



Filing with a Digital Signature

February 2022

Methods of Filing

Under the Act and Commission regulations, many forms—including Form 700s—may be filed via paper with a handwritten signature or with a “secure electronic signature,” which may be submitted in two ways. The first form of a “secure electronic signature” is an electronic signature included in an electronic filing system. The second form of a “secure electronic signature” is a “digital signature,” which may be used to sign documents electronically, if permitted by the filing officer. The use of “digital signatures” in FPPC forms is the subject of this guide.

What is a “Digital Signature?”

In short, a digital signature is a type of certificate-based electronic signature that offers increased security to ensure the identity of the signer and prevent the alteration of documents after signing.

Digital Signature Services

Numerous companies offer digital signature services, but this guide focuses on one common program that may be used for digital signatures at no cost—Adobe Acrobat Reader DC (“Adobe Reader” or “Adobe”).

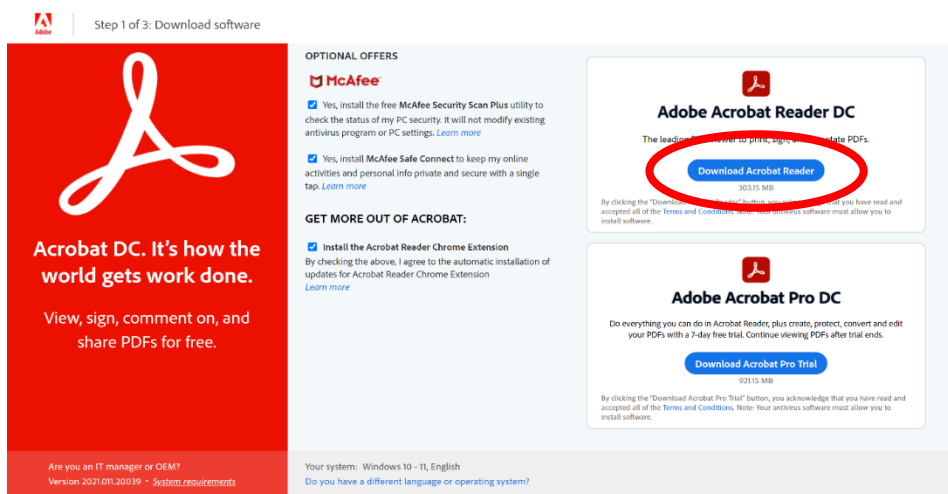
Adobe Reader allows officials to create a Digital ID to digitally sign documents, which may then be verified as valid by filing officials.

The steps below describe the signing and validation process for “self-signed” Digital IDs—that is, a Digital ID created by the signer, rather than issued by a Certificate Authority (“CA”). As explained in detail below, self-signed Digital IDs must be manually verified before they may be considered valid. In contrast, Digital IDs issued by a CA are automatically validated by the CA, which operates similarly to a notary public. An agency may use a CA for digital signature services, but there are generally costs associated with such services, just as there are with an electronic filing system.

Steps for the Filer

Step 1: Download and install Adobe Reader

If you do not already have an Adobe product capable of digitally signing a document, Adobe Reader can be downloaded at <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>.



Step 2: Fill out every applicable form field, other than the filer signature field, unless a field is specifically reserved for use by the filing official.

Step 3: Review your document for completeness and accuracy, then click the filer signature field.

5. Verification

MAILING ADDRESS	STREET	CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE
(Business or Agency Address Recommended - Public Document)				
123 Example Street		Sacramento	CA	95814
DAYTIME TELEPHONE NUMBER		EMAIL ADDRESS		
(555) 123-4567		JDoe@fppc.ca.gov		
I have used all reasonable diligence in preparing this statement. I have reviewed this statement and to the best of my knowledge the information contained herein and in any attached schedules is true and complete. I acknowledge this is a public document.				
I certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct.				
Date Signed		Signature		
2/3/22 (month, day, year)		(File the originally signed paper statement with your filing official.)		

Print **Clear**

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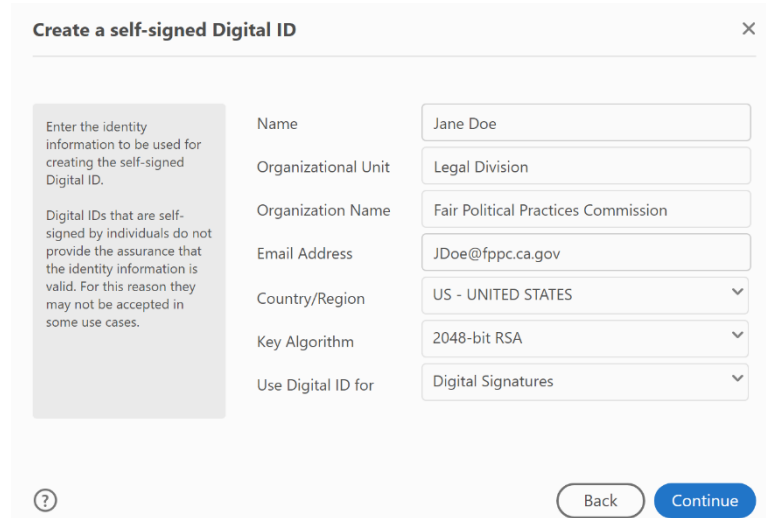
NOTE: Once the form has been digitally signed, the form fields cannot be altered unless the digital signature is removed. For this reason, it is important to review the document for completeness and accuracy.

Step 4: Create or Choose a Digital ID

After clicking the filer signature field, you will be prompted with a text box that reads, “Sign with a Digital ID.” If you do not already have a Digital ID, click “Configure New Digital ID,” followed by “Create a new Digital ID,” then “Save to File.”

Fill in the relevant information, including your name, agency email address, and organization name and unit.

Keep “Country/Region,” “Key Algorithm,” and “Use Digital ID for” on the default selections of “US – UNITED STATES,” “2048-bit RSA,” and “Digital Signatures,” respectively.



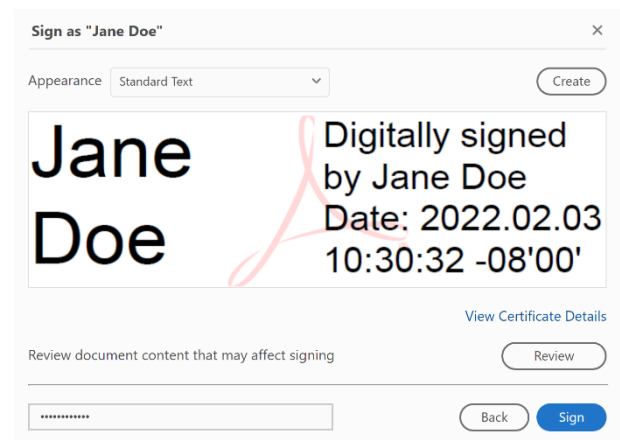
The screenshot shows a dialog box titled "Create a self-signed Digital ID" with a close button (X) in the top right corner. On the left, there is a grey box with text: "Enter the identity information to be used for creating the self-signed Digital ID." and "Digital IDs that are self-signed by individuals do not provide the assurance that the identity information is valid. For this reason they may not be accepted in some use cases." To the right of this box are several input fields: "Name" (Jane Doe), "Organizational Unit" (Legal Division), "Organization Name" (Fair Political Practices Commission), "Email Address" (JDoe@fppc.ca.gov), "Country/Region" (US - UNITED STATES), "Key Algorithm" (2048-bit RSA), and "Use Digital ID for" (Digital Signatures). At the bottom left is a question mark icon, and at the bottom right are "Back" and "Continue" buttons.

Click “Continue” and you will be asked to create a password for your Digital ID. Create a password, then select where to save your Digital ID. You will need to access this file to digitally sign documents, so the file should be saved in a location that is private and secure.

Step 5: Sign with Your Digital ID

You will be returned to the “Sign with a Digital ID” screen. Choose your new Digital ID and click “Continue.” On the next page, enter the password for your Digital ID, click “Sign,” and choose where to save your signed document.

NOTE: It is recommended you choose a new file name so that your signed version does not overwrite the unsigned version of the document.



The screenshot shows a dialog box titled "Sign as Jane Doe" with a close button (X) in the top right corner. At the top left is an "Appearance" dropdown menu set to "Standard Text" and a "Create" button. Below this is a large box containing the text "Jane Doe" in a large font, a red digital signature scribble, and the text "Digitally signed by Jane Doe Date: 2022.02.03 10:30:32 -08'00'". To the right of this box is a link "View Certificate Details". Below the large box is a section "Review document content that may affect signing" with a "Review" button. At the bottom is a password input field (masked with asterisks) and "Back" and "Sign" buttons.

Step 6: Review and Submit Your Document

Review the document again, then send it to your filing official via your agency email address.

NOTE: If, after signing, you realize you need to amend some aspect of your form, right click your signature and click “Clear Signature.”

Steps for the Filing Official

Step 1: Review the Document for Digital Signature Validity

A blue banner at the top of the document should state whether the document has been signed with valid signatures. A valid checkmark is represented by a cursive signature icon with a green checkmark.



Signed and all signatures are valid. Please fill out the following form.

Step 2: Confirm the Authenticity of the Filer’s Signature

Upon receiving a document signed with a self-signed Digital ID for the first time, the document will not indicate that the signature is valid. Rather, an icon including a yellow triangle with an exclamation point will display, indicating a problematic signature.



At least one signature has problems. Please fill out the following form.

In this instance, you should reach out to the filer, generally via phone or email, to confirm the purported filer did, in fact, send the digitally signed document.

NOTE: If the file received is sent from the filer’s agency email address, you will not need to take further action to confirm the identity of the filer.

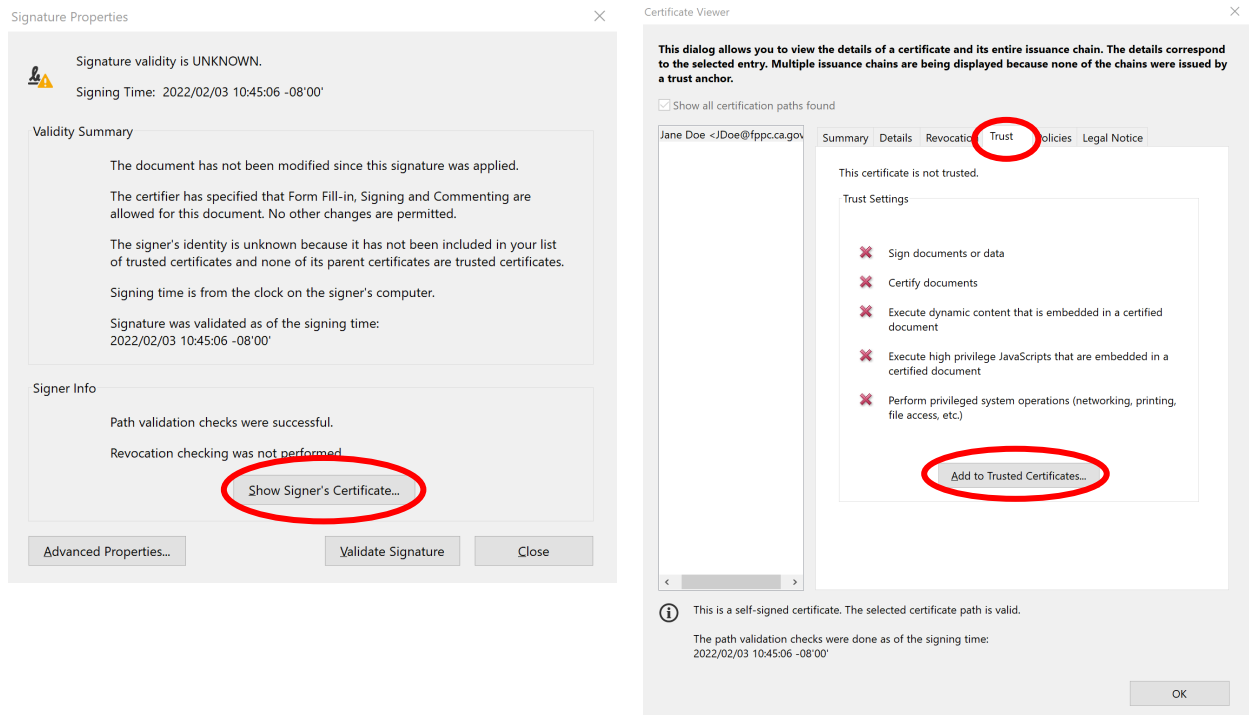
Step 3: Validate the Filer’s Signature in Adobe

Once you have confirmed the identity of the filer and their use of the Digital ID, click on the signature in the file, followed by “Signature Properties.”

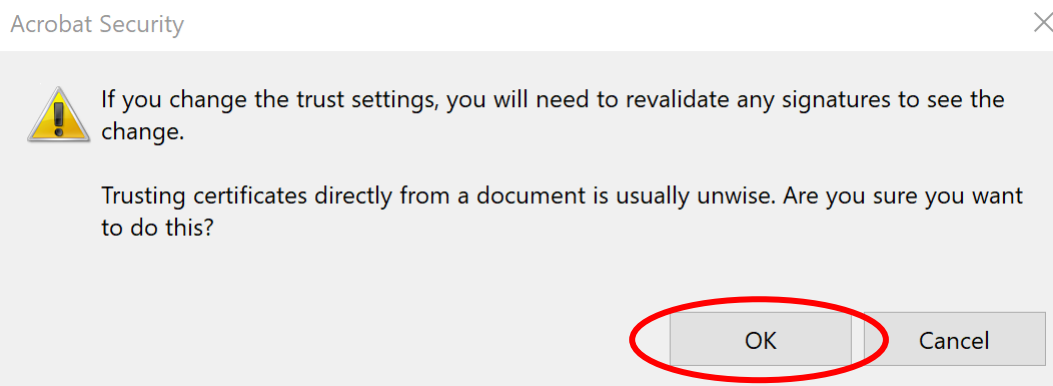
Signature Validation Status



Click on “Show Signer’s Certificate,” the “Trust” tab, then “Add to Trusted Certificates.”



Adobe will display a text box stating, “If you change the trust settings, you will need to revalidate any signatures to see the change. Trusting certificates directly from a document is usually unwise. Are you sure you want to do this?” Having confirmed the authenticity of the filer’s signature in Step 2, click “OK.”



Adobe will display a page with a pre-checked box reading, “Use this certificate as a trusted root,” above another pre-checked box reading, “Signed documents or data.” Leave these boxes checked and the other boxes unchecked, then click “OK.”

Import Contact Settings

Certificate Details

Subject: Jane Doe <JDoe@fppc.ca.gov>
 Issuer: Jane Doe <JDoe@fppc.ca.gov>
 Usage: Digital Signature
 Expiration: 2/3/2027 10:28:31 AM

Trust

A certificate used to sign a document must either be designated as a trust anchor or chain up to a trust anchor in order for signature validation to succeed. Revocation checking is not performed on or above a trust anchor.

☒ Use this certificate as a trusted root

If signature validation succeeds, trust this certificate for:

☒ Signed documents or data
☐ Certified documents
☐ Dynamic content
☐ Embedded high privilege JavaScript
☐ Privileged system operations (networking, printing, file access, etc.)

Help OK Cancel

Step 6: Confirm the signature has been validated

Click the signature again and it should now display as valid.

Signature Validation Status

Signature is VALID, signed by Jane Doe <JDoe@fppc.ca.gov>.
 - The document has not been modified since this signature was applied.
 - The signer's identity is valid.

Signature Properties... Close

5. Verification

MAILING ADDRESS	STREET	CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE
(Business or Agency Address Recommended - Public Document)				
123 Example Street	Sacramento	CA	95814	

DAYTIME TELEPHONE NUMBER (555) 123-4567

EMAIL ADDRESS JDoe@fppc.ca.gov

I have used all reasonable diligence in preparing this statement. I have reviewed this statement and to the best of my knowledge the information contained herein and in any attached schedules is true and complete. I acknowledge this is a public document.

I certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct.

Date Signed 2/3/22 (month, day, year)

Signature Jane Doe Digitally signed by Jane Doe Date: 2022.02.03 10:45:06 -08'00' (View the originally signed paper statement with your filing office.)

Print Clear

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Step 7: Add the Date Received

Note the date the form was received in the field reserved for the filing official.



Please type or print in ink.

STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS
COVER PAGE
A PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Date Initial Filing Received
Filing Official Use Only

2/3/22

Upon reopening the file, a banner will indicate that the filer's signature is valid, with a subsequent change to the form—that is, the addition of the filing date.



Signed and all signatures are valid, but with unsigned changes after the last signature. Please fill out the following form.

Step 8: Save

Save the form. It is also recommended that you save an electronic copy of the email in which the form was sent.