

How to Handle Documents with Pre-Printed Notarial Certificates

If a document has a pre-printed notarial certificate, that certificate serves two purposes:

- 1) It tells the notary what type of notarial act(s) the document preparer (or the company or agency for whom they work) wants the notary to perform and what facts they want the notary to verify; and
- 2) It serves as the notary's written, signed, and sealed statement of what he or she did and witnessed the signer do, as well as when and where the notarization took place.

Of these two purposes, the second is the more important, as only the notary is responsible for the correct completion of the acts mentioned in the notarial certificate and for the accurate statement of what acts were performed and what the facts of the notarization were.

(Another article will cover how to proceed when there is no pre-printed notarial certificate.)

While the notary only needs to scan the body of the document to gather a few pertinent pieces of information for his journal, he needs to read the entire notarial certificate closely to see what acts are requested and what facts are stated in that certificate. Perhaps the signers are simply being asked to acknowledge they signed the document freely and willingly. They could be required to swear that the statements made in the document are true or that they will do what the statement says they will do. Maybe they are signing as a corporate officer or an attorney-in-fact and the notarial certificate says they acknowledged signing and swore they did so in such a capacity. The notary must be sure that each signer of the document does what he or she is reported to have done in the notarial certificate before signing and sealing the document.

Pay particular attention to whether the notarial certificate says how you verified the identity of the signer. Some notarial certificates do not say anything about this; others are very specific. Check the laws and rules in your state to see how they define the phrase "proven on the basis of satisfactory evidence", "personally known" and the word "knowledge" so that you can be sure to verify the identity of the signer properly.

Next, the notary must briefly review (scan) the document for particulars to enter in his journal, verify the identity of the signer, and record the document in his journal. At this time, the notary should have the signer of the document sign the journal and compare that signature to the one on the signer's I.D. If the two signatures are not at least reasonably close to the same, that is a red flag, and the signer may not be who he or she claims to be.

Having completed the journal entry, the notary then makes any necessary corrections to the notarial certificate. Be sure that the venue and the date within the notarial certificate are complete and accurate, as well as the wording of the certificate. Make any needed corrections by the usual method (strike one line through the incorrect information, write in the correct information, and then initial). Make the corrections as neatly as possible.

If a significant portion of the notarial certificate has to be corrected due to factual errors or state-specific requirements, it is best practice to substitute a new notarial certificate with the correct wording, as long as this certificate is for the same notarial act(s) and includes the same capacity for the signer. This can be done through a handwritten, rubber stamped, or attached loose certificate. If you find that you need to add a new notarial certificate, write "see notarial certificate below" or "see the notarial certificate attached," whichever the case may be, below the flawed, pre-printed notarial certificate.

Next, the notary will administer any verbal ceremonies called for as part of the acts reported in the certificate.

Finally, the notary will sign and seal the notarial certificate and hand the now properly notarized document to the signer for his or her review.

The American Society of Notaries supplies rubber stamps containing the standard short form jurat and acknowledgment notarial certificates. They also carry other loose notary certificates that the Delaware notary can use if the document does not have the pre-printed wording on the document that you are notarizing. They can be reached at (850)671-5164 or online at www.ASNNotary.org.

This article is part of the series that began with [What Does a Notary Public Do?](#)

NOTE: This article serves as information purposes to broaden the knowledge of the notary public. The Delaware Notary Association is dedicated in keeping the Delaware Notary with working information in performing their duties to the best they can and to the fullest.