

Fast Facts: eFiling a Searchable PDF Document Under Rule 14

What's new with Rule 14?

[Rule 14 of the General Rules of Practice](#) governs eFiling and eService. Previously, this Rule allowed documents to be eFiled in several different formats. As of September 13, 2013, however, documents are required to “be submitted in searchable PDF format only.”

What is “searchable PDF format?”

Searchable PDF format allows users to search easily for words or phrases within a document. You achieve this by saving documents you've created in Microsoft Word, Excel, etc. as PDFs (see [QRG: Creating a Searchable PDF Document](#)).

What if my documents aren't searchable?

If you submit a non-searchable document (which is an incorrect format under Rule 14), a judge may not be able to review it efficiently (if at all). Aside from a directive to resubmit your document in the correct format, you may also be subject to sanctions including, without limitation, costs for staff to convert the document on your behalf.

Can I apply OCR instead?

Optical character recognition (OCR) should not be used for eFiling pursuant to Rule 14.03(b)(2). It greatly increases the document's file size and can result in errors.

Where can I find the details on how to format my documents?

Document formatting requirements (including file size, resolution, etc.) are outlined in [Rule 14.03](#). Also refer to the best practices on the next page.

What's the correct format for signatures and notary stamps?

[Rules 14.04\(b\) and \(c\)](#) permit facsimile or typographical signatures and stamps. See Rule for more detail.

The Rule prohibits *external* hyperlinks, but are *internal* hyperlinks okay?

Yes. Documents containing internal hyperlinks that direct the reader to a location within it (e.g., a table of contents that links to specific page numbers) are permitted. External hyperlinks that direct a reader to a URL or other location outside of the document are prohibited because they can result in format errors and prevent your document from being accepted.

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What best practices can I use for creating searchable PDFs in addition to what Rule 14 spells out?

Use a standard font

Times New Roman, Arial, and Courier New are a few examples.

Be careful when using special characters such as bullets, symbols, or checkboxes

They often don't convert correctly and can make the file size too large, which can cause an error.

Use bookmarks

Bookmarks are helpful when you want to direct a reader to specific content within a lengthy document. If you add bookmarks to a document prior to eFiling, they will be viewable by judicial officers and court staff. Information on how to apply bookmarks can be found in [QRG: Adding and Viewing Bookmarks in Adobe Acrobat](#).

Submit images as separate files

Such as charts, photos, graphs, etc. that would normally be embedded in the document.

Set your scanner to 300 DPI

300 is the recommended (and maximum) DPI setting.

Be sure your documents are black and white, not grayscale or color

Using grayscale increases the file size and should only be used when necessary to maintain the integrity of an image. Only file a color document if you have permission from the court.

Review all documents before eFiling

Ensure your documents are legible and images are clear.

What about things like handwritten notes or pictures that have to be scanned?

You can still eFile certain documents that can't be converted into searchable PDF format, like:

- Documents you did not electronically generate
- Handwritten documents
- Photographs
- Portions of documents that contain charts, graphics, signatures, or handwritten items on pre-printed forms

Scan and eFile these documents in PDF format using the best practices listed above.