

How to prepare for the ATIA associate-level examination

(By: Regina Landeck)



Pre-Requisite Examinations

Always read the instructions carefully!

Code of Ethics

- You will be presented with 25-30 multiple choice questions, based on ATIA's Code of Ethics and the Rules of Professional Conduct for Court Interpreters.
- Print out the Code of Ethics from the ATIA website (www.atia.ab.ca). You will find it under the tab "About Us". You also have a copy in this Information Package.
- This seems to be obvious: READ the ATIA Code of Ethics at least twice before writing the exam. We recommend that you read it on separate days, as this will improve your chances of retention. Remember, you do not have to memorize the Code of Ethics. You may bring your printed copy along to the exam. If you should forget it, the invigilator will have some additional copies on the day of the exam.
- When reading the Code of Ethics in preparation of the exam, be an "active" reader, i.e. ask yourself what the reason for the various regulations may be or think about situations that would constitute a violation.

English Proficiency Examinations (You only write ONE of the following exams.)

Reading Comprehension Exam

- If you are writing your translation exam from English INTO another language, you will have to complete the *Reading Comprehension Exam*.
- In this exam, you will be given 5 short reading passages followed by multiple-choice questions. The reading level required corresponds to what is expected of first-year university students. The test is modeled after the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), which is used as the standard admission requirement for non-native speakers of English to North American Universities. If you have taken the TOEFL in the past, you have a good idea of the type of questions to expect. However, a recent TOEFL score does not exempt you from the requirement of passing this part of the examination.
- Search the Internet for "GMAT" or "GRE" sites to get an idea of the reading comprehension tasks.
- Remember: you are NOT allowed to bring any reference material to this test. (No dictionaries, computers, grammar books, etc.)

Editing Exam

- If you are writing from another language INTO English, you will have to pass the editing exam.
- In the editing exam, you will be given 20 English sentences to consider. Some of these sentences may contain mistakes, some may be correct. It is your job to identify the mistake by underlining it and to write a correct version of the sentence underneath. You do not need to give a grammatical explanation regarding the nature of the mistake, just provide a reasonable alternative to the incorrect sentence. Only provide ONE sentence. If you provide more than one option, only the first option will be marked. If the sentence is correct, write “correct”.
- Error types can include anything from verb tenses, spelling, word choice, punctuation, sentence structure, prepositions, phrases and clauses, subject-verb agreement, usage etc.
- The language level of this exam corresponds to what would be expected from a first-year university student.
- To prepare for this part of the exam, we recommend that you review English grammar. Get a good grammar book and work through all sections. Your local bookstore will have a variety of books and practice activities to choose from.
- The editing exam is based on the following references: “The Canadian Style – A Guide to Writing and Editing”, Dundurn Press Limited, ISBN1-55002-276-8, and “The Canadian Oxford Dictionary”, Oxford University Press, Catalogue number: 0-19-541816-6
- Search the Internet for websites on English grammar. There are many sites that offer practice tests.
- Remember: you are NOT allowed to bring any reference material to this test. (No dictionaries, computers, grammar books, etc.)

Reading Comprehension and Editing Exam

More formal options for exam preparation

Some more formal preparation options for the *Reading Comprehension Exam* and the *Editing Exam* include formal language, writing and grammar courses offered through your local continuing education programs. Please check with your local colleges for their course offers.

Associate-level Translation Exam

Once you have passed the pre-requisite exams, you are able to register to write the translation exam in the language combination you registered for. Here are a few things to remember and consider.

- Being bilingual alone does not automatically make you a translator.
- You must be fluent in the language you are translating into and have excellent knowledge of the language you are translating from.
- You must be familiar with the current social context of both languages in order to be able to understand nuances.
- You must be an excellent writer in the language you are translating INTO.
- You must keep up to date with language developments in both languages:
 - Read magazines and newspapers in both languages on a regular basis.
 - Visit the countries where the languages are spoken to brush up your skills on a regular basis.
 - Subscribe to linguistic newsletters (if available) in your language combination.
 - Take a writing course in the language you are translating INTO.
 - Take a reading course in the language you are translating FROM.
- It helps, but is not absolutely essential, to have a university degree completed in the language you are translating into.
- You definitely must be interested in language and linguistics and enjoy working with words.

Exam Preparation:

- Practice, practice, practice! Get familiar with your resources. You should have at least the following resources:
 - An excellent bilingual dictionary
 - A thesaurus (a dictionary giving you synonyms and antonyms) in the language you are translating INTO.
 - A grammar of the language you are translating INTO
- Do practice translations from articles you find in magazines. Use magazines that are written at a higher language level, i.e. Maclean's, Time, Canadian or National Geographic etc. or their equivalents in the language you are translating from. Have someone with excellent language skills read your translation and give you honest feedback. Remember: if it reads like a translation, it is a BAD translation. The reader of your translation should be able to read your translation as if it were an original piece.
- Read good translations and their original counterparts. ATIA offers copies of TransLit, which includes short passages from literature (short stories, poems, etc.) in the original version with a translation done by certified translators. This gives you a good idea what a professional translation looks like. Contact ATIA for information and orders.
- Take advantage of the educational opportunities offered by ATIA:
 - An Introduction to Translation
 - English Grammar and Punctuation for Language Professionals
 - The Ethical Translator: Professional Development Workshop & Code of Ethics Exam Preparation
 - Tutorial for the Associate-level exam. Work on 3 practice texts with a tutor.