

Tips for working with an interpreter

Before the session

1. Schedule adequate time for the session. A rule of thumb is to allow twice as long as you would normally allocate.
2. If appropriate, check with the person you are meeting whether s/he would prefer a male or female interpreter.
3. Brief the interpreter about the purpose of the session and clarify the process of communicating through him/her.
4. Check that the interpreter understands any essential technical or specialist terms and whether there are cultural issues that you should be aware of.
5. Check that the language of the interpreter and the person you are meeting are compatible and that there are no political, religious or other reasons that would make it difficult for them to work together.
6. Clarify who has overall responsibility for the session.
7. Think through the implications of leaving your interpreter alone with the person you are meeting at any time (including before and after the session) and decide if the impact this may have is something you are happy with.

At the start of the session

1. Introduce everyone present
2. Make sure everyone can be seen easily (arranging seats in a triangle usually works best)
3. Establish ground rules e.g. confidentiality; everything said in the room will be interpreted; everyone to seek clarification when they do not understand what has been said.

During the session

1. Address the person you are speaking to not the interpreter.
2. Pay attention to body language
3. Speak in small chunks and pause frequently to enable the interpreter to interpret accurately.
4. Avoid jargon and explain difficult concepts so the interpreter can explain them.
5. Break the session if necessary
6. Check if there is any written information that needs interpreting
7. Before ending check that everything has been understood.

After the session

Allow 15 minutes for debriefing with the interpreter at the end.

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