

Writing a document for translation

Midland Technical Translations (UK) Ltd

Writing a document to be translated

Writing a document which you intend to have translated is not as simple as you might think. For ease of translation, there are several things that need to be taken into consideration, which you may not usually think about when writing in English.

Things to consider:

- Where it is possible, use a picture in place of text. If it can express the same meaning, it will save a lot of time and money and will be clearer.
- Try to avoid jokes. Things that are funny in English usually do not mean the same in other languages and may even be impolite. Visual jokes can have a different meaning in other countries; so be careful with imagery.
- Avoid the use of similes, metaphors, cultural clichés, etc. These are very difficult to translate, because often there is no equivalent phrase. The translator may have to use a complicated explanation to convey the same meaning.
- Make sure that the text includes any information that is necessary abroad but not needed in England. This can include international dialling codes, full addresses etc. Also ensure that the text does not include information that is unnecessary in your target country.
- Make sure the translator has as much information as possible. To ensure the original style of the text is followed in the translation, they need to know what the text is for (a brochure, an instruction leaflet etc.) and the intended audience of the text (engineers, marketing specialists etc.). A style guide is always useful.

- Know where your target market is. For example, if you are having your text translated into Spanish, is it for an audience in Spain or in Mexico? Both speak Spanish, but differently!
- If your company has any preferred terms in the target language(s), such as specific technical vocabulary, it can be useful to make a glossary for the translator. This can be approved at the start of the project and will avoid complications later in the process. We can help with this if needed.
- Do not send an unfinished piece of text to be translated. If it is edited or changed later in the process, it will increase the cost of the translation, as well as delaying it.
- Provide a contact number or e-mail address for queries which may arise, preferably for a specialist within your company. If the translator has any problems or queries, it is easier and faster for them to contact the company directly.
- Have the text checked by your localisation specialist before it is translated. This will ensure that there is nothing in the text which will be impossible to translate into the target language(s), nothing offensive (especially imagery) and that you have included all the necessary information.
- Allow sufficient time for your translation work to be done and checked – the longer you can give, the better the result. We'll be able to prepare properly; organise the team needed and select the very best linguists for your project.