

## Wordfast: A quick and inexpensive way to translate

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I used to think that translating on the computer was drudgery. Translation for me five or six years ago was just a way to make some extra money. You could say it was just an afterthought. Of course, this was before broadband connections and Windows XP and other applications. MS Word was the only "tool" that I had. Needless to say, I made mistakes such as leaving words out, and putting extra words in. My terminology was in no way consistent. If I was translating from Spanish into English, I might have put "agreement" for the term "contrato" in one part of the document and "contract" in another. If I remembered to use only one term in the source document, I would do a MS Word Find and Replace and use just one term, "agreement", for instance. I also confused a few terms. For "procedimiento" I mistakenly put "process" (instead of "procedure") on one occasion. I am a fairly good speller in both Spanish and English. However, when translating, the source language invariably affected my spelling in English. Word's spellchecker did not always catch my mistakes.

When I finally decided to make translating my career instead of an occasional activity, I started looking into translation software. I was a bit skeptical about it because I had seen how Babelfish and other online translators operated and thought them utterly useless for my work. However, after casually searching in Google, I came across Wordfast and decided to try out the free version.

Boy, did my translations improve! I was able to translate faster and more accurately. No more split screens with source and target documents open in 2 Word windows. No more glancing at a printout of the source document and then glancing back up at the computer screen. No more retyping numbers or symbols at the risk of getting them wrong. All of this without having to take a course or slogging through a lengthy manual.

Of course, that is not to say that Wordfast does not have an extensive manual or advanced features. However, once you have installed the template in MS Word, you are ready to go. The fact that Wordfast isolates each sentence, or better said, segment, for both the source and target text in colored boxes is reason enough to use the program. You are much less likely to skip a segment or add one with this system. The light colors are easy on the eye and encourage extended use of the computer.

This feature is just the beginning of Wordfast. The translator is able to define the terms he or she uses and have them automatically inserted into the target segment. Not only does this save time, it means that he or she is always going to use the same target term for the same source term. There is a glossary where the translator defines

his or her source and target terms. Every time one of these terms appears in a document, the source term is highlighted in blue. With a tap of a few keys, the target term automatically appears in the target box! With some careful prior preparation when making entries into the glossary, the translator can always input the correct terms with perfect spelling.

Not only can you define your source and target terms, with translation memory, or TM, Wordfast will remember everything you translate in every session. In addition, if Wordfast finds a match or close match for the text in the target segment, it will automatically fill it in. Let's say that in one document you write "Introduction" for "Introduccion". In the next document you translate that contains the word "Introduccion", the program will automatically write "Introduction". Think how much typing this will save you on longer segments!

There are a great deal of CAT programs available to the professional translator. Though it may not be the best CAT product on the market, it is inexpensive and easy to use on a basic level. If you are translating small Word documents, you have nothing to lose by downloading the free version as well as Plus Tools, which is freeware. The program was designed by Yves Champolion, and you can find all the necessary information at: [www.wordfast.net](http://www.wordfast.net)

Wordfast has significantly boosted my level of professionalism and I am very glad to have come across it.