

# Careers in Interpreting



# What is interpreting?

Interpreting is the transfer of one spoken or signed language to another. Interpreters work in a wide range of different settings – from international conferences and business meetings to courts and doctors' surgeries.

Some interpreters work both ways between their mother tongue and other language(s), in which case they must speak or sign their other language(s) very well. Others, such as conference interpreters, usually only work into their mother tongue so the most important thing for them is to have a very good understanding of their other language(s).

All interpreters need excellent knowledge of their mother tongue: they should have a wide vocabulary, be able to use the appropriate registers in different situations and they must be clear and concise when speaking or signing.

What kind of work is available for trained interpreters?

# **In-house interpreter**

As an in-house interpreter, you are employed full-time, part-time or on a contract basis as part of a company's permanent staff. In-house positions are available in large organisations, where you are more likely to perform other tasks in addition to interpreting including translation, document drafting, editing or minute-taking. In some organisations, you might specialise in one area such as law or medicine. Working in-house provides a more stable income but means you do not enjoy the flexibility of working on a freelance basis.

# Freelance interpreter

Freelance interpreting allows you to build up a range of clients and specialist subject areas. Potential clients include international government and non-government organisations, multinational corporations and law firms as well as national and local government agencies including the NHS, police forces, UK Border Agency and the courts. You may work on very sensitive topics.

Flexibility and being your own boss are the benefits of working freelance, but you must be disciplined to work independently and prepared to be persistent and patient while you build up your client base. You can combine a part-time in-house post with some freelancing, giving you the best of both worlds.

# Conference interpreter

Conference interpreters work in-house or on a freelance basis, interpreting simultaneously (as the speaker or signer is delivering) or consecutively (by taking notes and conveying what has been said or signed when the speaker/signer pauses).

With international institutions such as the European Commission or United Nations, you would often work in a booth, interpreting simultaneously into your mother tongue to delegates wearing headsets. If working for large multinationals or the diplomatic service, you would normally work in bilateral meetings interpreting consecutively or whispering. For consecutive interpreting, you need notetaking skills, as you do not interpret until the delegate has finished talking. Whispering uses all your simultaneous interpreting skills, but without a microphone!

Interpreters may work in very stressful situations. Therefore strong nerves and a mentally robust disposition are a must!

# Public service interpreter

Public service interpreters help people to access the services they have a right to use as UK residents. As a freelancer, you could work for a range of public services, including local authorities, Job Centres or the Home Office. In-house work also offers variety – if working in a hospital you might interpret for a woman giving birth, a child with a broken finger and a diabetic all in the same day. You must be able to interpret effectively into your mother tongue and your second language, spoken or signed. You must also be very sensitive to the circumstances and of course, enjoy working with people.

# Telephone interpreter

Telephone interpreting is used in situations where the individuals requiring an interpreter cannot be present in the same place (e.g. international conference calls, help lines) or where they are in the same place but could not plan for an interpreter being physically present (e.g. doctors' surgeries, police stations). As a telephone interpreter, you would often work from home, either 'on call' or on pre-arranged calls, and usually perform 'liaison' interpreting that is consecutive interpreting, both into and out of your mother tongue. You'll experience a great deal of variety in your work as well as the advantages of working from home.

# Voice over

Voice over recording is increasingly in demand. It is used in a number of different media - the news, commercial adverts, sports events etc. You can work on a freelance basis or as an in-house linguist, working on providing voice overs in addition to other language services such as interpreting and translation. Working as a voice over recorder gives you the chance to use your language skills in exciting fields as well as use state of the art technology and learn a variety of recording techniques.



# Interested in Interpreting?

If you are naturally curious, able to analyse information, can think on your feet and want to help people from different cultures communicate, you should consider interpreting! When you train as an interpreter, you will develop these abilities and learn strong public speaking, note-taking and research skills; you will learn about the professional interpreter's role in different contexts and you will work on tact, diplomacy and empathy. All these skills and your knowledge of other languages will not only prepare you for a career in interpreting but will also make you extremely employable in other sectors.

Produced by CILT, the National Centre for Languages in collaboration with the Routes into Languages National Network for Interpreting.

Led by University of Leeds, in partnership with University of Bath, University of Salford and University of Westminster, the National Network for Interpreting was established in order to address the following issues: ■ National shortage of first language English translators and interpreters ■ Reverse the decline in language learning ■ Boost interest of young people in the professions ■ Generate wider awareness of interpreting needs ■ Create greater cooperation between all sectors of education and employer in terms of training.

For information on interpreting, please contact the National Network for Interpreting: [routes.nni@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:routes.nni@leeds.ac.uk)

**[www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/interpreting](http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/interpreting)**

For information on translation, please contact the National Network for Translation: [routes-nnt@salford.ac.uk](mailto:routes-nnt@salford.ac.uk)

**[www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/translation](http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/translation)**



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