

You may not realise it, but in the [world of interpreting](#), there are a variety of different types of interpreting work that you can do. Whilst they all revolve around [translating](#) one language into another in order for both parties to understand, the way that the work and the way that the translation is delivered can vary.

In order to know as much as possible about working as an interpreter (and, of course, work on your own skills to really help you to progress in your career), we have put together our guide to the different types of interpreting.

What is interpreting and examples?

Interpreting is the rendering of the spoken word from one language into another. Whilst translation is looking at text and then transferring it into another language, interpreting does this with conversation. This means that it is more fast-paced and can also be down to the knowledge and understanding of the interpreter too.

We can all picture the main type of interpreting that we are used to seeing; however, the truth is that there are more forms of this work than you may realise.

To help you to understand more, we have put together our guide to the different types of interpreting and what they entail.

[Consecutive interpreting](#)

The most common form of interpreting is consecutive interpreting.

[Consecutive interpreting](#) is where the participants take turns speaking, pausing to allow the interpreter interpret what has been said.

This will usually be an option for conversations that are between individuals such as a [medical](#) appointment or a conversation in a job centre.

Liaison interpreting

One of the most common types of interpreting that you will see is liaison interpreting. This will usually be to facilitate a conversation between two

people who speak a different language. More often than not, it is on behalf of an individual, but it can, where appropriate, apply to a small group.

You will often find liaison interpreting used during a review or appointment. This could be with a doctor, or it could be as a part of a [social services](#) case too.

Online Chat interpreting

As the name suggests, an online chat interpreting occurs virtually and will be between a customer or a member of the public and a company's customer support agent. This will usually require another party to be a part of the conversation and translate what is being said via the chat function.

The messages that are used in online chat are usually short and concise, which allows the interpreter to translate them and relay them whilst keeping the conversation flowing well.

Relay interpreting

This particular type of [interpreting](#) can sometimes be known as indirect interpreting and is used when an interpreter from one language into another is not available, meaning a relay of interpreters needs to be used. The first interpreter will listen to the speaker in their source language and then translate the message of what is being said into a language the next interpreter can also speak. The next interpreter then interprets into the target language.

This can work both on an individual basis and also as a group.

Simultaneous interpreting

This is a form of interpreting that happens in real-time, which can be the most pressurised for the interpreter to complete. They will listen to what is being said in one language, then, at the same time as the conversation is moving forward, will relay it into another language.

More often than not, the interpreter will try to do this within 30 seconds of the initial statement being made. This is so the flow of conversation is not lost.

Video or over-the-phone interpreting

Not every interpreter (or conversation, for that matter) will happen face-to-face. This means that another form of interpreting is performed either over a video link or over the phone. It works just like any other form of interpreting. However, the conversation is not in the same room. This may mean that it is easier to take natural breaks in the conversation to allow for all parties to understand.

Whispered interpreting

Whisper interpreting is another form of simultaneous interpreting. However, the interpreter will listen to the conversation and then relay it, as quietly as they can, into the ear of the other party. This means that the conversation can still be understood. However, there will be minimal disruption to the rest of the people who are speaking or listening. This is commonly used during court hearings.

Remote simultaneous interpreting

As the name suggests, remote simultaneous interpreting is when the conversation is translated and interpreted in real-time as the person speaks. However, the interpreter is not there in person (or perhaps they are, but the other party is not there). They are responsible for relaying the message to them virtually, ensuring that they can understand what is being said (and also to answer any relevant questions or provide information as they are asked).

This can be a good option if the conversation has been arranged quickly or is time-sensitive but still requires the services of an interpreter.

Key types of interpreting

In order to know which type of interpreting you may want to do, it is important to take the time to understand the key type that you can choose to work within. You can, if you work as a freelancer, cover all three types as and when you want.

Additionally to this, you can also choose a speciality and then work within that particular sector.

Business interpreting

As we become more global, many of the business interactions that we now have can be with anyone else in the world. We are lucky that many people do have a sound understanding of the English language. However, this is not to be just expected and is not always the case.

In order to negotiate and be able to do business with people all around the world, business interpreting has been created. The idea behind this is that you have a person on board who can translate the key messages and ensure that you build a high-quality customer relationship. They can be there to gain leads, nurture those leads, or provide a business service too.

Conference interpreting

Another form of interpreting is when the interpreter attends a conference or event with someone or a group of people. They will require an interpreter because the language that the event is being delivered in is not their normal language.

Having an interpreter on hand will ensure that they understand what is being said and will be able to have an interactive part to play in the conference that they are attending. You may find that remote interpreting is a common approach to conference interpreting or whisper interpreting.

The main aim is to ensure that all the information is understood but that it does not disrupt the flow of the delivery or distract anyone around them.

Public Service Interpreting

[Public service interpreting](#) is incredibly important because it allows those who require a variety of [public services](#) to access them in the best way possible for them. They can have the information that they need to understand and respond to present to them in a language that they best understand.

This could be someone who is part of social care or perhaps is visiting a doctor or hospital. It could also be used by police to perform an interview or during education.