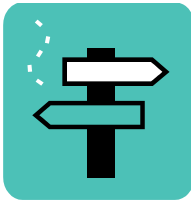# How to buy translation

This guide aims to provide helpful advice and tips, whether you are using a translation service for the first time, or are a seasoned professional. It includes many of the things any translation provider will need to know before starting a project, or even before they provide you with a quote.

Getting Started

I need to buy translation, where do I start?

It's a good idea to have the document or website you need to translate ready, as one of the first questions the translation provider will ask is how much text there is. If you can get a wordcount of the text, even better, but it helps no end if you have the necessary files ready to hand, so that the provider can give you the most accurate quote in terms of both cost and timescale.

Which translation supplier should I use?

The best translation providers are professional, responsive, experts in advising clients, and should give quotations and general advice free of charge. Don't ever pay for quotations, even if the company says they will knock this charge off the cost of the project should you choose to go ahead.

What should I look for in a translation provider?

Translation agencies should have copious examples of work they have done freely available either on their website, or elsewhere in the public domain. You may want to ask for references from their clients, or ask someone you trust to recommend someone they have used themselves.

What will translation cost?

The total price for your translation will vary according to the quantity of text, the subject matter i.e. a highly technical document such as legal text will cost more, and the language, as some languages simply cost more to buy than others due to the supply of translators.

How is translation priced?

Most providers should be able to tell you their rates per language and service. Translation is usually charged at pence per word. Proofreading by a second translator is normally quoted as an additional charge and some agencies will also charge hourly rates or percentages for project management time and other services such as desktop publishing.

tel: +44 (0) 1924 360 460

web: www.web-translations.com
address: 16-20 St John's Business Centre, St John's North, Wakefield, WF1 3QA

Registered in England No 04842002

THE CHAMBER AWARDS 2007
Regional Winner - Impact of Technology

What is proofreading?

Proofreading involves a second translator checking over the document and checking for errors, accuracy and general quality of a translation. The criteria the proofreader checks against can vary from one client to another, as it depends on what the text is required for. See "Once you've chosen a provider" below for more about client preferences and requirements.

How long does it take to get a document translated?

This all depends on the amount of text you have to translate but most agencies should have the capacity to turn around 2000 words in 24-48 hours. For large projects with urgent turnaround times, the agency should be able to scale up and place several translators on one project at the same time.

Can't I just use an online translation tool like Google translate or Babelfish?

The free automated translation tools can sometimes be very useful for getting an understanding of the text. But if you intend on publishing the text, this is the last thing you would want to use as the automated translations are very literal.

For example, there's nothing French about french fries, but a translation machine doesn't know that and you could end up with a very odd text!

Do I need to know exactly which languages or dialects I need?

No, all good translations agencies can advise you on this, such as the difference between Traditional Chinese or Simplified Chinese and which would be best for your target audience.

Define what quality means to you…

Set your goals - is accuracy to the original document, speed, editorial flair, or a native like translation your primary concern?

What can I do if the price is too expensive and my budget won't cover the cost of translation?

Reduce the content. It's better to compromise on the amount of content than on the translation supplier.

How can I be confident about the quality of the translations?

You should always look for agencies that have references and testimonials freely accessible. And if you get a series of quotations and one is much cheaper than the other; there will be a reason for why it's so cheap and that's normally reflected in the quality of the output you get back.

Once you've chosen a provider…

Provide good source texts…

Whether it's a word document or an html file, it is important that you provide the best possible source materials. Poorly punctuated copy, littered with spelling and grammar mistakes gives the impression that you don't care, and that is not the stance you want a translator to take.

Provide reference materials

Previously translated material is the best way for a translator to understand your style requirements and will save time by eliminating the need for post project amends. To maintain brand and company consistency a glossary is a must. That way, esoteric terms can only be translated in a way in which you have previously approved.

Mention any preferences

If you don't want a brand name translating, highlight it in the text and make that apparent when purchasing your translation; if you want monetary amounts leaving in the source language…you now know what to do. All these things speed up the process and make it as hassle free as possible for you.

With websites, in order to get the most localized and natural results, places, times, brand names and so on, should all be researched in your target country. For example: if you are having your website translated into French, and have worked with clients such as Boots, Argos, Carrefour and Renault, the latter two of those four are obviously going to resonate more with your target audience, so would be the most relevant case studies or examples to use on your French website.

Provide contacts…

If you have an in-country colleague, let your translation supplier know about it. That way, any issues that come up during the project can quickly be resolved and, again, will save time by removing the need for post project edits.

Align your preferences with colleagues…

If you are a large company with many different people buying translation, make sure your preferences are set and made common knowledge, or inform us otherwise. Otherwise your supplier may be working on a piece with the criteria of one employee in mind, when you have quite different preferences yourself.