



Sylvia Scheibe
Hafenstraße 20 C
D-23568 Lübeck

Telefon: +49 451 9695035
Fax: +49 451 9692031
Mobil: +49 163 4319062

sylvia@scheibe-translations.com
www.scheibe-translations.com

USt-IdNr./VAT ID No./No. TVA:
DE814253215

Good translation must not be left to chance

How you can contribute to the success of your translation project as the client

1. The groundwork:

Check that the file for the translator contains all the sections to be translated and that these can be edited (particularly, if this involves the translation of software and websites), and also check that all the information is relevant for the target audience. It may be that certain information can be left out, reducing translation costs.

2. Plan for text expansion.

This is particularly important, if the layout of the translation should not differ greatly from the layout of the original, as is the case with software interfaces, for example. An expansion of between 5 and 20% should be taken into account for the language direction English – German. For translations from French to German, the translation will generally only expand by 0-10%, though in certain cases, this can also easily be 20%.

3. Plan time for the translation in your project schedule.

Calculate one working day per 2,000 words of source text just for the translation. A further working day per 8,000 words of source text may also be required for additional proofreading.

Give sufficient notice of your translation project, so that the translator can reserve the necessary time.

4. Select a translator with the relevant qualifications.

Your translator should have the target language as their **mother tongue**, as only then can you be sure that you will receive a document without any inappropriate linguistic abnormalities.

Moreover, the translator should be familiar with the **subject area** of the text concerned, as a lack of specialist knowledge can easily lead to misinterpretations and terminology errors.

Even though the term “translator” is not a legally protected occupational title, and anyone who wants to is able to work in this profession, you should engage a translator with the right **training**. This will reduce the risk of you receiving an unprofessional translation, which, in the worst case scenario, you will have to arrange to be completely reworked.

Alongside the title “graduate translator” or “state-approved translator”, membership of a professional body, such as the German Association of Interpreters and Translators (BDÜ) is a further assurance of quality. Translators have to satisfy certain criteria in terms of their training or professional experience to gain membership of a professional body.

5. Specify your requirements to the translator in as much detail as possible.

You require a translation purely for information, or is the text intended for publication? What is the target audience for the text? Should the translator adhere to a certain style guide? Do you use specific terminology in your company that the translator must observe?

6. Provide the translator with any reference material you have available before the start of the project.

For example, terminology lists, translations of previous versions and illustrations



7. Respond to any queries the translator may have as quickly as possible.

A responsible translator will ask questions, if they do not understand certain points in the text or are uncertain about the choice of terminology. Answer these questions as quickly as possible, as otherwise any ambiguities could permeate the entire text and will take considerable time to correct later on. As translators are the most critical readers of your text, you may even benefit from this process and revise any final ambiguities in your original.

8. Avoid any part deliveries, if possible.

When under pressure, it may appear reasonable to ask the translator for part delivery. This will then enable you to carry out any further work on this part while the translator continues with the rest of the translation. Please consider, however, that changes in terminology towards the end of the translation are very likely that will affect the entire text. It may be that the translator realises certain things at the end that results in them completely revising one sentence or paragraph of the part that has already been delivered. Even if it is possible to insert changes at a later date: you will receive the best result from one complete delivery.

9. Have the translation proofread by a second translator.

If even the translator works very carefully and uses all available tools to correct errors, it can arise that they will not see their own errors. For text intended for publication, you should therefore consider engaging a second translator for the proofreading.

10. Have your document checked by the translator after any DTP work.

Further errors may occur during the DTP work that the translator can correct, e.g. incorrect hyphenation.

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