

Your 7-step checklist to becoming a California notary.

It looks like a lot written down. Taken one step at a time, it is very doable. Print this, keep it somewhere you will see it, and tick each step off as you go. The pages after this one walk through every step in detail.

- ☐ **01 Complete the approved 6-hour course** This one's us Date done _____
Our state-approved course, at your own pace. You can't fail it, and your Proof of Completion is included.
- ☐ **02 Register for the state exam** Date done _____
Pick a date and location with CPS HR. Have a \$40 check or money order ready.
- ☐ **03 Take the exam** Date done _____
45 multiple-choice questions, 70% to pass. Bring your ID, application, photo and Proof of Completion.
- ☐ **04 Live Scan background check** Date done _____
Get fingerprinted (many UPS Stores offer it) and submit your notary application.
- ☐ **05 Receive your commission packet** Date done _____
The Secretary of State mails it once you are approved. This is the exciting part.
- ☐ **06 Buy your notary supplies** Date done _____
Your \$15,000 bond, a journal, and your official notary seal.
- ☐ **07 File your oath and bond** Date done _____
With your county clerk, within 30 calendar days of your commission start date.

You've got this. Every California notary started exactly where you are now, with step one. Start the course at becomeacalifornianotary.com and we will be with you for every step after.

STEP 01 Complete the approved education

Everyone must complete a six-hour course of study approved by the Secretary of State before appointment, no matter how many commission terms they have held before. Our course is approved by the Secretary of State.

TO DO

- ☐ Enroll and complete every section of the 6-hour course
- ☐ Save your Proof of Completion. You attach it to your notary application.

How long is it valid? Your Proof of Completion is valid for 24 months from the date it is issued.

Can I take the 3-hour refresher? Only if you are renewing before your current commission expires. If it has already expired, you need the 6-hour course.

Tip: if your commission expires in 90 days or less, take the 6-hour course. It counts whether or not your commission has expired.

STEP 02 Register for the exam

The state exam is given in person by CPS HR at test sites around California. Take one in your area, or travel to any upcoming location.

TO DO

- ☐ Find a date and location: [cpshr.us test schedule](https://cpshr.us/test-schedule)
- ☐ Register for your exam
- ☐ Get a check, money order or cashier's check payable to the Secretary of State

How much is the exam? \$40 for new applicants and reappointments. \$20 if you previously took the exam and did not pass.

Your name must be preprinted on the check. Temporary checks and cash are not accepted.

STEP 03 Take the exam

You must pass the state exam within 12 months of your filing date. There are 45 multiple-choice questions, and you need 70% or higher.

BRING WITH YOU

- ☐ Photo ID, current or issued within the last five years:
 - California driver's license or DMV ID card
 - Canadian or Mexican driver's license
 - U.S. or foreign passport or passport card
 - U.S. military ID card
- ☐ Your completed notary public application (**current Commission Application form**)
- ☐ A 2" x 2" color passport photo, attached to the application
- ☐ Your Proof of Completion, attached to the application
- ☐ Sharpened No. 2 pencils, and your exam fee

If I don't pass? You can retake it the next calendar month. Taking it twice in one month makes the second score invalid and forfeits the fee.

Do I retake the course? No. Your Proof of Completion covers retakes for 24 months.

When are results ready? They are mailed to you, usually within about 15 to 20 business days.

STEP 04 Live Scan background check

Once you pass the exam, complete a background check to confirm you are fit to hold the position, and submit your application.

BRING WITH YOU

- ☐ A completed Request for Live Scan Service, notary form SOS/BCIA 8016 ([download the form](#))
- ☐ A current photo ID
- ☐ The state fee (\$35) plus the location's rolling fee

Where? Many UPS Stores offer Live Scan. Full list: oag.ca.gov/fingerprints/locations

Cost: \$35 state fee plus a rolling fee, often around \$25. Call the location to confirm.

Appointment? Most locations don't need one, but check first.

STEP 05 Receive your commission packet

It is mailed once your application is approved and your background check clears. It includes a cover letter and filing instructions, your commission certificate, two oath and certificate of filing forms, a certificate of authorization to manufacture a notary seal, and a list of authorized seal manufacturers.

- ☐ Packet received. Keep the certificate of authorization safe: you need the original for step 6.

STEP 06 Buy your notary supplies

Once your packet arrives, you are ready to buy what you need.

- ☐ **\$15,000 notary bond**, from any bonding or insurance company. Usually about \$50 to \$200, so shop around.
- ☐ **Notary journal**. Keep one active sequential journal for all your notarial acts.
- ☐ **Notary seal**, only from a Secretary of State authorized manufacturer. Send them your original Certificate of Authorization.

STEP 07 File your oath and bond

You are almost done. File your oath of office and bond with the county clerk in the county where your principal place of business is, within 30 calendar days of your commission's start date. This window cannot be extended, and your commission does not take effect until both are filed.

- ☐ Oath and bond filed with the county clerk
- ☐ Filed by (30 days from start date): _____

In person or by mail? Mail is allowed, but counties process filings in order, not by the date received. We recommend filing in person so it is on time.

If I miss the 30 days? The commission is not valid, and you cannot act as a notary until you obtain a new appointment.

Congratulations. You're a California notary.

Your commission is valid for four years. To keep it from lapsing, start your education again 6 to 9 months before it ends.

This checklist is a guide. Requirements and fees are set by the California Secretary of State and can change; check sos.ca.gov/notary for the latest.