



**translationAcademy**

**Translation Manual Volume 1**

**Version 5**

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# Introduction to translationAcademy

## Welcome to translationAcademy

The "translationAcademy" is intended to enable anyone, anywhere to equip themselves so that they will be able to make high-quality translations of biblical content into their own language. translationAcademy is designed to be highly flexible. It can be used in a systematic, in-advance approach or it can be used for just-in-time learning (or both, as needed). It is modular in structure.

This page answers the question:

*What is translationAcademy?*

translationAcademy contains the following sections:

- [Introduction](#) - introduces the unfoldingWord project
- [Process Manual](#) - answers the question "what next?"
- [Translation Manual](#) - explains the basics of translation theory and practical translation helps
- [Checking Manual](#) - explains the basics of checking theory and best practices
- [Audio Manual](#) - How to do high quality audio recordings
- [Gateway Languages Manual](#) - explains issues specific to the Gateway Languages

Several of the manuals are separated into two volumes. Volume 1 of each manual covers the basics of that subject while volume 2 goes more in depth. In general, if a module is needed to translate and publish Open Bible Stories, then it is included in volume 1, if not, then it is included in volume 2.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[The unfoldingWord Project](#)

# Why We Translate the Bible

The purpose of translationAcademy is to train you to become a Bible translator. Translating God's Word into your language to help your people grow as disciples of Jesus is an important task. You must be committed to this task, take your responsibility seriously, and pray that the Lord will help you.

God has spoken to us in the Bible. He inspired the writers of the Bible to write his Word using the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek languages. There were about 40 different authors writing from around 1400 B.C. to A.D. 100. These documents were written in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. By recording his Word in those languages, God ensured that the people at those times and in those places could understand it.

Today, your people in your country do not understand Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. But translating God's Word into their language will enable them understand it!

Someone's "mother tongue" or "heart language" means the language they first spoke as a child and the one which they use at home. This is the language in which they are most comfortable and which they use to express their deepest thoughts. We want everyone to be able to read God's Word their heart language.

Every language is important and valuable. Small languages are just as important as the national languages spoken in your country and they can express meaning just as well. No one should be ashamed to speak their dialect. Sometimes, those in minority groups feel ashamed of their language and try not to use it around the people who are in the majority in their nation. But there is nothing inherently more important, more prestigious, or more educated about the national language than there is about local languages. Each language has nuances and shades of meaning that are unique. We should use the language we are most comfortable with and with which we best communicate with others.

This page answers the question:

*Why should we translate the Bible?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\*The unfoldingWord Project\*](#)

[\*Introduction to the Translation Manual\*](#)

in [\*Translation Manual Volume 1\*](#)

[\*What is Translation\*](#) in [\*Translation Manual Volume 1\*](#)

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\*The Qualities of a Good Translation\*](#) in [\*Translation Manual Volume 1\*](#); [\*The Translation Process\*](#) in [\*Translation Manual Volume 1\*](#)

# The unfoldingWord Project

The unfoldingWord project exists because we want to see **unrestricted biblical content in every language**.

Jesus commanded his disciples to make disciples of EVERY people group:

"Jesus came to them and spoke to them and said, 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey all the things that I have commanded you. And see, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.'" (Matthew 28:18-20 ULB)

This page answers the question:

*What is the unfoldingWord Project?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Introduction to translationAcademy](#)

We have the promise that people from EVERY language will be in heaven:

"After these things I saw, and behold, there was a great crowd, which no one was able to number, out of every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."  
(Revelation 7:9 ULB)

Understanding the Word Of God in one's heart language is important:

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."  
(Romans 10:17 ULB)

## How Do We Do This?

How do we accomplish the goal of **unrestricted biblical content in every language**?

- [unfoldingWord Network](#) - By partnering with other like-minded organizations
- [Statement of Faith](#) - By working with those who have the same beliefs
- [Translation Guidelines](#) - By using a common translation theory
- [Open License](#) - By releasing everything we create under an open license
- [Gateway Languages Strategy](#) - By making Biblical content available to translate from a known language

## What Do We Do?

- **Content** - We create and make available for translation free and unrestricted biblical content. See <http://ufw.io/content/> for a complete list of resources and translations. Here are a few samples:
  - **Open Bible Stories** - a chronological mini-Bible comprising 50 key stories of the Bible, from Creation to Revelation, for evangelism and discipleship,

- in print, audio, and video (see <http://ufw.io/stories/>).
- **the Bible** - the only inspired, inerrant, sufficient, authoritative Word of God made available under an open license for unrestricted translation, use, and distribution (see <http://ufw.io/bible/>).
  - **translationNotes** - linguistic, cultural, and exegetical helps for translators. They exist for Open Bible Stories and the Bible (see <http://ufw.io/tn/>).
  - **translationQuestions** - questions for each chunk of text that translators and checkers can ask to help ensure that their translation is understood correctly. Available for Open Bible Stories and the Bible (see <http://ufw.io/tq/>).
  - **translationWords** - a list of important Biblical terms with a short explanation, cross references, and translation aids. Useful for Open Bible Stories and the Bible (see <http://ufw.io/tw/>).
- **Tools** - We create translation, checking, and distribution tools that are free and open-licensed. See <http://ufw.io/tools/> for a complete list of tools. Here are a few samples:
    - **Door43** - an online translation platform where people can collaborate on translation and checking, also the content management system for unfoldingWord (see <https://door43.org/>).
    - **translationStudio** - a mobile app and a desktop app where translators can do offline translating (see <http://ufw.io/ts/>).
    - **translationKeyboard** - a web and mobile app to help users create and use custom keyboards for languages without them (see <http://ufw.io/tk/>).
    - **unfoldingWord app** - a mobile app where translations can be distributed (see <http://ufw.io/uw/>).
  - **Training** - We create resources to train mother tongue translation teams. translationAcademy (this resource) is our primary training tool. We also have audio recording and training resources. See <http://ufw.io/training/> for a complete list of training materials.

Next we recommend you learn about:

*[Statement of Faith](#); [Gateway Languages Strategy](#)*



## Statement of Faith

The official version of this document is found at <http://ufw.io/faith/>.

The following statement of faith is subscribed to by all member organizations of and contributors to the *unfoldingWord* project (see <https://unfoldingword.org>). It is in agreement with the Lausanne Covenant (see

<http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html>).

We believe that Christian belief can and should be divided into **essential beliefs** and **peripheral beliefs**.

### Essential beliefs

Essential beliefs are what define a follower of Jesus Christ and can never be compromised or ignored.

- We believe the Bible to be the only inspired, inerrant, sufficient, authoritative Word of God.
- We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ.
- We believe in the humanity of Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father.
- We believe that every person is inherently sinful and so is deserving of eternal hell.
- We believe that salvation from sin is a gift of God, provided through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, attained by grace through faith, not by works.
- We believe that true faith is always accompanied by repentance and regeneration by the Holy Spirit.
- We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the follower of Jesus Christ is enabled to live a godly life.
- We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, from all nations and languages and people groups.
- We believe in the personal and physical return of Jesus Christ.
- We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; the unsaved will be resurrected to eternal damnation in hell and the saved will be resurrected to eternal blessing in heaven with God.

### Peripheral beliefs

This page answers the question:

*What do we believe?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The unfoldingWord Project](#)

Peripheral beliefs are everything else that is in Scripture but about which sincere followers of Christ may disagree (e.g. Baptism, Lord's Supper, the Rapture, etc.). We choose to agree to disagree agreeably on these topics and press on together toward a common goal of making disciples of every people group (Matthew 28:18-20).

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\*Translation Guidelines; Open License; Copyrights, Licensing, and Source Texts\*](#) in  
[\*Translation Manual Volume 1\*](#)

# Translation Guidelines

The official version of this document is found at <http://ufw.io/guidelines/>.

The following statement on the principles and procedures used in translation is subscribed to by all member organizations of and contributors to the unfoldingWord project (see <https://unfoldingword.org>). All translation activities are carried out according to these common guidelines.

This page answers the question:

*By what principles do we translate?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The unfoldingWord Project Statement of Faith](#)

1. **Accurate** — Translate accurately, without detracting from, changing, or adding to the meaning of the original text. Translated content should faithfully communicate as precisely as possible the meaning of the original text as it would have been understood by the original audience. (see [Create Accurate Translations](#))
2. **Clear** — Use whatever language structures are necessary to achieve the highest level of comprehension. This includes rearranging the form of a text and using as many or as few terms as necessary to communicate the original meaning as clearly as possible. (see [Create Clear Translations](#))
3. **Natural** — Use language forms that are effective and that reflect the way your language is used in corresponding contexts. (see [Create Natural Translations](#))
4. **Faithful** — Avoid any political, denominational, ideological, social, cultural, or theological bias in your translation. Use key terms that are faithful to the vocabulary of the original biblical languages. Use equivalent common language terms for the biblical words that describe the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. These may be clarified, as needed, in footnotes or other supplemental resources. (see [Create Faithful Translations](#))
5. **Authoritative** — Use the original language biblical texts as the highest authority for translation of biblical content. Reliable biblical content in other languages may be used for clarification and as intermediary source texts. (see [Create Authoritative Translations](#))
6. **Historical** — Communicate historical events and facts accurately, providing additional information as needed in order to accurately communicate the intended message to people who do not share the same context and culture as the original recipients of the original content. (see [Create Historical Translations](#))
7. **Equal** — Communicate the same intent as the source text, including expressions of feeling and attitudes. As much as possible, maintain the different kinds of literature in the original text, including narrative, poetry, exhortation, and prophecy, representing them with corresponding forms that communicate in a similar way in your language. (see [Create Equal Translations](#))

## Identifying and Managing Translation Quality

The quality of a translation generally refers to the fidelity of the translation to the meaning of the original, and the degree to which the translation is understandable and effective for the speakers of the receptor language. The strategy we suggest involves checking the forms and communicative quality of the translation with the language community, and checking the fidelity of the translation with the Church in that people group.

The specific steps involved may vary significantly, depending on the language and context of the translation project. Generally, we consider a good translation to be one that has been reviewed by the speakers of the language community and also by the leadership of the church in the language group so that it is:

1. **Accurate, Clear, Natural, and Equal** — Faithful to the intended meaning of the original, as determined by the Church in that people group and in alignment with the Church global and historical, and consequently:
2. **Affirmed by the Church** - Endorsed and used by the Church. (see [Create Church-Approved Translations](#))

We also recommend that the translation work be:

1. **Collaborative** — Where possible, work together with other believers who speak your language to translate, check, and distribute the translated content, ensuring that it is of the highest quality and available to as many people as possible. (see [Create Collaborative Translations](#))
2. **Ongoing** — Translation work is never completely finished. Encourage those who are skilled with the language to suggest better ways to say things when they notice that improvements can be made. Any errors in the translation should also be corrected as soon as they are discovered. Also encourage the periodic review of translations to ascertain when revision or a new translation is needed. We recommend that each language community form a translation committee to oversee this ongoing work. Using the unfoldingWord online tools, these changes to the translation can be made quickly and easily. (see [Create Ongoing Translations](#))

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Open License; Introduction to the Translation Manual](#) in *Translation Manual Volume 1*;  
[Introduction to Translation Checking](#) in *Checking Manual Volume 1*

# Open License

## A License for Freedom

To achieve **unrestricted biblical content in every language**, a license is needed that gives the global church "unrestricted" access. We believe this movement will become unstoppable when the Church has unrestricted access. The

This page answers the question:

*What freedoms do users have with unfoldingWord content?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The unfoldingWord Project](#)

[Statement of Faith](#)

[Translation Guidelines](#)

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- [CC Attribution \(CC BY\)](#)
- [CC Attribution-ShareAlike \(CC BY-SA\)](#)
- [Free Translate License](#)

See [Copyrights, Licensing, and Source Texts](#) for more information.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Gateway Languages Strategy; Copyrights, Licensing, and Source Texts](#) in *Translation Manual Volume 1*

# Gateway Languages Strategy

The official version of this document is found at <http://ufw.io/gl/>.

## Explanation

The objective of the gateway languages strategy is to equip 100% of the people groups that comprise the global Church with biblical content that is released from copyright restrictions and made available in a language they understand well (a language of wider communication) together with unrestricted translation training and tools that enable them to translate it into a language they understand fully (their own language). A "gateway language" is a language of wider communication through which second-language speakers of that language can gain access to content and translate it into their own language.

The "gateway languages" at the world level comprise the smallest number of languages through which content can be delivered to every other language, via translation by bilingual speakers. For example, French is a gateway language for minority languages in Francophone Africa in that content available in French can be translated by bilingual speakers from French into their own languages.

At the country level, the gateway languages of a given country are the fewest languages of wider communication required for bilingual speakers in every minority language native to the country (not located there due to immigration) to gain access to content. For example, English is the gateway language for North Korea, given that all people groups native to North Korea can be reached by translation of content into their language from English.

## Effects

This model has two basic effects: First, it empowers all languages to "pull" content to their language once the content and helps have been "pushed" into a language accessible to every language of the world (a gateway language). Second, it limits the amount of translation that needs to be done as the translation helps only have to be translated into the gateway language. All other languages can translate only the biblical content, since no language will be dependent upon them for understanding the translation helps.

Thus, whether or not a language is a gateway language will determine what needs to be translated into that language.

For Other Languages, we recommend they translate at least Open Bible Stories. They

This page answers the question:

*How can every language be reached?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The unfoldingWord Project](#)

[Open License](#)

are welcome to translate whatever other resources they like.

To see what must be translated for Gateway Languages, go to [Translating in the Gateways](#). If you are translating into a gateway language, you will find the [Gateway Languages Manual](#) particularly helpful because it deals with certain issues that specifically appear for gateway languages.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Translating in the Gateways](#) in *Gateway Languages Manual*; *Finding Answers*



# Finding Answers

## How to Get Answers

There are several resources available for finding answers to questions:

- **translationAcademy** - This training manual is available at <http://ufw.io/ta> and has much information including:
  - [Introduction](#) - introduces the unfoldingWord project
  - [Process Manual](#) - answers the question "what next?"
  - [Translation Manual](#) - explains the basics of translation theory and practical translation helps
  - [Checking Manual](#) - explains the basics of checking theory and best practices
  - [Audio Manual](#) - How to do high quality audio recordings
  - [Gateway Languages Manual](#) - explains issues specific to the Gateway Languages
- **Slack Chatroom** - Join the Team43 community, post your questions to the "#helpdesk" channel, and get real-time answers to your questions (sign up at <http://ufw.io/team43>)
- **Helpdesk** - email [help@door43.org](mailto:help@door43.org) with your questions

This page answers the question:

*Where can I find answers to my questions?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Introduction to translationAcademy](#)

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Introduction to the Process Manual](#) in *Process Manual Volume 1*

# Introduction

## Introduction to the Translation Manual

### What Does the Translation Manual Teach?

This manual teaches translation theory and how to make a good translation for Other Languages (OLs). Some of the principles of translation in this manual also apply to Gateway Language translation. For specific instruction on how to translate the set of translation tools for Gateway Languages, however, please see the Gateway Language Manual. It will be very helpful to study many of these modules before starting any type of translation project. Other modules, such as the ones about grammar, are only needed for "just-in-time" learning.

This page answers the question:

*What is the Translation Manual?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Introduction to translationAcademy](#)  
in  
[Introduction to translationAcademy](#)  
[Translation Guidelines](#) in  
[Introduction to translationAcademy](#)  
[Finding Answers](#) in  
[Introduction to translationAcademy](#)

Some highlights in the Translation Manual:

- [The Qualities of a Good Translation](#) - defining a good translation
- [The Translation Process](#) - how to achieve a good translation
- [Choosing a Translation Team](#) - some items to consider before starting a translation project
- [Choosing What to Translate](#) - what to start translating

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Why We Translate the Bible](#) in [Introduction to translationAcademy](#); [The Qualities of a Good Translation](#); [The Translation Process](#); [Choosing What to Translate](#)

# Terms to Know

## Important Words to Know

*Note: These are terms that the Translation Manual will use to talk about language. The translator will need to understand these terms in order to use the Translation Manual.*

**Term** - A word or phrase that refers to one thing, idea, or action. For example, the term in English for pouring liquid into one's mouth is "drink." The term for a ceremony that marks an important transition in someone's life is "rite of passage." The difference between a term and a word is that a term can contain several words.

**Text** - A text is something that a speaker or writer is communicating to a hearer or reader by means of language. The speaker or writer has a certain meaning in mind, and so he or she chooses a form of the language to express that meaning.

**Context** - The words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs surrounding the word, phrase, or sentence in question. The context is the text that surrounds the part of the text that you are examining. The meaning of individual words and phrases can change when they are in different contexts.

**Form** - The structure of the language as it appears on the page or as it is spoken. "Form" refers to the way that the language is arranged - it includes the words, the word order, the grammar, idioms, and any other features of the structure of the text.

**Grammar** - The way that sentences are put together in a language. This has to do with the order of its various parts, such as if the verb goes first or last or in the middle.

**Noun** - A kind of word that refers to a person, place, or thing. A proper noun is the name of a person or place. An abstract noun is a thing that we cannot see or touch, like "peace" or "unity." It refers to an idea or a state of being. Some languages do not use abstract nouns.

**Verb** - A kind of word that refers to an action, like "walk" or "arrive."

**Modifier** - A kind of word that says something about another word. Both adjectives and adverbs are modifiers.

**Adjective** - A kind of word that says something about a noun. For example, the word "tall" says something about the noun "man" in the following sentence. *I see a tall man.*

**Adverb** - A kind of word that says something about a verb. For example, the word

This page answers the question:

*What terms should I know?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Introduction to the Translation Manual](#)

"loudly" says something about the verb "spoke" in the following sentence. *The man spoke loudly to the crowd of people.*

**Idiom** - An expression that uses several words and that means something different as a whole than it would if the words were understood with the meanings that they have when they are used separately. Idioms cannot be translated literally, that is, with the meanings of the separate words. For example, "He kicked the bucket" is an idiom in English that means, "He died."

**Meaning** - The underlying idea or concept that the text is trying to communicate to the reader or hearer. A speaker or writer can communicate the same meaning by using different forms of the language, and different people can understand different meanings from hearing or reading the same language form. In this way you can see that form and meaning are not the same thing.

**Translation** - The act of expressing the meaning conveyed by the form of one language in the form of another language.

**Source Language** - The language *from* which the translation is being made.

**Source Text**- The text *from* which the translation is being made.

**Target Language** - The language *into* which a translation is being made.

**Target Text**- The text being made by the translator as he or she translates the meaning from the source text.

**Original Language** - The language in which a Bible text was initially written. The Original Language of the New Testament is Greek. The Original Language of most of the Old Testament is Hebrew. However, the Original Language of some parts of Daniel and Ezra is Aramaic. The Original Language is always the most accurate language from which to translate a passage.

**Language of Wider Communication** - A language that is spoken over a broad area and by many people. For most people, this is not their first language, but is the language that they use to speak to people outside of their language community. Some people call this a trade language. Most Bibles will be translated using a language of wider communication as the source language.

**Literal Translation** - A translation that focuses on reproducing the form of the source text in the target text, even if the meaning changes as a result.

**Meaning-based Translation (or Dynamic Translation)** - A translation that focuses on reproducing the meaning of the source text in the target text, even if the form changes as a result.

**Passage** - A section of the Bible text that is being talked about. This can be as small as one verse, but it is usually several verses that together have one topic or tell one

story.

**Gateway Language** - A Gateway Language (GL) is a language of wider communication that we have identified as being one of the languages into which we will translate all of our translation tools. The set of Gateway Languages is the smallest number of languages through which content can be delivered to every other language of the world, through translation by bilingual speakers.

**Other Language** - The Other Languages (OLs) are all of the languages of the world that are not Gateway Languages. We translate our Bible translation tools into the Gateway Languages so that people can use those tools to translate the Bible into the Other Languages.

**End-user Bible** - This is a Bible that people have translated so that it speaks in a natural way in the target language. It is meant to be used in churches and homes. In contrast, the ULB and UDB are Bibles that are translation tools. They do not speak naturally in any language, because the ULB is a literal translation and the UDB avoids using idioms and figures of speech, which a natural translation would use. Using these translation tools, a translator can produce an end-user Bible.

**Participant** - A participant is one of the actors in a sentence. This could be the person doing the action, or the person that is receiving the action, or mentioned as participating in some way. A participant could even be an object that is stated as participating in the action of the sentence. For example, in the following sentence, the participants are underlined: John and Mary sent a letter to Andrew. Sometimes participants are left unstated, but they are still part of the action. In this case, the participant is *implied*. For example, in the following sentence, there are only two participants stated: Andrew received a letter. The senders, John and Mary, are implied. In some languages, the implied participants must be stated.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[What is Translation](#)

# What is Translation

## Definition

Translation is a process performed between different languages that involves a person (the translator) changing a text from one language (the source language) into a different language (the target language).

There are basically two kinds of translations: literal and dynamic (or meaning-based).

- Literal translations focus on representing words in the source language with words in the target language that have similar basic meanings. They also use phrases that have similar structures to the phrases in the source language. This kind of translation allows the reader to see the structure of the source text, but it can make it difficult or impossible for the reader to understand the meaning of the source text.
- Dynamic, meaning-based translations focus on representing the meaning of the source language sentence in its context, and will use whatever words and phrase structures are most appropriate to convey that meaning in the target language. The goal of this kind of translation is to make it easy for the reader to understand the meaning of the source text. This is the kind of translation recommended in this Translation Manual for Other Language (OL) translations.

The ULB is designed to be a literal translation, so that the OL translator can see the forms of the original biblical languages. The UDB is designed to be a dynamic translation, so that the OL translator can understand the meaning of these forms in the Bible. When translating these resources, please translate the ULB in a literal way and translate the UDB in a dynamic way. For more information about these resources, see the Gateway Manual.

This page answers the question:

*What is Translation?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\*Introduction to the Translation Manual\*](#)

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\*Why We Translate the Bible\*](#) in [\*Introduction to translationAcademy\*](#); [\*The Qualities of a Good Translation\*](#); [\*The Translation Process\*](#); [\*Form and Meaning\*](#); [\*Literal Translations\*](#); [\*Meaning-Based Translations\*](#)

## More about Translation

Translation is the process of representing in one language (the "target language") the ideas found in a document (the "source text") written in a different language.

### Why do people translate texts?

Translators in general have different reasons for doing their work. Their reasons depend on the kind of document they are translating, and on the needs of the person who has asked them to translate it. In the case of Bible translation, people usually do their work because they want the Bible's ideas to affect the target language readers in the same way that the original readers and hearers of the biblical texts were affected. Because God's ideas in the Bible lead us to eternal life with him through Jesus Christ, translators also want the target language readers to know his ideas.

This page answers the question:

*What more should I know about translation?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[What is Translation](#)

[Why We Translate the Bible](#) in [Introduction to translationAcademy](#)

### How do we as Bible translators usually expect to represent the biblical ideas?

There are various ways in which we can represent the ideas in a source text: we can put them into a list, we can summarize them using far less space on the written page, we can simplify them (as we often do in children's Bible story books and in other kinds of Bible helps), or we can even put them into diagrams or charts. However, Bible translators usually try to present the biblical ideas as completely as possible. This also means that they try to produce in translation the same kinds of documents as the original documents (a prophecy for a prophecy, a letter for a letter, a book of history for a book of history, etc.) Also, they try to recreate the same **tensions** in the translation that exist in the source texts.

### What do we mean by "tension" in texts?

Examples of tension occur when a reader wonders what will happen next to the participants in a story, or when a reader follows the argument, encouragement, and warnings of an epistle writer or of a conversation that is reported in the text. A reader can feel tension when reading a psalm, since the praises of God affect the psalmist in various ways. When reading an Old Testament prophetic book, the reader can feel tension rise as the prophet condemns people for their sin, or as he warns them to turn back to God. Tension may also be felt when reading about God's promises for the future, as one considers when God fulfilled those promises, or when he will fulfill them. Good translators study the kinds of tension in the source documents, and they try to recreate those tensions in the target language.

## How to Aim Your Bible Translation

### A translator is like a hunter

A translator is like a hunter, who must aim his gun at an animal if he wants to hit it. He must know the kind of animal he is hunting, because a hunter does not shoot birds with the same kind of bullets that he would use to kill an antelope, for example.

It is the same when we speak to other people. We do not speak to young children with exactly the same words that we would say to an adult. Neither do we speak to our friends in exactly the same way we would speak to the president or ruler of our country.

In all these cases, we decide to use different words and expressions. For example, if I am sharing the gospel with a young child, I should not say to him, "Repent, and the Lord will give you his grace." Instead, I should say something like, "Be sorry for the wrong things you have done, and tell Jesus that you are sorry. Then he will welcome you, because he loves you."

In every language, there are words that only adults use, words that children have not yet learned. Of course, the children will eventually learn to use many of these words. But if you say too many of these words to children at the same time, they will find it very difficult to understand you.

In addition, languages are like trees that grow new leaves and lose old ones: new words are always forming in languages, and some words are always dropping out of use. These words die and drop like leaves; they are words that the old people know but that the younger people never learn to use. After the older generation is gone, these old words will no longer be used in the language. Even if they are written down, in a dictionary for example, as they should be, the younger people will usually never actually use them again.

For these reasons, Bible translators must decide who are the people that they will aim their translation at. Here are their choices:

### Aim to the Future

Translators can aim their translation at young mothers and their children who speak the target language, because these people represent the future of their language. If translators work in this way, they will avoid using old words that the younger people are not learning. Instead, they will use ordinary, everyday words as much as possible. In addition, such translators will follow these other rules:

This page answers the question:

*What should be the purpose of our Bible Translation?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[What is Translation](#)

[Why We Translate the Bible](#) in [Introduction to translationAcademy](#)



1. They do not try to transliterate common Bible words from other languages into the target language. For example, this means that they will not try to transform the Bible word "synagogue" into something like "sinagog" and then try to teach its meaning to the people. They will not try to transform the Bible word "angel" into something like "enjel" and then try to teach its meaning to the target language readers.
2. They do not try to invent new words to signal ideas that they find in the Bible. For example, if the target language has no word that signals all the aspects included in "grace" or "sanctify," translators do not make up new words for them. Instead, they will find phrases suitable for expressing the main part of the word's meaning in the Bible passage that they are working on.
3. They remember not to take known words in the target language and stuff them with new meaning. They know that if they try this, the people will simply ignore the new meaning. As a result, the people will misunderstand the meaning that you want the text to communicate.
4. They remember to express the biblical ideas in ways that are clear and natural. (See: [Create Clear Translations](#), [Create Natural Translations](#))

When translators follow these rules, we call the result a common language version. If you are working to provide a language with its first Bible, then we recommend that you follow these guidelines. Common language versions in English include Today's English Version and The Common English Bible. But remember that your target language will probably want to express many ideas in ways that are very different from what you find in these English versions.

### **Aim for a Bible Study Translation**

Translators can aim their translation at Christians who want to study the Bible in a way that is deeper than the way it is read by new Christians. Translators may decide to do this if the target language already has a good Bible that speaks well to unbelievers and new believers. If translators work in this way, they may decide to:

1. Try to imitate more of the grammatical structures they find in the biblical languages. For example, when the Bible says, "The love of God," translators might decide to leave the expression ambiguous. If they do this, they will not decide whether it means "the love that people have for God" or "the love that God has for people." When the Bible says, "the love that we have in Christ Jesus," translators might decide not to say that it means "because of Christ Jesus" or "united to Christ Jesus."
2. Try to say what Greek or Hebrew words "stand behind" various expressions in translation. For example, they can do this with footnotes.
3. Try to invent new expressions in the target language that signal more of the meaning carried by biblical words. If translators do this, they must become creative with the target language.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\*The Qualities of a Good Translation\*](#)

# Defining a Good Translation

## The Qualities of a Good Translation

### Four Main Qualities

There are four main qualities of a good translation. It must be:

- Clear - see [Create Clear Translations](#)
- Natural - see [Create Natural Translations](#)
- Accurate - see [Create Accurate Translations](#)
- Church-Approved - see [Create Church-Approved Translations](#)

We can think of each of these qualities as a leg of a four-legged stool. Each one is necessary. If one is missing, the stool will not stand. Likewise, each of these qualities must be present in a translation in order for it to be useful and faithful to the church.

This page answers the question:

*What are the qualities of a good translation?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Translation Guidelines](#) in [Introduction to translationAcademy](#)

[Introduction to the Translation Manual](#)

[What is Translation](#)

### Clear

Use whatever language structures are necessary to achieve the highest level of comprehension. This includes simplifying concepts, rearranging the form of a text, and using as many or as few terms as necessary to communicate the original meaning as accurately as possible. To learn how to make Clear Translations, see [Create Clear Translations](#).

### Natural

Use language forms that are effective and that reflect the way your language is used in corresponding contexts. To learn how to make Natural Translations, see [Create Natural Translations](#).

### Accurate

Translate accurately, without detracting from, changing, or adding to the meaning of the original text. Translated content should faithfully communicate as precisely as possible the meaning of the original text as it would have been understood by the original audience. Translate with the meaning of the text in mind and communicate accurately the implicit information, unknown concepts and figures of speech. To learn how to make Accurate Translations, see [Create Accurate Translations](#).

### Church-Approved

If a translation is clear, natural, and accurate but the church does not approve of it or accept it, then it does not achieve the final goal of edifying the church. It is important that the church be involved in the translation, checking, and distribution of the translation. To learn how to make Church-Approved Translations, see [Create Church-Approved Translations](#).

## Six Other Qualities

In addition to being clear, natural, accurate, and church-approved, great translations should also be:

- Faithful - see [Create Faithful Translations](#)
- Authoritative - see [Create Authoritative Translations](#)
- Historical - see [Create Historical Translations](#)
- Equal - see [Create Equal Translations](#)
- Collaborative - see [Create Collaborative Translations](#)
- Ongoing - see [Create Ongoing Translations](#)

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Create Clear Translations](#); [Create Natural Translations](#); [Create Accurate Translations](#);  
[Create Church-Approved Translations](#); [The Translation Process](#)

# Create Clear Translations

## Clear Translations

A clear translation will use whatever language structures are needed to help readers easily read and understand it. This includes putting the text into a different form or arrangement and using as many or as few terms as necessary to communicate the original meaning as clearly as possible.

These guidelines are for Other Language translations, not for Gateway Language translations. When translating the ULB into a Gateway Language, you should not make these changes. It is not necessary to make these changes when translating the UDB into a Gateway Language, because they have already been done. Here are some ideas to create a clear translation from the source text:

This page answers the question:

*How do I create clear translations?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The Qualities of a Good Translation](#)

[Translation Guidelines](#) in [Introduction to translationAcademy](#)

## Check Pronouns

You will need to check the pronouns in the source text and make it clear to whom or what each pronoun refers. Pronouns are words that stand in the place of a noun or a noun phrase. They refer back to something that has already been mentioned.

Always check carefully that it is clear to whom or what each pronoun refers.

## Identify Participants

Next you need to understand who is doing the action. A clear translation will identify the **participants**. The **participants** in an event are the people or things that take part in that event. The subject that is doing the action and the object that has the action done to it are the main **participants**. When re-expressing an **event** idea as a verb, it is often necessary to state who or what are the **participants** in that event. Usually this will be clear from the context.

## Clearly Express Event Ideas

A clear translation may need to express **event** ideas as verbs. You may need to change each **event** idea into an active clause to be sure it is understood.

When preparing to translate, it is helpful to look for any **event** ideas in the passage, especially those which are expressed by some form other than a verb. See if you can re-express the meaning using a verb to express the **event** idea. If, however, your language also uses nouns to express **event** ideas and the event or action sounds more natural as a noun, then use the noun form. [Abstract Nouns](#)

## Passive Verbs

A clear translation may need to change any **passive** verbs to the **active** form.

### [Active or Passive](#)

In the **active** form, the subject of the sentence is the person who does the action. In the **passive** form, the subject of the sentence is the person or thing to which the action is done. For example, "John hit Bill" is an active sentence. "Bill was hit by John" is a passive sentence.

Many languages do not have a **passive** form, only the **active** form exists. Therefore, it may be necessary to turn a sentence from the **passive** form into the **active** form.

## Look at Each 'Of' Phrase

To make a clear translation, you will also need to look at each "of" phrase to identify the meaning of the relationship between the nouns connected by "of." In many languages, "of" constructions are not as frequent as they are in the original languages of the Bible. Study the meaning of each one and re-express the "of" phrase in a way which makes the relationship between the parts clear.

After you have checked these things and made your translation as clear as possible, you will need to read it to other people who speak your language to see if it is clear to them. If there are parts that they do not understand, it may be because that part is not clear. Together, you can think of a clearer way to say that part. Keep checking the translation with many people until all of it is clear.

Remember: Translation is re-telling, as exactly as possible, the meaning of the original message in a way that is clear and natural in the target language.

## Writing Clearly

Asking yourself these questions can help you create a clear translation:

- Have you used punctuation to help a reader know when to pause or breathe?
- Have you indicated which parts are direct speech?
- Are you separating paragraphs?
- Have you followed the verse numbering of your source text?

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Create Natural Translations](#); [Create Accurate Translations](#); [Create Church-Approved Translations](#);  
[The Translation Process](#)

# Create Natural Translations

## Natural Translations

To translate the Bible so that it is NATURAL means that:

The translation sounds like it was written by a member of the target group—not by a foreigner. Here are some ideas for making a natural translation:

### Use Short Sentences

In order for a translation to sound natural, sometimes it is necessary to create shorter, simpler sentences from longer, complex ones. The Greek language often has long, grammatically complicated sentences. Some Bible translations follow the Greek structure closely and keep these long sentences in their translation, even when this does not sound natural or is confusing in the target language.

When preparing to translate, it is often helpful to rewrite the passage, breaking long sentences up into shorter sentences. This can help you to see the meaning more clearly and translate it better. In many languages, it is good style to have shorter sentences, or, when sentences are longer, to avoid having complicated sentences. So in re-expressing the meaning in the Target Language, it is sometimes necessary to break up some of the original long sentences into several shorter sentences. Because many languages use sentences with only one or two clause groupings, the shorter sentences will give a sense of naturalness. The shorter sentences will also give readers a better understanding, because the meaning will be clearer. Be sure to include clear connection words between the new, shorter clauses and sentences.

To make shorter sentences from longer, more complex sentences, identify the words in the sentence that relate directly to each other, that is, that belong together to form a clause. Generally, each verb or action word has words on either side of it that point back to or forward to the action of the verb. A grouping of words like this that can stand on its own may be written as an independent clause or a simple sentence. Keep each of those groups of words together and in that way divide the sentence into its separate ideas or parts. Then test your translation by reading it to a member of the language community to see if it sounds natural.

### Write the Way Your People Talk

Read the passage or chapter of the Bible and ask yourself, "what kind of message is this?" Then translate that passage or chapter in the way that your language would communicate that kind of message.

This page answers the question:

*How do I create natural translations?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The Qualities of a Good Translation](#)  
[Translation Guidelines](#) in  
[Introduction to translationAcademy](#)

For example, if the passage is a poem, such as in the Psalms, then translate it in the form that your people will recognize as a poem. Or if the passage is an exhortation about the right way to live, such as in the New Testament letters, then translate it in a form that people in your language exhort each other. Or if the passage is a story about what someone did, translate it in the form of a story (that really happened). The Bible has a lot of these kinds of stories, and as part of these stories people say things to each other that also have their own form. For example, people make threats, give warnings, and praise or rebuke each other. To make your translation natural, you should translate each of these things in the way that people in your language make threats, give warnings, praise or rebuke each other, etc.

In order to know how to write these different things, you may have to listen to what people say around you, and practice writing down different things that people say and do, so that you become familiar with the form and words that people use for these different purposes.

A good translation will use the same vocabulary and expressions as the people of the target group normally use. It should be easy for them to read it or listen to it. There should not be any awkward or strange phrases. The translation should read as easily as a letter from a close friend.

### **Not for Gateway Language Translations**

This section is not for Gateway Language translations of the ULB and UDB. These are Bibles that are designed to have characteristics that keep them from being natural in a target language. They are Bible translation tools, not end-user Bibles. For more information about this, see "Translating the ULB" and "Translating the UDB" in the Gateway Languages Manual.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Create Clear Translations](#); [Create Accurate Translations](#); [Create Church-Approved Translations](#);  
[The Translation Process](#)



# Create Accurate Translations

## Accurate Translations

To create an ACCURATE translation of the Bible means that the translation communicates the same message as the source. Here are some steps to follow:

- Discover the meaning of a passage.
- Identify the main idea.
- Translate with the author's message in mind.

## Discover the Meaning

First, read each passage a few times to discover the meaning. Use the two versions of the Bible available in translationStudio: the Unlocked Dynamic Bible and the Unlocked Literal Bible. Also read the definitions of the translationWords and the translationNotes.

First read the Unlocked Literal Bible:

"Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat what is set before you, and heal the sick that are there. Say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'" (Luke 10:8-9 ULB)

Look at the Unlocked Dynamic Bible in the translationHelps:

"Whenever you enter a town and the people there welcome you, eat whatever food they provide for you. Heal the people there who are sick. Tell them, 'The kingdom of God is right here near you.'" (Luke 10:8-9 UDB)

Do you notice the differences? There are some differences in the words each Bible version uses.

Did you discover the meaning is the same? In both versions Jesus is giving specific instructions, and they are the same instructions. Both versions are accurate translations.

## Identify the Main Idea

Then, after discovering the meaning of the passage, you should identify the main idea.

Ask yourself, "Why is the author writing this, and how does he feel about these things?"

This page answers the question:

*How do I create accurate translations?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The Qualities of a Good Translation](#)  
[Translation Guidelines](#) in  
[Introduction to translationAcademy](#)

Look at the Luke 10 passage again. Why do you think the author is writing this? What do you think the author feels about what he wrote? What do you think? After you have read the passage several times, answer these questions:

- What is happening? *Jesus gave instructions.*
- When and where did these things take place? *To answer this question, you would need to remember what happened earlier. Earlier Luke writes that Jesus and the disciples are on the way to Jerusalem and chapter 10 starts with Jesus sending out 72 people to preach.*
- Who is involved in this passage? *Jesus and the 72 people he sent out.*
- Why were the 72 sent out? *To heal the sick and to tell everyone that the kingdom of God is near.*

### The Message of the Writer

Finally, part of translating the source text accurately is to think of the original audience and the message of the writer.

Do you think the author had specific things for the reader to know? Remember what we thought the author's main ideas were? The main ideas were:

- The instructions that Jesus gave.
- That the 72 people whom Jesus sent out would have power to heal sick people.
- That they would tell others that the kingdom of God was near.

This is the message to the original audience. Allow the same message to come clearly into your mind in the target language.

Look at the passage and think how you would retell it in your own language. Keep this initial translation by writing it down. Use an alphabet that suits your language.

**Remember:** Translation is re-telling, as exactly as possible, the meaning of the original message in a way that is clear and natural in the target language.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Create Clear Translations](#); [Create Natural Translations](#); [Create Church-Approved Translations](#);  
[The Translation Process](#)

# Create Church-Approved Translations

## Church-Approved Translations

The first three qualities of a good translation are **Clear** (see [Create Clear Translations](#)), **Natural** (see [Create Natural Translations](#)), and **Accurate** (see [Create Accurate Translations](#)). All three of these directly affect the words and phrases that are used in the translation. If a translation is not one of these three, simply changing or reordering the words that were used can often fix the problem. The fourth quality, church-approved, has less to do with the words used and more to do with the process that is used.

This page answers the question:

*How do I create church-approved translations?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The Qualities of a Good Translation](#)  
[Translation Guidelines](#) in  
[Introduction to translationAcademy](#)

## The Goal of Translation

The goal of the translation of biblical content is not only to produce a high-quality translation, but to produce a high-quality translation that is used and loved by the church. High-quality translations must be clear, natural, and accurate. But for a translation to be used and loved by the church, it must be church-approved.

## How to Create a Church-Approved Translation

Creating a church-approved translation is all about the process of translation, checking, and distribution. The more church networks that are involved in these processes, the more likely they will approve of the translation.

Before starting a translation project, as many church networks as possible should be contacted and encouraged to become a part of the translation and even to send some of their people to be a part of the translation team. They should be consulted and asked for their input into the translation project, its goals, and its process.

It is not necessary that the church actively lead the translation and coordinate all the efforts, but it is necessary that whoever is leading the translation be approved by the church networks, preferably before they even start.

## Church Approval and the Checking Levels

The need for church-approval of a translation is clearly reflected in the Checking Levels. In fact, the Checking Levels are largely a measurement of how broadly the church approves of the translation.

- Level 1 states that the church-approved translation team has approved the translation.

- Level 2 states that the pastors and leaders of local churches approve the translation.
- Level 3 states that leaders of multiple church networks approve of the translation.

At each level, the people leading the translation should encourage participation and input from the church networks. By using this process, we hope to encourage church ownership of the translation among as many church networks as possible. With this approval, there should be nothing hindering the translation from being used to strengthen and encourage the church.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Create Clear Translations](#); [Create Natural Translations](#); [Create Accurate Translations](#);  
[Introduction to the Checking Manual](#) in [Checking Manual Volume 1](#)

# Meaning-Based Translation

## The Translation Process

### How to Translate

There are two things to do in translation:

1. Discover the meaning in the source language text (See: [Discover the Meaning of the Text](#))
  2. Re-tell the meaning in the target language translation (See: [Re-telling the Meaning](#))
- Instructions for translation sometimes divide these two things into smaller steps. The graphic below shows how these two fit into the translation process.

This page answers the question:

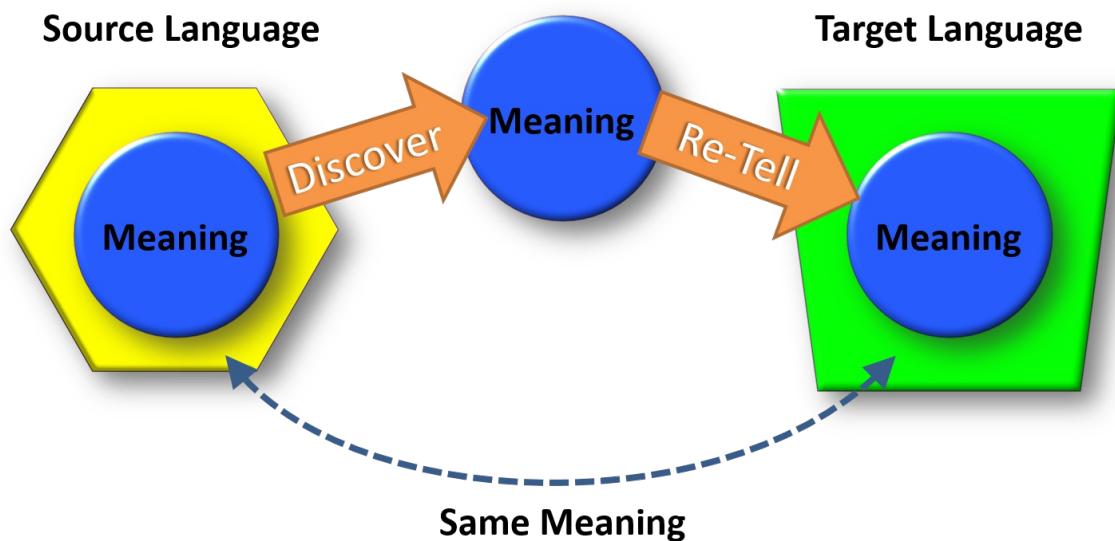
*What are two things I do to translate?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Introduction to the Translation Manual](#)

[The Qualities of a Good Translation](#)

## Translation Process



Next we recommend you learn about:

[Discover the Meaning of the Text](#); [Re-telling the Meaning](#); [Terms to Know](#); [Form and Meaning](#)

# Discover the Meaning of the Text

## How to Discover the Meaning

There are many different things that we can do to help us to discover the meaning of the text, that is, to make sure that we understand what the text is trying to say. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Read the whole passage through before you translate it. Understand the main point of the whole passage before you begin to translate it. If it is a narrative passage, such as a story of one of Jesus' miracles, picture the original situation. Imagine you were there. Imagine how people felt.
2. When translating the Bible, always use at least two versions of the Bible together as your source text. Comparing two versions will help you to think about the meaning, so that you do not just follow the words of one version literally. The two versions should be:
  - One version that follows the form of the original language fairly closely, such as the Unlocked Literal Bible (ULB).
  - One meaning-based version, such as the Unlocked Dynamic Bible (UDB).
3. Use the translationWords resources to learn about terms that you are not familiar with. Words sometimes have more than one meaning. Make sure that you have understood the right meaning of the word in the passage.
4. Also use the translationNotes that are with the ULB Bible. These are available in the translationStudio program and the Door43 website. These will explain things about the passage that may not be clear. If possible, also use other reference books, such as other versions of the Bible, a Bible dictionary, or Bible commentaries.

This page answers the question:

*How Do I Discover the Meaning of the Text?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The Translation Process](#)

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Terms to Know; Re-telling the Meaning](#)

# Re-telling the Meaning

## How to Re-tell the Meaning

Following is a list of ordered steps. The purpose of these steps is to help the translator produce a translation that is natural, understandable, and accurate. One of the most common translator mistakes is failing to use the natural forms in the target language for developing a coherent text. By following these steps, the translator will produce a more natural and more understandable translation.

This page answers the question:

*How do I re-tell the meaning?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The Translation Process](#)

[Discover the Meaning of the Text](#)

1. Read the entire chosen passage in the source language. The passage should be a portion or whole section (in the Bible from one title to the next title.)
2. Without looking at the text in the source language, verbally tell it in the target language. Although you might forget some parts, continue telling what you remember right to the end.
3. Again, look at the source language text. Now tell everything again in the target language.
4. Looking again at the source language text, focus only on the parts you forgot, and then say it all in the target language by memory.
5. After remembering the entire passage, write it exactly as it you said it by memory.
6. Once written, look at the source language to see if you have overlooked some detail. Insert any such detail.
7. If you do not understand something in the source text, write into the translation '[not understood]' and continue writing the rest of the passage.
8. Now, read what you wrote. Assess whether you understand it or not. Fix the parts that should be improved.
9. Go on to the next section. Read it in the source language. Strictly follow steps 2 through 8.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Form and Meaning](#); [Terms to Know](#); [Literal Translations](#); [Meaning-Based Translations](#)

# Form and Meaning

## Defining Form & Meaning

Two of the major terms used in translating text are "form" and "meaning." These terms are used in special ways in Bible translation. They have the following definitions:

- **Form** - The structure of the language as it appears on the page or as it is spoken. "Form" refers to the way that the language is arranged - it includes the words, the word order, the grammar, idioms, and any other features of the structure of the text.
- **Meaning** - The underlying idea or concept that the text is trying to communicate to the reader or hearer. A speaker or writer can communicate the same meaning by using different forms of the language, and different people can understand different meanings from hearing or reading the same language form. In this way you can see that form and meaning are not the same thing.

This page answers the question:

*What is form and meaning?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The Translation Process](#)

[Discover the Meaning of the Text](#)

[Re-telling the Meaning](#)

## An Example

Let's consider an example from normal life. Suppose a friend sent you the note below:

- "I am having a very difficult week. My mother was sick and I spent all of my money to take her to the doctor and to buy medicine for her. I do not have anything left. My employer will not pay me until next weekend. I do not know how I am going to make it through the week. I do not even have money to buy food."

## The Meaning

Why do you think the friend sent this note? Just to tell you about his week? Probably not. His true intention was more likely to tell you:

- "I need you to give me money."

That is the primary **meaning** of the note that the sender wanted to communicate to you. However, it would be rude in some cultures to ask for money so directly—even from a friend. Therefore, he adjusted the **form** of the note to fill out the request and help you to understand his need. He wrote in a culturally-acceptable way that presented his need for money but did not obligate you to respond. He explained why he had no money (his sick mother), that his need was only temporary (until he is



paid), and that his situation was desperate (no food). In other cultures, a more direct form of request might be more appropriate to communicate this meaning.

## The Form

In this example, the **form** is the entire text of the note. The **meaning** is "I need you to give me money!"

We use these terms in a similar way. **Form** will refer to the entire text of the verses that we are translating. **Meaning** will refer to the idea or ideas that the text is trying to communicate. The best form for communicating a certain meaning will be different in different languages and cultures.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Literal Translations](#); [Meaning-Based Translations](#); [Levels of Meaning](#); [The Importance of Form](#)

# The Importance of Form

## Why Form is Important

The meaning of a text is the most crucial element. However, the form of the text is also very important. It is more than just a "container" for the meaning. It affects the way the meaning is understood and received. So the form itself also has a meaning.

For example, look at the differences in form between two translations of Psalm 9:1-2:

From the New Life Version:

I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart. I will tell of all the great things You have done. I will be glad and full of joy because of You. I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

From the New Revised Standard Version

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart;  
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.  
I will be glad and exult in you;  
I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

The first version puts the text into a form that is no different than the form it uses for telling stories. Each line of the Psalm is stated as a separate sentence.

In the second version, the text is arranged as lines of poetry are arranged in the target culture, with each line of the poem on a separate line of the page. Also, the first two lines are joined with a semi-colon, with the second line indented. These things indicate that they are related - they say very similar things. The third and fourth lines also have the same arrangement.

A reader of the second version will know that this Psalm is a poem or a song because of the form that it has, while the reader of the first version may not get that understanding, because it was not communicated through the form of the text. The reader of the first version might be confused, because the Psalm seems to be a song, but it is not presented as one. The words are expressing a joyful emotion. As a translator, you should use the form for expressing a joyful song in your language.

Look also at the form of 2 Samuel 18:33b in the New International Version:

"O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!"

This page answers the question:

*What is the importance of form?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Form and Meaning](#)

[The Translation Process](#)

[Discover the Meaning of the Text](#)

[Re-telling the Meaning](#)

Someone might say that the meaning contained in this part of the verse is, "I wish that I had died instead of my son Absalom." This does summarize the meaning contained in the words. But the form communicates much more than just that content. The repetition of "my son" so many times, the repetition of the name "Absalom," the expression "O," the wish form "If only..." all communicate a strong emotion of deep anguish on the part of a father who has lost a son. As a translator, you need to translate not just the meaning of the words, but also the meaning of the form. For 2 Samuel 18:33b, it is important that you use a form that communicates the same emotion as contained in the original language.

So we need to examine the form of the biblical text and ask ourselves why it has that form and not some other one. What attitude or emotion is it communicating? Other questions that might help us to understand the meaning of the form are:

- Who wrote it?
- Who received it?
- In what situation was it written?
- Which words and phrases were chosen and why?
- Are the words very emotional words, or is there anything special about the order of the words?

When we understand the meaning of the form, then we can choose a form that has that same meaning in the target language and culture.

## Culture Affects Meaning

The meaning of forms is determined by culture. The same form might have different meanings in different cultures. In translation, the meaning must remain the same, including the meaning of the form. This means that the form of the text must change to fit the culture. The form includes the language of the text, its arrangement, any repetitions, or any expressions that imitate sounds like "O." You must examine all of these things, decide what they mean, and then decide which form will express that meaning in the best way for the target language and culture.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Literal Translations](#); [Meaning-Based Translations](#); [Levels of Meaning](#)

# Levels of Meaning

## Levels of Meaning

A good translation requires that the meaning be the same in the target language as in the source language.

There are many different levels of meaning in the Bible. These levels include:

- Meaning of words
- Meaning of phrases
- Meaning of sentences
- Meaning of paragraphs
- Meaning of chapters
- Meaning of books

## Words Have Meaning

That is, even the smallest unit, a word, has a meaning. But this meaning is determined by the context that the word is in. For example, a single word like "give" may have the following possible meanings, depending on the context:

- to grant a gift
- to collapse or break
- to surrender
- to quit
- to concede
- to supply
- etc.

## Building the Larger Meaning

The translator must determine what each word means in the context, and then reproduce the same meaning in the translated text. These words then combine into phrases, sentences, paragraphs, etc. Therefore, the translator must also make sure that the words fit together into equivalent phrases, sentences, paragraphs, etc. so that the translated text has the same meaning on each level.

This page answers the question:

*What are the Levels of Meaning?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\*Form and Meaning\*](#)

[\*Discover the Meaning of the Text\*](#)

[\*The Importance of Form\*](#)

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\*Literal Translations; Meaning-Based Translations\*](#)

# Literal Translations

## Definition

Literal translations focus on the form of the text.

## Other Names

Literal translations are also called:

- form-based
- modified literal
- word-for-word

This page answers the question:

*What are literal translations?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[What is Translation](#)

[The Translation Process](#)

[Form and Meaning](#)

[Terms to Know](#)

## Form Over Meaning

A literal translation is one that focuses on reproducing the form of the source text in the target text, even if the meaning changes, or is hard to understand, as a result. An extreme version of a literal translation would not be a translation at all—it would have the same characters and words as the source language. The next closest step would be to replace each word in the source language with an equivalent word from the target language. Because of differences in grammar between languages, the target language audience would probably not understand this kind of translation. Some translators of the Bible wrongly believe that they should keep the word order of the source text in the target text and only substitute target language words for source language words. They wrongly believe that this shows respect for the source text as God's word. But in fact this kind of translation keeps people from understanding God's word. God wants people to understand his word, so it shows the greatest respect for the Bible and for God to translate the Bible so that people can understand it.

## Weaknesses of Literal Translation

Literal translations usually contain the following problems:

- foreign words that are not understood by the target audience
- word order that is strange or awkward in the target language
- idioms that are not used or understood in the target language
- names of objects that do not exist in the target culture
- descriptions of customs that are not understood in the target culture
- paragraphs that have no logical connections in the target language
- stories and explanations that do not make sense in the target language

## When to Translate Literally

The only time to translate literally is when translating Gateway Language Materials, such as the ULB, that will be used by Other Language translators. The purpose of the ULB is to show the translator what is in the original. Even so, the ULB is not strictly literal. It is a modified literal translation that uses the target language grammar so that readers can understand it (see the lesson [Modified Literal Translation](#)). For the places where the ULB uses the original expressions in the Bible that may be difficult to understand, we have provided the translationNotes to explain them.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Meaning-Based Translations](#)

## Word for Word Substitution

### Definition

A word-for-word substitution is the most literal form of translation. It is not the best choice for doing good translations. A word-for-word translation simply substitutes an equivalent word in the target language for each word in the source language.

### In word-for-word translations

- The focus is on one word at a time.
- The natural sentence structure, phrase structures and figures of speech of the target language are ignored.
- The process of word-for-word translation is very simple.
  - The first word in the source text is translated by an equivalent word.
  - Then the next word is done. This continues until the verse is translated.
- The word-for-word approach is attractive because it is so simple. However, it results in a poor quality translation.

Word-for-word substitution results in translations that are awkward to read. They are often confusing and give the wrong meaning or even no meaning at all. You should avoid doing this type of translation. Here are some examples:

### Word Order

Here is an example of Luke 3:16 in the ULB:

As for me, I baptize you with water, but someone is coming who is more powerful than I, and I am not worthy even to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

That translation is clear and easy to understand. But suppose the translators had used the word-for-word method. What would the translation be like?

Here, translated in English, are the words in the same order as the original Greek.

answered saying to all the John I indeed with water baptize you he comes but who mightier than I of whom not I am worthy untie the strap of the sandals of him he you will baptize with spirit holy and fire

This translation is awkward and can be hard to understand in English.

Look at the ULB version above again. The English ULB translators did not keep the original Greek word order. They moved words around in the sentence to fit the rules

This page answers the question:

*Why should I not translate using word for word substitution?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Literal Translations](#)

[Form and Meaning](#)

of English grammar. They also changed some of the phrasing. For example, the English ULB says, "John answered by saying to them all," rather than "John answered to all saying,". They used different words to make the text sound natural.

The translation must communicate the same meaning as the Greek text. In this example, the ULB is a much better English translation than the awkward word-for-word version.

### Range of Word Meanings

In addition, word-for-word substitution usually does not take into account that most words have a range of meanings. In word-for-word translations usually only one meaning is chosen.

For example, the Greek word *aggelos* can refer to a human messenger or to an angel.

"This is he of whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger before your face, Who will prepare your way before you.' (Luke 7:27)

Here the word *aggelos* refers to a human messenger. Jesus was talking about John the Baptist.

the angels had gone away from them into heaven (Luke 2:15)

Here the word *aggelos* refers to angels.

A word-for-word translation process might use the same word in both verses, even though it is used to refer to two different kinds of beings. This would be confusing to the reader.

### Figures of Speech

Finally, figures of speech are not conveyed correctly in a word-for-word translation. Figures of Speech have meanings that are different from the individual words that they are made up of. When they are translated word-for-word, their meanings are not clear. Even if they are translated so that they follow the normal word order of the language they are translated into, their meaning may not be clear. See the [Figures of Speech](#) page to learn how to correctly translate them.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Problems with Literal Translations](#); [Figures of Speech](#); [Meaning-Based Translations](#)



## Problems with Literal Translations

### The meaning of forms change

Literal translations keep the form of the source text in the target text. Some translators might want to do this because, as we saw in the teaching module "The Importance of Form," the form of a text affects the meaning of the text. However, we must keep in mind that people from different cultures understand the meaning of forms differently. In different cultures, the same form may be understood in very different ways. Therefore it is not possible to protect the meaning from change by keeping the original forms. The only way to protect the meaning is to change the original form to a new form that communicates the same meaning in the new culture as the old form did in the old culture.

This page answers the question:

*What are several problems with translations that are too literal?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Literal Translations](#)

[Word for Word Substitution](#)

[Form and Meaning](#)

### Different languages use different orders of words and phrases

If you keep the source word order in your translation, it will be very difficult, and sometimes impossible, for the people who speak your language to understand it. You must use the natural word order of the target language so that people can understand the meaning of the text.

### Different languages use different idioms and expressions

Each language has its own idioms and other expressions, such as words that represent sounds or emotions. In order to express the meaning of these things, you must choose an idiom or expression that has that same meaning in the target language, not just translate each word. If you do that, the idiom or expression will have the wrong meaning.

### Some terms do not have equivalents in other cultures

The Bible contains many terms for things that no longer exist, such as ancient weights (stadia, cubit), money (denarius, stater) and measures (hin, ephah). Animals in Scripture may not exist in some parts of the world (fox, camel). Other words may be unknown in some cultures (snow, circumcision). It is not possible to simply substitute equivalent words for these terms in those situations. The translator must find another way to communicate the original meaning.

### The Bible was intended to be understood

The testimony of the Scriptures themselves shows that they were meant to be understood. The Bible is written in three languages because the language of the

people changed. When the Jews returned from exile and no longer remembered Hebrew, the priests translated the Old Testament readings into Aramaic so they could understand (Neh 8:8). Later, when the New Testament was written, it was written in the common Koine Greek, which was the language that most people spoke at that time, rather than Hebrew or Aramaic or even classical Greek, which would have been harder for common people to understand.

These and other reasons demonstrate that God wants people to understand his word. So we know that he wants us to translate the meaning of the Bible, not reproduce the form. The meaning of the Scriptures is more important than the form.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\*Meaning-Based Translations\*](#)

# Meaning-Based Translations

## Introduction

We have looked closely at literal translations. Now, we will look at meaning-based translations. These translations are also called:

- meaning-equivalent
- idiomatic
- dynamic

## Key Characteristic

The key characteristic of meaning-based translations is that they give priority to translating the meaning over reproducing the form of the source text. That is, they **change the form of the text as needed in order to make the meaning clear**. The most common types of changes that meaning-based translations make are:

- change word order to match the grammar of the target language
- change order of reasons or results to match the normal order of the flow of logic in the target language
- substitute or explain idioms
- explain or translate terms from other languages ("Golgotha" = "place of the skull")
- use phrases with simpler words instead of trying to find single word equivalents for difficult or uncommon words in the source text
- replace terms that are unknown in the target culture with equivalent terms or descriptions
- replace connecting words that the target language does not use with connecting words that the target language needs

## Examples of Meaning-Based Translations

What does a meaning-based translation look like? We will look at how different versions translate the same verse.

In Luke 3:8, *John the Baptist rebukes the self-righteous people who came to be baptized.*

The **Greek** text of the first half of the verse is shown below.

Ποιήσατε οὖν καρπούς ἀξίους τῆς μετανοίας

The **English** translation in the same order as each Greek word, with some alternative English words to choose from, is below.

This page answers the question:

*What are Meaning Based Translations?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The Qualities of a Good Translation](#)

[The Translation Process](#)

[Literal Translations](#)

[Form and Meaning](#)

Do/make/produce therefore fruits fit/appropriate of the repentance

## Literal

A literal translation would usually follow the words and order of the Greek text as closely as possible, such as the following.

Produce fruits that are worthy of repentance (Luke 3:8 ULB)

Note that this fairly-literal translation retains the words "fruits" and "repentance." The word order is also very similar to the Greek text. This is because the ULB is designed to show translators what is in the original text. But it may not be the natural or clear way to communicate this meaning in your language.

## Meaning-Based

Meaning-based translations, on the other hand, are more likely to change the words and order if the translators think it will help to clarify the meaning. Consider these three meaning-based translations:

From the Living Bible:

...prove that you have turned from sin by doing worthy deeds.

From the New Living Translation:

Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.

From the Unlocked Dynamic Bible

Do the things that show that you have truly turned away from your sinful behavior!

Notice that these translations have changed the word order to be more natural in English. Also, the word "fruits" no longer appears. In fact, the Living Bible translation does not use any of the words in the ULB translation. Instead, rather than "fruits," the meaning-based translations refer to "deeds" or to "the way you live." "Fruits" in this verse is used as part of a metaphor. The meaning of "fruits" in this metaphor is "the things that a person does." (See [Metaphor](#).)

So these translations translated the meaning in context, rather than just the word. They also used more understandable phrases such as, "turned from sin" or "turned away from your sinful behavior" rather than the single difficult word, "repentance," or they explained the word by saying, "repented of your sins and turned to God." The meaning in all of them is the same, but the form is very different. In the meaning-based translations, the meaning is much clearer.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\*Translate for Meaning\*](#)

# Translate for Meaning

## The Importance of Meaning

The people who wrote the Bible had messages from God that God wanted people to understand. These original writers used the language that their people spoke so that they and their people could understand God's messages. God wants people today to understand those same messages. But people today do not speak those languages that the Bible was written in long ago. So God has given us the task of translating the Bible into the languages that people speak today.

This page answers the question:

*Why should I translate for meaning?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Meaning-Based Translations](#)

[The Translation Process](#)

[Form and Meaning](#)

[Why We Translate the Bible in](#)

[Introduction to translationAcademy](#)

The particular language that people use to communicate God's messages is not important. The specific words that are used are not important. What is important is the meaning that those words communicate. The meaning is the message, not the words or the language. What we must translate, then, is not the words or the forms of the sentences of the source languages, but the meaning.

Look at the pairs of sentences below.

- It rained all night. / Rain fell all night.
- John was very surprised when he heard the news. / The news very much amazed John when he heard it.
- It was a hot day. / The day was hot.
- Peter's house / The house that belongs to Peter

You can see that the meaning of each pair of sentences is the same, even though they use different words. This is the way it is in a good translation. We will use different words than the source text, but we will keep the meaning the same. We will use words that our people understand and use them in a way that is natural for our language. Communicating the same meaning as the source text in a clear and natural way is the goal of translation.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Choosing a Translation Team](#)

# Before Translating

## First Draft

### How do I start?

- Pray that God would help you to understand the passage that you are translating and that he would help you to find the best way to communicate that passage in your language.
- If you are translating Open Bible Stories, read the entire story before starting to translate it. If you are translating the Bible, read the entire chapter before you start to translate any part of it. This way you will understand how the part you are translating fits into the larger context, and you will translate it better.
- Read the passage that you plan to translate in as many different translations as you have. The ULB will help you to see the form of the original text, and the UDB will help you to understand the meaning of the original text. Think about how to communicate the meaning in the form that people would use in your language. Also read any Bible helps or commentaries that you have that talk about that passage.
- Read the translationNotes for the passage that you plan to translate.
- Read the definitions of important terms in the list called "translationWords" for each highlighted word in the passage that you plan to translate.
- Discuss the passage, the translationNotes, and the translationWords with others in the translation team.
- When you understand well what the passage is saying, write down (or record) what it is saying in your language, in the way that someone from your language community would say it. Write down (or record) the whole passage (the chunk of text) without looking at the source text. This will help you to say these things in a way that is natural for your language, rather than in a way that was natural for the source language but that is not the best way to say it in your language.

This page answers the question:

*How do I do make a first draft?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Choosing What to Translate](#)

[Choosing a Source Text](#)

[Decisions for Writing Your Language](#)

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Help with Translating](#)

# Choosing a Translation Team

## Importance of a Translation Team

Translating the Bible is a very large and difficult task that will take many people to accomplish. This module will discuss the skills that will be needed by members of the Bible translation team, and the responsibilities that these people will have. Some people will have many skills and responsibilities, and other people will have only a few. But it is important that every Bible translation team include enough people to make sure that all of these skills are represented on the team.

This page answers the question:

*How do I choose a translation team?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The Qualities of a Good Translation](#)

[What is Translation](#)

[Why We Translate the Bible](#) in

[Introduction to translationAcademy](#)

## Church Leaders

Before starting a translation project, as many church networks as possible should be contacted and encouraged to become a part of the translation and even to send some of their people to be a part of the translation team. They should be consulted and asked for their input into the translation project, its goals, and its process.

## Translation Committee

It is good if the leaders of these churches and church networks can form a committee to guide the work, choose the translators, resolve problems that arise, and encourage the churches to pray for the work and to support the work financially.

This committee can also choose the people who will check the translation for accuracy at levels 2 and 3.

When it comes time, this committee can also make decisions about the format of the translation, how it will be distributed, and they can encourage the churches to use the translated Scriptures.

## Translators

These are the people who will do the work of making the translation drafts. They will be appointed by the Translation Committee. They need to be people who are native speakers of the target language, who can read the source language very well, and who are respected in the community for their Christian character. For more details about these things, see [Translator Qualifications](#).

As well as making the first drafts, these people will form the core of the translation team that will check each other's work, check the translation with the language



community, and receive the suggestions for revision from the level 2 and level 3 checkers. After each review or checking session, these translators are responsible to make the changes to the translation that are necessary so that it communicates what it should in the best way. So they will revise the translation many, many times.

## Typists

If the translators themselves are not inputting the translation draft into a computer or tablet, then someone else on the team needs to do this. This needs to be someone who can type without making a lot of errors. This person also needs to know how to use punctuation marks correctly and consistently. This person may also need to type the revisions and corrections to the translation after each round of checking.

## Translation Testers

Some people need to test the translation with members of the language community to make sure that the translation is clear and sounds natural in the target language. Usually these are the translators, but they could be other people. These testers need to read the translation to people and then ask them questions to see how they are understanding it. For a description of this task, see [Other Methods](#).

## Checkers

The people who are selected to check the translation for accuracy should be people who already know the Bible well in the source language. They should be able to read well in the source language. They will be comparing the translation to the source Bible, to make sure that the translation communicates everything that is in the source Bible. They should be people who are interested in the translation work and who have time to do a good job of checking. It is good if these people can include members of the different church groups who speak the target language and who will use the translation. The level 2 checkers should be leaders in their local church. The level 3 checkers should be leaders of groups of churches, or respected very widely in the language area. Since many of these people are very busy, it may work best to send different books or chapters to different people, and not burden one or two people with the whole translation.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Translator Qualifications](#); [Choosing a Source Text](#); [Alphabet/Orthography](#) in [Translation Manual Volume 2](#); [Decisions for Writing Your Language](#)

# Translator Qualifications

## Qualifications of the Translator or Translation Team

The leaders of the church networks that will be involved in the translation should consider the following questions when choosing the people who will be members of the translation team. These questions will help the church and community leaders know if the people that they choose will be able to successfully translate the Bible or the Open Bible Stories.

This page answers the question:

*What are the qualifications of a translator?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Choosing a Translation Team](#)

1. Is the person known to be a very good speaker of the target language? It is important that the person speak the target language very well.
  - Can this person read and write the target language well?
  - Has the person been living in the language community for much of his or her life? Someone who has lived away from the language area for a very long period of time might have difficulty making a natural translation.
  - Do people respect the way this person speaks their own language?
  - What is the age and local language background of each translator? It is usually good to have people from different places in the language area and of different ages, because people of different places and ages might use the language differently. These people then need to agree on a way to say things that sounds good to all of them.
  
2. Does the person have a very good understanding of the source language?
  - What level of education have they received, and how have they obtained skills in the source language?
  - Does the Christian community recognize that this person has adequate skills to speak the source language and an education sufficient to use the Notes or other exegetical helps provided?
  - Can the person read and write the source language with fluency and understanding?
  
3. Is the person respected in the community as a follower of Christ? The person must be humble and willing to listen to suggestions or corrections from others concerning his or her translation work. The person must be always willing to learn from others.
  - How long have they been a Christian, and are they in good standing with their Christian community?
  - How has this person shown himself to be committed to Christ as a

disciple? Bible translation is difficult, involves many revisions, and requires dedication to the task.

After the translators have been working for awhile, the translation committee will need to make sure that they are working well. They may ask:

- Does their work meet the expectations of their fellow translators and local church leaders? (Has the translator been willing to work with others in testing and checking their translation?)

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\*Choosing a Source Text\*](#)

# Choosing What to Translate

## What Should I Translate First?

At some point, the translation team will have to figure out what they should translate first, or, if they have already done some translation, what they should translate next. There are several factors that need to be considered:

- What does the church want to be translated?
- How experienced is the translation team?
- How much Biblical content has been translated into this language?

The answers to these questions are all important. But remember this:

### **Translation is a skill that grows with experience.**

Because translation is a skill that grows, it is wise to start translating content that is less complicated so that the translators can learn the skill while translating something simple.

## Translation Difficulty

Wycliffe Bible Translators have rated the difficulty of translating the different books of the Bible. In their rating system, the most complicated books to translate receive a level 5 difficulty. The easiest books to translate are a level 1.

In general, books that have more abstract, poetic, and theologically loaded terms and ideas are more difficult to translate. Books that are more narrative and concrete are generally easier to translate.

### **Difficulty Level 5 (Most Difficult to Translate)**

- Old Testament
  - Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel
- New Testament
  - Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Hebrews

### **Difficulty Level 4**

- Old Testament
  - Leviticus, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah,

This page answers the question:

*What should I translate first?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[The Qualities of a Good Translation](#)

[What is Translation](#)

[Why We Translate the Bible](#) in

[Introduction to translationAcademy](#)

Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

- New Testament
  - John, 1-2 Corinthians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Peter, 1 John, Jude

### Difficulty Level 3

- Old Testament
  - Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- New Testament
  - Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, James, 2-3 John, Revelation

### Difficulty Level 2

- Old Testament
  - Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jonah
- New Testament
  - *none*

### Difficulty Level 1 (Easiest to Translate)

- *none*

## Open Bible Stories

Though Open Bible Stories was not assessed according to this rating system, it should fall under Difficulty Level 1. We recommend that you begin by translating Open Bible Stories. There are many good reasons to start by translating Open Bible Stories:

- Open Bible Stories was designed to be easily translated
  - It is largely narrative
  - Many difficult phrases and words have been simplified
  - It has many pictures to help the translator understand the text
- Open Bible Stories is much shorter than the Bible or even the New Testament, so it can be quickly completed and distributed to the Church
- Since it is not Scripture, Open Bible Stories removes the fear that many translators have of translating the Word of God
- Translating Open Bible Stories before translating the Bible gives the translators experience and training in translation, so that when they translate the Bible, they will do it well
  - Experience in creating a translation and checking team
  - Experience in doing the translation and checking process

- Experience in using the Door43 translation tools
- Experience in resolving translation conflicts
- Experience in getting church and community participation
- Experience in publishing and distributing content
- Open Bible Stories is a great tool to teach the church, evangelize the lost, and train the translators in what the Bible is all about

You can work your way through the Stories in whatever order that you want, but we have found that Story #31 (see <http://ufw.io/en-obs-31>) is a good first story to translate since it is short and easy to understand.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, the church needs to decide what they want to translate, and in what order. But because translation is a skill that improves with use, and because the translation and checking teams can learn so much about translating the Bible by translating Open Bible Stories, and because of the immense value that the translated Open Bible Stories gives to the local church, we highly recommend starting your translation project with Open Bible Stories.

After translating Open Bible Stories, we recommend working through some of the Difficulty Level 2 and 3 books (like Ruth and Mark). Finally, after the translation team has a lot of experience, then they can start translating Difficulty Level 4 and 5 books (like John, Hebrews, and Psalms). If the translation team follows this schedule, they will make better translations with far fewer mistakes.

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Translator Qualifications; Choosing a Source Text; Alphabet/Orthography* in *Translation Manual Volume 2; Decisions for Writing Your Language*

## Choosing a Source Text

### Factors to Consider For A Source Text

When choosing a source text, there are a number of factors that must be considered:

- **Statement of Faith** - Is the text in line with the Statement of Faith?
- **Translation Guidelines** - Is the text in line with the Translation Guidelines?
- **Language** - Is the text in a suitable language that translators and checkers understand well?
- **Copyrights, Licensing, and Source Texts** - Is the text released under a license that gives sufficient legal freedom?
- **Source Texts and Version Numbers** - Is the text the latest, most updated version?
- **The Original and Source Languages** - Does the translation team understand the difference between source languages and original languages?
- **Original Manuscripts** - Does the translation team understand about Original Manuscripts and [Textual Variants](#)?

It is important the the leaders of the churches in the language group agree that the source text is a good one. The Open Bible Stories are available in many source languages on <http://ufw.io/stories/>. There are also translations of the Bible there to be used as sources for translation in English, and soon other languages, as well.

This page answers the question:

*What factors should be considered when choosing a source text?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Choosing a Translation Team](#)

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Copyrights, Licensing, and Source Texts](#); [Source Texts and Version Numbers](#); [The Original and Source Languages](#) in [Translation Manual Volume 2](#)

# Copyrights, Licensing, and Source Texts

## Why Is It Important?

When choosing a source text from which to do a translation, considering the copyright/licensing issue is important for two reasons. First, if you translate from a copyrighted work without prior permission you are breaking the law because translation is a right reserved for the owner of the content. In some places, copyright infringement is a criminal offense and may be prosecuted by the government without the copyright holder's consent! Second, when a translation is done off of a copyrighted work, the translation is the intellectual property of the copyright holder of the source text. They maintain all the rights of the translation just as they do with the source text. For these and other reasons, unfoldingWord will only distribute translations that are not in violation of copyright law.

This page answers the question:

*What copyright and licensing considerations should be taken when choosing a source text?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Choosing a Source Text](#)

[Open License](#) in

[Introduction to translationAcademy](#)

## What License Do We Use?

All content published by unfoldingWord is released under a **Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 License (CC BY-SA)** (see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>). We believe this license is the greatest help to the church because it is permissive enough to allow translation and other derivatives to be made from it, but not so permissive that those derivatives can be locked up under restrictive licenses. For a complete discussion on this issue read The Christian Commons (see <http://thechristiancommons.com/>).

## What Source Texts Can Be Used?

Source texts can be used if they are in the public domain or are available under one of the following licenses, which permit translated work to be released under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License:

- **CC0 Public Domain Dedication (CC0)** (see <http://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/>)
- **CC Attribution (CC BY)** (see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)
- **CC Attribution-ShareAlike (CC BY-SA)** (see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)
- Works released under the **Free Translate License** (see <http://ufw.io/freetranslate/>)

For all other works in question, please contact [help@door43.org](mailto:help@door43.org).



**Note:**

- All source texts that appear as source texts in translationStudio have been reviewed and are legal for use by anyone as a source text.
- Before anything is published by unfoldingWord the source text must be reviewed and available under one of the licenses listed above. Please check your source text before you start translating to avoid being unable to have your translation published.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Source Texts and Version Numbers](#)

# Source Texts and Version Numbers

## Importance of Version Numbers

Especially in an open project like unfoldingWord, it is important to keep track of published versions. It is important because translations (and source texts) can change frequently. Being able to identify each version helps bring clarity about which iteration is being talked about. Version numbers are also important because all translations should be based off of the latest source text. If the source text changes, the translation should eventually be updated to match the latest version.

This page answers the question:  
*How can version numbers help me select a source text?*

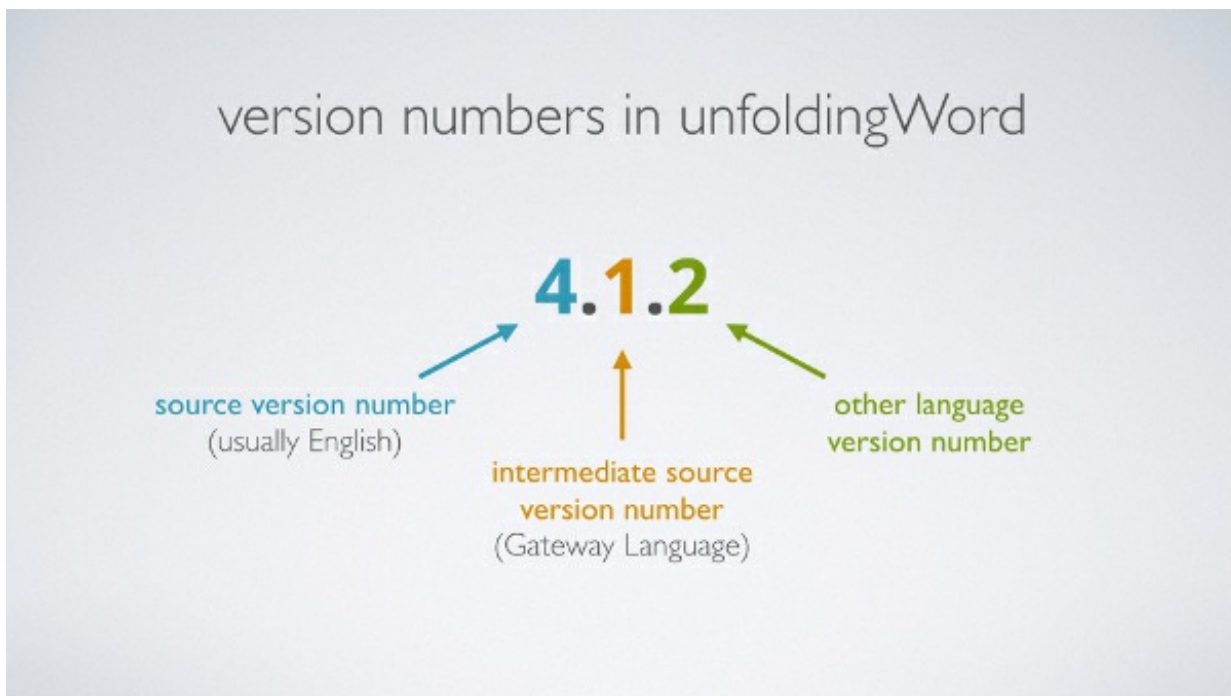
In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Choosing a Source Text](#)  
[Copyrights, Licensing, and Source Texts](#)

Before starting a translation project, please ensure that you have the latest version of the source text.

## How Versioning Works

Version numbers are only given when a work is released, not when they are edited. Revision history is kept in Door43, but this is different than a work being given a version number.



Each source text is given a whole number for each release (version 1, 2, 3, etc). Any translations based on that source text will take the version number of the source text and add .1 (a translation from English OBS version 4 would become version 4.1). Any further translation based on the intermediate translation would add another .1 to

the version number it was created from (for example 4.1.1). New releases of any of these texts increment their "decimal place" by 1.

Please see <http://ufw.io/versioning> for more details.

## Where to Find the Latest Version

<https://unfoldingword.org> always has the latest published version of each resource. See the Dashboard page at <http://ufw.io/dashboard> for version history of each resource. *Note: translationStudio and the unfoldingWord app do not always have the latest versions since updating content does not happen automatically.*

Next we recommend you learn about:

[The Original and Source Languages](#) in *Translation Manual Volume 2*

# Decisions for Writing Your Language

## Important Questions to Answer About Writing

When a language is first written the translator must decide how to indicate certain features of all written languages.

These questions will give the wider community an understanding of some of the preliminary decisions made by the translator for writing the local language in the areas of punctuation, spelling and the writing of names in the Bible. The translation team and the community should agree on how to do this.

- Does your language have a way of highlighting direct or quoted speech? How do you show it?
- What guidelines have you followed for indicating verse numbering, quoted speech and Old Testament quotations? (Are you following the style of the national language? What variations have you decided to use to suit your language?)
- What guidelines have you followed in writing names in the Bible? Do you use the names written in the national language Bible? Do you have guidelines from your own language as to how names are pronounced and if they need added titles? (Has this decision been acceptable to the community?)
- Have you taken note of any spelling rules for your language that you would like to share with others, such as where a word changes its form or two words combine? (Are these rules acceptable to the community?)

This page answers the question:

*What are some decisions we need to make for writing our language?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Choosing a Source Text](#)

[Choosing a Translation Team](#)

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Choosing What to Translate; Writing Styles](#) in *Translation Manual Volume 2*

## File Formats

### The Technical Nature of Translation

While a large part of translation has to do with language, words, and sentences, it is also true that a major aspect of translation is technical in nature. From creating alphabets, typing, typesetting, formatting, publishing, and distributing, there are many technical aspects to translation. In order to make all this possible, there are some standards that have been adopted.

This page answers the question:

*What file formats are acceptable?*

### USFM: Bible Translation Format

For many years, the standard format for Bible translation has been USFM (which stands for Unified Standard Format Markers). We have adopted this standard as well.

USFM is a type of markup language that tells a computer program how to format the text. For instance, each chapter is marked like this "\c 1" or "\c 33". Verse markers might look like "\v 8" or "\v 14". Paragraphs are marked "\p". There are many other markers like this that have specific meaning. So a passage like John 1:1-2 in USFM will look like this:

\c 1

\p

\v 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

\v 2 This one, the Word, was in the beginning with God.

When a computer program that can read USFM sees this, it is able to format all of the chapter markers the same way (for instance, with a larger number) and all the verse numbers the same way (for instance, with a small superscript number).

***Bible translations must be in USFM for us to be able to use it!***

To read more about USFM notation please read <http://paratext.org/about/usfm> .

### How To Do a Bible Translation in USFM

Most people do not know how to write in USFM. This is one of the reasons why we created translationStudio (<http://ufw.io/ts/>). When you do a translation in translationStudio what you see looks very similar to a normal word processor document without any markup language. However, translationStudio is formatting the Bible translation in USFM underneath what you see. This way, when you upload your translation from translationStudio, what is being uploaded is already formatted in USFM and can be immediately published in a variety of formats.

### Converting a Translation to USFM

Though it is strongly encouraged to only do a translation using USFM notation, sometimes a translation is done without using USFM markup. This type of translation still can be used, but first the USFM markers must be added. One way to do this is to copy and paste it into translationStudio, then place the verse markers in the correct place. When this is done, the translation will be able to be exported as USFM. This is a very arduous task, so we strongly recommend doing your Bible translation work from the beginning in translationStudio or some other program that uses USFM.

## Markdown for Other Content

Markdown is a very common markup language that is used in many places on the Internet. Using Markdown makes it very easy for the same text to be used in a variety of formats (such as webpage, mobile app, PDF, etc).

Markdown supports **bold** and *italic*, written like this:

Markdown supports **`**bold**`** and *`*italic*`*.

Markdown also supports headings like this:

```
# Heading 1
## Heading 2
### Heading 3
```

Markdown also supports links. Links display like this <https://unfoldingword.org> and are written like this:

```
https://unfoldingword.org
```

Customized wording for links are also supported, like this:

```
[uW Website](https://unfoldingword.org)
```

Note that HTML is also valid Markdown. For a complete listing of Markdown syntax please visit <http://ufw.io/md>.

## Conclusion

The easiest way to get content marked up with USFM or Markdown is by using an editor that is specifically designed to do that. If a word processor or a text editor is used, these markings must be manually entered.

*Note: Making text bold, italic, or underlined in a word processor does not make it bold, italic, or underlined in a markup language. This type of formatting must be done by writing the designated symbols.*

When contemplating which software to use, please keep in mind that translation is not just about words; there are a lot of technical aspects that need to be taken into

consideration. Whatever software is used, just remember that Bible translations need to be put into USFM, and everything else needs to be put into Markdown.

# How to Start Translating

## MAST Core Concepts

### What is MAST?

MAST stands for Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation.

MAST is a program for the rapid drafting of Scripture that is designed to be easy to learn and follow. The steps work together in sequence so that, when a translator follows them carefully, the outcome will be a draft that speaks naturally in the target language, and has been checked by several people to make sure that it communicates everything that the source text communicated.

### Methodology Steps in MAST

MAST methodology is comprised of eight steps. The first four describe the Drafting Steps and the last four describe the Checking Steps.

#### Drafting Steps

1. **Consume** - Take in the source text, usually one chapter at a time for scripture translation. For a written translation, the translator would read the chapter, and for an oral translation the translator would listen to the chapter.
2. **Verbalize** - Express what you just consumed to someone else. Tell this other person what the chapter is about. It is best if you can do this in the target language. This should not be a detailed discussion of the text in exegetical form. This should largely focus on the expression of the main points of the chapter.
3. **Chunk** - Group the text of the chapter into sections. These sentences in each section should fit together because of a shared topic, theme, or chain of logic. The sections should be bigger than sentences or verses, often 2, 3, or 4 verses at a time. If you are translating in translationStudio from the ULB and UDB texts, you do not need to do this step because the chunking has been done for you. But if you would like to make different chunks than the ULB and UDB have, then go ahead and do so.
4. **Blind Draft** - Set aside the source text and draft the chunk as well as you can without looking back at the text. Write everything that you remember about that chunk. Do not look back at the source text for this chunk until you begin the editing steps. Continue doing this with each chunk of the chapter before

This page answers the question:

*How can I use MAST methodology to translate?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\*The Qualities of a Good Translation\*](#)

[\*What is Translation\*](#)

[\*Why We Translate the Bible\*](#) in [\*Introduction to translationAcademy\*](#)

[\*Alphabet/Orthography\*](#) in [\*Translation Manual Volume 2\*](#)

[\*Decisions for Writing Your Language\*](#)



moving to the checking steps. This step should not be used for drafting Gateway Language materials such as the ULB, UDB, and translationNotes. Instead, draft these materials while looking at the source text.

## Checking Steps

1. **Self edit** - The translator can now examine their newly drafted scripture chunks and compare them to the source text(s). Any error can be edited and corrected at this point, The key focus question at this step is, "What did I miss?" Anything that was missed in blind drafting should be added into the translation now, in the place where it is most natural in the target language.
2. **Peer edit** - When the translator has finished the self-edit step for the whole chapter, they should trade it for a chapter that another translator has finished self-editing. The translators will examine each other's chapter, looking for anything that seems unnatural as well as anything that seems to be inaccurate. When they find a problem, they should mark it and then discuss the problems and fix them together.
3. **Keyword Check** - a facilitator, working with the translator, should examine each new drafted chapter for all key words in two steps:
  - A. The facilitator should ask if each key word is present in the newly translated scripture. If it is not, then it either needs to be added or there needs to be a good reason why it is not, such as the meaning being communicated by a different word or words.
  - B. The facilitator should ask the translator to provide a definition of each key word in the text and compare it to an already developed list of contextual definitions. These definitions should match. If they do not, the translation team needs to discuss which word is the best to use for the key term in this context.
4. **Verse-by-Verse Check** - a facilitator should examine each verse of the newly translated chapter and compare it to the source text to make sure that it accurately communicates the same message as the source and to verify with the translator that the verses flow naturally in the target language.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Translator Qualifications](#); [Choosing a Source Text](#); [Self Check](#) in [Checking Manual Volume 1](#); [Peer Check](#) in [Checking Manual Volume 1](#); [translationWord Check](#) in [Checking Manual Volume 1](#); [Accuracy Check](#) in [Checking Manual Volume 1](#)

## Help with Translating

### Using translationHelps

To help translators make the best translation possible, **translationNotes**, **translationWords** and **translationQuestions** have been created.

**translationNotes** are cultural, linguistic, and exegetical notes that help to describe and explain some of the Bible background that the translator needs to know to translate Open Bible Stories, as well as inform translators about different ways that they might express the same meaning. See <http://ufw.io/tn/>.

The **translationWords** are key terms found in Open Bible Stories and the Bible that are important to translate correctly. Each of these words or phrases has a small article written about it as well as cross-references to other places where that term is used in either Open Bible Stories or the Bible. This is to show the translator other ways that the translationWord is used and to ensure that it has been translated correctly in those places, too. See <http://ufw.io/tw/>.

The **translationQuestions** are comprehension questions that can be used to self-check your translation. Can the Target Language translation be used to correctly answer each of the questions? The translationQuestions are also a good tool to use for each level of checking. See <http://ufw.io/tq/>.

Once you have consulted the translationNotes, translationWords and translationQuestions, then you are ready to make the best translation.

**Please use the translationNotes & translationWords when doing your translation!**

This page answers the question:

*Where do I find help for translating?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Choosing What to Translate](#)

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Using the translationNotes](#)

# Use the translationHelps when Translating

## Notes with Links

There are two types of links in the translationNotes. Links to a translationAcademy topic page and links for repeated words or phrases within the same book.

### translationAcademy Topics

The translationAcademy topics are intended to enable anyone, anywhere to learn the basics of how to translate the Bible into their own language. They are intended to be highly flexible for just-in-time learning in web and offline mobile video formats.

Each note will provide immediate help on how to translate a phrase from the ULB. Sometimes there will be a statement in parenthesis at the end of the suggested translation that may look like this: (See: [Metaphor](#)). The word or words in green are a link to a translationAcademy topic. You can click on the link to learn more about the topic.

There are several reasons to read the translationAcademy topic information:

- Learning about the topic will help the translator be more accurate in their translation.
- The topics have been chosen to provide the basic understanding of the principles and strategies of translation.

### Examples

- **evening and morning** - This refers to the whole day. Two parts of the day are used to refer to the whole day. In the Jewish culture, a day begins when the sun sets. (See: [Merism](#))
- **walking** - "obeying" (See: [Metaphor](#))
- **made it known** - "communicated it" (See: [Idiom](#))

### Repeated Phrases in a Book

Sometimes a phrase is used multiple times in one book. When this happens, there will be a link in the translationNotes - green chapter and verse numbers that you can click on - that will take you back to where you have translated that phrase before. There are several reasons why you want to go to the place where the word or phrase was translated before:

This page answers the question:

*Why should I use the links in the translationNotes?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Help with Translating](#)

- This will make it easier for you to translate this phrase by reminding you of where you have already translated it.
- This will make your translation faster and more consistent because you will be reminded to translate that phrase in the same way each time. If a translation that you have used before for the same phrase does not fit a new context, then you will have to think of a new way to translate it. In this case, you should make a note of it and discuss it with others on the translation team. These links will only take you back to notes in the book that you are working on.

## Examples

- **be fruitful and multiply** - See how you translated these commands in Genesis 1:28.
- **everything that creeps along the ground** - This includes all types of small animals. See how you translated this in Genesis 1:25.
- **will be blessed in him** - AT: "will be blessed because of Abraham" or "will be blessed because I have blessed Abraham." For translating "in him," see how you translated "through you" in Genesis 12:3.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Using the translationNotes](#); [Notes with Probable or Possible Meanings](#)

## Using the translation Notes

### To translate from the ULB.

- Read the ULB. Do you understand the meaning of the text so that you can accurately, clearly and naturally translate the meaning into your language?
  - YES? Start translating.
- NO? Look at the UDB. Does the UDB help you understand the meaning of the ULB text?
  - YES? Start translating.
- NO? Read the translation notes for help. Translation Notes are words or phrases copied from the ULB and then explained. In English, every note that explains the ULB starts the same. There is a bullet point, the ULB text is in bold followed by a dash, and then there are translation suggestions or information for the translator. For example:
  - **copied ULB text** - translation suggestion or information for the translator  
There are many different type of notes in the Translation Notes. Each type of note gives the explanation in a different way. Knowing the type of note will help the translator make decisions on the best way to translate the Bible text into their language.
  - **Notes with Definitions** - Sometimes you may not know what a word in the ULB means. Simple definitions of words or phrases are added without quotes or sentence format.
  - **Notes that Explain** - Simple explanations about words or phrases are in sentence format.

This page answers the question:

*What are the different types of translation Notes?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Help with Translating](#)

### Suggested Translations

There are several types of suggested translations.

- **Notes with Synonyms and Equivalent Phrases** - There are times that the notes provide a translation suggestion that can replace the word or phrases in the ULB. These replacements can fit into the sentence without changing the meaning of the sentence. These are synonyms and equivalent phrases and are written in double-quotes. These mean the same as the text in the ULB.
- **Notes with Alternate Translations (AT)** - An alternate translation is a suggested change to the form or content of the ULB because the target language has a different form. The alternate translation should only be used when the ULB form or content will not fit into the form of your language.
- **Notes that Clarify the UDB Translation** - There may be no note if the UDB provides a good alternate translation for the ULB. However, on occasion there may be text from the UDB as well as a suggested translation. There will be "

(UDB)" after the text from the UDB.

- **Notes that have Alternate Meanings** - Alternate meanings refer to when there are multiple ways to express something or when there are different understandings of what the word or phrase means.
- **Notes with Probable or Possible Meanings** - Sometimes Bible scholars do not know for sure, or do not agree on, what a particular phrase or sentence in the Bible means. Some reasons for this include: there are minor differences in the ancient Bible texts, or a word may have more than one meaning or use, or it may not be clear what a word (such as a pronoun) refers to in a particular phrase.
- **Notes that Identify Figures of Speech** - In the notes there will be an explanation on how to translate the Figure of Speech that is in the passage. Sometimes an Alternate Translation (AT:) is provided. There will also be a link to the translationAcademy page for additional information and translation strategies to help the translator accurately translate for the meaning of the passage.
- **Notes that Identify Indirect and Direct Quotes** - There are two kinds of quotations: direct quotation and indirect quotation. When translating a quotation, translators need to decide whether to translate it as a direct quotation or an indirect quotation.
- **Notes for Long ULB Phrases** - Sometimes there are notes for a phrase and separate notes for portions of that phrase. In that case, the larger phrase is first, and its parts afterward. The longer phrase is broken down so that translation suggestions for parts of the phrase can be explained for each part.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Notes with Links](#)

# Connecting Statement and General Information in the Notes

## Description

Sometimes, at the top of the list of notes, there are notes that start with **Connecting Statement** or **General Information**.

A **connecting statement** tells how the scripture in a chunk is related to scripture in earlier chunks. The following are some of the kinds of information in the connecting statements.

- whether this chunk is at the beginning, middle or end of a passage
- who is speaking
- who the speaker is speaking to

A **general information** note tells about issues in the chunk that cover more than one phrase. The following are some of the kinds of information that appear in a general information statement.

- who pronouns refer to
- important background or implied information that is needed to understand the text in the chunk
- Logical arguments and conclusions

These notes are to help you understand the passage better and be aware of issues that you might need to address in translation.

## Examples

### Whether this chunk is at the beginning, continuation, or end of a passage

<sup>1</sup>It came about that when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.

<sup>2</sup>Now when John heard in the prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent a message by his disciples <sup>3</sup>and said to him, "Are you the Coming One, or is there another person we should be looking for?" (Matthew 11:1 ULB)

- **General Information:** - This is the beginning of a new part of the story where the writer tells of how Jesus responded to disciples of John the Baptist. (See: *Introduction of New Event*)

This page answers the question:

*Why do some translationNotes not have any ULB text at the beginning?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Help with Translating](#)

[Using the translationNotes](#)

This note alerts you to the beginning of a new part of a story and gives you a link to a page that tells more about new events and issues concerning translating them.

### Who is speaking

<sup>17</sup>For he was one of us and received his share of the benefits of this ministry." <sup>18</sup>(Now this man bought a field with the earnings of his evil act. Then he fell head first, and his body burst wide open, and all his bowels poured out. <sup>19</sup>It became known to all those living in Jerusalem that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, The field of blood.) (Acts 1:17-19 ULB)

- **Connecting Statement:** - Peter continues his speech to the believers that he began in *Acts 1:16*.

This note tells you that it is still Peter speaking in verse 17 so you can mark that clearly in your language.

### Who pronouns refer to

<sup>20</sup>And Isaiah is very bold and says,  
"I was found by those who did not seek me.  
I appeared to those who did not ask for me."  
<sup>21</sup>But to Israel he says, "All the day long I reached out my hands  
to a disobedient and resistant people." (Romans 10:20-21 ULB)

- **General Information:** - Here the words "I," "me," and "my" refer to God.

This note lets you know how the pronouns refer to. You may need to add something so that readers will know that Isaiah is not speaking for himself, but is quoting what God said.

### Important background or implied information

<sup>26</sup>Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip and said, "Arise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This road is in a desert.) <sup>27</sup>He arose and went. Behold, there was a man from Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship. <sup>28</sup>He was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. (Acts 8:26-28 ULB)

- **General Information:** - This is the beginning of the part of the story about Philip and the man from Ethiopia. Verse 27 gives background information about the man from Ethiopia. (See: *Backgrounds*)



This note alerts you to the beginning of a new part of a story and to some background information so you can be aware of them and use your language's ways of showing these things. The note includes a link to the page on background information so you can learn more about translating it.

## Notes with Definitions

### Description

Sometimes you may not know what a word in the ULB means. The notes may have a definition or a description of the word or phrase to help you understand what it means.

### Translation Notes Examples

Simple definitions of words or phrases are added without quotes or sentence format. Here are examples:

It is like children playing in the marketplace, who sit and call to one another and say, 'We played a flute for you (Matthew 11:16-17 ULB)

- **marketplace** - a large, open-air area where people would come to sell their goods
- **flute** - a long, hollow musical instrument which is played by blowing air in or over one end

people who dress in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' palaces (Luke 7:25 ULB)

- **kings' palaces** - a large, expensive house that a king lives in

### Translation Principles

- Use words that are already part of your language if possible.
- Keep expressions short if possible.
- Represent God's commands and historical facts accurately.

### Translation Strategies

See [Translate Unknowns](#) for more information on translating words or phrases that are not known in your language.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Notes that Explain](#); [Using the translation Notes](#)

This page answers the question:

*What translating decision should I make when I see a definition in the notes?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Help with Translating](#)

[Using the translation Notes](#)

## Notes that Explain

### Description

Sometimes you may not know what a word or phrase means in the ULB, and it may also be used in the UDB. In this case, it will be explained in the notes. These explanations are meant to help you understand the word or phrase. Do not translate the explanations into your Bible. Use them to help you understand the meaning so you can translate the Bible text correctly.

This page answers the question:

*What translating decision should I make when I see an explanation in the notes?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Help with Translating](#)

[Using the translationNotes](#)

### Translation Notes Examples

Simple explanations about words or phrases are written as full sentences. They begin with a capital letter and end with a period (".").

The fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets.  
(Luke 5:2 ULB)

- **washing their nets** - They were cleaning their fishing nets in order to use them again to catch fish. If you did not know that fishermen used nets to catch fish, you might wonder why the fishermen were cleaning their nets. This explanation can help you choose good words for "were washing" and "nets."

they motioned to their partners in the other boat (Luke 5:7 ULB)

- **motioned** - They were too far from shore to call so they made gestures, probably waving their arms. This note can help you understand what kind of motion the people made. It was a motion that people would be able to see from a distance. This will help you choose a good word or phrase for "motioned."

He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even while in his mother's womb.  
(Luke 1:14 ULB)

- **even while in his mother's womb** - The word "even" here indicates that this is especially surprising news. People had been filled with the Holy Spirit before, but no one had heard of an unborn baby's being filled with the Holy Spirit. This note can help you understand what the word "even" means in this sentence, so you can find a way of showing how surprising this was.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Notes with Definitions](#)

# Notes with Synonyms and Equivalent Phrases

## Description

There are times that the notes provide a translation suggestion that can replace the word or phrases in the ULB. These replacements can fit into the sentence without changing the meaning of the sentence. These are synonyms and equivalent phrases and are written in double-quotes. These mean the same as the text in the ULB.

This page answers the question:

*What translating decision should I make when I see words in double quote marks in the notes?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Help with Translating](#)

[Using the translationNotes](#)

## Translation Notes Examples

'Make ready the way of the Lord, (Luke 3:4 ULB)

- **the way** - "the path" or "the road"

In this example, the words "the path" or the words "the road" can replace the words "the way" in the ULB. You can decide whether it is natural to say "way," "path," or "road" in your language.

whoever has food should do likewise." (Luke 3:10 ULB)

- **do likewise** - "do the same thing"

In this example, the words "do the same thing" can replace the words "do likewise" in the ULB. You, as the translator, can decide what is natural for your language.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Using the translationNotes](#)

## Notes with Alternate Translations (AT)

### Description

An alternate translation is a suggested change to the form or content of the ULB because the target language has a different form. The alternate translation should only be used when the ULB form or content would give a wrong meaning, or would be unclear or unnatural.

The alternate translation suggestion may involve, for example, adding implicit information, changing passive voice to active, or rewording rhetorical questions as statements. The notes often explain why there is an alternate translation and a link to a page that explains the topic.

This page answers the question:

*What translating decision should I make when I see "AT:" in the notes?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Help with Translating](#)

[Using the translationNotes](#)

### Translation Notes Examples

The "AT:" indicates that this is an alternate translation. Some examples are:

#### Making Implicit Information Clear

it is the law of the Medes and Persians, that no decree or statute that the king issues can be changed. (Daniel 6:15 ULB)

- **no decree...can be changed** - An additional sentence may be added here to aid in understanding. AT: "no decree...can be changed. So they must throw Daniel into the pit of lions." (See: *Explicit*)

The additional sentence shows what the speaker wanted the king to understand from his reminder that the king's decrees and statues cannot be changed. Translators may need to state some things clearly in the translation that the original speaker or writer left unstated or implicit.

#### Passive to Active

to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. (Luke 12:10 ULB)

- **it will not be forgiven** - This can be expressed with an active verb. AT: God will not forgive him. This can also be expressed in a positive way using a verb that means the opposite of "forgive." AT: "God will consider him guilty forever" (See: *Active Passive*)

Translators whose languages do not have passive sentences will need to know how they can translate passive sentences that they find in the Bible.

## Rhetorical Question

Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? (Acts 9:4 ULB)

- **why are you persecuting me?** - The Lord used this question to rebuke Saul. In some languages a statement would be more clear. AT: "You are persecuting me!" (See: *Rhetorical Questions*)

The translation suggestion provides an alternate (AT) way to translate the rhetorical question if your language does not use rhetorical questions to rebuke.

## Notes that Clarify the UDB Translation

### Description

There may not be a note if the Unlocked Dynamic Bible provides a good alternate translation for the ULB. However, on occasion a note may have text from the UDB as well as a suggested translation. In that case the text from the UDB will be followed by "(UDB)."

This page answers the question:

*Why do some translationNotes have quotes from the UDB?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Using the translationNotes](#)

[Help with Translating](#)

### Translation Notes Examples

they implored him to stay with them (John 4:40 **ULB**)

they urged him to stay a longer time with them (John 4:40 **UDB**)

- **implored him** - "begged him" or "urged him" (UDB) Here the suggested translation for the words 'implored him' is 'begged him.' The words, 'urged him' from the UDB mean the same thing and are included as another suggestion.

When he saw Jesus, he fell on his face (Luke 5:12 **ULB**)

When he saw Jesus, he bowed down to the ground (Luke 5:12 **UDB**)

- **he fell on his face** - "he knelt and touched the ground with his face" or "he bowed down to the ground" (UDB) Here the words from the UDB are provided as another translation suggestion.

## Notes that have Alternate Meanings

### Description

Alternate meanings refer to when there are different understandings of what a word or phrase means.

The note will have the ULB text followed by an explanation starting with the words "Possible meanings are." The meanings are numbered, and the first one is most likely correct. If a meaning is given in a way that it can be used as a translation, it will have quote marks around it.

The translator needs to decide which meaning to translate. Translators may choose the first meaning, or they may choose one of the other meanings if the people in their community use and respect another Bible version that has one of those other meanings.

This page answers the question:

*Why do some translationNotes have numbered translation suggestions?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Help with Translating](#)

[Using the translationNotes](#)

[Notes with Alternate Translations \(AT\)](#)

### Translation Notes Examples

You are like a young lion among the nations, like a monster in the seas (Ezekiel 32:2 ULB)

- **like a monster in the seas** - Possible meanings are that 1) he was powerful or 2) he was not doing anything important. This note has the ULB text followed by two meanings. The note starts with 'Possible meanings are,' and the meanings are numbered. The first meaning is most likely correct.

But Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell down at Jesus' knees (Luke 5:8 ULB)

- **fell down at Jesus' knees** - Possible meanings are 1) "bowed down at Jesus' feet" or 2) "lay down on the ground at Jesus' feet" or 3) "knelt down before Jesus." Peter did not fall accidentally. He did this as a sign of humility and respect for Jesus. This note explains what 'fell down at Jesus' knees" might mean. The first meaning is most likely correct, but the other meanings are also possible. If your language does not have a general word that could refer to any of these actions, you may need to use a word that shows specifically how Simon Peter did this.



## Notes with Probable or Possible Meanings

### Description

Sometimes Bible scholars do not know for sure, or do not agree on, what a particular phrase or sentence in the Bible means. Some reasons for this include:

1. There are minor differences in the ancient Bible texts.
2. A word may have more than one meaning or use.
3. It may not be clear what a word (such as a pronoun) refers to in a particular phrase.

This page answers the question:

*What translating decision should I make when I see the word "probable" or "possible" in the note?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Help with Translating](#)

[Using the translation Notes](#)

### Translation Notes Examples

We have two kinds of translation notes for these situations: 1) ones that show one probable meaning and 2) ones that show multiple possible meanings.

#### 1. Probable Meaning

When most scholars generally agree on a meaning, we write a note that includes the word "probably." We recommend that you use the meaning that is given in the note.

The sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying, Listen to us, my master. You are a prince of God among us. (Genesis 23:5-6 ULB)

- **a prince of God** - This probably means "a powerful man" (UDB) or "a mighty leader."

The angel of Yahweh said to him, "Why do you ask my name? It is wonderful!" (Judges 13:18 ULB)

- **It is wonderful** - This probably means "It is too wonderful for you to understand."

#### 2. Possible Meanings

When many scholars say that a word or phrase means one thing, and many others say that it means other things, we show the most common meanings that they give. Our notes for these situations begin with "Possible meanings are" and then give a **numbered list**. We recommend that you use the first meaning given. However, if people in your community have access to another Bible that uses one of the other possible meanings, you may decide that it is better to use that meaning.

But Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell down at Jesus' knees, saying,

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord." (Luke 5:8 ULB)

- **fell down at Jesus' knees** - Possible meanings are 1) "bowed down at Jesus feet" or 2) "lay down on the ground at Jesus feet" or 3) "knelt down before Jesus." Peter did not fall accidentally. He did this as a sign of humility and respect for Jesus.

## Translation Strategies

1. Translate it in such a way that the reader could understand either meaning as a possibility.
2. If it is not possible to do that in your language, then choose a meaning and translate it with that meaning.
3. If not choosing a meaning would make it hard for the readers to understand the passage in general, then choose a meaning and translate it with that meaning.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Using the translationNotes](#)

# Notes that Identify Figures of Speech

## Description

Figures of speech are ways of saying things that use words in non-literal ways. That is, the meaning of a figure of speech is not the same as the more direct meaning of its words. There are many different types of figures of speech.

In the translationNotes there will be an explanation about the meaning of a figure of speech that is in the passage. Sometimes an alternate translation is provided. This is marked as "AT," which is the initial letters of "alternate translation." There will also be a link to a translationAcademy page that gives additional information and translation strategies for that kind of figure of speech.

In order to translate the meaning, you need to be able to recognize the figure of speech and know what it means in the source language. Then you can choose either a figure of speech or a direct way to communicate that same meaning in the target language.

This page answers the question:

*How will I know if the translationNote is about a Figure of Speech?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Help with Translating](#)

[Using the translationNotes](#)

[Notes with Alternate Translations \(AT\)](#)

## Translation Notes Examples

Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he,' and they will lead many astray. (Mark 13:6 ULB)

- **Many will come in my name** - The word "name" represents the authority of Jesus. AT: "Many will come, claiming my authority and permission." (See: [Metonymy](#)) The figure of speech in this note is metonymy. The note explains the metonymy in this passage and gives an alternate translation. After that, there is a link to the tA page about metonymy. Click on the link to learn about metonymy and general strategies for translating metonymys.

"You offspring of poisonous snakes, who warned you to flee from the wrath that is coming? (Luke 3:7 ULB)

- **You offspring of poisonous snakes** - This is a word picture. Poisonous snakes are dangerous and represent evil. AT: "You evil poisonous snakes!" or "You are evil like poisonous snakes." (See: [Metaphor](#)) The figure of speech in this note is metaphor. The note explains the metaphor and gives two alternate translations. After that, there is a link to the tA page about metaphors. Click on the link to learn about metaphors and general strategies for translating them.

# Notes that Identify Indirect and Direct Quotes

## Description

There are two kinds of quotations: direct quotation and indirect quotation. When translating a quotation, translators need to decide whether to translate it as a direct quotation or an indirect quotation. (See: [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#))

When there is a direct or indirect quote in the ULB, the notes may have an option for translating it as the other kind of quote. The translation suggestion may start with "It can be translated as a direct quote:" or "It can be translated as an indirect quote:" and it will be followed by that kind of quote. This may be followed by a link to the information page called "Direct and Indirect Quotations."

There is a likely to be a note about direct and indirect quotes when a quote has another quote inside of it, because these can be confusing. In some languages it may be more natural to translate one of these quotes with a direct quote and the other quote with an indirect quote. The note will end with a link to the information page called "[Quotes within Quotes](#)."

This page answers the question:

*How will translationNotes help me translate indirect and direct quotes?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Help with Translating](#)

[Using the translationNotes](#)

## Translation Notes Examples

He instructed him to tell no one (Luke 5:14 ULB)

- **to tell no one** - This can be translated as a direct quote: "Do not tell anyone." The implied information is "that you have been healed." (See: [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#)) Here the translation suggestion is to change the indirect quote to a direct quote.

At the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First pull out the weeds and tie them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." (Matthew 13:30 ULB)

- **I will say to the reapers, "First pull out the weeds and tie them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn"** - You can translate this as an indirect quote: "I will tell the reapers to first gather up the weeds and tie them in bundles to burn them, then gather the wheat into my barn." (See: [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#)) Here the translation suggestion is to change the direct quote to an indirect quote.

## Notes for Long ULB Phrases

### Description

Sometimes there are notes for a phrase and separate notes for portions of that phrase. In that case, the larger phrase is explained first, and its parts afterward.

### Translation Notes Examples

But it is to the extent of your hardness and unrepentant heart that you are storing up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath (Romans 2:5 ULB)

- **But it is to the extent of your hardness and unrepentant heart** - Paul compares a person who refuses to listen and obey God to something hard, like a stone. The heart represents the whole person. AT: "It is because you refuse to listen and repent" (See: [Metonymy](#))
- **hardness and unrepentant heart** - The phrase "unrepentant heart" explains the word "hardness" (See: [Doublet](#))

In this example the first note explains the the metaphor and metonymy, and the second explains the doublet in the same passage.

This page answers the question:

*Why do some translation Notes seem to repeat of a previous note?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Help with Translating](#)

[Notes with Alternate Translations \(AT\)](#)

[Notes that Identify Figures of Speech](#)

## Using translationWords

### translationWords

It is the duty of the translator, to the best of his ability, to make sure that each Bible passage he translates has the meaning that the writer of that Bible passage intended it to communicate. In order to do this, he will need to study translation helps prepared by Bible scholars, including the translationWords resource.

In order to use translationWords, follow these steps:

1. Identify the important words and any words in the source text that are ambiguous or difficult to understand.
2. Look at the section called "translationWords."
3. Find the words that you identified as important or difficult, and click on the first one
4. Read the translationWords entry for that word
5. After reading all of the definitions, read the Bible passage again, thinking about the definition that you read in translationWords.
6. Compare the word with other words of similar meaning.
7. Think of possible ways to translate the term. Choose one to try.
8. Test the term you have chosen to see if others understand the meaning.
9. Do the same for each word that you identified.

Once you have found a good translation for a translationWord, you should use it consistently throughout the translation. If you find a place where that translation does not fit, then think through the process again. It could be that a word with similar meaning will fit better in the new context. Keep track of which word or words you are using to translate each translationWord.

### Unknown Ideas

Sometimes a translationWord refers to a thing or custom that is unknown in the target language. Possible solutions are to use a descriptive phrase, substitute something similar, use a foreign word from another language, use a more general word or use more specific words. See the lesson on [Translate Unknowns](#) for more information.

One kind of 'unknown idea' are words that refer to Jewish and Christian religious customs and beliefs. Some common unknown ideas are:

**Names of places** such as:

- Temple (a building where the Israelites offered sacrifices to God)

This page answers the question:

*How can translationWords help me make a better translation?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Notes with Probable or Possible Meanings](#)

[Help with Translating](#)

- Synagogue (a building where Jewish people assemble to worship God)
- Sacrificial alter (a raised structure on which sacrifices were burned as gifts, or offerings, to God.)

**Titles of people who hold an office** such as:

- Priest (someone who is chosen to relate to God on behalf of his people)
- Pharisee (important group of Israel's religious leaders in Jesus' time)
- Prophet (person who speaks God's messages to people)
- Son of Man
- Son of God
- King (ruler of an independent city, state or country).

**Key Biblical Concepts** such as:

- Forgiveness (to not resent that person and not be angry at him for doing something hurtful)
- Salvation (being saved or rescued from evil, enemies, or from danger)
- Redemption (the act of buying back something that was previously owned or that was held captive)
- Mercy (helping people who are in need)
- Grace (help or regard that is given to someone who has not earned it).

You may need to discuss the definitions of these translation Words with other members of the translation team or people from your church or village in order to discover the best way to translate them.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Create Faithful Translations](#) in [Translation Manual Volume 2](#); [Translate Unknowns](#)

## Using translation Questions

It is the duty of the translator, to the best of his ability, to make sure that each Bible passage he translates has the meaning that the writer of that Bible passage intended it to communicate. In order to do this, he will need to study translation helps prepared by Bible scholars, including translation Questions.

tQ are about information as it appears in the ULB and can be used to self-check your translation.

This page answers the question:

*How can translation Questions help me make a better translation?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Help with Translating](#)

Using tQ during community checks will help the translator know if the Target Language translation is clear and accurate. If the community member's answer is correct, then the translation might be clear and accurate.

### Checking Translations with tQ

In order to use tQ, follow these steps when doing a self-check:

1. Translate a passage, or chapter, of the Bible.
2. Look at the section called "Questions."
3. Read the question entry for that passage.
4. Think of the answer from the translation. Try to not answer from what you know from other Bible translations.
5. Click on the question to have the answer displayed.
6. If your answer is correct, you have done a good translation.

In order to use tQ, follow these steps for a community-check:

1. Read the newly completed translation of a Bible chapter to one or more community members. Tell the listeners to try to not remember other translations of the same chapter while this translation is being read to them.
2. Look at the section called "Questions."
3. Read the question entry for that chapter.
4. Ask them to answer the question. Remind the community members to think of the answer from the translation.
5. Click on the question to have the answer displayed.
6. If the community member's answer is correct, the translation is good.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Create Faithful Translations](#) in [Translation Manual Volume 2](#)



# Just-in-Time Learning Volume 1

## Figures of Speech

### Figures of Speech

Figures of speech are ways of saying things that use words in non-literal ways. That is, they have special meanings that are not the same as the meanings of their individual words. There are different kinds of figures of speech. This page lists and defines some of those that are used in the Bible.

This page answers the question:

*What are some figures of speech?*

### Definition

Figures of speech are ways of saying things that use words in non-literal ways. That is, the meaning of a figure of speech is not the same as the more direct meaning of its words. In order to translate the meaning, you need to be able to recognize figures of speech and know what the figure of speech means in the source language. Then you can choose either a figure of speech or a direct way to communicate that same meaning in the target language.

### Types

Listed below are different types of Figures of Speech. If you would like additional information simply click the green word to be directed to a page containing definitions, examples and videos.

- **Apostrophe** - In apostrophe, a speaker turns his attention from the people he is speaking to and makes an exclamation to someone who is not there with them.
- **Doublet** - A doublet is a pair of words or very short phrases that mean the same thing and that are used in the same phrase. In the Bible, doublets are often used in poetry, prophecy, and sermons.
- **Euphemism** - A euphemism is a mild or polite way of referring to something that is unpleasant or embarrassing. Its purpose is to avoid offending the people who hear or read it.
- **Hendiadys** - In hendiadys a single idea is expressed with two words connected with "and," when one word could be used to modify the other.
- **Hyperbole** - A hyperbole is a deliberate exaggeration used to indicate the speaker's feeling or opinion about something.
- **Idiom** - An idiom is a group of words that has a meaning that is different from what one would understand from the meanings of the individual words.
- **Irony** - In irony, a speaker repeats what someone has (or could have) said or thought, but he expects the listeners to understand from the context that he

does not agree with it.

- **Litotes** - Litotes is an emphatic statement made by saying that the opposite idea is not true.
- **Merism** - Merism is a figure of speech in which a person refers to something by listing some of its parts or by speaking of two extreme parts of it.
- **Metaphor** - A metaphor occurs when someone speaks of something as if it were something else because there is something that they have in common. That is, in some way one thing is like the other.
- **Metonymy** - Metonymy is a figure of speech in which a thing or idea is called not by its own name, but by the name of something closely associated with it. A metonym is a word or phrase used as a substitute for something it is associated with.
- **Parallelism** - In parallelism two phrases or clauses that are similar in structure or idea are used together. It is found throughout the whole of the Hebrew Bible, most commonly in the books of Psalms and Proverbs.
- **Personification** - Personification is a kind of simile or metaphor, in which an idea or something that is not human is referred to as if it were a person and could do the things that people do or have the qualities that people have.
- **Predictive Past** - The predictive past tense uses that past tense to refer to things that will happen in the future. This is sometimes done in prophecy to show that the event will certainly happen.
- **Rhetorical Question** - A rhetorical question is a question that is used for something other than getting information. Often it indicates the speaker's attitude toward the topic or the listener. Often it is used for rebuking or scolding, but some languages have other purposes as well.
- **Simile** - A simile is a comparison of two things that are not normally thought to be similar. It focuses on a particular trait the two items have in common, and it includes the words "like," "as" or "than."
- **Synecdoche** - Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which 1) the name of a part of something is used to refer to the whole thing, or 2) the name of a whole thing is used to refer to just one part of it.

## Idiom

An idiom is a certain kind of figure of speech, the kind that usually cannot be correctly understood without being told its true meaning. Every language has them. Some English examples are:

- You are pulling my leg (This means, "You are telling me a lie")
- Do not push the envelope (This means, "Do not take a matter to its extreme")
- This house is under water (This means, "The debt owed for this house is greater than its actual value")
- We are painting the town red (This means, "We are going around town tonight celebrating very intensely")

This page answers the question:

*What are idioms and how can I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Figures of Speech](#)

## Description

An idiom is a phrase that has a special meaning to the people of the language or culture that uses it. Its meaning may be different from what a person would understand from the meanings of the individual words that form the phrase.

He resolutely set his face to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51 ULB)

The words "set his face" is an idiom that means "decided."

Sometimes people may be able to understand an idiom from another culture, but it might sound like a strange way to express the meaning.

I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. (Luke 7:6 ULB)

The words "enter under my roof" is an idiom that means "enter my house."

Let these words go deeply into your ears (Luke 9:44 ULB)

This idiom means "Listen carefully and remember what I say."

**Purpose:** An idiom is created in a culture probably somewhat by accident when someone describes something in an unusual way. But, when that unusual way communicates the message powerfully and people understand it clearly, other people start to use it.

## Reasons this is a translation issue

- People can easily misunderstand idioms in the original languages of the Bible if they do not know the cultures that originally wrote the Bible.
- People can easily misunderstand idioms that are in the source language Bibles

if they do not know the cultures that made those translations.

## Examples from the Bible

"Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Look, we are your flesh and bone." (1 Chronicles 11:1 ULB)

This means, "We and you belong to the same race, the same family."

The kings of the earth take their stand together (Psalm 2:2 ULB)

This means, "The kings on earth plan together."

the one who lifts up my head" (Psalm 3:3 ULB)

This means, "the one who helps me."

## Translation Strategies

If the idiom would be clearly understood in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

1. Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.
2. Use a different idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

1. Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.
  - **Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Look, we are your flesh and bone."** ( 1 Chronicles 11:1 ULB)
    - "...Look, we all belong to the same nation."
  - **he resolutely set his face to go to Jerusalem.** (Luke 9:51 ULB)
    - "He started to travel to Jerusalem, determined to reach it."
  - **I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof.** (Luke 7:6 ULB)
    - "I am not worthy that you should enter my house."
2. Use an idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.
  - **Let these words go deeply into your ears** (Luke 9:44 ULB)
    - "Be all ears when I say these words to you."
  - **"My eyes grow dim from grief** (Psalm 6:7 ULB)
    - "I am crying my eyes out"

# Irony

## Description

Irony is a figure of speech in which a person pretends to say what he really believes, when in fact he is saying what someone else believes, and he does it in a way that shows that other belief is wrong. People do this to emphasize how different something is from what it should be, or how someone else's belief is foolish. It is often humorous.

This page answers the question:

*What is irony and how can I translate it?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Figures of Speech](#)

Jesus answered them, "People who are in good health do not need a physician, only people who are sick need one. I did not come to call righteous people to repentance, but to call sinners to repentance."  
(Luke 5:31-32 ULB)

When Jesus spoke of "righteous people," he was not referring to people who were truly righteous, but to people who wrongly believed that they were righteous. Jesus implied that they were wrong to think that they were better than others and did not need to repent.

## Reason this is a translation issue

- If someone does not realize that a speaker is using irony, he will think that the speaker actually believes what he is saying. He will not realize that the speaker is ridiculing the idea.

## Examples from the Bible

After blindfolding him, they asked him, saying, "Prophecy! Who is the one who hit you?" (Luke 22:64 ULB)

The fact that the soldiers were beating Jesus shows us that they did not believe that he was a prophet. They knew that other people thought that Jesus was a prophet, and they may have also thought that Jesus himself claimed to be a prophet. When they told him to prophesy, they were using irony. They were mocking him and implying that if he really was a prophet, then he should be able to tell who hit him without seeing them.

"Present your case," says Yahweh; "present your best arguments for your idols," says the King of Jacob. "Let them bring us their own arguments; have them come forward and declare to us what will happen, so we may know these things well. Have them tell us of earlier predictive declarations, so we can reflect on them and know

how they were fulfilled." (Isaiah 41:21-22 ULB)

People worshiped idols as if their idols had any knowledge or power, and Yahweh was angry at them for doing that. So he used irony and challenged their idols to tell what would happen in the future. He knew that the idols could not even speak, but he did this to mock the idols and rebuke the people for worshiping them.

Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work?  
 Can you find the way back to their houses for them?  
Undoubtedly you know, for you were born then;  
"the number of your days is so large!" (Job 38:20, 21 ULB)

Job thought that he was wise. Yahweh used irony to show Job that he was not so wise. The two underlined phrase above emphasize that Job could not possibly answer God's questions about the creation of light because Job was not born until many many years later.

## Translation Strategies

If the irony would be understood correctly in your language, translate it as it is stated. If not, here is another strategy.

1. Translate it in a way that shows that the speaker is saying what someone else believes.
2. Translate the actual, intended meaning of the statement of irony. The actual meaning of the irony is not found in the literal words of the speaker, but instead the true meaning is found in the opposite of the literal meaning of the speaker's words.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

1) Translate it in a way that shows that the speaker is saying what someone else believes.

- **After blindfolding him, they asked him, saying, "Prophecy! Who is the one who hit you?"** (Luke 22:64 ULB)
  - "After blindfolding him, they asked him, saying, "You call yourself a prophet. Then prophecy! Who hit you?"
  - "After blindfolding him, they said to him, "Prophecy! If you were really a prophet, you would be able to tell us who hit you."
- **I did not come to call righteous people to repentance, but to call sinners to repentance.** (Luke 5:32 ULB)
  - "I did not come to call people who think that they are righteous to repentance, but to call sinners to repentance."

2) Translate the actual, intended meaning of the statement of irony.

- **After blindfolding him, they asked him, saying, "Prophecy! Who is the one who hit you?"** (Luke 22:64 ULB)
  - "After blindfolding him, they said to him, "You are not a prophet because you cannot even tell us who struck you!" "
- **"Present your case," says Yahweh; "present your best arguments for your idols," says the King of Jacob. "Let them bring us their own arguments; have them come forward and declare to us what will happen, so we may know these things well. Have them tell us of earlier predictive declarations, so we can reflect on them and know how they were fulfilled."** (Isaiah 41:21-22 ULB)
  - " 'Present your case,' says Yahweh; 'present your best arguments for your idols,' says the King of Jacob. Your idols cannot bring us their own arguments or even come forward to declare to us what will happen. We cannot hear them because they cannot speak to tell us their earlier predictive declarations, so we cannot reflect on them and know how they were fulfilled."
- **Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work? Can you find the way back to their houses for them? Undoubtedly you know, for you were born then; the number of your days is so large!** (Job 38:20, 21 ULB)
  - "Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work? Can you find the way back to their houses for them? You act like you know how light and darkness were created, as if you were there; as if you are as old as creation!"

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Litotes](#) in *Translation Manual Volume 2*

# Metaphor

## Description

A metaphor is the use of words to speak of one thing as if it were a different thing. Sometimes a speaker does this in ways that are very common in the language. At other times, a speaker does this in ways that are less common in the language and that might even be unique.

### First we will discuss very common metaphors.

The metaphors that are very common in a language are usually not very vivid. They may even be "dead." Examples in English are "table leg," "family tree," and "the price of food is going up." Examples in biblical languages are "hand" to mean "power," "face" to mean "presence," and "clothing" to mean emotions or moral qualities.

Metaphors like these are in constant use in the world's languages, because they serve as convenient ways to organize thought. In general, languages speak of abstract qualities, such as power, presence, emotions, and moral qualities, as if they were objects that can be seen or held, or as if they were body parts, or as if they were events that you can watch happen.

When these metaphors are used in their normal ways, the speaker and audience do not normally even regard them as figurative language. This is why, for example, it would be wrong to translate the English expression, "The price of petrol is going up" into another language in a way that would draw undeserved attention to it, because English speakers do not view it as a vivid expression, that is, as an unusual expression that carries meaning in an unusual manner.

For a description of important patterns of this kind of metaphor, please see [Biblical Imagery - Common Patterns](#) and the pages it will direct you to.

**Next we will discuss the less common metaphors**, metaphors that are sometimes even unique in a language.

The speaker usually produces metaphors of this kind in order to emphasize the importance of what he is talking about. For example,

For you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. (Malachi 4:2 ULB)

Here God speaks about his salvation as if it were the sun rising to shine its rays on the people whom he loves. And he speaks of the sun's rays as if they were wings. Also, he speaks of these wings as if they were bringing medicine that would heal his

This page answers the question:

*What is a metaphor and how can I translate a sentence that has one?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Figures of Speech](#)

[Simile](#)



people.

We call this kind of metaphor "live." It is unique in the biblical languages, which means that it is very memorable.

## Parts of a Metaphor

When talking about metaphors, it can be helpful to talk about their parts. The thing someone speaks of is called the topic. The thing he calls it is the image. The way that they are similar is the point of comparison.

In the metaphor below, the speaker describes the woman he loves as a rose. The woman (his "love") is the topic and the red rose is the image. Both are beautiful and delicate.

- My love is a red, red rose.

1. Sometimes the **topic** and the **image** are both stated clearly.

Jesus said to them. "**I am the bread of life.** He who comes to me will not hunger, and he who believes on me will never thirst." (John 6:35 ULB)

Jesus called himself the bread of life. The topic is "I" and the image is "bread." Bread is a food that people ate all the time. Just as people need to eat food in order to have physical life, people need to trust in Jesus in order to have spiritual life.

2. Sometimes only the **image** is stated clearly.

Produce **fruits** that are worthy of repentance (Luke 3:8 ULB)

The image here is "fruits". The topic is not stated, but it is actions or behavior. Trees can produce good fruit or bad fruit, and people can produce good behavior or bad behavior. Fruits that are worthy of repentance are good behavior that is appropriate for people who have repented.

## Purposes of this second kind of Metaphor

- One purpose of metaphor is to teach people about something that they do not know (the **topic**) by showing that it is like something that they already know (the **image**).
- Another purpose is to emphasize that something has a particular quality or to show that it has that quality in an extreme way.
- Another purpose is to lead people to feel the same way about one thing as they would feel toward another.

## Reasons this is a translation issue

- People may not realize that a word is being used as an image in a metaphor.
- People may not be familiar with the thing that is used as an image.
- If the topic is not stated, people may not know what the topic is.
- People may not know how the topic and the image are alike.

## Translation Principles

- Make the meaning of a metaphor as clear to the target audience as it was to the original audience.
- Do not make the meaning of a metaphor more clear to the target audience than it was to the original audience.

## Examples from the Bible

And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **clay**. You are our **potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULB)

The example above has two metaphors. The topics are "we" and "you" and the images are "clay" and "potter." Just as a potter takes clay and forms a jar or dish out of it, God makes us into what he wants us to be.

Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of **the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees**." The disciples reasoned among themselves and said, "It is because we took no bread." (Matthew 16:6-7 ULB)

Jesus used a metaphor, but his disciples did not realize it. When he said "yeast," they thought he was talking about bread, but "yeast" was the image in his metaphor about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Since the disciples did not understand what Jesus meant, it would not be good to state clearly here what Jesus meant.

## Translation Strategies

If people would understand the metaphor in the same way that the original readers would have understood it, go ahead and use it. If not, here are some other strategies.

1. If the metaphor is common and seems to be a normal way to say something in the biblical language, express the main idea in the simplest way preferred by your language.
2. If the target audience would think that the phrase should be understood literally, change the metaphor to a simile. Some languages do this by adding words such as "like" or "as."
3. If the target audience would not know the **image**, see [Translate Unknowns](#) for ideas on how to translate that image.

4. If the target audience would not use that **image** for that meaning, use an image from your own culture instead. Be sure that it is an image that could have been possible in Bible times.
5. Or, if the target audience would not use that **image** for that meaning, simply state the truth that the metaphor was used to communicate.
6. If the target audience would not know what the **topic** is, then state the topic clearly. (However, do not do this if the original audience did not know what the topic was.)
7. If the target audience would not know how the topic is like the image, state it clearly.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

1. If the metaphor is common and seems to be a normal way to say something in the biblical language, express the main idea in the simplest way preferred by your language.
  - **For after David had in his own generation served the desires of God, he fell asleep, was laid with his fathers, and experienced decay,** (Acts 13:36 ULB)
    - "For after David had in his own generation served the desires of God, **he died**, was laid with his fathers, and experienced decay,"
2. If the target audience would think that the phrase should be understood literally, change the metaphor to a simile. Some languages do this by adding words such as "like" or "as."
  - **And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the clay. You are our potter; and we all are the work of your hand.** (Isaiah 64:8 ULB)
    - "And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are **like** clay. You are **like** a potter; and we all are the work of your hand."
3. If the target audience would not know the **image**, see [Translate Unknowns](#) for ideas on how to translate that image.
  - **Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick a goad.** (Acts 26:14 ULB)
    - "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to **kick against a pointed stick.**"
4. If the target audience would not use that **image** for that meaning, use an image from your own culture instead. Be sure that it is an image that could have been possible in Bible times.
  - **And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the clay. You are our potter; and we all are the work of your hand.** (Isaiah 64:8 ULB)

- "And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **wood**. You are our **carver**; and we all are the work of your hand."
  - "And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **string**. You are the **weaver**; and we all are the work of your hand."
5. Or, if the target audience would not use that **image** for that meaning, simply state the truth that the metaphor was used to communicate.
- **I will make you become *fishers of men*.** (Mark 1:17 ULB )
    - "I will make you become **people who gather men**."
    - "Now you gather fish. I will make you **gather people**."
6. If the target audience would not know what the **topic** is, then state the topic clearly. (However, do not do this if the original audience did not know what the topic was.)
- **Yahweh lives; may *my rock* be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted.** (Psalm 18:46 ULB)
    - "Yahweh lives; **He is my rock**. May he be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted.
7. If the target audience would not know how the topic is like the image, state it clearly.
- **Yahweh lives; may *my rock* be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted.** (Psalm 18:46 ULB)
    - "Yahweh lives; may he be praised because like a huge rock, **he shields me from my enemies**. May the God of my salvation be exalted."
  - **Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you *to kick a goad*.** (Acts 26:14 ULB)
    - "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? You **fight against me and hurt yourself** like an ox that kicks against its owner's pointed stick."

To learn more about specific metaphors read:

- [Biblical Imagery - Common Patterns](#)

## Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is a question to which the speaker does not expect an answer because he is not looking for information. Speakers use rhetorical questions to express deep emotion or to encourage hearers to think deeply about something. The Bible contains many rhetorical questions, often to express sarcasm or to rebuke or scold the hearer. Speakers of some languages use rhetorical questions for other reasons as well.

This page answers the question:

*What are rhetorical questions and how can I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Figures of Speech](#)

[Sentence Types](#) in  
[Translation Manual Volume 2](#)

### Description

A rhetorical question is a question to which the speaker does not expect an answer because he is not looking for information. Speakers often use rhetorical questions to rebuke or scold people.

Those who stood by said, "**Is this how you insult God's high priest?**"  
(Acts 23:4 ULB)

The people did not ask this question in order to get information. Rather they used it to scold Paul because they did not think he should have spoken as he did to the high priest.

The Bible contains many rhetorical questions. Some of the purposes of these rhetorical questions are to remind people of something that they already know, to express strong emotion, to say something in a strong way, or to introduce something they want to talk about.

### Reasons this is a translation issue

- Some readers may think that a question is a request for information.
- Some languages use rhetorical questions only for scolding.
- Some readers might think that the purpose of a question is something other than what it really is.

### Examples from the Bible

Do you not still rule the kingdom of Israel? (1 Kings 21:7 ULB)

Jezebel used the question above to remind King Ahab of something he already knew: he still ruled the kingdom of Israel. She did this in order to rebuke him for being unwilling to take over a poor man's property. She was implying that since he was the king of Israel he should feel free to take the man's property.

*Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULB)*

God used the question above to remind his people of something they already knew: a women would never forget her jewelry and veils. He then rebuked his people for forgetting him, who is so much greater than those things.

*Why did I not die when I came out from the womb? (Job 3:11 ULB)*

Job used the question above to show how sad he was that he did not die as soon as he was born. He wished that he had not lived.

*And why has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (Luke 1:43 ULB)*

Elizabeth used the question above to show how surprised and happy she was that the mother of her Lord came to her.

*Or what man among you is there who, if his son asks him for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9 ULB)*

Jesus used the question above to remind the people of something they already knew: a good father would never give his son something bad to eat.

*Therefore, if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give good things to those who ask him? (Matthew 7:11)*

Jesus used this question to teach the people in an emphatic way that God gives good things to those who ask him.

*What is the kingdom of God like, and what can I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed which a man took and threw into his garden... (Luke 13:18-19)*

Jesus used the question above to introduce what he was going to talk about. He was going to compare the kingdom of God to something.

## **Translation Strategies**

Be sure you know that you are dealing with a rhetorical question and not an information question. Then be sure you know what the purpose of the rhetorical question is. Is it to encourage or rebuke or shame the hearer? Is it to bring up a new topic? Is it to do something else?

If using the rhetorical question would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider doing so. If not, here are other options:

1. Add the answer after the question.
2. Change the rhetorical question to a statement or exclamation.
3. Change the rhetorical question to a statement, and then follow it with a short question.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

1. Add the answer after the question.
  - **Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number!** (Jeremiah 2:32 ULB)
    - "Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? *Of course not!* Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number!"
  - **Or what man among you is there who, if his son asks him for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone?** (Matthew 7:9 ULB)
    - "Or what man among you is there who, if his son asks him for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone? **None of you would do that!**"
2. Change the rhetorical question to a statement or exclamation.
  - **What is the kingdom of God like, and what can I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed...** (Luke 13:18-19)
    - "This is what the kingdom of God is like. It is like a mustard seed..."
  - **Is this how you insult God's high priest?** (Acts 23:4 ULB)
    - "You should not insult God's high priest!"
  - **Why did I not die when I came out from the womb?** (Job 3:11 ULB)
    - "I wish I had died when I came out from the womb!"
  - **And why has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?** (Luke 1:43 ULB)
    - "How wonderful it is that the mother of my Lord has come to me!"
3. Change the rhetorical question to a statement, and then follow it with a short question.
  - **Do you not still rule the kingdom of Israel?** (1 Kings 21:7 ULB)
    - "You still rule the kingdom of Israel, **do you not?**"

## Simile

A simile is a comparison of two things that are not normally thought to be similar. One is said to be "like" the other. It focuses on a particular trait the two items have in common, and it includes the words "like," "as" or "than."

### Description

A simile is a comparison of two things that are not normally thought to be similar. It focuses on a particular trait the two items have in common, and it includes the words "like," "as" or "than."

This page answers the question:

*What is a simile?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Figures of Speech](#)

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were worried and confused, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:36)

Jesus compared the crowds of people to sheep without a shepherd. Sheep grow frightened when they do not have a good shepherd to lead them in safe places. The crowds were like that because they did not have good religious leaders.

See, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves. (Matthew 10:16 ULB)

Jesus compared his disciples to sheep and their enemies to wolves. Wolves attack sheep. Jesus' enemies would attack his disciples.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. (Hebrews 4:12 ULB)

God's word is compared to a two-edged sword. A two-edged sword is a weapon that can easily cut through a person's flesh. God's word is very effective in showing what is in a person's heart and thoughts.

### Purposes of Simile

- A simile can teach about something that is unknown by showing how it is similar to something that is known.
- A simile can emphasize a particular trait, sometimes in a way that gets people's attention.
- Similes help form a picture in the mind or help the reader experience what he is reading about more fully.

### Reasons this is a translation issue



- People may not know how the two items are similar.
- People may not be familiar with the item that something is compared to.

## Examples from the Bible

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:3 ULB)

In this simile, Paul compares suffering with what soldiers endure, and he encourages Timothy to follow their example.

for as the lightning appears when it flashes from one part of the sky to another part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in his day. (Luke 17:24 ULB)

This verse does not tell how the Son of Man will be like the lightning. But from the context we can understand from the verses before it that just as lighting flashes suddenly and everyone can see it, the Son of Man will come suddenly and everyone will be able to see him. No one will have to be told about it.

## Translation Strategies

If people would understand the correct meaning of a simile, consider using it. If they would not, here are some strategies you can use:

1. If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience.
2. If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible.
3. Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

1. If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience.
  - **See, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves**, (Matthew 10:16 ULB) - This compares the danger that Jesus' disciples would be in with the danger that sheep are in when they are surrounded by wolves.
    - "See, I send you out among wicked people and you will be in danger from them as sheep are in danger when they are among wolves."
  - **For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12 ULB)
    - "For the word of God is living and active and more powerful than a very sharp two-edged sword"

2. If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible.
- **See, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves,** (Matthew 10:16 ULB) - If people do not know what sheep and wolves are, or that wolves kill and eat sheep, you could use some other animal that kills another.
    - "See, I send you out as chickens in the midst of wild dogs,"
  - **How often did I long to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you did not agree!** (Matthew 23:37 ULB)
    - How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a mother closely watches over her infants, but you refused!
  - **If you have faith even as small as a grain of mustard,** (Matthew 17:20)
    - "If you have faith even as small as a tiny seed"
3. Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

- **See, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves,** (Matthew 10:16 ULB)
  - "See, I send you out and people will want to harm you."
- **How often did I long to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you did not agree!** (Matthew 23:37 ULB)
  - "How often I wanted to protect you, but you refused!"

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Metaphor](#)

# Grammar

## Forms of You

### Singular, Dual, and Plural

Some languages have more than one word for "you" based on how many people the word "you" refers to. The **singular** form refers to one person, and the **plural** form refers to more than one person. Some languages also have a **dual** form which refers to two people, and some have other forms that refer to three or four people.

This page answers the question:

*What are the different forms of you?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Forms of 'You' - Singular](#)

[Forms of 'You' - Dual/Plural](#)

You may also want to watch the video at [http://ufw.io/figs\\_younum](http://ufw.io/figs_younum).

Sometimes in the Bible a speaker uses a singular form of "you" even though he is speaking to a crowd.

- [Forms of 'You' - Singular to a Crowd](#)

### Formal and Informal

Some languages have more than one form of "you" based on the relationship between the speaker and the person he is talking to. People use the **formal** form of "you" when speaking to someone who is older, or has higher authority, or is someone they do not know very well. People use the **informal** form when speaking to someone who is not older, or does not have higher authority, or is a family member or close friend.

You may also want to watch the video at [http://ufw.io/figs\\_youform](http://ufw.io/figs_youform).

For help with translating these, we suggest you read:

- [Forms of "You" - Formal or Informal](#)

## Forms of 'You' - Dual/Plural

Some languages have a **singular** form of "you" for when the word "you" refers to just one person, and a **plural** form for when the word "you" refers to more than one person. Some languages also have a **dual** form of "you" for when the word "you" refers to only two people. Translators who speak one of these languages will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for "you" in their language.

### Description

Some languages have a **singular** form of "you" for when the word "you" refers to just one person, and a **plural** form for when the word "you" refers to more than one person. Some languages also have a **dual** form of "you" for when the word "you" refers to only two people. Other languages, such as English, have only one form, which people use regardless of how many people it refers to.

The Bible was first written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. These languages all have a singular form of "you" and a plural form of "you." When we read the Bible in those languages, the pronouns show us whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one. However, they do not show us whether it refers to only two people or more than two people. When the pronouns do not show us how many people the word "you" refers to, we need to look at the context to see who the speaker was referring to.

### Reasons this is a Translation Issue

- Translators who speak a language that has distinct singular, dual, and plural forms of "you" will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for "you" in their language.
- Many languages also have different forms of the verb depending on whether the subject is singular or plural. So even if there is no pronoun meaning "you," translators of these languages will need to know if the speaker was referring to one person or more than one.

Often the context will make it clear whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one. If you look at the other pronouns in the sentence, they will help you know the number of people who were being spoken to.

### Examples from the Bible

This page answers the question:

*How do I know if the word 'you' is dual or plural?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Forms of You](#)

[Pronouns](#) in  
[Translation Manual Volume 2](#)

[Parts of Speech](#) in  
[Translation Manual Volume 2](#)

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask you." He [Jesus] said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:35-36 ULB)

Jesus is asking the **two**, James and John, what they want him to do for them. If the target language has a **dual** form of "you," use that. If the target language does not have a dual form, then the plural form would be appropriate.

... and Jesus sent out two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village opposite us. As soon as you enter it, you will find a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. (Mark 11:1-2 ULB)

The context makes it clear that Jesus is addressing **two** persons. If the target language has a **dual** form of "you," use that. If the target language does not have a dual form, then the plural form would be appropriate.

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion, greetings. Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you experience various troubles, knowing that the testing of your faith works endurance. (James 1:1-3 ULB)

James wrote this letter to many people, so the word "you" refers to many people. If the target language has a **plural** form of "you," it would be best to use it here.

## Strategies for finding out how many people "you" refers to

1. Look at the notes to see if they tell whether "you" refers to one person or more than one person.
2. Look at the UDB to see if it says anything that would show you whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one person.
3. If you have a Bible that is written in a language that distinguishes "you" singular from "you" plural, see which form of "you" that Bible has in that sentence.
4. Look at the context to see who the speaker was talking to and who responded.

You may also want to watch the video at [http://ufw.io/figs\\_youdual](http://ufw.io/figs_youdual).

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Forms of 'You' - Singular](#)

## Forms of 'You' - Singular

Some languages have a **singular** form of "you" for when the word "you" refers to just one person, and a **plural** form for when the word "you" refers to more than one person. Translators who speak one of these languages will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for "you" in their language.

### Description

Some languages have a **singular** form of "you" for when the word "you" refers to just one person, and a **plural** form for when the word "you" refers to more than one person. Other languages, such as English, have only one form, which people use regardless of how many people it refers to.

The Bible was first written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. These languages all have both a singular form of "you" and a plural form of "you." When we read the Bible in those languages, the pronouns show us whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one. When we read the Bible in a language that does not have different forms of you, we need to look at the context to see who the speaker was referring to.

### Reason this is a Translation Issue

- Translators who speak a language that has distinct singular and plural forms of "you" will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for "you" in their language.
- Many languages also have different forms of the verb depending on whether the subject is singular or plural. So even if there is no pronoun meaning "you", translators of these languages will need to know if the speaker was referring to one person or more than one. Often the context will make it clear whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one. If you look at the other pronouns in the sentence, they will help you know the number of people who were being spoken to. Sometimes Greek and Hebrew speakers used "you" singular even though they were speaking to a group of people. See [Forms of 'You' - Singular to a Crowd](#)

### Examples from the Bible

The ruler said, "All these things I have obeyed from the time I was a youth." When Jesus heard that, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. You must sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and

This page answers the question:

*How do I know if the word 'you' is singular?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Parts of Speech](#) in  
[Translation Manual Volume 2](#)

[Forms of You](#)

[Pronouns](#) in  
[Translation Manual Volume 2](#)

you will have treasure in heaven—and come, follow me." (Luke 18:21, 22 ULB)

The ruler was speaking about just himself when he said "I." This shows us that when Jesus said "you" he was referring only to the ruler. So languages that have singular and plural forms of "you" would have the singular form here.

The angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." Peter did so. The angel said to him, "Put on your outer garment and follow me." So Peter followed the angel and went out. (Acts 12:8, ULB)

The context makes it clear that the angel was speaking to one person and that only one person did what the the angel commanded. So languages that have singular and plural forms of "you" would have the singular form here for "yourself" and "your". Also, if verbs have different forms for singular and plural subjects, the verbs "dress" and "put on" will need the form for "you" singular.

To Titus, a true son in our common faith. ... For this purpose I left you in Crete, that you might set in order things not yet complete, and ordain elders in every city as I directed you. ... But you, say what agrees with healthy doctrine. (Titus 1:4,5; 2:1 ULB)

Paul wrote this letter to one person, Titus. Most of the time the word "you" in this letter refers only to Titus.

### Strategies for finding out how many people "you" refers to

1. Look at the notes to see if they tell whether "you" refers to one person or more than one person.
2. Look at the UDB to see if it says anything that would show you whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one person.
3. If you have a Bible that is written in a language that distinguishes "you" singular from "you" plural, see which form of "you" that Bible has in that sentence.
4. Look at the context to see who the speaker was talking to and who responded.

You may also want to watch the video at [http://ufw.io/figs\\_younum](http://ufw.io/figs_younum).

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Forms of 'You' - Dual/Plural](#)

## Order of Events

In the Bible, events are not always told in the order in which they occurred. Sometimes the author wanted to discuss something that happened at an earlier time than the event that he just wrote about. This can be confusing to the reader.

### Description

In the Bible, events are not always told in the order in which they occurred. Sometimes the author wanted to discuss something that happened at an earlier time than the event that he just talked about. This can be confusing to the reader.

This page answers the question:

*Why are the events not listed in the order they happened, and how do I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Writing Styles](#) in  
[Translation Manual Volume 2](#)

[Verbs](#) in  
[Translation Manual Volume 2](#)

**Reason this is a translation issue:** Readers might think that the events happened in the order that they are told. It is important to help them understand the correct order of events.

### Examples from the Bible

But then Herod ... had John locked up in prison. Now it came about, while all the people were being baptized by John, that Jesus also was baptized. (Luke 3:20-21 ULB)

This could sound like John baptized Jesus after John was locked up in prison.

Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets of rams horns before Yahweh, as they advanced, they gave a blast on the trumpets... But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout. No sound must leave your mouths until the day I tell you to shout. Only then must you shout." (Joshua 6:8-10 ULB)

This sounds like Joshua gave the order not to shout after the army had already started their march.

Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? (Revelation 5:2 ULB)

The seals that lock the scroll must be broken before the scroll can be unrolled.

### Translation Strategies

1. If your language uses phrases or time words to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using one of them.



2. If your language uses verb tense or aspect to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using that. (See: the section on Aspect on [Verbs](#))
3. If your language prefers to tell events in the order that they occurred, consider reordering the events so they they are in that order. This may require putting two or more verses together (like 5-6). (See: [Verse Bridges](#))

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

1. If your language uses phrases, time words or tenses to show that an event happened before the one just mentioned, consider using one of them.
  - **<sup>20</sup> But then Herod ... had John locked up in prison. <sup>21</sup> Now it came about, while all the people were being baptized by John, that Jesus also was baptized.** (Luke 3:20-21 ULB)
    - <sup>20</sup> "But then Herod ... had John locked up in prison. <sup>21</sup> Before John was put in prison, while all the people were being baptized by John, Jesus also was baptized."
  - **Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?** (Revelation 5:2 ULB)
    - "Who is worthy to open the scroll after breaking its seals?"
2. If your language uses verb tense or aspect to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using that.
  - **<sup>8</sup> Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh, as they advanced, they gave a blast on the trumpets...<sup>10</sup> But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout. No sound must leave your mouths until the day I tell you to shout. Only then must you shout."** (Joshua 6:8-10 ULB)
    - <sup>8</sup> "Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets of rams horns before Yahweh, as they advanced, they gave a blast on the trumpets...<sup>10</sup> But Joshua had commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout. No sound must leave your mouths until the day I tell you to shout. Only then must you shout."
3. If your language prefers to tell events in the order that they occur, consider reordering the events. This may require putting two or more verses together (like 5-6).
  - **<sup>8</sup> Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets of rams horns before Yahweh, as they advanced, they gave a blast on the trumpets...<sup>10</sup> But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout. No sound must leave your mouths until the**

**day I tell you to shout. Only then must you shout."** (Joshua 6:8-10 ULB)

- 8-10 "Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout. No sound must leave your mouths until the day I tell you to shout. Only then must you shout." Then just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets of rams horns before Yahweh, as they advanced, they gave a blast on the trumpets..."
- **Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?** (Revelation 5:2 ULB)
  - "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"

You may also want to watch the video at [http://ufw.io/figs\\_events](http://ufw.io/figs_events).

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Background Information* in *Translation Manual Volume 2*; *Connecting Words* in *Translation Manual Volume 2*; *Introduction of a New Event* in *Translation Manual Volume 2*; *Verse Bridges* in *Translation Manual Volume 2*

# Word Order

## Description

Most languages have a normal way of ordering the parts of a sentence. It is not the same in all languages. Translators need to know what the normal word order is in their language.

## The Main Parts of a Sentence

Most sentences have three basic important parts: subject, object, and verb. Subjects and objects are usually nouns (i.e., a person, place, thing, or idea) or pronouns. Verbs show action or a state of being.

### Subject

The subject is usually what the sentence is about. It usually performs some action or is being described. A subject may be **active**: it does something, such as sing, or work, or teach.

- Peter sings the song well.

A subject may have something done to it.

- Peter was fed good food.

A subject can be described or it can be in a **state**, such as being happy, sad, or angry.

- He is tall.
- The boy is happy.

### Object

The **object** is often the thing that the subject does something to.

- Peter hit the ball.
- Peter read a book.
- Peter sang the song well.
- Peter ate good food.

### Verb

The verb shows an action or a state of being.

This page answers the question:

*What does "word order" mean?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Grammar Topics](#) in  
[Translation Manual Volume 2](#)

[Parts of Speech](#) in  
[Translation Manual Volume 2](#)

[Sentence Structure](#) in  
[Translation Manual Volume 2](#)

- Peter sings the song well.
- Peter is singing.
- Peter is tall.

### Preferred Word Order

All languages have a preferred word order. The examples below show the order of the subject, object, and verb in "Peter hit the ball" for some languages. In some languages, such as English, the order is Subject-Verb-Object.

- Peter hit the ball.

In some languages the order is Subject-Object-Verb.

- Peter the ball hit.

In some languages the order is Verb-Subject-Object.

- Hit Peter the ball.

### Changes in Word Order

Word order can change if the sentence:

- is a question or command
- describes a state of being (He is happy. He is tall)
- expresses a condition, such as with the the word "if"
- has a location
- has a time element
- is in a poem

Word order can also change

- if there is some kind of emphasis on a certain part of the sentence
- if the sentence is really about something other than the subject

### Translation Principles

- Know which word order is preferred in your language.
- Use your language's preferred word order unless there is some reason in your language to change it.
- Translate the sentence so that the meaning is accurate and clear and so that it sounds natural.

You may also want to watch the video at [http://ufw.io/figs\\_order](http://ufw.io/figs_order).

# Unknowns

## Translate Unknowns

How do I translate words like lion, fig tree, mountain, priest, or temple when people in my culture have never seen these things and we do not have a word for them?

### Description

Unknowns are things that occur in the source text that are not known to the people of your culture. The translationWords pages and the translationNotes will help you understand what they are. After you understand them, you will need to find ways to refer to those things so that people who read your translation will understand what they are.

We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish (Matthew 14:17 ULB)

Bread is a particular food made by mixing finely crushed grains with oil, and then cooking the mixture so that it is dry. (Grains are the seeds of a kind of grass.) In some cultures people do not have bread or know what it is.

### Reason this is a translation issue

- Readers may not know some of the things that are in the Bible because those things are not part of their own culture.
- Readers may have difficulty understanding a text if they do not know some of the things that are mentioned in it.

### Translation Principles

- Use words that are already part of your language if possible.
- Keep expressions short if possible.
- Represent God's commands and historical facts accurately.

### Examples from the Bible

I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for jackals (Jeremiah 9:11 ULB)

Jackals are wild animals like dogs that live in only a few parts of the world. So they are not known in many places.

This page answers the question:

*How can I translate ideas that my readers are not familiar with?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Sentence Structure](#) in  
[Translation Manual Volume 2](#)

Beware of false prophets, those who come to you in sheep's clothing, but are truly ravenous wolves. (Matthew 7:15 ULB)

If wolves do not live where the translation will be read, the readers may not understand that they are fierce, wild animals like dogs that attack and eat sheep.

Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with myrrh. But he refused to drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULB)

People may not know what myrrh is and that it was used as a medicine.

to him who made great lights (Psalm 136:7 ULB)

Some languages have terms for things that give light, like the sun and fire, but they have no general term for lights.

your sins ... will be white like snow (Isaiah 1:18 ULB)

People in many parts of the world have not seen snow, but they may have seen it in pictures.

## Translation Strategies

Here are ways you might translate a term that is not known in your language:

1. Use a phrase that describes the part of the meaning that is important in the particular verse being translated.
2. Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.
3. Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.
4. Use a word that is more general in meaning.
5. Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

1. Use a phrase that describes the part of the meaning that is important in the particular verse being translated.
  - **Beware of false prophets, those who come to you in sheep's clothing, but are truly ravenous wolves.** (Matthew 7:15 ULB)
    - "Beware of false prophets, those who come to you in sheep's clothing, but are truly hungry and dangerous animals."
  - **We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish** (Matthew 14:17 ULB)
    - "We have here only five loaves of baked grain seeds and two fish"

2. Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.
  - **your sins ... will be white like snow** (Isaiah 1:18 ULB) This verse is not about snow. It uses snow in a figure of speech to help people understand how white something will be.
    - "your sins ... will be white like milk"
    - "your sins ... will be white like the moon"
3. Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.
  - **Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with myrrh. But he refused to drink it.** (Mark 15:23 ULB) - People may understand better what myrrh is if it is used with the general word "medicine."
    - "Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with a medicine called myrrh. But he refused to drink it."
  - **We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish** (Matthew 14:17 ULB) - People may understand better what bread is if it is used with a phrase that tells what it is made of (seeds) and how it is prepared (crushed and baked).
    - "We have here only five loaves of baked crushed seed bread and two fish"
4. Use a word that is more general in meaning.
  - **I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for jackals** (Jeremiah 9:11 ULB)
    - "I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for wild dogs"
  - **We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish** (Matthew 14:17 ULB)
    - "We have here only five loaves of baked food and two fish"
5. Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.
  - **to him who made great lights** (Psalm 136:7 ULB)
    - "to him who made the sun and the moon"

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Copy or Borrow Words; How to Translate Names](#)

# Copy or Borrow Words

## Description

Sometimes the Bible talks about things that are not part of your culture and that your language may not have a word for. It also talks about people and places that you may not have names for.

When that happens you can "borrow" the word from the Bible into your own language. This means that you basically copy it from the other language. This page tells how to "borrow" words. (There are also other ways to translate words for things that are not in your language. See [Translate Unknowns](#)).

This page answers the question:

*What does it mean to borrow words from another language and how can I do it?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Translate Unknowns](#)

## Examples from the Bible

He saw a fig tree on the roadside (Matthew 21:19 ULB)

If there are no fig trees where your language is spoken, you might not already have a name for this kind of tree.

Above him were the seraphs each one had six wings; with two each covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. (Isaiah 6:2 ULB)

Your language might not already have a name for this kind of creature.

The declaration of the word of Yahweh to Israel by the hand of Malachi. (Malachi 1:1 ULB)

Malachi might not be a name that people who speak your language use.

## Translation Strategies

There are several things to be aware of when borrowing words from another language.

- Different languages use different scripts, such as the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Cyrillic, Devanagari, and Korean scripts. These scripts use different shapes to represent the letters in their alphabets.
- Languages that use the same script might pronounce the letters in that script differently. For example, when speaking German, people pronounce the letter "j" the same way that people pronounce the letter "y" when speaking English.
- Languages do not all have the same sounds or combinations of sounds. For example, many languages do not have the soft "th" sound in the English word



"think" and some languages cannot start a word with a combination of sounds like "st" as in "stop."

There are several ways to borrow a word.

1. If your language uses a different script from the language you are translating from, you can simply substitute each letter shape with the corresponding letter shape of the script of your language.
2. You can spell the word as the other language spells it, and pronounce it the way your language normally pronounces those letters.
3. You can pronounce the word similarly to the way the other language does, and adjust the spelling to fit the rules of your language.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

1. If your language uses a different script from the language you are translating from, you can simply substitute each letter shape with the corresponding letter shape of the script of your language.
  - **צְפַנְיָהּ** - A man's name in Hebrew letters.
    - "Zephaniah" - The same name in Roman letters
2. You can spell the word as the other language spells it, and pronounce it the way your language normally pronounces those letters.
  - **Zephaniah** - This is a man's name.
    - "Zephaniah" - The name as it is spelled in English, but you can pronounce it according to the rules of your language.
3. You can pronounce the word similarly to the way the other language does, and adjust the spelling to fit the rules of your language.
  - **Zephaniah** - If your language does not have the "z", you could use "s". If your writing system does not use "ph" you could use "f". Depending on how you pronounce the "i" you could spell it with "i" or "ai" or "ay".
    - "Sefania"
    - "Sefanaia"
    - "Sefanaya"

## How to Translate Names

The Bible has names of many people, groups of people, and places. Some of these names may sound strange and be hard to say. Sometimes readers may not know what a name refers to, and sometimes they may need to understand what a name means. This page will help you see how you can translate these names and how you can help people understand what they need to know about them.

This page answers the question:

*How can I translate names that are new to my culture?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Translate Unknowns](#)

### Description

The Bible has names of many people, groups of people, and places. All names in the Bible have meaning. Most of the time, names in the Bible are used simply to identify the people and places they refer to. But sometimes the meaning of a name is especially important.

It was this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him. (Hebrews 7:1 ULB)

Here the writer uses the name "Melchizedek" simply to refer to a man who had that name, and the title "king of Salem" simply to tell us something about Melchizedek.

His name "Melchizedek" means "king of righteousness," and also "king of Salem," that is, "king of peace. (Hebrews 7:2 ULB)

Here the writer explains the meanings of Melchizedek's name and title.

### Reasons this is a translation issue

- Readers may not know some of the names in the Bible. They may not know whether a name refers to a person or place or something else.
- Readers may need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand the passage.
- Some names may have different sounds or combinations of sounds that are not used in your language or are unpleasant to say in your language.
- Some people and places in the Bible have two names. Readers may not realize that two names refer to the same person or place.

### Examples from the Bible

You went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. The leaders of Jericho fought against you, along with the Amorites (Joshua 24:11 ULB)

Readers might not know that "Jordan" is the name of a river, "Jericho" is the name of a city, and "Amorites" is the name of a group of people.

she said, "Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?"  
Therefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; (Genesis 16:13-14 ULB)

Readers may not understand the second sentence if they do not know that "Beerlahairoi" means "Well of the the Living One who sees me."

She named him Moses and said, "Because I drew him from the water."  
(Exodus 2:11 ULB)

Readers may not understand why she said this if they do not know that the name Moses sounds like the Hebrew words "pull out."

Saul was in agreement with his death (Acts 8:1 ULB)

It came about in Iconium that Paul and Barnabas entered together  
into the synagogue (Acts 14:1 ULB)

Readers may not know that the names Saul and Paul refer to the same person.

## Translation Strategies

1. If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.
2. If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.
3. Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name.
4. If a person or place has two different names, use one name all of the time and write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently.
5. Or use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that explains who or what the name refers to.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

1. If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.
  - **You went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. The leaders of Jericho fought against you, along with the Amorites** (Joshua 24:11 ULB)
    - "You went over the Jordan River and came to the city of Jericho. The leaders of Jericho fought against you, along with the tribe of the

Amorites"

- **Shortly after, some Pharisees came and said to him, "Go and leave here because Herod wants to kill you."** (Luke 13:31 ULB)
    - "Shortly after, some Pharisees came and said to him, "Go and leave here because King Herod wants to kill you."
2. If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.
- **She named him Moses and said, "Because I drew him from the water."** (Exodus 2:11 ULB)
    - "She named him Moses, which sounds like 'drawn out,' and said, "Because I drew him from the water."
3. Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name.
- **she said, "Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?" Therefore the well was called Beerlahairoi;** (Genesis 16:13-14 ULB)
    - "she said, "Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?" Therefore the well was called Well of the One who sees me; "
4. If a person or place has two different names, use one name most of the time and the other name only when the text talks about that name. Write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently. For example, Paul is called "Saul" before Acts 13 and "Paul" after Acts 13. You could translate his name as "Paul" all of the time, except in Acts 13:9 where it talks about him having both names.
- **a young man named Saul** (Acts 7:58 ULB)
    - "a young man named Paul"<sup>1</sup> The footnote would look like:
      - <sup>[1]</sup>Most versions say Saul here, but most of the time in the Bible he is called Paul.
  - **But Saul, who is also called Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit;** (Acts 13:9)
    - "But Saul, who is also called Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit;"
5. Or if a person or place has two names, use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that explains who or what the name refers to. For example, you could write "Saul" where the source text has "Saul" and "Paul" where the source text has "Paul."
- **a young man named Saul** (Acts 7:58 ULB)

- "a young man named Saul"
- **But Saul, who is also called Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit;** (Acts 13:9)
  - "But Saul, who is also called Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit;"
- **It came about in Iconium that Paul and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue** (Acts 14:1 ULB)
  - "It came about in Iconium that Paul<sup>1</sup> and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue" (Acts 14:1 ULB) The footnote would look like:
    - <sup>[1]</sup>This is the man that was called Saul before Acts 13.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Copy or Borrow Words](#)

## Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

**Assumed knowledge** is whatever a speaker assumes his audience knows before he speaks and gives them some kind of information. There are two types of information.

- **Explicit information** is what the speaker states directly.
- **Implicit information** is what the speaker does not state directly because he expects his audience to be able to learn it from what he says.

This page answers the question:

*What are assumed knowledge, implicit information, and explicit information?*

### Description

When someone speaks or writes, he has something specific that he wants people to know. He normally states this directly. This is **explicit information**.

The speaker assumes that his audience already knows certain things that they will think about in order to understand this information. Normally he does not tell people these things, although what he says may remind them. This is called **assumed knowledge**.

The speaker does not always directly state everything that he expects his audience to learn from what he says. Information that he expects people to learn from what he says even though he does not state it directly is **implicit information**.

### Examples from the Bible

Then a scribe came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20 ULB)

Jesus did not say what foxes and birds use holes and nests for, because he assumed that the scribe would have known that foxes sleep in holes in the ground and birds sleep in their nests. This is **assumed knowledge**. Jesus did not directly say here "I am the Son of Man" but, if the scribe did not already know it, then that fact would be **implicit information** that he could learn because Jesus referred to himself that way. Jesus did not state explicitly that he travelled a lot and did not have a house that he slept in every night. That is **implicit information** that the scribe could learn when Jesus said that he had nowhere to lay his head.

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the mighty deeds had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. (Matthew

11:21, 22 ULB)

Jesus assumed that the people he was speaking to knew that Tyre and Sidon were very wicked, and that the day of judgment is a time when God will judge every person. Jesus also knew that the people he was talking to believed that they were good and did not need to repent. Jesus did not need to tell them these things. This is all **assumed knowledge**.

An important piece of **implicit information** here is that because the people he was speaking to did not repent, they would be judged more severely than the people of Tyre and Sidon would be judged.

Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat. (Matthew 15:2 ULB)

One of the traditions of the elders was a ceremony in which people would wash their hands in order to be ritually clean before eating. People thought that in order to be righteous, they had to follow all the traditions of the elders. This was **assumed knowledge** that the Pharisees who were speaking to Jesus expected him to know. They were accusing his disciples of not following the traditions. This is **implicit information** that they wanted him to understand from what they said.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\*Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit\*](#)

# Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit

Modern readers may not know some of things that the people in the Bible and the people who first read it knew. This can make it hard for them to understand what a speaker or writer says, and to learn things that the speaker left implicit. Translators may need to state some things clearly in the translation that the original speaker or writer left unstated or implicit.

## Description

When someone speaks or writes, he expects his audience to know certain things that they can think about to help them understand what he means by his words. The things he actually says are **explicit information**. The things that he expects them to already know or be able to learn are **implicit information**. Normally a speaker or writer does not tell people things that he believes they already know. And sometimes he does not state clearly things that expects them to be able to understand from what he says.

This page answers the question:

*What can I do if the target language speakers do not know some important assumed knowledge or cannot understand some new information that the original speaker or writer left implicit?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#)

## Reasons this is a translation issue

- Readers may not understand the message if they do not know things that the original speakers and hearers knew.
- Modern readers do not know everything that the original speakers and hearers in the Bible knew.

## Examples from the Bible

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the mighty deeds had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. (Matthew 11:22 ULB)

The people that Jesus was talking to knew that the people of Tyre and Sidon were very wicked, and that the day of judgment is a time when God will judge every person. They also believed that they themselves were righteous and did not need to repent. Today's readers need to know these things in order to understand that Jesus was telling the people that they would be punished more severely because they did to repent, even though they saw the mighty deeds that Jesus did.



Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat. (Matthew 15:2 ULB)

Modern readers could think the Pharisees were saying that the disciples should wash their hands before eating in order to keep from getting sick from germs on the hands. But for the Jews, washing the hands before eating was a ceremony that they practiced in order to be ritually clean. The elders had given them this tradition, and they believed that people had to follow all the traditions of the elders in order to be righteous. This is assumed knowledge. The Pharisees were accusing Jesus disciples of not being righteous. This is implicit knowledge.

## Translation Strategies

If readers have enough assumed knowledge to be able to understand the message and any important implicit information that goes with it, then consider leaving that knowledge unstated and leave the implicit information implicit.

1. If readers cannot understand the message because they do not have certain assumed knowledge, then provide that knowledge as explicit information.
2. If readers cannot understand important implicit information, then state that information explicitly.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

1. If readers cannot understand the message because they do not know certain implicit information, then state that information clearly.
  - **it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you** (Matthew 11:22 ULB) - Assumed knowledge is that the people of Tyre and Sidon were very very wicked. This can be stated explicitly.
    - "it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, cities whose people were very wicked at the day of judgment than for you"
  - **Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."** (Matthew 8:20 ULB) - Assumed knowledge was that the foxes slept in their holes and birds slept in their nests.
    - "Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes to live in, and the birds of the sky have nests to live in, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head and sleep.""
  - **Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.** (Matthew 15:2 ULB)
    - "Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For they do not go through the ceremonial handwashing ritual when they eat."

2. If readers cannot understand important implicit information, then state that information explicitly.

- **it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you** (Matthew 11:22 ULB) - God's would not only judge the people; he would punish them. This is implicit information. It can be made explicit.
  - "God will punish Tyre and Sidon, cities whose people were very wicked, less severely than he will punish you"
  - "God will punish you more severely than Tyre and Sidon, cities whose people were very wicked."
- **Then a scribe came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."** (Matthew 8:19, 20 ULB) - Jesus referred to himself as the Son of Man. Important implicit information is is that if the scribe wanted to follow Jesus, he would have to live like Jesus without a house.
  - "Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have nowhere to lay my head.""
  - "Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but Son of Man has no home to rest in. If you want to follow me, you will live as I live.""

Next we recommend you learn about:

[When to Keep Information Implicit](#)

## When to Keep Information Implicit

Sometimes it is better not to state assumed knowledge or implicit information explicitly.

### Description

Sometimes it is better not to state assumed knowledge or implicit information explicitly. This page gives some direction about when not to do this.

### Translation Principles

- If a speaker or author intentionally left something unclear, do not try to make it more clear.
- If the original audience did not understand what the speaker meant, do not make it so clear that your readers would find it strange that the original audience did not understand.
- If you need to explicitly state some assumed knowledge or implicit information, try to do it in a way that it does not make your readers think that the original audience needed to be told those things.
- Do not make it explicit if it throws the message out of focus and leads the readers to forget what the main point is.
- Do not make assumed knowledge or implicit information explicit if your readers already understand it.

This page answers the question:

*How do I know whether or not to make certain information explicit?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#)

[Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit](#)

### Examples from the Bible

Out of the eater was something to eat;  
out of the strong was something sweet. (Judges 14:14 ULB)

This was a riddle. Samson purposely said this in a way that it would be hard for his enemies to know what it meant. Do not make it clear that the eater and the strong thing was a lion and that the sweet thing to eat was honey.

Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." The disciples reasoned among themselves and said, "It is because we took no bread." ... (Matthew 16:6,7 ULB)

Some assumed knowledge is that Jewish people associated the idea of yeast with sin and false teaching. The implicit information is that the disciples should beware of the false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. But Jesus' disciples did not understand this. They thought that Jesus was talking about real yeast and bread. So it would not be appropriate to state explicitly that the word "yeast" here refers to false teaching. The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant until they heard

what Jesus said in Matthew 16:11

"How is it that you do not understand that I was not speaking to you about bread? Take heed and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that he was not telling them to beware of yeast in bread, but to beware of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matthew 16:11,12 ULB)

After Jesus explained that he was not talking about bread, they realized that he was talking about the false teaching of the Pharisees.

### **Translation Strategies**

This page does not have any translation strategies.

### **Examples of Translation Strategies Applied**

This page does not have any translation strategies applied.

## Writing Styles

### Parables

A parable is a short story that makes truth easy to understand and hard to forget.

#### Description

A parable is a short story that is told to teach a truth. Though the events in a parable could happen, they did not actually happen. They are told only to teach a truth. Parables rarely contain the names of specific people. (This may help you identify what is a parable and what is an account of a real event.) Parables often have figures of speech such as simile and metaphor.

This page answers the question:

*What is a parable?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Figures of Speech](#)

Then he also told them a parable. "Can a blind person guide another blind person? If he did, they would both fall into a pit, would they not?" (Luke 6:39 ULB)

This parable teaches that if a person does not have spiritual understanding, he cannot help someone else to understand spiritual things.

#### Examples from the Bible

Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but rather, on the lampstand, and it shines for everyone in the house. Let your light shine before people in such a way that they see your good deeds and praise your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:15-16 ULB)

This parable teaches us not to hide the way we live for God from other people.

Then Jesus presented another parable to them. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. This seed is indeed the smallest of all other seeds. But when it has grown, it is greater than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." (Matthew 13:31-32 ULB)

This parable teaches that the kingdom of God may seem small at first, but it will grow and spread throughout the world.

#### Translation Strategies

1. If a parable is hard to understand because it has unknown things in it, you can

replace the unknown things with things that people in your culture know.

However, be careful to keep the teaching the same. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

2. If the teaching of the parable is unclear, consider telling a little about what it teaches in the introduction, such as "Jesus told this story about being generous."

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

1. If a parable is hard to understand because it has unknown things in it, you can replace the unknown things with things that people in your culture know. However, be careful to keep the teaching the same.
  - **Jesus said to them, "Do you bring a lamp inside the house to put it under a basket, or under the bed? You bring it in and you put it on a lampstand".** (Mark 4:21 ULB) - If people do not know what a lampstand is, you could substitute something else that people put a light on so it can give light to the house.
    - Jesus said to them, "Do you bring a lamp inside the house to put it under a basket, or under the bed? You bring it in and you put it on a high shelf."
  - **Then Jesus presented another parable to them. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. This seed is indeed the smallest of all other seeds. But when it has grown, it is greater than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."** (Matthew 13:31-32) - To sow seeds means to toss them so that they scatter on the ground. If people are not familiar with sowing, you can substitute planting.
    - "Then Jesus presented another parable to them. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and planted in his field. This seed is indeed the smallest of all other seeds. But when it has grown, it is greater than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." "
2. If the teaching of the parable is unclear, consider telling a little about what it teaches in the introduction, such as "Jesus told this story about being generous."
  - **Jesus said to them, "Do you bring a lamp inside the house to put it under a basket, or under the bed? You bring it in and you put it on a lampstand".** (Mark 4:21 ULB)
    - "Jesus told them a parable about why they should witness openly. "Do you bring a lamp inside the house to put it under a basket, or under the bed? You bring it in and you put it on a lampstand." " (Mark

4:21 ULB)

- **He said, "To what can we compare the kingdom of God and what parable can we use to explain it? It is like a mustard seed, which when it is sown it is the smallest of all the seeds sown that lay upon the ground. Yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all the garden plants. It puts out great branches, so even the birds of heaven can make their nests under its shade." (Mark 4:30-32 ULB)**
  - "He told them a story about how the Kingdom of God grows. "To what can we compare the kingdom of God and what parable can we use to explain it? It is like a mustard seed, which when it is sown it is the smallest of all the seeds sown that lay upon the ground. Yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all the garden plants. It puts out great branches, so even the birds of heaven can make their nests under its shade." "

## Hyperthoetical Situations

"If the sun stopped shining...", "What if the sun stopped shining...", "Suppose the sun stopped shining...", "If only the sun had not stopped shining." We use such expressions to set up hypothetical situations, imagining what might have happened or what could happen in the future but probably will not. We also use them to express regret or wishes. These occur often in the Bible. We need to translate them in a way that people will know that the event did not actually happen, and that they will understand why the event was imagined.

This page answers the question:

*What is a hypothetical situation?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Writing Styles](#) in  
[Translation Manual Volume 2](#)

### Description

Hypothetical situations are situations that are not real. They can be in the past, present, or future. Hypothetical situations in the past and present have not happened, and ones in the future are not expected to happen.

People sometimes tell about conditions and what would happen if those conditions were met, but they know that these things have not happened or probably will not happen. (The conditions are the phrase that start with "if.")

- If he had known about the party, he would have come to it. (But he did not come.)
- If he knew about the party, he would be here. (But he is not here.)
- If he knew about the party, he would come to it. (But he probably will not come.)

People sometimes express wishes about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- I wish he had come.
- I wish he were here.
- I wish he would come.

People sometimes express regrets about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- If only he had come.
- If only he were here.
- If only he would come.

### Reason this is a translation issue

- Translators need recognize the different kinds of hypothetical situations in the Bible.



- Translators need to know their own language's ways of talking about different kinds of hypothetical situations.

## Examples from the Bible

### 1. Hypothetical situation in the past

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the mighty deeds had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matthew 11:21 ULB)

Here in Matthew 11:21 Jesus said that if the people living in the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon had been able to see the miracles that he performed, they would have repented long ago. He said this to rebuke the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida who had seen his miracles yet did not repent. The people of Tyre and Sidon did not actually see his miracles and repent.

### 2. Hypothetical situations in the present

Also, no man puts new wine into old wineskins. If he did that, the new wine would burst the skins, and the wine would be spilled, and the wineskins would be destroyed. (Luke 5:37 ULB)

Jesus told about what would happen if a person were to put new wine into old wineskins. But no one would do that. He used this imaginary situation as an example to show that people do not mix new things with old things. He did this so that people could understand why his disciples were not fasting as people traditionally did.

Jesus said to them, "What man would there be among you, who, if he had just one sheep, and if this sheep fell into a deep hole on the Sabbath, would not grasp hold of it and lift it out? (Matthew 12:11 ULB)

Jesus asked the religious leaders what they would do on the Sabbath if one of their sheep fell into a hole. He was not saying that their sheep would fall into a hole. He used this imaginary situation to show them that they were wrong to judge him for healing people on the Sabbath.

### 3. Hypothetical situation in the future

Unless those days are shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened. (Matthew 24:22 ULB)

Jesus was talking about a future time when very bad things would happen. He told what would happen if those days of trouble were to last a long time. He did this to show about bad those days will be - so bad that if they lasted a long time, no one would be saved. But then he clarified that God will shorten those days of trouble, so

that the elect (those he has chosen) will be saved.

#### 4. Expressing emotion about a hypothetical situation

Regrets and wishes are very similar.

The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by Yahweh's hand in the land of Egypt when we were sitting by the pots of meat and were eating bread to the full. For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill our whole community with hunger." (Exodus 16:3 ULB)

Here the Israelites were afraid they would have to suffer and die of hunger in the wilderness, and so they wished that they had stayed in Egypt and died there with full stomachs. They were complaining.

I know what you have done, and that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot! (Revelation 3:15 ULB)

Jesus' wished that the people were either hot or cold. He was rebuking them.

## Translation Strategies

Know how people speaking your language show:

- that something could have happened, but did not.
- that something could be true now, but is not.
- that something could happen in the future, but will not unless something changes.
- that they wish for something, but it does not happen.
- that they regret that something did not happen.

Use your language's ways of showing these kinds of things.

You may also want to watch the video at [http://ufw.io/figs\\_hypo](http://ufw.io/figs_hypo).