

Interpreter Factsheet: What They Can & Can't Do

What an Interpreter CAN Do ✓

- Ensure accurate and complete interpretation of all spoken communication.
- Maintain strict impartiality and neutrality, avoiding personal opinions.
- Uphold privacy and confidentiality regarding all information encountered during interpretation.
- Clarify communication when necessary to ensure understanding between parties.
- Demonstrate cultural sensitivity and awareness in all interactions.
- Adhere to professional ethics and standards of conduct for interpreters.

What an Interpreter CANNOT Do ✗

- Add, omit, or alter any information during interpretation.
- Offer personal advice, opinions, or recommendations to any party.
- Act as an advocate or representative for any party involved.
- Engage in personal conversations or discussions with parties.
- Perform other roles such as legal advisor, social worker, or counselor.
- Accept gifts, favors, or compensation directly from parties.

Common Misunderstandings ⚠

- Interpreters explain things.
Correction: Interpreters facilitate communication, they do not explain or add information.
- Interpreters can fill out forms.
Correction: Interpreters cannot fill out forms or provide advice.
- Interpreters translate documents.
Correction: Interpreters work with spoken language; translators work with written language.
- Interpreters can give their opinion or advice.
Correction: Interpreters maintain neutrality and do not offer personal opinions or advice.

How to Work Effectively with translators 💡

- Speak directly to the client, not the interpreter.
- Use simple, clear language and avoid jargon, and acronyms.
- Speak clearly and at a moderate pace, pausing often, be aware of tone and loudness.