

# E-Signature and OFR Portal Submissions

## How to e-sign a document using Microsoft Word:

1. Open emailed document using Microsoft Word and verify that the typed date of signature above the signature block is the date you are e-signing the document. Confirm there are no tracked changes or comments in the document.
2. Choose "Save as". Ensure the "save as type" is set to "Word Document" (.docx) and NOT "Word 97-2003 Document" (.doc). Click Save.
3. Click "File" in the top left corner of Microsoft Word.
4. Within the "Info" tab, click "Protect Document", then choose "Add a Digital Signature".
5. In the pop-up: For commitment type choose "Approved this document" then click "Sign". You do not have to add a purpose for signing this document.
6. The document will automatically save with the invisible electronic signature. To view the signature, click "File" then choose "View Signatures". There is no need to save the document again.
7. Exit Word and return the e-signed document via email to the requester.

## Common e-signature errors and how to avoid them

- Documents saved as "Word 97-2003 Document" (.doc) will not pass the OFR submission portal. Changing the file type to .docx after e-signature will remove the e-signature. Suggest sending documents to signer in .docx format, because the file will automatically save in its current format.
- OFR will automatically withdraw any documents submitted with tracked changes or comments included. Suggest turning off tracked changes and deleting all comments before sending the document to the signer.
- The date entered above the signature block must match the date of the digital signature. Suggest entering the date into the unsigned document and including in the email to the signer, "I have inserted today's date into the signature block, if you sign a different day, please revise the date in the document." To view the date of the digital signature, click "File" then choose "View Signatures".
- In rare cases, if the signer chooses "Mark as Final" instead of, or in addition to, "Add a digital signature", the document will be withdrawn because OFR editors will not be able to edit the document. However, all properly e-signed documents will say "Marked as final" at the top. To view if the document was e-signed, click "File" then choose "View Signatures".
- If the signature block uses their first initial, it must also contain their middle initial.  
Ex: John Kennedy, John F. Kennedy, or J. F. Kennedy. But not J. Kennedy.

## Additional OFR digital signature instructions for MS Word are available at:

<https://piv.idmanagement.gov/userguides/signworddoc-ofr/>

## Submitting e-signed documents through OFR online portal

<https://webportal.fedreg.gov/> or google search: “Federal Register Portal”

- If not registered, choose “Request Account” and fill in form. For DHS, the agency is listed as “Homeland Security Department”. OFR usually approves the account within 1-2 business days.
- OFR only permits federal employees, not contractors, to have an account, upload documents, and be a certifying or liaison officer.
- Before uploading a file to the OFR, save the e-signed document to an accessible folder on your computer. Choose “upload file”, navigate to the document, and choose “open”. Click submit.
- To upload multiple documents at a time, click “Add” and another document submission box will appear.
- If the document selected does not have a digital signature, a pop-up will notify you that a signature error has been detected.
- If the document requires expedited publication, publication on a certain date, or is accompanied by an OFR deviation request letter, click the box next to “Requires Special Handling”. When submitting an e-signed rule or notice, you should also send a e-signed special handling letter. A separate submission box will appear to upload the e-signed special handling letter.
- If the e-signed document is submitted without a special handling letter, you can email a scanned pdf copy of an ink signed special handling letter to [fedreg.liaison@nara.gov](mailto:fedreg.liaison@nara.gov). Include in the body of the email the title of the e-signed submission and whether it was a rule, proposed rule, or notice so they can identify the document.
- Anyone who is identified as a certifying officer or liaison officer in the agency’s OFR liaison letter can sign special handling letters, but follow agency procedures.
- To view previously submitted e-signed documents from your agency, navigate to the “Search Documents” tab and insert date parameters. The results will show: the submission ID number, date and time of submission, the user who uploaded the document, the file name, any special handling letters, the assigned Federal Register document number, the file’s pass or fail status, and any remarks about the e-signature or file.