

The steps to successful translating:

Writing for translation and choosing your translator



Translations that mean business.™

How can you ensure a successful translation of your project — whether it's a product or policy manual, technical document or marketing materials?

A successful translation will convey your intended meaning, address your audience with the appropriate tone and generate the results you want. There are two crucial steps that determine your translation success: 1) writing for translation and 2) choosing your translator. Here are some tips for both of these steps.

WRITING FOR TRANSLATION

The more straightforward and clear your original text, the more likely a translator will be able to duplicate your meaning in a translation.

Follow some basic writing rules

First, some “Don’ts”:

- Avoid abbreviations, slang terms, buzz words, jargon, colloquial expressions
- Avoid words with more than one meaning (use “movie” instead of “film” and “painting” instead of “picture”)
- Avoid non-standard contraction marks (semi-colons and hyphens)
- Steer clear of special characters and symbols
- Skip cultural or place-specific references
- Leave out the humor

Now for some “Dos”:

- Keep sentences short and simple (less than 20 words)
- Think one sentence per idea
- Use active rather than passive verbs
- Be precise
- Keep copy style formal
- Always use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation

Know your target audience

Is your audience a group of electrical engineers or entry-level interns? Gen-Yrs, Gen-Xrs or Baby Boomers? Academics or HR generalists? Decide ahead of time what tone you want to convey—serious, informational, technically detailed or lighthearted. Your target audience determines the tone that should be conveyed.

Within individual languages and countries, meanings can also change regionally. Even in the United States, many phrases can be interpreted