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Working it out

Tune in to Reading

An interpreter

Strategy 1: Using what you know

When you have a complicated text to read, first try to think about everything you already know about the topic. This is good preparation for reading.

1 In the box, write down what you already know about interpreting.

Place of work: _____
Types of interpreting: _____
Difficulties of the job: _____
Job satisfaction: _____

Now read the text quickly. Compare your ideas with the information in the text.

THE WORKING DAY OF ... AN INTERPRETER

a Well, I often have to travel, because interpreting tends to happen at regional, national or international levels. You might have a four-day trade fair on prefabricated housing in Madrid, for example, then the next week a two-day medical conference on developments in asthma research. Or if you specialise in law, perhaps a ten-day court case on international money-laundering. So I often start the day in a hotel somewhere.

b After breakfast, you need to get to the venue in plenty of time, to find your way around and to check that the installations work properly. Like the sound system: there's nothing worse than trying to translate something you can't hear clearly. And you have to be 100% on the ball. You need to have read up on the subject matter in time. You can't be tired from the night before. You have to be ready for the unpredictable.

c Before you realise it, it's lunchtime. Simultaneous interpreting – this is when you listen to someone speaking and have to translate practically at the same time – is mentally and emotionally exhausting. I much prefer translating to interpreting, because it's a lot less demanding. I work on translations such as doing a voiceover for a TV programme. You have time to read the transcript, view the images, check on any unfamiliar language. But simultaneous interpreting, well, that's a lot harder.

d Back at the conference, you have the afternoon session. Today I have to translate from English into Spanish. This is always like a memory test: five English adjectives before a noun, and I can't give the Spanish until I hear the noun. Why? Because in Spanish most adjectives come after the noun, and I need the noun to make the correct agreements (masculine or feminine, singular or plural). And in the meantime, the speaker continues talking! But it's a very satisfying job too. After all, an interpreter is a medium for countries and cultures to communicate and understand each other, as well as for people to exchange information and do business together.



Strategy 2: Taking notes

When you read a text, take notes for what information is in each paragraph. This will help you to find the answers to questions more quickly.

2 Skim the text and match each paragraph a-d with the description of its contents 1-4.

- 1 a typical interpreting problem
- 2 two types of work
- 3 preparations at the place of work
- 4 examples of where interpreters work

Strategy 3: Guessing unknown words

Remember to use the sentences before and after new words to guess their meaning.

3 Find phrases in the text which mean:

- 1 a specialised meeting for people who work in the same business (*paragraph 1*)
- 2 the process of moving illegal income so that it looks legal (*paragraph 1*)
- 3 a set of audio equipment (*paragraph 2*)
- 4 the topic being discussed (*paragraph 2*)
- 5 almost (*paragraph 3*)
- 6 while this is happening (*paragraph 4*)