TLCLab
Professional Interpreter Training

FREE PRACTICAL RESOURCE | OCTOBER 2026 | VERSION 1.1

TLCLab Interpreter Toolkit

Scripts checklists and practice for spoken language interpreters

Use this toolkit to prepare for an assignment, respond to communication problems, and practice the skills that need your attention. Each tool is designed for independent use. Nothing needs to be submitted to TLCLab.

Start with the task in front of you

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Practice without exposing anyone

All practice encounters in this toolkit are fictional. Use fictional material when recording yourself. Do not put patient, client, student, or assignment information into personal recordings, public AI tools, or public discussion boards.

Use within your professional setting

The examples focus on spoken language healthcare and community encounters. Follow the applicable professional code, assignment instructions, and organization procedures. Court interpreting, signed language interpreting, emergencies, and specialized work may require different protocols and qualifications.

This free resource is a practice aid. It is not a certification, approved continuing education activity, language proficiency assessment, or substitute for supervised training and qualified feedback.

Prepare and open the encounter

Use this page before an onsite, telephone, or video assignment. Rehearse the opening in both working languages until it sounds natural.

Before you accept or connect

- Confirm the requested language and dialect, setting, interpreting mode, participants, and expected duration.
- Check whether the subject is within your competence. Identify a conflict of interest or limitation before proceeding.
- Prepare a short topic glossary from approved, nonconfidential material. Verify unfamiliar terms rather than memorizing uncertain equivalents.
- Check your audio, environment, and approved way to request support or a replacement.

A sample opening

> *"Hello, my name is [name], and I will interpret between English and [language]. I will interpret what each person says. Please speak directly to each other and pause regularly so I can interpret. If I need a repetition or clarification, I will let everyone know."*

Where appropriate, add a confidentiality statement consistent with the setting, such as "I will handle information according to our confidentiality requirements." Do not promise secrecy without exceptions.

Make the intervention visible

Use first person when interpreting a speaker. When speaking in your own role, identify yourself as the interpreter and make the intervention accessible to the affected participants. [1]

> *"The interpreter needs the last sentence repeated."*

> *"The interpreter needs to clarify one term before continuing."*

Two minute rehearsal

Say the opening in English, then in your other working language. Check that both versions explain the same process. Repeat without reading. Aim for a calm explanation rather than a memorized announcement.

One phrase I need to make clearer in my other working language

_____

Manage an OPI call

Over the phone interpreting relies on sound alone. Use a predictable process so missing audio or overlapping voices does not become missing meaning.

A six step call routine

1 Establish the connection

Check that each participant can hear. Confirm the language and introduce the interpreting process.

2 Establish the speakers

Ask participants to identify themselves when several people are on the line. Do not infer identity from a voice.

3 Follow the message

Track who did what, when, why, and under what conditions. Give special attention to negation, uncertainty, names, numbers, and changes of plan.

4 Protect each turn

Ask for a pause at a manageable point. If speakers overlap, stop the overlap and return to one complete turn at a time.

5 Repair the specific gap

Identify precisely what was unclear. Request that part again, interpret it, and correct any earlier affected rendition.

6 Close deliberately

Interpret the closing exchange. Confirm whether further interpreting is needed and follow the assignment closing procedure.

Phrases to rehearse

"The interpreter heard "Thursday" but missed the time. Please repeat the time."

"The interpreter needs one person to speak at a time. Please finish your sentence, then pause."

"Interpreter correction: I said [incorrect wording]. The speaker said [correct wording]."

Try the decision

The audio drops out during an appointment instruction. You hear "Friday" and "bring," but the rest is missing. Do you infer the likely instructions or request the missing section?

Review: request the missed section, then interpret it. Familiarity with common appointment instructions does not establish what this speaker said. If the connection remains unreliable, explain the limitation and request an approved alternative. [1]

Identify every voice



TLCLab training image. Any lesson number shown belongs to the original training image.

Apply the image

A new voice joins the call and gives a different appointment time. What must you establish before attributing that statement? Say your intervention in both working languages.

Self review: Ask the new speaker to identify themselves and their role. Clarify whether the new time replaces the earlier time. Audio clues can prompt a question; they do not establish identity or intent.

Troubleshoot a VRI encounter

Video remote interpreting can fail even when the screen still looks connected. Check whether the participants can actually hear, see, and follow the exchange.

A practical troubleshooting sequence

Problem	First response	If the problem continues
Audio drops or words are clipped	Pause and name the lost segment. Check the selected audio device.	Ask the host for approved technical support or another effective connection.
Echo or feedback	Ask whether more than one nearby device has active audio.	Have the host isolate the audio source; do not keep interpreting over an echo.
A person or visual reference is out of frame	Explain what you cannot see and request a usable view.	Ask the speaker to describe or identify the reference clearly.
Video freezes but sound works	Confirm what visual information is needed for this encounter.	Use an alternative only if it meets the participants' communication needs.
A document is unreadable	Request a readable view or approved document-sharing method.	State the limitation. Do not guess or read a complex document beyond your competence.

Fictional exercise

A clinician points to two lines on a form and asks, "Which of these did you sign?" You can hear the question, but the form is blurred. The patient answers, "The second one."

Your next step: _____

Explained response

Interpret the words you can hear, then identify the unresolved visual reference transparently: "The interpreter cannot read the two lines. Please identify each option aloud or provide a readable view." Do not decide what "the second one" means from a blurred image.

Do not switch from video to telephone by default. Consider the communication requirements, participant needs, and approved procedure. In an urgent clinical situation, notify the responsible team immediately and follow its emergency process.

Check the remote environment



TLCLab training image. Any lesson number shown belongs to the original training image.

Apply the image

Look at the off-camera speaker and the private disclosure in the illustration. Identify one question about who is present and one sentence that explains the limits of your role.

Self review: Request speaker identification rather than assuming privacy. Do not promise a private side conversation. Explain your interpreting role and follow the relevant confidentiality and escalation procedure. Use only approved recording or transcription tools when explicitly authorized.

Work through ethical decisions

Use the questions below to slow down a difficult decision. These are TLCLab practice prompts, not a replacement for the code and procedures governing an assignment.

Six questions before you act

- What did I observe, and what am I only assuming?
- Which part of communication is unclear or at risk?
- What does my interpreting role permit in this setting?
- Who needs to understand any intervention I make?
- What is the smallest effective step I can take?
- When do I need a supervisor, replacement, or other authorized support?

Scenario A A request for advice

After a healthcare explanation, a patient asks you, “Would you agree to this if you were me?”

Choose: A Give your personal opinion. B Skip the question. C Interpret the question and clarify your role if needed.

Explained answer: C. Keep the patient’s question in the conversation. If needed, explain that you can interpret the discussion but cannot make the healthcare decision. Facilitate the patient’s question to the clinician; do not answer as though you were a clinical adviser. [1]

Scenario B An unfamiliar term

A speaker uses an abbreviation you do not recognize. The surrounding sentence sounds familiar.

Choose: A Substitute the most likely term. B Ask the speaker to expand or explain the abbreviation. C Leave it out.

Explained answer: B. Request a specific clarification. A plausible guess can change meaning while sounding fluent. Once clarified, interpret the speaker’s meaning and repair any earlier affected rendition. Work within your competence. [2]

Scenario C A familiar participant

At the start of an assignment you recognize a participant from a personal relationship. What should you do before proceeding?

Review: identify and disclose the potential conflict through the authorized process, protect the person’s privacy, and seek direction or replacement as appropriate. Do not assume familiarity is harmless or discuss personal history with others. [2]

Explain your professional decision



TLCLab training image. Any lesson number shown belongs to the original training image.

Apply the image

Return to one scenario in Tool 04. Explain your response aloud using observed facts, the relevant responsibility, and the specific action you would take. Avoid adding facts that the scenario does not provide.

Self review: A defensible explanation names the communication problem and connects your action to your interpreting role. If your explanation relies on a guess about someone's motives, identify that assumption and reconsider it.

Practice consecutive interpreting

Set aside 10 to 15 minutes. Use this fictional community appointment message to practice listening, short notes, and an accurate spoken rendition into your other working language.

Set up the practice

Use approved text-to-speech or make a source recording from the fictional text below. Listen once without looking at the page, take brief notes, then interpret aloud. Record only your fictional practice if you choose to record. No submission is required.

Fictional source message

Your appointment was originally set for Tuesday, November 10, at 9:15 in the morning. We have moved it to Thursday, November 12, at 10:45 in the morning because the specialist will be at another location on Tuesday. Please arrive 20 minutes early and bring a photo ID and your current list of medications. If you need to reschedule, call by 3:00 in the afternoon on Monday. You do not need to bring payment to this appointment.

Practice in three rounds

- Round 1: Interpret the whole message once. Do not look at the review list until you finish.
- Round 2: Compare your rendition with the eight meaning units below. Mark changes, omissions, and additions.
- Round 3: Repeat using only keywords and relationships in your notes. Then use Tool 06 to choose the next skill to practice.

Eight meaning units to preserve

Unit	Meaning to check
1	Original appointment: Tuesday, November 10, 9:15 a.m.
2	New appointment: Thursday, November 12, 10:45 a.m.
3	Reason: the specialist is at another location on Tuesday.
4	Arrival: 20 minutes early.
5	Bring: photo ID.
6	Bring: current medication list.
7	To reschedule: call by Monday at 3:00 p.m.
8	Payment: no payment needs to be brought to this appointment.

Self-check: did I preserve the change of date, the deadline, and the negative instruction? Checking these eight units alone does not verify all grammar, terminology, tone, or bilingual accuracy.

Build notes that support meaning



TLCLab training image. Any lesson number shown belongs to the original training image.

Apply the image

Use the fictional appointment message in Tool 05. Make a short note set that clearly separates the original appointment, revised appointment, deadline, and negative payment instruction. Then interpret without looking at the source text.

Self review: The marks should help you reconstruct relationships accurately. Symbols are personal memory aids, not universal meanings. The notes pictured illustrate a different fictional message; do not copy their names or numbers into the appointment exercise.

Review your practice

Use this rubric with the fictional activity on page 9 or another approved practice source. A fluent delivery can still contain a changed date, missing condition, or incorrect term.

Use the same scale for each area

0 = an important issue is present. 1 = partly consistent, with identifiable gaps. 2 = consistently demonstrated in this practice sample. Mark N/A when an area was not observable; do not award points for an untested skill.

Area	Evidence to check	Score
Meaning and completeness	Compare actions, reasons, sequence, conditions, and details with the source.	0 / 1 / 2
Numbers and negation	Check dates, times, quantities, deadlines, and words that reverse meaning.	0 / 1 / 2
Terminology and register	Check terms in context and the speaker's level of language. Flag uncertain equivalents.	0 / 1 / 2
Delivery	Listen for intelligibility, pace, sentence completion, and hesitation that obscures meaning.	0 / 1 / 2
Notes and memory	Check whether notes supported the message rather than replacing listening.	0 / 1 / 2
Interventions and repair	In a simulated interruption or correction, check whether your own intervention was identified and the gap repaired.	0 / 1 / 2 / N/A

Interpret the review

This is a formative practice rubric, not a pass mark, validated test, or readiness determination. Do not convert a score into a claim that you are qualified for an assignment or likely to pass a certification exam.

If you changed a date, deadline, negation, speaker, or other consequential detail, practice that item again before increasing difficulty. Seek qualified bilingual feedback for accuracy you cannot verify yourself.

One specific example of a changed or missing meaning

_____

One correction I will make in the next attempt

_____

Date and practice source for my next review

_____

Check numbers and terminology

Use these short drills to catch details that can survive in notes but change during delivery. All examples are fictional practice material.

Four precision drills

Read once and interpret	Compare after speaking
“The fee is fifteen dollars, not fifty.”	Keep $15, the rejected $50 amount, and the contrast.
“The balance changed from $1,250 to $1,520.”	Keep the original and revised amounts in the correct order.
“Call before 2:30 p.m. on Monday, not Tuesday.”	Keep the before condition, time, day, and correction.
“The reference number is 406-019.”	Keep all digits, their order, and the zero.

Practice each into your other working language, then reverse direction using a new equivalent source. Do not assume that matching written digits proves your spoken rendition was clear.

A reusable glossary entry

Field	Your entry
Term and subject area	_____
Meaning in this context	_____
Equivalent in my other working language	_____
Reliable source and date checked	_____
An example sentence in each language	_____
Ambiguity or false friend to watch	_____

Test the term in a sentence

Choose one term you regularly hesitate over. Define its meaning in context, verify an equivalent using a suitable source, and practice a sentence in each language. A word list without context can conceal a wrong sense or register.

For a real assignment, request clarification when a term remains uncertain. Keep confidential names, case facts, and patient details out of your personal study glossary.

Close and build a practice routine

A short closing routine helps you finish the assignment responsibly and identify a useful next practice task.

After the encounter

- Interpret the final exchange and confirm whether further interpreting is needed before disconnecting or leaving.
- Handle temporary notes and downloaded material through the organization's approved secure-disposal or retention procedure. Do not keep an identifying personal study copy.
- Record only authorized service information in the approved system. Report a technical problem or accuracy concern through the designated channel.
- Choose one skill to review using fictional material. Do not reproduce a real encounter in a personal journal, public forum, or practice recording.

A seven day practice plan

Day	Ten to fifteen minute task	Evidence to keep
1	Rehearse the opening in both working languages.	One phrase to improve.
2	Practice the OPI repetition and correction phrases.	One clear intervention.
3	Work through the blurred-form VRI exercise.	Your reason for the response.
4	Explain all three ethics responses aloud.	One boundary to rehearse.
5	Complete the consecutive practice activity.	Your eight-unit comparison.
6	Repeat weak number drills and one glossary entry.	The detail you corrected.
7	Repeat the consecutive activity and use the rubric.	One next practice goal.

Keep the goal observable

Instead of "be more accurate," write "preserve every revised date and deadline in my next three fictional practice messages." Use qualified feedback when you cannot evaluate the language or professional decision independently.

My next practice goal

_____

References and next steps

TLCLab created the scripts, fictional scenarios, practice plan, and formative rubric in this toolkit. The professional principles noted with [1] and [2] are supported by the resources below. NCIHC has not endorsed this toolkit.

Professional references

[1] National Council on Interpreting in Health Care. National Standards of Practice for Interpreters in Health Care (2005). See the sections on accuracy, confidentiality, and role boundaries. Healthcare guidance should not be treated as a universal court or signed language protocol.

NCIHC standards and publication links

[2] National Council on Interpreting in Health Care. A National Code of Ethics for Interpreters in Health Care (2004). Consult the published code and commentary for confidentiality, impartiality, role boundaries, and professional development.

NCIHC National Code of Ethics

Prepared October 28, 2026. Review the current source documents when using professional guidance. This toolkit summarizes selected principles; it does not reproduce or replace either code.

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