

How do I get a personal document* translated?

Some FAQs about translation,
brought to you by



(Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators)
the professional association for
translators and interpreters

www.ausit.org

** such as an overseas birth / marriage / education certificate,
for immigration / passport / citizenship
or similar official purposes*

Does my document need to be translated?

- If it's not in English: **yes**, definitely!
- It's your responsibility to arrange for a translation **before** you submit your application or attend your interview.
- In most cases, you'll need to pay for this yourself.
- For official purposes, it must be done by a translator who is **certified (or recognised) by NAATI** (check the government agency's website).

What if my document already includes English translations?

- That's great – but if **any** of the information isn't in English, or is in another writing system, you'll still need to get the document translated.
- For instance, information like a person's sex may still be in the other language / other writing system.

Can I use a translation that was done in my home country before I came to Australia? Or get an Australian translator to check it?

- Sorry, unless that original translator is certified or recognised by NAATI, the translation probably won't be accepted by Australian officials.
- Also, because of professional ethics, a translator here can't certify the accuracy of a translation that was done by someone else.

So how do I find a translator with the required NAATI credentials?

- There are two main ways: deal directly with a translator, or go to a language service provider (LSP) – a company that finds a translator for you.
- Finding a translator yourself is quite easy: the NAATI website has a 'Need a translator?' page (visit www.naati.com.au).
- You can choose the language and the direction of translation, and see contact details for all translators for that language (Australia-wide, or in a particular state or territory).
- You can also look on the AUSIT website (visit www.ausit.org), which also has a directory of translators. The translators listed there are all AUSIT members who are committed to upholding the AUSIT Code of Ethics.

How can I be sure that the translator has NAATI credentials?

- If you find a translator **yourself**: the NAATI website **only** shows translators whose certification or recognition is **current and valid** – and it shows what credentials they hold.
- If you go to an **LSP**: for a personal document translation, they'll usually ensure that the translator has NAATI credentials (and as the client, you can insist on that).

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How do I deliver the document to the translator?

- The good news: you **don't** need to go in person! Almost all translators are happy to receive a scan or photo of the original (source) document by email.
- This means that you don't need to find a translator who's located in the same city or state/territory as you. (Most translators work with clients from all over Australia or even overseas.)
- Of course, it's a good idea to email, message or ring a translator first, to ask if they're available and how busy they are.
- A scanned copy is preferable to a photo (usually better quality; in colour if possible). If you send a photo, make sure you photograph the document from directly above (not at an angle), with no shadows falling on it. If the document's stored in a plastic sleeve, try to remove it before you scan/photograph it (to minimise reflections).
- The important thing is to give the translator a copy that's **as clear as possible**, so that they can do an accurate translation.

Does it need to be a 'certified true copy'?

- No, it doesn't need to be. As well as putting their NAATI stamp on the translation, and signing and dating it, the translator will also put an image of the source document on the **back** of the translation, plus their NAATI stamp, and sign and date that as well. (This will serve as evidence of which document they used to make the translation.)
- Government officials may ask you to show them the original document (as well as the translation), so they can compare it with the image on the back of the translation.

How will the translator deliver the translation back to me?

- There are two methods: 'hard copy' (a paper document) or 'soft copy' (an electronic file, such as a PDF). Many translators are happy to deliver the translation in both a hard copy and a soft copy if you ask them.
- Many government agencies now allow applications to be done online, and when they do, they allow you to upload documents like translations in electronic form. So you may find a soft copy translation more convenient.
- A soft copy translation can be emailed, and you'll receive it almost immediately. A hard copy translation will need to be posted, and even with Express Post or Priority Post, the delivery time will depend on Australia Post.

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I've received the translation, but the translator hasn't translated everything on the original! Is that acceptable?

- Yes, that's perfectly acceptable! In fact, it's completely normal for 'standard' personal documents like birth certificates, etc.
- Different countries include different information on documents like these, and format it differently, so Australian officials often **prefer** an 'extract' translation. The translator uses a **set format**, which **only includes** the information that appears on an equivalent Australian certificate.
- If the overseas certificate doesn't include some of the set information, no problem! The translator will add a 'translator's note' such as '[not stated]' or '[not shown]' – this is normal practice.
- Most 'non-standard' documents need to be translated **in full** (not 'extract').

How soon can the translation be available?

- It all depends on how busy the translator is, how many documents you need translated, and how big they are (translators usually count the total number of **words, not** the number of **pages**).
- However, if the translator isn't busy, and you only need one or two 'standard' documents translated, most translators can finish the task within 24 hours, or often the same day. (Bigger jobs, of course, will take longer!)
- The important thing to remember is: **don't wait until the last minute!**

How much will it cost?

- If you engage a translator yourself, as a 'freelancer' each practitioner will have their own scale of fees. (Similarly, each LSP will have their scale of fees, which will include their own commission.)
- Most translators base their fees on the **number of words** (in English) in the translation, so it's **difficult** to quote a price just on the number of **pages**.
- Often, they'll have a minimum fee (for instance, for anything up to 100 words) and then charge per word if the total is more than that minimum.
- For that reason, if you've got several documents to be translated, it's usually cheaper to ask the translator to do them all in one job.
- A typical minimum charge (for a single 'standard' document) would be in the range of **\$40 to \$50**, and for large jobs **\$0.20 to \$0.30 per word**.
- Some translators may charge extra for urgent translations.

How do I pay the translator?

- Some translators will send an **invoice** when they deliver the translation, and ask you to pay by **online transfer** (to the bank account on the invoice).
- Other translators may ask you to pay a deposit, or the full amount, before they start the translation.