

12 Steps to Prepare InDesign Files for Translation

If you're using Adobe InDesign, here are a few tips for making the translation and localization of those documents easier and faster. In Design is a friendlier program to create files that will be formatted into languages that will need to be outlined later (e.g. Chinese, Khmer, Farsi, etc.).

These tips help ensure that your formatting and style choices remain with the text even as the document goes through multiple stages of the translation process.

1. Use the "Numbered List" option to automatically number items in list, rather than entering the numbers manually.
2. Create separate paragraphs for any distinct style changes.
3. When building tables, use InDesign's tables - don't manually create your own.
4. Use "layers" to link a text with particular graphics.
5. Use "style sheets" to assign complicated formatting and apply it globally throughout a document.
6. "Group" elements that need to remain together, so they stay that way even as text moves due to expansion. Remember: translations can be 25 to 35 percent longer than the original, and some eastern languages - Arabic, Farsi, Urdu - display text right-to-left. The key is to create a design flexible enough to accommodate any language you'll need.
7. Keep abbreviation/acronym rules straight. The treatment of an abbreviation or acronym matters and needs to be consistent across the document. E.g. Use "English (EN)"; then abbreviation or the spelled-out form for the rest of the text.
8. When referring to some part of the document, use a particular section name instead of a specific page number. Depending on the target language, the text would shrink or expand so the page number will change while the section name will be translated. E.g. Instead of saying "See Page 10", it's better to say "See Section 2."
9. Avoid soft-breaks in the middle of a sentence.
10. Avoid unnecessary extra spaces. Use tabs if necessary.
11. Sending similar files in batches, or referencing old jobs with similar files, is a great way to help us keep your costs down. We can analyze two similar documents and quickly determine that only a couple of words need to change from one document to the other.
12. Because of strict CMS regulations, even when it comes to attestations, the best way to get the attestation right the 1st time is for the client to send exactly the file description/name that is to be used.