

# Practical Guide for Professional Conference Interpreters

## 0. Introduction

At a time when multilingual conferences are becoming ever more specialized and technically complex, when an impersonal machine assigns an interpreter to a meeting on tin in the morning and one on dairy products in the afternoon, when the number of working languages is increasing as rapidly as the use of consecutive is declining, and when newly-fledged (and sometimes decidedly under-fledged) colleagues are being hastily drafted in to fill ever more booths, there is a pressing need to maintain quality and standards in the profession of conference interpreting, to motivate newcomers to do so and show them how, and generally to recognize that the profession's reputation for quality and integrity rests on the sum of our individual efforts to secure it.

This guide has therefore been put together to share practical advice on professional practice in conference interpreting, with the aim of contributing to high standards of professionalism and quality interpretation, and thereby to the dignity and integrity of our profession. The present version of this guide is an updated and expanded edition, based on one published in 1990.

The contents of this *vademecum* reflect the standards of quality, integrity, and professionalism espoused by the [International Association of Conference Interpreters \(AIIC\)](#), a professional association that represents conference interpreters worldwide and sets standards for the profession that are internationally recognized, in particular the AIIC [Code of Professional Ethics](#) and [Professional Standards](#). Many practical suggestions have also been distilled from bouquets and brickbats shared by delegates, clients, and colleagues.

The major target audience of this guide is of course beginners, new colleagues who have completed their professional training in conference interpreting, passed their qualification exams, and are now venturing out onto the market and into the booth. But the guide may also be useful for more experienced colleagues, as an *aide-mémoire* covering best practices. Naturally, experienced interpreters will find many statements of the obvious, while newcomers to the profession may not understand all the reasons behind some of the suggestions. If this looks like a daunting amount of advice to take on board, don't worry: things quickly fall into place, and a lot of this advice is really just common sense.

In organizing this guide, an attempt has been made to proceed in a logical order. We begin by moving chronologically through a 'conference cycle', from before the conference to during and after, and then proceed to discuss a number of other themes. If you prefer, you can click on any section in the following table of contents to jump directly to your selection:

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##### Appendix: Useful texts and tips

A couple of caveats before we begin: This brief guide is addressed to professional conference interpreters and is not intended as a substitute for professional training in conference interpreting. The suggestions contained in this document are not meant as an official interpretation of any policy or text of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), and no statement contained herein is offered as legal advice or as a replacement for competent legal counsel.

## 1. Before the conference: From contact to contract

### 1.1 *Inquiries, options, and firm offers*

When you are contacted regarding your availability for an upcoming assignment, you may be presented with an inquiry, an option, or a firm offer.

An **inquiry** is simply a request for information about your potential availability. This is a preliminary stage of contact, and no obligations are undertaken by either the recruiter or the interpreter.

An **option** is an offer of work that is subject to confirmation. In accepting an option, you are giving the recruiter a right of first refusal for the dates concerned. This concept is sometimes confusing for beginners. When you accept an option, it means that (a) once the assignment is confirmed, the recruiter will let you know immediately and will engage your services for the dates specified under the agreed terms; (b) if the assignment is cancelled, the recruiter will let you know immediately and release you from the option; and (c) before the option is either confirmed or cancelled, if you receive a firm offer for another, conflicting assignment, you will, before accepting, first contact the holder of the option and give them the right of first refusal, at which point the option holder must either confirm the option or release you.

A **firm offer** is one which, when accepted, creates a binding commitment between the interpreter and the recruiter. A firm offer can be made and accepted orally or in writing, including by e-mail. Acceptance of a firm offer is usually followed up by signing a **written contract**, which is a formal written agreement setting forth the agreed arrangements, working conditions, and the rights and obligations of each party.

### 1.2 *Asking the right questions*

In order to avoid any unpleasant surprises, before you accept an assignment, make sure that you ask the recruiter for all the pertinent information, including:

- nature of the meeting and subject matter
- dates and venue
- working hours
- technical conditions (booths, visibility, equipment)
- language regime and the languages you will work from and into
- availability of documents and texts
- team members, boothmates, team leader
- whether the interpretation will be recorded and/or broadcast
- mode of interpreting: simultaneous only? consecutive? whispering?
- social functions: are any dinners, field trips, etc. to be covered by the interpreters?
- professional fees, travel expenses, accommodation, DSA
- when confirmation is expected (in the case of an option)
- terms of payment

### 1.3 *Conflicting offers and availability management*

It is quite common for conference interpreters to receive offers for different assignments that overlap. Managing conflicting offers professionally and ethically is therefore an important part of our practice of the profession.

First, when you are discussing a potential assignment with a recruiter, **seek explicit clarity about whether you are being presented with an option or a firm offer/contract**. Keep your engagements calendar up to date, and clearly mark the status of each meeting as either option or firm. Often (but not always), a contact develops into a contract sequentially, from inquiry to option and then to firm offer, followed by a written contract. It is important to be clear about what stage of the process a potential assignment has reached, and what obligations you and the client have respectively undertaken at each stage in the process.

Second, after accepting a firm offer, **protect yourself by signing a written contract with an explicit cancellation clause**, stipulating the fees that will be paid to you if your assignment is cancelled (or curtailed). Beware of recruiters who are happy to give you a “firm offer” but who refuse to back it up with a written contract containing a cancellation clause. Without such a written contract, you are at risk, because if your assignment is cancelled, it can be very difficult if not impossible to get paid. It is especially important to make sure that you sign such a contract **before you turn down other work for the same period**. If you have accepted a “firm offer” from a recruiter who then refuses to sign a written contract with a cancellation clause and you subsequently receive a conflicting firm offer, give the first recruiter one last chance to put it in writing; if they still refuse, cover yourself by writing them formally, removing yourself from the “firm offer” and stating the reason.

NB: All contracts entered into with organizations with which AIIC has concluded a collective agreement (known jointly as the “[Agreement Sector](#)”) are governed by the corresponding agreements, all of which contain cancellation provisions. If you have any doubts about particulars, get in touch with the professional delegation of the organization in question for clarification.

Third, **if you have committed to an assignment, do not try to get out of it because someone else has offered you something more attractive**. This ‘No Replacement Rule’ is a fundamental part of our professional ethics. Accepting an assignment is a personal commitment, and once you have committed yourself, it is unethical to accept another assignment for all or part of the same period of time, and it is unethical to attempt to have yourself replaced for frivolous reasons.

If, after accepting a contract, you need to be replaced for *serious* and *valid* reasons, first find out if a suitable colleague is free on the date(s) concerned, without providing further details. Next, approach the person who recruited you to see if the colleague you propose is acceptable as your replacement. Remember, however, that the person who recruited the team will have taken care to ensure that it is balanced linguistically and otherwise and will not be pleased if you disturb that balance. Be aware that your reputation for reliability will suffer if you ask to be replaced.

#### 1.4 *Recruiters and working conditions*

Offers of work may come from an **intergovernmental organization**, a **consultant interpreter**, an **intermediary**, or a **direct client**. Different recruiters have different degrees of awareness about how conference interpreting works and the working conditions we require to deliver high-quality interpretation.

When you are recruited by an **intergovernmental organization**, both working conditions and remuneration will almost certainly be in conformity with existing agreement or accepted practice. Many international bodies, including the United Nations and the European Union, have signed agreements with AIIC, laying down conditions of employment and remuneration. These agreements apply to all interpreters who work in these organizations, including members and non-members of AIIC alike. The [texts of these AIIC-brokered agreements](#), which should be required reading for anyone working in the “Agreement Sector”, are published on the AIIC website, together with the [current rates](#) paid.

Members of AIIC who work as **consultant interpreters** are practicing professional conference interpreters who provide a value-added service to the organizer of a multilingual conference by being a single point of contact and professionally coordinating the provision of all interpretation services. They have the task of ensuring a high-quality service adapted to the client's needs while obtaining optimum working conditions for the interpreters at each conference. In particular, they have a special responsibility to ensure that the AIIC Code of Professional Ethics and Professional Standards are observed. AIIC has developed [Guidelines for Consultant Interpreters](#) as an annex to the Professional Standards. Any AIIC member may and can recruit.

**Intermediaries** include professional conference organizers (PCOs), public relations firms, translation companies, and *ad hoc* organizers. Such intermediaries, together with **direct clients**, like government agencies, companies, law firms, and NGOs, may or may not have experience working with teams of professional conference interpreters. Some may not be familiar with professional requirements and working conditions in professional conference interpreting, and will require tactful guidance. This kind of ‘client education’ is best handled by the team leader; however, there may not be a team leader if each of the interpreters is recruited individually. AIIC has developed useful communications materials in the form of [tips](#) that can be used to help communicate requirements clearly and effectively --- see the Appendix for a selection. From time to time, you may encounter some recruiters who refuse to deliver proper working conditions, despite best efforts to communicate their necessity for quality interpretation. If so, it is in your own interest to decline the assignment.

Wherever the offer comes from, it is *your responsibility* to be aware of professional requirements and necessary working conditions and to ensure that they are observed. No interpreter can provide a professional standard of interpretation unless working conditions are up to minimum professional standards, and there is nothing more frustrating to a good interpreter than being prevented from delivering quality interpretation due to the non-provision of texts, bad sound, poor visibility, or other inadequate working conditions that could have been avoided. Ensuring professional working conditions is therefore the first pillar of quality in professional conference interpreting.

#### 1.5 *Signing a written contract*

The best way to ensure proper working conditions and avoid unpleasant surprises is to **always sign a written contract**. It is in your own interest to sign a written contract that (a) explicitly sets out all the terms and conditions of service, (b) defines and guarantees professional working conditions, and (c) contains a cancellation clause.

AIIC has prepared two standard [contract forms](#), which are available on the AIIC extranet for the use of members and candidates of the association. The [Master Contract](#) is to be concluded between the conference organizer and the consultant interpreter, who will recruit interpreters under the terms of the Master Contract and prepare Individual Contracts for each interpreter. The [Individual Contract](#) is to be signed between the interpreter and the conference organizer directly.

If an intermediary or direct client presents you with a different contract form, it may not stipulate the working conditions that are necessary to ensure high-quality interpretation. In this case, you have various options: (a) suggest using the AIIC contract form instead; or (b) **request that the second page of the AIIC Individual Contract, titled “General conditions of work”, be attached to the**

**contract**, and insert a clause into the body of the contract stating that these conditions form an integral part of the contract and that both parties are familiar with them and agree to abide by them; or (c) add all the clauses that you feel your contract should contain.

When you are recruited by an intermediary, you may want to sign your contract with the conference organizer directly, or at least make sure that your identity, remuneration, and working conditions are known to the conference organizer, to avoid any confusion. It is also a good idea to find out who the other members of the team will be, if they have been recruited individually; some intermediaries have been known to recruit mixed teams of professionals and aspiring amateurs, and it can be very unpleasant to discover on the day of the conference that your boothmate can only handle 'easy' speeches (whatever those might be). Also, beware of signing a contract with an intermediary who has been hired by another intermediary who has been hired by the organizer; chains of intermediaries between you and the actual conference organizer can make communication very difficult and cause problems in terms of working conditions and access to documents.

If any recruiter refuses to sign a written contract that guarantees proper working conditions, it is best to turn down the assignment.

## 2. *Preparing for the conference*

If ensuring proper working conditions is the first pillar of quality in conference interpreting, diligent preparation is the second. **Always prepare thoroughly** for your meetings.

The more you know about the context, subject matter, and terminology of the meeting, the better your performance in the booth will be. A conference interpreter needs to have as good a knowledge of the terrain as any trekker heading into the Himalayas. In today's market, many meetings are becoming increasingly specialized and technical, and at the same time, with more and more qualified interpreters entering the profession, competition is becoming more and more intense. Colleagues who are known to prepare their assignments scrupulously are always at the top of recruiters' lists.

Thorough preparation takes time and effort. Make sure that you schedule sufficient time to do the necessary research before the conference.

### 2.1 *Information sources*

There are three main sources of information that interpreters use to prepare for an upcoming meeting: **conference documents**, the **World Wide Web (WWW)** and other background information and terminology resources, and the **pre-conference briefing**.

The most useful **conference documents** are:

- program or agenda
- background papers on the subjects and organizations involved
- documents to be discussed
- texts of speeches to be delivered
- PowerPoint presentations and the speakers' notes
- multilingual glossaries of the relevant terminology
- summaries or minutes of previous meetings
- list of speakers and delegates
- speakers' bios

Although the standard AIIC contract does require the conference organizer to provide documents to the interpreters in sufficient time to prepare, one would be rather lucky to receive all of the above --- in all relevant languages --- in good time before the conference. It is of course the responsibility of the chief interpreter or team leader to deliver polite reminders to the conference organizer. Often, though, some documents will not be finalized until the wee hours of the morning before the conference starts. It can help to **ask for drafts** in whatever state they are in, reminding the organizer that all documents provided will be treated as strictly confidential and will be destroyed or returned at the organizer's request.

Increasingly, documents are being placed on the Internet for the delegates and interpreters to download themselves. Also, more and more documents are being sent out by e-mail. It is a very good idea to ask the organizer to convert huge and unwieldy PowerPoint and PDF files into smaller file formats (like .rtf) before sending. Make sure that your inbox is large enough to receive inbound file attachments. (All members of AIIC get a 50 MB AIIC.MAIL mailbox, so if you are a member, don't forget to set up your AIIC.MAIL service.) Save e-mailed conference documents in a dedicated directory created for each conference.

In the case of PowerPoint documents, be sure to request a copy that includes the speaker's notes under each slide --- these are often suppressed in the version distributed to delegates.

When a full set of conference documents is not available in all the relevant languages (and even when it is), the **World Wide Web (WWW)** is an extremely powerful tool for preparation of both subject matter and multilingual terminology. It is well worth investing time in learning how to search expertly for information on the web. Two *Communicate!* articles on this subject are available [here](#) and [here](#); these are now slightly dated, but the basic principles remain more than relevant. Encyclopedias, basic textbooks for beginners, pre-existing topical glossaries in the relevant languages, and other introductory materials are also very helpful sources of background information and terminology.

The first time you work for an organization, be sure to get hold of its basic texts (Charter or Constitution, Statutes, Rules of Procedure, Standing Orders, etc.) in the languages you cover. Study these in detail; the better your mastery of the organization's structure, procedures, and jargon, the more likely you are to be recruited again. Interpreters must identify with and fit in to the "corporate culture" of the organization. (A very good orientation for interpreters preparing for their first freelance contract at the United Nations in New York is available here: [Premier contrat freelance: Nations Unies - New York.](#))

## 2.2 *Glossary preparation*

On the basis of the conference documents and your own research, prepare your own multilingual glossary for the meeting. Never be a terminology freeloader, relying on others to do the work. Glossary preparation is an important learning process, the main point of which is to help you understand and memorize the terminology. On-the-fly glossary lookups while interpreting are distracting and difficult --- especially when using somebody else's glossary.

In your glossary, include not only unfamiliar technical terms, but also recurring topical items of a more general nature, in order to contextualize yourself and to increase their 'availability', so that they are on the tip of your tongue when you need them. Pay attention to usage that is specific to the particular body or topic at hand; a Management Committee in one context may be Steering Group in another. It can be helpful to make a separate list for acronyms, titles of officials, and the names of committees.

Make sure that you know how to pronounce names and other proper nouns, and, if necessary, include an indication of their pronunciation in your glossary. Similarly, make sure that you know the names of all the relevant countries in all your working languages; pay attention to any that may have changed as a result of political developments.

In compiling your glossary, whether on a computer or on paper, make sure that you have a logical system for sorting terms (e.g. by subject, organization, committee, etc.) in alphabetic order for each language so you will be able to find the term you are looking for quickly.

Be prepared to share your glossary with the other members of the team. It can be very helpful to cross-reference your glossary against those prepared by other colleagues, including colleagues working in other booths. You may discover some gaps in your preparation, and you may find that there are other translations for terms that you have already captured.

## 2.3 *Coordination with the organizer*

Another important aspect of preparation is one that is the responsibility of the consultant interpreter or team leader. This is **coordinating closely with the conference organizer** in the run-up to the conference, to ensure that technical and other arrangements are in place. *Inter alia*, it is a good idea to

have distributed to all the speakers, through the conference organizer or secretariat, a copy of [AIIIC's Guidelines for Speakers](#). It is also good practice to visit the conference hall the night before the conference, to make sure that the technical set-up is satisfactory, and, when mobile booths are being used, that they are positioned properly in the meeting room with a direct view of the speaker and of the projection screen. AIIIC has prepared a [checklist for conference organizers](#) that may be useful in the pre-conference coordination process.

#### 2.4 *The pre-conference briefing*

Finally, a **pre-conference briefing**, even a very short one immediately before a session, can be a valuable addition to the interpreters' preparation for a difficult technical meeting. It can also enhance the professional image of the interpreters. A well-organized briefing, i.e. one attended by experts, preferably covering the working languages of the conference, and by the interpreters, who have studied the conference documents and done background research in advance, can greatly improve interpretation performance. Experts usually appreciate informed questions, and in the course of discussing the significance of a term or a process, they develop a much better understanding of the interpreters' work and much greater confidence in the interpreters' ability to deal with technical subject matter.

The pre-conference briefing may also be a good opportunity to remind speakers of the need to provide to the interpreters a copy of any text that is to be read out during the conference, and to demonstrate the appropriate reading speed for high-quality interpretation of a recited written text. This is best handled by the chief interpreter or team leader.

## 3. The conference

#### 3.1 *Getting there and setting up*

The only people who **must be on time** for a meeting are the interpreters. On the first day of a conference, it is advisable to arrive at least 30 minutes early, to make sure that you can find your booth, to get set up properly, and to reassure the organizer that the interpreters are present and ready to go. On any meeting day, interpreters should be in position at least 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time, to allow time to get ready, and to check whether any new documents have been circulated or *ad hoc* working groups convened. A group of delegates may habitually arrive late, but the day you do, you may find that they arrived on time and are waiting for you. Take traffic into account, and make sure you leave in plenty of time to be early.

Dress appropriately to fit in at the meeting; you may find yourself having to interpret in consecutive at a luncheon or in the event of a problem with the simultaneous equipment. Use perfume or aftershave sparingly; too heady a scent can be a problem in an enclosed interpretation booth. Avoid bangles and other jewelry that can make noise in the booth. If you need **eyeglasses** for reading documents or viewing slides, don't leave home without them. Also, make sure to bring notepads and pens, your documents and glossary, and any other gear you may find helpful: opera glasses, highlighters, paper clips, Tylenol, eye drops, an electronic dictionary, your special headset, etc.

When you arrive, **introduce yourself** to any colleagues you haven't met, and also to the technicians, who are important allies we rely on to make sure things go smoothly.

Next, **familiarize yourself with the equipment and do a sound check**. Make sure you know how to operate the console and, in particular, how to switch the input channel from the floor to the appropriate relay channel(s) and back. If you will be doing *retour*, make sure you know how to switch the output channel to that of your *retour* language and back again as well. Do a sound check, to ensure that everything is working properly, and make sure to test the cough button. If there is any problem contact the sound engineer. Make sure that you know how to tell when the microphone is on and when it is off. When you are done, ensure that all microphones are turned off.

Discuss and determine **working arrangements**. It is important to have a clear understanding of who does what when. Arrangements must take account of the needs of all the booths, overall language

cover, working conditions, difficulty of the subject matter, and any special expertise that exists within the team. Slavish adherence to the clock or to dividing the work rigidly on the basis of the number of papers to be presented may serve neither your interests nor those of the delegates. For example, it is rarely advisable to change interpreters in the middle of a speech, unless it is very long. Also, in a team where all the working languages are covered in each booth, there can be no excuse for systematic relay or the sudden absence of a given language combination. This can happen if there has been insufficient consultation between booths. The chief interpreter or team leader is responsible for coordinating inter-booth arrangements, and must therefore be kept informed of what is proposed.

**Set up your working space.** The agenda, your glossary, the list of participants, and other key documents that you will need to refer to frequently should be placed in a convenient position for easy access; some colleagues will stand them up against the glass of the booth window, behind the console. Texts of speeches should be sorted chronologically. Keep your working space tidy and well-organized.

Read through the most recent list of participants and **familiarize yourself with names** that may be difficult to pronounce or to recognize when spoken by a non-native speaker. You might also want to take a few minutes to review your glossary and activate the relevant terms in your mind.

Before the meeting begins, make sure that your **mobile phone** is turned off. Silent mode is not advisable, because most handphones will interfere with the audio system if they are too close to the console and because a flashing or buzzing phone is an unwanted distraction to both yourself and your boothmate. So **switch it off completely** and check for messages later.

### 3.2 *Volume and microphone protocol*

**Keep your volume down.** Set your headset volume to the lowest level at which you can comfortably listen to the speaker. Then, deliver your interpretation at a comfortable low speaking volume. In order to achieve better acoustic separation between their 'input' and 'output', many colleagues wear their headset with one side on one ear and the other side either partly or completely off the other ear. It is a good idea to keep one hand on the volume control, in order to make necessary adjustments in real-time. Remember that you can also adjust the **tone control** (bass/treble balance), and that this can sometimes be more effective than increasing the volume level.

Some beginners tend to crank their headset volume up to a very high level, out of fear that they will "fail to hear" something. As a result, they wind up yelling at the microphone in order to be able to hear themselves. This vicious cycle must be avoided. Setting your headset volume too high might damage your hearing over time, and raising your voice is entirely unnecessary, as interpretation microphones are very sensitive. It is annoying for the delegates who have to put up with shouting in their receivers, and agonizing for boothmates who are trapped in a small, enclosed, acoustically insulated space. Moreover, speaking in a very loud voice will create a sense of agitation and nervous energy and will tire you out quickly. Conversely, keeping your volume level down can help you to feel calm and centered, especially when interpreting a fast or difficult speaker.

If there is a considerable difference in volume between your voice and that of your colleague, ask the sound engineer to adjust the output volume whenever you switch. Try always to **speak at a constant distance from the microphone** and do not turn away from it while interpreting.

**Microphone protocol** dictates that the only sound that should be transmitted through the interpreter's microphone is that of the interpreter's voice clearly and professionally interpreting the speech that is being delivered on the floor. This means that you must not rustle papers, pour out glasses of water, drum your fingers on the work surface, or otherwise make noise in front of a live mike. Learn to **handle documents and turn pages silently**. If you have to switch off your microphone momentarily in the middle of interpreting, in order to cough, sneeze, say something to your boothmate, etc., be sure to **use the cough button**; don't use the main on/off switch, because that will return your listeners to the floor, flooding their earphones with the voice of the speaker.

Microphone protocol also means that when no speech is being interpreted, microphones should be **turned off**. During breaks and recesses, make absolutely sure that all microphones are switched off. Never let any in-booth conversation be transmitted over a live microphone. When microphones are left on inadvertently, very embarrassing things can happen. Even when you think that all microphones are

off, it is best to avoid saying anything in the booth that is not suitable for broadcast over the public sound system, just in case.

### 3.3 *Quality interpreting*

As conference interpreting is a **professional communication service**, quality in interpreting is a function of communication. It is your job to communicate the speaker's intended messages as **accurately, faithfully, and completely** as possible. At the same time, make it your own speech, and **be clear and lively in your delivery**. A conference interpreter is a communication professional who needs to be a good public speaker, so make your interpretation fluent, expressive, and communicative.

In a number of respects, good interpreting is like acting. As the speaker's alter ego, you must strive to convey both the substance and the emphasis, tone, and nuance of what is said, so as to allow your delegates to comprehend the speaker's messages just as clearly and effectively as those who are listening to the original. Watch the delegates listening to you for their reactions and hold their attention by being **not only accurate but convincing**. Make them forget they are hearing the speaker through an interpreter.

Here is [what a UN chief interpreter has to say](#) about quality:

**Quality** is more than a merely linguistic concept. Let me start with the most obvious. Many an interpreter knows his languages inside and out, misses nothing, makes no serious mistakes, and yet does not quite succeed in interpreting altogether satisfactorily. The main problem is too much of an obsession with words and not enough attention to sense. I can always tell when an interpreter is too much in thrall to words: he is the one talking too much, too fast, and more monotonously; the one whose speech reeks so much of *translationese* that I can guess in no time what language he is interpreting from. I prefer professionals who are prone to talk less and say what really counts, idiomatically, with elegance, precision, natural intonation and poise. I find it difficult to put up with practitioners who sound bored and boring, or have a halting delivery, or scarcely pause to take breath and then at the wrong places. In that, I am irritated by the same things that irk any listener in any speaker. I want my interpreters to be top-notch communicators.

Professional conference interpreters speak in the first person on behalf of the speaker, and, as such, their **primary loyalty is always owed to the speaker** and to the communicative intent that the speaker wishes to realize, whatever the speaker's position or point of view. The interpreter is morally responsible for the integrity of his or her work and must not bow to any pressure in performing it. The interpreter must never change or add to the speaker's message. Furthermore, the interpreter must never betray any personal reaction to the speech, be it skepticism, disagreement, or just boredom.

Be sure to match your **register** to that of the speaker and the audience. If the speaker is using simple, plain words, do not distort the original by using abstruse terms or particularly arcane expressions. Conversely, do not lapse into a familiar or jocular tone on formal occasions. Aim to come across the way the speaker would if s/he were speaking the target language.

Remember that the **delegates' life is not always easy**. Some have to wear headphones most of the time and they are less well protected from extraneous noise than interpreters. It is tiring enough to have to follow several days of discussions, and when this has to be done via interpretation through headphones, it becomes very demanding. Be helpful, by being clear and making your interpretation as **easy and pleasant to follow** as possible. Do not speak in sharp bursts followed by long pauses, nor in a deadpan monotone, nor in a sing-song. Make sense in every sentence, and finish every sentence. Always quote document references particularly clearly.

### 3.4 *When you are not interpreting*

When it is not your turn at the microphone, you are still very much **on the job**. Your responsibility is to assist your partner, to continue to follow the meeting, and to prepare for your next turn. If you must go out, therefore, **do not leave for longer than necessary**. Constant presence (both physical and mental) is a virtue. Be firm, but courteous, with people who drop by for a chat, and don't leave your partner alone in the booth for extended periods. When speaking with colleagues outside the booth, keep your voices down.

You can **assist your partner** by writing down numbers, names, terms, and other helpful information. Make sure that whatever you write for your partner is BIG and LEGIBLE. You can also help your partner by proactively locating documents as they are needed, and by pointing to information in a document or glossary when it is needed. You should also help monitor the status of the equipment, and make sure that your partner's microphone is on and is transmitting on the correct language channel.

Being helpful, however, requires being sensitive to your partner's preferences. If you are working with a new partner, it is a good idea to ask what kinds of help are expected and appreciated. If you resent help, say so. Unwanted help that is perceived as aggressive and intrusive can be as much of a problem as assistance that is not forthcoming when required. In teams that work well together, interpreters develop an awareness of what their partners prefer, and provide the right kinds of help at the right time.

It is important to **follow the meeting**. This means generally paying attention to what is going on, and keeping track of ideas, terminology, points of contention, jokes, and metaphors that may crop up again. Note down new terms, and add them to your glossary. Take an active interest in the proceedings; the more immersed you are in the context of the meeting, the better your interpretation will be. If appropriate, listen to other interpretation channels, to see what terms are being used in your passive languages, so you will be prepared to handle them when they come up.

If you have the texts of upcoming speeches that you will likely be interpreting during your next turn or later in the day, **prepare the materials you have** by reading them, marking them up for interpretation, and updating your glossary with any new terms. As new documents are delivered to the booth, sort them out and file them in the appropriate place.

Given the importance of their 'off-mike' duties, **interpreters who routinely disappear** at the end of their turn and then rematerialize just in time for their next turn are wanting as professionals and as colleagues.

If your colleague has unavoidably to leave the booth during his or her turn, do not abruptly hand over the mike the moment s/he returns. It takes a little while to pick up the thread of the discussion again. If possible, quickly brief your colleague on how far the discussion has progressed and on any new or unusual terms. Likewise, if a new team is taking over after you, leave them a note in the booth telling them how far the meeting has progressed and anything else that might be of help.

### 3.5 *Relay interpreting*

In relay interpreting<sup>1</sup>, the 'pivot', i.e. the interpreter the other booths are listening to and taking relay from, has a very special responsibility. Apart from those delegates who are listening to the original, everybody else at the meeting is relying on the pivot to deliver the speaker's message. When you are pivot, all the principles of quality interpreting apply, of course, and a good pivot is, first and foremost, a good interpreter. However, the pivot must also make a special effort to interpret with the needs of colleagues in mind, and to be maximally clear and helpful.

Those taking relay cannot hear the prosody of the speaker's discourse, and therefore cannot rely on its intonation, rhythm, and stress to help them follow the thread. Also, because they do not know the language of the speaker, they may not pick up on cultural referents, allusions, and nuances. Moreover, they may lack familiarity with the local circumstances, political, geographical, and other, of the country that the speaker represents. They may also find it difficult to repeat names of persons and places in a language they do not know. Added to all this is the extra difficulty of feeling cut-off or one step removed from the speaker and the conference room.

These inherent difficulties of relay interpreting call for the pivot to adopt a special approach, tailored to the needs of colleagues taking relay, to help them deliver a clear message to their delegates.

Here are some useful guidelines for when you are the pivot:

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<sup>1</sup> This discussion of relay is based in part on advice contained in *A Systematic Approach to Teaching Interpretation*, Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer, translated by Jacolyn Harmer, Silver Spring, MD: The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), 1995, pp.173-174.

- If you have received an advance copy of the speaker's text in a language that is understood by colleagues in other booths, make sure that they receive it. If you have a copy in your language only, but there is an opportunity to do so in advance, brief colleagues who will be taking relay from you on names, numbers, and terms of special significance in the text.
- Make a point of stating the name and identity of each new speaker, and the language in which the speaker is taking the floor.
- Begin speaking immediately. Fill in the first few seconds of lag time with something neutral, if necessary, so as to reassure the other booths that they are tuned in to the correct relay channel and that the relay system is working.
- Make a special effort to articulate clearly. In particular,
  - ◆ Pronounce numbers clearly, if possible twice.
  - ◆ Quote document references clearly, if possible twice.
  - ◆ Pronounce names clearly and slowly, especially ones that the other booths may have difficulty with.
- Make yourself easy to follow. Try to construct simple complete sentences, and avoid using obscure words.
- Do not reproduce the speaker's false starts or obvious slips of the tongue.
- If you realize that you have not been clear, restate the idea clearly and succinctly. If, after interpreting an idea, in the light of further context you realize that a clarification or revision is required, make the necessary correction clearly and succinctly.
- Avoid long pauses in your interpretation.
- If the speaker makes asides about his/her own speech --- for example, after making a mistake, correcting it and saying 'sorry', or mentioning that s/he can't seem to find the right place in a document, etc. --- you may add the words 'says the speaker', to avoid any confusion.
- Do not get too far behind the speaker, and try to finish with the speaker or as soon after the speaker as possible. Remember, there is a double lag in relay. If you take too long to finish after the speaker has concluded, by the time the colleagues taking relay have wound up their interpretation of your interpretation, the next speaker may already be a few sentences into his or her intervention.
- When speakers change, be sure to indicate so.

**When your boothmate is the pivot**, your supporting role is especially important. Help your partner by writing down numbers, names, terms, and other useful information in LARGE and LEGIBLE letters. Help find documents as they are needed, and offer them proactively to your partner. Help your partner find the place in a document that the speaker is reading from or referring to. Check that your partner's microphone is transmitting on the correct language channel, especially before and after *retour*. **Never leave your partner alone in the booth when s/he is giving relay.**

If you take relay from a colleague and s/he does a good job, make a point of saying so afterwards. It is an especially demanding role, and **expressions of appreciation** are gratifying. If you found the relay difficult to follow, think twice before you rush into the pivot's booth to complain. Try to be constructive instead; understand the difficulties and realize that you are adding to them by having to take relay.

### 3.6 *Crisis management*

Conference interpreting has been described as crisis management. Many mini-crises can be averted through solid preparation, good technique, and effective teamwork in the booth. However, there will be

times when it is necessary to **call attention to a problem**, and the interpreter should not hesitate to do so if it is in the best interests of the meeting.

If you have not understood something essential, say so over the microphone. Your delegates can then decide whether they want to ask the speaker to repeat it. Likewise, if a speaker is reading at breakneck speed from a written text that you haven't received a copy of, making it impossible to provide a complete and accurate interpretation, say so over the microphone. You may inform your delegates of the problem and indicate that you will try to provide a summary. If necessary, you may state that you regret that you will have to stop interpreting until reliable interpretation becomes possible again. Turning off your microphone is of course an extreme tactic, but when no interpretation is better than the best interpretation possible under the circumstances, it is undoubtedly the ethical thing to do.

When calling attention to a problem, be **professional, calm, and to the point**.

### 3.7 *Contact with delegates*

During your contact with delegates, try to be an **ambassador for the profession** and for the colleague who recruited you. Good communication with delegates, as with the organizer, makes for good interpretation.

Social occasions, such as coffee breaks, luncheons, dinners, and receptions, can present good opportunities to do some **public relations** for the profession. Do not, however, monopolize your delegates' attention, as social occasions give participants a chance to make contacts and deal with business or professional matters. If the interpreters take up too much time, it may well be resented. Avoid becoming the center of attention.

If a delegate compliments you, be loyal to your colleagues and include them in the tribute. Never criticize a colleague to others.

Do not discuss the meeting or a particular speech in public, even with colleagues. You may find yourself quoted in the next day's newspaper or discover, when you turn around, that the speaker is just behind you.

Never hand over copies of documents to inquiring journalists or others. You have a duty of confidentiality, and even when the documents requested are publicly available, it is still inappropriate to do so, as you should avoid any appearance of indiscretion. Always refer such requests to the conference organizers.

When inside the booth, remember that you are acoustically but not visually insulated from the meeting room. It is not advisable to knit or to manicure one's nails in the booth, nor to be seen to be reading a newspaper in full view of the delegates or to be snatching a late breakfast. Such behavior is unlikely to impress the delegates or the organizers with your professionalism.

### 3.8 *Media interpreting*

When interpreting for television or radio, an increasingly common occurrence, an interpreter faces a new set of challenges and is subject to additional constraints.

First of all, the proper technical setup is absolutely critical. While the sound engineers are experts in their field, they may have little or no experience of the needs of simultaneous interpreters. Contact the broadcasting organization well in advance, letting them have a **list of basic technical requirements**, perhaps in the form of a memo for the chief sound engineer. AIIC has developed some useful [guidelines for interpreting for the media](#).

Never make the mistake of assuming that television studios understand the technical conditions required for live-to-air simultaneous interpreting. Otherwise, when you turn up at the studio, you may find that you are expected to work from a little out-of-the-way cubby hole, supplied with heavy stereo headsets, no volume control, and no cough button. You may even discover that you are expected to

work live on set, in full view of the television audience, using an anchor's hidden earpiece (IFB), without a booth, volume control, cough button, or access to help from your partner.

Second, when working for TV or radio, an interpreter's **style and delivery** need to be particularly smooth and clear, regardless of the original. This is so because TV and radio audiences are accustomed to the well-trained voices of newsreaders and commentators and do not understand or appreciate the very different demands made of interpreters.

Furthermore, the media interpreter must work with a **very short 'ear-voice span' (EVS)**, attacking an utterance without the usual lag (which is unsettling to listeners), and with as little overhang as possible once the speaker has finished. In a typical interview, the interviewer comes in all the time with fast, snappy questions, and the interpreter has to match the interviewer's timing so as not to lessen the effect and take the punch out of the questions and answers. It is advisable to have **as many interpreters as there are speakers**, no matter how short the broadcast, to avoid problems of speaker identification for listeners or viewers and to ensure that the interpreter can cut in as soon as the speaker starts.

Never attempt to interpret a **scripted presentation or exchange** without a copy of the script, and make sure that you are given the text sufficiently in advance to be able to prepare it.

Media interpreting can be very rewarding, but it requires **cool nerves, very good technique, and considerable skill**. It is likely to be more in demand in the future, and may do a lot to enhance our professional image --- if done well.

### 3.9 *Consecutive interpreting*

Consecutive has been described as the 'noblest' mode of interpreting, and there is force in the argument that one who claims to be a fully-fledged conference interpreter must master both simultaneous and consecutive.

Before working in consecutive, make sure that you will be interpreting from a position from which you can **clearly hear the speakers**, and that you have a **working surface** to support your notepad, documents, and microphone, which should be fixed in position with a **desktop microphone stand**.

In a meeting room, sit at the table with the speakers. In a lecture hall situation, if the organizers have arranged for a podium for the speaker, make sure that there is a second podium or a table and chair set up for your use. It can be a rather harrowing experience trying to support one's notepad with one hand while taking notes with the other while at the same time juggling a handheld microphone on stage in front of hundreds of people, especially when doing long consecutive on a difficult speech.

In consecutive, it is all the more important to be a good public speaker. Don't forget to make **eye contact** with the audience, and make sure to project poise and confidence with your **body language**. All the principles of quality interpreting apply, with the additional requirements of the visual dimension and non-verbal performance factors.

### 3.10 *Recordings*

If a recorded speech or video is played, do not attempt to interpret it unless you have a direct feed to your headset and you have had a chance to study the script in advance.

If your interpretation is being recorded, ask for what purpose. Check that such recording is permitted under the terms of your contract. (The standard AIIC contract stipulates that the interpretation is provided "...solely for direct and immediate use by the listeners; no recording may be made, either by the listeners or anyone else, without the prior consent of the interpreters concerned".)

If such recording is in violation of your contract, request that the recording stop. If such recording is permitted under your contract, make sure that all related conditions provided for in your contract are met.

### 3.11 *After the assignment*

Before you leave, be sure to **return documents** that are confidential or that the organizer has asked you to hand back. Don't depart without **saying thanks and goodbye** to your colleagues, the team leader or chief interpreter, the sound technician, and the organizer, as appropriate.

Make sure to **invoice promptly**. Remember to **keep careful accounts** of income and professional expenditure so that you can easily prepare your income tax and, if applicable, VAT returns.

Update your glossary on your computer, adding in all those handwritten entries that you made during the conference. **File your glossary**, together with useful documents, for reference next time you work at the same or a similar meeting. Documents that you do not intend to file should be shredded.

## 4. Other topics

### 4.1 *Professional ethics*

As professionals with important responsibilities to their speakers, listeners, colleagues, and clients, and to society, conference interpreters must hold themselves to the highest standards of **professional ethics**. In particular, they must conscientiously observe their obligations of **integrity, professionalism, and confidentiality**, so as to uphold and advance the honor and dignity of the profession and to preserve and enhance the trust of those who rely on them.

Adopted at the founding of our association, the AIIC [Code of Professional Ethics](#) enshrines the fundamental principles of ethical conduct for professional conference interpreters, and has remained basically unchanged for five decades. It is concise, essential, and if anything even more relevant today than it was when developed by our founders; as two past presidents of AIIC have underscored, the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the [century of ethics](#).

As a framework of fundamental principles, the code is not intended to provide specific guidance for all situations, nor would that be possible. Your own **best judgment and discretion** will always be required in applying the principles to specific circumstances.

A full discussion of professional ethics and their significance is beyond the scope of this practical guide, but to recap the most important points in practice:

- Do not accept an assignment for which you are not qualified. Do not hesitate to turn down an offer if you think you are not sufficiently experienced to handle it, if it is too difficult technically for you to do it well, or if you don't have time to prepare fully.
- *Working conditions*: Always strive to secure satisfactory working conditions, so as to ensure the highest quality of interpretation. If you are acting as consultant interpreter or team leader, this applies *a fortiori* as an obligation you have to your colleagues.
- *No replacement*: If you have accepted a contract, do not attempt to get out of it when you are later offered a more attractive assignment. Conference interpreters must not accept more than one job for the same period of time.
- *Prepare thoroughly*. Acceptance of an assignment implies a moral undertaking to work with all due professionalism and to a high professional standard.
- *Fidelity*: The interpreter's primary loyalty is always owed to the speaker s/he is interpreting. It is the interpreter's duty to communicate the speaker's meaning as accurately, faithfully, and completely as possible, whatever the speaker's position or point of view. The interpreter is morally responsible for the integrity of his or her work and must not bow to any pressure in performing it.
- *Professional secrecy*: The interpreter is bound by the strictest secrecy, which must be observed towards all persons and with regard to all information disclosed in the course of the practice of the profession at any gathering not open to the public.

- *No personal gain*: Interpreters must refrain from deriving any personal gain whatsoever from confidential information acquired in the exercise of their duties.
- *Integrity*: Do not accept any job or situation that might detract from the dignity of the profession, and refrain from any act that might bring the profession into disrepute.
- *Collegiality*: Conference interpreting is teamwork. Be a helpful and loyal colleague. Remember that you are part of a team and, more generally, a member of a community, and act accordingly at all times.

In fact, much of the practical advice given in this guide is based on the AIIC [Code of Professional Ethics](#), together with the closely related [Professional Standards](#).

#### 4.2 *Stress and health issues*

Ours is a stressful occupation.

Just how stressful became clearer when a large-scale empirical study on **interpreter stress and burnout** commissioned by AIIC was completed in December 2001. The results of this "[Interpreter Workload Study](#)" (also reported in this [executive summary](#)) placed simultaneous interpreting clearly in the category of high-stress professions with high burnout levels. The main stressors identified in the study were, in order: speakers reading from texts, fast speakers, lack of background material, difficult accents, booth discomfort, lack of preparation time, and undisciplined speakers.

These findings underscore the need for us to strengthen our collective efforts to deal with these stressors directly, through **enhanced communication** with clients and speakers. We need to do more to raise awareness of and respect for our working conditions. In particular, we need to do more to make sure that documents and especially **texts to be read out** are provided to us interpreters in advance, in sufficient time to prepare, and that the **reading speed** of such texts is controlled.

The high-stress nature of the job also means that conference interpreters should learn to take care of themselves: eat right, exercise regularly, sleep well, and generally lead a **healthy and active lifestyle**. Interpreters are also advised to learn and practice **stress management techniques**, such as meditation, deep breathing, yoga, progressive muscle relaxation, and the Alexander technique.

Furthermore, interpreters need to take special care of their **hearing** and their **voice**, which are, quite literally, the tools of their trade. It is worthwhile to have a baseline audiometric test performed early in your career, in order to have proof of work-related injury in the event of accidental hearing damage.

#### 4.3 *Keep improving*

If any profession requires a commitment to life-long learning, it is conference interpreting.

Constantly work to **improve all your working languages**, not least your A language. In all of your languages, and especially those spoken outside your country of domicile, make every effort to keep abreast of linguistic, cultural, and social developments, through the media and the Internet. Listen carefully to how language is used by native speakers from different countries and note their use of words and expressions. Language is constantly changing and usage varies over time and over distance, so we can never relax our **linguistic vigilance**.

Take an active interest in the world, and **read widely** to build up your general knowledge. Follow **current events** closely.

**Listen carefully** to the work of your colleagues, especially more experienced colleagues with your languages. See how they tackle particular difficulties, and learn from them.

After a conference, **keep difficult texts** for further study, provided of course that they are public documents. Go over them off-line, analyze the difficulties, and find good solutions. **Sight translation** can be a wonderful practice discipline.

Learn more about economics, law, and technology, and delve deeper into the different **specialized topics** that you interpret. Read up on the theories underlying the subjects concerned, and learn about important ideas, controversies, and developments in the field. Nobody can be expected to own every dictionary or glossary published but they are tools of our trade and money invested in the latest versions of appropriate **technical dictionaries** is a sound investment. Ask more experienced colleagues for advice on what to buy and be ready to let others make use of your reference books. Dictionaries with explanations, definitions, and diagrams tend to be more helpful than ones that merely list terms in different languages.

From time to time, **record your interpretation** so as to evaluate your own performance afterwards. Of course, do this only at public meetings or with the consent of the organizer. **Listen to your own output critically**. If you do not like the sound of what you hear, **do something about it**. If you identify linguistic weaknesses, address them systematically. Try to spend more time in a country of that language and consider going on one of the increasing number of language enhancement courses being run by AIIC members. If the problem is one of content, make a sustained effort to fill in your knowledge of the areas in which you are weak. If you detect irritating speech mannerisms, umming and awing, poor diction, choppy delivery, or other defects, fix them.

Since voice is as essential to an interpreter as it is to an actor, it is well worth working on your voice and delivery with the help of a **professional voice coach**. Time and time again, an otherwise good interpreter has been poorly ranked by delegates because of an unpleasant voice or poor delivery.

You can always **ask a colleague to listen to you** during a meeting and to comment afterwards on both content and delivery. If somebody asks you to do the same, seek to be constructive in your comments. It can be a two-way process.

Language, media, technology, and, indeed, the world are constantly evolving, and unless interpreters develop with them, they will not be able to keep up with the demands of the profession.

#### 4.4 Training

As you gain more experience, you may become involved in **interpreter training**. Helping others learn to interpret well is a rewarding experience, and can teach you many new things about interpreting, no matter how long you have been doing it, or how well.

In fact, one important way that AIIC promotes the profession of conference interpreting is by advocating sound training practices and quality standards for training centers. In particular, the AIIC Training Committee has developed a [ten-point statement of basic quality criteria](#) for professional conference interpreter training programs. These quality criteria are substantially reflected in the [European Masters in Conference Interpreting](#) curriculum.

Every few years, the Training Committee evaluates conference interpreter training programs against these quality criteria, and updates its [list of conference interpreter training programs](#), which includes an indication of the extent to which each program complies with AIIC's quality criteria.

If you are asked by prospective trainees about professional training in conference interpreting, apart from sharing your own experiences and insights, refer them to the AIIC publication [Advice to Students Wishing to Become Conference Interpreters](#), together with the list of conference interpreter training programs.

If you are interested in teaching, you should be aware that there is a growing body of literature on interpretation pedagogy and teaching methods. You might begin with these three titles:

- *A Systematic Approach to Teaching Interpretation (Pédagogie Raisonnée de L'interprétation)*, by Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer. This trainer's manual is now a classic and contains much practical advice on didactics and establishing progressive goals in both consecutive and simultaneous.
- [Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training](#), by Daniel Gile. Drawing on research in psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, and translation studies, this book arms interpretation instructors with easy-to-grasp explanations of difficulties and

key issues, *inter alia* covering communication and quality, fidelity, comprehension, knowledge acquisition, processing capacity management, process-oriented teaching methods, and interpretation problems and coping tactics.

- [Conference Interpreting Explained](#), by Roderick Jones. Although not written for trainers per se, this book contains clear explanations of the basic principles and techniques of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, and as such is a useful reference for instructors.

You may contact AIIIC's Training Committee for more information on training literature and methodology. Also, from time to time, **training of the trainers courses** are offered, aimed at helping professional conference interpreters develop teaching skills.

If you do work as a trainer, help **promote best practices in training** in line with AIIIC's quality criteria for professional conference interpreter training programs.

#### 4.5 Research

If you would like to learn about **Interpreting Studies** as an academic discipline, two new books may provide a useful introductory orientation: [Introducing Interpreting Studies](#), by Franz Pöchhacker, and [The Interpreting Studies Reader](#), edited by Franz Pöchhacker and Miriam Shlesinger.

If you are interested in delving further into **research into conference interpreting**, extensive up-to-date information, including bibliographical references and reviews, is available in the [CIRIN Bulletin](#). Those considering doing PhD research in interpreting would be well advised to consult [Getting Started in Interpreting Research](#), edited by Daniel Gile, Helle V. Dam, Friedel Dubslaff, Bodil Ringe Martinsen, and Anne Schjoldager.

If you are asked to **participate as a subject** in a research study, please do give it positive consideration. Much research needs to be done in the area of conference interpreting. Its potential contribution is valuable, but too often research is frustrated by lack of access to subjects who are qualified professional conference interpreters. Your willingness to participate and provide data for analysis would be appreciated. Generally accepted guidelines for research on human subjects dictate that the identity of participants is to be kept strictly confidential and data reported on a strictly anonymous basis. Read the informed consent form, and don't hesitate to **ask the researcher** about the precautions that will be applied to safeguard identifiable records.

#### 4.6 AIIIC membership

The [International Association of Conference Interpreters \(AIIIC\)](#) is the worldwide professional association for conference interpreters. Membership of AIIIC is a badge of **professionalism and quality** that is recognized internationally. Whether you are a freelance or staff interpreter, being admitted to AIIIC is an important milestone in your career.

As this guide is an AIIIC publication, you will not be surprised to find yourself encouraged to apply for membership of your professional association. You will find a detailed explanation of the application procedure in [Applying to AIIIC: A Primer](#).

As a member, you will have a chance to influence how the profession develops. Do not just pay your dues, but **be an active member**: Take an active interest in the affairs of the association, which is democratically run and relies on volunteers to do much of its most important work. Read AIIIC's publications, including the [Bulletin](#) and [Communicate!](#), and contribute a letter or an article. Attend regional meetings, go to AIIIC assemblies, and join voluntary groups tackling the issues that matter most to you. If you want to change something, see if you can find like-minded colleagues and put proposals to your regional meeting and to the Assembly in accordance with the procedure laid down for that purpose.

If you are asked to **sponsor an application** to join the association, read the [Regulations Governing Admissions and Language Classification](#) carefully. Remember that when you sign a sponsorship form, you are stating that you would be prepared to recruit that person for the language combination in

question, and you are vouching for his or her professionalism and ethics. Once you have agreed to be a sponsor, you must be prepared to defend your judgment if challenged and to support the candidate. If you refuse to sponsor a prospective applicant, give your reasons openly and fairly. Less demanding sponsors might be found elsewhere, but you will have reminded that person of the standards set by the profession.

## **5. Conclusion**

We hope that this short guide will prove useful in terms of providing practical advice to beginners and reminders to more experienced colleagues.

This guide is the result of a collective effort, involving many people. Its sole purpose is to contribute to high standards of professionalism and quality interpretation, which must be the aim of all conference interpreters, newcomers and old timers alike.

Inevitably, many important things will have been omitted, and others will have been expressed less clearly than they might have been. Your comments and suggestions are most welcome. Please click on "post your comment" and share them with us below.

# Appendix

## Useful texts and tips

### Basic texts:

- [AIIC Code of Professional Ethics](#)
- [AIIC Professional Standards](#)
- [ISO 4043: Mobile booths for simultaneous interpretation](#)
- [ISO 2603: Fixed booths for simultaneous interpretation](#)
- [AIIC Individual Contract](#), page 2, "General Conditions of Work"

### Tips for conference organizers:

- [Choosing the right provider of interpretation services](#)
- [What your consultant interpreter needs to know](#)
- [Golden rules for conference organizers](#)
- [Checklist for Conference Organizers](#)
- [Guidelines for Speakers](#) [to be transmitted to each speaker]

### Tips on technical requirements:

- [Checklist for hiring simultaneous interpretation equipment](#)
- [Technical notes on simultaneous interpretation](#)
- [Conference equipment](#)
- [Built-in simultaneous interpretation booths](#)
- [Mobile booths for simultaneous interpretation](#)
- [Guidelines for technicians](#)
- [Standard Requirements for Interpretation Booths and Equipment](#)

### Media interpreting:

- [Checklist for TV interpretation](#)
- [Simultaneous interpretation and the media: interpreting live for television](#)
- [Media interpreting: a different sort of world](#)
- [Essential do's and don'ts when using simultaneous conference interpreters on TV](#)