**Thinking about becoming a translator?**

A career as a [professional translator](https://www.translationservices24.com/) is listed in the top ten professions right now. Globalisation, international business combined with the technological revolution has brought the global community into a centralised space and the need for translators is at a premium.

Having said that, language translation is a highly competitive market. Becoming a successful professional translator is not easy, nonetheless, once you prove yourself to be a capable linguist, a career as a professional translator can be financially and personally rewarding. There are several routes you can pursue; working for a language [translation agency](https://www.languagereach.com/) or working as a freelancer for many different clients, which then you need to acquire yourself.

Many translators target a specialist field they have an interest or pre-existing skills in or knowledge of. Typical niche markets include in-demand trades with international markets such as engineering, law, marketing, financial services, medical and pharmaceuticals sectors. International companies favour employees who are proficient in a second language and capable of communicating with foreign partners.

## ****What qualifications do you need to become a professional translator?****

The standard of education to become a professional translator is very high. At the very least you will need a bachelors degree or equivalent. Most translators also have a postgraduate qualification in translation and translation techniques.

Nevertheless, your degree does not have to specifically be in a language related course. Naturally, you will have to demonstrate you are proficient in the language you intend to translate, but it is advantageous for translators to have a degree in a specialist field; legal, medicine and marketing are in high demand.

To increase your chances of finding work, you must be able to write to an impeccable standard in your mother tongue. You must also demonstrate that you are fluent in the language you want to translate, but you must also be familiar with the country’s customs and culture. This is particularly important when translating marketing materials. For those reasons, some agencies, such as ours for example, work only with translators who translate into their native language.

Furthermore, it is pertinent to join professional institutions. Most professional language translation agencies will not engage translators if they are not a member of the [Institute of Translation and Interpreting (in the UK)](https://www.iti.org.uk/membership/about-membership) (ITI) or the equivalent organisation in other countries. The ITI also gives good advice about becoming a translator and you can find it [here](https://www.iti.org.uk/professional-development/career-development/how-to-become-a-translator).

## ****Build your CV****

Once your qualifications are in place, you should start building your CV. There are several ways to do this. In addition to your University qualifications, it will stand you in good stead to take a [language proficiency test](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_language_proficiency_tests) in your target language.

Moving abroad to live, study or work shows prospective employers that you have immersed yourself in the culture and customs of another country. Working for a local company in your country of choice is a strong addition to your CV as most local companies will not employ foreigners if they are not proficient in the language. Even if you volunteer for an internship or secure entry-level work, you can use this experience as a stepping-stone that will lead to better opportunities.

## ****Find experience translating****

In truth, experience counts more than qualifications. However, it is something of a catch-22 that professional translation agencies are somewhat reluctant to hire translators who do not have a proven history within the industry, yet you need the experience to build your profile.

Most translators gain experience by approaching local law firms, hospitals, police stations, government agencies and international businesses. Offer your services for an attractive fee but don’t sell yourself short. In the application, mention that you have specialist knowledge within a particular business area and are able to provide quick turnaround times, accuracy, competitive prices and persuasive writing.

A professional translator should always translate into their mother tongue. There will be the occasional exception, but generally, only apply for jobs where the client wants your native language as their target language.

You will also need to be equipped with the correct tools to do the job. A laptop or desktop computer is essential together with [professional translation software](https://blog.gengo.com/10-online-translation-tools-translators/). Translation memory software is desirable together with computer-aided translation (CAT) tools as they help speed up the process and make your work more efficient.

## ****Market yourself****

Most translators and interpreters work as freelancers rather than full-time employees. You will therefore need to know how to market your services until you get a regular flow of work from various language translation agencies.

Build a website and maintain a blog. You don’t have to rank in search engines, where the competition between largest agencies is great anyway (although it helps to get ad hoc work), but a website is a supporting evidence that you have a good grasp of languages. There are also advantages in joining an active online community of language professionals, such as [Proz](http://www.proz.com/), to enhance your language learning and find out more about the industry.

A give away sign that an aspiring translator is not a professional is not knowing what your rates should be. Establish how much you want to charge per hour and per word before you approach clients. If you do not know what a reasonable rate is, tap into online communities. Furthermore, offer competitive fees without going too low – unless you state the price is a “special offer’ or a better rate for an ongoing client.

## ****Continue learning****

Languages are very rich subjects. Just because you are fluent in a second language, it does not mean there is nothing else to learn. Read literature and high-end magazines which are written in your second language and follow the news in the countries you are translating for. In fact, continue learning your mother language as well, as languages are ever changing and evolving.

If you are working in a specialised field, you should be keeping up to date with the latest news, trends, laws and technologies. The more knowledge you have about the field you are working in, the easier it is to translate documents accurately and with authority.

Translation is not the easiest career to get into, but with the right qualifications and application you will find opportunities. And once you prove yourself as a skilled linguist with specialist knowledge, you can expect to find more work and carve out a good career for yourself with a reasonable income and work flexibility.

Once you have been a successful translator for a while you may even decide to branch out and become an interpreter or specialise in a more expert translation field, such as [transcreation services](https://www.translationservices24.com/transcreation-services/) or [localisation](https://www.translationservices24.com/localisation-services/). A career as a linguist will have its challenges, but it is an extremely rewarding and fulfilling career.