

3 STEPS OF NOTARIZATION

The process of notarization involves three critical steps that a notary public should always follow: screen the signer; make a journal entry; complete the notarial certificate.

STEP 1. Screen the Signer

Not all notarizations require the document to be signed in front of the notary public, (e.g. acknowledgment, copy certification) but you should always screen the signer.

Personal Appearance - Personal appearance by the individual requesting notarization is required at the time of notarization in **ALL** instances.

Determine Willingness - Make sure the signer is not being forced to sign the document. If you suspect coercion, it is best to refuse to notarize.

Determine Awareness - Do not notarize the document if you have a reasonable belief that the person signing the document is not aware of the significance of the transaction.

Determine Identity - You must have satisfactory evidence that a person is the individual whose true signature is on the document. Identity may be proven through: personal knowledge, identification documents (i.e. driver's license), or the sworn word of a credible identifying witness.

STEP 2. Make a Journal Entry

Although Iowa law does not require notaries public to keep a journal, it is strongly recommended. A journal serves as a permanent record of notarizations you perform. When making journal entries:

1. Complete the entry in ink; do not use a pencil.
2. Enter the data before the notarial certificate is complete to prevent the signer from leaving before all data is recorded.
3. Record all notarizations - even the requests for notarization that you have refused.

A sample journal page is on the next page

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Date/Time of Notarization	Type of Notarization	Document Date	Type of Document Notarized	Name and Address of Signer	Signer Identification	Additional Information	Signature of Signer
1							
2							
3							
4							

- 1 Date and time of day of the notarization.
- 2 Type of notarization (i.e. jurat, acknowledgment).
- 3 Date of the document.
- 4 Type of document being notarized.
- 5 Name and address of signer.
- 6 Description of how signer was identified - include ID issuing agency, ID# and issuance/expiration date.
- 7 Any additional pertinent information.
- 8 Signature of document signer .

STEP 3. Complete Notarial Certificate

When notarizing a document, you must complete and sign a notarial certificate. It indicates the procedure followed in performing the notarization. The certificate includes:

1. a place at the top to fill in the jurisdiction (“State of ___” and “County of ___”). This is the location where your “feet are planted” at the time the document is notarized.
2. a place to include the title “Notary Public” under your signature; not your title at work.

The most common types of certificates include:

Acknowledgment - An Acknowledgment is a formal declaration made before the notary that the person signing the document did so freely, voluntarily, and for the purpose stated in the document. The document does not have to be signed in the notary’s presence, but the signer must personally appear before the notary at the time of notarization to acknowledge he signed it.

Jurat (Verification) - The main purpose of a Jurat is to compel truthfulness in a signer. The signer must take a verbal oath and sign the document in front of the notary. The notary certifies that the individual came before him, signed and verbally swore to the truthfulness of the statements in the document. A typical oath is “Do you *swear* that the statements in this document are true?”

Copy Certification - A certified copy is a document that has been verified as an accurate reproduction of the original, privately held document. Documents for copy certification include business documents, diplomas and passports. Avoid certifying copies of documents that are public records such as birth/death certificates, court records and deeds.

See the next page for sample certificates