



# CASLI Exam Content Outline and Preparation Guide

## CASLI Generalist Exam Philosophy

The [Center for the Assessment of Sign Language Interpretation](#), CASLI, administers the Generalist Knowledge and Generalist Performance Exams which are used by the [Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf \(RID\)](#) to determine eligibility for their two national certification programs: the [Certified Deaf Interpreter, CDI](#), and the [National Interpreter Certification, NIC](#). The exams assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) an ASL interpreter should have to competently work in typical, non-specialized, interpreting settings.

The exams use a practice-based approach. This means that the exams focus on competencies such as language comprehension and fluency, knowledge of interpreting practices and skills, ethical decision making abilities, cultural competency, the ability to produce dynamic equivalence between two languages, etc., that an interpreter should have to be able to perform well in typical, general work settings. For example, a question such as “What does the acronym ‘CASLI’ stand for?” would not be on the exam since knowing (or not knowing) this answer would have no bearing on an interpreter’s ability to actually interpret or perform competently on the job. A question such as “When interpreting in a small group meeting with four non-signing hearing individuals and one Deaf consumer sitting at a round table, where should the interpreter position themselves?” would be on the exam since knowing this information and having the ability to apply it would demonstrate an interpreter’s competence on the job.

The exams are designed to assess whether a candidate demonstrates that they are able to meet the needs of the consumers and the community they serve by synthesizing their education, attitude, training, and experience and applying best practices to both every interpreting situation encountered and to the profession, as a whole.

## CASLI Generalist Exam Content Outline

There are three exams used to assess a candidate’s eligibility for national certification (CDI or NIC) awarded by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf:

### **CASLI Generalist Knowledge Exam:**

1. **The Fundamentals of Interpreting Exam** is a bilingual exam presented in American Sign Language and written English, which assesses a candidate’s ability to apply practical knowledge of what an interpreter should know to competently perform as an ASL interpreter in typical interpreting settings,
2. **The Ethics and Cultural Responsiveness Exam** is a bilingual exam presented in both American Sign Language and written English, which assesses a candidate’s ability to make ethical decisions, demonstrate cultural competency, and demonstrate the skills and abilities needed to competently perform as an ASL interpreter in typical interpreting settings

### **CASLI Generalist Performance Exam:**

3. **Performance Exam** assesses the candidate's ability to perform the tasks required of an ASL interpreter. There are two performance exams: one is specific to the tasks of a Deaf interpreter, the other is specific to the tasks of an interpreter who is not deaf and works primarily between ASL and spoken English.

Each exam is administered and scored separately.

These exams were created from two national ASL Interpreter Job Task Analyses (JTA) Studies: [The RID NIC Job Task Analysis](#) conducted by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc, in 2015, and the [Deaf Interpreter Job Task Analysis](#) conducted by CASLI in 2018 (both available on the CASLI website). These JTAs became the blueprint, or foundation, from which CASLI knowledge exams and performance exams were created.

These three exams assume that the candidate will be able to:

- Accurately transfer messages from a source language to a target language<sup>1</sup> in any engagement that involves vocabulary and subject matter that would normally be understood by ordinary consumers<sup>2</sup>.
- Mediate the cultural differences between the participants in the encounter (the interpreted situation) and they accept responsibility for the integrity of the interpreted message.
- Work at a technical level of discourse<sup>3</sup> and are able to assess their own ability to perform an interpretation which may require specialized knowledge or vocabulary.
- Have advanced competence in ASL and English and are able to accurately facilitate communication between both languages – consecutively or simultaneously – as is appropriate for the situation.
- Readily access and produce the visual and/or auditory cues and nuances of each language with few errors that interfere with, or distract from, the communication.
- Perform these tasks with little or no supervision.
- Work in accordance with established professional conduct standards, alone or in teams of other interpreters, as is appropriate for the situation.
- Accurately relay messages between two languages: Along the continuum of ASL and other signed languages, as well as, other forms of visual and tactile communication for Deaf and DeafBlind individuals and English.
- Make cross-cultural comparisons and assessments, and adjust their communication as needed for the culture.
- Have a mastery of ASL and English to be able to assess the language needs of all parties in a communication.
- (For Deaf Interpreter candidates) Perform interpreting services alone or in a team with other Deaf or hearing interpreters in a variety of settings that involve vocabulary and subject matter that would normally not require a technical understanding of the subject. They are, however, able to determine their own ability to perform an interpretation which may require specialized knowledge or vocabulary.

<sup>1</sup>“Source and target languages” include ASL, spoken English, “English-like signing” or transliteration and sight translation.

<sup>2</sup>“Ordinary consumers” refers to individuals who are not experts in the subject area.

<sup>3</sup>A “technical level of discourse” means discussions involving terms and phrases that have unique meanings in a situation or profession which are different from those used in everyday conversation.

**CASLI GENERALIST KNOWLEDGE EXAMS:** The knowledge portion of the test has two (2) parts, the Fundamentals of Interpreting and the Ethical Decision Making and Cultural Responsiveness Exam. These are described more in-depth below, however, the examples listed are not all inclusive, and CASLI expects that the candidate has done their own due diligence regarding content and context.

**Fundamentals of Interpreting:** The exam is a computer-based exam and has 120 multiple choice questions, half of which are in ASL, half of which are in written English. The items listed below each domain are meant to give examples and are not all-inclusive. The exam covers four (4) major domains:

<b>I. Pre-commitment activities</b> (i.e., those activities that occur before the interpreter accepts or declines an engagement)	
<i>Tasks:</i>	Gather information about the encounter (including logistics, scope of work and intent of the assignment) and determine the purpose and intended outcomes of the encounter.
	Determine the interpreting needs of all participants in the encounter (including the nature of the assignment, and knowledge of subject matter and communication styles).
	Determine the paralinguistic and environmental aspects of the encounter (such as identifying the preferred communication modalities, and knowing the physical requirements of the assignment); also determine the inter- and intrapersonal skill levels required, such as assessing potential conflicts of interest, or physical, mental or emotional limitations of the consumers, or determining one’s own personal limitations/biases, etc.).
	Determine the need for additional interpreters including Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs)(for example, knowing when a situation may require multiple interpreters, or multiple teams).
<b>II. Pre-encounter activities</b> (i.e., those activities that occur before interpreting begins)	
<i>Tasks:</i>	Conduct research/reading into subject matter of the engagement (such as looking up information about the situation, assessing and mitigating the environmental aspects of the encounter, finding visual aids and other resources to support the interpretation, etc.).
	Collaborate with other interpreters (including Deaf, hearing, and foreign language interpreters) such as determining interpreting protocols for different types of interpreters, logistics and strategies for teaming, etc.
<b>III. The Encounter</b> (i.e., those activities that occur during the interpreted event)	
<i>Tasks:</i>	Facilitate the encounter (do the interpreting work). This would require knowledge of best practices concerning the most appropriate interpreting approach, of language registers, of elicitation techniques, etc., and ability to understand the intended outcome of the meeting, and to use appropriate controls.
<b>IV. Post-encounter</b> (i.e., those activities that occur after the interpreter leaves the location of the interpreted event)	
<i>Tasks:</i>	Includes items such as seeking Seek feedback about the encounter from participants, colleagues, mentors, etc. (debriefing, follow up calls, surveys, etc.). It may also mean providing feedback to supervisor, referral agency, etc. about the needs of the participants (for future engagements)
	Complete business aspects of interpreting (invoicing, record keeping, etc.), including understanding requirements regarding document retention or destruction, knowledge of safety protocols (such as OSHA, Child Protective Services, etc.) and self-awareness strategies for dealing with vicarious trauma and burnout.

**Ethics and Cultural Responsiveness:** There are eight (8) case studies presented. The candidate will be presented with a scenario, and then be asked to select as many actions or responses among a list of options, as are needed to appropriately respond to the situation as presented. Candidates are to only select actions that are necessary; do not select actions that are not needed, not yet needed, or not appropriate at that point in the case. Each case study is multi-step, and once the candidates select their responses and move to the next step in the scenario, they will not be able to navigate back and change their responses.

**The scenarios** in each case study present an evolving situation. The scenarios assess the candidate's knowledge of cross-cultural communication, awareness of cultural and systemic oppression, and/or ability to assess one's own personal cultural competence for the assignment.

**The options** presented for each step of a scenario may assess the candidate's knowledge of what constitutes a conflict of interest (or the appearance of a conflict of interest); knowledge of power dynamics in different settings; awareness of intentional and/or unintentional compromises of ethical standards (such as on social media); and/or the candidate's ability to apply ethical standards to a given situation, etc. A candidate should be able to:

- Determine if the event fits the interpreter's skill set
- Verify that no conflict of interest exists
- Assess personal cultural competence for engagement
- Assess the skills/needs/preferences of Deaf and hearing participants
- Take steps to ensure confidentiality when appropriate
- Maintain boundaries (i.e. in accordance with professional conduct standards)

**CASLI GENERALIST PERFORMANCE EXAMS:** There are two CASLI Generalist Performance Exams. One assesses the tasks performed by a Deaf interpreter and the other assesses the tasks performed by a hearing interpreter. The CASLI Generalist Performance Exams are computer-based exams consisting of 6 video scenarios. The scenarios range from 5 to 20 minutes. Candidates are to interpret as appropriate using consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, sight translations or any combination thereof, within each scenario.

Each scenario is of a general community setting and assesses candidates' skills and abilities to:

- Simultaneously produce target language and receive source language applying consecutive/simultaneous/sight or blended interpreting using ASL and English while maintaining message equivalency.
- Adapt and adjust syntactic form (such as temporal sequencing, spatial representation, temporal referencing, pronominal referencing, constructed action, restructuring of question forms to narrow possible responses, adjusting register).
- Interpret fluently at various registers, correct errors when needed as unobtrusively as possible while maintaining transparency in the interpreting process.
- Adapt the interpretation (register, genre, and variations of ASL) to the consumer (including considerations of age, gender, culture, health, and education level).
- Monitor for message accuracy through any method.
- (Deaf) Provide contextual information, incorporate visual descriptions, filtering out irrelevant environmental information while monitoring multiple sources of visual processes for accuracy.
- (Hearing) Produce an interpretation that captures prosodic information (e.g., in English: rhythm, volume, pitch, pausing, etc.; and in ASL: rhythm, velocity, size, pausing, etc.), understand and match intent, and incorporate non-verbal cues.

## Preparing for the CASLI Generalist Exams

**Recommended Reading:** The following is a list of recommended reading that may be helpful in preparing for the CASLI Generalist Exams for both Deaf and hearing exam candidates. This list contains general recommendations from the Test Development Committee, but is by no means comprehensive. This list contains general recommendations for anyone working in or preparing for work within the ASL-English Interpreter profession. CASLI does not intend the list to imply endorsement of these specific references, nor are test items necessarily taken directly from these sources.

Anderson, G. B., & Watson, D. (Eds.). (1993). Racism within the deaf community. *American annals of the deaf*, 117:6, 517-619.

Brown, M. C. (2013). *On the beat of truth: A hearing daughter's stories of her black deaf parents*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Bragg, L.(Ed.). (2001). *Deaf world: A historical reader and primary sourcebook*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Caskill, C., Lucas, C., Bayley, R., Hill, J., Dummet-King, R., Baldwin, P., & Hogue, R., (2011). *The hidden treasure of black ASL: Its history and structure*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Coates, J. & R. Sutton-Spence (2001). Turn-taking patterns in Deaf conversation. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 5(4): 507-529.

Dean, R. K. & Pollard, R. Q (2013). *The demand control schema: Interpreting as a practice profession*. North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Edwards, T., (2014). From compensation to integration: Effects of the pro-tactile movement on the sublexical structure of tactile American sign language, *Journal of Pragmatics*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jpragm.2014.05.005>

Gannon, J. R. (2012). *Deaf heritage: a narrative history of deaf America*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Granda, A.J. & Nuccio, J., (2018). *Protactile principles, Tactile Communications*, Retrieved September 18, 2018 from <https://www.tactilecommunications.org/Documents/PTPrinciplesMoviesFinal.pdf>.

Hairston, E. & Smith, L. (1983). *Black and deaf in America: Are we that different?* Dallas, TX: T.J. Publishing, Inc.

Holcomb, T. K. (2013). *Introduction to American deaf culture*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Holcomb, T. K., & Smith, D. H. (2018). *Deaf eyes on interpreting*. Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Hoza, J. (2010) *Team interpreting: As collaboration and interdependence*. Alexandria, VA: RID Press

Humphrey, J. H. (2007). *So you want to be an interpreter. 4th ed.* Seattle, WA: H & H Publishing Co.

[InterpreterEducation.org](http://InterpreterEducation.org)

Lane, H. (1992). *The mask of benevolence: Disabling the deaf community*. San Diego, CA: DawnSignPress.

Larson, M. (1998). *Meaning-based translation: A guide to cross-language equivalence*. New York, NY: University Press of America.

McKee, R. L., & Davis, J. E. (2010). *Interpreting in multilingual, multicultural contexts*. Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Mindness, A. (2014). *Reading between the signs: Intercultural communication for sign language interpreters, 3rd ed.* Boston, MA: Intercultural Press.

National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers. (2016). *Deaf interpreter curriculum*. Retrieved from <http://www.diinstitute.org/learning-center/deaf-interpreter-curriculum/>

Nicodemus, B. (2009). *Prosodic markers and utterance boundaries in American sign language interpretation*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

[RID-NAD Code of Professional Conduct](#)

Roberson, L., & Shaw, S. (Eds.). (2002). *Signed language interpreting in the 21st century: An overview of the profession*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Seal, B. (2004). *Best practices in educational interpreting* (2nd ed.) Boston, MA: Pearson.

[Streetleverage.com](http://Streetleverage.com)

Thumann, M. (2014). *Proficiency and depiction in ASL*. In 2014 Our Roots: The Essence of Our Future: Conference of Interpreter Trainers (pp. 175–185). Retrieved from <http://www.cit-asl.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/25-2014-thumann.pdf>

**CASLI Generalist Exams Study Checklist:** This is a *suggested* checklist for our candidates and is by no means exhaustive. This checklist assumes that a candidate has participated in interpreter education and/or interpreter training and is able to competently perform the tasks listed on page two of this document.

### Registering for the Exam:

- Read the CASLI Exam Candidate Handbook
- Submit any necessary documents to RID or CASLI to meet exam eligibility
- Create an account in RID Member Portal for a RID Member ID number
- Create an account in the CASLI Exam System (CES) for an Exam Candidate Account
- Request an exam in CES. Once eligibility for CASLI Generalist Exam is verified, CASLI staff will manually add an exam for candidates to purchase
  - Send in any requests for ADA/exam accommodations 30 days or more prior to scheduling the exam

### Preparing for the Exam:

- Review CASLI Exam Content Outline for an overview of the exams
- Review [NIC](#) and [Deaf Interpreter Job Task Analyses \(JTAs\)](#) for a more comprehensive listing of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed for competent interpreting practice
- Perform self-assessments on the areas within the KSAs to focus on developing/enhancing interpreting knowledge and competency
- Work with an accomplished language mentor or interpreting mentor to improve language fluency and interpreting competency
- Read and review the resources listed above in “Recommended Reading” on pages 5-6 of this document
- Read and review any resources, literature, or videos not listed above but are generally recognized within the field of ASL Interpreting to be invaluable to one's own professional development (e.g. [RID's Views magazines](#), [CATIE Center's Youtube channel](#), [CALI's self-paced modules](#), etc.)
- Develop/enhance ASL interpreting competence through [deliberate practice](#)
- In the [CASLI Exam System](#), use the “Take a Sample Exam” to familiarize yourself with the user interface, exam instructions, navigation features, and layout of the exam items.

### Taking the Exam:

- Practice self-care (e.g. sleep, hygiene, healthful eating, etc.) to improve cognitive abilities, mental health, and physical stamina
- Research and apply self-help techniques (e.g. deep breathing, meditation, etc.) to reduce exam anxiety
- Prepare for your exam appointment by:
  - confirming your appointment day/time/location with your test administrator/test site (be sure to review and follow any test site rules or policies)
  - making sure you have all necessary documents (e.g. government issued photo ID, test/proctor token)
  - planning your clothing/attire for fluctuating temperatures and, if applicable, those that are optimal for on-screen video recording (e.g. works with your skin tone)
  - planning your route to the test site and, if applicable, parking situation
  - planning to arrive 15 minutes early to check in, get settled, use the restroom, etc.
  - cultivating a positive mental attitude (We're rooting for you!)

**Best of luck on your Exam!!!**

**The CASLI Team**