

HOW CAN COUNSEL AND THE COURT HELP WITH REALTIME?

Realtime translation begins with the court reporter, but he or she is not solely responsible for the quality of the translation. The conduct of the participants in the courtroom can greatly affect realtime translation. If you look at the screen and see an increase in mistranslates or untranslates, several things could be happening. Less useable realtime can occur if there are words not in the reporter's stenographic dictionary, if people are crosstalking, if someone is talking too fast, if someone is not talking clearly, or if the court reporter is getting tired. The reporter cannot write what they do not hear or understand.

It is important to provide the court reporter with a word list ahead of time. This list should include not only the witnesses' names, but any names that may be mentioned during the proceedings, any technical terms, geographical locations, including street names or business names, and any cases you anticipate citing. If it is a word where the pronunciation is not obvious, it is helpful to know how to pronounce the name or term.

It is necessary to pronounce your words clearly. If a person says, "I saw 'em over there," the reporter can usually later determine from context whether that should be "him" or "them." It is sometimes difficult to do that while writing realtime. Court reporters also write phonetically. If you don't pronounce a word clearly, the realtime may be as garbled as your speech.

Crosstalking and talking too fast can have disastrous effects on realtime. Although the court reporter may be able to keep up with the fast examination or sort out two people talking at one time, the precision with which each word must be written for the computer to recognize it in realtime will suffer.

It requires a higher degree of mental gymnastics to write realtime. When the reporter hears a homonym such as the word "to," they must first determine whether it should appear as "to," "two," "too," "2," or "II," recall the necessary steno stroke for the differentiation, and then write the word. Also each word spoken must be written precisely on the steno machine in order for the computer to be able to recognize it. This is both mentally and physically tiring. It will help the quality of the translation if regular breaks can be taken.

You are an important part of a realtime record and by following these suggestions you are helping to ensure a high-quality product.