

The thirty-nine steps

Questions you need to ask yourself when undertaking a translation



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- 1 Into what variant language is the translation to be made?**
Eg. Castilian Spanish, Mexican Spanish...
- 2 What is the purpose of the translation?**
e.g. information, publication, use in court, training...
- 3 What is the target readership of the translation?**
e.g. literacy, specialist...
- 4 What is the intended quality level for the translation?**
e.g. draft, revision, third party revised...
- 5 Does the style or terminology used in the translation have to conform to any specific requirements?**
e.g. consistency with ISO document, house style, pharmacopoeia...
- 6 Can any reference/background material be provided?**
e.g. prior correspondence, reports, glossaries, specifications...
- 7 Who is the contact for queries?**
Keep records of the contact person's details: name, email, telephone...
- 8 Is the layout of the translation to comply with any particular requirements?**
e.g. facsimile of the original, page for page...
- 9 Are tables and graphical material to be incorporated with the text?**
e.g. figures, diagrams, equations, flow charts...
- 10 Which particular word processing software requires the translation?**
e.g. MSWord, Macintosh, QuarkXpress...
- 11 In which format is the translation to be provided?**
e.g. paper, diskette, electronic file...
- 12 When is the translation to be delivered?**
Don't forget there is always a deadline for the submission of translations.
- 13 How is the translation to be delivered?**
e.g. fax, modem, internet...
- 14 Where is the translation to be delivered?**
e.g. client's address, intermediary, both, internet address...
- 15 Is any non-standard form of delivery required?**
e.g. courier, express post, recorded/special delivery...
- 16 Before delivering: has the translation been properly checked?**
e.g. correct terminology, spell-check, structure and syntax...
- 17 Does the target text read like a piece of original text in that language?**
- 18 Is the source text, reference material, to be returned?**
- 19 Does the translation have to be certified?**
e.g. official documents. An ITI official translator can certify documents. If not, you have to go to a notary public, solicitor or registrar.
- 20 On what basis will the translation be charged?**
e.g. target text length, source text length, time, lump sum...
- 21 What rate will be applied?**
Some publications like the ITI Rates & Salaries survey will give you all the details about charges taking into account all the below specifications.
- 22 Will there be an additional charge for urgency?**
e.g. unsociable hours, weekend working (see step 20)
- 23 Will there be an additional charge for complex layout?**
e.g. multiple font changes, complex tables...
- 24 Will there be an additional charge for unusual difficulties?**
e.g. poorly legible text, contact with foreign informants...
- 25 Will there be an additional charge for special presentations?**
e.g. bromides
- 26 Will there be an additional charge for research?**
e.g. pertinent legislation, specialist terminology, prior documentation
- 27 Will there be an additional charge for attendance?**
e.g. for certifying a translation, travel to a collection point...
- 28 Will any other additional services be required?**
e.g. post-editing, proof-reading...
- 29 Will VAT apply to these charges?**
Refer to step 20.
- 30 How is payment to be made?**
e.g. single payment, advance + instalments...
- 31 When is payment to be made?**
e.g. on delivery, 30 days.
- 32 What method of payment is to be used?**
e.g. bank transfer, cheque, eurocheque, banker's draft...
- 33 Does foreign payment convey any charge?**
e.g. foreign cheques, bank transfer's...
- 34 Is copyright to be retained or transferred?**
e.g. by assignment, licence...
- 35 To whom and under what conditions?**
See ITI Model Terms for Business.
- 36 Is the subject matter of the translation under confidentiality restrictions?**
Refer to the previous step.
- 37 Is there any source of possible consequential liability of which the translator should be aware?**
e.g. printing of documentation...
- 38 Is there any likelihood of a possible liability, which might exceed the normal level of insurance cover?**
- 39 What compensation should be agreed when a job is cancelled after work has begun?**
See step 35.

Further reading

ITI Reference 019 (10/02): Recommended Model General Terms of Business for commissioned Translation Work (1999)

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