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TIPS ON HOW TO
TRANSLATE
LIKE A
PRO

Contrary to what many people think, simply knowing two or more languages does not automatically qualify you as a professional translator. To give you an idea of how demanding the profession is, suffice it to say that a certified translation agency may only work with translators who have a degree in translation, or a degree in another field plus two years of experience as full-time translators, or five years' full-time experience.

One of the golden rules of professional translation is that **translators must only translate into their mother tongue** or their mother tongues, in the case of bilingual translators. However, the crux of the matter here is what the word «bilingual» actually means. And it means to have two mother tongues; in other words, to have learned two languages simultaneously during the period of language acquisition in childhood. For example, in the case of a child whose father's mother tongue is one language and whose mother's is another. Only in these cases can it be said that a person is bilingual.

However, as we have seen, **it takes more than simply learning a certain language** (or two) to become a professional translator.

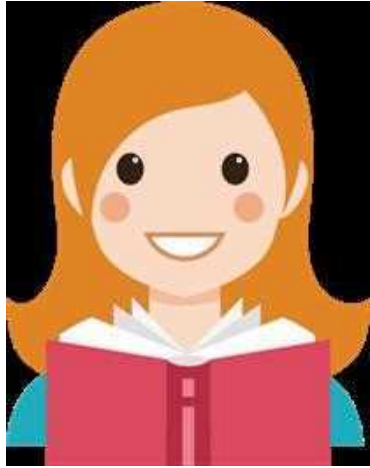


You must **have a university degree** or **equivalent experience** to enable you not only to carry out a series of essential mental operations involving **analysis** and **linguistic correspondence**, but also to undertake **complex research** using the Internet and a range of other information sources.

Nowadays, you must also be comfortable using a series of **technological tools** that make translation faster and more consistent and, by extension, less expensive. However, **great care is needed** in this respect, because an inexperienced or less meticulous translator may run the risk of delivering translations that contain errors due to insufficient human intervention.

Ultimately, the aim of a professional translation is to **produce a text that appears not to be a translation**. In other words, when read by a native of the target language, the translated text should read as though it had originally been written in that language. This is the goal that professional translators strive to achieve. And to do so, they must **study, train** and make constant use of tools that allow them to **check and search** for information.



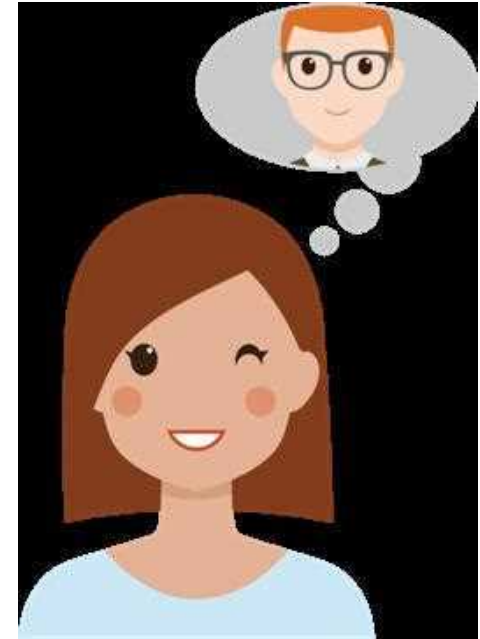


1. Before you start translating, read the whole text.

You will often find that difficulties encountered early on in a translation are solved further on in the source text itself. So read the whole thing before you start and, if possible, do some brief research into the subject of the text so that you will already have some general knowledge about it when you start the translation.

2. Find out what the author's intention was.

That way you can choose the appropriate register and terminology in the translation. For example, if the aim is to encourage people to buy a certain product, you will have to use more persuasive language, whereas practical vocabulary will be more appropriate if the text is intended merely to provide readers with facts and figures.





Find out, too, who the intended readership is.

This will also affect your choice of vocabulary and even the type of sentences you will use in the translation. Busy professionals with little time to spare may appreciate shorter and simpler wording, while readers who are not pressed for time may prefer sentence structures that are more complex and elaborate.

4. The secret of a good translation lies in your interpretation of the source text.

So never try to translate word for word. Read the entire sentence and try to grasp its meaning as a whole. Then try to put your understanding of the source text into words that you would normally use to express the same meaning in the target language.





5. Take care to be coherent with the terminology, i.e. vocabulary that is specific to the subject of the source text.

If you translate a term in a particular way, you should always translate it the same way whenever appropriate. To ensure you do so, you might consider creating a glossary on an Excel spreadsheet, where you can add in the different terms as you translate them. You will then be able to consult your glossary if you encounter the same word again but can't remember how you translated it first time round. When you have finished the translation, you can run a search to check that you have translated the same terms consistently throughout.

6. Don't rush into using the first result on a dictionary.

When you look up a word in a bilingual dictionary, don't fall into the trap of immediately using the first translation you see on the list. Take the time to read what the different suggestions mean so that you don't accidentally use a word which has a different meaning to the corresponding word in the source text.





7. Use the right online resources.

Apart from printed dictionaries, there are various online resources that you can use when translating. [Linguee](#) is a database of translations that also includes dictionaries. For English, you have the [Oxford English Dictionary](#) and [Merriam-Webster](#). For French, you could use [Lexilogos](#) and for Portuguese you have [Priberam](#), but your best option would be to invest in the *Dicionário Houaiss para a Língua Portuguesa*, which is available as a CD-ROM that you can consult on your PC. [Dictionaries of synonyms](#) can also be useful when you need to find alternatives in order to avoid repeating a word too often or using one that would sound unnatural.

8. Be particularly wary of «false friends».

«False friends» are words that look familiar but actually have very different meanings in one language to those that they resemble in another. For example, «*atual*», in Portuguese, does not mean «actual» in English but, rather, «present», «current» or «up-to-date», and «*eventualmente*» means «possibly» rather than «eventually».





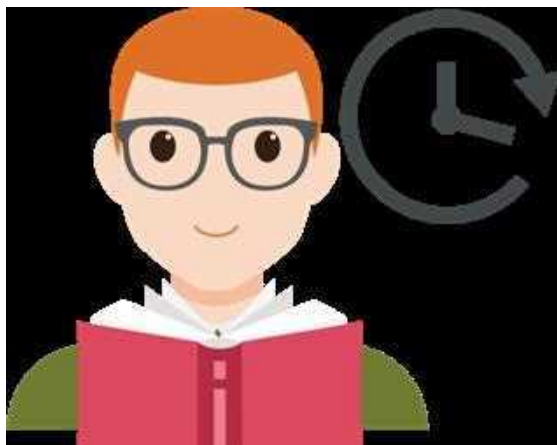
9. Your goal is to create a well-written and carefully presented text.

Bear in mind that there are long-standing rules for such things as writing numbers, bibliographical references, capital and small letters, acronyms and abbreviations, notes, lists, and the use of italics and boldface, among others. Consult the style guides on the subject, such as the [Chicago Manual of Style](#) (English) or the [Livro de Estilo do Público](#) (Portuguese).

10. Read your translation.

Always read through the translation one last time without consulting the source text, as though you were reading a piece that had been written from scratch in the target language. This will help you pinpoint parts of the translated text that may not sound quite natural in the target language and that could therefore do with some improvement.





11. Re-read your translation later.

If time permits, set the translation aside to re-read a few days or weeks later. Stepping back from it for a while can help you find better options or detect problems that you might not have noticed to begin with.

12. Make use of your computer's spell check program.

Always remember to make use of your computer's spell check program to help you detect unnoticed spelling and grammar mistakes or extra white spaces in the text.



So on your next translation don't forget to use these golden tips we shared with you on this free eBook. We are sure that they will be very helpful on all your future translations.

If by any chance you come across a very complicated or long text and you feel like it's too burdensome for you, or that you don't have enough time to spare for it, consider contacting an experienced translation company or a qualified translator; they will help you get the job done properly.



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