



## HOW LONG DOES TRANSLATION TAKE?

It really depends. If you have a large website or a thick manual, it *can* take longer to have it translated. Similarly, if you have special requirements for things like quality, in-country review cycles, and format, these can also affect timelines.

For many companies, translation is critical to doing business in global markets: their products will not sell unless supported by strong, correctly translated materials.

A translator's job is to understand what is being communicated and to reproduce that material faithfully in another language. A good translator must:

- ➔ Be familiar with the content (whether it's technical, medical, comical, etc.)
- ➔ Communicate concepts, often not possible by translating word for word
- ➔ Know all the subtleties of the source language, usually English
- ➔ Be fluent in both the target and source language
- ➔ Be a linguist, i.e. have extensive training and often certification in the translation process

Quality translation takes time. Most experienced translators can translate around 2000 words a day—approximately eight pages of material. The quality, complexity, and unique aspects of the source material can alter how quickly or slowly a translator works.

As an aside, English is a very difficult language. Consider these things:

- ➔ Phrasal verbs (two or three words) are common in English, but not in other languages (To turn on / turn off / turn over / turn around )
- ➔ English has definite and indefinite articles (*the, an*)
- ➔ English is not a phonetic language (“Read”: present tense or past participle?)
- ➔ Vocabulary peculiarities: English has a rich but limited vocabulary. There are 1.5 million words in a typical English thesaurus, but only one word for ‘language’ and ‘snow’.
- ➔ Rigid syntax: Noun + Verb + Object

### How Translation Works

Most translators use a computer plus translation tools and technology to speed up their work. First, they transform the piece to be translated to a file type that is easy to work with—usually RTF (rich text format). Next, the translator applies a translation memory to that text. The translation memory accesses previous translations that match the current text and plugs them in automatically. Next, the translator reviews those translations and translates the rest from scratch. Finally, the translator reads each section of the source material, refers to a glossary and a style guide, and translates the source into the target language.

Following this process, the translated text must be edited and proofread. Another translator or linguist usually performs this edit.

Once this edit is complete, the translated content is put back into its original format. Desktop publishing or engineering may be needed so that the translated version closely approximates the source version.

Multiple translators can work on particularly big projects. However, an extra quality step is generally recommended, as different translators have different writing styles. Also, the project manager carefully delegates pieces to appropriate translators, so no work is duplicated.

While having multiple translators working on a project can speed up the process, it is not possible to simply divide the word count by the number of translators involved. This is because additional time is needed to coordinate among the multiple translators, and an additional QA pass will be required to ensure the style and tone are consistent.

### Things to Know about Translation Time

1. There are many steps involved and timelines can be impacted by customer requirements.
2. It requires very specialized expertise.
3. Multiple translators may speed up the work, but additional reviews are needed to ensure quality and consistency.
4. If you want quality translation, you must build enough time into the schedule!

Need more information?

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