Ten Ways to Prepare for becoming a Student of Translation and Interpretation

1. Read extensively, especially in your non-native language(s)
   - Read high quality newspapers (e.g. the New York Times, Wall Street Journal) EVERYDAY for at least a year.
   - Read high quality news magazines (e.g. the Economist from cover to cover; really know the material in all working languages, the Scientific American, etc.).
   - Read your favorite topics in your non-native language(s).
   - Read other well-written material that will help broaden your general knowledge.

2. Watch the TV news and listen to radio news in all working languages
   - Don’t just listen to news stories; analyze
   - Know current events and issues.
   - Really know the material in both native and non-native languages.
   - Tape the interviews so you can listen to them later.

3. Strengthen your general knowledge of economics, history, the law, international politics, and scientific concepts and principles, (in that order)
   - To meet this goal, take college-level courses, review high school texts, etc.
   - It is also a good idea to strengthen your knowledge in a specialized field, (preferably in a technical field, like computers).

4. Live in a country that speaks your non-native language - A stay of at least six months to a year is recommended
   - Live with and/or frequently interact with native speakers of your non-native language.
   - Take content-related courses in your non-native language (not just pure language courses).
   - Work in a setting that requires high level use of your non-native language.

5. Fine-tune your writing and research skills
   - Take challenging composition courses (not just “creative writing” courses, but classes in journalism, technical writing, etc.) so that you can “speak” journales, UNese, legalese, etc.
   - Copy (by hand) sections of textbooks and periodicals in your non-native languages.
   - Make a note of unfamiliar grammatical points.
   - Practice proofreading.

6. Improve your public speaking skills
   - Take rigorous speech courses and/or join Toastmasters.
   - Practice writing and making presentations in front of other people in both your native and your foreign language(s). (Have native speakers of your non-native language edit your speeches).

7. Hone your analytical skills
   - Practice listening to speeches and orally summarizing the main points.
   - Practice writing summaries of news articles.
   - Practice deciphering difficult texts (philosophy, law, etc.).
   - Practice explaining complicated concepts understandably.
   - Identify resources for background research; library, Internet, etc.

8. Become computer savvy
   - Be familiar and comfortable with word processing in both your native and non-native languages.
   - Practice using on-line services for research.

9. Learn how to take care of yourself – eat sensibly, exercise regularly, and get sufficient sleep
   - These are the habits required of a good translator/interpreter.

10. Be prepared for the long haul
    - Bringing language skills and analytical skills up to the level required of a professional translator and interpreter is not a task that can be accomplished in a few short years. Only with a lot of patience and sustained hard work can anyone truly succeed in this challenging and exciting field.