

Translator and Interpreter

Move meaning between two languages in writing or out loud, in courtrooms, hospitals and books.

TYPICAL PAY

\$60,170

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$37k to \$104k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Courts, hospitals, schools, conferences, publishers, remote f...

How you get there

- 1 Get truly fluent in two languages** Years
 Fluent enough to handle a doctor explaining chemotherapy or a lawyer arguing procedure. School Spanish is not this.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
 Usually in the language, linguistics, or a subject you want to work in such as biology or law. A degree in the subject plus fluency is often worth more than a language degree alone.
- 3 Specialist training** Weeks to 2 years
 A 40 hour medical interpreter course, a court interpreter program, or an interpreting degree in American Sign Language.
- 4 Get certified** Months
 The American Translators Association for translation, healthcare bodies for medical work, your state or the federal courts for legal work.
- 5 Build a client list** 3 to 5 years
 Agencies first for volume, then direct clients at double the rate. Most people take three to five years to get there.

Pros and cons

- + You can work from anywhere, and a lot of it is remote
- + Genuinely useful. People get care and justice because you were in the room
- + Rare language pairs are well paid and always short of people
- Machine translation has cut the bottom out of general work
- Freelance income is uneven and nobody pays you for sick days
- Interpreting is mentally exhausting in a way that surprises people

Optional boosts

American Translators Association certification. Federal or state court certification. Healthcare interpreter certification. Sign language certification.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Interpreters and Translators

American Translators Association: certification

United States Courts: federal court interpreters and contract rates

Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/translator-interpreter>

Good to know

Conference interpreters work in pairs and swap every half...

Simultaneous interpreting, the kind done from a booth while the speaker keeps talking, burns concentration so fast that interpreters trade off roughly every 20 to 30 minutes. Booking one interpreter for...

Translating and interpreting are different jobs

Translators work with written text and can look things up, rewrite and sleep on it. Interpreters work live and get one shot. Plenty of excellent translators are bad interpreters and the other way round, and the cer...



Scan for the full clicker