

EXERCISES FOR CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETING

Suggestions for Preparing for the Test

Practice your ability to repeat sentences and paragraphs of varying lengths, from one to fifty words. You are likely to find a number of sources for practice materials. For example, your local court reporter's office may be willing to let you have draft copies of actual transcripts, or you may find practice materials on the World Wide Web. If necessary, you can ask friends and family members to create samples of "question and answer" formatted transcripts. Say a segment aloud in the source language (or have a friend or family member read the segment out loud for you), then interpret that segment into the target language. Be sure to vary the lengths of the utterances and practice until you are able, with the use of notes if you are trained in note-taking skills, to interpret long passages.

For many interpreters, note taking is extremely beneficial in all modes of interpretation, but especially in the consecutive mode. If you find that you benefit from note taking, develop an efficient note-taking system in order to remember relevant names, dates, places, and figures. It is often essential to develop this skill under the direction of an experienced interpreter or teacher. However, the skill you develop will be your own personal method of note taking. Notes might be recorded in the form of simple outlines, charts, diagrams, or graphs. Listing information in the form of a diagram might be helpful while interpreting at a trial during which a particular scenario is repeatedly mentioned. An effective note-taking system allows you to concentrate on the ideas and concepts contained in the message, not on taking the notes. It is important to adopt a strategy or strategies that work best for you.

Practice consecutive interpretation until you are able to accurately interpret transcripts that are 850 to 900 words in length, with varying lengths of utterances, within a 20- to 22-minute time frame.

Memorization Techniques for Consecutive Interpreting

1. How do you remember? Are you a visual or a verbal learner, neither, or both? If you forget something you have heard, try to understand what prevented you from storing or retrieving the information.
2. Your short-term memory capacity is normally limited to between five and nine bits of information (units of memory), and your ability to recall depends on how well you can organize what you have heard by finding patterns. Have someone read a series of seven unrelated numbers to you. As soon as you are able to repeat the series accurately, try to repeat it backwards. To do this, you must be able to retain the series in your short-term memory.
3. Increase your analytical skills by reading a newspaper or magazine. After finishing each story, try to summarize what you read in a single sentence. Do this in all your working languages.

4. Try exercise 3 after listening to a news report or a radio or television talk show. Summarize the main idea in a single sentence.
5. For the exercises below, have someone read a newspaper or magazine article into a recorder or record talk or interview programs from the radio or television. Limit yourself to nontechnical material. Do not record the news because the newscaster reads from a prepared script. Record increasingly longer texts as your skills improve. You will only repeat the information you hear in the same language and will not interpret it.
 - a. Listen to the passage without taking notes and try to repeat as much as possible.
 - b. Listen to the passage and write down keywords to help you remember the content. Then repeat as much information as possible. Compare the results you achieved with and without notes. Which worked best for you?
 - c. As you listen to the passage, try to condense it into a few meaningful units. Organize the information into groups. For example, if a person were to list the schools she had attended and the subjects she studied, you could group the schools by location and the subjects studied by topic. Numbers can be grouped the way people recite phone or social security numbers, in groups of two, three, or four numbers, rather than as a string of unrelated numbers. Please note that when interpreting testimony you should maintain the speaker's work sequence as spoken, except to accommodate the syntax of the target language.
 - d. Do not allow your opinions to color your rendition of a speaker's words, even if you have strong opinions about the subject matter. Pay close attention to your reaction to the text while listening and maintain the same level of language (register) as the speaker.

Note that improving your listening and memory skills is an ongoing and lifelong endeavor. As you gain experience and confidence, your skills will improve.