



REVISION 2026

Sign Language Translation Standards

Standards and video-production guidance for teams
producing high-quality sign-language translations



SIGN LANGUAGE TRANSLATION STANDARDS

These standards were compiled by sign-language linguists, educators, and media-production specialists in collaboration with SL Studio. They are intended to serve as a reference for professionals working in American Sign Language (ASL) translation and related fields.

Although the examples and technical specifications in these standards focus on ASL, the underlying principles are designed to be applicable to the translation of materials into any sign language.

SL Studio operates independently and is not affiliated with any federal agency. The opinions, strategies, and tools presented herein reflect the practices adopted and refined by SL Studio to ensure consistent quality and accessibility in language services. This document may be used as a reference or adapted, with appropriate credit, by institutions or professionals with shared goals of equitable and linguistically sound communication.

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to define a set of standards to aid in the production of high-quality sign language translations for a diverse Deaf audience.¹ These translation standards are presented as a four-step process, outlined in the four sections that follow this introduction. Also included are six appendices and a glossary of terms and roles.

Common Inquiries Regarding Sign Language Translation

The following questions address some common inquiries about the necessity of sign language translation.

How many people use American Sign Language (ASL)?

ASL is one of the most widely used languages in the United States. A 2022 national survey estimated that nearly 3% of U.S. adults use some form of sign language—on the order of several million people—of whom roughly one million are Deaf or hard of hearing.²

Why do Deaf people need quality sign-language translations?

Just as U.S. government officials recognize the need to use plain language to ensure written communications are clear and accessible to English speakers,³ Deaf people likewise need access to clear content in their native language. Translation of

¹ For the purpose of this document, the term "Deaf" refers to persons who have hearing loss in the severe to profound range, communicate in American Sign Language, and otherwise demonstrate a sociocultural association with the American Deaf community.

² Ross E. Mitchell and Travas A. Young, "How Many People Use Sign Language? A National Health Survey-Based Estimate." *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* 28, no. 1 (Dec. 2022): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1093/deafed/enac031>.

³ *Plain Language Guide Series*, U.S. General Services Administration, <https://digital.gov/guides/plain-language>.

educational, medical, business, and entertainment content in ASL enables Deaf individuals to access important information in a language they clearly understand.

Why is written communication, such as captions, not sufficient?

The primary language for many Deaf people is ASL, which is characterized by a unique linguistic structure—including its own grammar and syntax—that is distinct from English.⁴ Acquiring English literacy is a lifelong challenge for many Deaf people because most begin their education without a solid language base in English or ASL.⁵ The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects the rights of Deaf people to have equal access, including communication that is “effective” and content that is “readily accessible” and “usable.”⁶ Many spoken languages have access to translations in their language, but the availability of ASL translation is sorely lacking.

This document focuses specifically on “translation.” Is translation distinct from interpreting?

Translation and interpreting are two different processes. Interpreters are valuable resources when an in-person, real-time rendering of a message is necessary. However, because of the real-time nature of their work, interpreters have limited time to consider alternate renderings.⁷ Additionally, interpreters are not often trained in translation techniques.

⁴ Mitchell and Young. “How Many People Use Sign Language?”

⁵ Robert Q Pollard Jr, “What If Your Client Is Deaf?” *Atrium Experts Monthly Newsletter* 9, no. 4 (October 2, 2014).

⁶ “Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Regulations.” ADA.Gov, 24 June 2024, <https://www.ada.gov/law-and-regs/regulations/title-ii-2010-regulations/>

⁷ Marin P. Allen et al., “Language, Interpretation, and Translation: A Clarification and Reference Checklist in Service of Health Literacy and Cultural Respect.” *NAM Perspectives* (February 2020) <https://doi.org/10.31478/202002c>. “Under any conditions, simultaneous interpretation presents linguistic and cognitive challenges. The results sometimes suffer from inaccuracies . . . These difficulties occur not only in spoken language interpreting but during sight translation (on-the-spot translation from documents or directions provided during the visit) that are also interpreted.”

On the other hand, translation allows for analysis and collaborations to determine the most accurate and effective renderings.⁸ Due to the differences of translation and interpreting, ASTM International, a globally recognized developer of technical standards for a wide range of services, has published distinct standards for spoken-language interpreting⁹ and translation.¹⁰

Therefore, when information must be accessible to a diverse Deaf audience and will be used over time, collaborating with Deaf professionals within a formal translation process is essential. The time invested in research, review, and revision ensures accuracy, addresses complex terminology, and results in a more trusted resource.

Why is a set of standards for sign-language translation necessary?

Launching a translation project without clear standards is often costly, time-consuming, and unreliable. Applying established standards eliminates guesswork, optimizes resource allocation, and guarantees a high-quality translation that can be trusted by Deaf audiences.

How did the standards in this document come about?

These standards distill decades of collective expertise from Deaf and hearing translators who have worked on thousands of sign-language projects. This practical experience was refined through collaborative research and review with the SL Studio Research and Writing Team. The result is a set of time-tested and community-vetted practices designed to help any team deliver translations that are accurate, culturally appropriate, and consistently accessible to Deaf audiences.

⁸ Marin P. Allen et al., “Language, Interpretation, and Translation. “The essential characteristic of translation is that it tends not to be ‘live.’ It involves longer time spans between the source production and the rendering into the target language. The time difference provides the opportunity for consideration of alternative translations . . . and revision of the final target production.”

⁹ F43 Committee. *Standard Practice for Language Interpreting*, ASTM F2089-15, <https://doi.org/10.1520/F2089-15>

¹⁰ F43 Committee. *Standard Practice for Language Translation*, ASTM F2575-23E02, <https://doi.org/10.1520/F2575-23E02>.

These standards are rooted in globally recognized standards, specifically referencing Daniel Gouadec's *Translation as a Profession* and the ASTM Standard *Practice for Language Translation*.

Section 1: Project Coordination

Project coordination is the partnership between the individual, customer, or organization (referred to as “[requester](#)”) and the [project coordinator](#) ensuring that the project’s major decisions are finalized before translation begins. Experience shows that selecting a project coordinator helps facilitate communication among all stakeholders.

To begin, the requester must define the scope of the translation project: (1) its purpose, (2) target audience, (3) budget, and (4) timeline.¹¹ The project coordinator communicates with the requester to clarify project objectives and needs of the target audience.¹² This information will guide subsequent decisions related to selecting personnel, translation style, workflow, video layout, cost, and production time frame. The project coordinator creates a [Project Information Summary](#) to clearly communicate all decisions to all team members (translation, production, and post-production teams).

The information provided below outlines the essential factors and decisions determined by the project coordinator to ensure project success.

Project Planning and Scope

- Assess the overall vision of the project, its purpose and intent.
- Identify the target audience (e.g., employees, patients, students, parents).
- Determine a price estimate for the project based on a specific number of translation, production, and post-production team members.
- Set deadlines for the project.

¹¹ ASTM F2575-23E02, 3 (section 5).

¹² Daniel Gouadec, *Translation as a Profession* (John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007), 60–62.

Source Material Assessment

- Analyze the content structure, genre, and format of the source material (e.g., discharge papers, prescription information, forms, tutorial video, podcast).
- Examine the source material to determine if there is content that can be condensed or omitted, thus reducing the amount of work involved and the cost of translation. If so, ensure that an updated source text is approved by the requester before translation begins.
- Identify features such as images and charts and determine how these will be presented in the final product (see figure 1).



Figure 1. Images greatly increase the quality of the translation, especially with highly technical information.

- Ensure high-quality images are available in the correct file format. Obtain all necessary permissions to use images before translation begins. Collaborate with the requester as needed.
- Provide a script for audio or video content so it is accessible to Deaf translators. Include timestamps so corresponding audio can be found quickly, enabling translators to determine how much time can be allotted for a particular section of translation.

- Verify timing restrictions for audio or video translation. Ensure the signed translation will not exceed the length of the corresponding segments of the source material.
- Ascertain if any terms should be presented in English to the target audience. Sometimes Deaf viewers need to see a specific English word, not just a sign with equivalent meaning. If so, document that on-screen text (OST) will appear in the final translation (see figures 2 and 3).
 - The OST should appear at the same time the signer is referencing the key term and stay on screen long enough for the viewer to read it.
 - Text displayed on screen *should not* block the signer's signing space (i.e., face, hands, torso), nor should the signer cover the text or captions.



Figure 2. OST appears next to the signer in a document translation.

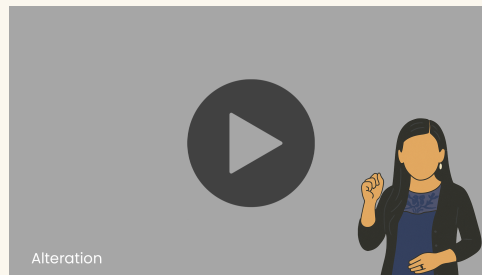


Figure 3. OST appears in a video translation.

Team and Resource Management

- Identify the translators that will be used to fill the various translation roles. (See [Appendix A: Selecting Team Members.](#))
- Ascertain what resources the requester will supply to assist the translators in understanding the source material.¹³

¹³ ASTM F2575-23E02, 8 (sec. 9.3.1).

- Prepare a contact list so that the project coordinator, subject matter expert(s), translators, production team, and post-production team can collaborate as needed.

Translation and Quality Control

- Determine how much authority translators will have to propose changes to the final product (e.g., OST, images, number of signers) and how such suggestions will be handled and reviewed.
- Verify how each team member will collaborate, receive source material, and deliver translation files.

Production and Post-Production

- Distribute a production schedule that outlines when each section will be filmed and completed.
- Implement any style guide or branding provided by the requester, such as logos and clothing (this may include an established dress code for some organizations).

Handling Future Revisions

- Document how to handle future revisions to the source materials.
 - The requester must provide the project coordinator with the updated materials and a breakdown of what sections need to be translated again.
 - Ideally, the same translation team would be used to make the needed adjustments to the translation.
 - An effort would be made to preserve the original look and feel when filming the updated video segments.

Section 2: Translation

At the core of these standards is the iterative review process essential for delivering high-quality translations. This collaborative approach—whether executed by a single translator with built-in self-review cycles or by a dedicated team—is designed to mitigate individual bias and limited perspectives, thereby preserving the intent, purpose, and tone of the original message. For larger or more complex projects, a three-member team approach—(1) lead translator, (2) English reviewer, and (3) ASL reviewer—is recommended to distribute specialized roles and streamline quality assurance.

Team Kickoff Meeting

The project coordinator meets with the translation team for the project. They discuss the following:

- Review the [Project Information Summary](#). The project coordinator will note any questions from the team that need to be clarified by the requester.
- Strategize how to maintain consistent terminology. For example, a simple [video glossary](#) can be created to keep recurring names or unique terminology consistent.
- Discuss how the final video product will be presented:
 - For text-based content (e.g., documents, books) or audio-only projects (e.g., podcasts, audio recordings), signers should be centered on a blank, neutral-colored background (see figure 4).

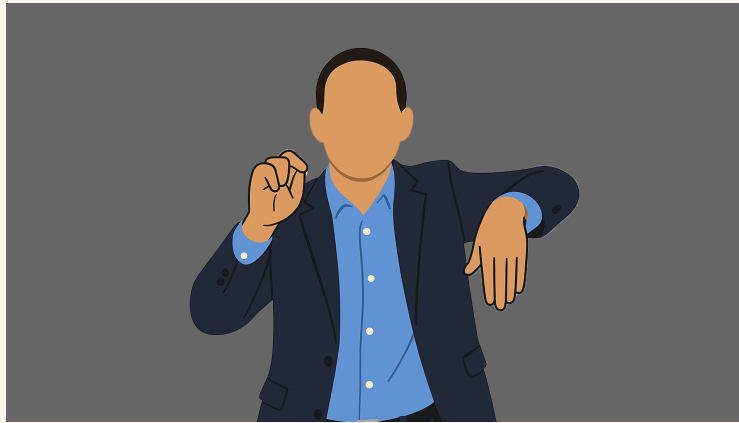


Figure 4. Example of a signer centered on a blank, neutral-colored background.

- For videos, signers should be positioned off-center in front of the video, using the video as the background. Adjust the size and placement of the signers so as not to block content (see figure 5). Alternatively, it may be necessary to slightly reduce the size of the source video and move it into the opposite corner of the signer. This will create less overlap and less chance of blocking important visual information (see figure 6).

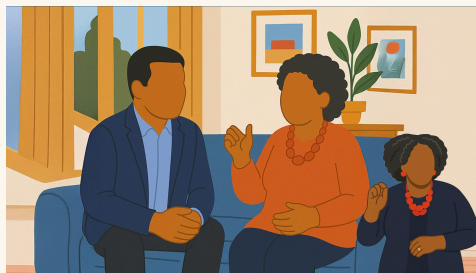


Figure 5. The signer is in front of a full-size video.

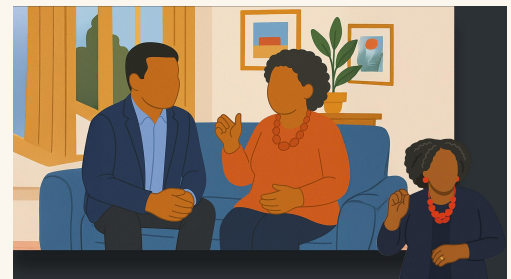


Figure 6. The video size is reduced so the signer does not block important visual information.

- In videos with multiple characters conversing in a scene, it may be necessary to use a separate signer for each character to help clearly identify who is talking (see figure 7). This same principle can be applied to text (e.g., questions and answers, or content with two opposing views).

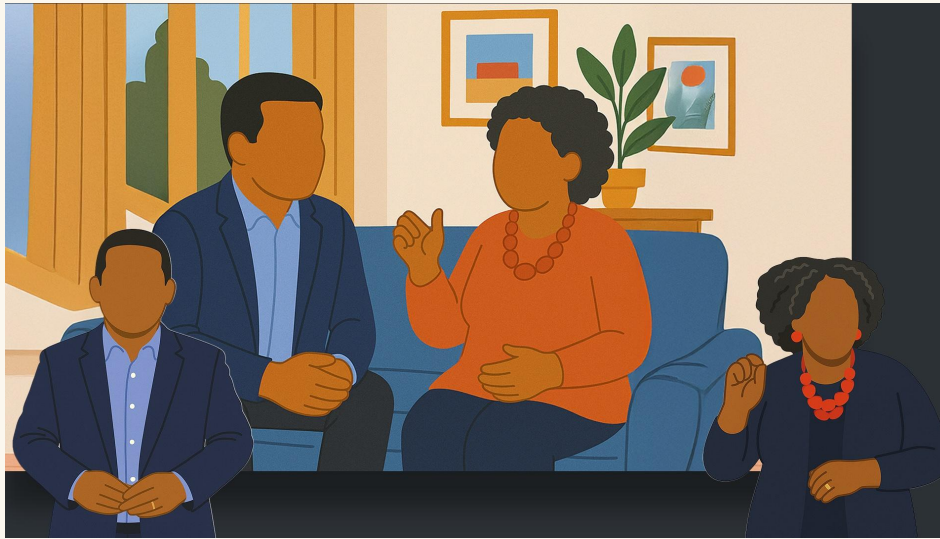


Figure 7. Two signers are on screen at the same time.

- Discuss options for the on-camera signer role(s). Translators may help fill these roles. It is preferable when possible to use Deaf individuals as the on-camera signers.

Analyze the Source Material

Translator(s) analyze the source material before they begin translating.

- Analyze the target audience, tone, theme, and purpose.
- Identify how chapters or sections relate to each other. This will help retain the original document's consistency and coherence.
- Identify any technical terms that might not be readily known or familiar to Deaf audiences. Use printed or online ASL dictionaries (e.g., ASLcore.org or SignASL.org) to find established signs for these terms.¹⁴ If no established signs exist, apply addition or expansion translation techniques—using multiple signs to fully express a concept that was merely implied or succinctly expressed in the source language.

¹⁴ Daniel Gouadec, *Translation as a Profession*, 71-72.

- Identify terms to add to the video glossary if it was decided to use one.
- Consider geographical differences in signs and identify the sign that is most appropriate for the intended audience.

Pre-Translation Discussion

If multiple translators are involved in a project, the team should meet to harmonize their understanding of the source material and identify questions or challenges before beginning translation. This discussion should address the following:

- Review findings from the source material analysis and confirm all are in agreement.
- Investigate possible solutions to problematic terms or cultural adaptations. Consider what is unfamiliar to the target audience.
- Discuss what register will be used based on the tone of the source material and target audience.
- Assess the need for on-screen text (OST), images, or other visual aids. Contact the project coordinator with any new requests.
 - If needed, create storyboards for each segment of the translation that shows how these visual aids will appear in the final video (see figure 8).
 - Understand how videos and pictures will appear on the final video and include accurate eye gaze, pointing, position, etc. in the initial translation. This will directly impact the on-camera signer's work during production (see figure 9).



Figure 8. A storyboard can clearly indicate where visual aids will appear on screen.

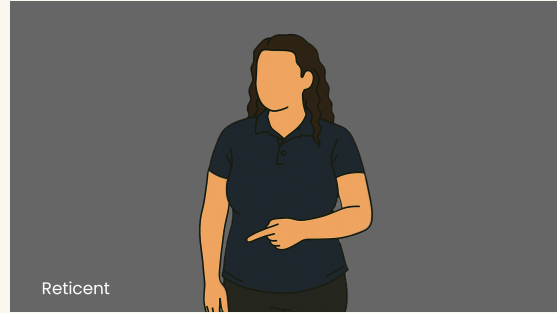


Figure 9. Visual information that appears on screen directly affects translation (i.e., eye gaze, pointing, position).

- Identify content that is unclear. If the translation team is unsure of the meaning or intent, they should contact a [subject matter expert](#) to avoid any inconsistencies, errors, or delays while translating.
- Discuss specific considerations based on the media type of the source material (see [Appendix C: Media Considerations](#)).

Translate

The steps below outline the basic process a team would perform synchronously. A solo translator adapts these principles to their individual workflow. They follow the same quality assurance principles but manage the review cycle independently. While it is ideal to have a second set of eyes review the translation for accuracy, clarity, and naturalness, this can be accomplished asynchronously when a dedicated team is not available. The solo translator completes the translation steps as outlined, then shares the work with a qualified reviewer (i.e., another ASL professional or subject matter expert) who provides feedback. The translator then refines the translation based on that input before recording the final version.

- **Divide the source material into smaller sections.**
 - Text sources are divided by paragraph.
 - Video sources are divided where a new point is made.

- Discretion is needed to ensure a section of information is not too large, as this would make it difficult for the team to process it effectively.
- **Translate as a team.**¹⁵
 - The **lead translator** signs a complete translation.
 - The **English reviewer** uses the source material to identify inaccuracies of meaning, intent, or tone.¹⁶
 - If the English reviewer does not have a translation solution for a piece of feedback, the lead translator provides ideas.
 - An effective strategy to determine the accuracy of sign choice is to ask the ASL reviewer to explain a particular concept from the initial translation through the eyes of the Deaf audience.
 - Once the English reviewer is satisfied, the **ASL reviewer** focuses on clarity, naturalness, intended impact, and any cultural sensitivities that need to be addressed.
 - The team works at solutions. These steps are repeated on each section until the entire team is satisfied. This quality assurance loop produces a high-quality translation.¹⁷
- **Record the initial translation.**
 - When the team agrees on a section's translation, they record an initial translation.
 - It is important that the initial translation is recorded with sufficient quality to ensure that the on-camera signer(s) will be able to easily copy it when the final translation is recorded in the studio (see figures 10 & 11).
 - Check for accuracy, clarity, and naturalness. If necessary, re-record it.

¹⁵ See also [Appendix B: Translating Efficiently and Effectively](#).

¹⁶ ASTM F2575-23E02, 9 (sec. 9.7).

¹⁷ Gouadec, 76-79.



Figure 10. A translator records the initial translation.



Figure 11. An on-screen signer copies the initial translation to record the final translation.

- **Upload initial translation video clips.**
 - Make all initial translation video clips available for the production team per the Project Information Summary instructions.
- **Communicate media needs.**
 - If there is a need for OST or images that are not in the Project Information Summary, communicate this with the project coordinator and video editor.

Quality Assurance Check

It is recommended that a quality assurance (QA) check be completed on the translation. This check may be at a predetermined time interval or when a certain amount of content has been translated. The completion of QA checks is communicated to the requester.¹⁸

¹⁸ Gouadec, 79-82.

Section 3: Production

Production constitutes the phase in which the translation is realized through formal recording. This phase includes preparation, the actual recording of on-screen signer(s), and making all materials available for post-production.

Pre-Recording Preparation

Before the recording of the final translation can begin, the translation team collaborates to ensure necessary tasks are completed.

- Set-up the studio. For details on the technical specifications for setting up a recording studio, please see [Appendix E: Recording Room Setup](#).
- Verify the number of signers that will be used.
- Verify the deadline to complete the recording with the project coordinator.
- Distribute a filming schedule that shows daily goals to meet the deadline. Include rest days for on-camera signer(s) as necessary.
- Provide the initial translation to the on-camera signer(s) so they can prepare. Clearly indicate which roles and sections they will sign.
 - The on-camera signer(s) should ask for clarification as needed.
 - The on-camera signer(s) may make suggestions, but they do not try to re-translate the initial translation. Their goal is to enhance the translation with delivery (e.g., facial expressions, pausing, emphasis).
- Finalize wardrobe, hairstyle, etc. for each signer. (See [On-Screen Signer\(s\) Attire and Grooming](#) in Appendix F.)

- Verify where signer(s) will appear on the final video.
 - If a signer will look or point at specific video elements, it is beneficial to have a preview TV with live green screen so they can see where to point.
 - If there is no preview TV, record a test clip and put it into the editing software to see where the signer looks or points and if it is accurate.
- Create a shot list to organize the filming process by specifying which signers will be filmed in what order based on the project's requirements. Include details about the number of lines each signer will deliver, the sequence in which they will be filmed, and any specific shots or angles needed. A shot list ensures that all necessary footage is captured, minimizes disruptions such as wardrobe changes, and reduces the risk of missed lines. It also helps to track and save the footage systematically, making it easier to review and edit later.
- Meet with on-camera signer(s) to discuss overall tone, purpose, audience, etc., as well as the availability of the on-camera signer(s).

Final Recording Process

Review the [Checklist](#) in Appendix F, then proceed to record each section of the translation.

- The [recording coach](#) briefly reviews the tone and purpose of each section with the on-screen signer.
- The on-screen signer watches and practices signing the translation. The signer must know where videos and pictures will be shown on the final video, as this will affect their eye gaze, pointing, position, etc.
- The coach advises how to improve clarity and/or naturalness.
 - Some minor adjustments can be made to the translation, but these should not affect the accuracy or intent of the source material.

- Coaches must use discretion and not demand perfection. Repeating the recording of the same section in pursuit of a “perfect” take will result in signer fatigue and loss of naturalness.
- Consider the best place for breaks between clips. Although the translation team may have already decided where to have breaks, they should be mindful of the on-camera signer(s) and recognize if they would benefit from more breaks to produce a higher quality product. If breaks are added, verify that the overall message of the translation remains clear and cohesive. The signer(s), coaches, and filming technician will work together to decide on where to modify the breaks.
- A filming technician, if available, provides support to ensure each section is recorded properly. If a dedicated technician is not available, another team member or the translator may handle equipment setup and operation.
 -
- When the signer completes a take, the coaches review it. If necessary, for accuracy, clarity, or naturalness, the signer may record it again.
- Coaches keep track of all completed takes whether they are approved or not.
 - Use clear, specific file names to indicate which clips are incomplete, will be kept as a backup, or are approved for the final video.
 - Clear file names are important for the video editor to easily identify the approved clips to use for editing the final video.
- If the filming begins to fall behind schedule, notify the project coordinator i.

For **solo translators** recording their own work, the same considerations apply. Good self-direction in this phase ensures the same clarity and naturalness as a coached approach. They must be extra aware of:

- The tone and purpose of each section.
- Where videos and pictures will appear on screen and how this affects eye gaze, pointing, and position.

Technical Troubleshooting

The filming technician is responsible for troubleshooting most technical problems in the studio. The video editor can verify that the final clips are of good quality. If a technician is not available, the video editor may be able to help with some studio equipment problems.

Section 4: Post-Production

As the concluding phase of the workflow, post-production encompasses the editing and integration of all translation components into a cohesive final deliverable.

Edit The Final Video

1. The project coordinator will provide the [video editor](#) with the necessary items to create the final video(s). This includes:
 - a. The [Project Information Summary](#)
 - b. Final approved clips from the recording sessions
 - c. Any document or files that contain translation decisions that affect the format, signer placement, etc.
2. The video editor will set up any necessary video production assets, such as:
 - Backgrounds
 - Images
 - Custom effects
 - OST
 - Logos
3. The video editor edits the final video and exports to the preferred file format (file size, resolution, file type, etc.). If any questions arise, the video editor contacts the project coordinator.
- 4.

Edit Video Quality Assurance Check

The [edit QA checker](#) watches the final video product to do a quality assurance check of the technical aspects of the product. The QA is not a review of the translation but it does confirm that all video elements are placed correctly in the timeline and that the video elements do not conflict with the signing. The following points are checked:

- Chroma key
- Color and lighting
- Signer positions
- Transitions
- OST and graphics spelled correctly and appear/disappear at the appropriate times
- Correct background media
- Requester's preferred video format is used

Delivery and Distribution

The project coordinator delivers the final product to the requester.

Archive

The project coordinator determines what project materials should be kept and for how long. Compress materials (e.g., Project Information Summary, final recorded clips, editing project, final delivered videos) and put them in long-term storage.

Appendix A: Selecting Team Members

List of Potential Personnel Roles

Process	Potential Roles*
Project Coordination	Project coordinator
Translation	Translator, lead translator, English reviewer, ASL reviewer, subject matter expert (SME)
Production	On-screen signer(s), recording coach(es), filming technician, interpreter
Post-Production	Video editor, editor QA checker

*See [Glossary > Roles](#) for definitions of each role.

While the chart above outlines standard translation roles, not every project requires the full roster. Ultimately, the project coordinator assesses the specific scope of the work and assembles the appropriate personnel.

Project Coordinator

An effective project coordinator is an experienced ASL translator as well as a good communicator, organizer, and project manager. They should have experience interacting with Deaf people. They also should understand each step of the translation workflow.

The project coordinator is responsible to facilitate materials and communicate with all team members to keep the project on track. This includes the following responsibilities.

- Maintain communication with the [requester](#).
- Organize the project.
- Select personnel to complete the project.
- Ensure the project is completed on time.
- Monitor the budget.
- Coordinate the flow of materials between different steps of the workflow.
- Obtain artwork and photo credits as necessary and provide these. (The requester and coordinator may choose someone else to handle this as needed.)

See [Section 1: Project Coordination](#) for a more detailed explanation of the coordinator's responsibilities.

Translator

It is beneficial to recruit a robust pool of translators and signers. In particular, it is advantageous to use native ASL translators—meaning translators who are Deaf or the children of Deaf adults (CODAs). All translators must be thoroughly versed in Deaf culture and community, as well as intimately familiar with this translation workflow.

During the audition process, the project coordinator evaluates each candidate's distinct competencies. For instance, a translator may excel at analyzing source material but lack the on-camera presence or confidence required for filming; such an individual is ideally suited for a foundational translation role rather than a performance role. Conversely, another candidate might contribute less to the initial script analysis but dramatically elevate the translation through exceptional prosody and grammatical facial expressions. This individual would be best utilized as the

on-camera signer. Finally, coordinators should note that performance or translation gaps can often be bridged through targeted, focused training.

To streamline the recruitment process, project coordinators can implement a pre-interview video audition tailored to the candidate's linguistic profile. For candidates fluent in English, coordinators can provide a sample text or video reflecting the project's actual content; the candidate then translates and records this material as their submission. For Deaf candidates whose primary language is ASL, the coordinator can provide a signed video sample. The candidate can then either refine the translation—making it more natural and easier to understand—or reproduce the signing to demonstrate their delivery style. In either scenario, this recording serves as the baseline for evaluation.

The following criteria are essential for evaluating the candidate's video submission and their performance during the recruitment interview:

- **ASL Proficiency.** The candidate should demonstrate a strong understanding of ASL grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. Look for fluency, clarity, and accuracy in their signing.
- **English Proficiency.** The candidate should demonstrate the ability to comprehend complex English texts and accurately translate them into ASL, ensuring that the original meaning, tone, and intent are preserved. Strong English skills are essential for interpreting nuances and delivering a high-quality ASL translation.
- **Expressiveness.** The candidate should be able to effectively communicate the intent and tone of the content they are signing. Evaluate the individual's ability to convey emotions and nuances through their signing.¹⁹

¹⁹ A candidate may be a skilled translator but not have all the expressiveness necessary to serve as a on-camera signer(s).

- **Cultural Competency.** The candidate must have a strong understanding and respect for Deaf culture and community, as well as other social or ethnic communities. Look for cultural sensitivity, awareness of Deaf community norms, and respect for cultural nuances in their signing.
- **Adaptability.** The candidate should be able to adjust their signing to fit the tone and style of the source material. Assess the individual's ability to adapt their signing style and pace to different types of content, whether it is designed for children, seniors, women, men, etc.
- **Collaborative Skills.** The candidate should be open to feedback and able to incorporate changes or adjustments into their signing as needed. Consider the individual's ability to work collaboratively with other team members, including fellow translators, signing coaches, and other team members.
- **Professionalism.** The candidate should demonstrate a commitment to delivering high-quality work consistently. Look for punctuality, preparedness, and a positive attitude during the audition and interview process.
- **Previous Experience.** Consider any previous experience the individual may have in ASL translation or productions. For example, if an on-camera signer(s) has experience in acting or performing arts, this could be beneficial.
- **Audition Performance.** Look for confidence, stage presence, and the ability to engage the audience through their signing.

Team vs. Solo Translator Selection

When a team approach is appropriate: Higher-stakes, complex, or longer projects—and any project using multiple on-camera signers—benefit from a team. Team translators may specialize in particular roles and rely on collaborative feedback to refine the work.

When a solo translator approach is appropriate: Smaller, shorter, or resource-limited projects may be handled by a single translator. A solo translator should have strong English and ASL proficiency, cultural competency, and the ability to self-review, and should seek asynchronous feedback from another qualified professional whenever possible.

On-Camera Signer

Sometimes the on-camera signer(s) is a translator. But when this is not the case,²⁰ the same process used for selecting translators can be used to audition potential on-camera signers. Additionally, the translator(s) will fill the role of the recording coach(es) to assist the on-camera signer in expressing the translation accurately and naturally. For solo translators who record their own work, the separate audition and coaching process does not apply; the translator manages both the translation and recording phases independently.

Filming Technician

A filming technician, if available, should have an understanding of video production and be able to assist with the initial setup of the recording equipment. They operate the camera and lighting equipment or train team members to handle this work throughout the filming.

Interpreter

²⁰ The on-camera signer may not have been involved in translation for various reasons, such as multiple signers being required, or perhaps during the audition process it was determined that the translators' strength was not on-screen signing. Other times a well-known Deaf presenter or an exceptionally skilled signer is chosen to elevate the final product.

If some of the personnel on the production set are not fluent in sign language, an interpreter may be needed. The interpreter would only be used for on-set communication and would not be used as an on-camera signer(s).

Video Editor

The video editor should have the necessary equipment, software, and skills to edit the final recordings into the final product. They must be able to follow the project decisions made earlier in the workflow. Editing is most effective when the editor is comfortable with both post-production techniques and the sign language used in translation. Familiarity with ASL, for example, helps the editor make precise timing and framing choices, while solid technical skills ensure a polished visual result. If one person does not bring both strengths, the project coordinator may choose to pair a skilled video editor with a fluent signer so that linguistic accuracy and production quality are addressed together.

Edit QA Checker

An edit QA checker role requires sign language proficiency and meticulous attention to detail, with a strong preference for candidates who possess technical video editing experience. These skills will enhance their ability to check the video editor's work against project instructions, established guidelines, and standards set earlier in the workflow.

Appendix B: Efficient, Effective Translation

Translators are encouraged to keep the project goals and clarity of the message at the center of their decisions, setting personal preferences aside when necessary. When considering a proposed translation, accuracy should always be prioritized, followed by clarity, then natural flow.

Naturalness

When considering how to make a translation more natural, take a moment to consider whether a small refinement might achieve the desired clarity instead of replacing the entire idea. Often, a subtle tweak is all that is necessary to enhance understandability. Prioritize small, targeted adjustments to what is already working rather than replacing entire concepts.

Timing Considerations

Timing constraints will at times impact translation. Experienced translators apply techniques, such as using an economy of signs or omitting non-essential details, so the ASL translation conveys the critical points within the desired timeframe.

As an example, a school administering a written test may desire that Deaf students have the same amount of time to watch the ASL version as their hearing peers have to read the written text. Therefore, the timing must be managed during translation.

Working as a Team

Especially when working synchronously as a team, translators must be cognizant of contributing to a collaborative environment. When differing ideas emerge, translators must look for ways to weave them together; combining perspectives often leads to an even stronger solution that satisfies the whole team.

Mutual trust lays the groundwork for productive collaboration. For example, when the lead translator receives feedback, a brief pause to explore why the suggestion arose can be illuminating. What gap or ambiguity might it highlight? Could a blended solution satisfy everyone and even strengthen the original idea? When the English reviewer or the ASL reviewer shows how the translation under discussion could be misinterpreted, there is a genuine need for refinement. By recognizing how a phrase will be understood—or potentially misunderstood—the team can preserve the intended message and tone.



Appendix C: Media Considerations

The type of source material will influence your translation decisions. Below are some examples to consider.

Written Material

When working with written source text, a translator must be vigilant to understand implied meanings in text. Often, text formatting features are used to convey meanings to the reader, such as structuring content with titles and headings to enhance comprehension and emphasize important information. Some text formatting features that have meaning to the reader include:

- Font size and styles
- Bullet points and numbering
- Indentation
- Hyperlinks
- Text effects
- Whitespace

Understanding the intent of these features will help translators determine an equivalent rendering in the ASL translation. Equivalent features in the translation could include:

- OST or symbols such as chapter and paragraph markers
- ASL indexing (signing "1st," "2nd," "3rd," etc.)
- Use of different video transitions. For example, a simpler dissolve might be used

between paragraphs (keeping the background visible) while a fade-to-black might be used for a subheading or chapter ending.

- A separate signer for footnotes or tangential information
- Reference to other parts of the document or video (in OST or signing)

Additionally, the ASL translation video can have the original document displayed beside the signer with the current paragraph or sentence highlighted or enlarged (see figure 12).

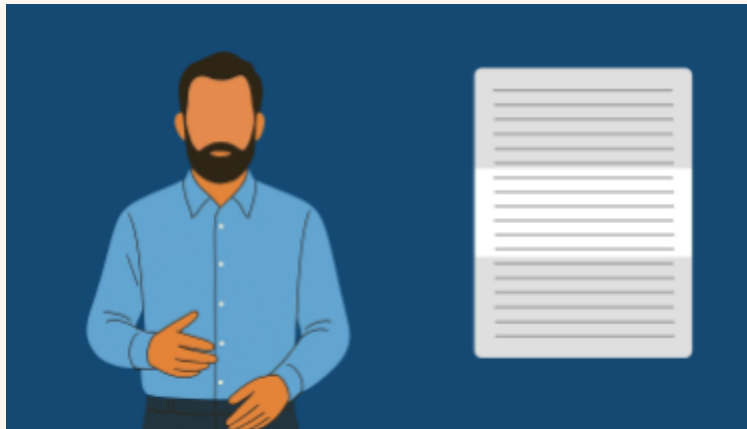


Figure 12. The document appears next to the signer..

Audio or Video Material

Hearing audiences can simultaneously process visual and auditory information, such as watching a newscaster while listening to their voice. In contrast, Deaf viewers must switch their gaze between the signer and the video, meaning they risk missing information. Translation teams should consider methods to ensure Deaf viewers can follow both the action and dialogue, such as:

- Condensing the translation to essential information.
- Timing the translation to show before or after the action.
- Integrating the dialogue with the action scene, prompting viewers to watch the

scene when the signer does.

The translation may need to fit timing constraints. For example, when the signer is superimposed with a video as their background, the translation team should remember to leave time before and after each line or section for the signer to fade in and out. During the recording phase, the final translation video should line up with the source video.

Translators must determine how to handle any audio information that is not represented visually. For example, a loud crash heard from an unknown source would need to be narrated; however, non-essential dialogue happening in the background may be distracting and thus omitted. In a documentary or interview, the video may cut away from the original speaker and another individual may begin speaking while still off camera. The translation should incorporate the information that a new person is speaking.



Appendix D: File Management and Confidentiality

File Management

File management is crucial to ensure the final product reaches completion by the determined deadline. From receipt of the source material to delivering the translation, there should be a system in place to save and transfer needed files. Having a standardized folder structure and naming convention will allow seamless collaboration from each part of the team, from the organizers to the translators to the signers to the editors.

No matter the applications, programs, or drives used, the team will need access to the source material, translation materials, recording files, and target material. This shared system allows for a collaborative workflow and, when someone must fill in for someone else, the work can keep moving.

Confidentiality Standards

Confidentiality standards for handling materials from vendors, especially in the context of translation, editing, and content production, are crucial to maintaining trust and integrity in business relationships. Here are some key confidentiality standards you might consider implementing:

- **Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs):** Require vendors to sign NDAs before accessing sensitive materials to legally bind them to confidentiality and prevent third-party disclosure.

- **Limited Access:** Restrict sensitive material access to individuals who need it for their duties, implementing secure controls like passwords and encryption.
- **Data Encryption:** Protect sensitive data during transmission and storage with encryption to ensure it remains unreadable if intercepted.
- **Secure Storage:** Store sensitive materials in secure physical and digital locations, utilizing secure servers and encrypted cloud solutions.
- **Employee Training:** Train employees and vendors on proper handling of sensitive materials and the consequences of breaching confidentiality.
- **Regular Audits and Monitoring:** Conduct regular audits, monitor access logs, and review security protocols to promptly address vulnerabilities or breaches.
- **Secure Communication Channels:** Share sensitive information with vendors exclusively through secure, encrypted email and messaging platforms.
- **Document Destruction:** Implement secure destruction policies, using shredding for physical documents and secure deletion methods for digital files.
- **Vendor Oversight:** Maintain ongoing oversight and conduct periodic reviews of vendor practices to ensure alignment with confidentiality standards.

Appendix E: Studio Setup

A professional recording studio is best for capturing high-quality video. The technical recommendations below outline the essential components required for the setup:

- Lighting
- Camera
- Tripod
- Video capturing device
- Backdrop
- Computer with recording software

Studio Measurements

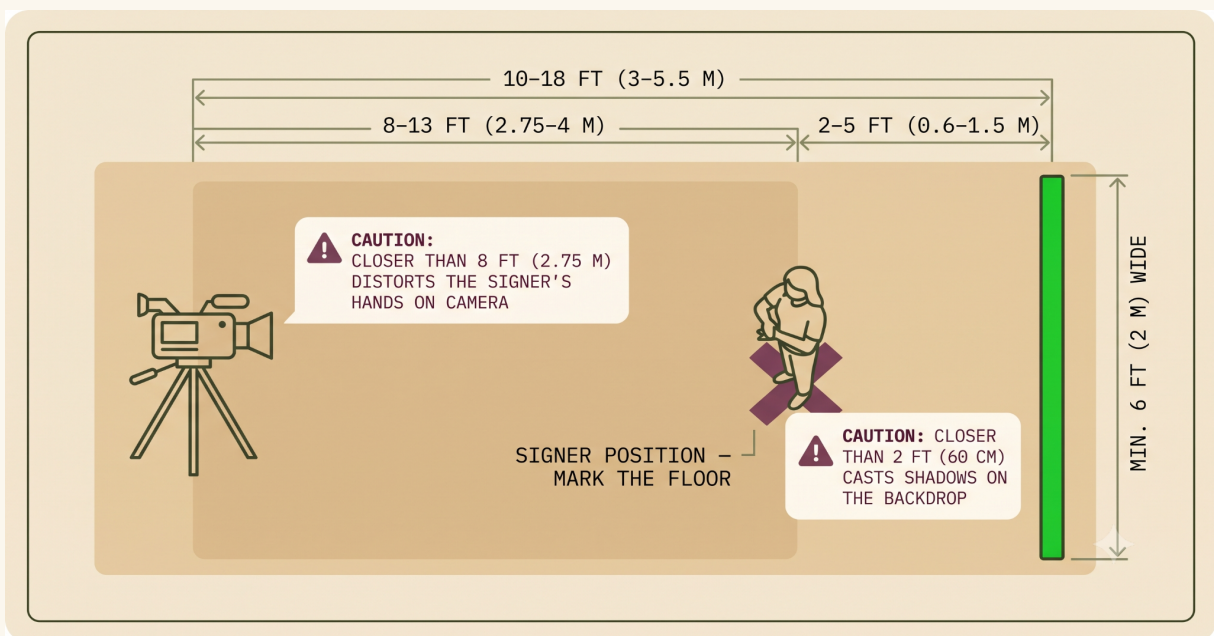


Figure 13. Diagram of studio measurements.

- Distance between green screen and camera: 10-18 feet (3-5.5 meters)
- Width of green screen: At least 6 feet (2 meters)
- Distance between camera and signer: 8-13 feet (2.75-4 meters)
CAUTION: If the distance is less than 8 feet (2.75 meters), the signer's hands will appear distorted on the final recording.
- Distance between backdrop and signer: 2-5 feet (60cm-1½ meters)
CAUTION: If the distance is less than 2 feet, shadows could appear on the backdrop and cause problems in video editing.
- Mark the floor where the signer should stand (see figure 13).

Camera Specifications

- Prosumer or professional camera capable of at least 1080p recording at 30 fps or 60 fps.
- Clean HDMI output is needed if capturing to a computer. This means no camera icons, setting graphics, or data indicators are displayed on the output video.
- Manual adjustment of shutter speed, iris, and white balance.
- Optical zoom. Digital zoom will reduce the video quality and should not be used.
- When using smartphones, models with high-quality optics , optical zoom, support for modern codecs (such as ProRes 422 LT), and a professional camera app that allows for adjustments to white balance, shutter speed, and iris should be used.
- Set on a tripod and adjust height to eye level.
- Keep the camera plugged in rather than using batteries.
- Use a video capturing device connected to a computer with capturing software via HDMI cable, or use an SD card to record clips

Camera Settings

- Camera settings should be readjusted:
 - At the start of the recording session.

- When a different signer is being recorded.
 - If the camera loses power.
- Set to manual mode.
- Set the shutter speed:
 - 1/60 minimum for 30 fps recording
 - 1/120 minimum for 60 fps recording
- Set the iris to 0db. Increasing the iris could add "grain" to the video.
- Set the white balance. Do not use auto white balance because it will change the color tone in the middle of the recording.
- Some cameras allow you to manually set the color temperature. Set it to the same color temperature as the recording lights. Cameras without this feature should be able to lock the white balance to a white object.
 - Hold or place a white cardboard or paper where the signer will stand.
 - Zoom in so the white object fills the picture.
 - Select the option on the camera to set the white balance to the white object. A message should appear that the operation is complete.
- Framing the signer: The top of the frame should be a few inches above the signer's head and the bottom of the frame should be at the waist.
- Set the focus so the face and eyes of the signer are clear.
 - Select auto focus, wait a few seconds, then switch to manual focus.
 - Do not leave auto focus on. The recorded clips will become blurry as the signer's hands move and the camera "hunts" for something to focus on.

Lights

- The goal is to have soft, even light on the subject and reduce distracting shadows.
- Use 2 or 3 LED lights with diffusion on light stands.
 - Option 1: Softbox lights. The fixture should have sockets for 5 or 7 bulbs to allow for the most flexibility in lighting options (see figure 14).
 - Option 2: LED panels with diffusion. While not required, some models

allow for adjustments to color temperature and lumens (see figure 15).



Figure 14. Softbox lights.

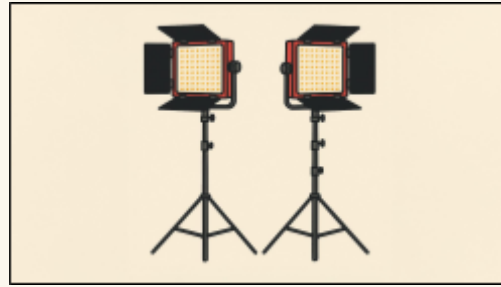


Figure 15. LED panels.

- Color temperature: Daylight. 5000K or 5600K.
- Lumens: Approximately 30,000 lumens for all lights combined. An example: 3 softbox lights with a 7-bulb head should use bulbs with about 1,500 lumens each.
- Make sure each light is adjusted the same: lumens, color temperature, brightness, etc.
- Position the lights about 3 feet (1 meter) from the signer at 45-degree angles.
- Point the lights slightly up as needed to reflect off the ceiling for additional diffusion.
- Keep the lights plugged in rather than using batteries.
- Prepare temporary blackout shades for any windows. CAUTION: Do not use natural sunlight. This will cause variations in brightness and cause problems later during video editing.

Backdrop

- Use a green screen at least 6 x 6 feet (2m x 2m). Larger green screens are recommended.
- Use a simple kit with stands to hold the green screen up (see figure 16).

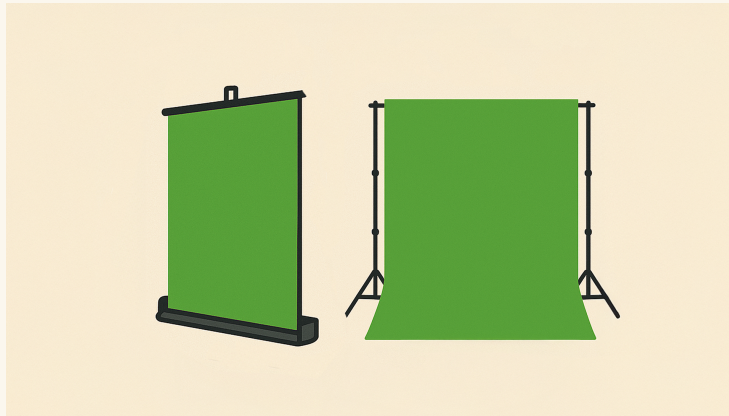


Figure 16. There are different kinds of stands that can be used to hold up a green screen.

- Avoid wrinkles. If a cloth backdrop is folded and stored between recording sessions, use a clothing steamer at the start of each recording session.
- Remove shadows. Additional lights can be used to reduce shadows.

Calibrating the Equipment

- The video editor should check test clips on the editing software:
 - At the initial installation of the studio.
 - Each time the equipment is adjusted.
- If the picture is too dark:
 - Try increasing the brightness of the lights.
 - Softbox lights with multiple bulbs: Add bulbs.
 - LED panels: Increase the brightness.
 - Try adding a light.
 - Try repositioning the lights so they point more directly toward the signer.
- If the lights are too bright and uncomfortable for the signer:
 - Reduce the lights until comfortable.
- Make very small increases to the camera's shutter speed and iris.
 WARNING: Too many adjustments to the shutter speed and/or iris will cause "grain" in the video.

Computer and Video Capture Device

- Minimum 16 GB RAM
- Video capture device:
 - Option 1: HDMI to USB capture device. This is a good option for notebook computers.
 - Option 2: PCI video capture card installed in the PC. This is a good option for desktop computers.
- Make sure you have an HDMI cable to connect the camera to the capture device.
- Software:
 - Open Broadcasting Software (OBS)
 - QuickTime (Mac only)
- Capture at minimum 1080 progressive and 30 fps. Prevent dropped frames.

Appendix F: Recording Session

Checklist

To prevent technical problems later, use this checklist before you begin the final recording:

- ☐ Check camera settings and frame the signer.
 - ☐ White balance
 - ☐ Focus
 - ☐ Top of the frame is a few inches above the signer's head
 - ☐ Bottom of the frame is at the waist
- ☐ Checking the lighting.
 - ☐ Turn on recording lights.
 - ☐ Check for any burned out bulbs.
 - ☐ Turn off all other room lights.
 - ☐ Black out the windows.
- ☐ Record a test clip.
 - ☐ Record a short clip, using several large signs in high, medium, and low positions.
 - ☐ Send the test clip to the editor and get approval to proceed.

On-Screen Signer(s) Attire and Grooming

The clothing, accessories, and hair styling of each on-screen signer must be carefully selected. This is vital to prevent problems during video editing and ensure Deaf viewers are not distracted and can see the final product clearly.²¹ The translation

²¹ The Deaf audience may be distracted by clothing that reveals too much skin, certain jewelry, or hairstyles that move during signing. This distraction may extend to other more permanent features such as visible tattoos, facial piercings, nail art, etc.

and production teams can work together to decide on colors and wardrobe. The project coordinator may have input from the requester. It is advisable for on-camera signer(s) to have several different clothing options available to choose from.

- Clothing should be solid colors that contrast with skin tone. Do not use busy patterns, white, green, or bright colors.
- Clothing should be clean and neat, without sweat or other stains.
- Clothing should not bunch or pull while signing.
- Hair should be neat and not cover facial expressions. (Use neutral color clips or ties if necessary.)
- Avoid visually distracting jewelry, long fingernails, and white, green, or bright nail colors.
- Choose a wardrobe that is a similar style and color to the on-screen character or speaker. This helps viewers to easily identify who is speaking and reduces confusion and distraction. (See figure 12.)
- Choose a wardrobe that reflects the nature of the source material. For example, if the source material is a courtroom video with attorneys in suits, the signer may also wear a suit. (See figure 13.)



Figure 12. The on-screen signers' wardrobe helps the viewer quickly identify who is speaking.



Figure 13. The on-screen signer's clothing reflects the nature of the content.

Glossary

Terms

Final Translation

The version of the translation produced in the studio. This version will be used to edit into the final product that is provided to the requester.

Initial Translation

The original translation video made by the translation team. This differs from the final translation video that is recorded later in a studio.

Interpret

To convey messages between two languages. Interpretation is generally used for one-time communication access between parties. Since it is usually performed simultaneously, it is considered of lower quality than translation.

Project Information Summary

A summary of the project created by the project coordinator. After consulting with the requester, the project coordinator compiles a summary and provides it to the translation team.

Register

The level of formality and the relationship between the speaker and the audience. The variation of language used for a particular purpose or in a specific social setting.

Source Material

The original material that will be translated into ASL. Format may vary (e.g., textbooks, exams, videos, podcasts, etc.).

Take

A single recorded attempt of a video clip. Multiple takes may be recorded for the same clip to achieve the desired clarity, naturalness, and accuracy.

Target Material or Final Video

The final ASL video. Format may vary (e.g., signer on a neutral background, signer in front of the source video, etc.).

Translate

To express the sense of words, text, or other content in another language. Translation produces a high-quality target text with the goal of cultural and linguistic equivalency.

Translation Team

The team is typically made up of three translators: (1) the lead translator, (2) the English reviewer, and (3) the ASL reviewer.

Video Clip

A recorded segment of the translation, typically corresponding to a section or scene of the source material.

Video Glossary

A collection of reference videos for a project that give the ASL equivalent for recurring terms, names, or places.

Roles

ASL Reviewer

Translation team member fluent in ASL and skilled in understanding Deaf culture and various Deaf audiences. The ASL reviewer is preferably Deaf. This team member will assist the signer to sign clearly, accurately, and naturally.

Edit QA Checker

Responsible for quality assurance of the technical aspects of the final video product (e.g., correct transitions, OST spelled correctly, correct background media, requester's preferred video format, etc.). Preferably proficient in ASL and an experienced video editor.

English Reviewer

An experienced member of the translation team whose primary responsibility is to verify the accuracy of the signed translation against the English source text and recommend necessary adjustments to the translator.

Filming Technician

Assists with setup of the recording equipment. Operates camera and lighting equipment and should be knowledgeable about the studio equipment. This role may be filled by a dedicated technician or, when unavailable, by another member of the translation or production team.

Interpreter

Responsible for communication needs between any non-signing and Deaf team members. This person is not used for recordings. It is preferred that all team members be fluent in ASL whenever possible.

Lead Translator

On the translation team, this translator develops the initial translation ideas and then implements the feedback of the English and ASL reviewers.

On-Camera Signer

Preferably a Deaf person who is a role model or leader in the Deaf community and who can connect with the target audience. They work in the studio as a part of the production team.

Project Coordinator

The person designated to facilitate communication and workflow for a specific project, including organization of the project, selecting personnel, tracking schedule and budget, and approving the final product delivered to requester. For smaller projects, the project coordinator may also function as a translator.

Recording Coach

One or more members of the translation team that will advise the on-camera signer(s) in the recording studio. They will give feedback based on the project's purpose and tone, the target audience, and overall clarity of the message. This is especially important when the on-screen signer was not part of the translation team.

Requester

The person or entity that produces or comes into possession of material which needs to be translated. They generate the specific translation requirements, often including an outline of the budget.

Subject Matter Expert

A professional in the field related to the source content that is available to the translator(s) as a resource for answering content questions. They do not need to know ASL.

Translator

An individual that is fluent in either English or ASL and skilled in the translation process with an understanding of Deaf culture and the Deaf community.

Video Editor

The individual that compiles all elements (signed clips, video, pictures, etc.) and edits it into the final product. If possible, they should be proficient in sign language.

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