

# How to hold orientation for non-English speaking staff

A reader of our weekly e-mail newsletter recently posed this question to the other readers: **“What’s the best way to include Spanish-speaking employees in orientation sessions with a predominantly English-speaking group?”** Following are some of the responses:

1. “In our new-hire orientation, we use a bilingual employee to translate. In our monthly meetings, we present to everyone first, and then we gather with the Spanish-speaking employees. We prefer that everyone hear the same thing, but it’s more important that they understand what the meeting was about.” —L.B., North Carolina
2. “We don’t have an orientation process, but we had an interpreter when we have scheduled meetings so that everyone can understand what the meeting was about. If your orientation is done by a video, then you can order it in the other language. Sometimes, employees have to be split into different groups so they will understand what’s going on. It’s not discrimination. A happy employee means a happy workplace and a job well done.” —C.F.
3. “Splitting the group is not an option if you want to be a teamwork-oriented employer. My approach would be to identify the people who aren’t dominant in English and prepare a written printout for them that covers the presentation in English and in their dominant language. Although that may sound like a large effort, it’s not because someone in the company likely speaks that person’s dominant language.” —Maria, Florida
4. “The most efficient way to approach the situation is to have a translator booth so that real-time translation via headphones can be broadcast to the non-English speaking members with the least amount of disruption and the maximum comprehension of the message delivered. Long term, I suggest an aggressive effort to teach English by offering basic language classes customized to the company’s work environment.” —Ramon Rodriguez, Indiana