

LAUNCHING A CAREER AS A

COURT REPORTER



COURT REPORTERS BOARD

OF CALIFORNIA





If you're looking for an interesting and lucrative career, court reporting could be the job for you.

Court reporters — also known as certified shorthand reporters (CSRs) — are highly trained, licensed professionals who transcribe spoken words using a stenotype machine in a wide variety of settings — not just in court.

CSRs fill a critical role in the justice system: They provide verbatim transcripts of judicial proceedings and ensure that nothing compromises their accuracy. Court reporters are present in court hearings, trials, and other litigation-related sessions such as depositions. But opportunities in this field go beyond the courtroom.

OPPORTUNITIES AND BENEFITS

It's an exciting time for CSRs. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment for them will grow by 18 percent between 2008 and 2018, reflecting the demand for real-time broadcast captioning and translating. This growth rate is faster than the average for all occupations in that time period.

Broadcast captioners, also called stenocaptioners, use court reporting skills on the stenotype machine to caption live television programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers with software that instantly displays speech as text so it can be read immediately. This includes news, emergency broadcasts, sports events, and more.

Court reporters use the same process for webcasts, instantly transmitting captions to the computer screens of all parties via the Internet. The stenotype machine enables court reporters to write words using a letter or a combination of letters to represent a sound, a word, or a phrase. This allows them to write text much faster than on a standard computer keyboard.



In addition, the skills gained on the stenotype machine may prepare you for other career options such as:

- * Rapid data entry.
- * Scoping (computerized editing of transcripts for court reporters).
- * Legal secretary.
- * Paralegal.
- * Medical transcribing.

Court reporting schools offer shorthand machine theory and speed-building classes that prepare students for the state licensing exam. They also offer intensive instruction in English grammar, punctuation, spelling and word usage, legal and medical terminology, deposition and court procedures, computer-aided transcription programs and current California laws related to court reporting.

The English education and legal and medical terminology may provide other career options or a foundation for pursuing higher education.

CSRs can be independent contractors or run their own firms. Work hours are usually flexible and transcription is often performed at home.

Annual salaries range from \$30,000 to \$100,000 or more, based on how much you want to work and where you live. Incomes can average more than \$60,000 a year, according to the National Court Reporters Association.

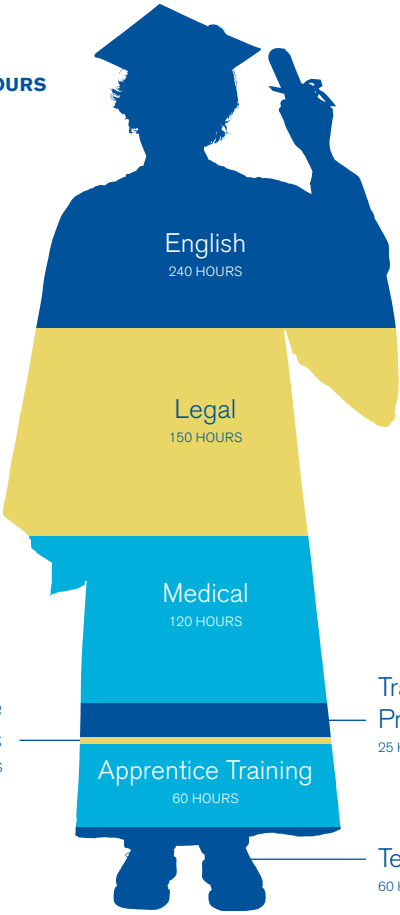
WHAT IT TAKES

Becoming a licensed CSR requires passing a three-part licensing exam, usually after attending a State-approved court reporting school. Having an out-of-state license or appropriate work experience can also qualify you for the exam. CSR school programs are designed to take three to four years. Courses are self-paced, challenging, and require self-discipline and a high degree of motivation. The curriculum is largely skills-based, and practice builds speed levels required to take the licensing exam, which requires 200 words per minute with a 97.5 percent accuracy rate. Academic homework is also required.

So, court reporting school is a full-time job – for a while. Here are the minimum requirements to graduate:

SUBJECTS	HOURS OF INSTRUCTION
English	240
Legal	150
Medical	120
Transcript Preparation	25
Resource Materials	5
Apprentice Training	60
Technology	60
Typing skills	45 WORDS PER MINUTE
Total Academic Hours	660
Approximate machine hours	2,300

660 HOURS



Resource
Materials
5 HOURS

Transcript
Preparation
25 HOURS

Technology
60 HOURS

+



+



2,300 MACHINE HOURS

 = 100 HOURS

CHOOSING A SCHOOL

Before enrolling in a court reporting program, do your research. Start by talking to staff at prospective schools, particularly admissions counselors. Smaller schools without this role may put you in touch with an actual teacher. Here are some questions you should ask:

- * How long can one expect to be enrolled on a full-time basis or on a part-time basis? Does this include students that started the program from the beginning as well as those who transferred in?
- * What is the total cost of attending this school, including tuition, books, supplies, and getting a machine? What financial aid is available?
- * How many tests are required at each speed level to progress to the next speed level?
- * How long should it take to progress in each speed level at this school? Each school should be able to provide a detailed chart of the approximate time it should take to progress in each speed class according to their students' records. The chart should identify the average length of time it takes at that school, based on actual data from students' records.
- * How many candidates did this school send to the CSR exam last year and how many passed? The previous year?
- * What are the school's dropout and transfer-out rates?

- * Who accredits, approves, and recognizes this school? (Check with both the Court Reporters Board of California and the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education – both part of the California Department of Consumer Affairs – to find out if this school is on probation or has provisional approval or full approval from these agencies.)
- * How many weekdays is this school closed per year? (Missed days extend the time it takes to graduate.)
- * How many hours per week does this school offer live dictation?
- * Does this school have a graduate placement program? If so, what percentage of graduates are placed after receiving their California license?

Next step: Visit potential schools. Some may offer tours or orientation classes. Ask to be put in touch with current students and recent graduates for more information. Ask what they think of the school, what its strengths and weaknesses are, how it helped students in reaching their goals and overcoming problems, and how it helped with placement after graduation. Ask working CSRs which schools they would recommend and why.

In addition, talk to staff at local deposition firms: Ask their opinions about prospective schools. Try to job shadow current CSRs: Sit in a courtroom and observe the reporter working. See if they're open to questions at breaks.

CONSIDERING COSTS

Calculate the costs for attending the average length of time, as well as the longest length of time, at each prospective school. Be sure to ask the school about financial aid. If you are attending a private court reporting school, ask school officials if they provide a regular accounting statement of the financial aid checks and an itemization of where the money goes. Ask school officials what the policy is for communicating increased indebtedness and whether students are notified when approaching the end of financial eligibility. Remember that any student loans incurred are real loans — meaning they have to be paid back — whether or not you finish school. Research the costs of equipment and software.

When your research is finished, enroll in the school that offers complete answers to all your questions and is properly accredited.



OTHER RESOURCES

Also visit:

National Court Reporters Association

www.ncraonline.org

www.bestfuture.com

California Court Reporters Association

www.cal-ccra.org

California Official Court Reporters Association

www.cocra.org

Deposition Reporters Association of California

www.caldra.org

More questions?

Call the Court Reporters Board of California at (877) 3-ASK-CRB or (916) 263-3660, or fax any questions to us at (916) 263-3664, or visit **www.courtreportersboard.ca.gov**.

Court Reporters Board of California

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You can also call the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE) at (916) 574-7720; **www.bppe.ca.gov**.





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