

# Guidelines for In-House Translation Reviews

Employees reviewing translations and those requesting internal reviews should follow these guidelines to ensure quality and to record translation vendor performance.

Please forward the translated documents to your internal reviewer, a copy of the English originals, these guidelines, and the Translation Quality Assurance Form.

- **Peer reviewers should focus on two areas: errors and context barriers.** The reviewer's task is to correct mistakes and to point out contextual barriers by offering constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement. Reviewers should not concentrate on style. Ask yourself: is this really an issue or is it a matter of taste?
- **Peer reviewers should be native speakers.** Please consider regional differences of the language. For example, Spanish varies greatly among countries and regions. Before deciding that a work or expression is incorrect, double check to make sure that the word is in fact incorrect and not a word that sounds foreign only because you are not accustomed to using it. Remember that our US audience comprises a variety of speakers from different countries and regions. Therefore, we must make a conscious effort at including those variations in our translations.
- **Use the following steps to guide the review process.** Following are standard procedures for reviewers to follow, consisting of seven steps.

**Step 1: Read the translation first.** Set aside the original English document to read later. Read the translation right through to assess the quality and suitability of the language version. By reading only the language version at first, you should gain a general impression of the ideas expressed in the other language, without your judgment being affected by what the English version says.

**Step 2: Take mental notes.** As you read, make a mental note of where you have to pause to "get the meaning", or if any part of the translation is not possible to comprehend.

**Step 3: Read the English version and compare the translated document with the English version.** If you think the translation is not a high enough standard to be published as health information for members of the public, please inform the project coordinator immediately to discuss whether you should continue the checking process.

**Step 4: Review the translation for accuracy of context, meaning, message, grammar, and spelling.** When reviewing the translated document, ask yourself the questions outlined below. Identify and mark any significant inaccuracies and write on your copy of the translation what you think it should say in the target language. Where appropriate, include brief explanatory comments.

- Does the translated document convey the same meaning as the original English?
- Does it contain all, and only, the essential messages that were in the English original, and is it easy to follow?
- Are medical terms accurately translated into language that will be understood by the intended reader?
- Would the readers of the translated version, who only speak the other language, understand everything and be comfortable with the way it is expressed? Is the translation inappropriate or offensive for your audience?
- Are there any mistranslations, additions or omissions, or unclear messages?



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- Are there any serious mistakes which distort or cloud the meaning of any part of the text?
- Are there grammatical errors, such as incorrect gender usage, mistakes in spelling, punctuation, script, accents, incorrect or inconsistent capitalization, or hyphenation?
- Is the language level appropriate? Are there words and phrases that the target population may not understand because of literacy issues?
- Does the translation maintain the same tone and reading level as the original?

**Step 5: Proofread and check the overall presentation and layout.** Are there any problems with general presentation, format and layout, font size, spacing or alignment of text? Proofread carefully to make sure that all dates and times are correct, also the format of postal addresses, codes etc., that titles and headings (including any in English) are consistent and complete. It is important to check that any English words or information included in the translated text have been spelled and inserted correctly.

**Step 6: Complete the Translation Quality Assurance Form.** Using the attached form rate the translated document for loyalty, accuracy, register, false cognates, appropriateness for culture/ audience, and grammar and style. Provide an overall rating of the translation, and general comments in one or two paragraphs on the quality of the translation. Comment, for example, if it has been translated “word for word” in a way that makes the meaning unclear. If you feel that the way the English original was written has led to problems for the translator, please make this clear. Remember that the project coordinator may not speak the language concerned, and is relying on you to explain why you consider the translation unsatisfactory.

**Step 7: Contact your translator.** Review your concerns, corrections, and comments with translator/translation agency and discuss changes for developing another draft of the translation.

**For questions or technical assistance, contact  
[INSERT APPROPRIATE DEPARTMENT] at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER].**

Adapted from The Commonwealth of Massachusetts *Translation Guidelines for Written Materials* and the NSW Multicultural Health Communications Service *Seven Steps* translation guidelines.



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