

# Oregon Judicial Department



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## Remote Hearings: Recommended guidelines and phrasing - court interpreters

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This guide is designed to be a practical reference tool for court interpreters working remotely in the Oregon Courts. As a reminder, the same professional standards and protocols required for in-person appearances are also required for interpreters appearing remotely. The quality of the interpretation is critically important for court users with limited English proficiency (LEP) to meaningfully participate in court proceedings. When appearing remotely, always work from a location that ensures effective communication, maintains confidentiality and is free from distractions.

### **BEFORE A PROCEEDING:**

Join early enough (at least 15 minutes) to **introduce yourself either to the court clerk or the judge.**

Example introductions:

*"Good morning / afternoon, this is [Your Name], court-certified Spanish interpreter."*

*"Good morning your honor, this is [Your Name], a [specify language] interpreter."*

### **Conduct a Sound Check.**

Politely inquire – *"Can the interpreter be seen (if appropriate) and heard clearly in the courtroom?"*

### **Establish communication:**

Respectfully request:

*"Your Honor [if addressing the Court], may the interpreter perform a brief sound check/language assessment to ensure mutual understanding?"*

*"May the interpreter have a moment to establish communication?"*

Take the time necessary to ensure you, the interpreter, and the participant with limited English proficiency can hear / see each other clearly. Conduct a brief language assessment.

After establishing clear communication, confirm:

*"Your Honor, the interpreter has successfully communicated with [Name] and can hear and understand [her/him/them], and [Name] has indicated that [he/she/they] can hear and understand the interpreter."*  
(Or, if there are problems with communication, address those.)

*"Thank you, your honor, the interpreter has been able to establish communication and is ready to proceed."*

### **Interpreter Tips:**

- Notify the court about any verbal or visual cues you will use to signal witness(es) to pause to allow time to render an accurate interpretation and to resume when speaking when the interpreter is ready for additional information (utterances in the source language).
- Establish with the court the appropriate protocol for requesting repetitions or clarifications.

## **DURING A PROCEEDING:**

The judge may inquire about your qualifications and administer an oath while on the record. If you are a certified interpreter (i.e. you passed an oral interpreting exam), state so for the record. If you are not certified but you have been authorized by CLAS, be prepared to take an oath, and answer any additional questions the judge may have.

When interpreting on record and addressing the court (judge) it is crucial to use the first-person when interpreting and the third person when referring to yourself (“Your Honor, could the question be repeated for the interpreter”). This distinction is particularly vital during remote hearings to avoid confusion about who is speaking—the Limited English Proficient court user or the interpreter.

Currently remote simultaneous interpretation requires an LEP participant to connect using a second channel, like a cell phone for example. As a result LEP participants rely solely on the interpreter to access information during a remote hearing therefore it is best practice for interpreters to identify who is speaking before rendering an interpretation.

### **Intervening:**

If necessary, politely interrupt with:

*"Your Honor, the interpreter requests a repetition."*

*"Your Honor, the interpreter needs clarification regarding the word/acronym used."*

*"Your Honor, the interpreter is struggling to understand the speaker clearly."*

## **AFTER A PROCEEDING:**

At the end, inquire:

*"Your Honor, is there any further need for the interpreter's assistance?"*

*"With the Courts permission, the interpreter has no additional matters scheduled and will now disconnect."*