



WASHINGTON STATE COURT INTERPRETER PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

WRITTEN EXAM

for

TEST CANDIDATES

*This overview is adopted from original text prepared by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts.
The multiple choice written exam is a product of the Consortium;
Washington State administers it consistent with Consortium guidelines.*

INTRODUCTION

This document will help aspiring court interpreters understand what the written test measures, how it is administered, and how to prepare for taking the exam. Each examinee should study this overview thoroughly in order to be fully prepared for the written exam.

The written examination is only part of the process for becoming a *Certified* or *Registered* court interpreter. Passing this test does not mean a person has become a “*certified* or *registered* court interpreter.” It means the examinee has met one of several requirements for certification.

OVERVIEW

The written test measures candidates’ knowledge of areas central to the work of a court interpreter at the level of a court interpreter:

1. English Language. To function as a professional court interpreter, one indispensable component is a high degree of proficiency in the English language. Accordingly, the written examination assumes a high degree of literacy in the English language and familiarity with a range of language constructions. It tests comprehension of written English vocabulary and idioms.

2. Court-Related Terms and Usage. A second area of knowledge essential for a successful court interpreter is familiarity with the terminology and procedures of the court system. Accordingly, the written examination also measures recognition of common court-related situations and vocabulary, *especially in the area of criminal courts.*

3. Ethics and Professional Conduct. The third area of knowledge required of professional court interpreters is general knowledge of standards guiding the performance of duties. Accordingly, the written exam includes questions aimed at measuring candidates’ knowledge of ethical behavior and professional conduct.

What does the test look like?

Multiple Choice: Part 1: General Language Proficiency; Part 2: Court-Related Terms and Usage; and Part 3: Ethics and Professional Conduct.

The examination contains 135 multiple-choice questions. Each question has four choices, labeled A, B, C, and D. You will select the **best** choice and mark that choice on the answer sheet.

Several sections contain groups of questions that will have specific instructions at the beginning of each section. A complete list of the sections, including one or more sample questions for each, is in Sample Questions section below.

How will the test be scheduled and how do I register?

Registration information will be available on the Washington Courts website two months before to the written exam at www.courts.wa.gov/interpreters. The Administrative Office of the Courts does not keep a mailing list for sending out exam registration information.

Fees

The registration fee for the *Written Exam* is \$75. The fee is not negotiable and non-refundable.

What do I do on the day of the exam?

Arrive early. No one will be admitted late. There are no exceptions and no one arriving late for any reason will be able to take the test at that test session.

Only small purses or wallets are allowed in the testing room. Leave everything else at home or in your car. Do not try to bring briefcases, palm pilots, dictionaries, gym bags, cell phones, calculators, paper, or any other similar items into the test room, as you will not be admitted to the test room with them.

You will need to sign in at the registration desk before going into the testing room. In the testing room, there will be a test administration supervisor, and test proctors present to help.

Use the restroom before going into the testing room. If you ask to leave the testing room after the test begins, you will have to leave all of your test materials with the test administration supervisor before leaving the room. You may be escorted to the restroom to make sure that you do not use a telephone or talk to anyone while you are outside of the testing room. No more than one candidate will be allowed to leave the testing room at the same time. You will not be given any extra time to complete exam for the time you are outside of the testing room.

What if I need special accommodation due to a disability?

If you have a disability recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you must request special accommodation *in advance*. You must complete a Request for Special Accommodation form (available by contacting the Court Interpreter Program at interpreters@courts.wa.gov) and submit it to the Interpreter Program as early as possible. You must describe your disability and describe the type or kind of accommodation you are requesting. You must also submit a statement from an appropriate professional documenting the diagnosis or evaluation of your disability.

How will the test be administered?

The test will be given in two locations in a classroom style setting. A test administration supervisor is responsible for overseeing the test administration process.

Seating will be assigned. Depending upon the seating arrangements, some candidates may be asked to move from one seat and occupy another. If this happens, it is for test security measures and the candidates should not be troubled or concerned.

Security of the test materials is essential. Examinees may not take notes or copy any portion of the exam.

Proctors will monitor candidates throughout the examination to prevent cheating and handle the situation if cheating occurs. They may move around the room but they will not disturb you. If a proctor suspects that an examinee is cheating in any way, the proctor will notify the test administration supervisor to address the situation. Some examples of cheating include giving or receiving help during the examination, communicating with others, retaining or copying examination questions, or using prohibited aids.

If an examinee is disruptive, engages in clear or flagrant cheating, or attempts to copy questions or retain or record test materials, the examinee will be expelled from the testing room and

advised that his or her examination will not be scored. The Interpreter Program at the Administrative Office of the Courts will maintain documentation of the expulsion and the reasons for it.

Once everyone is seated for the exam, the test administrator will read scripted instructions to ensure that all everyone receives the same instructions. Then you will read and sign an Agreement and Oath Form. You must listen to the instructions carefully and must not begin the examination until the test administration supervisor says, "You may begin."

You will have 2 hours and 15 minutes to complete the examination. A clock may be provided in the testing room. Fifteen minutes before the end of the test, the test administrator will make the following announcement out loud: "You have 15 minutes remaining."

The test has instructions on how to answer the questions. As you work your way through the test, you should carefully read the instructions in each section to make sure you understand how to answer the questions. The types of instructions you will find will be to select the answer that:

- Is closest in meaning
- Most appropriately completes a sentence
- Best answers a question or provides the best solution to a situation
- Has the correct sequence of events
- Is opposite in meaning

See the Sample Questions section for examples of the questions from various sections of the exam.

What score do I need to pass the test? How will I find out my results?

You will need to answer 80% of the questions correctly to pass the written exam. That means you must answer at least 108 of the 135 items correctly. The Interpreter Program will send you your results by mail. ***Reminder: Passing this test does not mean you are a certified or registered court interpreter.***

How can I prepare for the test?

A list of activities and resources has been compiled to help you identify actions you can take to help prepare for the exam. Some of the resources may help you decide whether you are ready to participate in a test of this nature. You can find this list in the Preparing for the Test section.

What if I do not pass the examination?

This written exam was created to measure entry-level knowledge of:

- English general vocabulary
- Common words and phrases likely to be heard in court
- The typical progression of cases through the court system
- Provisions of a code of professional responsibility

If you do not pass the exam, it is better not to register and take the exam in another location right away. Experience shows that people who retake this kind of exam without developing their skills won't get very different results. Please review the section of this overview titled "How can I prepare for the test?" and Preparing for the Test section, and spend time reading and studying before taking the exam again. The Washington Court Interpreter Program offers the exam once

per year, giving candidates time to prepare to take the exam again. There are no limits on how many times you can register and take the written exam.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Sections in Part 1 - General Language Proficiency

Sentence Completion. Items 1 through 9 consist of unfinished sentences. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four words or phrases the one that best completes the sentence.

Example: A person who feels persecuted in his/her home country may apply for political

- A. appellation
- B. appraisal
- C. asylum
- D. ascendance

(C is the best answer)

Synonyms in Context. Items 10 through 17 consist of sentences that contain an underlined word or phrase. The candidate is instructed to choose from a list of four words or phrases the one that is closest in meaning to the underlined word or phrase.

Example: It was done pursuant to the proceedings of the court.

- A. in accordance with
- B. in addition to
- C. in conjunction with
- D. in spite of

(A is the answer that is closest in meaning)

Synonyms. Items 18 through 38 consist of words or phrases. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four words or phrases the one that has the same meaning or closest to the same meaning as the word or phrase provided.

Example 1: Scaffold

- A. platform
- B. table
- C. prop
- D. curtain

(A is the answer that is closest in meaning)

Example 2: Hubris

- A. exaggerated pride
- B. steadfast loyalty
- C. extreme shyness
- D. committed fidelity

(A is the answer that is closest in meaning)

Antonyms. Items 39 through 50 consist of words or phrases. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four words or phrases the one that is opposite in meaning to the word or phrase provided.

Example: Excessive

- A. stingy
- B. large
- C. robust
- D. restricted

(D is the correct answer, opposite in meaning)

Idioms. Items 51 through 75 consist of sentences that contain an underlined idiomatic expression. The candidate is instructed to select from the list of four words or phrases the one that is closest in meaning to the underlined idiom.

Example 1: Do you need to make a pit stop before we get there?

- A. get some money
- B. go to the bathroom
- C. empty the trash
- D. make a phone call

(B is the answer that is closest in meaning)

Example 2: His career as an attorney is all washed up.

- A. off to a late start
- B. off to a good start
- C. completely over
- D. very profitable

(C is the answer that is closest in meaning)

Sections in Part 2 – Court-Related Terms & Usage

Sentence Completion. Items 76-111 consist of unfinished sentences that are likely to be heard in the court environment. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four words or phrases the one that most appropriately completes the sentence. The legal terms found in items 76 through 125 are taken largely from criminal court case types.

Example 1: A case decided without prejudice means that

- A. there is no right to a new trial
- B. there is an automatic appeal of the case
- C. there is a right to a new trial
- D. there are no racial overtones in the case

(C is the answer that most appropriately completes the sentence)

Example 2: A defendant is required to give up certain constitutional rights

- A. after being found guilty at trial
- B. before entering a plea of guilty
- C. only if represented by a public defender
- D. only after probation is granted

(B is the answer that most appropriately completes the sentence)

Court-Related Questions. Items 112 through 121 consist of questions on court-related topics. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four choices the one that is the best answer.

Example: Which of the following would be a concurrent sentence?

- A. two years for burglary, two years for robbery: two years in jail
- B. two years for theft, two years for assault: four years in jail
- C. four years for rape, three years for a second rape: seven years in jail
- D. four years for rape, two years for assault: two years in jail

(A is the best answer)

Sequence. Items 122 through 125 consist of questions about the proper sequence of events in court-related situations. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four choices the one that correctly describes the order in which the events should occur.

Example: Which of the following is a correct sequence of events?

- A. Jury Charge, Jury Deliberation, Jury Instructions, Jury Verdict
- B. Jury Sworn, Jury Verdict, Jury Charge, Jury Deliberation
- C. Jury Deliberation, Jury Sworn, Jury Instructions, Jury Verdict
- D. Jury Sworn, Jury Charge, Jury Deliberation, Jury Verdict

(D is the correct sequence of events)

Sections in Part 3 – Ethics & Professional Conduct

Professional Conduct Questions. Items 126 and 127 consist of questions about the appropriate course of professional conduct an interpreter should take. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four choices the one that is the best answer.

Example: Which of the following is most important for you to do when you are interpreting at the witness stand?

- A. keep your eyes on the jury
- B. keep your dictionary and note pad at hand
- C. keep eye contact with the witness at all times
- D. keep the judge informed of contradictory testimony

(B is the best answer)

Scenarios. Items 128 through 135 consist of brief scenarios describing situations an interpreter might encounter while interpreting in the courts that would pose ethical or professional problems. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four alternatives the best solution or course of action.

Example: An expert witness is giving testimony regarding blood alcohol content while you are interpreting for the defendant. The testimony is very complex, and even though you can interpret it at the same level, you sense that the defendant does not understand such technical language. What is the best thing for you to do in this situation?

- A. advise the judge that the defendant does not understand
- B. interpret at the same level as the witness
- C. ask the judge for permission to explain for the witness
- D. summarize the testimony for the defendant in language he can understand

(B is the best solution)

PREPARING FOR THE TEST

Everyone taking the Written Exam comes to it from a different background. Depending on your level of English, experience taking multiple-choice exams, experience interpreting, knowledge of the legal system, you will find different areas that you may need to study and focus on.

The list below is not an exhaustive list of resources and many other websites and videos are available by searching online for phrases such as, “Court Interpreter Written Exam”. Many states use the same kind of Written Exam as Washington, but be aware that some resources online may include information specific to other states.

General Test Taking

If you are not familiar with taking written, multiple-choice tests, you may find it helpful to:

1. Review instructions and suggestions on taking multiple-choice tests such as: “Suggestions on how to prepare for the FCICE Written Examination” available at: http://www.ncsconline.org/d_research/fcice_exam/FCICEExamineeHandbook2010.pdf
2. Study preparation materials developed for similar exams, or even take the exams, such as TOEFL: <http://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/prepare>. There are many other publications available as well.
3. Many of the websites in the sections below also give you some choosing synonyms and antonyms in multiple-choice style similar to the Written Exam.

General Language Proficiency

For Part 1, you need to have a very broad command of the English language. That is not something that is easily acquired. However, some of the following activities may help increase your knowledge of the English language and prepare for the test:

- Take upper-level English courses at a college or university.
- Read widely such items as books and professional journals in many fields, American literature, and editorials and articles in major newspapers.
- Brush up on English vocabulary and lexical concepts (go back to the basics and review antonyms, synonyms, and idioms).

Idioms

The questions about idioms pose one of the biggest challenges for many test candidates. These websites can help you practice.

- The Idiom Connection, available online at: www.idiomconnection.com
- The ESL Idiom Page, (Dennis Oliver), available online at: www.eslcafe.com/idioms
- Another idiom site: <http://idiomsite.com/>
- English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions at: www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms/?qclid=CM-76q3s6ZgCFRFWagodSQyL1g

- These sites have some sections for Court and Legal related idioms with example sentences:
<http://www.idiomconnection.com/>
http://www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idioms_proverbs.html
- This is a video that shows some common English idioms:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwH0Uih5bP0>
- Some websites court and legal related idioms with example sentences:
<http://www.idiomconnection.com/>
http://www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idioms_proverbs.html

Synonyms

These websites may help you with using synonyms – different words that have similar or the same meaning.

- The Synonyms Page will help you find synonyms:
www.synonym.com/synonyms/page
- These pages have questions similar to the ones you will see on the exam:
http://wps.ablongman.com/long_licklider_vocabulary_1/46/11888.cw/index.html
http://wps.ablongman.com/long_licklider_vocabulary_1/46/11899.cw/index.html
http://englishteststore.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=81&Itemid=283

Antonyms

This page will let practice with choosing antonyms - words that mean the opposite of one another.

- <http://www.c4learn.com/aptitude/verbal-ability/english-antonyms-set-1-multiple-choice-questions/>
- http://wps.ablongman.com/long_licklider_vocabulary_1/46/11922.cw/index.html
- http://wps.ablongman.com/long_licklider_vocabulary_1/46/11933.cw/index.html
- http://englishteststore.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59&Itemid=297

Synonyms and Antonyms

This site has a number of tests with synonyms and antonyms with answer keys and explanations. The higher the grade level of the test, the closer it will be to the kinds of questions on the written exam.

- <http://www.englishforeveryone.org/Topics/Synonyms-and-Antonyms.htm>

Vocabulary

- English Vocabulary Practice available online at: www.freerice.com
- 20-Minute ESL Lessons: www.esl-lab.com/vocab/index.htm
- Advanced Vocabulary Lists and Exercises online at:
www.eflnet.com/vocab/advanced_vocabulary.php
- Advanced Vocabulary Quizzes at: www.esl-classroom.com/vocabulary/vindex.html
- Vocabulary tests:
http://englishteststore.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=195&Itemid=166

Other Resources

You may also find materials meant to help people study for the SAT or GRE useful in preparing for the Written Exam, as well as, vocabulary-building materials. You can find many in the reference sections of public libraries or bookstores. A few online vocabulary materials include:

- <http://www.proprofs.com/quiz-school/story.php?title=SAT-Reading-Sentence-Completion>
- <http://www.proprofs.com/quiz-school/story.php?title=SAT-Reading-Sentence-Completion-II>
- <http://www.c4learn.com/aptitude/>

Court-Related Terms and Usage

The following activities would be helpful in expanding or getting more knowledge about court-related terms or usage.

- Read news items related to legal matters, law enforcement, and the courts in major newspapers, consulting a dictionary to look up unfamiliar words.
- Visit courthouses and observe court proceedings in civil, criminal, and family matters.
- Take college/university courses in criminal justice and court administration.
- Read any standard introductory textbook on the criminal justice system.
- Read information about Courts and Legal Procedure available from the American Bar Association.
www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/resources/law_related_education_network/how_courts_work/courts_legal_procedure.html
- Read publications about the administration of justice such as the following documents issued by the American Bar Association (www.abanet.org/abastore), which are available for \$2.50 each:
 - Law & the Courts, Volume I, *The Role of the Courts*, 2000
 - Law & the Courts, Volume II, *Court Procedures*, 1998
 - Law & the Courts, Volume III, *Juries*, 2001
- Study resources available by law schools such as the following from Cornell University Law School:
 - *Criminal Procedure: An Overview*
http://topics.law.cornell.edu/wex/Criminal_procedure
 - *Civil Procedure: An Overview* http://topics.law.cornell.edu/wex/civil_procedure
- Study legal terms from the following sources:
 - Black's Law Dictionary
 - Glossary of Commonly Used Court & Justice System Terminology
go to www.courts.wa.gov/interpreters and click on "Resources for Interpreters" and "Glossaries of Legal Terms"
- Some Online
 - Basic Legal Vocabulary:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDcTXidHhNU&list=PLh0bLFae5jiodou44scphghCi595cVJm_&index=7
 - Court Cases:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYcYHDHEF64>

- Court Vocabulary:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayjKTL5hNGc>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMQR44byPm4>
- Very Basic Crime and Criminal Vocabulary
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuMIRI8Ypi4>

Ethics and Professional Conduct

The following activities would be helpful in expanding or getting more knowledge about court-related terms or usage.

- Become familiar with the Washington State's Code of Conduct for Court Interpreters and its Rules of Court pertaining to court interpreting:
https://www.courts.wa.gov/programs_orgs/pos_interpret/index.cfm?fa=pos_interpret.display&fileName=generalRule11#gr11.2
- Join and participate actively in a professional association such as the National Association of Judicial Interpreters and Translators (www.najit.org) or the American Translators Association (www.atanet.org), studying their respective codes of ethics.
- Read at least one of the classic texts in the field. Some of these are at the Washington State Law Library (<https://www.courts.wa.gov/library/>), which you can borrow through some local libraries.
 - Berk-Seligson, Susan (1990). *The Bilingual Courtroom: Court Interpreters in the Judicial Process*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 - De Jongh, E.M. (1992). *An Introduction to Court Interpreting: Theory and Practice*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
 - Edwards, Alicia B. (1995). *The Practice of Court Interpreting*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
 - Gonzalez, R.D., Vasquez, V. F., and Mikkelson, H. (1991). *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation: Theory, Policy and Practice*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
 - Hewitt, William E. (1995). *Court Interpretation: Model Guides for Policy and Practice in the State Courts*. Williamsburg, VA: National Center for State Courts (available online [see #2 above for web address]).
 - Available at the Law Library and online:
<http://cdm16501.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/accessfair/id/162/rec/13>
 - Mikkelson, H. (2000). *Introduction to Court Interpreting*. Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing.