

Court Reporting Is a Terrific Opportunity to Work from Home

There are a growing number of workers today who are looking for non-traditional employment that gives them the flexibility to stay at home with their families. Empowered work at home moms are a growing segment of the workforce and are being joined by a lot of work at home dads. Becoming a certified court reporter is a lucrative career and the need for qualified reporters is growing rapidly. A substantial percentage of today's reporters are independent contractors who work for court reporting agencies out of their homes. Although this is a popular choice for home-based workers, it requires you to plan ahead.

Stenographers, Transcriptionists and Court Reporters These three professions seem similar on the surface. They all transcribe the spoken word into written documents. However there are significant differences among them. Stenographers take dictation using shorthand or stenotype machines. They type their notes into a steno machine, which is connected to a computer, which translates the steno into words to create a document. These documents are court proceedings or depositions but may also include meeting minutes or other records.

Transcriptionists listen to recordings and transcribe them into reports. They use equipment that allows them to stop, start, and rewind the recording so are not necessarily transcribing in real time. Most are medical or legal transcriptionists and have a strong understanding of medical and legal terminology. Court reporters document official proceedings including trials, depositions, and corporate meetings. They can take notes in real time as stenographers and transcribe their notes later but some work from recordings. Other court reporters use voice recognition software. In addition to working for the court system, they may work for lawyers, corporations, television stations, or other employers. Court reporting is more than just dictation. Reporters are official witnesses that produce an unbiased document of a proceeding. A document prepared by a certified court reporter carries more weight than the same document prepared by a paralegal or a transcriptionist, unless the transcriptionist is being supervised by a court reporter or stenographer and certifies the transcript for them.

Education Requirements and Job Prospects for Court Reporters The court reporting profession is a demanding one that requires a substantial amount of professional preparation. To get into this profession will require at least a 2-year degree and preferably a 4-year degree. Job prospects are sky-high as demand outstrips supply. The California State Labor Market Information Division reported that the number of attorneys grew by 33% between 1993 and 2005 while the number of court reporters fell by 3%. Salaries are substantial and court reporters are in demand everywhere in the US.

Work at Home Opportunities Many court reporters are independent contractors who work out of their home either independently or through a court reporting agency. Wireless and Internet technologies have made it easy to do these jobs remotely, even if they must "attend" the event they are documenting. However it is nearly impossible for an inexperienced court reporter to work as an independent consultant. Reporters are expected to work at least two years in a supervised office position before they have a realistic chance to work out of their homes. If you can invest the time for the education and experience, you can look forward to a rewarding and flexible home-based career.

About the Author

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