

ata American Translators Association

GUIDE TO STARTING OUT AS A TRANSLATOR

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO BUILDING YOUR TRANSLATION CAREER

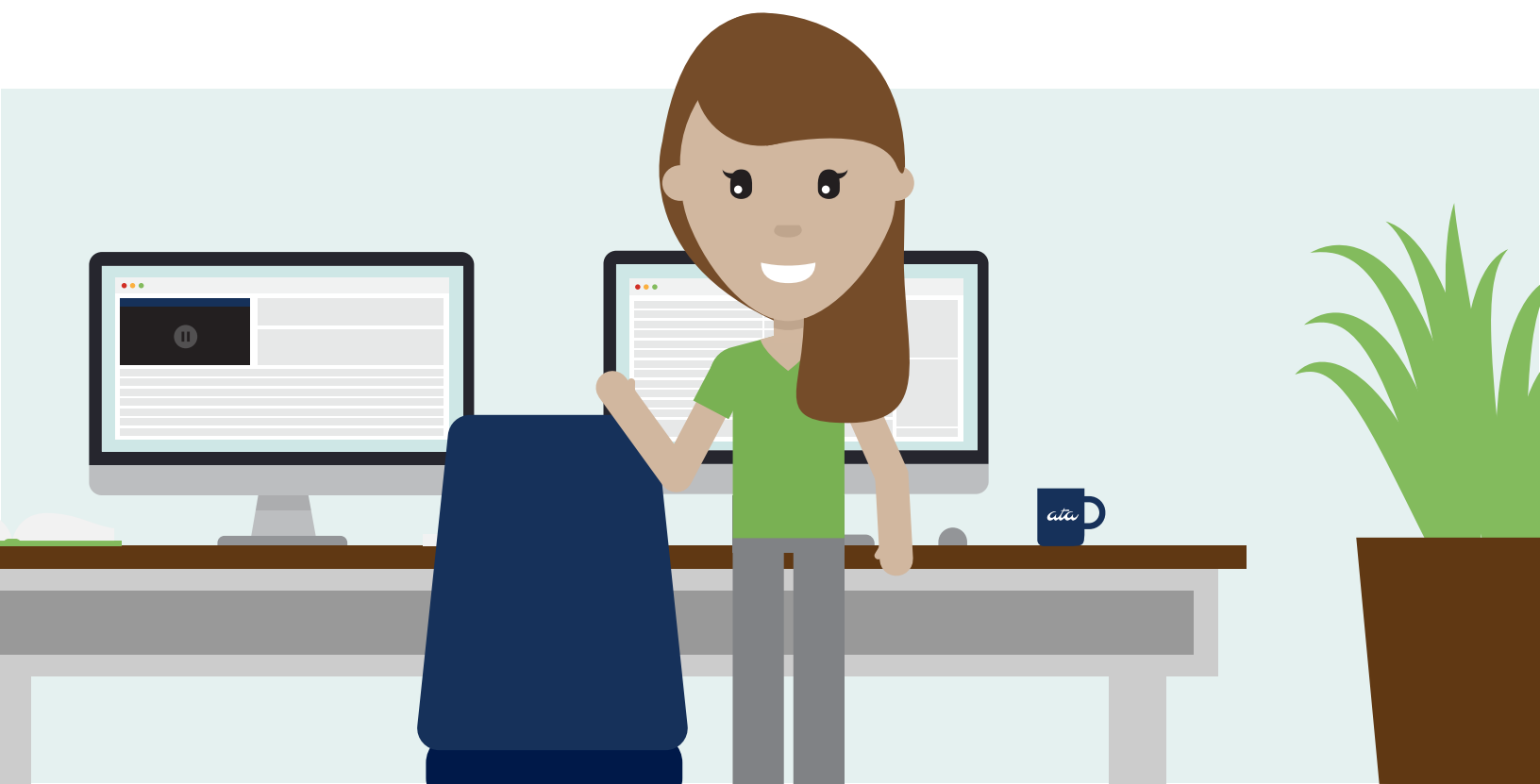


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INTRODUCTION



Translation is a tool that bridges people and cultures. It's a very rewarding profession that allows you to learn every single day and connect people through the written word. Translation is one of the fastest-growing careers in the nation, and the translation and localization industry is expected to grow by 20% between 2019 and 2029.¹

This e-book is for anyone new to the translation profession. Whether you're currently studying translation, a recent graduate, or making a career change, we hope that this e-book will help you start off on the right foot and set you up for success in this dynamic and exciting field.

The intention of this e-book is not to teach you how to translate. It will not help you be a better translator, maintain your source or target language skills, or teach you how to be entrepreneurial. Source language mastery, superior target language

writing skills, subject matter expertise, business acumen, and persistence are all prerequisites to launching a successful career as a freelance translator.

What this e-book *does* intend to do is introduce you to some of the first hurdles you'll encounter on your path to becoming a translator. The goal is to answer the most common questions beginners often have when first starting out. The e-book also aims to introduce you to a few things you might not have considered before to help you build a strong launchpad for your new business and career.

The beginning of this e-book features a glossary of terms that are common in the translation industry, but may still be unfamiliar to you. Several of these terms are linked throughout the e-book for easy consultation.

We sincerely hope that you'll find this e-book and the many resources

referenced in its pages useful and informative.

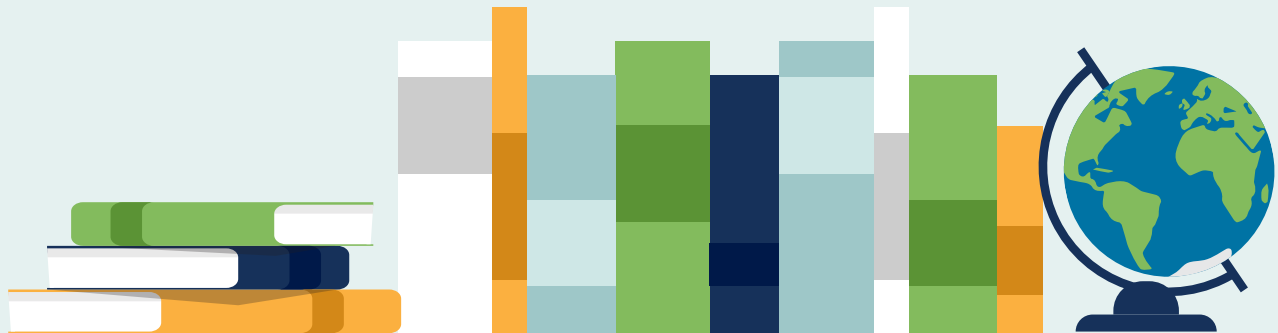
Lastly, we hope that you'll consider joining ATA, the largest professional association for translators and interpreters in the United States. You can find us at atanet.org.

¹U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook (accessed December 8, 2020)



HELPFUL TERMS

This e-book uses terms that might seem unfamiliar to you or that you don't recognize in this context. Below, you will find a non-exhaustive list of some of these terms and what they mean in this particular publication.



A

Alignment

The process of matching source and target segments of a translation project in a [computer-assisted translation tool](#) to create a [translation memory](#), or shorthand for the resulting memory.

Association

In the context of this e-book, “association” refers to a professional, usually nonprofit organization of translators. A professional association aims to support its members through professional development, networking opportunities, advocacy efforts, etc.

B

Building platform

A web-based tool used to build websites.

C

Call to action

A word or phrase used in web copy intended to prompt a response from the user, such as clicking to visit a page or make a purchase.

Certificate

A translation certificate is a professional credential earned from a college, university, or other institute of higher learning that proves that an individual completed coursework in a certificate program in translation. This should not be confused with [certification](#).

Certification

The process of certifying translators to demonstrate a certain level of translation proficiency in a given [language pair](#). Certification is typically offered either by government entities, where such credentials exist, or by professional associations like ATA in the United

States or OTTIAQ in Quebec. See [Certified translator](#).

Certified translator (CT)

A certified translator is a translator who has received a passing score on the ATA Certification Exam. The CT designation applies specifically to the [language pair](#) and direction in which the exam was passed.

Computer-assisted translation (CAT) tool

Software that assists a human translator with certain parts of the translation process.

Confidentiality agreement

A legal contract between two or more parties in which the parties agree to not share certain information with outside parties. See [Non-disclosure agreement \(NDA\)](#).

D

Desktop publishing (DTP)

The creation of documents using layout and design software on a computer. This can include manuals and other documents that include text, images, diagrams, and other design elements.

Direct client

A company, organization, or individual with whom a translator works directly to provide their services, without the intervention of a third party such as a translation agency or other referral service.

Directory

In the context of this e-book, “directory” refers to an online list of translators, where professionals can choose to provide their contact information for potential clients.

Domain name

The address of a website, e.g., www.domainname.com.

E

Elevator pitch

A short description of yourself and your business that you can use to introduce yourself, particularly at networking events.

Encryption

The process of converting information into a code to prevent unauthorized access.

H

Hosting

The storage of a website to make it accessible on the internet.

L

Language combination or pair

The combination of two languages that content is originally written in (see [Source language](#)) and translated into (see [Target language](#)).

Language services company or provider (LSC, LSP)

see [Translation agency](#).

M

Machine translation (MT)

The use of software to translate text from one language to another.

Massive open online course (MOOC)

An educational course provided over the internet to a large number of people.

N

Non-disclosure agreement (NDA)

A legally binding contract that establishes a confidential relationship between two or more parties. The parties signing the agreement agree that any sensitive information they may obtain will not be made available to others. See [Confidentiality agreement](#).

O

Online portal

A special website that serves as a gateway to a particular resource or as a repository for information. For example, a translator might sign into an agency’s online portal to access information about available work, upload invoices, or modify their contact information.

P

Payment Practices

A paid online database for translation service providers that aims to provide information on whether more than 10,000 [translation agencies](#) and other clients pay on time. See www.paymentpractices.net. ATA members receive a discount on their subscription through ATA’s [Member-to-Member Program](#).

Project management

The discipline of managing a project from start to finish. In translation, this involves everything from receiving a file from a client, quoting it, analyzing it, translating and editing it, and delivering it. There are various applications available to facilitate translation and localization project management, and project management is an essential skill for all freelance professionals.

ProZ Blue Board

A database of [translation agencies](#), companies, and outsourcers that includes ratings and feedback from [language service providers](#) on how pleasant the relationship was, the timeliness of payment, ease of communication, etc. See www.proz.com/blueboard.

Q

Quality assurance (QA)

The process of ensuring that a translation meets the requirements of the project, uses the proper **terminology** and **translation memory (TM)**, and is free of errors in spelling, grammar, and syntax.

S

Sales team

A team of salespeople who are responsible for negotiating the terms of a translation project with an end client.

Search engine optimization (SEO)

The process of improving a site to increase visibility on search engines. The more visible your pages are in search results, the more likely you are to attract visitors to your website. If you are a business, the more visitors to your website, the likelier you are to convert some of them into customers.

Source document

An original document intended for translation.

Source language

The language in which content intended for translation is originally written.

Specialization

An area of focus in which you have special expertise and knowledge.

T

Target document

A translated document.

Target language

The language that content is translated into.

Terminology management

The practice of researching, compiling, managing, modifying, and using a database of special technical terms or industry-specific words to make the translation process easier.

Translation agency

A company that provides translation and other language services.

Translation memory (TM)

A database of segments (parts of or complete sentences) that have been translated before that can be consulted while translating.

Acronyms Cheat Sheet

CAT: computer-assisted translation

CT: certified translator

DTP: desktop publishing

LSC: language services company

LSP: language services provider

MOOC: massive open online course

MT: machine translation

NDA: non-disclosure agreement

PM: project manager

QA: quality assurance

SEO: search engine optimization

T&I: translation and interpreting

TM: translation memory

FIRST STEPS



I'm studying translation or have just finished a translation studies program. How do I transition into becoming a translator?

Welcome! We're so glad you're interested in becoming a translator. Translation studies programs offer students valuable opportunities to learn about the field and practice their skills. By picking up this e-book, you're continuing on the right path to start a career in translation.

In this e-book, you'll find overview information for a variety of aspects of your life as a professional translator. Here are some ideas on where to start:

01 Business



Wondering how to set up your business structure and finances? Head to [Legal and Financial Considerations](#).

04 Connections



Curious about opportunities to sharpen your skills and meet fellow language professionals? See [Networking](#).

02 Income



"Translation? You can actually make a living doing that?" To make sure your answer to this question is a confident "YES," read [Pricing Strategies](#).

05 Website



Read up on how to start one in [Setting Up a Website](#).

03 Technology



What tools do you need to start translating? Check out [Technology](#).

Watch a free ATA webinar, ["Spreading Your Wings: Transitioning from Classroom to a Career in Translation,"](#) for more ideas!



In addition to reading this e-book, what actions can you take now? You may want to seek out a mentor or an internship for your first “real-life” translation experience.

Someone who already works as a translator can offer you tips of the trade: what worked for them, and what didn't. You can look for a mentor through networking opportunities and professional organizations in your area. While meeting a mentor face-to-face is very helpful, you might also consider connecting with a mentor who has a similar background or the same [language pair](#) but isn't necessarily located in your area. Online meetings can be great in this situation!

Once you have more experience as a professional translator under your belt, you can consider the [ATA Mentoring Program](#), which is designed for experienced translators with a specific goal or career focus in mind.

Another path that might be helpful is an internship. Interning with a translator or [translation agency](#) can provide you with useful experience and be a valuable addition to your résumé. If you're open to learning the ropes from a non-translator perspective, you could look for an internship with a translation agency's [project](#).

Consider joining the [ATA Mentoring Program](#), which is designed for experienced translators with a specific goal or career focus in mind.

[management](#), [sales](#), or [quality assurance team](#). This type of experience can help you learn how a translation business works, how translation projects are managed from start to finish, and what translation buyers are looking for in their service providers. Be aware that internships can be paid or unpaid; before considering an internship, make a point to learn about federal regulations on internship programs.

As a professional translator, you'll need to keep up with the latest news and training opportunities. And especially for newcomers, there's more to learn than could reasonably fit in this guide! Plan to allocate time to read blogs and newsletters, attend webinars, and participate in networking events. In addition to this e-book, you can check out [The ATA Savvy Newcomer](#) blog for a wealth of ideas for new translators, and [The ATA Chronicle](#) magazine for translators of all levels.

Here are a few articles from *The ATA Savvy Newcomer* and *The ATA Chronicle* for general advice on getting started:

- [Tips for Newcomers to the Translation and Interpreting Professions](#)
- [9 Useful Questions by New Professional Translators](#)

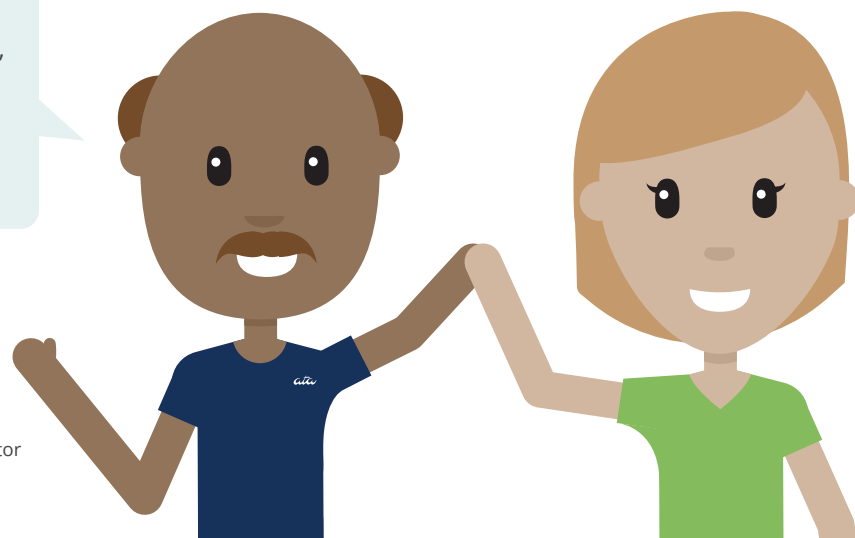
- [Focus On: New Translators](#)
- [Transitioning from Student to Translator](#)

You can also watch a free ATA webinar, [“Spreading Your Wings: Transitioning from Classroom to a Career in Translation,”](#) for ideas.

Above all, once you officially take the leap into freelance translation, it's important to think of yourself as a business. You'll need to be diligent in managing your existing clients while acquiring more clients in the process—all while staying on top of deadlines and making sure you're getting paid fairly and on time for your work.

Keep in mind that you might not become a full-time freelance translator all at once. When you start out as a freelancer, your income will increase slowly as you start completing jobs and gaining new clients. Many experienced freelancers agree that starting a business gradually (while keeping another job, at least part-time) can reduce the pressure to be successful all at once and lead to better outcomes in the long run.

The rest of this e-book will guide you through aspects of getting started as a translator. Good luck and welcome to the profession!



TECHNOLOGY



What kind of hardware will I need for my freelance translation business?

For new translators, an off-the-shelf laptop or desktop computer will likely be sufficient to get started. When selecting a computer, consider what your typical work environment will be. Will you always work from the same location, or will you work on the go? This will help you choose between a laptop and a desktop.

Also consider random-access memory (RAM). RAM helps your computer run multiple tasks at once. The translation software you'll be using could slow down your computer if the RAM is too low. Aim for a computer with RAM comparable to what a professional graphic designer would use.

If you plan to save a lot of your work on the actual computer (instead of entirely on a cloud-based server), you'll need ample storage space.

You'll need to save multiple versions of each document you translate, glossaries, translation memories, and other reference material. Additionally, you will likely need to save files for your invoicing, website, and other general business items. This can all add up, and you want to be sure you can store and access all of your files easily.

While your basic laptop or desktop setup is enough to get you started, many seasoned translators would also recommend a second monitor. Multiple monitors allow the translator to have a [source document](#), reference document, or web browser on display at the same time as the in-progress translation or [computer-assisted translation \(CAT\) tool](#) without being restricted by the limited space of a single monitor.

You might also consider additional hardware, such as a laptop stand and wireless Bluetooth keyboard and mouse, to make your

workspace as comfortable and efficient as possible.

Finally, if it is available in your area, consider getting reliable high-speed broadband or fiber-optic internet access. Staying connected and available will be very important for running your business and meeting your clients' expectations.

What kind of software will I need for my freelance translation business?

Office Suite

Microsoft Office is recommended because it tends to be the international standard software for business users. At the very least, you should plan to have Microsoft Word, but Excel and PowerPoint will likely come in handy as well. Free alternative versions of word processing and other common software may not be compatible with your translation software, or software used by your clients.

Secure Email

Secure email is essential to ensure that all information and documents exchanged between you and your clients are protected. Public email services can pose security issues, and use of these services may lead to breaches in data security, which can violate [non-disclosure](#) and [confidentiality agreements](#) with clients. We recommend you look for private, secure, [encryption](#)-enabled webmail solutions.

Secure Server-Based

Archive Storage

If you store documents or resources electronically or want to back up your files, you'll need to have some kind of large storage solution. Again, some public server options may lead to violations of [non-disclosure](#) and [confidentiality agreements](#). Private servers and cloud server solutions can better provide you with the storage space and functionality you need.

What other technology will I need for my freelance translation business?

Most translators work with [computer-assisted translation \(CAT\) tools](#). If you plan to work with editable documents with repetitive or potentially repetitive text, a CAT tool will likely prove very useful to you. These tools allow you to save your translations to a [translation memory](#) that you can consult for reference when translating similar documents in the future.

Many different CAT tools are available. Translators can use an application on their local computer

or a cloud-based application.

If you plan to contract work from a [language services company](#) or an end client with experience purchasing translations, you may need to use their proprietary or preferred CAT tool. In recent years, however, there has been a movement toward interoperability among applications. Many tools now offer cross-compatibility and standard exchange formats, freeing translators from being bound to one CAT tool for a client or job when they would prefer to use another.

While ATA does not recommend any one specific software, ATA's [Language Technology Division](#) listserv, included with ATA membership, can provide more in-depth information on various CAT tool features and differences.

How to find the CAT tool that will work best for you

Take advantage of free trials offered by all major CAT tool companies. Test as many programs as you can.

Watch instructional videos on YouTube and attend training webinars to learn how to start translating with a CAT tool.

Work with a CAT tool on active projects during your free trial period. Try to work with each file type you expect to translate.

In addition to the translation interface, try out other functions of the program. CAT tools have expanded past translation memory to incorporate [terminology management](#), reference documents, online

dictionaries, web lookup, [quality assurance](#), [alignment](#), and more. Many translators find these other functions beneficial for the consistency and quality of their translations.

Research tool reviews online and ask established translators for their feedback. The *ATA Savvy Newcomer* also offers some feedback on various CAT tools in the post [“Computer-Assisted Translation Tools: A Digest.”](#)

For further information on various technologies available for translation professionals, and to stay up to date with the latest developments, consider adding *The Tool Box Journal* to your reading list. ATA members receive a discount on their [Tool Box Journal](#) subscription through ATA's [Member-to-Member Program](#).

“I’ve been an ATA member since the start of my career in 2000. Being a listed member in the ATA directory has helped me both personally and professionally in so many ways. It helped me establish a strong network with my peers and helped me improve my knowledge and skills, which also advanced my career.”



Zenab Khouder

RÉSUMÉ AND COVER LETTER



How do I create a résumé that works for me?

For most freelance linguists, a résumé is a one- to two-page summary of their relevant skills, experience, and education. Because **agency** clients and recruiters receive an overwhelming number of résumés and applications, you will want to keep your résumé brief and to the point.

Before creating a résumé, consider what you want to achieve with it. It should easily demonstrate to your ideal client that you are the right person for the job based on your expertise and experience. This means that you will need to create different versions of your résumé to suit different clients and projects. On the other hand, the résumés you upload to online platforms such as your website, LinkedIn profile, and **translator directories** will need to be general enough to fit a wide variety of situations.

Many **translation agencies** prefer that you apply directly on their

website by filling out a form instead of sending a résumé. Always find out and follow the agency's preferred method. To research an agency or company, spend some time on the company's website. Follow them on social media. You can also check LinkedIn to find the right person to email.

Depending on your marketing approach, you may want to stray a little further from a traditional résumé. For example, to catch the eye of a potential **direct client**, perhaps you'll want to create a brochure or leaflet. See more in the **Marketing Strategies** chapter.

What to Include in Your Résumé

- Your **language combination** in the résumé header, or clearly displayed elsewhere
- Your **specialization** near the top of the page
- Complete and accurate contact information and links to professional profiles

- Only information relevant to the translation industry or your areas of specialization; remove any superfluous experience
- Experience with **CAT tools** (and their specific names), if approaching a **translation agency**
- Experience in **desktop publishing** (DTP)
- Relevant **association** memberships, credentials, and **certifications**

Your résumé should be proofread and edited numerous times by at least one other person. And remember to keep it to one or two pages.

See more on drafting your résumé here: [Five Steps to Make Your Freelance Translator CV Stand Out](#)



File Name, Format, and Security

Once you have created a résumé you're happy with, make sure you save it with a specific name and in the correct file format. To ensure your file doesn't get lost in a pile of other translator résumés with the file name "Résumé.doc," consider naming your file with your last and/or first names and your **language combination**, in addition to the word "résumé."

While you've probably created your résumé in a word processor such as Microsoft Word, you should not post it online or distribute it to potential clients as a Word document (.doc). Word documents are editable, and therefore can be easily manipulated or copied by others. Distributing your résumé in a non-editable format such as Portable Document Format (.pdf) will protect it from accidental or malicious interference.

Tips for protecting your résumé:

- Do not upload your résumé file to online profiles, where it may be downloaded and re-distributed by scammers.
- When someone you trust requests a copy of your résumé, send it as a password-protected PDF.
- For even higher security, consider creating a flat image PDF of your résumé. When a PDF is "flat," the text within it cannot be copied and pasted.

See more ideas on marketing safely and strategically in the **Marketing Strategies** chapter.

Writing and Using Your Cover Letter

If you are applying to a **translation agency** or company directly by email, you should always include a cover letter. It should be concise and look like a letter you would send through the mail. The goal of the cover letter is to introduce yourself, express interest in a partnership, and show how you can specifically help the company or translation agency in question achieve their goals or overcome their challenges. Rather than attaching the letter as a PDF file, simply write it in the body of the email.

Guidelines

- **Know who you are writing to.** Even minimal research is better than no research at all. Know who your client is and what the company does. Express your knowledge of the industry by including details of your translation and/or other work in this company's field.
- **Dispel their fears.** Provide proof of your experience and qualifications as a translator. This may include projects you did during your studies, your translation degree, or work completed in an internship. Specifically reference items on your résumé.
- **Ask them to take action.** Help close the deal by including a **call to action** at the bottom of the letter. You might invite the client to meet you in person or ask them to give you a call to discuss a partnership or project further.
- **Leverage the power of references.** Offer to make references and

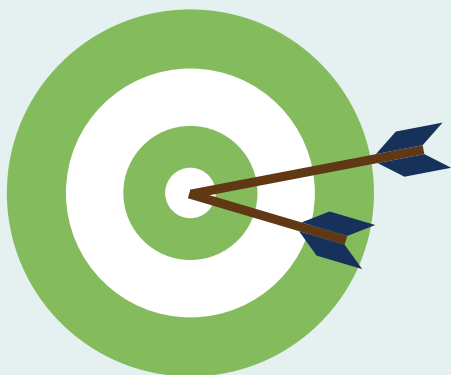
referrals available to the client upon request. Your references can include professors from a translation program, **direct clients** you've worked with, managers from internships or previous jobs, or fellow professional translators with whom you've worked. Make sure that you have obtained explicit permission from references before providing their names and contact information to your potential clients.

Follow up.

Gently follow up by email or telephone within a week of your initial application. Ask if you can provide any additional information to help in the decision, or if you can clarify questions regarding your application.



MARKETING STRATEGIES



How do I market my translation services?

As a new freelance translator, you have three main targets for marketing your translation services: [translation agencies](#), [online portals](#), and [direct clients](#). Each of these options has its advantages and disadvantages, and you'll find that one or another might be better suited to your situation and your goals.

Successful freelance translators build up a client base that includes a variety of different types of clients. A diverse range of clients, whether agencies, direct clients, or both, can help you maintain a steady income. This way, you avoid relying on a small handful of work opportunities to keep yourself in business.

Marketing to Translation Agencies

To gain new business as a fledgling freelance translator, you will most

likely need to contact [translation agencies](#) through their vendor managers and/or register yourself in their databases. Translators can construct very successful careers by following this strategy.

What you need for marketing to agencies:

- Résumé
- Cover letter
- List of agencies, such as ATA's [Directory of Language Companies](#)
- Resources to vet potential clients based on other translators' feedback, such as [Payment Practices](#) and/or [Blue Board](#)
- List or spreadsheet to track the following information:
 - Agency names, brief description, contact information
 - When and how you first contacted them

- Necessary follow-up steps
- End result

You can find lists of agencies in [translation association directories](#), [translation portals](#), [databases for payment practices](#), and by conducting an online search.

No matter which method you use, make sure you research each agency before you make the first contact. Google the agency's name to see if there is a website with contact information, check ratings via [Payment Practices](#) and/or the [Blue Board](#), ask colleagues if they have heard about the agency, and so forth.

Some agencies might have a dedicated vendor manager or other contact person listed on their website, in which case you can contact them with a cover letter and résumé as discussed in the [Résumé and Cover Letter](#) chapter.

Otherwise, you may be able to register yourself directly in an agency's online database by entering your information on their website. When you register directly in an agency's database, you may also want to send an introductory note or cover letter to a vendor manager as well, if one is listed.

For more tips on working with translation companies, see [“Tips on Getting and Keeping Agency Clients”](#) and [“Pursuing the Translation Dream: How to Keep the Phone Ringing”](#) on *The ATA Savvy Newcomer* blog and consider watching the ATA webinar [“Effective Marketing to Translation Companies.”](#)

Registering on Online Translation Portals

[Online translation portals](#) are an easy way to market your services and are often available for free with the option to pay for additional services or features. All you have to do is sign up, fill out a profile, and then review the available jobs. Unfortunately, because it's so easy for just about anyone to sign up on these portals, the competition for these jobs tends to be steep. Some clients are simply looking for the lowest bid on their projects rather than seeking out the best translator for a particular job. This practice can lead to unethical business dealings, as covered in the [ATA Code of](#)

[Ethics and Professional Practice.](#)

However, it's also possible that clients will find you in a given portal based on your experience and qualifications and contact you directly. When filling out your profile and communicating with clients, provide as much information about your translation experience as possible. This way, even if you decide to use an online portal, you're most likely to get noticed by potential clients who truly care about your experience and the quality of your work.

Working with Agencies	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Potential for high volume, regular work · Dedicated team handles project management and sales tasks · Receive feedback from other linguists who review your work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Price pressure is common and agencies may not be able to afford rate increases over time · Potential for communication challenges between various teams · Agencies may prioritize speed over quality
Working with Direct Clients	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Can result in very fulfilling and well-paying business partnerships · Easier to establish open line of communication with creators and/or end users of documents · Translator can focus on providing specialized services in their specific areas of expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Typically entails non-translation tasks such as project management, sales, and customer service · More time and effort may be required for networking and marketing · Translator must be comfortable with client education and managing expectations
Using Portals	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · High volume of work · Few barriers to entry for beginners · A variety of potential clients can find you in one place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Clients usually shop based on price, not quality or experience · Difficult to establish sustainable, well-paying business partnerships · More difficult to vet potential clients

Attracting and Connecting With Direct Clients

For anyone with a freelance business, nothing sounds more attractive than finding [direct clients](#). A direct client is any company you provide translation services to that is not a [language services provider](#) or translation agency. However, many freelance professionals struggle with this concept and are not sure where or how to find and attract these clients.

New translators may make the mistake of neglecting the marketing and sales aspects of their business. Having a good presence in the market is essential to attract potential clients and to assert yourself as an expert. The following strategies will help you build a professional presence to draw potential clients' interest.

- Take the time to organize the legal aspects of your business, as outlined in the [Legal and Financial Considerations](#) chapter. This is an important step for any successful freelance business and will likely increase the chance that a client may find you appealing.
- Define your translation service offerings in a way that clients will understand. Be specific about the services you provide and about your fields of expertise, e.g., technical, legal, medical, etc.
- Create a website and LinkedIn profile with information about your services. Work on [search engine optimization \(SEO\)](#) so clients can find you online. Consider starting a blog or submitting articles to blogs and other publications. See the chapter [Setting up a Website](#) for more details.

- Join [translation associations](#), as well as industry associations in your areas of expertise/specialization, and attend their conferences. Cultivate relationships with colleagues who can refer you to other clients. Take advantage of association membership benefits to market your services, such as creating a listing in ATA's [Directory of Translators and Interpreters](#).

- Create business cards and other marketing materials, both printed and digital.

As translators, we know there are clients in the market who need us. We often get confused as to how to apply a good marketing strategy to attract them. Below are steps to start landing direct clients.

1. Look closely at your list of contacts: who do you already know from previous academic or professional experiences? Keep in touch with contacts who may be able to steer you in the right direction, and ask for referrals where appropriate.
2. Create a list of companies that may need your services based on your [specialization](#). Research these companies to get to know their mission and potential challenges. Focus on their needs: how can you help them solve their problems and achieve their goals? Emphasize your answers to these questions when making contact with potential clients.
3. Show your potential clients how hiring a professional translator can save them time and money. Share articles about the importance of working with professional translators; check out ATA's PR pieces posted on [The ATA Compass](#).

4. As your business grows, consider purchasing errors and omissions insurance. Check out "[My Business Is Better Because I Have E&O](#)" on *The ATA Savvy Newcomer* blog.

For more ideas on attracting direct clients, read "[Spider Marketing: How to Get Clients to Come to You](#)" in *The ATA Chronicle*.

Remember that you must educate your client. A client may not know about localization, [desktop publishing](#), or [CAT tools](#), or even really understand what translation is. As a professional, you will have to explain what you do and why you are the best choice to help them achieve their goals and overcome challenges. If you're an ATA member, you can take advantage of the [ATA Client Outreach Kit](#), which provides ideas on how to prepare your marketing material.



“From my perch in Manila, halfway around the world from America, I’ve seen how the language industry has evolved in the past 20+ years. ATA has been an important part of my journey from individual Tagalog translator to owner of a multinational LSP. It’s always good to have first name-basis access to the world’s biggest translation market so whenever I’m in the U.S., I try to attend the ATA conference in person or at least meet with some ATA colleagues with ATA’s Translation Company Division (TCD). The Association is always evolving and as I shape my own goals as a lifelong linguist and businessperson, I feel that I am not alone in my corner of Asia. ATA is there to bridge distances and help me humanize communication for decades to come.”



Jake Irwin
Estrada

Maintaining Healthy Relationships

Whether you work with translation agencies, [direct clients](#), or a mix of both, you’ll need excellent customer service and communication skills to build productive and long-lasting relationships with your clients. See *The ATA Chronicle* articles [“Building Successful Relationships with Clients and Vendors”](#) and [“How to Develop Effective Communication Skills to Get and Keep Clients”](#) for tips on creating solid foundations in your professional partnerships. Bottom line: provide your clients with the type of customer service that makes them want to keep working with you.

Protecting Yourself from Scams

In an ideal world, we’d be able to trust everyone who contacts us inquiring about our services, but unfortunately translation scammers do exist. These scammers may try to obtain your services without paying you, copy and distribute information from your résumé without your permission, or even take money from your own bank account. If you ever have doubts about a potential client’s intentions, take the time to investigate the situation further before agreeing

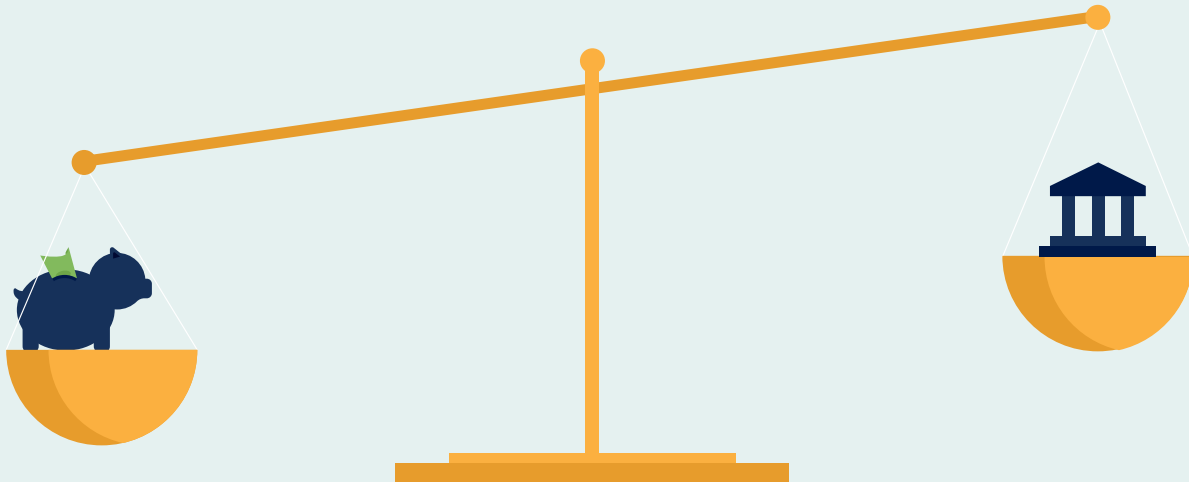
to provide your services or any personal information. You may want to ask the inquirer to have a phone call to discuss their needs, ask for further details about the project in question, ask for payment in full upfront using a trusted payment method, or ask colleagues if an email seems suspicious.

Check out the following resources for further details on how to identify and avoid scams:

- [How to identify and avoid translation scammers](#)
- [Translation Scams Reloaded](#)
- [ATA Members and Internet Scams](#)
- [Translator Scammers Directory](#)

To educate yourself about potential scams and ways to verify potential clients, read *The ATA Savvy Newcomer* article [“Resources to Help Ensure Translation Payment.”](#)

LEGAL AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS



The Legalities of Freelancing

The transition to freelancing can be an exciting one. You can choose what jobs to take or not to take, and you can feel more in control of your life. However, that newfound sense of freedom can disappear very quickly if you don't pay attention to the legal and financial sides of running your business. If you worked as a company employee in the past, you probably didn't worry about things like business structures, withholding amounts, and outstanding invoices. Some things freelancers overlook when going solo range from choosing the right business structure and planning for health insurance and retirement to making sure they have enough money to pay their monthly bills.

Things to consider to ease the transition:

The Right Business Structure

The business structure you choose influences everything from day-to-

day operations, to taxes, to which of your personal assets might be at risk. You should choose a business structure that gives you the right balance of legal protections and benefits. When it comes to making the right decision, you should rely on the advice of an accountant or lawyer. [The Small Business Administration](#) website offers explanations of common business structures that U.S. freelancers use, and local Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) can help you find the right resources for your jurisdiction. Research whether specific laws where you live apply to you and your situation. The advantages, drawbacks, requirements, and considerations vary widely according to where you live, so it is essential that you seek advice from a professional source in your area. That said, we advocate for operating as at least a sole proprietorship to professionalize your business operations. For advice on setting up your business, visit the [SCORE](#) website.

"I joined ATA as a college student, hoping to learn more about how I could become a translator. It turned out to be not only an excellent decision, but also a launching point for my career. Meeting practicing translators, learning about business practices, and having the opportunity to volunteer alongside fellow ATA members helped prepare me to both face the challenges and enjoy the advantages of becoming a freelance translator. I wholeheartedly recommend that students join ATA as early as they can and start getting involved. I'm so grateful that I did."



Jamie Hartz

Separate Your Personal and Business Finances

Separate finances are key for hassle-free bookkeeping. The first step is to open a separate bank account for your business. Depending on the business structure you've selected, you can (and should) open your account using a federal employer identification number (EIN), which you can get for free from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Not only is having two bank accounts tax smart, it also improves your organization. At the end of the year, all your business income and expenses will be in one place, making record keeping and tax filing easier. If you try to separate all your records in March or April, you won't be able to accurately remember how your money has moved around from the prior tax year. Keeping good records throughout the year will also provide you with the documents you will need if you get audited. There are many low-cost bookkeeping solutions you can use to make this easier.

Set Money Aside for Taxes

Many new freelancers find it difficult to set money aside. When freelancing, a common rule of thumb is to save at least 30% of your gross income to pay your taxes. In the U.S., most freelancers must pay estimated taxes quarterly. Although these amounts are usually based on the previous year's income, if you are in your first year, do a rough estimate of what your income has been for the quarter. Many states and the IRS will assess a penalty if you have not paid quarterly taxes or if you have not contributed enough. We recommend consulting an

accountant to ensure that you're following all local and federal laws.

Keep Regular Records

Make a habit of invoicing your jobs quickly—either immediately after completing the job or at a scheduled time once a week. One of the most frustrating things many [agencies](#) and [direct clients](#) face when working with freelancers is not getting an invoice on time. Some freelancers expect to be paid immediately even when they send an invoice late, which is a surefire way to alienate your clients. One way to keep on top of your invoicing is to use bookkeeping software. Whether you purchase an accounting software license or use a web-based invoicing tool, keeping good records will save you time and money, especially when filing taxes, and help you track down any late payments.

Money in the Bank

One of the hardest things for many of us to do is set money aside into savings, but it's absolutely critical when you work for yourself. Freelancing can be unpredictable. Your work can easily go from feast to famine without any rhyme or reason, or an unexpected situation may arise during which you are unable to work or have significant unplanned expenses. For tips on being prepared, read [“Do You Have an Emergency Business Plan?”](#) in *The ATA Chronicle*. You may also find that you want to take a leave of absence to pursue education, start a family, or care for a relative (see [Some Thoughts on Leaves of Absence \[Maternity and Otherwise\]](#)). The best practice is to save enough money to cover your bills for at least three months.

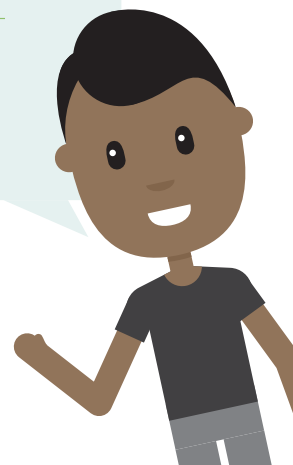
If you can, try to have a good nest egg in the bank before you start freelancing, as it will take time to grow your business and earn a comfortable living.

Consider Working With Accountant

Hiring an accountant to help you is one of the smartest investments you can make, especially in your first year of business. While you may have good advice from a tax-aware friend or family member, there is no one better than a qualified professional who specializes in self-employed taxes to assist you. An accountant will have a fee, but like all of your business expenses, it will be tax deductible. So much can be missed by running your finances on your own, from deductions to business expenses such as mileage, travel time, square footage of the area you use to do your work, and marketing costs. If you're considering doing your accounting yourself, read this informative article on finance for freelance translators in *The ATA Chronicle*: [“Finance for the Life of Your Language Services Business.”](#)

Being a translator and working on your own can be very rewarding, especially if you are organized and plan ahead. Find additional tips in [“So You Want to Be a Freelance Translator: Money Matters”](#) on *The ATA Savvy Newcomer* blog.

For tips on preparing for the unpredictable, read [“Do You Have an Emergency Business Plan?”](#) in *The ATA Chronicle*.



PRICING STRATEGIES



Disclaimer: ATA has a policy of strict compliance with the federal antitrust laws in effect in the United States. Therefore, this e-book does not include information on specific rates, rate expectations, rate projections, markups, discounts, or other matters which may affect rates. Please also review the [ATA Antitrust Compliance Policy](#).

Let's say you have a solid business foundation, with all the skills and knowledge you need to create high-quality translations. Before a steady stream of clients starts knocking on your door, you're going to have to answer one all-important question: what should you charge?

Before you determine your rates, consider different options for pricing, which include per-unit, hourly, project, and value pricing. Translators often quote their rates on a per-unit basis. The unit can

be a word, a character, a line, or a page. Various regions of the world use different customary units, and the per-unit rate can be based on either the [source text](#) or the [target text](#).

It is worth noting that there is a growing trend in the translation industry to shift to an hourly pricing model. It has been argued that per-unit pricing commodifies translation and is a poor way to measure how much a translation will cost or the amount of time that will be needed to complete it. While most agencies continue to pay and charge on a per-unit basis, many translators are successfully switching to hourly rates. For more information, read ["An Hourly Fee for Translation?"](#) in *The ATA Chronicle*.

To charge the right amount, there are two important variables you need to know: how fast you translate (in units per hour)

for various text types, and the expansion or contraction rate (i.e., is the word count in the source text normally lower or higher than the translated target text? By what percentage?). Knowing these factors will enable you to calculate average earnings per hour for per-unit pricing or average number of hours to quote for hourly pricing.

It may or may not be in your best interest to establish a per-unit rate. If you are an efficient translator, you can usually earn more if you charge per unit than what the client would be willing to pay for an hourly rate. One common complaint from translators is that they often feel pressure to lower their per-unit rates. For an investigation of why that is, and what you can do about it, consider reading ["Is There a Future in Freelance Translation?"](#) in *The ATA Chronicle*.

The main advantage of pricing by the hour is that there is no risk of loss for the translator, plus it is a common unit in other businesses and is easy to understand for clients not used to the business of translation and counting units. One disadvantage is that slower translators would need to charge for more hours than clients may be willing to pay, while efficient translators might be penalized for working “too quickly.”

Another option is to charge per project. This usually works best with [direct clients](#), where you can take into account time for research, formatting, and editing. Direct clients may also prefer to be quoted a total price.

For more potential considerations on pricing strategies, read [“Pricing Strategies for Translators and Interpreters”](#) in *The ATA Chronicle*. You can also view ATA’s on-demand webinar, [“The Price is Right—Pricing Strategies for Your Translation Services.”](#)

Steps for Determining Your Rates

1. Determine your monthly costs and how much you need to earn to break even. These calculations can be done on a per-year basis. Just make sure that all your numbers have the same units.
2. Take the amount from step 1 and add the amount of money you would like to earn per month or year.
3. Establish how many hours you can (or want to) work per month/

year. Then divide the amount from step 2 by the number of hours to get an hourly income.

4. Calculate how much you need to translate per hour or day to meet your goal. The best way to do this is to keep records of how much you translate in units and hours, for how long, and how much you earn over a certain period of time. This will give you the best indicator of how much you need to translate. For a handy calculator you can use to estimate your annual gross income for different per-word rates, based on how much you plan to work, check out the [ATA Translator Earnings Calculator](#).
5. Compare your target rate to industry averages, based on your [language combination](#) and specialization. You can do this by looking at rate surveys or asking around among colleagues and potential clients.
6. Take into account non-billable time, such as time for invoicing, project administration, research, and marketing.
7. Set your per-word/character/page/hour rate based on this estimate. If you would find it useful to use a spreadsheet to help you with these steps, you can watch ATA’s on-demand webinar [“The Business of Translation with U.S. CalPro.”](#) You’ll find other valuable considerations in [“Money Talk,”](#) a post on *The ATA Savy Newcomer* blog.
8. Adjust as necessary. Do not be afraid of charging too much. Base the rate on how much you want to work, who you want to work for, and, of course, whether the market will bear your rates (a balance of supply and demand).
9. There is no such thing as too high, but there is such a thing as too low. Remember that you get to dictate your rate and should be paid an amount that reflects the value of your services to your client and the training and skills necessary to provide that service. You always have the option of walking away from low rates, or replacing low-paying clients with higher-paying ones.
10. Remember that you have the final say in what you charge for your services. [Translation agency](#) clients may request discounts on your rates based on translation memory leverage from [CAT tools](#). You can choose whether or not to offer these rate discounts (with the caveat that some agencies will not work with you otherwise).



Raising Your Rates

If you are working with **direct clients**, you can often ask for a raise every year, adjusting to inflation, or simply quote higher rates for any new projects that arise. Negotiating a raise with a **translation agency** you already work with is a different story. In fact, many agencies

simply aren't open to having the conversation at all. However, it is not impossible. Many translators have the best luck onboarding new, higher paying clients that gradually replace lower paying clients.

Working with the Right Clients

Another way to increase your rates is to work with more discerning

clients once you have more experience, honed translation skills, and solid subject-matter expertise.

For more information about raising your rates and tips on doing it effectively, see "[Why Can't I Raise My Rates?](#)" in *The ATA Chronicle*.

Tips on raising your rates:

01 The Moment



Know the optimum moments to ask for a raise or to set your rates higher:

- When you start to work with new clients
- When you are already very busy and get a new inquiry
- At the beginning of a new year (notify clients in advance that your rates will increase after a specific date)

04 Justification



Make sure you justify the price increase and are able to explain your reasoning if a client asks about the change. You may explain that you've acquired new translation tools, taken a course to continue your education, or you have new and improved expertise.

02 New Project



You can bring your rates up to your current level with agencies you have not worked with for a long time and who are now contacting you with a new project. However, you may risk losing the new project.

05 Evening It Out



Raise previous clients' rates to be on par with those of newer clients. You can justify a rate increase by saying something like, "I really enjoy working with you, and most of my other clients are paying me XX. In order for me to be able to continue being available for you and prioritizing you as a client, I would like to ask if you can meet my current rate."

03 Small Increases



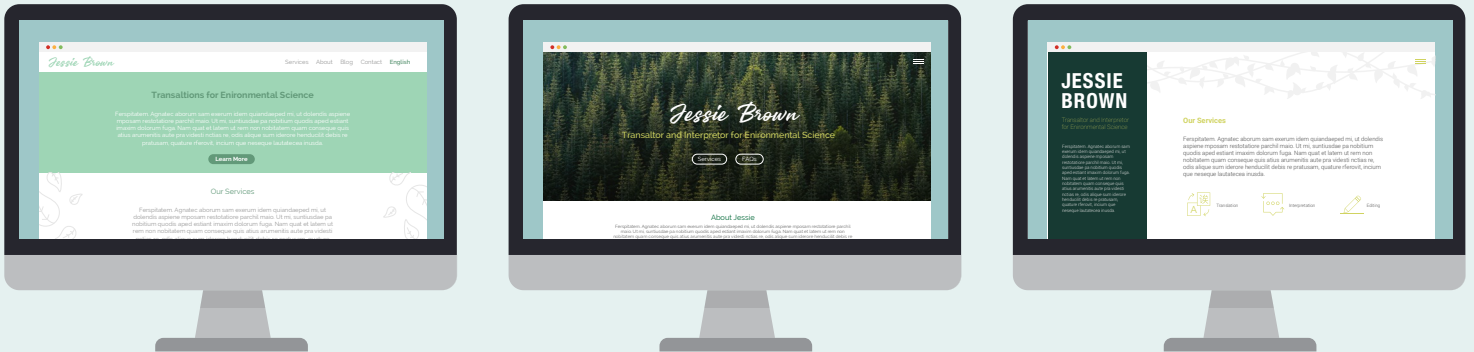
You can try to induce minimal, continuous increases to existing clients, adjusting to inflation. This is not as painful for clients as a substantial increase.

06 Monitor



Monitor your finances regularly, including expenses, in order to annually reassess whether—or when—a rate increase is in order.

SETTING UP A WEBSITE



Most freelance translators have a plethora of online profiles—such as social media, translation portals, and [directory](#) listings—that boost their online presence. This is where prospective clients can find them and learn about their services. None is more important—or can be more beneficial to your online presence—than a website. The great news is that you can create and maintain a website at a low cost by following the steps outlined below.

Basic steps for starting a website:

- Choose a name for your translation business, if you'd like to use something besides your own name.
- Choose a [domain name](#) based on your business name; go for short and sweet, easy to pronounce and spell, and memorable. Search your desired name to make sure

the name is available (not already being used by someone else).

- Choose a website [hosting service](#) and a [building platform](#). Think of the hosting service as the (virtual) location of your site, while the building platform is the materials you use to build your site. There are multiple options for each, so you'll want to take some time to research which features best suit your needs.
- Set up your site. You can choose from a template provided by your building platform or create a layout from scratch. Select colors, buttons, menus, and images that best fit your service offering and the image you want to portray to your potential clients. Write the content for your various pages (see suggestions below) and include a [call to action](#) on each page.
- Consider creating a personalized email address that uses your new

domain name (you@yourdomain.com). For more email strategies see *The ATA Savvy Newcomer* blog post [“Email Best Practices: How Not to End Up in the Recycle Bin.”](#)

- Launch your website and list it on your marketing materials, online profiles, and email signature.
- Make a habit of reviewing your website content at regular intervals to ensure that the information is up to date and relevant for your experience and the type of services you provide.

Pages to Include on Your Website

- **Home or About:** An introduction presenting yourself to your potential clients. This page may be the landing page of your site. Make sure to include the benefits your clients get out of working with you. What challenges will

you help them solve? Be sure to include any translation experience you may already have, including volunteering and internships. How does this experience make you stand apart from other new translators?

Tip: Resist the urge to refer to your business as “we” or “us” on your website if you are a one-person operation. Be clear about who you are and the services you offer. Clients may seek you out specifically because they prefer to work directly with independent contractors rather than agencies.

Bonus: Over time, consider building a portfolio of your work in addition to general biographical information on your About page. If you’ve received permission from your clients, include links to your published translation work. At a minimum, you can build a list of the various types of content you’ve translated without revealing specific client names or information. This way, a potential client visiting your site will have a better idea of what types of material you translate and how you might be a good fit for their specific needs. You can also translate general documents in the public domain to provide as an example of your work. See more ideas on building a portfolio in *The ATA Savvy Newcomer* article [“Branding Yourself – Create a Professional Portfolio.”](#)

· **Services:** What services you offer and what subject areas you work in. You might also post samples/ portfolio of your work and testimonials (just make sure to obtain permission to share content and testimonials before adding them to your site).

· **Contact:** Your contact details (email or phone) and other places where clients can find you, e.g., on social media. This page can also include a contact form that clients can use to request a quote.

Should I start a blog?

A blog can drive traffic to your website and turn visitors into clients, establish you as an authority in your field, increase awareness about your services, and, of course, increase your online visibility. However, keep in mind that a blog is a long-term commitment if you’d like to use it as a marketing strategy. You’ll need to maintain a regular posting schedule and hone in on new ideas and topics that aren’t already covered by other bloggers. Your intended audience matters, too: if your blog posts are about translation itself (rather than focused on a specific industry you serve as a translator), your readers are more likely to be fellow translators, not potential clients.

If you don’t have a blog on your own website, consider submitting articles to blogs and other publications that could be read by your potential

clients. See [“Crafting the Perfect Pitch”](#) in *The ATA Chronicle* for ideas. Finally, you could write articles for professional associations such as [ATA or your local ATA chapter or affiliate](#). Your website could include links to these articles that you’ve written for other publications.

Search Engine Optimization

When creating your site, you’ll want to choose your content strategically with [search engine optimization \(SEO\)](#) in mind. This strategy will help clients find your site more easily when using search engines to search for keywords that are related to the services you offer. There is a lot of advice online regarding SEO strategies, so take some time to research this concept further if you’d like to optimize your website content in this way.

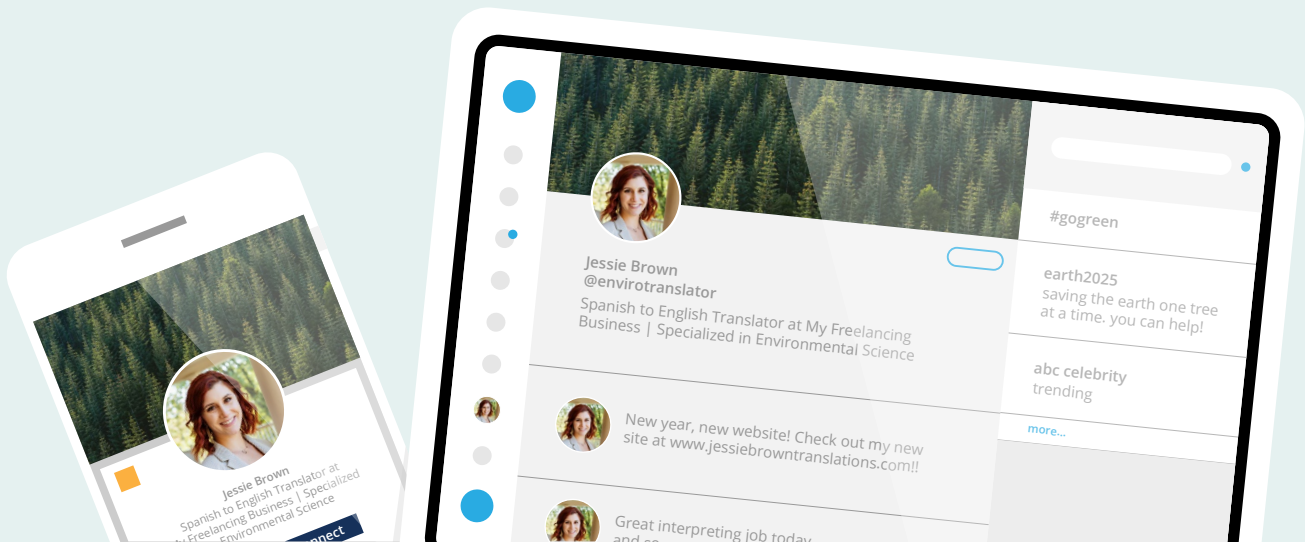
For more tips on creating your website and working on SEO, check out the ATA webinar [“Creating and Optimizing a Website for Your Freelance Business.”](#)

Finally, if the idea of setting up your own website sounds completely daunting and/or unappealing, consider hiring a professional to help you. Just make sure to budget for these professional services accordingly.

See more on building a portfolio in *The ATA Savvy Newcomer* article [“Branding Yourself – Create a Professional Portfolio.”](#)



SOCIAL MEDIA



Using Social Media for Marketing and Networking

Most people already use one or more social media platforms to keep in touch with family and friends. As a freelancer, you can benefit greatly from having an online presence in addition to your website. Maintaining a presence on social media will show the public that you are engaged with your professional community, eager to learn and interact with others, and willing to share your own expertise. You never know when you might cross paths online with someone that could become a client, or a colleague who could refer work to you in the future. You can think of social media as a virtual break room where you interact with colleagues, but also as a marketing tool to promote your services.

A word of advice: do not use your personal Facebook page or Twitter account for professional purposes. You can set up a separate business account on the platform(s) of your choice to keep personal and professional pages separate.

Of course, maintaining one or more social media profiles can take up your valuable time. Don't pressure yourself to use all the platforms if you won't be able to keep them fairly active. LinkedIn is a good platform to start with. See *The ATA Savvy Newcomer* post "[Are You Using LinkedIn to Get High-Paying Clients?](#)" and *The ATA Chronicle* article "[How to Find and Approach Your Ideal Clients through LinkedIn](#)" for tips on making the most of your LinkedIn profile.

Eventually, you could add Twitter to increase your engagement with

colleagues, educational resources, and potential clients; see *The ATA Chronicle* article "[Is Twitter Stupid?](#)" for inspiration. If you'd like to commit to even more, Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest could be of interest, especially if your work has a specific visual component.



LET'S GET SOCIAL

Share your favorite tip from this e-book on Twitter! Don't forget to tag us @atanet and use the hashtag #ATAStartingOut.

Guidelines for Your Business Social Accounts

01 Profile Picture

Make sure that your profile picture is a professional-looking headshot. No selfies or vacation photos, please! Your photo should present how you would typically appear at a professional event or meeting.

02 Consistency

Keep a unified look for all your social media accounts by using the same profile photo, logo, or header image.

03 Language Pairs

Display your language pair(s) prominently and specify what kind of translation services you provide.

04 Useful Content

Post useful information related to translation and to your **specialization** (medical, legal, etc.).

05 Blog

If you write a blog, share original content on your social networks and include social sharing buttons in your blog. Make sure that your social media accounts are also in a prominent place (sidebar or footer).

06 T&I Groups

Actively participate in translation groups and discussion forums. Be sure to share or like others' content.

07 80/20 Rule

Follow the 80/20 rule: 80% of your content should inform or entertain your audience, while 20% should be self-promotion.

08 Hashtag

Use translation- and interpreting-related hashtags (#x18, #1nt, #t9n, #110n).

09 Professionalism

Posting professional content and messages is key. Don't post anything personal or political that you wouldn't want potential or actual clients to see.

10 Engagement

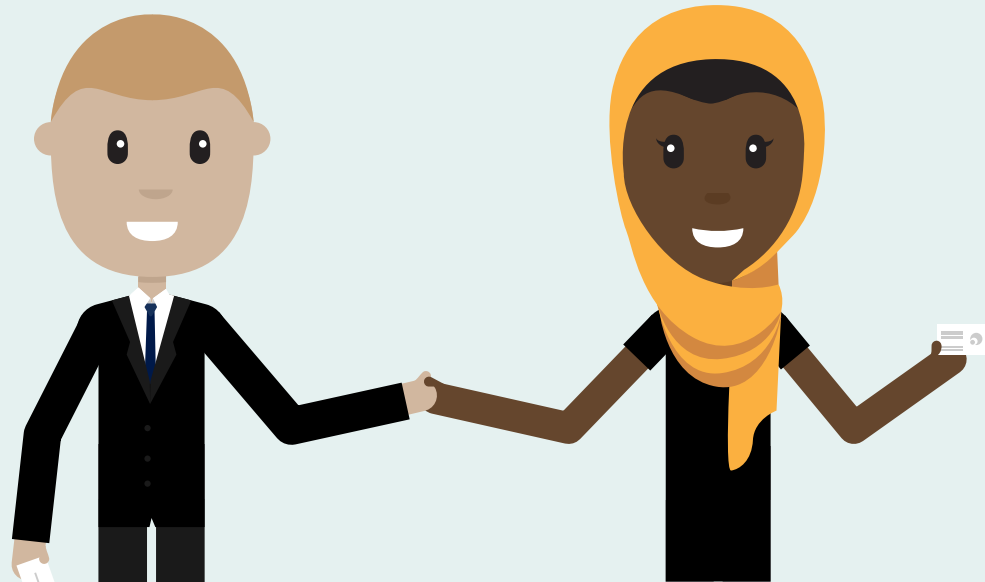
Maintain a consistent and engaging social media presence by posting content regularly and interacting with your followers.

For example, you might ask people to send you their questions. By answering their questions, you are creating unique content.

11 Management

Consider using a platform such as **Hootsuite** or **TweetDeck** to manage and schedule posts in advance.

NETWORKING



Networking and attending events, conferences, and expos, whether related to the translation industry or not, can play a significant role in finding clients and continuing your professional development. Networking is not always about finding your next client: it's about finding contacts and creating a network of trusted professionals to build lasting relationships. These relationships might never lead to paid income, but chances are that some of them might one day. For

example, colleagues you meet at a conference may not directly hire you themselves, but they could refer you for work that they know suits your expertise.

What Events Should I Attend?

There are many professional events and networking opportunities out there, and you'll want to make sure you choose the events that are the best investment for you and your business. When selecting events, consider the specific training you'll

receive, the speakers you'll be learning from, the attendees you'll connect with, and the potential for finding new business opportunities. Also consider the time you'll be taking away from your work and the expenses you'll incur for travel and accommodations. While you may not be able to attend every event you hear about, your ideal events should provide a healthy balance of these benefits and prove well worth the time and money you've invested in them.

"When I decided to pursue a career in translation, I knew I needed a solid plan to help me break into this vast global market. Step 1 was to go back to school to earn an academic qualification, and step 2 was to join ATA. What I learned in the classroom dovetailed nicely with everything I was learning by being an ATA member. Through listservs, articles in *The ATA Chronicle*, and all the materials available on the ATA website, I was able to create a strategy that put me on the right track once I had my diploma in hand. Everything came together in 2011 when I attended my first ATA conference. That's where all the knowledge I had gained at school and the practical advice I had absorbed from ATA collided, and it all made sense! Confident that I knew how the translation industry functioned and where I fit in, I made valuable contacts at that conference and landed my first freelance jobs. Everything snowballed from there and even today, after eight years as a full-time translator, I still rely on ATA to help me keep my skills up to date and keep my finger on the pulse of the industry."



Sarah
Puchner

Translation-specific events such as the ATA Annual Conference are very popular, and provide all of the benefits mentioned above. At the ATA Annual Conference, you can connect with translation and interpreting professionals from around the world. The ATA Annual Conference provides a comprehensive selection of educational opportunities for professional development specific to your needs. You'll find sessions that focus on practical skills and theory, across all levels of experience. You'll be inspired to consider new ideas through hands-on workshops, panel discussions, and lecture presentations.

If the idea of attending an event with nearly two thousand attendees sounds scary as a newcomer, remember that everyone was a first-timer once! Plus, the Buddies Welcome Newbies program was designed just for first-time attendees to make sure you feel welcome and learn the ropes from a seasoned colleague. Sign up as a Newbie and you'll be paired with a Buddy to help you make the most of your conference experience. For further tips on attending an ATA conference, check out *The ATA Savvy Newcomer* articles "[How to prepare for the ATA Conference](#)" and "[How to Get the Most Out of the 'Buddies Welcome Newbies' Program at the ATA Conference](#)" and *The ATA Chronicle* article "[Top 5 Tips for Preparing for ATA's Annual Conference.](#)"

You can also look into local groups for language professionals, including your regional ATA chapter or affiliate, and attend their events and conferences. Conferences are especially helpful for connecting

with local colleagues and businesses you may want to work with. See *The ATA Savvy Newcomer* article "[Chapter Conferences: A Great Place to Start](#)" for more thoughts on local translation conferences. See more information about ATA chapters and affiliates in the [Continuing Professional Development](#) chapter.

Besides translator-specific events, you should also consider attending conferences focused on the industry you translate for. At these events, you'll boost your subject-matter expertise, meet others who know the ins and outs of your specialty field, and—perhaps most importantly—meet potential clients. If you attend an industry-specific conference where attendees conduct business in your [source language](#), even better! To find these events, you can start by following professional associations and other organizations within your field of specialization on social media. Think of your ideal clients in your specialty field and what events they might attend. For more tips on industry events, see *The ATA Chronicle* article "[Attending Industry-Specific Conferences and Events.](#)"

What to do before, during, and after an event:

Before the Event

- Register for the event and book your flight and hotel.
- Check whether you need to print new or extra business cards or other printed materials.
- Prepare and rehearse your [elevator pitch](#). In a couple of sentences, how would you explain what you do and what you help your clients achieve?

- Check out the exhibitor list. Can you identify any potential clients? If so, make a list and research them. Plan specific times to visit their booths. Make sure you are up to date about their industry, i.e., [terminology](#), technology, etc.
- Check out the attendees list, if available, and decide if there are people you want to contact for a meet-up during the event. You won't get the best out of your investment if you spend every meal and break by yourself! Coffee breaks and meal plans book up quickly, so don't hesitate to reach out before the event.

During the Event

- Wear business attire and carry professional business cards.
- Make use of the question-and-answer session at the end of most presentations. Identify yourself and ask a pertinent question.
- Find people who speak your [target language](#) at international events; they'll be more open to talk about translation issues.
- If there's an exhibit hall, make sure you visit. Companies love to talk about their products or services, and you might find more potential clients among the exhibitors than among fellow attendees.

How to Approach People at Events

- When introducing yourself, don't jump immediately into a sales pitch. Instead, you can share a brief explanation of what you do, and ask a question to show your interest in the potential client's needs and concerns.
- Be friendly and professional. Don't complain about bottom-feeders, competitors, or [CAT tools](#).

- Start with an icebreaker. For example, thank an organizer for a fabulous event before asking a question or starting a conversation.
- Ask a question to start a conversation. For example, “What did you think of the speaker?” or “Which presentations did you like the most?”
- When the conversation leads to someone talking about their company or work, go into business mode: “Do you export to [X]?” or “Do you have any documentation in [language Y]?”
- Keep an eye out for attendees’, presenters’, and exhibitors’ participation on social media for the event. Join in the virtual conversation with social media posts and hashtags. Be mindful of your device usage during presentations so you’re not distracting other attendees or the presenter.
- Exchange business cards at the end of a conversation, if you haven’t already. Write a brief note to yourself on the person’s card to remind you of what you discussed when you follow up with them after the event.

Simple Conversation Starters

- What’s your favorite part of the event so far?
- I saw your name on the attendee

list. I’m glad to connect.

- What do you find most exciting in your business (or industry)?
- Your business sounds really interesting. How do you typically find your clients?

Open-ended Questions to Learn More About Contacts

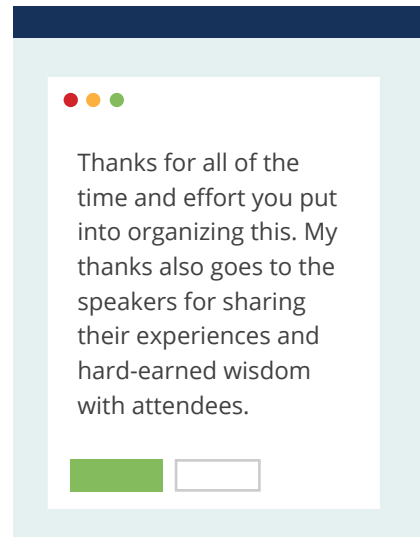
- What does your company do?
- What industry do you serve?
- Who are your key clients?
- What kind of products or services do you offer?
- What is your value proposition?
- What got you started in this industry/job?
- What do you enjoy most about your profession?
- What trends do you foresee in your industry/profession?

See *The ATA Chronicle* article [“Small Talk Tips for Translators”](#) for more ideas on making connections with your fellow event attendees.

After the Event

Email or send LinkedIn invitations to follow up with the people you met. Use the notes you’ve taken on business cards to remind you about how you met each person and what you talked about. Personalize your messages as much as possible and try to mention something specific that you talked about. Thank the

organizers and presenters online through the event website or on social media. For example:



Try to make a regular habit of attending conferences and other professional events. The more you do, the more comfortable you’ll become with networking and meeting potential clients in person. And continuing education opportunities offered at conferences are an ongoing investment in your career!

To dive further into your networking skills, check out *The ATA Chronicle* article [“24 Networking Tips that Actually Work”](#) and the ATA on-demand webinar [“Killer Networking Skills for Language Industry Professionals.”](#)

“I’ve always been a big supporter of professional associations, and I was thrilled to join ATA in 2012. Translation and interpretation can both be very lonely professions and, although it’s possible to succeed on your own, it’s significantly easier and more pleasant to thrive as part of a larger community. Being an ATA member has helped me find answers to questions that seemed new to me but other colleagues had already come up against in the past, and it’s made networking and asking for advice much easier. ATA also filled that empty space where my coworkers should be. We might not have an office water cooler, but we have several avenues to communicate and share work stories. Becoming certified has also greatly helped my career, since my clients are often monolingual and can’t assess my translation themselves. An external party speaking for the quality of my work helps put my clients’ minds at ease.”



Ártemis López

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Continuing Education

Learning doesn't stop on graduation day. Lifelong learning is vital to career success. It's up to you to determine what knowledge and skills you need or want to develop.

When you enter the workforce, you will gain knowledge from on-the-job experience. You will also soon realize that you must stay up to date with the latest developments in your **areas of specialization** and keep your business, technological, and language skills sharp.

Languages, specialties, and technologies grow and evolve quickly in a global society, making continuing education as necessary for translators as it is for doctors, lawyers, and accountants. To support its members in their pursuit of knowledge, ATA is committed to providing the most relevant education in the industry.

Webinars and Online Training

ATA webinars provide affordable

and effective online education throughout the year. These presentations are designed to help translators strengthen skills and expertise with experience-based information and techniques. Webinar topics vary widely, from in-depth subject matter training, **terminology**, language-specific sessions, and updates on the latest industry technology. ATA members receive a discount on webinar registration and on-demand fees. Select webinars are offered free of charge to members.

You can find additional training opportunities in a variety of formats online. Self-directed programs such as **massive open online courses (MOOCs)** can help you improve your specific expertise in your area of specialization, for example. As a freelance translator, you'll also need to keep up with various business practices to make sure that you're up to speed on tasks such as accounting, marketing, and technology use. Business

consultants and coaches may offer blogs, podcasts, and courses to hone these additional skills.

"Joining ATA as a student was an immediate, effective way to show new contacts and potential future clients that I was serious about my translation career. Having access at the discounted member rate to online workshops and resources helped me learn about the field from different perspectives, and attending my first ATA conference was so eye-opening! Experienced translators went out of their way to welcome me and offer tips and encouragement, and the sessions gave me a crash course in current hot topics."



Arwen Dewey

Resources from your Local ATA Chapter or Affiliate

If you prefer stepping away from your computer and getting out of the house, in addition to professional events (see chapter [Networking](#)), consider attending a workshop organized by your ATA chapter or affiliated group. ATA's website maintains lists of ATA [chapters and affiliates](#).

ATA chapters and affiliates serve translators at the regional level. They provide educational sessions and workshops, publicize the availability of local translators and interpreters, and increase the community's awareness of translation and interpreting. In addition to educational workshops, your local chapter or affiliate may also offer webinars,

mentoring opportunities, podcasts, newsletters, and other educational resources and opportunities.

Membership in an ATA chapter or affiliate is separate from ATA membership. Contact your local chapter directly or check their calendar of events. Many of these workshops and events are also listed on [ATA's calendar of events](#).



HOW ATA MEMBERSHIP CAN HELP



A Network that Builds You Up

Joining a professional **association** is an important step in building your career. It signals your commitment to excellence and continuous improvement as a professional. ATA can enhance your personal and professional development and provide numerous networking opportunities. For students and recent graduates, ATA is the perfect segue as they transition to the professional world.

Anyone with a professional interest in language services, located anywhere in the world, can join ATA. Various membership categories are available. Check **ATA's website** for the most up-to-date information on membership categories and pricing. Worth noting is that current students receive a generous discount on ATA membership, training opportunities, and annual conference registration.

ATA Member Benefits

Enhance your network. ATA members enjoy discounts on networking opportunities and events, such as the Annual Conference. ATA also provides numerous other ways to connect with colleagues and build long-lasting personal and professional relationships, such as through language- and interest-specific **divisions**. Members receive exclusive access to email lists, online forums, and social media groups, where you can share ideas, ask for advice, connect with others who share your language or subject-matter expertise, or get involved with volunteer opportunities.

Broaden your knowledge. ATA provides access to an enormous amount of information. Through *The ATA Chronicle*, the association's official magazine, twice-monthly

"I joined ATA as a student because it seemed like a good deal—and it was! The German Language Division email list is full of people willing to help with a difficult turn of phrase or comment on the latest German language trends. The Audiovisual Division has truly fun virtual networking events. NOTIS, my local ATA chapter, is a great place for meeting people in person. ATA is my source of colleagues, business information, and continuing education. I can't imagine being a freelance translator without ATA."



Melody Winkle

ATA Newsbriefs newsletter, special interest email lists, webinars, podcasts, and e-books like this one, ATA offers a multitude of opportunities for continuing education and training. Many of ATA's resources and training opportunities are offered at no cost or at a discounted rate for ATA members.

Whether you are looking to learn about job postings in your field, network in your professional community, gain access to current events in your career area, or just have some fun while meeting new people, ATA is here to support you!

Keep tabs on industry developments and advocacy efforts. Our association keeps abreast of the impact that external

factors such as legislation or new technology have on our profession. ATA is devoted to updating members about these changes and advocating for the profession as well as empowering members to advocate for themselves. The association supports its members by providing them with the latest information and recommendations on how to contact their lawmakers regarding legislation that impacts our profession. ATA also authors articles and statements to educate and inform the public about what we do and why it's important.

Beyond the Basics. ATA offers additional benefits beyond those listed above, including:

- Online directory listing, where potential clients can filter and

search to find your contact information to request your professional services

- Industry resources with members-only access to *The ATA Chronicle* magazine archives
- Discounted products and services for translators and interpreters, such as **CAT tools**
- The ATA Member-to-Member Program, where members receive a discount on products and services offered by other members
- Errors and omissions (E&O) insurance discounts

Visit the ATA website at atanet.org to get more information about ATA membership and join!



01 Connect



- Business discussion forums
- Members-only social media groups
- Opportunities to collaborate with other professionals
- Members-only professional interest groups

02 Advance



- Listing in online directory of language professionals
- Association involvement and leadership opportunities
- Affiliation with a respected national organization

03 Learn



- ATA's flagship bimonthly publication, *The Chronicle*, in print and online
- Newsbriefs, a twice-monthly email bulletin on all things ATA, translation, and interpreting
- ATA podcast
- Client outreach materials
- Compensation survey results

04 Grow



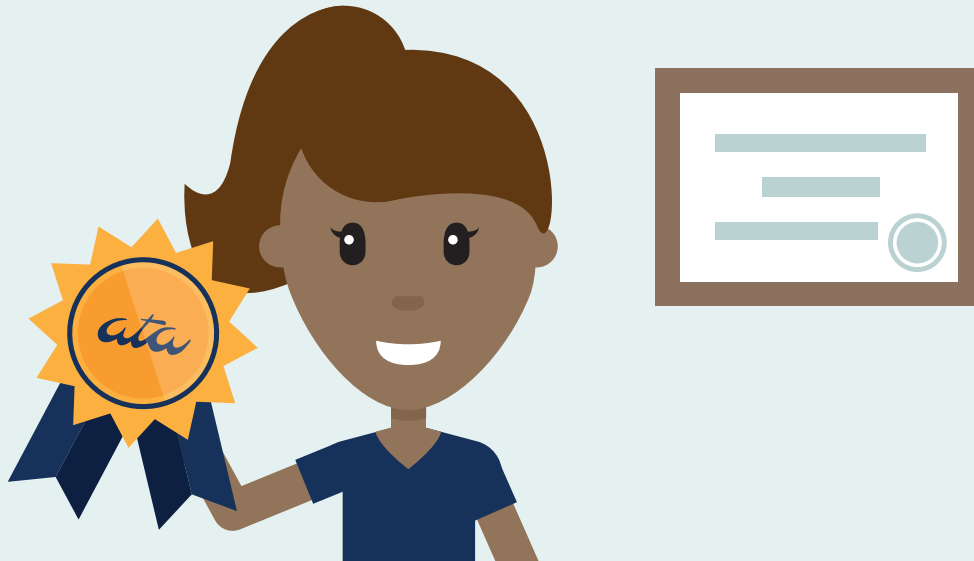
- Mentoring program pairing professionals with experienced mentors
- Opportunities to earn CE credits
- Blog and other resources for industry newcomers

05 Save



- Conferences, webinars, and workshops
- Professional liability insurance
- Tools and software
- Member-to-member programs
- ATA certification exam fee

ATA CERTIFICATION



Procedures, Tips, and Benefits

You may have heard of [certified translators](#) and their designation, CT. A certified translator has passed a translation exam administered by ATA in their [language pair](#) and direction (from or into English). Some translators have multiple [certifications](#) for multiple language pairs. As of printing, ATA certification is available:

- into English from Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Ukrainian
- from English into Arabic, Croatian, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Ukrainian

Check the [ATA website](#) for the most up-to-date information on language

pairs offered. See *The ATA Chronicle* article [“Why Isn’t ATA Certification Offered in My Language?”](#) for more information on how and why certification languages are offered.

The ATA website offers answers to [frequently asked questions](#) about ATA certification and a brief [Guide to the ATA Certification Program](#). See *The ATA Savvy Newcomer* blog for a post explaining the differences between a translation certificate and translation certification: [“Translation Certificate vs. Certification.”](#) You can also purchase a recording of the ATA webinar [“A Guide to ATA Certification.”](#)

Am I Ready?

ATA certification is a mid-career credential for experienced professional translators. You likely won’t be ready for the ATA

certification exam right out of school or at the beginning of your freelance career, but it is a goal you can work toward as you advance and gain more experience.

The certification exam is challenging, with the current overall pass rate below 20%—so it makes sense to prepare. To prepare for the exam, candidates are encouraged to take a practice test. Translating a typical passage and studying a grader’s feedback is helpful preparation for the examination; you may also find workshops and study groups sponsored by ATA [divisions](#) or [chapters](#). While there are no requirements to take a practice test, it is strongly encouraged. It’s an excellent way to measure your readiness for the exam. The ATA website provides [more information about the practice test](#).

For further exam tips, see *The ATA Chronicle* articles [“One Member’s Tips on How to Prepare for ATA’s Certification Exam,”](#) [“Who Wants to Fail ATA’s Certification Exam?”](#) and [“12 Extra-Linguistic Skills You Need to Master before Taking ATA’s Certification Exam,”](#) *The ATA Savvy Newcomer* blog post [“Study resources for translation certification,”](#) and [Tips for Candidates](#) on the ATA website.

Exam Details

The ATA certification exam is a three-hour, open-book, proctored exam. Candidates are provided three passages of about 225 to 275 words, and must choose two to translate. Instructions are included with each passage to specify context, preferred **terminology**, or other expectations that the translator must take into consideration in their translation. The ATA website provides [more details on the exam format and allowed resources](#).

Candidates must register and pay

for the exam in advance through ATA Headquarters. Exams are often organized by regional ATA chapters and affiliates. Check the ATA website for a [list of upcoming exams](#).

Benefits of ATA Certification

Client recognition: Certification offers qualified and independent evidence to both translator and client that the translator possesses professional competence in a specific **language combination**. As such, it reflects a strong commitment to the profession and its ethical practice—a distinction that can attract clients and open doors to new business.

Certification seal: The seal is a way for translators to identify their ATA certification. In addition to the translator’s name and language combination, it provides the information needed to verify their certification online.

Directory listing: An individual’s ATA certification is designated in the [ATA Directory of Translators and Interpreters](#).

“I have been an ATA member since 2018 and got my certification in 2019. Among the many benefits of ATA, networking and learning bring the most value to me so far—webinars, conferences, connections, etc. The ideas and inspiration I get allow me to think creatively and proactively about my own business, which, over time, becomes a great asset—leading to more profit. The ATA seal also helps to build authority; people often search for an ATA-certified specialist to translate their documents with a note certifying accuracy.”



Evgeny Terekhin

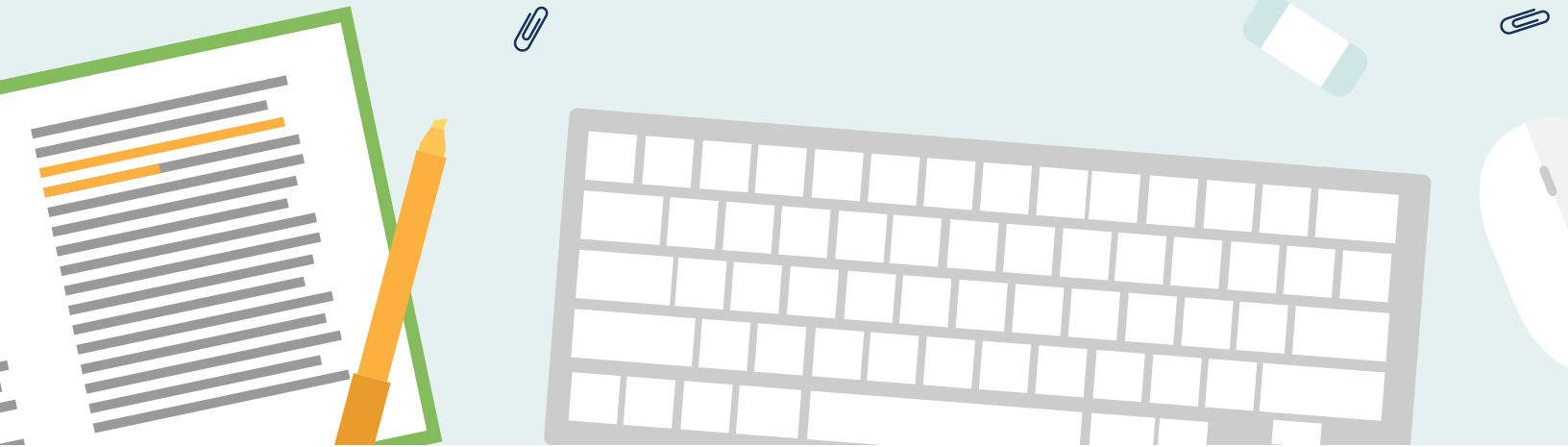


Verify at www.atanet.org/verify

Check out ATA’s [frequently asked questions](#) about ATA certification and a brief [Guide to the ATA Certification Program](#).



FURTHER READING



Books

101 Things a Translator Needs to Know, WLF Think Tank (ISBN-13: 978-9163754111)

A Practical Guide for Translators (Topics in Translation), Geoffrey Samuelsson-Brown (ISBN-13: 978-1847692597)

Diversification in the Language Industry: Success beyond translation, Nicole Y. Adams (ISBN-13: 978-0987477729)

The Entrepreneurial Linguist: The Business-School Approach to Freelance Translation, Judy Jenner and Dagmar Jenner (ISBN-13: 978-0557256235)

Finding and Marketing to Translation Agencies, Corinne McKay (ISBN-13: 978-1978136649)

Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World, Nataly Kelly and Jost Zetsche (ISBN-13: 978-0399537974)

How to be a Successful Freelance Translator: Make Translation Work for You, Robert Gebhardt (ISBN-13: 978-1499155198)

How to Succeed as a Freelance Translator, Corinne McKay (ISBN-13: 978-0578170077)

In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation, Mona Baker (ISBN-13: 978-1138666887)

In Translation: Translators on Their Work and What It Means, Esther Allen and Susan Bernofsky (ISBN-13: 978-0231159692)

Is That a Fish in Your Ear?: Translation and the Meaning of Everything, David Bellos (ISBN-13: 978-0865478763)

The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language, Steven Pinker (ISBN-13: 978-1491514986)

Literary Translation: A Practical Guide, Clifford E. Landers (ISBN-13: 978-1853595196)

Marketing Cookbook for Translators: Foolproof recipes for a successful freelance career, Tess Whitty (ISBN-13: 978-1502507792)

Marketing Tips for Translators: The Ultimate Collection of Business Tips from the Marketing Tips Podcast, Tess Whitty (ISBN-13: 978-1502507792)

The Poetics of Translation: History, Theory, Practice, Willis Barnstone (ISBN-13: 978-0300063004)

The Prosperous Translator, Chris Durban (ISBN-13: 978-0615404035)

The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century, Steven Pinker (ISBN-13: 978-0143127796)

Thoughts on Translation, Corinne McKay (ISBN-13: 978-0578107356)

Translation (The New Critical Idiom), Susan Bassnett (ISBN-13: 978-0415435635)

The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature, Emily Apter (ISBN-13: 978-0691049977)

Translation: Theory and Practice: A Historical Reader, Daniel Weissbort and Astradur Eysteinnsson (ISBN-13: 978-0198711995)

The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation, Lawrence Venuti (ISBN-13: 978-0415394550)

Free e-Books

[41 Checklists for a Successful Freelance Business](#) (Marketing Tips for Translators)

[Guide to Localization Management](#) (Translation Journal)

[Guide to Localization of Open Source Software](#) (Translation Journal)

[Images of Translators in Localization Discourse](#) (Translation Journal)

[Open Translation Tools](#) (Translation Journal)

[Preparing Products for the Global Marketplace](#) (Translation Journal)

[The Status of the Translation Profession in the European Union](#) (European Commission Directorate-General for Translation)

[Study on the size of the language industry in the EU](#) (European Commission Directorate-General for Translation)

[The Translation Studies Reader](#) (Translation Journal)

[Web translation as a genre](#) (European Commission Directorate-General for Translation)

[Working with agencies demystified](#) (Translation Journal)

Style Guides

[The Economist Style Guide](#)

[The Guardian and Observer Style Guide](#)

[Associated Press stylebook](#)

[Chicago Manual of Style](#)

[Associated Press vs. Chicago Manual of Style](#)

[Microsoft's Language Style Guides](#) (many languages)

[World Bank Translation Style Guide](#)

[IEEE Computer Society Style Guide](#)

[Guide to Grammar and Style](#)

[Government of Canada Writing Tips Plus](#)

More

[150 Ebooks gratis para Traductores e Intérpretes](#)

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