

# Codes of Ethics for Translators and Interpreters

*ATA (American Translators Association)  
AATI (Asociación Argentina de Traductores e Intérpretes)  
AUSIT (Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators Incorporated)*

*A must for every translator*

# ATA's Code of Professional Conduct and Business Practices

[http://www.atanet.org/certification/online\\_ethics\\_code.php](http://www.atanet.org/certification/online_ethics_code.php)

I. **As a Translator or Interpreter, a bridge for ideas from one language to another and one culture to another, I commit myself to the highest standards of performance, ethical behavior, and business practices.**

A. **I will endeavor to translate or interpret the original message faithfully,**

*A faithful translation is one which conveys the message as the author intended it . For example, a literal word-for-word translation of “it was raining cats and dogs” would be nonsensical and would not faithfully convey the original as the author intended it. The translator would have to find an equivalent idiom in the target language in order to convey the meaning of the original. —Think of another situation where a translation might not convey the message as the author intended it.*

**to satisfy the needs of the end user(s).**

*The translator/interpreter must make an effort to be informed about the intended audience and the purpose of the translation. For example, a source text might be handled differently in translation depending upon whether it is being used as evidence in a court case or in a marketing campaign.*

—Think of a situation where a “faithful” translation might not satisfy the needs of the end user.

**I acknowledge that this level of excellence requires:**

1. **mastery of the target language equivalent to that of an educated native speaker;**

Ideally, most professional translators will translate

in only one direction into one target language. Some translate from several source languages into one target language. Interpreters are often called upon to interpret in both directions.

Translators and interpreters must both have in-depth knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and culture in both target and source languages. They must also have broad general knowledge. In addition, translators must have excellent writing skills in their target language.

—Do you think that all translators and interpreters should have college degrees? Why or why not?

**2. up-to-date knowledge of the subject material and its terminology in both languages;**

*Many translators and interpreters specialize in fields they have previously studied or worked in. They become subject-area specialists by taking courses, collecting parallel texts to extract terminology, attending conferences, and consulting with other translators and subject-area experts.*

—Do you have an area of expertise in which you could claim to be a specialist?

**3. access to information resources and reference materials, and knowledge of the tools of my profession;**

*Translators and interpreters must have excellent research skills drawing on the Internet, print materials, list serves, and on-line glossaries for terminology and background material. Translators must also have excellent computer skills and be familiar with software specifically for translators and*

*localizers.*

—What information resources do you have to draw on?

4. **continuing efforts to improve, broaden, and deepen my skills and knowledge.**

*Successful translators and interpreters are avid readers of a wide variety of material. They participate in on-line terminology discussions, and they attend conferences and other continuing education opportunities whenever possible. They welcome and encourage feedback on their work.*

—What can you do to broaden your skills?

B. **I will be truthful about my qualifications and will not accept any assignments for which I am not fully qualified.**

*There is a delicate balance between knowing your limitations and being willing to take on a new subject area in order to expand your skills. Self-knowledge at this level comes with experience and education.*

—Think of a subject area in which you should turn down a potential job.

—Think of a subject area that is beyond your current range of knowledge in which you would accept a job. Why would you accept it?

C. **I will safeguard the interests of my clients as my own and divulge no confidential information.**

*Confidentiality often extends beyond the obvious. Translators and interpreters must be careful to avoid even*

*the perception of breaching confidentiality.*

—Think of a translation or interpreting situation in which confidentiality is not an issue.

**D. I will notify my clients of any unresolved difficulties.**

*“Unresolved difficulties” could be a convoluted source text, terminological conundrums, the need for a deadline extension, or anything else that might prevent the on-time delivery of a quality product.*

A translator should inform the client as soon as possible if he or she does not understand the source text, cannot confirm terminology, or is not going to be able to meet the deadline. Interpreters working on-site should inform the client immediately if problems arise on the job.

—What can a translator or interpreter do if an emergency prevents him or her from fulfilling the terms of an agreement?

**If we cannot resolve a dispute, we will seek arbitration.**

*Most disputes have to do with late payment, non-payment, and/or non-performance. Non-performance disputes can sometimes be settled by bringing in a third party to evaluate the translation and reaching a compromise regarding compensation.*

The ATA does not intervene in commercial disputes between members.

—How would you respond if a client found serious errors in your translation?

**E. I will use a client as a reference only if I am prepared to name a person to**

**attest to the quality of my work.**

*Always get permission before using a client's name as a reference.*

—What are some appropriate ways of informing potential clients about your past experience and specific projects?

**F. I will respect and refrain from interfering with or supplanting any business relationship between my client and my client's client.**

*If you are known to an end client through a T&I company, it is considered unethical to accept work from the end client even if the end client approaches you.*

—What would be an appropriate way to handle the situation described above?

**II. As an employer or contractor of translators and/or interpreters, I will uphold the above standards in my business.**

*Most freelance translators and interpreters get their start working for T&I companies. A translator or interpreter may work for as many T&I companies as he or she wants; T&I companies do not have exclusive contracts with the translators who work for them.*

**I further commit myself to the following practices with translators and interpreters:**

**A. I will put my contractual relationship with translators and interpreters in writing and state my expectations prior to work.**

*It is acceptable for translators and interpreters to negotiate agreements proposed by T&I companies and to request changes in contracts.*

—Think of a situation in which the translator or interpreter might not want to sign a contract without requesting revisions.

**B. I will adhere to agreed terms, payment schedules, and agreed changes,**

*Unless otherwise stated in a signed contract, T&I companies should not withhold payment for services rendered even if there are perceived problems with the translation or interpreting service. Translators and interpreters should be paid on time regardless of whether or not the T&I company has been paid by the end client. When disputes regarding quality arise, compromises should be sought.*

—Think of a compromise that would work in a situation where a translation for publication is deemed accurate but poorly written.

**and I will not capriciously change job descriptions after work has begun.**

*Sometimes clients revise their source texts after the translator has begun to translate the text. If the content or length of a project changes after the project has begun, the terms of the contract, especially compensation and deadlines, should be revised to reflect the changes in the scope of the project.*

—Think of a situation where the job description might change after the translator has started to translate.

**C. I will deal directly with the translator or interpreter about my dispute.**

*If a T&I company is not satisfied with the quality of a translation, the T&I company should send a copy of the final edited text to the translator. Disputes about quality can often be resolved by seeking compromises regarding compensation.*

—Is it a good idea for a T&I company to return a poorly translated text to the translator for revisions? Why or why not?

**If we cannot resolve a dispute, we will seek arbitration.**

*Most disputes have to do with late payment, non-payment, and/or non-performance. Non-performance disputes can sometimes be settled by bringing in a third party to evaluate the translation and compromising about compensation.*

The ATA does not intervene in commercial disputes between members.

—What kind of a compromise might a T&I company and a translator reach about a non-performance dispute?

**D. I will not require translators or interpreters to do unpaid work for the prospect of a paid assignment.**

*This refers to the practice of requesting long sample translations from prospective translators. Translators should not be expected to translate more than a page or so as an unpaid sample without compensation.*

—If a T&I company requires longer sample translations for a particular project, what are the possibilities?

**E. I will not use translators' or interpreters' credentials in bidding or**

**promoting my business without their consent or without the bona fide intention to use their services.**

*When bidding on projects, especially government work, T&I companies are often asked to include the qualifications of the independent contractors they intend to work with. T&I companies should not include the names or CV's of translators or interpreters without the express permission of the translator or interpreter.*

—If a bid requires that a T&I company mention specific independent contractors, what is an appropriate way to compile such a list?

- F. For translations for publication or performance over which I have direct control, I will give translators recognition traditionally given authors.**

*The translator's name should appear on the jacket and on the title page of book translations.*

—Can you think of any other situations where it would be appropriate to give credit to the translator in print?



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## **Código de ética de la AATI (Asociación Argentina de Traductores e Intérpretes)**

**[http://www.aati.org.ar/codigo\\_etica.htm](http://www.aati.org.ar/codigo_etica.htm)**

**Como Traductor/Intérprete miembro de la AATI, me comprometo a cumplir con los niveles de calidad, conducta ética y práctica profesional que se desprenden del siguiente Código de Ética.**

### **I. INTRODUCCIÓN**

El presente Código tiene por objeto enunciar los principios que orientan la actitud y la conducta del intérprete o traductor literario, técnico y científico, en tanto miembro de la AATI, en su desempeño profesional específico. Las normas éticas del presente Código no excluyen otras no enunciadas expresamente y contemplan el principio de buena fe, con el que obran todas las personas, sean éstas profesionales o no. Se entiende que ninguna de las normas aquí incluidas contradice lo expresado en la Constitución Nacional de la República Argentina.

### **II. ÁMBITO DE APLICACIÓN**

**1. El siguiente Código de Ética se aplica a todos los profesionales miembro de la AATI. Es deber inapelable de los miembros de la AATI respetarlo y darlo a conocer a sus colegas y a la comunidad toda.**

2. En el presente Código y a los propósitos de su aplicación, los términos “traductor” e “intérprete” se utilizarán indistintamente. La misma generalización se aplica a los términos “traducción” e “interpretación”, en tanto productos de la tarea específica de los traductores o intérpretes profesionales a quienes alcanza el presente.

### **III. PRINCIPIOS DE COMPETENCIA PROFESIONAL**

3. Toda traducción deberá ser completa y fiel. Se entiende por completa y fiel aquella que transmite el mensaje de la manera que mejor se ajusta a la situación comunicativa de traducción. Los parámetros de dicha situación comunicativa serán los acordados de antemano con quien encarga la tarea.

**4. El ejercicio de la profesión debe ser consciente y digno, por lo que el traductor se abstendrá de traducir lo que no puede dominar, sea por desconocimiento del tema o por desconocimiento de alguna de las lenguas de trabajo.**

5. El traductor no deberá alegar fallas o errores de terceros cuando su tarea se vea desmerecida por incompetencia propia.

#### **IV. PRINCIPIOS DE CONDUCTA PROFESIONAL**

##### **IV.1 PRINCIPIO DE RESPONSABILIDAD**

6. La labor traductora compromete al traductor cada vez que éste desarrolla su tarea o representa a la AATI, sea consciente o no de la responsabilidad que le cabe. Por lo tanto, no se deberá ejercer la profesión de manera irresponsable, pues esta conducta también menoscaba, directa o indirectamente, a los colegas o a la institución.

7 El traductor jamás podrá aprovecharse de su técnica para falsear la verdad.

8 El traductor respetará estrictamente todo compromiso asumido para realizar su tarea en determinado tiempo y forma.

9 Cuando el traductor esté a cargo de un equipo de trabajo en calidad de coordinador, gerente de proyectos o similar, deberá establecer con sus colegas un compromiso escrito en el cual detalle las características de la tarea y el nivel de expectativa sobre la calidad de la traducción, junto con las condiciones de trabajo, entrega, pago, etc.

10 El coordinador o gerente de proyectos de traducción/ interpretación será responsable del trabajo que realizan los miembros de su equipo. En consecuencia, no podrá nunca alegar fallas o errores de las personas que trabajan bajo su dirección o a quienes ha delegado la tarea.

11 Ningún traductor deberá arrogarse habilidades que no son propias. Deberá diferenciar los servicios que presta personalmente de aquellos que deriva.

12 En el caso de no actuar como supervisor directo de un trabajo que se le encomienda, es decir, de ser un mero intermediario, el traductor deberá informar de esta circunstancia al cliente o al colega.

13 El traductor no debe interrumpir la prestación de sus servicios profesionales sin comunicarlo con antelación razonable, salvo que circunstancias especiales impidan dicha comunicación.

##### **IV.2 PRINCIPIO DE CONFIDENCIALIDAD**

14 El traductor se comprometerá a no divulgar la información recibida durante la ejecución de su trabajo y a no utilizarla en beneficio propio o de terceros, o en perjuicio de terceros.

15 Todo texto –o su reproducción por cualquier medio– es propiedad del cliente y no puede darse a conocer sin su consentimiento, excepto en casos extremos, en que causas de fuerza mayor o la Justicia así lo requieran.

16 En caso de trabajo en equipo o de subcontratación, el traductor-coordinador deberá exigir la misma confidencialidad por parte de los demás integrantes del equipo.

### **IV.3 PRINCIPIO DE IMPARCIALIDAD**

17 Al aceptar un trabajo, no debe existir ningún prejuicio o conflicto de intereses que influyan sobre la realización de la tarea. Si éstos existieran, el traductor debe darlos a conocer y declinar el trabajo o dejar la decisión final en manos del cliente.

18 El traductor deberá mantener siempre la neutralidad entre las distintas partes que intervienen en el acto comunicativo y abstenerse de emitir opinión sobre el contenido del trabajo o la marcha de las negociaciones.

19 El traductor sólo podrá aceptar presentes que impliquen un reconocimiento a su labor y gratitud por el servicio prestado y no un intento velado de soborno que pudiera comprometer su integridad profesional.

### **IV. 4 PRINCIPIO DE DIGNIDAD PROFESIONAL**

20 El traductor deberá abstenerse de realizar su tarea cuando su labor facilite actos incorrectos o punibles; pueda utilizarse para sorprender la buena fe de terceros; o bien pueda usarse en forma contraria al interés público, a los intereses de la profesión o para burlar la ley.

21 Ningún traductor deberá permitir que otra persona ejerza la profesión en su nombre, ni facilitar que otra persona pueda aparecer como profesional sin serlo.

22 Es deber de todo profesional abstenerse de aceptar condiciones que no garanticen la calidad de su trabajo. Esto implica negarse a trabajar en condiciones inaceptables en términos de tiempo, ambiente laboral o remuneración. El traductor deberá oponerse a todo aquello que menoscabe su propio honor o buen nombre o el de su profesión.

23 El traductor deberá respetar los parámetros de fijación de honorarios mínimos sugeridos por la AATI, y no aplicará tarifas sustancialmente inferiores, que estimulen la competencia desleal.

24 El traductor no deberá requerir del cliente una remuneración excesiva aprovechándose de su necesidad, ignorancia o inexperiencia. .

25 El traductor no deberá realizar gestiones encaminadas a desplazar o sustituir a un colega en un asunto profesional, haya aceptado éste el trabajo o no, ofreciendo menor precio o impidiendo la prestación de sus servicios.

26 El traductor deberá abstenerse también de realizar cualquier acción maliciosa que atraiga a los clientes de otro profesional.

27 Cuando actúe por derivación de trabajo de otro profesional, el traductor deberá abstenerse de recibir los honorarios o cualquier otra retribución correspondiente al colega que le hubiera delegado la tarea, sin su autorización previa.

28. El traductor no debe formular manifestaciones que puedan significar un menoscabo a un colega en su idoneidad, prestigio o moralidad en el ejercicio de su profesión.

29 Toda situación anómala que vaya en detrimento de una conducta ética deberá resolverse, en primera instancia, estrictamente entre los profesionales involucrados y, de persistir, dentro del marco establecido por la AATI o, en última instancia, de acuerdo con la legislación nacional vigente en el fuero civil, comercial o penal que corresponda, según el caso.

Este documento fue elaborado por las traductoras María Cristina Pinto y Alejandra Mercedes Jorge, presidenta y vocal de la AATI, respectivamente, y presentado en el IV Congreso Latinoamericano de Traducción e Interpretación realizado en Buenos Aires del 1 al 4 de mayo de 2003. Publicado por la AATI en [http://www.aati.org.ar/codigo\\_etica.htm](http://www.aati.org.ar/codigo_etica.htm)

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# **AUSIT (Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators Incorporated) Code of Ethics for Interpreters & Translators**

**<http://www.ausit.org/eng/showpage.php3?id=650>**

[Summary version]

## **General Principles**

### **1. Professional conduct**

Interpreters and translators shall at all times act in accordance with the standards of conduct and decorum appropriate to the aims of AUSIT, the national professional association of interpreters and translators.

Interpreters and translators should:

- always be polite and courteous, unobtrusive, firm and dignified
- explain their role to clients, encouraging them to speak to each other directly
- allow nothing to prejudice or influence their work, and disclose any possible conflict of interest
- decline gifts and tips (except token gifts customary in some cultures), explaining to clients that accepting them could compromise their professional integrity
- ensure punctuality at all times (and if lateness is unavoidable, advise clients immediately)
- prepare appropriately for assignments and ensure they are completed
- refrain from unprofessional or dishonourable behaviour and refer any unresolved disputes to the AUSIT Executive Committee and accept its decision.

### **2. Confidentiality**

Interpreters and translators shall not disclose information acquired during the course of their assignments.

- Interpreters and translators may only disclose information with the permission of their clients (or if the law requires disclosure).
- If other interpreters or translators are involved in the same assignment and require briefing, this should be done after obtaining the clients' permission, and all are obliged to maintain confidentiality.
- No work should be subcontracted to colleagues without clients' permission.
- Translated documents remain the client's property.

### **3. Competence**

Interpreters and translators shall undertake only work which they are competent to perform in the language areas for which they are "accredited" or "recognised" by NAATI.

- Acceptance of an assignment is a declaration of one's competence and constitutes a contract. If, during an assignment, it becomes clear that the work is beyond the interpreter's or translator's competence, they should inform clients immediately and withdraw.
- Interpreters/translators must clearly specify their NAATI accreditation, level and language direction, if necessary explaining its significance to clients.
- It is the interpreter's responsibility to ensure that working conditions facilitate communication.

- If an interpreter or translator is asked to provide a second opinion or to review alterations to the work of another practitioner, there should be final agreement between all interpreters and translators concerned.

#### **4. Impartiality**

Interpreters and translators shall observe impartiality in all professional contracts.

- Professional detachment must be maintained at all times. If interpreters or translators feel their objectivity is threatened, they should withdraw from the assignment.
- Practitioners should not recommend to clients anyone or anything in which they have personal or financial interest. If for some reason they have to do so they must fully disclose such interest - including assignments for relatives or friends, or which affect their employers.
- They should not accept, or should withdraw from, assignments in which impartiality may be risked because of personal beliefs or circumstances.
- Interpreters and translators are not responsible for what clients say or write. They should not voice or write an opinion on anything or anyone concerned with an assignment.
- If approached for service by all parties to a legal dispute, an interpreter or translator shall offer to work for the first party making the request and notify all parties concerned.

#### **5. Accuracy**

Interpreters and translators shall take all reasonable care to be accurate.

They must:

- relay accurately and completely all that is said by all parties in a meeting - including derogatory or vulgar remarks, non-verbal clues, and anything they know to be untrue
- not alter, add to or omit anything from the assigned work
- acknowledge and promptly rectify any interpreting or translation mistakes. If anything is unclear, interpreters must ask for repetition, rephrasing or explanation. If interpreters have lapses of memory which lead to inadequate interpreting, they should inform the client, ask for a pause and signal when they are ready to continue.
- ensure speech is clearly heard and understood by all present. Where possible (and if agreed to by all parties), interpreters may arrange a short general conversation with clients beforehand to ensure clear understanding by all
- provide full evidence of NAATI accreditation or recognition if requested

#### **6. Employment**

Interpreters and translators shall be responsible for the quality of their work, whether employed as freelance practitioners or by interpreting and translation agencies or other employers.

- AUSIT members may set their own rates and conditions in freelance assignments. They may not accept for personal gain any fees, favours or commissions from anyone when making any recommendations to clients.
- Interpreters and translators are responsible for services to clients performed by assistants or subcontracted employees. I&T practitioners employed by colleagues must exercise the same diligence in performing their duties.

#### **7. Professional development**

Interpreters and translators shall continue to develop their professional knowledge and skills.

- They should constantly review and re-evaluate their work performance.
- They should maintain and enhance their skills by study and experience, and keep up to date with relevant languages and cultures.

#### **8. Professional solidarity**

Interpreters and translators shall respect and support their fellow professionals.

They should:

- assist and further the interests of colleagues, refraining from comments injurious to the reputation of a colleague
- promote and enhance the integrity of the profession through trust and mutual respect. Differences of opinion should be expressed with candour and respect - not by denigration -refraining from behaviour considered unprofessional by their peers.