

Practical tips for community interpreters

Focus on facilitating the conversation

- **Prioritize conveying information.** Your role is to support a speaker of one language to communicate with a speaker of a different language. To avoid confusion, try to separate interpreting from other tasks you might do, like giving advice. Ask the speakers to focus on the task of communicating information.

Be honest about what you need

- **Ask for support.** If you feel distressed about the content you've interpreted, it's okay to ask for psychological support. This is especially important if the information is sensitive or distressing.
- **Suggest ways to make interpreting easier.** For example, speakers could slow down, speak louder, or provide information in advance.
- **Say no if you need to.** You don't have to interpret if you don't want to or think you can't do so accurately. You can stop interpreting if you become overwhelmed, upset, or exhausted.

Convey a clear, accurate message

- **Prioritize the core meaning.** Focus on the speaker's key messages instead of translating every word.
- **Never change or add information.** Ask the speaker to repeat if you need to. If you don't know something, don't invent information. Don't add your own comments, opinions, or advice. Don't try to influence the speaker to say or not say something.
- **Find a way to convey uncomfortable information.** Translate uncomfortable words, such as swear words, if you can. If you feel too uncomfortable to use such terms, describe what the speaker said instead ("The speaker swore"). Never leave out what is said altogether.
- **Interpret as if you are the person speaking.** Use "I" instead of "the speaker says that he/she/they...". If the speaker says something that makes you uncomfortable, then you can use "the speaker said...".
- **Write down details.** Use a notebook to write key words, names, numbers, and dates, and any long or complex words that you might forget.
- **Speak slowly and clearly.** Be aware that you may want to talk faster if the content or interaction makes you react emotionally.

Remain neutral and respectful

- **Interpret for all speakers,** regardless of whether you agree or disagree with what they say.
- **Be respectful.** Respect all speakers regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity, social status, or any other factor. Only agree to interpret if you think you can remain respectful throughout the interaction.
- **Avoid mixing the personal and professional.** Don't interpret for someone you know (such as a friend) if you think it will be hard to remain neutral or if you might hear something you don't want to know.
- **Maintain confidentiality.** Never share sensitive or private information that you learn during interpreting, unless doing so can help someone in immediate danger (e.g a child at risk of abuse).

Prepare as well as you can before the interaction

Checklist: Am I ready to interpret?	Yes
Do I know what the topic of the interaction is?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I know enough vocabulary in both languages to translate information about this topic? <i>You can ask the person or organization you interpret for whether they have a glossary or term list relevant to the interaction, for example medical terminology. Don't interpret if you think you will not know enough vocabulary to do so accurately.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I know how long I will interpret for, when I can take a break and whether I will receive refreshments or a meal? <i>Interpreting is tiring. It is okay to ask to take a break or stop if you are tired and cannot interpret accurately any more. Interpreters usually interpret for a maximum of 1 hour before taking a break.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I know how many people I will interpret for and who they are (for example: a patient, someone answering a survey, a healthcare worker or NGO staff member sharing information, someone from a local authority)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the speakers use presentation material such as PowerPoint slides? If yes, have I seen the material so I can become familiar with the content?	<input type="checkbox"/>
If the speakers want to record the interaction, have I given my consent to also be recorded?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have I agreed with the speakers how long they should speak before pausing so I can interpret? (usually maximum 3-4 sentences, but it can be less if you need)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have I agreed with the speakers how I can interrupt them or pause the interaction if I need to ask them to repeat or explain something? (for example, tapping their shoulder, raising your hand, saying "Please pause")	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I have a notebook and pen that I can use to take notes? <i>If the interaction includes confidential or sensitive information, you must destroy your notes afterwards.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a quiet, calm place where we can have the interaction so I can see and hear all the speakers? Will they be able to see and hear me clearly?	<input type="checkbox"/>
If we need technology (for example: microphones, interpreting via phone or computer) does all the equipment work properly? Is the audio quality clear?	<input type="checkbox"/>