

# How to

## use free translation tools online



How to series / GBFFTT2007

*Ah. Now you're probably reading this because you searched for free translation on the internet and ended up here. You're already wondering why a proper translation company with considerable expertise is purporting to carry out free translation and expecting disappointment, aren't you? And you'd be absolutely right. Sadly we're not offering our translation services for free.*

*However we are going to offer you a little bit of advice on how to use the free translation tools which do exist and how to get the best out of them. We hope it helps.*

### **What is free translation?**

Free translation? Is there such a thing? Sure, but free translation comes at a price, if you'll forgive the pun. The free translation tools that you can easily find on the web such as Babelfish etc. are based on various Machine Translation (MT)

engines. MT is basically a bit of software that tries to translate for you. It doesn't always get it right. In fact it can go very badly wrong. We don't recommend relying on it for accuracy under any circumstances and won't be held responsible for any errors that occur!

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## So what do I do?

Here's our 5 tips for getting the best out of free translation:

### 1. *Keep it short*

The longer and more wordy your sentences get, the more likely it is that the MT engine will struggle. Keep to an absolute maximum length of about 15 words.

### 2. *Avoid ambiguity*

Check your text... is there any way that the words you have used could be misunderstood. Try to avoid ANY words which have double meanings.

### 3. *Avoid the passive and modal verbs*

What's the passive?  
Here's an example:

*The man had been bitten by the dog.*

Which is more simply rendered as "the dog bit the man" in the Active case.

The passive makes sentence structures more complicated.

Same with modal verbs, these are verbs like "could", "may" "might" "ought to", "would", "have to", "must", "should" etc. Whilst they seem quite simple to you they just make sentence structures much more complicated.

### 4. *Avoid nominalisations*

E.g. "She reached the conclusion" should be "She concluded".

### 5. *Use correct spelling, punctuation and grammar*

Basic but vital. A free translation tool won't make allowances for errors introduced by the user.

## **Can I use a free translation tool and get you to correct the text to a professional standard?**

Yes. But it'll normally end up costing more than getting the whole thing translated from scratch.



### Other documents in the How to series:

- How to get the best from multilingual typesetting
- How to save money on translation costs
- How to work with Sign Language interpreters
- How to work with interpreters
- How to plan a multilingual meeting

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