

Best practices when working with interpreters

Before the session

1. **Plan ahead:** Book the interpreter for sufficient time based on expected duration of the session.
2. **Brief the interpreter:** Provide context about the client's background and what to expect during the session.
3. **Set up the room:** For on-site interpreting, arrange the room (preferably a triangular setup) where the interpreter can see and hear all participants. This positioning optimises verbal and non-verbal communication.
4. **Consider cultural differences:** Be aware that topics may be approached differently across cultures.
5. **Prepare key documents:** Have any relevant forms or visual aids ready to facilitate communication.
6. **Consider preferences:** Check if the client has a preference for the gender or country of origin of their interpreter.

During the session

1. **Introductions:** Introduce yourself to the client. Then have the interpreter introduce themselves in English and in the client's language, briefly explaining their role and its importance.
2. **Direct communication:** Speak directly to the client, not the interpreter.
3. **Use first person:** Address the client as 'you', rather than 'he' or 'she'.
4. **Clear language:** Use straightforward language, avoiding jargon, slang or colloquialisms.
5. **Simple structure:** Ask one question at a time and use basic concepts.
6. **Pacing:** Speak clearly at a reasonable pace, pausing regularly to allow for interpretation.
7. **Non-verbal cues:** Pay attention to the client's body language and facial expressions.
8. **Clarify:** If something is unclear, ask for clarification before moving on. Be aware that the interpreter may also request clarification to ensure accurate interpretation.

After the session

1. **Debrief:** Check in with the interpreter for feedback and suggestions to improve future sessions.
2. **Document:** Record any important cultural or communication insights for future reference.
3. **Follow up:** Ensure any necessary follow-up sessions are scheduled with appropriate interpretation services.
4. **Evaluate:** Assess the effectiveness of the interpreted session and make note of any areas for improvement.