

Accuracy, Impartiality & Confidentiality: What do these look like in practice?

(Adapted from the Interpreting NZ *Interpreter Code of Practice*)

1. Accuracy

Aim of this principle

Parties relying on an interpreter will be able to exchange information exactly as they intend, without distortion of meaning.

Clients can expect the interpreter to do the following:

1. Interpret everything without omitting, adding or changing information
 - Pass on everything, including any side conversations, or information that might seem redundant, irrelevant or impolite.
 - Brief both parties before interpreting about how the communication process will work, reminding them that everything will be interpreted without editing: no cosmetic improvements; no screening, simplifying or elaborating on information.
2. Ask for clarification if necessary to enable accurate interpretation
 - Intervene promptly if a speaker's meaning is unclear or missed by the interpreter, stating politely that, "I, the interpreter, need clarification".
3. Correct their own interpreting errors
 - An interpreter who realises they have made a mistake corrects it promptly, informing parties that it is their own error. The interpreter does not fix perceived errors of information spoken by other parties.
4. Strive to convey equivalent tone, register, and style of speakers
 - An interpreter conveys the intent of parties in a way that matches the style and tone of language that speakers are using. If it is not possible to replicate a formal or technical register in the other language, one option is to ask the speaker if they can re-express the message more plainly.
5. Manage the flow of communication to enable accuracy
 - An interpreter may ask a speaker to slow down or pause to enable accurate interpretation.

2. Impartiality

Aim of this principle:

To enable both parties to trust that the interpreter will be a neutral facilitator of their communication, staying within defined role boundaries.

Clients can expect the interpreter to do the following:

6. Limit one's role to interpreting

- An interpreter does not offer opinions or advice relating to the situation. Exceptions to this might be when it seems necessary, in the interpreter's professional judgment, to alert parties to a cultural issue that is impeding the current communication, or when the immediate safety of a participant would be at risk by failing to offer advice or information.

7. Establish physical and social neutrality

- Sit in a neutral position between the two parties wherever possible.
- Avoid physical contact with either party, beyond conventional greetings initiated by them.
- Avoid eliciting or sharing overly personal information in conversation with parties during an interpreting assignment.
- Demonstrate courtesy and tact towards all parties equally.

3. Confidentiality

Aim of this principle:

- To protect the privacy of parties communicating through an interpreter.
- To maintain consumer trust in the integrity of professional interpreters.

Clients can expect the interpreter to do the following:

8. Not disclose information about assignment details
 - An interpreter does not tell others (friends, family, or colleagues) about the details of an assignment, including time, place, names, or content.
9. Inform parties during the briefing that everything interpreted will be kept confidential by the interpreter.
10. Not pass on knowledge about a client between agencies or assignments relating to a client.
 - Communication in each assignment remains confidential to that situation.
 - Notes related to the assignment should be destroyed or left behind.
11. An interpreter does not give opinions or share details about a situation in which they have interpreted, even if it is a public event; knowledge about that event belongs to the main participants rather than to the interpreter.

There are other elements to the Interpreter Code of Ethics and you can find the full version on our website: <http://www.interpret.org.nz/code-of-ethics/> .