



Court Interpreter Exam Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Judicial Council of California

Administrative Office of the Courts

Certification and registration process

What is the process to become a certified California court interpreter?

Only interpreters who pass the written and oral portions of the court interpreter certification examination or the required exam for American Sign Language and fulfill the corresponding Judicial Council requirements are referred to as certified court interpreters.

In early 2011, Prometric will administer court interpreter certification exams in the following languages: **Arabic, Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.**

To be eligible for certification in these languages, candidates must pass a written exam and a bilingual oral interpreting exam.

New oral exam forms in certified languages **not listed above** are currently being developed. The Administrative Office of the Courts anticipates offering court interpreter certification exams in other certified languages in the near future.

What is the process to become a registered California court interpreter?

Interpreters of spoken languages *other than* Arabic, Eastern Armenian, Western Armenian, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese are required to pass an English-only written exam and an English oral proficiency examination and to fulfill Judicial Council requirements in order to become a registered interpreter.

Will my results on the English oral proficiency exam indicate the languages for which I plan to interpret in the courts?

For candidates in registered languages, Prometric will test and report on only your English language skills. You indicate the registered languages you will interpret in the court when you enroll with the Judicial Council.

Can I become a registered interpreter in a certified language?

No. You cannot take the English-only written and oral proficiency exams used for registered languages and obtain registered status in the 12 certified languages: Arabic, Eastern Armenian, Western Armenian, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, or Vietnamese. The court interpreter certification process consists of a written exam and a bilingual oral interpreting exam. You must take and pass these exams to become a certified interpreter in these languages.

In early 2011, court interpreter certification exams will be administered by Prometric in the following languages: Arabic, Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

New oral exam forms in other certified languages are currently being developed. The Administrative Office of the Courts anticipates offering court interpreter certification exams in other certified languages in the near future.

Candidates who wish to interpret in a certified language must take the certification exam as available.

I am already a registered interpreter. Do I have to take the written and oral interpreting exams to become a certified interpreter?

If you are already a registered interpreter, you will not have to retake a written exam. However, to become a certified interpreter, you must take and pass the bilingual oral interpreting exam. You cannot take the **English** oral proficiency exams used for registered languages and obtain registered status in the following languages: Arabic, Eastern Armenian, Western Armenian, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, or Vietnamese.

Is reciprocity offered for any other credentials or certifications?

The Judicial Council offers reciprocity for the following:

- Federally certified court interpreters.
- ASL interpreters who hold the Specialist Certificate: Legal issued by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID).

**Test
administration
and registration**

How do I schedule my exam?

Registering and scheduling your exam is a multi-step process. You may accomplish this process by:

- Calling the Regional Registration Center at 866-241-3118, Monday through Friday, 5 a.m.–4 p.m. (PT); or
- Faxing the registration form provided in the Candidate Information Bulletin to: 800-347-8242; or
- Mailing the registration form provided in the Candidate Information Bulletin to: Prometric, ATTN: California Court Interpreters Program, 1260 Energy Lane, St. Paul, MN 55108, and then calling to schedule or scheduling online at www.prometric.com/california.

What information should I be prepared to provide when I schedule my appointment?

When you schedule your appointment, be prepared to provide the following information:

- A valid, government-issued ID that shows your name in the English alphabet, your signature, and your current photograph. *The name used to schedule your appointment must exactly match the name shown on your identification.*
- Your unique Prometric identification number.
- Contact phone numbers, so we can reach you if necessary.
- Mailing address (the address to which you would like your final scores mailed).
- E-mail address for sending your confirmation notice.

- Exam title and language.
- Method of payment: credit card (Visa, MasterCard, or American Express), cashier's check, company check, or money order. *Personal checks and cash are not accepted.*

Can I send my registration by overnight delivery?

Yes, overnight deliveries can be received between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Central time, Monday through Friday. You may use the carrier of your choice, however, you are responsible for tracking delivery confirmation to ensure your registration is processed.

How far in advance should I schedule an exam?

Since the written exam is taken on computer, a written exam can be scheduled up to one year in advance, but should be scheduled at least three days prior to the date on which you wish to take the exam.

Examination dates for the oral exam are posted online at www.prometric.com/california. As soon as the dates are posted, you may register for an exam. Please take note of the registration deadline for each examination date. Exam sites have a set number of examination seats. If your choice location is at capacity, it may be necessary to schedule your test at another location. The oral examination schedule is typically posted on an annual basis.

Will I receive a confirmation of my appointment details?

Yes, after receiving and processing your written exam registration, Prometric will email you a confirmation notice containing your exam date, time and location. You will not receive a mailed copy of your appointment details. If you do not receive your email confirmation, you are responsible for contacting Prometric to confirm your appointment details.

After receiving and processing your oral exam registration, Prometric will send you a notice confirming your exam date, time and location. If you scheduled your exam by phone, mail or fax, Prometric will mail you an admission letter. If you scheduled your exam online, you will receive an email notice confirming your exam date, time and location. If you do not receive your email confirmation with 24 hours, you are responsible for contacting Prometric to confirm your appointment details.

Where are the exams administered?

Written exams may be taken at any Prometric testing center in California. A list of testing centers in California is located online at www.prometric.com/California/courtintwritten. Then, under the "Do More" button, click "Continue" and follow the prompts.

Oral exams are offered in the Bay Area, Covington /East Los Angeles, West Los Angeles, Sacramento, and San Diego.

Exam locations are subject to change. Exact address information will be listed on the admission letter you will receive once your registration has been processed.

How do I reschedule or cancel my exam?

Rescheduling timelines and fees for the **written exam** are as follows:

- *No fee* if you reschedule three full business days or more before the originally scheduled exam appointment.
- *\$100 fee* if you reschedule one to three business days before your appointment date.
- *Another full exam fee* if you cancel on or after your appointment date.

Rescheduling timelines and fees for the **oral exam** are as follows:

- *No fee* if you reschedule 10 business days or more before the exam date.
- *Another full exam fee* if you reschedule less than 10 business days before the exam.

Should you decide to cancel your oral examination and choose not to reschedule, timelines and fees will apply as follows:

- *\$100 fee* if you cancel 10 business days before the exam date.
- *Forfeit all exam fees* if you cancel less than 10 business days before the exam.

When should I arrive at the testing location?

You should arrive at the testing location at least 30 minutes before the test is scheduled to begin.

What do I need to bring to the exam?

Bring only your identification and, if you are taking an oral exam, two pencils.

All other materials will be provided to you. Please note you are not permitted to bring any personal items into the testing room. We encourage you to leave all study materials, cell phones, briefcases, backpacks, heavy outerwear, etc. at home. Pocket items, such as keys and wallet, are permitted in the testing areas but must remain in your pocket.

What type of identification must I bring to the test center?

You must have one valid government-issued ID bearing your current photo and signature.

Acceptable forms of identification include:

- Driver's license or DMV-issued identification card.
- Passport.
- Military identification.
- Employee identification card.
- Green card.
- Foreign passport.

What is the role of the proctor and test center administrator?

Proctors are trained to administer the oral exams in accordance with testing standards at all test sites. Proctors do not rate the exams and often do not speak the target foreign language being assessed.

Test center administrators will verify your identification, show you to your computer station or oral exam testing station, and explain any necessary testing policies. Test center administrators *are not allowed* to answer any questions pertaining to the test content.

What happens to my exam after I take it?

At the end of your written exam, the computer will automatically score your exam and you will receive a printed score report with your exam results.

Oral exam recordings are sent to Prometric's central office in St. Paul, Minnesota. The recordings are then sent by random assignment to at least two independent raters located inside and outside of California.

The written and oral exams**What is the purpose of the written exam?**

The English-only written exam for certified and registered languages has been developed by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts. The written exam measures knowledge of general English proficiency, court related terms, and ethics and professional conduct.

What is the purpose of the oral exam?

Court interpreting is a very demanding job. Spoken language court interpreters must be completely fluent in both English and the target foreign language. The level of expertise required for this profession is far greater than that required for everyday bilingual conversation. The interpreter must be able to handle the widest range of language terms that may be presented in the courts—from specialized legal and technical terminology to street slang. In addition to the full command of these languages, the interpreter must demonstrate highly developed interpreting skills in simultaneous and consecutive modes and in sight translation.

The oral interpreting exam for certified languages measures oral interpreting performance in the following modes:

- Consecutive interpretation.
- Sight translation.
- Simultaneous interpretation.

The oral exam for registered languages measures a candidate's ability to speak and comprehend English.

What is the content of the written exam?

The English-only written exam covers a wide range of English language skills and court-related content. The examination contains 135 multiple-choice questions in the following two sections:

- General English Proficiency.
- Court-Related Terms and Usage and Ethics and Professional Conduct.

Candidates are given 2 hours and 15 minutes to complete the written exam.

What is the content of the oral exam?

The oral interpreting exam for certified languages measures interpreting performance in the following modes:

- Sight Translation – English to Foreign Language: oral interpretation of a document written in English to the target foreign language. You will be given 6 minutes to review the document and complete the interpretation.
- Sight Translation – Foreign Language to English: oral interpretation of a document written in the target foreign language to English. You will be given 6 minutes to review the document and complete the interpretation.

- Consecutive Interpretation: interpretation of a simulated trial with an English-speaking attorney and a witness speaking in the target foreign language. You will be given 22 minutes to complete this portion
- Simultaneous interpretation: interpretation of English proceedings delivered at approximately 120 words per minute. You will be given 7 minutes to complete this portion.

The English oral proficiency exam for registered languages measures a candidate's ability to speak and comprehend English. The English oral proficiency exam consists of the following exercises (in no specific order):

- One exercise requires the applicant to read passages on two different topics and record an oral statement in English explaining the content of each passage based on specific questions asked by the proctor.
- Another exercise requires the candidate to respond in English to a series of questions of general subject matter that do not require special knowledge or training.
- A third exercise requires the candidate to study two pictures and respond to questions about the pictures.

Who is eligible to take the court interpreter exam in certified or registered languages?

Although there are no minimum requirements for applying to take the state certification test, applicants are encouraged to complete formal, college-level course work and training in both languages and modes of interpreting before applying for the examination.

How long am I eligible to take the oral interpreting exam for certified languages or the English oral proficiency exam for registered languages?

Once you pass the written exam, you are permitted four attempts to take and pass the bilingual oral interpreting exam for certified languages or the English proficiency exam for registered languages. There is no time limit to take or to complete the four attempts, and you may take the oral exam in a particular language once during any exam cycle. If you do not pass the oral exam within four attempts, you must retake and pass the written exam before taking the oral exam again.

Effective January 1, 2011, all candidates who passed the written exam after January 1, 2005 will have a total of four additional opportunities to pass the oral exam.

How can I prepare for the written and oral exams?

Colleges and universities throughout the State of California offer introductory courses and certificate programs in interpretation or translation. Most of these are for English/Spanish. A list of these institutions is available online at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/courtinterpreters/intrainprog.htm.

This list does not constitute an endorsement of these programs but is provided for your information only. We encourage you to contact the schools and request information about their programs.

For all languages, information on self-study techniques is available online at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/courtinterpreters/documents/skillbuildingexercises.pdf. Candidates are also encouraged to attend courtroom proceedings to gain exposure to the legal process and attorney vocabulary.

For additional information, please review the *Written Exam Overview* and the *Oral Exam Overview* located online at www.prometric.com/california.

Practice exam kits can be found at www.prometric.com/california.

Scoring and rating procedures

How are the written exams scored?

At the end of your written exam, the computer will automatically score your exam and you will receive a printed score report with your exam results.

How are the oral exams scored?

All oral exam recordings are sent to Prometric's central office in St. Paul. Oral exams are then sent to a minimum of two independent raters. Exams are rated using standardized scoring guidelines, as outlined in the *Test Construction Manual* located online at www.prometric.com/california and the *Overview of the Oral Performance Examination* located online at www.prometric.com/california.

No names, regional locations, or other identifying information are on the exam recordings.

Raters score the exams using a consensus process and send the recordings back to Prometric. Prometric reviews the scores to ensure rater agreement. If two ratings are not in agreement, the exam recording is sent to a third rater. Prometric monitors its raters' reliability, and a sample of all exam recordings are rated by a third independent rater as a quality assurance measure.

How are raters selected?

All raters have been selected by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts. All raters are certified interpreters or academic experts in their languages. They are located both inside and outside of California.

How are raters trained and monitored?

All raters have been trained to properly evaluate the oral interpreting exams. Initial training includes but is not limited to the following: a review of all examination materials, a review of examination procedures, how to avoid rating biases and errors, and considerations in language variances.

In addition to the initial training, raters are given refresher training. Prometric also monitors rater reliability and provides quarterly reports to the AOC on rater performance.

Score reports for the written and oral exams

What is the passing score on the written exam?

To pass the English-only written examination, you must answer 80% or more of the questions correctly.

How is the oral interpreting exam for certified languages rated?

The oral interpreting exams for certified languages are assessed based on the number of objective scoring units correctly interpreted. Scoring units are particular words and phrases that are selected to represent various features of

language that interpreters encounter in their work, and that they must render accurately and completely, without altering the meaning or style of speech.

For more information on scoring units, please review the *Oral Examination Overview* and the *Test Construction Manual* located online at www.prometric.com/california.

What is a passing score on the oral interpreting exam for certified languages?

Each portion of the exam has a fixed number of scoring units. To pass, you must interpret 70% or more of the scoring units correctly on each part of the test (English-Foreign Language Sight Translation, Foreign Language – English Sight Translation, Consecutive Interpretation, and Simultaneous Interpretation).

How do I interpret my score report for the oral interpreting exam?

Your Results Report Form will include the number of objective scoring units rendered correctly. The Results Report Form will not include a holistic assessment or a diagnostic evaluation of your performance. If your scores are not as high as you expected, you should review *Common Oral Interpreting Exam Performance Deficiencies* located online at www.prometric.com/california.

What if my score on the oral interpreting exam varies from one exam administration to another?

The ratings you receive for the oral interpreting exam reflect your performance *on the day of that examination*. It is possible that your performance may vary from administration to administration. Your ratings are based only on your performance on that day, at that administration. Ratings from different administrations cannot be combined to form a passing rating.

Do I have to take all of the components of the oral interpreting exam every time I take the exam?

Yes. You must take all components of the oral interpreting exam (sight translation, consecutive interpretation, and simultaneous interpretation) each time you take the exam. The oral interpreting exam is rated based on your performance on the day of the test. Even if you passed a component of the oral interpreting exam during a previous administration, you will need to take all components of the exam each time you take it.

The ratings you receive for the oral interpreting exam reflect your performance *on the day of that examination*. You must pass all components of the specific performance to pass the exam.

How is the English oral proficiency exam for registered languages rated?

To pass the English oral proficiency examination for registered languages, you must demonstrate the ability to understand and speak English properly. Raters evaluate a candidate’s ability to use correct vocabulary, grammar and syntax, and pronunciation.

What is a passing score on the English oral proficiency exam for registered languages?

The English oral proficiency exam is based on a language proficiency rating scale of 1-5. To pass the English oral proficiency examination, candidates must receive a score of 4 or higher on the three sections of the exam: photograph explanation, extemporaneous questions, and passage explanation. For more information on the language proficiency rating scale, see the *English Proficiency Oral Performance Evaluation Guide* located online at www.prometric.com/california.

How do I interpret my score report for the English oral proficiency examination for registered languages?

Your score report will include numerical ratings for the three components of the English oral proficiency examination. If you receive a rating below 2 on any of the three components, you may need to participate in intensive study, practice, or training.

Do I have to take all of the components of the English oral proficiency examination every time I take the exam?

Yes. You must take all components of the English oral proficiency exam each time you take the exam. The English oral proficiency exam is rated based on your performance on the day of the test. Even if you passed a component of the oral proficiency exam during a previous administration, you will need to take all components of the exam each time you take it.

The ratings you receive for the English oral proficiency exam reflect your performance *on the day of that examination*. You must pass all components of the specific performance to pass the exam.

Can I get copy of my written or oral exam to identify the areas I need to improve?

No. Test content is confidential and is securely maintained by Prometric. You cannot see your written exam or listen to your oral exam recording.

Appeals

How do I submit an appeal?

Our goal is to provide a quality exam and testing experience for every candidate. If you are dissatisfied with either and believe we can correct the problem, you may submit an appeal.

Grounds for an appeal include evidence of bias, fraud, discrimination, or manifest error in the administration of the examination. You may submit an appeal in writing within 90 days of receipt of your examination results. Your appeal letter must state the evidence and basis for your appeal and include all relevant facts.

Your appeal letter also must include:

- 1** Your name.
- 2** Your Prometric ID number.
- 3** Exam title.
- 4** Date tested.
- 5** Test site.
- 6** Details of your concern, including all relevant facts.
- 7** Your signature and return address.