



Assessments Guide for Interpreters

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Assessments Department Overview

Our Mission

The mission of the Assessments Department is to support the growth of Sorenson Communications and foster excellence in the field of interpretation. Our team is proud to support interpreters and applicants on their journey of skill development. We want every Sorenson VRS call to be interpreted with excellence and we strive to help interpreters succeed every day.

What We Do

The Sorenson Assessments Department:

- Identifies key skills needed for effective interpreting
- Conducts valid and reliable assessments of applicants and current employees
- Provides individualized feedback to interpreters
- Collects macro- and micro-level information to support the objectives of Sorenson training and other initiatives

Contact Us

Send your questions about the SVRS Assessment to AssessmentsResourceTeam@sorenson.com. A member of our team will respond as soon as possible. In your email, please let us know the Sorenson call center where you work or are applying to work, so that we may include the local center management in our correspondence.

How Does the SVRS Assessment Measure Interpreting Skills?

Assessment Validity

Video Relay Service (VRS) is the interpretation of telephone calls. VRS calls include a wide variety of topics, settings, and registers with callers of all ages and backgrounds. Interpreters working in this environment must be qualified to interpret extemporaneous conversations, without the aid of advance preparation.

The SVRS Assessment examines patterns of interpreting errors exhibited during simulated VRS calls. In order to standardize the interpreting task, each interpreter is filmed while working with pre-recorded materials. The stimulus videos were produced to authentically represent VRS work, i.e. interactive conversations in common types of phone calls. When scoring, the raters recognize that the interpretation takes place in an artificial situation without the opportunity to clarify.

Each version of the SVRS Assessment is created through a collaborative effort with extensive time devoted to maintaining accuracy and reliability. The test development process involves in-depth source text analyses by Deaf and hearing team members and comprehensive pilot testing.

Assessment Reliability

Raters are provided ongoing guidance and feedback on their work performance to ensure they remain as consistent and objective as possible. Assessments are rated and reviewed by multiple people in order to uphold inter-rater reliability and to avoid unintentional biases. Raters recuse themselves from evaluating videos for interpreters they know personally or professionally, or if there is any reason the rating would not be impartial.

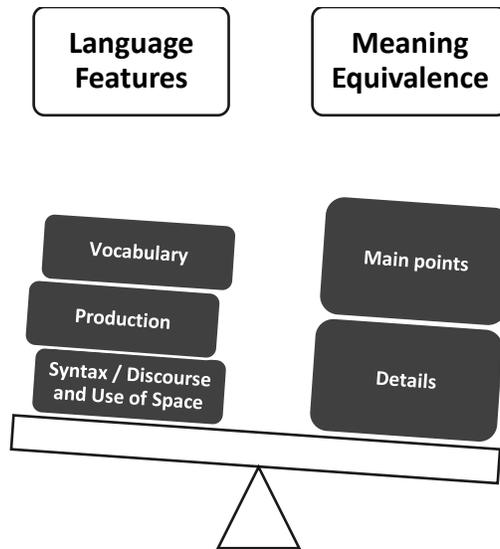
Fidelity to the Source Message

The SVRS Assessment recognizes there are many different ways to produce an equivalent interpretation. Each interpretation is scored based on a rubric for individual turns within the conversation, with set criteria for observable features. There is not one “right” version that raters expect to see or hear, and mistakes are considered inevitable in any simultaneous interpretation.

The rating framework is based on two main categories: meaning equivalence and language features. Although both categories are highly important in a dynamically equivalent interpretation, the scoring of meaning equivalence is weighted more heavily than the language features. Retrievable meaning is deemed more important than how the concepts are phrased.

For the purposes of this specific assessment, meaning equivalence is comprised of main points and details. Language features that are assessed include vocabulary, production, syntax/discourse, and use of space. To avoid subjectivity, unobservable aspects of interpreting are not rated, e.g. speculations as to the root causes for an interpreter’s errors. Please see the following chart for specific expectations.

Rating Categories and Expectations



ASL to English Interpreting	
Main Points Equivalence	Main points were accurately represented, while avoiding skews, omissions, and additions
Details Equivalence	Details were accurately represented, while avoiding skews, omissions, and additions
Vocabulary	English vocabulary was appropriate for intent and register, while avoiding ASL intrusions
Production	Clear pronunciation, volume, tone, pitch, and pacing/pausing
English Syntax / Discourse	Correct English word order, sentence types, tense, and discourse markers

English to ASL Interpreting	
Main Points Equivalence	Main points were accurately represented, while avoiding skews, omissions, and additions
Details Equivalence	Details were accurately represented, while avoiding skews, omissions, and additions
Vocabulary	ASL vocabulary was appropriate for intent and register, while avoiding English intrusions
Production	Clearly produced fingerspelling, numbers, and signs with natural pacing/pausing
ASL Syntax / Discourse	Correct ASL sign order, sentence types, tense, and discourse markers
Use of Space	Appropriate use of directional verbs, indexing, constructed action, constructed dialogue, classifiers, etc.

Filming the Assessment

SVRS Assessment Process Overview

1. Fill out the Interpreter Information Form
 - This data is used for statistical analysis and training development
 - Individual interpreters' names, demographics, and identifiable individual scores will not be published, printed, or shown in public forums without permission
2. Schedule your filming appointment with a proctor
 - All appointments are proctored remotely via FaceTime or Google Duo
3. Record a sample video to check the audio and video settings
4. Interpret the warm-up video
5. Interpret the assessment video
 - Two phone call scenarios
 - Lasts a total of 10-12 minutes
6. Results and action plans will be provided

Prepare with Practice Videos

Visit our website at <http://www.SorensonNHS.com> to interpret sample videos and to get more information about how to prepare for the SVRS Assessment.

Conduct Agreement

Sorenson's VRS Assessment contains confidential and proprietary information used in identifying qualified ASL interpreters. By consenting to participate in an assessment, you agree to allow Sorenson to film your interpreting sample and to maintain a copy for internal use, maintain professional conduct during the filming session, and to keep all contents of the Sorenson assessment video strictly confidential. You further agree that you will not engage in any of the following prohibited conduct:

- Discussing with third parties any of the assessment video's subject matter or terminology, unless given written permission from the Sorenson Director of Assessments
- Saving a copy of the video file or covertly recording the assessment video with a phone, watch, or other personal device
- Taking notes or transcribing any contents of the video
- Disclosing to third parties the video file or a description of its contents via email, website, social media, file sharing platform, or any other method of public or private transmission
- Allowing anyone access to see/hear the assessment video or its interpretation
- Previewing the assessment video before interpreting it

Any breach of this agreement will be grounds for immediate termination of employment or disqualification to be hired. It may also result in legal action to recuperate the cost of the compromised intellectual property, e.g. video production, scoring materials, rater training, etc.

Get Comfortable in the Filming Environment

Be sure to stay positioned in front of the camera so that your hands and face will be clearly recorded. Please do not adjust the laptop screen after you center yourself and set it.

Make sure you can see the video and hear it well enough to interpret. Adjust the volume level and laptop location/angle. If you would like to request any accommodations in order to interpret the video, please let the proctor know.

Technical Difficulties and Distractions

Do not stop or rewind the video during the assessment unless there is a technical issue that prevents you from interpreting, e.g. the video freezes, you cannot adjust the volume, etc. Immediately contact the proctor and describe what happened. If a minor technical issue or distraction arises after the filming has begun, please continue interpreting.

Keep in Mind

As with any interpreting assignment, be sure to match the language preferences of the callers, while still conveying the equivalent content and the emotional tone of the message.

The SVRS Assessment does not score behaviors related to asking for clarification. Even if you feel the need to clarify information, continue interpreting to the best of your ability. If you take time to explain about clarification with the callers, this effort may cause you to unintentionally skew, omit, or add information.

After Filming the Assessment

Timeline for Results

Our Assessments team finalizes all results as soon as possible. Results for applicants are typically finalized within one month after the video is uploaded. Results for current employees may take longer. The interpreting center Director will keep in touch with you regarding the status of your assessment and he or she will contact you when the results are ready.

Results and Action Plans

The SVRS Assessment is scored with results 0-100. If the video meets the minimum standard for a full assessment, your results will include your total score. If it does not, you will still receive suggestions for skills to work on, but not a specific score.

When the assessment results are finalized, you will be prescribed action plans based on patterns of errors observed in your video. The action plans are one-page documents designed to provide you with knowledge and skill resources for self-guided professional development. All action plans are public documents that may be used by any Sorenson employees and applicants. These resources may be used before and/or after testing.

Current action plan topics include: Omissions, Skews or Additions, Word choices, Pronoun choices, Pacing/pausing, Pronunciation, Volume, Incomplete thoughts, Word order, Sentence types, Tense, Redundant concepts, Sign choices, Overuse of fingerspelling, Avoiding use of fingerspelling, Adverbial nonmanual, Exaggerated mouthing, Fingerspelling production, Numbers production, Sign production, Sign size, Sign order, Discourse markers, Constructed action/dialogue, Indexing, Directional verbs, Classifiers, Affect, and Demeanor. If you have questions about terminology in your results, please see the Glossary at the end of this guide.

Next Steps

Sorenson Applicants:

If you do not pass the New Hire Screening, you may return after waiting 6 months. Please work with the interpreting center Director on how to reapply and the specific timeline for when you are eligible to return. Use this time to be proactive about developing your interpreting skills. Do the activities provided in your action plans. Seek mentoring in your community and practice skill exercises outside of your regular interpreting assignments.

Sorenson Employees:

Check in with your supervisor about opportunities for professional development at Sorenson and in your local community. Please use the resources provided in your action plans.

THANK YOU AND GOOD LUCK!

Glossary

Definitions	Examples of Errors
Additions: error that adds extra meaning to an interpretation	“MY NAME fs-Jessica fs-Jones” is not equivalent to “I am Jessica Jones from Indiana.”
Adverbial nonmanuals: ASL mouth movements that show duration, intensity, relative distance, etc.	Puffed cheeks when signing SCHOOL Signing WORK with tongue out
Affect: observable expressions of emotion through facial and body movements, gestures, tone of voice, laughter, etc.	Expressing emotions that do not match the emotional tone of the caller, e.g. inequivalently angry, impatient, hesitant, confused, monotone, showing lack of facial expression, or exaggerated facial expressions
Avoiding use of fingerspelling: signing words that should be fingerspelled or accompanied by fingerspelling	Not fingerspelling names and other proper nouns
Classifiers: depictions of size, shape, location, and/or movement of nouns	CL:F (“F” handshape) to describe a vehicle driving on a bumpy road
Constructed action/dialogue: the act of becoming the characters and objects within an ASL message, and showing action or dialogue rather than telling about it; during constructed action or constructed dialogue, the interpreter’s eye gaze looks towards the space and characters	Signing “SEARCH FOR WALLET”, but never acting out looking for it
Context: the conditions in which communication takes place, i.e. participants’ goals, physical setting, situation, relationships, shared knowledge, etc.	
Contrastive structure: indexing in ASL in order to compare concepts	Referring to two different concepts in the exact same area of space during one sentence

Glossary

Definitions	Examples of Errors
<p>Demeanor: the interpreter’s ability to focus on the interpreting task without distracting behaviors that show the interpreter’s personal feelings; professional and appropriate appearance</p>	<p>Side comments, laughter, reactions to errors, and other behaviors directly related to the interpreter rather than the callers; distracting clothing, movements, noises, whispering while signing, etc.</p>
<p>Details: specific information in the source message, e.g. numbers, proper nouns, and other important particulars</p>	<p>“Thank you for helping me with my homework” is not equivalent to “THANK-YOU HELP-ME.”</p>
<p>Directional verbs: ASL verbs that include spatial information, e.g. GIVE, FLY, BLAME</p>	<p>Signing GIVE-ME when the source message was “give you”; if the interpretation somehow restructured the information to be equivalent and make sense, that would not be considered an error</p>
<p>Discourse markers: words, phrases, pausing, or nonmanual actions that create cohesive transitions in a conversation or lecture by linking together ideas and signaling what will happen next; ASL discourse markers include WARN, INFORM, CURIOUS, UNDERSTAND, ANYWAY, PUSH-ASIDE, BACK-UP, #OK, etc.; English discourse markers include “oh,” “okay,” “now,” “so,” “basically,” “first,” “second,” “finally,” etc.</p>	<p>All concepts run together without any breaks between thoughts</p>
<p>Exaggerated mouthing: distracting mouth movements to emphasize English words or phrases</p>	<p>Signing DOESN’T-MATTER with over-emphasis on mouthing the words “even though”</p>
<p>Eye gaze: movement of the interpreter’s eyes that signal topicalization, interaction with characters, etc.; the interpreter looks toward space/characters during constructed action and constructed dialogue</p>	<p>Using constructed action to show the act of chopping vegetables, but the interpreter’s eyes do not look down toward the chopping movements</p>
<p>Fingerspelling production: clarity of fingerspelling</p>	<p>Misspellings, incorrect letter handshapes, incorrect movements, unnatural transitions between letters</p>

Glossary

Definitions	Examples of Errors
<p>Grammar nonmanuals: eyebrow, facial, head, and body movements that signal sentence types, e.g. eyebrows down for wh- questions, eyebrows up for yes/no questions, topics, conditionals, and rhetorical; head moves back and forth for negation</p>	<p>Signing the rhetorical question, “ME LIVE WHERE? SAN ANTONIO,” and moving eyebrows down while signing WHERE</p>
<p>Handshape: specific manual configuration for an ASL sign</p>	<p>Signing YES with an “A” handshape</p>
<p>Incomplete thoughts: sentences signed or said by the interpreter that are missing a critical part of the thought, e.g. a pronoun, antecedent, tense marker, verb, etc.</p>	<p>“I decided to... Where should we go for dinner?” “YESTERDAY WE BOOK.”</p>
<p>Incorrect/non-standard vocabulary: ineffective sign or word choices that do not match the intended meaning and/or context; the vocabulary choices may not be clear for the target audience due to being a variation that is not widely known, i.e. regional signs</p>	<p>“We leave on Wednesday” is not equivalent to “MONDAY WE LEAVE.” “MY MOTHER GROW-UP FLORIDA” is not equivalent to “My parents grew up in Louisiana.” “TIRE FLAT” (Texas variation for “tire”)</p>
<p>Indexing in space: structuring space in ASL to refer to people, places, and things</p>	<p>Using one referent in space to represent two different people</p>
<p>Indexing/listing on hand: a listing technique using the interpreter’s fingers to refer to specific items or a sequence</p>	<p>Holding up 2 fingers to list 3 items</p>
<p>Intrusions: unnatural sign or word choices that occur when the source language unduly influences the interpretation</p>	<p>“We closed on our house” is not equivalent to “WE CLOSE HOUSE.” “RAIN+++” is not equivalent to “It rained and rained and rained.”</p>

Glossary

Definitions	Examples of Errors
<p>Location / contact point: specific placement of the hand(s) expected for a sign; errors may be related to unclear production of where the interpreter’s hands stop or touch</p>	<p>Signing BOSS on the non-dominant shoulder</p> <p>Signing PLEASE without touching</p>
<p>Main points: the fundamental concepts in the source message; very general information; the goal(s) of the signer/speaker</p>	<p>“Thank you for helping me with my homework” is not equivalent to “THANK-YOU FOR HOMEWORK.”</p>
<p>Movement: specific motions of the hand(s) expected for a sign in ASL</p>	<p>Signing CHILDREN with both hands moving to the side in the same direction</p>
<p>Non-standard English grammar: idiosyncratic errors of English syntax, such as incorrect subject-verb agreement, nouns, verbs, prepositions, plurals, articles, adjectives, adverbs, etc.</p>	<p>“I goed to the school.”</p> <p>“I am on that study group.”</p>
<p>Numbers production: clarity of numbers; errors may be related to handshape, movement, natural transitions between numbers, money rules, time rules, age rules, etc.</p>	<p>Producing “79” as the digits “7” and “9” without twisting the hand</p>
<p>Omissions: error that causes meaning to be missing from an interpretation</p>	<p>“MY NAME fs-James fs-Earl fs-Jones” is not equivalent to “My name is James Jones.”</p>
<p>Overuse of fingerspelling: ASL vocabulary error marked by unnecessarily fingerspelling words that should have been signed or omitted</p>	<p>Fingerspelling “have” or “ummmmm”</p>
<p>Pacing/pausing: flow and speed of ASL sentences and English sentences</p>	<p>Long pauses, pauses in the middle of a thought, overly fast pacing, overly slow pacing, etc.</p>

Glossary

Definitions	Examples of Errors
<p>Palm orientation: specific position of where the hand faces during a sign</p>	<p>Signing STOP with the dominant hand sideways (perpendicular to the non-dominant hand)</p> <p>Signing HANG-UP-PHONE with the non-dominant hand facing down</p>
<p>Pronoun choices: words that take the place of an established noun or noun phrase, e.g. “he”, “she”, “they”, “hers”, “his”, “themselves”, “this”, “that”, “someone”, ME, YOUR, SELF, etc.</p>	<p>Calling a person “it”</p> <p>“Her is excited to be here.”</p> <p>Signing YOU when the possessive pronoun YOUR was needed, and vice versa</p>
<p>Pronunciation: clarity of spoken words; errors may be related to muttering, spoonerisms, or other peculiarities while speaking that make words difficult to comprehend</p>	<p>Severe enunciation mistakes that make it difficult or impossible to understand the words</p>
<p>Redundant concepts: concepts, phrases and/or sentences that are repeated unnecessarily</p>	<p>SEEM CLASS CANCEL. THINK FEEL MAYBE. WE’LL-SEE.</p> <p>“I really want to know how I can help him.... How can I help him?... Because he really needs me to support him.”</p>
<p>Register: level of formality in a situation, often categorized as formal, consultative, informal/casual, intimate, or frozen; register affects vocabulary choices, fingerspelling rules, pronunciation, size of sign space, ellipsis (leaving out information that is expected to be understood), etc.; register is the social distance - unspoken rules of who has the power to manage turn-taking, topics, expectations of politeness, etc.</p>	<p>Greeting the CEO of a company for the first time by saying, “What’s up?” or “WHAT’S-UP.”</p>
<p>Sentence types (ASL): types of grammar structures in ASL, e.g. topic-comment, conditional, yes/no questions, wh- questions, rhetorical questions, declaratives, imperatives, etc.</p>	<p>Phrasing a question as a statement</p>

Glossary

Definitions	Examples of Errors
<p>Sentence types (English): types of grammar structures in English, e.g. subject-verb-object, passive voice, conditional, yes/no questions, wh- questions, declaratives, or imperatives, etc.</p>	<p>Phrasing a question as a statement</p>
<p>Sign choices: ASL vocabulary, which should match the caller’s intent, register, and vernacular; errors may include using a sign that has inaccurate meaning for that context, sign variations that are not widely known, etc.</p>	<p>“We leave on Wednesday” is not equivalent to “MONDAY WE LEAVE.”</p> <p>“TIRE FLAT” (Texas variation for “tire”)</p>
<p>Sign order: the sequence of signs within an ASL sentence</p>	<p>“The boy was bitten by a dog” is not equivalent to “BOY BITE DOG.”</p>
<p>Sign size too small or large (sign envelope): an ASL production error related to signing space being too limited or being on too broad of a canvas</p>	<p>Tightening up shoulders, raising elbows, extending arms too far, etc.</p>
<p>Skews: error that that substitutes incorrect meaning into an interpretation</p>	<p>MY NAME fs-Angela fs-Medearis” is not equivalent to “My name is Angela Medina.”</p>
<p>Source: the original language <u>from</u> which a message is interpreted (said by the consumers)</p> <p>Target: the language <u>into</u> which a message is interpreted (said by the interpreter)</p>	
<p>ASL → English</p>	<p>English → ASL</p>
<p>When interpreting an ASL message into English, the <u>source</u> language is ASL and the <u>target</u> language is English.</p> <p>This is an ASL to English interpretation, sometimes referred to as “receptive interpreting” or “voicing”.</p>	<p>When interpreting an English message into ASL, the <u>source</u> language is English and the <u>target</u> language is ASL.</p> <p>This is an English to ASL interpretation, sometimes referred to as “expressive interpreting”.</p>

Glossary

Definitions	Examples of Errors
<p>Tense: a part of syntax that conveys the timing of events in the past, present, future, etc.; in ASL, tense is sometimes implied or it is set at the beginning of a topic by individual signs, e.g. YESTERDAY, TOMORROW, FINISH, etc.; in English, tense is repeated in every sentence through a combination of words and suffixes, e.g. walked, <u>is</u> walking, <u>will</u> walk</p>	<p>“YESTERDAY ME GO MOVIE. WATCH+++ ALL-DAY” is not equivalent to “I want to go to the movies.”</p> <p>“I drove there” is not equivalent to “ME DRIVE WILL.”</p>
<p>Tone/pitch: the sound frequency of spoken words</p>	<p>Speaking with intonation that is unnecessarily too high or too low</p>
<p>Unnecessary use of space: using space excessively when other ASL vocabulary and/or grammar would have been more effective</p>	<p>When interpreting the sentence, “My daughter is 6 years old,” the interpreter signs it on the right side as if to compare it to something else, but then does not</p>
<p>Volume: the audibility of spoken words</p>	<p>Speaking too loudly or too softly</p>
<p>Word choices: English vocabulary, which should match the caller’s intent, register, and vernacular; errors may include using a word that has inaccurate meaning for that context, word variations that are not widely known, etc.</p>	<p>“MY MOTHER GROW-UP FLORIDA” is not equivalent to “My parents grew up in Louisiana.”</p>
<p>Word order: the sequence of words within an English sentence</p>	<p>“On TV we watched the game.”</p>