Electronic Signature On Documents

Looking for your input: those of you who sign your documents electronically, what software/ website/ service do you use? I am getting tired of wasting time scanning docs if I want to send them via e-mail.

Thanks so much in advace!

I started using echosign about two months ago, and will never, ever go back to paper again.

Eric Ridley, California

Well, one way is to save the document to pdf and then insert the digital signature in the pdf. Of course that requires having Adobe 8, 9 or X. I don't think Adobe Reader has that capability.

Tom Simchak, Texas

With Adobe's recent acquisition of Echosign, something tells me that all these technologies will be merging together soon.

http://www.adobe.com/aboutadobe/pressroom/pressreleases/201107/071811AdobeAcquiresEchoSign.html

Dave Rakowski, Pennsylvania

I scanned a jpg of my signature in blue ink, which I insert in all documents requiring same. Then I can print them (or not), pdf them, fax them, whatever. A few of my attorney clients do this as well (I stole the idea from them) :)

Anna D. Collins Ford, Paralegal

It's a busted way to do it, but I signed a blank sheet of paper and opened it in PDF then extracted it to image. I then cropped it and saved it as a PNG file to preserve quality no matter what size I need. Saved it to desktop and just insert as needed.

Clark Stewart, Mississippi

In state and fed. Ct. here, it is just /S/ signature.

Eric C. Davis, Alabama

I think on pleadings, it's the ECF/Pacer or similar log in that is actually the signature or authentication of the pleading. Although I am aware that if you forget the "/s/" the document is not considered signed.

Jon van Horne

Back in 2005, intrepid sezzer Gene Lee wrote a virtual treatise (as seznotes go) on how to use the GIMP (very good free software that approximates what the very expensive Adobe Photoshop does) to create a signature for use in Acrobat. Then, in response to a question, how to do the same for using the signature in WordPerfect. (I imagine Word would not be that different, but I've never had occasion to do it in Word). Here are his two notes, it's not really as difficult as it might appear on first read.

Ok folks, after *much* frustration and ultimately, a very long night playing around with a free program called "The Gimp" (http://www.gimp.org), Acrobat 7.0, and a scanned TIFF image of my signature, I've finally figured out the secret to making signature stamps in Acrobat that have transparent backgrounds. Here it is.

PRELIMINARIES

1. Execute your signature on a clean piece of white paper, at normal size. Scan it into your computer using whatever scanner/software you use. I saved the scanned image in TIFF format because I think it preserves the most raw details of the image.

FIRST, create a clean raw image of your signature

1. Using the Gimp, I opened up the raw TIFF image of my signature. I used the rectangle selection tool (in the GIMP toolbox) to select the tightest rectangle around my signature

(may take a few tries with your mouse to make the rectangle fit as tightly as possibly around your signature image) and ctrl-cut/copy (control-x or control-c) it from the canvas.

2. I then deleted all layers, so that only a canvas with transparent background was left (a screen full of little white/black squares signifies a transparent background).

3. Then I pasted the signature I had selected and cut/copied out earlier back onto the canvas. The point of all this is, you now have on a clean, transparent canvas with the sole rectangular image of your signature on it, with nearly all extraneous white space left out.

SECOND, make the background of your signature transparent

1. Right-click the signature image anywhere, then go to Select > By Color. Then left-click the mouse anywhere on the white background of your signature image. This will select everything in your signature image which has a white color.

2. Right-click the signature image anywhere, then click Layer > Transparency > Color to Alpha. "Alpha" basically means "Transparent". Your signature will now be floating against a transparent background.

THIRD, resize the image to roughly 1.6" in length

1. Right-click the signature image anywhere, then click Image > Scale Image. Under the "Image Size" heading of the "Scale Image" window, click on the pulldown menu to the right that currently says "pixels" and hold the mouse button down. Drag the mouse down and select "inches". Now the image size dimensions will read in inches rather than pixels. In the "width" box under the "Image Size" heading, type in 1.6.

2. Under the "Quality" heading of the "Scale Image" window, click on the pulldown menu to the right of the word "Interpolation". Change the interpolation from "linear" to "cubic(best)".

3. Click on the "Scale" button at the bottom right of the "Scale Image" window. The window should disappear, and the image will rescale to 1.6" in width.

FOURTH, save the image as a PNG file

1. If you save the image as anything other than a PNG or GIF file, guess what, the background of your image won't be transparent. Instead it will be opaque black or white. THIS is where I was getting hung up. I suggest you save the image as PNG, as the resolution is much much higher than GIF format. Your signature in GIF format will look very blocky and computerized, not the effect most want.

2. Right-click anywhere in your signature image. Select File > Save as. In the "Save Image" window that pops up, click on "Select File Type (by extension)" and double-click either GIF or PNG in the list that pops up. Again, I strongly recommend PNG since it looks much better.

3. Click the "Save" button in the bottom right of the window. Remember where you saved the file.

FIFTH, create the signature stamp in Adobe Acrobat 7.0

1. Click on File in the menu. Then select Commenting Tools > Stamps > Create Custom Stamps. Click Browse in the window that appears, then find your PNG/GIF signature file that you created with The Gimp and select it. Click OK and the window closes. A new window appears. Type in the name of the new stamp (e.g., "My Signature") and select the category it should appear under (or create a new category).

THAT'S IT. Your signature stamp is now ready and it should have a transparent background. Now you can stamp anywhere you want, including on signature lines. If the signature is too big, you can always resize it in Acrobat by simply grabbing a corner of the stamp and dragging diagonally up or down.

I went ahead and made several signatures for the sake of variety.

Gene Lee

Sandra,

Using the GIMP techniques noted in my first post, I create a JPEG version of the signature file that has the transparent background. To do this, in Step FOUR, instead of saving as a PNG or GIF file, just save as a JPEG file.

Next, I go to the WP menu up top, select Insert > Graphics > From File... Then I browse to the JPEG file, select it. It will appear in your document, and it should have a transparent background. You will have to right click on the image once it's in your document and play with the setting called "wrap" in order to make the signature appear over/under text. I tried it though, and it works perfectly. The signature has a transparent background and can be positioned wherever you want on the document. Once the signature is in the document, it will appear in the printouts and faxes of the document. BE CAREFUL though. I wouldn't e-mail the doc with your signature inserted into it. It could give unscrupulous people an exemplar of your signature that they can use to commit fraud (not that they couldn't do it already using any hard copy document you have signed and sent out. Only distribute hard copies or fax it out. If you have to e-mail it, I'd convert it to Acrobat first, then send it out. That way, they can't easily get at the signature file embedded into your WP document.

Hopefully this isn't as confusing as I think it sounds....

Gene Lee

James S. Tyre, California

I use EchoSign for my client agreements. I've used them for 3 years with no problems.

For something that just needs my signature, I do what others suggested: have an image of my signature that I can drop onto whatever doc needs it.

In Acrobat, you can also setup a custom stamp using that signature image. Then it's a super snap to sign a PDF.

Andrew Flusche, Virginia

It depends on what use I intend for the document. In many, many cases an image/stamp of your signature is sufficient on a document. I forget how I created it, but the directions are easy to find on Google. Scan in an exemplar signature. Make a file of it. Associate it with the Signature stamp tab on Acrobat and viola, you make a new PDF, affix your signature by "stamping" it on the document, and you have signed a document that is quite acceptable.

In other cases, I will affix an Acrobat electronic signature, which gives the time and date in the signature and is quite authentic. Unfortunately that signature is rarely accepted for any purposes (though under the e-sign laws it should be accepted universally).

And then there are document which must be signed and counter signed. EchoSign is a very good product for that purpose. They were just acquired by Adobe and Adobe plans on integrating EchoSign with Acrobat for a update rollout later this year.

There are plenty of other alternatives, but these are the three I use.
Roger Traversa, Pennsylvania

Many times, I will open any letter or Motion on my iPad and use the app Signmypad to sign the doc, put it back on dropbox and email/fax it out. In addition, I have made a picture that I insert in my letterhead also for letters in WORD (as others have done).

Here's instructions on how to do it:
http://www.productivity501.com/how-to-create-a-scanned-signature/357/

Gabriel Cheong

Was already using a .png signature, but making it transparent is nice.
Thanks for the tip!

Tim Ackermann

I tried and tried, using Irfanview, to get a PNG signature to work, but Acrobat wouldn't
recognize the transparency. Finally had to use a GIF.

Michael A. Koenecke, Texas

If you attach a signature via a signature stamp in Acrobat, as I do, you may also want to
flatten the page (In 9 Pro - go to Documents and choose the Flatten all pages, or Flatten
current page choices) so someone cannot lift the image directly from your PDF.

Mark E. Peneguy, Louisiana

Where do you find the option to Flatten in Acrobat 9 Pro? I had to add a Javascript plugin to
get that; it's a button on my toolbar. Can't find anything in the menus.

Michael A. Koenecke

As noted, in the "Document" drop-down list.

Mark E. Peneguy

That's what I mean: my "Document" drop-down list looks like this:

Header and Footer
Background
Watermark
--
Insert Pages
Extract Pages
Replace Pages...
Delete Pages...
Split Document...

--
Crop Pages
Rotate Pages...
--
Scan to PDF
Optimize Scanned PDF
OCR Text Recognition
--
Reduce File Size...
Examine Document...
Compare Documents...
--
Add Bookmark
--
Attach a File...

No "Flatten" anywhere in there. Acrobat Pro Extended, version 9.4.5.

Michael A. Koenecke

Mike,

I'll bet I installed a similar javascript plugin as you. But mine does show up in the Document menu. It provides the option to flatten the current page or the whole document.

I know it wasn't part of 9 because I remember installing the plugin. Of course now I can't find a link to it.

Andrew Flusche

I had not remembered it being that Java Plugin, but I have "Flatten current page," then "Flatten all pages," following "Attach a File..." But, i did find the file and I will send it to Mike off-list.

Mark E. Peneguy

Rick Borstein posted a Java Script for this on his Acrobat for Legal Professionals page some time ago. It will put a Flatten Pages button on the toolbar. Very handy. If you can't find it, let me know and I can send it to you with very rudimentary instructions on where to put the

script file.

David Masters, Colorado

I just had to re-install the script on my office machine since I formatted the hard drive a couple weeks ago. Here is the script and the instructions:

http://blogs.adobe.com/acrolaw/2010/02/add-a-flatten-document-menu-item-to-acrobat/

Andrew

Andrew Flusche

Without a plug-in, in Acrobat 9 Pro you can:

Advanced menu -> PDF Optimizer... -> Discard User Data panel -> Discard hidden layer content and flatten visible layers

However, I think that trying to protect an image of your signature from digital copying and digital forgery is hopeless. A true digital signature, with or without an image of one's manual signature, is much more secure. It is surprising that digital signatures have not caught on in our profession.

Steven Finell

Does the flatten script work in Acrobat X Pro? I tried to get the old one working, and as is often the case, the people on the Adobe forum who were helping, disappeared. Please send it along! Thanks!

Mike Phillips, North Carolina

BTW - this works, but when you save the file "flatten.txt", make sure you name it just "flatten". Otherwise it may not get recognized as the right kind of file (.js) when you move it (in the 2d step).

Tim Ackermann