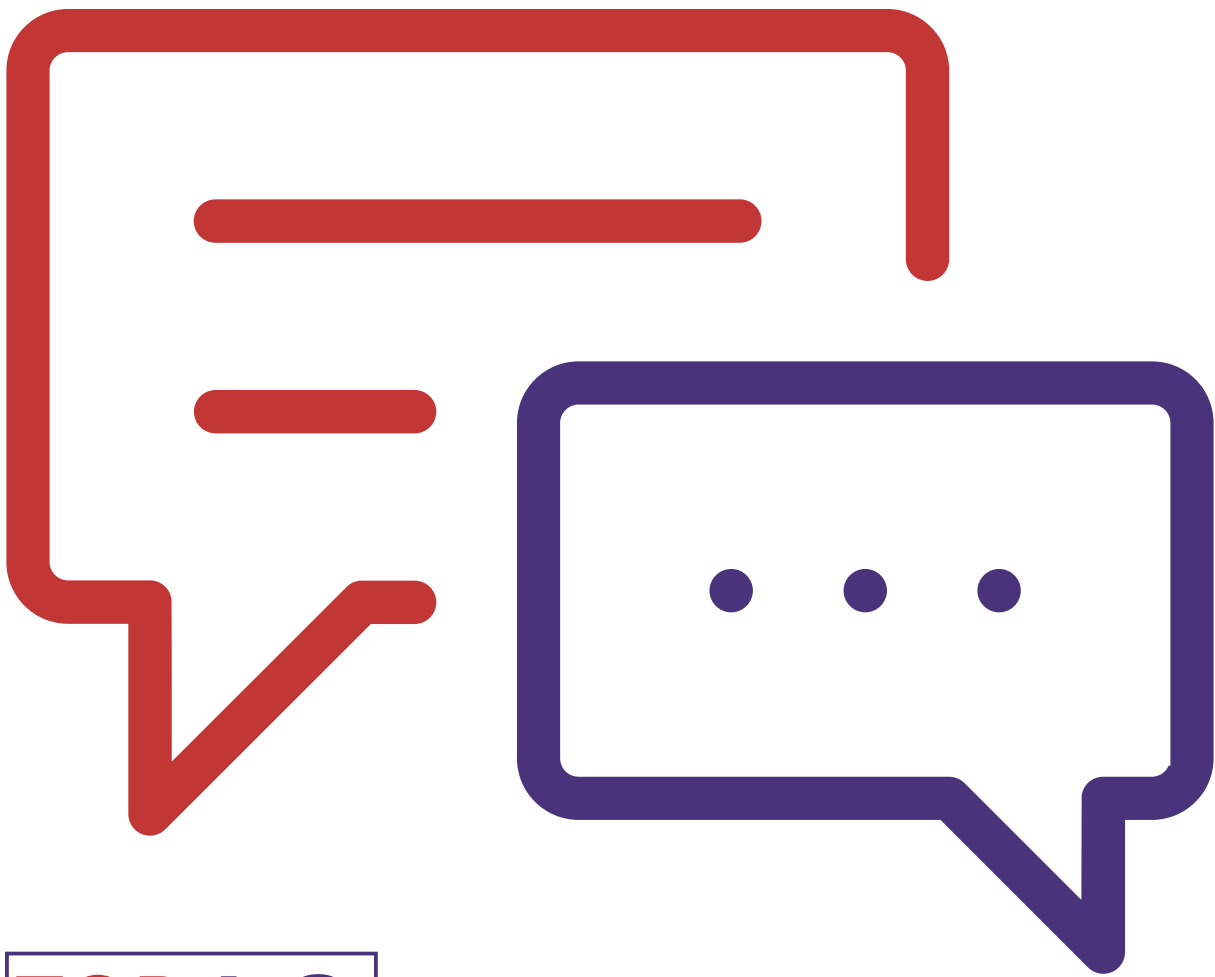




Association of  
Translation Companies  
DEFINING STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

# Association Of Translation Companies' Guide To Buying **Translation Services**

If you're not a linguist yourself then buying translations can be both daunting and confusing. This guide is designed to simplify the process with 10 tips to ensure you get the best results from your investment.



**TOP  
TIPS 10**



## 1. Written or spoken? Identify your required service

- There is a significant difference between translation and interpreting – which one do you require? If you want to interact with people in a foreign language on the spot you need an interpreter. If you are working with text you need a translation company.
- Professional translation companies produce texts that read well in the target language. They are fluent in their source language(s) as well. But they are above all effective bridges between the languages they work in; they can render the message of the original text, with appropriate style and terminology, in their native language.

Translation companies write; interpreters speak – be clear on your requirement



## 2. Choose the correct translation partner

- There are no hard and fast rules on the type of translation partner to use: a bilingual member of staff, a freelance translation provider, or a translation company?
- A bilingual member of staff may be highly competent at a language on a colloquial level and may, at first, seem to be the most economical option. However, it is a common misconception that someone who speaks a language will also be a good translator. Serious mistakes can occur when specialist knowledge of a subject is required.
- You will also want to weigh up whether translation is the best use of time for your staff who are more highly skilled in their own area – are they better spending time checking the work of a professional linguist rather than producing it themselves?
- Ask potential translation companies for samples of their work; texts they've produced and sold, web sites, brochures or speeches they've already translated. It's also a good idea to run samples past a trusted, language-sensitive native speaker (perhaps a foreign subsidiary or partner) for a second opinion.
- Working with an accredited company also adds reassurance - many ATC members have achieved ISO accreditation and all will carry full professional indemnity insurance as a final safeguard of the customers' interest in the event of something going wrong.

Don't be tempted to save money by using a bilingual team member – if you want a professional translation job invest in a professional translation partner



### 3. If you intend to use machine translation, do it right

- Machine translation has developed rapidly over the last decade and is now used in a variety of scenarios and for different purposes. See ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machine\\_translation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machine_translation)) for more information about the technology used
- You may be familiar with the free Google Translate tool, or similar online services, but businesses should be very cautious about entering confidential/sensitive text into systems like this. You do get the translation instantly and for free, but Google retains the right to reuse any text entered as they see fit, and you can never fully rely on the accuracy of the translation unless you pay someone suitably qualified to check it, which more often than not will negate any cost/time saving.
- Some translation companies subscribe to professional machine translation services or have developed systems of their own to help reduce costs and/or turnaround times. Translations from such systems will usually have better accuracy and linguistic quality, but this still doesn't negate the need for human checking and corrections. Publishing even the very best machine translation that money can buy without such human proofing means taking a calculated risk.
- In the majority of cases where a professional translation company offers a lower price and/or faster delivery thanks to the use of a machine translation system, they will explain all of the above very clearly. Normally they will also recommend that the machine translated text is carefully checked by one/two skilled human translators. When this process is followed, it is possible to achieve a final translation as good as if no machine had been involved.
- As a client, you should always carefully discuss the use of machine translation with your translation company and consider the intended use and required quality of the translation, not only budget and speed.

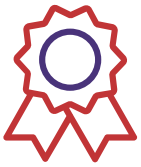
Don't be tempted to rely on machine translated text alone – to ensure accuracy and quality always have it checked by a trained professional



### 4. Take a bespoke approach to large volume projects

- You may have a series of technical manuals or similar text that requires translating into a number of different target languages within a limited timescale.
- A number of ATC members specialise in such high volume translation work into multiple languages and regularly co-ordinate projects involving thousands of pages of source text.
- In addition, some members can offer CAT (Computer Assisted Translation) which enables you to approve particular terminology in advance. Your translations are then stored in a sophisticated database, which will ensure consistency for future projects.
- Ask the company about their resources, such as how many project managers and translators they have - some simply do not have the facilities to handle larger projects.

Identify translation companies with relevant experience in, and processes for, handling large-scale assignments



## 5. Don't compromise on quality

- Working with an accredited translation company gives reassurance about the quality of translations you will receive. Members of the ATC are carefully vetted before being admitted as members, adhere to a strict code of professional conduct, are subject to the rulings of a professional ethics committee and carry full professional indemnity insurance cover to safeguard the interests of the translation buyer. Many ATC members are certified to EN 15038 (European quality standard for translation services) or its successor, ISO 17100 (global standard), and/or ISO 9001 (International quality management system).
- When briefing your translation company, ensure that you are clear about where the copy is to be used. Is it for internal distribution only? For inclusion on a website? Or within a customer-facing piece of print such as a brochure? There may well be subtle differences in the translations you receive for different formats and audiences. It is therefore only by outlining the intended use of the translated copy that you and your translation company can ensure it is fit for purpose.
- Many ATC member companies also strongly recommend that you distribute proofs to your agents abroad and will liaise with them on your behalf; it may be necessary to adapt or vary slightly the emphasis of a particular point or terminology according to the target market. Copy adaptation is a very subjective area, and it certainly pays to involve your overseas agent or distributor at a draft stage.

Ensure all briefs include the intended purpose and target audience of the copy – both can necessitate subtle differences in the translation you receive



## 6. Be budget savvy

- The cost of the translation will depend on the length of the document, the content and the foreign language required. There will probably be a basic rate according to the number of words. There will be extra costs according to the target language (what the language is and whether it is into or from English).
- A legal contract or technical document will require a specialist translation company and may be more time-consuming.
- Some companies will charge by time, some by line, page or number of words. It may be worth approaching a few companies for an estimate before choosing.
- If the work is urgent there may be rush charges for a same-day or overnight service.
- Large amendments of the original text will incur additional charges too - it pays to plan ahead, leaving time for the translation company to work at a pace that allows for proper checking and liaison with you.

Get a comprehensive quote ahead of any work and be aware of additional charges for short deadlines and large amendments



## 7. Get the brief right

- Tell the translation company about the purpose of the content. Style, pronounceability, word choice, phrasing and sentence length will all vary, depending on where your text will appear and what you want it to achieve. An experienced translation company will probably ask you for this information, so make sure you know yourself.
- Avoid culture-bound clichés. References to national sport, the human body, literary and cultural metaphors often don't translate well.
- For written documents, don't box yourself in by linking your content to visuals that may not carry the same meaning outside your native country.

Develop a comprehensive brief, avoiding culture-bound references and imagery



## 8. Be realistic on timings

- Often the first question is 'How long will it take?'. This is not a question that can be answered simply, since it will depend on the content of the translation and how you wish to receive the finished product. Ask the translation company about the time needed and they will advise you on how to meet your deadlines.
- Tempting as it may be to get your translation project rolling as quickly as possible, having translation companies work from a draft-in-progress will almost always be more time-consuming — hence more expensive (and probably more frustrating) — than waiting for the final text to be ready. Even worse, the more versions you have, the more likely it is that errors will creep into the final version.

Work with your translation companies to agree a realistic schedule and don't be tempted to provide draft text in an attempt to speed things up



## 9. Maximise a full range of services

- You may require more than just the translation of the text. Brochures and sales literature might require design, artwork, typesetting, desk-top publishing and printing in foreign languages. This is a specialist area as many languages have accented characters not found in English and sometimes the foreign language will take up more space than the original version. Many of the ATC's members offer some or all of these facilities.
- Other services offered by ATC members include interpreting, voice-overs, sub-titling, conference management, direct mailing, executive language training and language consultancy. Information about all these is listed under Range of Services for each member's entry in the ATC members' directory.

Take advantage of the full range of services from design to the layout of translated text



## 10. Form a long-term partnership with your translation company

- You'll get best results from developing an ongoing relationship with a translation company. The longer you work with them and the better they understand your business philosophy, strategy and products, the more effective their texts will be.

Work with your translation company to help them develop a thorough understanding of your business