



## Written Test of English Language Proficiency and Legal Terminology For Per Diem (Freelance) Court Interpreters (Languages Other than Spanish)

### General Information About the Written Test

Interpreter professionals interested in freelance assignments within the New York State Unified Court System (UCS) as a Per Diem Court Interpreter are required to pass a written test of English language proficiency and legal terminology. Depending on the language, individuals who are successful on the written examination may also be required to pass an appropriate oral examination. If you are unsuccessful on the written test, you may take an equivalent form of the exam after three (3) months. If you fail the second time, then you must wait at least one (1) year before taking the exam again. All per diem court interpreters must undergo a criminal history investigation and participate in an ethics training seminar when offered.

This written guide provides an overview of the content of the Written Test of English Language Proficiency and Legal Terminology. Please read the descriptions and test question examples carefully so you will know what to expect. The examination consists of 75 multiple-choice questions and you will have an hour and a half (90 minutes) to complete the written examination which is designed to assess the following:

- A. Reading and Understanding Written Material - Sentence Completion**
- B. Reading and Understanding Written Material - Paragraph Comprehension**
- C. Grammar and Language Usage**
- D. Vocabulary - Synonyms**
- E. Vocabulary - Antonyms**
- F. Idiomatic Expressions**
- G. Legal Terminology**

Qualified court interpreters possess educated, native-like mastery of both English and a second language and have the ability to do consecutive, simultaneous and sight interpreting in a courtroom setting. Some of the activities that you might find helpful to expand your knowledge of the English language might include taking an English course at a college or university and reading vocabulary-building books found in the reference sections of libraries and bookstores.

To improve your knowledge of court-related legal terminology there are many excellent glossaries and other resources available to interpreters in publications and on organizational websites such as: <http://www.ncsconline.org> and <http://www.najit.org> . You can also reference a copy of the UCS Court Interpreter Manual and Code of Ethics which contains a legal glossary and extensive practical information useful to court interpreters working in the courts that is available on the NYS Court System website at: <http://www.nycourts.gov/courtinterpreter/pdfs/CourtInterpreterManual.PDF>

## Content of Written Test

The written exam will consist of multiple choice questions designed to assess the candidate's language skills in the following areas:

### A. Reading and Understanding Written Material - Sentence Completion

These questions are designed to assess how well candidates comprehend written material in English. Candidates are given sentences in which one or more words are missing. Candidates must select the word or phrase from the alternatives listed that best fits into the blank so that the sentence makes most sense.

*Example:* Select the word that best fits into the blank so that the sentence makes most sense.

Mr. Smith is \_\_\_\_\_ in his job by his lack of education.

- A. hardened
- B. hampered
- C. hallowed
- D. heightened

The correct answer is B, so the bubble corresponding to 'B' on the Answer Sheet would be filled in.

### B. Reading and Understanding Written Material - Paragraph Comprehension

These questions are designed to assess how well candidates comprehend written material in English. Candidates are provided brief reading selections followed by questions pertaining to the information in the passage. Candidates are not required to have any specialized knowledge relating to the content covered in this section.

*Example:* Read the following paragraph and select which one of the four statements is most correct, based solely on the material presented.

People who appear in a court in New York State have the basic right to an interpreter. Criminal defendants must be allowed to assist in their own defense by being present at the trial and understanding the proceedings. The courts have also ruled that criminal defendants who cannot understand English are entitled to have the proceedings interpreted for them in a language that they understand. Failure to provide an interpreter where one is needed may void the decision in a criminal trial. Similarly, in a civil trial, where a witness or party does not speak English, the court has the authority to appoint an interpreter. In fact, the Judiciary Law provides for the temporary appointment of an interpreter in any court, if these services are necessary. This right also applies in instances involving physical disability such as a hearing impairment.

According to the passage above, a criminal trial may be voided if:

- A. an interpreter is not provided where one is needed.
- B. any of the parties do not speak English.
- C. an interpreter was requested but was unavailable.
- D. any instance involving physical disability such as a hearing impairment.

The correct answer is A, so the bubble corresponding to 'A' on the Answer Sheet would be filled in.

**C. Grammar and Language Usage**

These questions test a candidate's ability to apply basic rules of grammar, usage and sentence structure in English.

*Example:* Which of the following four sentences is most correct according to the rules of standard English?

- A. While the victim lay injured on the floor of the store, the police dispatcher counseled the shopkeeper on how to perform first aid.
- B. While the victim laid injured on the floor of the store, the police dispatcher concealed the shopkeeper on how to perform first aid.
- C. While the victim lay injured on the floor of the store, the police dispatcher counceled the shopkeeper on how to perform first aid.
- D. While the victim laid injured on the floor of the store, the police dispatcher cancelled the shopkeeper on how to perform first aid.

The correct answer is A, so the bubble corresponding to 'A' on the Answer Sheet would be filled in.

**D. Vocabulary - Synonyms**

These questions test a candidate's knowledge of general vocabulary in English. Candidates select from four alternatives the word that most closely has the same meaning of a given word. Specialized legal terminology is not included.

*Example:* Select the alternative which is closest to the same meaning as the target word.

LABYRINTH

- A. Flower
- B. Building
- C. Maze
- D. Patient

The correct answer is C, so the bubble corresponding to 'C' on the Answer Sheet would be filled in.

**E. Vocabulary - Antonyms**

These questions test a candidate's knowledge of general vocabulary in English. Candidates select from four alternatives the word that most closely has the opposite meaning of a given word. Specialized legal terminology is not included.

*Example:* Select the alternative which is closest to the opposite meaning as the target word.

IMPEDE

- A. Rank
- B. Facilitate
- C. Distribute
- D. Proscribe

The correct answer is B, so the bubble corresponding to 'B' on the Answer Sheet would be filled in.

**F. Idiomatic Expressions**

These questions test a candidate's knowledge of basic idiomatic expressions commonly used in everyday conversation in English. Candidates are to select from four alternatives the word or phrase that best expresses the meaning of a given idiom.

*Example:* Choose the word or phrase that has the same meaning as the idiomatic expression given.

SHARP AS A TACK

- A. Difficult to get along with
- B. Thin
- C. Dangerous
- D. Very bright

The correct answer is D, so the bubble corresponding to 'D' on the Answer Sheet would be filled in.

**G. Legal Terminology**

These questions assess a candidate's knowledge of basic court-related legal terminology that court interpreters frequently encounter in their daily work.

*Example:* Select the best alternative.

The instruction that a judge gives to the jury before the jury begins deliberation is known as the:

- A. verdict
- B. closing argument
- C. judge's charge
- D. summation

The correct answer is C, so the bubble corresponding to 'C' on the Answer Sheet would be filled in.

**Examination Rating:**

The examination is scored on a pass/fail basis. Candidates are required to answer a minimum of 52 questions in order to pass. Subarea scores are not provided. Candidates are notified by mail of their results generally within a period of 30 to 60 days following the administration.

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