

# ATA CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION GUIDELINES FOR CANDIDATES ONLINE EXAM

## Introduction

The certification exam tests the language skills of a translator. These include:

- Comprehension of the source language text.  
*Criteria: Translated text reflects a sound conceptual understanding of the material presented, including cause-and-effect and the rationale for an opinion or argument.*
- Translation techniques.  
*Criteria: Translated text conveys the full meaning of the original. Common translation pitfalls are avoided. Dictionaries are used effectively. Sentences are recast appropriately for target-language style and flow.*
- Writing in the target language.  
*Criteria: Translated text is coherent. Grammar, punctuation, spelling, syntax, usage, and style are appropriate.*

The examination is a three-hour, open-book, online proctored exam in a specific language pair (i.e., one specific source language and one specific target language). The exam consists of three passages of approximately 225-275 words. These passages are general and should not require mastery of any particular field. You will complete no more than two passages of your choice. You will mark the third passage as “This passage not translated.”

**This is an online exam and you will be completing the exam using your own computer and any stored resources, including dictionaries and glossaries.** You will have access to non-interactive resources, e.g., online dictionaries and databases, but not email or chat rooms. This is to ensure that the work is the translator's own and that the carefully vetted exam passages are not shared.

**WARNING:** Read this list carefully. You may face penalties if you use unauthorized websites on the ATA exam.

- You are to use the allow list only. This list is at:  
<https://www.atanet.org/certification/prepare-to-take-the-ata-certification-exam/restrictions-and-requirements/resources/>.
- You may not type in new URLs into the address bar and you may not click on links to search results when using approved search engines.
- All online exams are recorded and will be reviewed by ATA before being sent for grading.
- If either the live proctor or ATA reviewer sees any unauthorized activity, your exam may not be graded and you may forfeit your exam fee.

Candidates who opt for the online format agree to the exam rules when they register for the exam. If you violate the exam rules, you will be expelled from the online exam. Candidates who violate the rules could potentially face action in the form of restrictions on future eligibility to apply for certification and prosecution for an ethics violation.

Exams are hosted by ATA and ExamRoom.AI (their testing platform is called Prov). You will receive two emails from [no\\_reply@examroom.ai](mailto:no_reply@examroom.ai). One email will contain your login credentials and information on how to schedule a time and date for your exam. The second email will contain the confirmation of exam date and time you set up with ExamRoom.AI. You will be receiving these confirmation emails within five days from receipt of this email. If, after five days, you have not received any emails from [no\\_reply@examroom.ai](mailto:no_reply@examroom.ai),

please check your spam folder. If there are still no emails, please reach out to ExamRoom.AI by going to <https://examroom.ai/> and using the chat function to get assistance in scheduling or you can call +1 (877) 848-3926.

**You must schedule and take your exam within 30 days of registering with ATA.** If you miss this deadline, you can write to ATA HQ at [certification@atanet.org](mailto:certification@atanet.org) and ask for an extension. If the exam testing period is over, you can ask for a refund minus the \$25 cancellation fee referenced in your registration form. On exam day log into <https://examroom.ai/> 15 minutes before your exam is scheduled to start. **Your exam results will be mailed by ATA—just like with the in-person exam.**

### **Must Read Pre-Exam Day Information**

You must present a valid photo ID to the onboarding agent on exam day before taking the exam. Have this handy on exam day to avoid any delay in logging in.

You must have a mobile device (smartphone or tablet) to use as a second camera. You must download the ExamRoom.AI app for Android or iPhone before taking the exam. Make sure your phone is charged; you will be running the 360 App for the entire duration of the exam (3 hours). Instructions will be provided by ExamRoom.AI in a separate email.

All other internet-capable devices (except the computer you are using for your exam) must be turned off and stowed.

You may use hardcopy or electronic dictionaries and other reference materials of your choice. You should have general bilingual dictionaries, monolingual dictionaries for the source and target language, and a selection of specialized dictionaries or glossaries. Online resources are limited to the list at: <https://www.atanet.org/certification/prepare-to-take-the-ata-certification-exam/restrictions-and-requirements/resources/>. You should bookmark this page for easy access on exam day.

Before the exam day, you will want to make sure you are using an updated browser (Chrome or Firefox is required) and that you have an internet-capable camera. You will need to have the keyboards you need to take the exam installed. For example, if you are taking the into Spanish exam, you must have a Spanish keyboard installed on your computer and you must know how to use it. Online exam sittings are recorded, so to qualify you must agree to be visible on camera and enable screen sharing.

We recommend that you have these instructions handy on exam day.

In the confirmation email sent by ExamRoom.AI, there is a link to both a visual walkthrough and a tour of the exam at the bottom right of the email that you may find helpful to review before you take your exam.

Be sure to log in to the ExamRoom.AI website prior to the scheduled start time.

### **Technical Limitations**

Some key things to remember when taking the online exam:

- You should have the proper keyboards installed. Shortcut keys, cut and paste, and ASCII keys may not work for accents or special characters.

- You will not be able to use your mouse to navigate the page. You will be using your arrow keys.
- As a security measure, cut and paste will not function.
- If you have inconsistent internet speeds, your exam may take longer. If the internet speed slows down too much, even for a short period of time, you may get kicked out of the exam. You will be allowed to log back in and pick up where you left off, however, you need to go through the onboarding process again.

### **Technical Requirements**

You must supply your own computer and any computer accessories you need. Your computer must be connected to the internet. Please refer to the “Exam Day Manual” from ExamRoom.AI before the day of the exam to make sure your computer is set up correctly. The “Exam Day Manual” also explains the exam process.

An ExamRoom.AI Onboarding Agent will verify the technical setup before the exam starts, check your ID, and briefly explain the exam rules. The Onboarding Agent will then transfer you to an online proctor. If you have any technical questions, contact ExamRoom.AI’s call center. Their contact information is: \_\_\_\_\_

877-848-EXAM (3926)

Call Center Hours: Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m.– 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Saturday: 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Sunday: Closed

### **Technical Issues and Rescheduling**

If technical issues beyond your control occur, you may have the option to reschedule your exam or receive a refund. It is important to note that you are expected to have thoroughly reviewed all materials provided before the exam and to ensure you meet the technical requirements outlined by the Exam Room, such as using the correct operating system, having the required internet speed, and installing proper keyboards.

If you encounter technical difficulties during the exam that are outside of your control, you'll need to contact ATA to inquire about rescheduling. It's advisable that upon noticing any technical issues, you pause your exam promptly, inform the proctor of your intention to reschedule, and then log out. ExamRoom cannot assist with rescheduling until you've contacted ATA.

Please be aware that depending on the duration of your exam and the extent to which you've progressed through it, rescheduling an online exam may not be possible, and you may need to schedule an in-person exam so you can be given alternative passages. Ideally, technical issues should be addressed as soon as they arise, preferably during the onboarding period. Refunds may be granted on a case-by-case basis, and in certain circumstances, you may be subject to a \$25 cancellation fee. An ATA representative will review the exam recording to assess the appropriate course of action.

### **Exam Rules**

During the exam, you **may**:

- Use any dictionaries, glossaries, or word lists stored on your computer.

- Use resources listed on the Approved List at: <https://www.atanet.org/certification/prepare-to-take-the-ata-certification-exam/restrictions-and-requirements/resources/>.
- Take a bathroom break after notifying and getting confirmation from the proctor.
- Have food or drink at your desk.
- Use a whiteboard to take notes. You will be required to erase the whiteboard before the end of the exam and show the proctor you have erased it.

**You may not:**

- Copy or in any way save the source texts or your translations onto your computer or memory or attempt to take pictures of your computer screen. Your exam will be terminated immediately if these actions are observed.
- Type in any URLs in the address bar. You must click on the links on the approved resources list to navigate.
- Use CAT tools or translation memories.
- Use any type of automatic spell or grammar check software or apps.
- Use email, chat rooms, forums, or MT tools, such as Google Translate.
- Use any websites not listed on the approved list.
- Use more than one screen (you may only use one computer).
- Use phones, tablets, smart watches, or other such devices (with the exception of the phone or tablet being used for the 360 security app).
- Use scratch paper or write notes of any kind.
- Have another person in the room or talk to another person during the exam.
- Talk during the exam (except to the proctor).

Note that you are allowed to use translation memories only print them in advance.

Contact ATA's Certification Program Manager well before exam day if you have any questions about whether specific sites may be accessed during the exam. A list of approved sites can be found at: <https://www.atanet.org/certification/prepare-to-take-the-ata-certification-exam/computerized-exam/resources/>

## **Taking the Examination**

It is recommended that you read through all three passages, with translation in mind, before deciding which of two passages you will translate. If you do not, you may encounter a sentence or phrase that you are unable to translate only after it is too late to begin another passage in its place. Do not translate more than two passages. On the third passages, type "This passage not translated" in the text box to avoid an error when you submit your exam.

Pace yourself carefully so that you will have time to reread your translation for sense and for accuracy.

Plan to use all of the time allotted. Should you finish before the three-hour period has ended, use that time to recheck terminology and the accuracy of your translation.

## **Receiving the Results**

Examination graders are not ATA employees. They are active translators worldwide. ATA therefore schedules sufficient time for these graders to carefully assess exams, and cannot

expedite the process. Once the graders have submitted their comments and your graded exam is finished, you will be notified promptly by email. Please allow a minimum of at least sixteen weeks for notification.

You may receive a feedback request from ExamRoom.AI (though their Pro product). This feedback is only for ExamRoom and only for technical aspects of the exam. ATA does not get the information from these surveys. If you have comments to send to ATA, you must send them to [certification@atanet.org](mailto:certification@atanet.org).

### **Review Procedure**

Candidates who fail the exam may apply for certification review by completing the review request form and paying a fee of \$250 per passage. In this procedure, the examination is reviewed for accuracy in grading. The fee is refunded if the grade of “fail” is overturned, and the candidate will receive a Certificate of Certification backdated to the original notice of failure. If the grade of “fail” is upheld, the candidate will receive a graded copy of all or part of the examination showing grounds for the failure. Candidates who fail an examination will have two months from the date their exam results were sent to apply for a review or until January 31. No reviews will be accepted after January. Because of this, it is critical for you follow up with ATA as soon as possible if you did not receive the exam results. The actual review will not take place until the next calendar year. Additional details on the review procedure and application forms may be obtained through ATA Headquarters and from the ATA website.

### **Certification Exam - Tips for Candidates**

#### **Before you start translating:**

- Choose your passages carefully!
- You will receive three passages, and you must translate two of the three. Read all of the passages carefully before you decide which to translate. Do you understand the subject matter? Do the dictionaries you have access to cover the subject matter? Are there complicated sentences that will take time to untangle?
- Read the translation instructions that appear above the passages! These set the context for the translation, specifying the purpose of the target text, the target audience, and often the medium in which the target text will be published. By situating the target text in a real-life context they help you choose the appropriate language level and degree of formality. They may provide the translation of one or more terms. Failure to follow the instructions or use the translations provided will be penalized when the translation is graded.  
The translation instructions also state “Translate the following text for the specified purpose.” This is a reminder that any headings or subheads, for example, are considered part of the passage and have to be translated.
- Read the entire passage! Before you start translating read the entire passage with the translation instructions in mind. Make sure you understand the passage as a whole. Sentences, phrases or individual terms may become clear in the context of the entire passage and the translation instructions.

#### **While you are translating:**

- Develop a translation strategy!
- You will be graded on your ability to transmit the information contained in the source text to the target audience according to the specifications of the translation instructions. The most important guideline for your translation and for grading is how well the target text fulfills the specified task.

Therefore:

- *Beware of translating literally.* A literal translation may be adequate for understanding the meaning of the source text. However, the target language reader has expectations with regard to readability, register, and style depending on the purpose and place of publication of the target text. This applies to individual words and phrases, but also to the entire text.
- *Beware of translating idiomatic expressions or metaphors literally.* Think in terms of the target culture and of target language use in the respective situation. For example the phrase "hanging around the house" conveys the idea that one is relaxing, being lazy. Ask yourself how this idea is expressed in your target culture and language to find an appropriate translation.
- *Follow the conventions of your target language with regard to words or terms that remain in the source language.* Remember that the reader has to understand what you are saying.
- *Do not add clarifications unless you are certain that the target reader needs them to understand the text.*
- *Be sure not to add or omit information.* The target reader expects to get the information that is in the source text.
- *Word order varies between languages.* Be careful where you place qualifiers and modifiers.
- *Pay attention to spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.* The rules of the target language apply.
- *Alternative translations will be considered errors.* It is up to you to select a viable translation.
- *Use standard words and avoid regionalisms.*
- *Unwieldy sentences can be broken into shorter ones, provided no information is added or omitted.*
- *Do not convert measures, distances, currencies, and the like.* You will not be penalized if you convert correctly, but you will be marked off if the conversion is wrong.

**When you are done translating:**

- Compare the source and target texts to make sure you did not omit a sentence or word.
- Reread the translation instructions, put yourself in the shoes of the specified target reader and read your translation aloud in your mind: is it intelligible, does it make sense, does it read naturally in the target language? Can it be used for the specified purpose, could it be published in the specified medium?
- Proofread for grammar (subject/verb agreement, prepositions, tenses, syntax)
- Check proper names, numerals, and dates.
- Check the placement of punctuation and diacritical marks.
- Pay special attention to commonly misspelled words.
- Check for repetitions (a bird in *the the* hand)

### **Spelling style and usage:**

Candidates translating into English are expected to use standard **American spelling, style, and usage**.

### **Use of dictionaries and other references**

- Use dictionaries judiciously, and be sure your choices are correct in context. If a dictionary offers more than one translation for a word, don't assume you can use any of them interchangeably. It sometimes helps to cross-check an unfamiliar term you have tentatively selected by looking it up in the other direction.
- Exam passages are modified to avoid obscure terms. If this is not possible such a term is provided in the translation instructions. However, if a word or phrase is not in your dictionaries, apply your translation skills. Perhaps it is a compound whose parts are in the dictionary, a derivative of a word that is listed, or a cognate you can look up in the target language. In some cases, you are expected to determine the meaning from the context and determine the correct term/phrase in accordance with the translation instructions.
- Remember that you will be working without a spell checker. Consider bringing a monolingual dictionary in your target language.
- Consider bringing a grammar book of your source language and a style book for your target language.

For more information about the ATA exam including grading, preparation tips, and common FAQs, please go to: <https://www.atanet.org/certification/about-the-ata-certification-exam/>.