

The Newcomers Guide to the English Translation Section



Welcome to the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)! For over 60 years, the translation services of the United Nations Secretariat have been helping the now 193 Member States of the United Nations to communicate. By producing documentation in the six official languages of the United Nations, we are also at the forefront of multilingualism in the Organization and the world in general.

We are proud to place our skills at the service of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Our work is challenging: it requires political sensitivity, interest in current affairs, analytical skills and, of course, superior language skills. Not only do our translations inform decision- and policy-making at the highest level, they also contribute to holding Member States accountable for their human rights record, keeping key global issues in the spotlight and developing international law. By serving as a historical record, our summary records become a key part of the lasting legacy of the Organization's work.

We are always looking for talented translators with the right language combination and skills and we look forward to showing you what our job involves. We trust that you will find it as exciting and rewarding as we do. This guide contains information specific to the English Translation Section, as well as practical information on working at UNOG (a map of the Palais des Nations and tips about living in Geneva can be found in the annexes). It is meant as an overview; you will receive more detailed information and training in your first few days with us. We hope that you will find it useful and will help us to improve it during your time with us.

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The English Translation Section

Where we are

Location

Our offices are located on the sixth floor of the E building at the Palais des Nations (see annexed map).

Contacting us

The main point of contact for the Section is the front office (E-6040), which is staffed by the Documents Assistant, who can be reached at +41 22 917 53 59 or trad_sec_eng@un.org.

Who we are

The English Translation Section (ETS) currently has 23 full-time staff, including the Chief and the Documents Assistant.

The Chief of Section heads the team and is accountable to the senior managers of the Languages Service and the Division of Conference Management for all aspects of the Section's work. The Section has three senior revisers, nine revisers and nine translators/précis-writers. The Documents Assistant is responsible for front office work, including distribution of work, certain administrative duties and record-keeping. In peak periods, freelancers are recruited to help with the additional workload. The Section also works closely with text processors, who proofread and format translations, summary records and verbatim records of the Conference on Disarmament. The staff also interact closely with those involved in meetings planning and services in order to deliver summary records to clients on time.

Chief of Section: Ms. Nicole Maguire



Documents Assistant: Ms. Antonella Balzerano



We are a fairly diverse group, representing a number of different nationalities including American, British, Canadian, Estonian, French, Irish, Italian, Malaysian, Spanish and Swiss. Some of us have been with the United Nations for one year, some of us for more than 20. Between us we have almost 400 years of experience in translation and knowledge of over a dozen languages. We like to think of ourselves as a friendly, creative bunch, and we will do our best to make you feel welcome.

What we do

The English Translation Section is primarily responsible for producing summary records and for translating into English documents received in the five other official languages of the United Nations.

Our clients are diverse and include the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Law Commission (ILC) and the Conference on Disarmament. OHCHR accounts for over 60 per cent of our translation work. Most of the documents we receive in that connection are prepared by Member States or the Geneva-based human rights treaty bodies.

Producing summary records accounts for 60 per cent of the Section's workload and is referred to as "précis-writing". Staff draft and revise summary records of meetings of the 10 treaty bodies and the International Law Commission. As this is an important part of the Section's work, training is provided to all newcomers in this area. Précis-writing is an intensive task, but it also gives staff first-hand knowledge of the work of the United Nations.

Your time in the English Translation Section

Your first day

To ensure you receive your entry badge, Swiss ID card (*carte de légitimation*) and other important documentation, on your first day please be sure to bring the following with you:

- Official passport bearing your photo
- Signed offer letter or internship agreement
- 3 identical ID photos (for your *carte de légitimation*)
- Any other documents requested by the Human Resources Management Service

Freelancers: Given that contracts are not signed ahead of time, the units responsible for issuing badges and ID cards should have received notification that you are starting a contract on that day. However, have the names and contact details of the Chief and the Documents Assistant on hand should the appropriate paperwork not have gone through.

On your first day, you will need to enter the Palais through the Pregny Gate entrance. Appia is the closest bus stop, but you can also walk up the hill from the Nations bus/tram stop. Check which route is most convenient for you on tpg.ch.

Go through the security check at Pregny Gate. In order to be issued with a badge, give your full name and present a Government-issued photo ID at the desk. Be sure to tell them you are starting a contract rather than just visiting the Palais. Once you have your badge, make your way to the Section's front office (E-6040), where you will receive guidance on any outstanding admin procedures.

Note that once you have received your permanent access badge, you will be able to enter the Palais des Nations through any of the entry gates by swiping your badge on the magnetic reader. You should keep your badge with you at all times as it is required at some doors to the buildings within the complex.

Dress code

While the dress code varies from department to department, proper business attire and a professional appearance are an important element in the overall impression staff make on colleagues, visitors and client offices at the United Nations. ETS staff tend to maintain business-oriented attire, especially given the possibility of being sent to cover a meeting unexpectedly.

What to expect

In your first few days in the Section, you will be assigned a person to help you with induction, training, the use of technological tools and other matters, and other members of the Section will be involved in providing you with assistance and feedback. Workshops are held periodically on various topics related to our work; you are encouraged to attend any that take place during your time with us. As précis-writing takes up a large proportion of the Section's work, you should be prepared to attend meetings and develop the knowledge and expertise associated with this task.

Précis-writing

As a newcomer, you will be sent as soon as possible for dry runs, either in the Palais des Nations or at the Palais Wilson (see Annex 1 for maps). You will need to have or develop good note-taking skills, as the pace of delivery can at times be high. Familiarity with the treaty being discussed is essential to understanding the proceedings.

Précis-writing teams are made up of between two and four précis-writers, who each draft a part of the summary record, and a reviser, whose role is to turn the parts into a cohesive whole. There are usually two 3-hour meetings per day, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 to 6 p.m.; one team covers the mornings and another the afternoons. Each précis-writer takes notes in the meeting room for 45 or 90 minutes (a period known as a "take"), depending on the size of the team, then returns to the office to write up. Meetings are also recorded to provide a sound file as back-up. For each 45-minute take, précis-writers are allocated one working day (including the time spent in the meeting room) to draft their portion of the record, which can be anywhere between 1,000 and 1,500 words.

How to prepare

For general information about UNOG, check out this [interactive annual report](#).

Keep a close eye on current events, especially those relating to human rights, as these have an immediate impact on what we do and explain a lot of what you will see in United Nations documents and hear in United Nations meetings.

Human rights issues account for a significant portion of our work, so it is helpful to familiarize yourself with the following websites:

- [The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)
- [Treaty bodies and the treaties that they deal with](#)
- [Human rights documents](#) (you can filter by document type, so this is also the place to find examples of summary records)

The United Nations has developed its own [editorial manual](#) to guide drafters. You will receive much fuller information about the précis-writing manual and other tools and resources during your time with us in the Section.

For further information on UNOG and the events being held here, take a look at www.unog.ch.

UNOG Gender Policy

In 2016, UNOG adopted a policy for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The policy is designed to establish an inclusive organizational culture free from gender bias and discrimination and to improve the representation of women at all levels. It can be found [here](#).

Practical information

Finding your way around the complex

An app called [UNOG Search](#) can be downloaded onto a smartphone to find the main committee meeting rooms and other on-site services at the Palais des Nations.

Working hours

Working hours are 8.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., with an hour's break for lunch. If you wish to start earlier or later, you should ask the Chief. Hours are more flexible when *précis*-writing, if you can respect the deadlines for handing in your summary record.

If you are delayed or sick, please contact the Documents Assistant before 9 a.m. (+41 22 917 53 59 or trad_sec_eng@un.org).

Lunch and coffee breaks

Cafeteria

The main cafeteria serves hot meals and is located on Level 0 of the Palais des Nations. It provides a large selection of dishes and is reasonably priced by Geneva standards. The menu rotates daily and meals can be ordered to-go. The cafeteria offers outdoor terrace seating in the summer overlooking the grounds. The menu can be consulted [here](#).

Note that interns are entitled to a special price of 8 CHF (present your badge to the cashier) for the express, natura, wellness and vegetarian menus, pizza marguerite and Napolitaine pasta.

Pasta corner

The pasta corner is located on the Level 1 of the E building, adjacent to the Bar Serpent, and serves made-to-order pasta and a small selection of other ready-made meals, all of which can be ordered to-go.

Coffee/snack bars

There are several coffee/snack bars throughout the Palais: Bar Serpent and Bar Palette on Level 1 and Level 6 of the E building, the Press Bar near Door 6 in the C building and the Delegates Lounge on the third floor of the A building. They all serve generally the same sandwiches, drinks, snacks and coffee for the same prices.

Note that the cafeteria and coffee bars only stay open until mid-/late afternoon. Opening hours can be found [here](#). Plan to bring your own food if you are staying late as there are no options for food except the vending machines.

Staff lounge

The staff lounge is located in room E-5110 and has a fridge, small freezer and microwave.

Food options at the Palais Wilson

The Palais Wilson, where we often have to go to cover meetings of the human rights treaty bodies, has a small cafeteria that also operates as a coffee bar outside the lunch hour. Opening hours can be found [here](#).

Other food options

All the international organizations around the Palais des Nations, such as WIPO, WMO, WTO, UNHCR and the Red Cross, have their own cafeterias that you are welcome to use. During the summer, there is also a restaurant at the Club de la Plage de l'ONU, a beach reserved for UN staff, located by the lake and within walking distance of the Palais. You will need to bring your badge and pay the small entry fee.

Services

Medical service

There is a walk-in clinic from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday, where you can consult a doctor or nurse (ext. 72520). The infirmary is in the basement near door 2 of the S building (see map). In a medical emergency, phone 112.

SAFI

SAFI is a staff-owned shop located at door 1 of the S building that sells a range of products, including luxury goods (watches, jewellery, clothing and make-up), Swiss souvenirs, luggage, toiletries, chocolates, alcohol, food, snacks and cold drinks. Many of the prices are cheaper than in the rest of Geneva.

Banks and ATMs

ATMs are available at door 41 of the E building (near the United Nations Federal Credit Union office) and near door 6 in the C building (at the entrance to the UBS office). The ATMs dispense euros as well as Swiss francs.

UN Bookstore

The UN Bookstore is located inside door 40 of the E Building and sells a great selection of books in English and French on UN-related topics, as well as UN souvenirs.

Newsstand

There is a newsstand at door 6 in the C building. You can buy newspapers, magazines, cards, snacks and lottery tickets, as well as a variety of UN souvenirs.

Post office

There is a post office just inside door 6 in the C building. Note that UN stamps can only be used on mail sent from UN facilities. You can send packages and registered mail here as well. UN stamps are also available at the United Nations Postal Administration counter located behind the UN Bookstore in the E building.

Classified ads

Classified ads (apartments, concert tickets, furniture, etc.), as well as temporary job vacancies at UNOG are listed on the [UNOG intranet](#), accessible only from inside the Palais des Nations. Classified ads are also posted in the hallway between door 6 and the cafeteria.

Tours of the Palais des Nations

Guided tours of the Palais des Nations are available free of charge to interns. In July and August, tours are available Monday through Saturday non-stop between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Just go to the tour desk at Pregny Gate (lower level) and show your badge.

Cultural Kiosk

The CAGI Cultural Kiosk at door 6 offers cultural and tourist information. There are often special deals on theatre shows and concerts for UN staff.

Annex 1: Maps

Palais des Nations

ACCESS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The 3rd floor and the ground floor allow you to cross the entire length of the Palais des Nations.

CARPARKS
Priority parking for persons with disabilities is available at the following accessible doors:
A13 | A18 | B20 | C6 | D9 | E40

ACCESSIBLE DOORS
C6 | D9 | A18 | B20 | E40

ACCESSIBLE ELEVATORS
S2 | A12 | A13 | A15 | A16 | C5 | C7 | A29 | E46

ACCESSIBLE TOILETS
Door A13 | Ground floor near the Cafeteria
Door A13 | 3rd floor
Door C5 | 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th floor
Door E40 | 1st, 3rd, 6th floor

CONFERENCE ROOMS

BUILDING	FLOOR	DOOR
BUILDING A		
ROOM III	1	C6
ROOM V	1	C6
ROOM VI	3	A13
ROOM VII	3	A13
ROOM VIII	3	A13
ROOM IX	3	A13
ROOM X	3	A15
ROOM XI	3	A15
ROOM XII	3	A15
ROOM XIV	1	A18
ROOM XV	2	A11
ROOM XVI	5	A13 15
ROOM XVI	3	A13 15
ASSEMBLY HALL		
BUILDING B		
LIBRARY	1	B20
CYBERSPACE	1	B20
LEAGUE OF NATIONS MUSEUM	1	B20
ARCHIVES READING ROOM	3	B20
BUILDING C		
ROOM I	1	C6
ROOM II	1	C6
ROOM IV	3	C6
COUNCIL CHAMBER	1	C6
BUILDING E		
ROOM XVII	1	E40
ROOM XVIII	1	E40
ROOM XIX	3	E40
ROOM XX	3	E40
ROOM XXI	1	E40
ROOM XXII	1	E40
ROOM XXIII	1	E40
ROOM XXIV	1	E40
ROOM XXV	1	E40
ROOM XXVI	1	E40
ROOM XXVII	1	E40
BUILDING S		
ROOM S1	0	S2
ROOM S2	3	S2
ROOM S3	3	S2
ROOM S4	3	S2
ROOM S5	4	S2

SERVICES

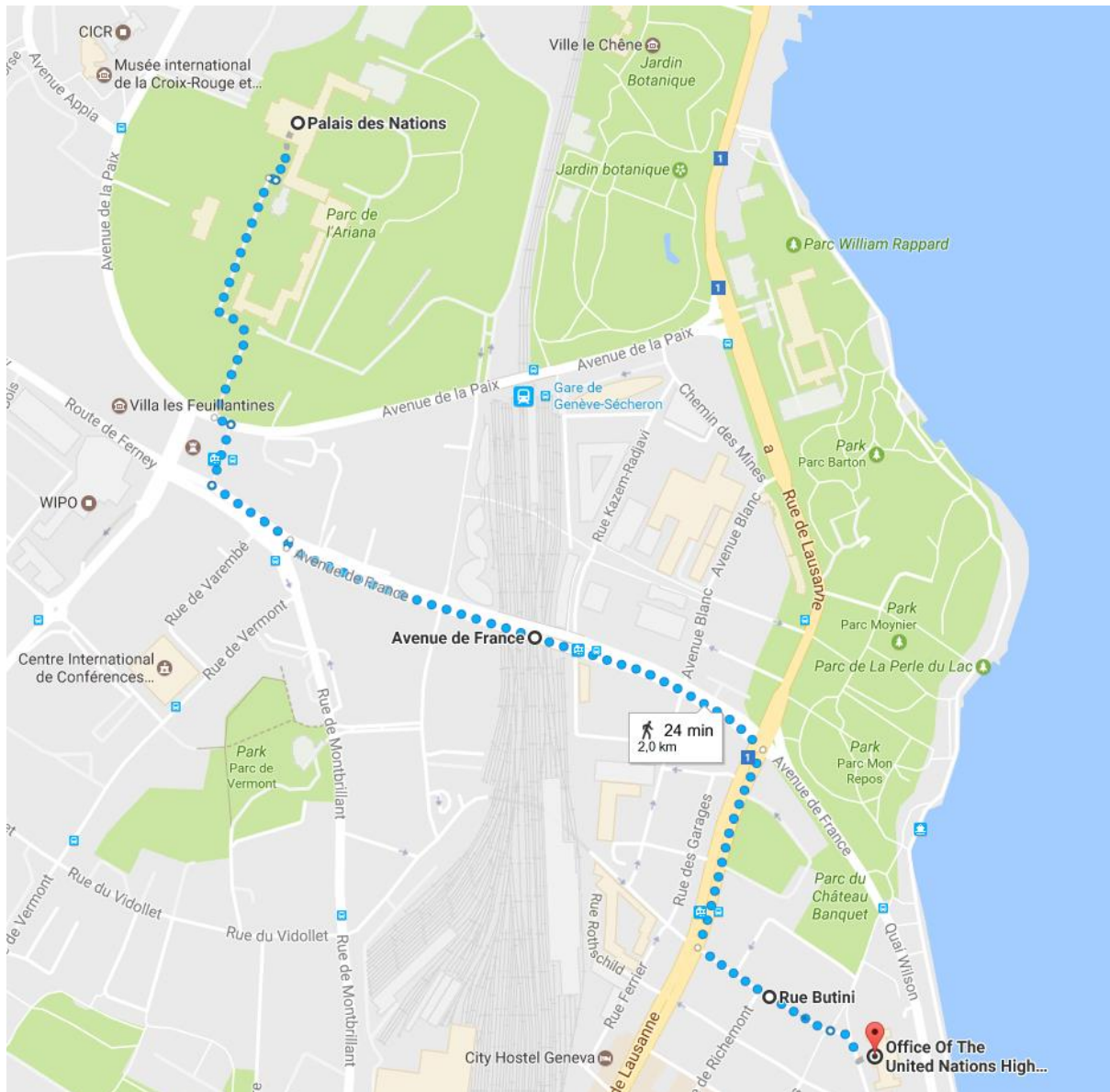
NO.	NAME	FLOOR	DOOR
1	SAFI SHOP	12:00am-6:30pm	-1 S1
2	MEDICAL SERVICE	8:00am-5:00pm	-1 S2
	COUNCIL CHAMBER LOBBY		
	BANK	8:30am-4:30pm	
	TRAVEL AGENCY	9:00am-5:00pm	
	NEWSPAPER KIOSK	8:00am-5:30pm	
3	POST OFFICE	8:00am-5:00pm	0 C6 23
	SOUVENIRS	9:00am-5:30pm	
	UN STAMPS	9:00am-4:00pm	
	CULTURAL KIOSK	9:00am-5:00pm	
4	PRESS BAR	8:00am-5:30pm	0 C6 23
5	DELEGATES LOUNGE	8:30am-5:00pm	3 A13

NO.	NAME	FLOOR	DOOR
6	CAFETERIA	8:15am-4:45pm	0 A13 15
7	DELEGATES RESTAURANT	12:00am-2:30pm	8 A13 15
8	GUIDED TOURS	www.unog.ch	2 E39
	TRAVEL AGENCY	9:00am-5:30pm	
9	NEWSPAPER KIOSK	7:30am-5:00pm	2 E40
	BOOKSHOP SOLVENIRS	8:00am-5:30pm	
10	SERPENT BAR	9:00am-5:15pm	1 E40
	BANK	8:30am-4:30pm	2 E40
11	BAR / SNACK PALETTE	8:15am-5:00pm	6 E40

DEFIBRILLATORS
Door S2 | Door C6 | Door E40 | Pregny, visitor entrance | Le Bocage Annexes, ground floor | Library, B building, 1st floor | Hall des Pas Perdus, A building, 3rd floor | Quai 30 |

Annex 1: Maps

Location of the Palais Wilson



Annex 2: Geneva Basics

Your arrival

Geneva Airport

Geneva Airport (Cointrin) is conveniently located just minutes outside of Geneva. Public transportation from the airport to the city via bus or train is free — be sure to pick up a ticket from the machine before you exit through customs declaration in the baggage claim area.

The train is the fastest way to the centre of Geneva (under 10 minutes) and will take you directly to Gare Cornavin, the main train station. Buses 5 and 28 will take you to the Appia and Nations stops by the Palais des Nations, and Bus 10 goes near Servette, Jonction and Rive. A taxi will cost 35–45 CHF to the centre of town, depending on traffic.

Gare Cornavin

Gare Cornavin is the main train station in Geneva, as well as a major hub for tram and bus lines. There is also a high-speed train to Paris (about three hours) and other destinations in France.

Money

The currency in Switzerland is the Swiss franc (CHF). The cost of living in Geneva is quite high — do some research online to get an idea of what to expect.

Ideally you should bring a Maestro or debit card and/or credit card as the most convenient method of payment. ATMs are generally available everywhere for cash withdrawal, and most shops accept payment by debit or credit card.

First-time freelancers who wish to open a Swiss bank account may do so under certain conditions. These conditions relate to the duration of the contract and the nationality of the prospective account holder. Those with contracts of less than three months would need a waiver to be able to open a Swiss bank account and, in any case, special restrictions and conditions apply to US nationals. It is a good idea to check ahead of time with ETS on the recent legislation in this regard. For those eligible, there is a UBS branch at UNOG and the Post Office also offers full financial services.

Public transportation

Public transportation in Geneva is run by Transports publics genevois (TPG). Tickets cost 3 CHF for one hour of transportation around Geneva and can be purchased from machines at stops. Note that not all machines take cards or give change. You may want to consider buying a monthly TPG pass, which can be purchased at the TPG office at Gare Cornavin with an ID card. This pass will allow you to use all the buses and trams in the Geneva area and the train to the airport, as well as the mouettes (taxi boats) on the lake. It is also possible to purchase bus tickets by SMS (<http://www.tpg.ch/billets-sms>) if you have a Swiss SIM card. Note that hefty fines are applied if you are caught without a ticket on public transportation.

For details on fares, routes, schedules and stops, visit [tpg.ch](http://www.tpg.ch) or download the free app.

Mobile phones

You can purchase a pay-as-you-go SIM card at mobile stores and at newsstands, post offices and convenience shops. Salt (formerly Orange) shops are the most prevalent, but Swisscom and Sunrise have shops as well. You will not need to provide proof of address when you purchase a SIM card, but you will need to give a Swiss address. If buying a SIM card from a mobile shop, you will also need to provide photo ID. Migros and Coop supermarkets also have their own mobile phone networks and are generally cheaper.

Groceries and shopping

The two main supermarket chains are Migros and Coop. The closest supermarket to the UN is the Coop behind UNHCR, which sometimes offers discounts after 5 p.m. There is also a supermarket in the basement of the Manor department store, close to Gare Cornavin, which is somewhat more expensive than Migros and Coop. There are several weekly markets with local produce, including one at Rive on Saturday mornings and at Plainpalais on Sundays. There is also a weekly flea market at Plainpalais on Saturdays.

Another option is to shop for groceries in France, which is often cheaper than Geneva. However, some customs duties may apply on large quantities of meat, dairy and alcohol. See <https://www.ch.ch/en/how-clear-personal-goods-purchased-abroad/> for more information.

The main shopping area is on the stretch between Bel-Air Cité and Rive. Rue du Rhône runs parallel and boasts many of the world's most famous brands and designers. The old town, Plainpalais and Carouge also have interesting boutiques. There are two main malls, Balexert and La Praille, both accessible by public transportation.

Keep in mind that most supermarkets and shops close early in Geneva, usually at 6 or 7 p.m. on weekdays, except on Thursday evenings when they stay open later. Almost all shops and supermarkets are closed on Sundays except for those at Gare Cornavin and the airport and some smaller grocery and convenience stores in the Servette and Pâquis neighbourhoods.