

California Department of  
Consumer Affairs

Court Reporters  
Board of California

Considering a  
Career in  
Court Reporting?

**THINGS  
YOU  
SHOULD  
KNOW  
AND  
CONSIDER**



## WHAT IS A COURT REPORTER?



Certified Shorthand Reporters (CSR), commonly known as “court reporters,” are trained and licensed to write testimony from multiple persons at speeds of 200 words per minute and higher. Court reporting schools teach shorthand machine theory and speed-building classes designed to advance skills in preparation for the state exam. Schools offer intensive classes in English grammar, punctuation, spelling and word usage, legal and medical terminology, deposition and court procedures, computer aided transcription programs and current California laws relating to court reporting.

Becoming a licensed CSR requires passing a three-part licensing exam, usually after attending a Board-approved court reporting school. Other ways to qualify are to obtain certain out-of-state licenses or work experience. Once a CSR license is earned, the licensee may choose to work in a court-house setting or take depositions. Salaries range from \$30,000 to \$100,000 per year, based on how much a CSR wants to work and where he or she chooses to live.

The skills gained on the stenotype machine may prepare a student for other career options that do not require a state license, such as, rapid data entry, scoping, legal secretarial, paralegal, medical transcribing, Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), and captioning. The concentrated English education and legal and medical terminology may be applicable to other career options or used as a foundation for pursuing higher education.

## HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

Court Reporting is **designed** to be a three to four year program, assuming strict adherence to daily attendance and practice on the machine **five hours per day**. This machine practice is **mandatory** to succeed in building speed levels required to sit for the licensing exam, which is 200 words per minute with a **97.5%** accuracy rate. A significant portion of the education is related to skill-based curriculum. Court reporting students also have to do transcribing and academic homework in addition to machine practice. Court reporting school is a full-time job. While a few students have attained the required speed in less time, they are rare.

As indicated, court reporting school can take three to six years if attending full time and adhering to the minimum daily schedule established by the institution. It may take five years or more if a student’s extracurricular responsibilities consume a significant portion of a personal schedule. It is self-paced, challenging and requires self-discipline and a high degree of motivation. Court reporting is typically more difficult for students who are easily distracted or those who have other responsibilities that do not allow them to treat school as a full-time job.

Plan to commit to the necessary amount of time and effort for three years or more. Excellent attendance and practice at home is vital for the completion of the program within the designated time. Work as a court reporter can also be physically taxing as sitting for hours without breaks may be required.

(How long will it take cont.)

Progress in speed building classes will vary from person to person. 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 student's records. The chart should identify the average length of time it takes at that school, based on actual data from students' records.

The Business and Professions Code and regulations that govern the practice, specify the following minimum requirements to graduate:

| <u>Subjects</u>                 | <u>Hrs of Instruction</u> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| English                         | 215                       |
| Legal                           | 175                       |
| Medical                         | 125                       |
| Transcript Prep.                | 60                        |
| Apprentice Train.               | 60                        |
| Technology                      | 25                        |
| Typing Skills                   | 45 wpm.                   |
| <hr/>                           |                           |
| <b>Total Academic Hrs.</b>      | <b>660</b>                |
| <b>Approximate Machine Hrs.</b> | <b>3000</b>               |

### ? *SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK* ?

Prior to enrolling in a court reporting program the Board recommends you interview the prospective school.

#### Interviewing Schools

1. At this school, how long can one expect to be enrolled on a full time basis? A part-time basis?

2. Do these figures (quest. #1) include both students that started the program, and transfer-in students?
3. What is the total cost of attending this school, including tuition, books, supplies, and purchase or rental of a machine? \$\_\_\_\_\_
4. How many tests are required at each speed level to progress to the next speed?
5. Approximately how long should it take to progress in each speed level at this school?
6. How many candidates did this school send to the CSR exam last year? The previous year? How many of this school's candidates passed the CSR exam last year? The previous year?
7. What is this school's dropout rate? What is this school's transfer-out rate?
8. Who accredits, approves, and recognizes this school? Get names, addresses, and phone numbers and check with both the Court Reporters Board and the Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education to see if this school is on probation, or has provisional approval, or full approval from these agencies. (see names, phone numbers and web addresses at end of brochure.)
9. How many weekdays is this school closed per year? (Each day missed delays graduation.)
10. How many hours per week does this school offer live dictation?
11. What is the policy on "pushing" and "trailing" classes?
12. Does this school have a graduate placement program? If so, what percentage of graduates are placed after receiving their California license?

## INTERVIEW CURRENT STUDENTS & COURT REPORTERS

✓ Ask working CSRs which schools they would recommend and why. What were their experiences in school and on the job?



✓ Visit potential schools and speak with current students. What is their view of the school being considered?

✓ What are the school's strengths and weaknesses?

✓ How has this school assisted the students in reaching their goals and overcoming any problems?

✓ How has the school assisted graduates with placement opportunities in the court reporting field?

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Calculate the costs for attending the average length of time, as well as the longest length of time, at the schools being considered.

If you are attending a private court reporting school, ask the school if they customarily provide a regular accounting statement of the financial aid checks and an itemization of where the money goes.

If you are attending a private court reporting school, ask the school what their policy is regarding communicating increased indebtedness and whether notification of approaching the end of financial eligibility can be expected.

Understand that any student loans incurred are real loans, meaning they have to be paid back, whether or not the education is completed.

Research the costs of equipment and realize that four years or so down the road, technology will have advanced and your equipment may need to be updated or replaced.

## OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Interview deposition firms in your geographic area. Ask their opinions about the schools in which you are interested. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the various schools based on the people they have hired from those schools?

Job shadow current CSRs. Sit in a courtroom and observe the reporter working. Ask questions at breaks.

Check some of the following Web sites for further information:

National Court Reporters Association  
[www.ncraonline.org](http://www.ncraonline.org) and [www.bestfuture.com](http://www.bestfuture.com)

Deposition Reporters Association  
[www.caldra.org](http://www.caldra.org)

Calif. Court Reporters Association  
[www.cal-ccra.org](http://www.cal-ccra.org)

Calif. Official Court Reporters Association  
[www.cocra.org](http://www.cocra.org)

US Court Reporters Association  
[www.USCRA.org](http://www.USCRA.org)

### In Summary

After all research is completed and analyzed, enroll in the school that offers complete answers to all your questions.

### More Questions?

Call the Court Reporters Board of California at (916) 263-3660, or fax any questions to us at (916) 263-3664, or visit the web site:

[www.courtreportersboard.ca.gov](http://www.courtreportersboard.ca.gov)  
or you may call:

Bureau for Private Post Secondary & Vocational Education at (916) 445-328; their web site is:

[www.dca.ca.gov/bppve](http://www.dca.ca.gov/bppve)