



**ARKANSAS SUPREME COURT
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS
COURT INTERPRETER SERVICES**

**OVERVIEW OF THE CANDIDATE WRITTEN EXAMINATION
FOR SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AND DEAF
INTERPRETERS**

Introduction

This document has been prepared to help sign language interpreters and deaf interpreters interested in becoming certified court interpreters understand what the Candidate Written Exam measures, how it is administered, and how to prepare for taking the exam. Each examinee should study this overview thoroughly in order to be fully prepared for the exam.

The examination is only one part of the process for becoming a certified or approved court interpreter. Passing this test does not mean a person has become a “certified court interpreter;” rather, it means the examinee has officially met the requirements to be a Candidate for Certification.

The test measures examinees’ knowledge of two areas central to the work of a court interpreter at the level of a minimally qualified court interpreter:

1. Ethics and Professional Conduct. The first area of knowledge required of professional court interpreters encompassed in the written test is general knowledge of standards guiding the performance of duties. Accordingly, the written exam includes questions aimed at measuring candidates’ knowledge of ethical behavior and professional conduct as established by the Arkansas Supreme Court in Administrative Order 11.
2. Court-Related Terms and Usage. The second area of knowledge essential to successful professional performance is familiarity with the terminology and procedures of the court system. Accordingly, the examination also measures recognition of common court-related situations and vocabulary, *especially in the area of criminal courts.*

How will the exam be scheduled and what do I need to know in advance?

Court Interpreter Services will notify you in writing by mail or e-mail once your registration for the exam has been received. The notice will include a reminder of when and where to report for the test and may include directions to the test site.

Arrive early. No one will be admitted late. There are no exceptions and no one arriving late for any reason will be able to take the test at that test session.

You must present valid photo identification before entering the testing room. There may be a registration area where you will report and sign in. In the testing room, there will be a test administration supervisor, and there may be another test proctor present to assist. You will not be permitted to keep anything at your desk aside from your photo ID and pencils. All other belongings must be placed in the back of the testing room.

What if I need special accommodation due to a disability?

If you have a disability recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you must request special accommodation *in advance*. In order to do that, you should complete the attached Request for Special Accommodation and submit it to the director of the court interpreting program in your state as far ahead of the test date as possible. You must describe your disability and describe the type or kind of accommodation you are requesting.

How will the test be administered?

Examinees are allotted two hours to complete the examination.

The exam will be given in classroom style to a number of examinees at the same time in the same room. Upon completing the written sections, the examinee should notify the exam proctor who will collect the exam for scoring.

Security of the exam materials is obviously essential. Examinees may not take notes or copy any portion of the exam. If an examinee is disruptive, engages in clear or flagrant cheating, or attempts to copy questions or retain or record exam materials, the examinee may be expelled from the testing room and advised that his or her examination will not be scored. Documentation of the expulsion and the reasons for it will be maintained by the state.

What is the score required for passing and how will I be notified about the results?

In order to pass the exam, examinees must achieve a score of 80%. Court Interpreter Services will advise the examinee of the results of his or her exam by mail or e-mail. Reminder: Passing the Candidate Written Exam makes the examinee a Candidate for Certification, NOT a Certified Sign Language Interpreter or Certified Deaf Interpreter.

What can I do to prepare for the exam?

A list of possible activities and resources has been compiled to help you identify actions you can take to help prepare for the exam. Some of the resources may help you decide whether you are ready to participate in a test of this nature.

What if I do not pass the examination?

Applicants are permitted to test only once in a 12 month period. If you do not pass the exam, it is suggested that you review the preparation materials provided in this overview before registering to take the test for the following year.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Sections in Part I, Court-Related Terms & Usage

(*The legal terms found in items 1 through 36 are taken largely from criminal court cases.)

Sentence Completion. Items 76-111 consist of unfinished sentences that are likely to be heard in the court environment. The examinee is instructed to select from a list of four words or phrases the one that most appropriately completes the sentence.

Example 1: A case decided without prejudice means that

- A. there is no right to a new trial
- B. there is an automatic appeal of the case
- C. there is a right to a new trial
- D. there are no racial overtones in the case

(C is the answer that most appropriately completes the sentence)

- Example 2: A defendant is required to give up certain constitutional rights
- A. after being found guilty at trial
 - B. before entering a plea of guilty
 - C. only if represented by a public defender
 - D. only after probation is granted
- (B is the answer that most appropriately completes the sentence)

Court-Related Questions. Items 37 through 49 consist of questions on court-related topics. The examinee is instructed to select from a list of four choices the one that is the best answer.

- Example: Which of the following would be a concurrent sentence?
- A. two years for burglary, two years for robbery: two years in jail
 - B. two years for theft, two years for assault: four years in jail
 - C. four years for rape, three years for a second rape: seven years in jail
 - D. four years for rape, two years for assault: two years in jail
- (A is the best answer)

Sequence. Item 50 is a question about the proper sequence of events in court-related situations. The examinee is instructed to select from a list of four choices the one that correctly describes the order in which the events should occur.

- Example: Which of the following is a correct sequence of event?
- A. Jury Charge, Jury Deliberation, Jury Instructions, Jury Verdict
 - B. Jury Sworn, Jury Verdict, Jury Charge, Jury Deliberation
 - C. Jury Deliberation, Jury Sworn, Jury Instructions, Jury Verdict
 - D. Jury Sworn, Jury Charge, Jury Deliberation, Jury Verdict
- (D is the correct sequence of events)

Part II: Ethics

Professional Conduct Questions. Items 51 and 52 consist of questions about the appropriate course of professional conduct an interpreter should take. The examinee is instructed to select from a list of four choices the one that is the best answer.

- Example: Which of the following is most important for you to do when you are interpreting at the witness stand?
- A. keep your eyes on the jury
 - B. keep your dictionary and note pad at hand
 - C. keep eye contact with the witness at all times
 - D. keep the judge informed of contradictory testimony
- (B is the best answer)

Scenarios. Items 53 through 60 consist of brief scenarios describing situations an interpreter might encounter while interpreting in the courts that would pose ethical or professional problems. The examinee is instructed to select from a list of four alternatives the best solution or course of action.

Example: An expert witness is giving testimony regarding blood alcohol content while you are interpreting for the defendant. The testimony is very complex, and even though you can interpret it at the same level, you sense that the defendant does not understand such technical language. What is the best thing for you to do in this situation?

- A. advise the judge that the defendant does not understand
 - B. interpret at the same level as the witness
 - C. ask the judge for permission to explain for the witness
 - D. summarize the testimony for the defendant in language he can understand
- (B is the best solution)

Suggested Study Resources

Ethics & Professional Conduct

1. Become familiar Administrative Order 11, Code of Professional Responsibility for Interpreters in the Judiciary in Arkansas.
2. Join and participate actively in a professional association such as the National Association of Judicial Interpreters and Translators (www.najit.org) or the American Translators Association (www.atanet.org), studying their respective codes of ethics.
3. Read at least one of the classic texts in the field:
 - a. Berk-Seligson, Susan (1990). *The Bilingual Courtroom: Court Interpreters in the Judicial Process*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 - b. De Jongh, E.M. (1992). *An Introduction to Court Interpreting: Theory and Practice*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
 - c. Edwards, Alicia B. (1995). *The Practice of Court Interpreting*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
 - d. Gonzalez, R.D., Vasquez, V.F., and Mikkelson, H. (1991). *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation: Theory, Policy and Practice*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
 - e. Mikkelson, H. (2000). *Introduction to Court Interpreting*. Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing.

Court-Related Terms & Usage

With respect to Part IV, Court-Related Terms & Usage, the following activities would be helpful in expanding or acquiring the substantive knowledge pertinent to these fields:

1. Read news items related to legal matters, law enforcement, and the courts in major newspapers, consulting a dictionary to look up unfamiliar words.
2. Visit courthouses and observe court proceedings in civil, criminal, and family matters.
3. Take college/university courses in criminal justice and court administration.
4. Read any standard introductory textbook on the criminal justice system.
5. Read publications about the administration of justice such as the following documents issued by the American Bar Association (www.abanet.org/abastore), which are available for \$2.50 each:
 - a. Law & the Courts, Volume I, *The Role of the Courts*, 2000.
 - b. Law & the Courts, Volume II, *Court Procedures*, 1998.
 - c. Law & the Courts, Volume III, *Juries*, 2001.
6. Study legal terms from the following sources:
 - a. Black's Law Dictionary
 - b. Glossary of Commonly Used Court & Justice System Terminology (available on the National Center for State Courts website <http://www.ncsc.org>)



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REQUEST FOR ADA ACCOMMODATION

Complete this form only if you are requesting individual testing arrangements because you have a disability recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

APPLICANT NAME:

Have you been diagnosed with a disability that is recognized by the ADA:
Yes___ No___

Describe the type of disability:

I request an accommodation, which is described on the *Documentation of Accommodation*, attached hereto.

Signature

Date