



MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH

Minnesota District Court Registered User Guide for Electronic Filing eFile and eServe (eFS) System

State Court Administrators Office
Minnesota Judicial Branch

April 15, 2026

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About This Guide and How to Use It

This guide explains the court rules and requirements for filing and serving documents electronically in Minnesota state trial courts. It also gives an overview of the electronic filing and service system, called eFile and eServe (eFS). It explains how to properly format signatures, the filer's responsibility to mark any court documents in filings as non-public and describes how the courts handle filings that are rejected or stricken.

Under Minnesota General Rule of Practice 14.03(g), the court rules and requirements in this guide are legally binding. Anyone using the electronic filing system must follow the formatting rules. If a filer does not follow them, their documents might fail submission, which could cause missed filing or service deadlines. Not following the rules could also result in other penalties from the court.

The overviews in this guide are summaries and should not be used as the only legal authority for filing and serving documents in the Minnesota trial courts. Court filings may be governed by court rules, laws, statutes, or other sources of law that do not appear in this guide. This guide was created by the Minnesota State Court Administrator's Office and may be updated from time to time. The most current official version is available on the Minnesota Judicial Branch's website, www.mncourts.gov under the File a Case section <https://mncourts.gov/file-a-case/file-in-a-district-trial-court>. Any changes are listed in the "Revision History" section at the end of the guide.

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Filing Documents Using eFile and eServe

The Minnesota state trial court electronic filing and service system (eFS) is an online platform used to electronically file documents in Minnesota’s state trial courts. This guide explains the legal rules for using eFS and shows the required formatting for filings.

Who Must File in eFile and eServe

Attorneys, government agencies, and guardians ad litem are required to use eFS to electronically file documents in Minnesota trial courts.¹ All government agencies are required to use eFS for filing. For example, social workers filing reports and sheriff’s deputies filing proof of service documents as part of their work are required to use eFS. Attorneys representing Indian tribes in juvenile protection or adoption cases are not required to use eFS. All other filers, including self-represented litigants, can use eFS or submit their documents in paper form. Once a filer has successfully filed a document through eFS, the filer must use eFS for all remaining filings in the case.² Judges may order any filer to use eFS and may prohibit any filer from using eFS.³

Judges will direct filers on how to submit documents to the court for in camera review.⁴

¹ MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.01(b)(1).

² MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.01(b)(5)(i), (b)(6)(i).

³ MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.01(b)(5)(i)-(ii), (b)(6)(i)-(ii).

⁴ MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.07. “In camera” (“in a chamber”) means the judge is considering the documents privately, usually in the judge’s chambers.

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Documents that Cannot be Filed Using eFile and eServe

Some documents cannot be filed using eFS:

- Criminal complaints, citations, and tab charges (filed through other approved electronic systems).⁵
- Juvenile delinquency petitions and citations (filed through other approved electronic systems).⁶
- Wills deposited for safekeeping or original wills filed in probate cases (filed on paper).⁷
- All documents filed in parental notification bypass proceedings (filed on paper).⁸

Use eFS only to file documents that belong in a specific case file. For example, file an affidavit of service through eFS because it is part of a particular case. Do not use eFS for documents not tied to a case, such as court-paid service of process invoice, or for evidentiary exhibits for evidentiary hearings or trials. Exhibits for criminal omnibus hearings may be filed through eFS. Only file non-case documents according to judicial directives and local court practices.

Paying Filing Fees Through eFile and eServe

All fees for documents filed online must be paid when submitting the documents through eFS. Currently, eFS accepts MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit or debit cards.

⁵ Minn. R. Crim. P. 1.06, subd. 2. Criminal complaints must be filed through the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension's (BCA) eCharging system; criminal citations and tab charges must be filed using electronic filing method approved by the State Court Administrator.

⁶ Minn. R. Juv. Delinq. Pro. 6.02, subd. 2, 6.03, subd. 2.

⁷ MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.01(b)(2)(i).

⁸ MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.01(b)(2)(ii).

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Serving Documents Using eFile and eServe

Documents can also be electronically served using eFS. In most cases, anyone who must file documents using eFS must also use it to serve documents on others in the case who are required to do the same.⁹ There are some exceptions to this rule. If there is a statute, court rule, or court order that requires some other means of service, documents must be served accordingly.¹⁰ Discovery materials may be served through eFS but may also be served by other means agreed to by the parties.¹¹ You can use eFS to serve documents only on someone who has added themselves as a service contact in a case.¹²

Example:

In a case that has three parties, one party has an attorney, and the other two parties are self-represented. One of the self-represented parties uses eFS to file a document in the case and the other does not. The attorney and the e-filing self-represented party must serve documents on each other through eFS but must use other means to serve the self-represented party who does not use eFS. The non-e-filing self-represented party must serve the other two parties by means other than eFS.

⁹ MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.03(d)(1).

¹⁰ MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.03(d).

¹¹ MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.03(d)(3).

¹² MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.03(d).

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Receiving Documents Served Through eFile and eServe

When a document is served through eFS, the recipient receives an email that includes a link to the document. To get that email and link, each filer must have email notifications turned on in eFS.

- The document can be downloaded for 30 days from the date it is served. After that period the link expires, so the recipient must download and save a copy before the deadline.
- All litigants are responsible for maintaining their own record-keeping and files.
- eFS is **not** a case management tool and should not be used as a repository for documents.

If a litigant fails to keep a copy of a filed document or does not download a served document within the allowed time, eFS will not provide another copy. In that situation, the party must request the document from court administration and any applicable copy fees set by the Minnesota statutes will apply.

Anyone can view most public court documents at no cost on a computer or mobile device or at courthouse public access terminals. Government agencies can access court documents through a separate application.

Responsibilities of People Being Served

Sign up for Service in Each Case

Each person who is required to be served through eFS must sign up for service **in each case**. Registering an eFS account does not automatically enroll a person for service in a case. A person cannot be served through eFS until they have signed up for service in that specific case. Filers may not sign up other individuals for service, except for members of the same law firm.¹³ Court staff may not sign anyone up for service. If a filer needs to serve someone in eFS who has

¹³ Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 14.02(b)(5).

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not signed up for service in a case, the filer should contact that person directly and request that they sign up for service. Failure to properly sign up for service, or improper enrollment of others, may result in court sanctions. Attorneys who withdraw must remove themselves as service contacts in the case.

Example:

Both parties in a case are represented by attorneys. The complaint and answer have been filed, and the defendant's attorney is preparing a motion to dismiss. The plaintiff's attorney has not added himself as a service contact to the case, preventing service of the motion to dismiss. The defendant's attorney contacts the plaintiff's attorney and reminds him to add himself to comply with the service rules, as failure to do so may lead to court sanctions.

Maintaining an Active Email Address

Every eFS filer is required to have a valid email address to receive service.¹⁴ The filer is responsible for ensuring eFS has the correct email address, the email account works properly, and it hasn't reached its storage/size limit.¹⁵ Filers who do not keep their email accounts up to date or check them may miss served documents and may not be able to challenge the service as invalid.

Each party should designate only one email address to receive service for a case. If several attorneys or staff members are working on the case, only one email address should be listed for service. Adding multiple service email addresses can create duplicate service records in the court file and may slow case processing. If other staff need to receive copies of served documents, they can be added using the Administrative Copy field or the Other Service Contacts option.

¹⁴ MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.02(a).

¹⁵ MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.02(b)(4).

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Another option is for the law firm to create a single service email address (for example, *servicemnstatecourts@smithlawfirm.com*) and set up an internal email distribution list so that everyone working on the case receives copies.

Example:

The Smith Law Firm represents a party in a civil case. Partner Jane Smith handles the case with help from associate John Doe and paralegal Mary Roe. Jane Smith's email address is listed for service. John Doe and Mary Roe are not listed as separate service contacts. Instead, their email addresses are added to the Administrative Copy field, so they also receive the documents.

Individual Usernames and Passwords

Each eFS filer is required to create their own username and password. Every filer must have their own login credentials and may not share them with others, including filers who are members of the same law firm. Filers are responsible for the use (activity) of their username and password, and any documents filed or served using those credentials are considered filed by that filer.¹⁶ If a filer's password is compromised, the filer must immediately change it and notify the court.¹⁷

Filers create a username and password by registering in eFS. Registration is free.

Availability of eFile and eServe

The eFile and eServe service is available online 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by going to the eFile and eServe website at www.mncourts.gov/file-a-case/file-in-a-district-trial-court. The system will occasionally be unavailable for technical upgrades. Notices of these scheduled downtimes will be posted on the Minnesota Judicial Branch's website.

¹⁶ Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 14.02(b)(3).

¹⁷ MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.02(b)(2).

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Documents may be filed through eFS at any time, except during scheduled downtimes. A document is considered filed when it is successfully transmitted to the court through eFS, unless it is rejected by court administration, canceled by the filer, or fails to submit.¹⁸ A document transmitted to the court for filing by 11:59 p.m. will be deemed filed on that date, unless the document is rejected or the court orders a different deadline.¹⁹

Troubleshooting and Technical Errors

If technical errors prevent filing or service, the filer may file a motion asking the court to deem the document filed or served on the date attempted and must show that a technical error occurred.²⁰ The court may adjust response deadlines if appropriate. Failure to follow the formatting and technical requirements in this guide may result in missed deadlines or court-imposed sanctions.

eFile and eServe Support Center

Staff are available by phone Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., except for court holidays.

Phone: (612) 902-9585

Phone: (844) 918-1724 (if calling long distance from a landline phone)

Email: [Email Contact Form](#)

¹⁸ Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 14.03(b). Court administrators are authorized to reject filings for five reasons listed in the Minnesota Rules of Civil Procedure. See Minn. R. Civ. P. 5.04(c).

¹⁹ Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 14.03(c).

²⁰ Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 14.01(c).

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Types of Signatures

Minnesota’s court rules recognize two types of electronic signatures: typographical signatures and facsimile signatures.²¹ A typographical signature is created by typing a name in format “/s/ Pat L. Smith” using a word processing program.

In contrast, a facsimile signature is an electronic image of a handwritten signature. Unless a statute or court rule specifically requires a handwritten signature, a typographical signature may be used instead of a handwritten signature.²²

Filers can choose to use typographical signatures or facsimile signatures. Filers should keep in mind that typographical and facsimile signatures do not require scanning. Scanned (image-based) electronic documents have significantly larger file sizes and cannot be searched electronically because optical character recognition data (OCR) is not allowed in court documents. This makes scanned (image-based) documents much more difficult for judges and other filers to work with and means the documents will take more time to load and download. In addition, scanned (image-based) documents may also encounter technical errors when submitted.

Minnesota’s rules do not authorize filers to use digital signatures on court filings. An unauthorized digital signature can cause a filing to be rejected in eFS or have the digital signature removed.

When to Sign by Hand

Some documents need to be signed by hand. Court rules recognize the need for handwritten signatures and do not prohibit signing documents by hand. For example, attorneys may ask clients to sign contracts or marital termination agreements by hand to avoid disputes about

²¹ Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 14.04(b).

²² MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.04(b)

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whether the signature is genuine. In other situations, such as when a client is in prison, the person may not have the ability to sign documents electronically.

If a document needs to be signed by hand and then eFiled, the document will need to be scanned. To avoid scanned documents, state and federal courts across the country allow typographical signatures. Under court rules, typographical signatures have the same legal force and effect as handwritten signatures. Typographical signatures should be used on court filings unless there is a specific reason to sign a document by hand.

Special Requirements for Signatures by the Filer

Minnesota Rule of Civil Procedure 11.01 requires a signature on many documents. If you sign these documents, or file and serve the documents through eFS, your signature must also include your typed name, address, telephone number, email address, and if you are an attorney, your attorney registration number.²³

Signatures Made Under Penalty of Perjury (No Notary Required)

Most court documents can be signed under penalty of perjury per Minn. Stat. § 358.116 and do not need to be notarized.²⁴

To do this, the signature must appear directly below a statement that says:

“I declare under penalty of perjury that everything I have stated in this document is true and correct.”

The document must also include the date it was signed and the court and state where it was signed.²⁵ Signing a document this way has the same legal effect as a notarized signature. If

²³ Minn. R. Civ. P. 11.01, MINN. GEN. R. PRAC. 14.04(b).

²⁴ Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 14.04(c). Some types of documents still require notarization, including admissions, settlement agreements, or consents to adoption filed in juvenile protection or adoption cases.

²⁵ Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 14.04(d), Minn. Stat. § 358.116.

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someone knowingly signs a document that contains a materially false statement, they may be charged with the felony of perjury under Minn. Stat. § 358.116.

When to Use a Cover Letter

Cover letters are usually not needed when filing documents with the court. Most of the information that was historically included in a cover letter, such as the identity of the filer, the case number, and a list of the documents being filed, is now directly entered into eFS.

Repeating this information in a cover letter creates an unnecessary entry in the case record.

Cover letters can be useful in some situations. For example, you may use one to tell the judge that the parties have reached an agreement on an issue, that a motion is unopposed, or suggest deadlines for subsequent filings. A cover letter may also be used to let court administration know that you are requesting expedited handling.

Public Filings vs. Non-Public Filings

General Rule of Practice 11.03 requires all filers to identify and designate non-public information and filings they submit to the court. This is the filer's responsibility, not court administration's. If filers do not follow this rule, they may face sanctions and their filings may be rejected or administratively stricken.²⁶

Filers may use the Cover Sheet for Non-Public Documents (Form 11.2) to identify non-public filings.²⁷ Alternatively, electronic filers may select a filing code that defaults to Confidential or Sealed to identify non-public filings.²⁸

²⁶ MINN.GEN.R.PRAC. 11.05

²⁷ MINN.GEN.R.PRAC. 11.03(a).

²⁸ MINN.GEN.R.PRAC. 11.03(a).

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General Rule of Practice 14.06 requires electronic filers to appropriately designate each individual document as either Public, Confidential, or Sealed in eFS.²⁹ Filers designate documents by typing “public,” “confidential,” or “sealed” in the eFS Comments to Court field.

Under General Rule of Practice 11.04, filers may only designate a document as non-public if there is a court rule that classifies the document as confidential or sealed, a court order allows the document to be filed as confidential or sealed, or the filer has filed a motion asking for permission to file it as confidential or sealed.

Filers are required to confirm they understand this legal requirement. If court administration discovers that a document was designated incorrectly or filed with the wrong filing code, they may correct the designation or reject the filing.

Filers should check both the Rules of Public Access to Records of the Judicial Branch and the rules for the specific type of case to determine whether a filing is public or non-public. You can find the court rules and detailed tables of non-public records maintained by the State Court Administrator’s Office at www.mncourts.gov/supremecourt/court-rules.

Some documents, such as tax returns, are completely non-public.³⁰ Other documents may include sensitive information, such as Social Security Numbers, which must be redacted. If it’s necessary for the court to know the numbers or additional information, submit them on a confidential Information Form (Form 11.1) before filing.³¹

The general process for submitting non-public documents and information applies to all case types and is explained in General Rule of Practice 11. Certain case types, such as juvenile

²⁹ “Confidential” means the document is not accessible to the public but is accessible to court staff and others authorized by law, court rule, or court order. Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 14.01(a)(1). “Sealed” means the document is not accessible to the public and is accessible to court staff with access to court records at the highest security level. Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 14.01(a)(9).

³⁰ Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 11.01(c).

³¹ Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 11.02(a).

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protection matters, have additional rules for redaction and separation, which is summarized in this guide.

This guide highlights common types of non-public information but does not list every type. For a full list, refer to the Rules of Public Access and the Case Records Table posted on the courts' public website at www.mncourts.gov/supremecourt/court-rules.

General Rule of Practice 11

Minnesota General Rule of Practice 11 applies to all documents filed in any trial court. The rule requires filers to separate non-public information from public information for certain sensitive information in public filings, including restricted identifiers, financial source documents, and other non-public information. Restricted identifiers include Social Security numbers, employer identification numbers, other taxpayer identification numbers, and financial account numbers, like bank account numbers or credit card account numbers. Filers may include only the last four digits of financial account numbers in public court filings but may not include any portion of a Social Security Number (SSN), Employer Identification Number (EIN), or Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) in a public court filing.

Financial Source Documents and Other Forms of Non-Public Information

The State Court Administrator's Office has published a list of "financial account numbers" to help filers know what must be filed separately from public documents. See the Resources section at the end of this document for hyperlinks to reference documents.

eFS Requirements

- When filing documents through eFS, filers must check a box certifying that their filings contain no restricted identifiers, except as allowed under General Rule of Practice 11.02.
- This certification applies only to documents filed through eFS. However, eFS will also ask filers to check the box for documents that are served but not filed through eFS, even though the certification applies only to filed documents.

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Submitting Restricted Identifiers or Non-Public Documents

Restricted identifiers must be submitted on either:

- Confidential Information Form 11.1; or
- If part of an otherwise non-public document, filed with a separate public Cover Sheet for Non-Public Documents (Form 11.2)³²

Form 11.2 can also be used to identify non-public documents that do **not** contain restricted identifiers, such as:

- Medical records.
- Custody evaluations.
- Documents a judge has ordered to be filed as confidential or under seal.

Important: Form 11.2 should not be used for confidential documents governed by the Rules of Juvenile Protection Procedure (applies to Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) cases). A separate cover sheet is available for juvenile protection cases.

Juvenile Protection Procedure Rule 8.04

Juvenile Protection Procedure Rule 8.04 identifies types of confidential information and documents that must be kept separate from public filings in juvenile protection cases. The State Court Administrator's Office has published a guide Confidential Documents and Confidential Information in CHIPS Proceedings, to help filers follow these rules. See the [Resources](#) section at the end of this document for hyperlinks to reference documents. Filers may face sanctions, including fines, if they fail to properly separate confidential information and documents.

The rule requires filers to use:

- Confidential Document Cover Sheet – CHIPS (Form 11.3) – a public cover sheet used to submit confidential documents. This form shows what types of confidential documents

³² MINN. GEN. R. PRAC.11.02(a).

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have been filed. It should only be used for the specific types of documents listed on the form. Mis-using Form 11.3 may result in sanctions.

- Confidential Information Form – CHIPS (Form 11.4) – a confidential document used to submit individual pieces of confidential information, such as the location of a child in foster care that cannot be appear in public documents. Form 11.4 cannot be used as a cover sheet for other documents.

Minor Victims in Criminal Sexual Conduct Cases

The identity of a victim who is a minor at the time of an alleged offense or incident in criminal or delinquency cases with charges under Minn. Stat. §§ 609.322, .342, .343, .344, .345, .3451, or .3453 (sex trafficking and criminal sexual conduct charges) is non-public.³³ Filers must ensure the minor is not identified in public documents, using generic references such as “Child 1” or “Victim 2”, or by initials and year of birth. The possibility that members of the community could identify the victim from the initials does not change the fact that the document is public.

The identity of an adult victim of sexual assault is public information. The identity of a minor victim of a crime other than one of the seven criminal statutes listed above is also public information. The identity of a minor victim of sexual assault is public in case types such as marital dissolutions or restraining orders, even if there is also a pending criminal case in which the minor victim’s identity is protected.

Medical Records and Medical Information

Medical records are non-public documents when filed with the courts.³⁴ Medical information may be included in public documents. For example, a doctor’s report filed in support of a

³³ Minn. R. Pub. Access 4, subd. 1(m). There is a different standard in juvenile protection cases, in which the mere allegation that a child has committed or been subjected to any type of sexual assault makes the child’s identity confidential. Minn. R. Juv. Prot. P. 8.04, subd. 2(j).

³⁴ MINN. R. PUB. ACCESS 4, subd. 1(f).

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motion for summary judgment is a non-public document, but the legal memorandum supporting the motion is public even if it quotes the doctor's report. With few exceptions, public documents may refer to the contents of a non-public document.³⁵

Medical records admitted as evidentiary exhibits in public court hearings are available for public inspection only as ordered by the presiding judge.³⁶ (Exhibits admitted at hearings are not "filed" with the courts and follow different rules than filed documents.)

General Rules of Practice 11.03 and 14.06 require filers to identify and mark medical records as non-public when filing. If a filer fails to identify and designate a medical record as non-public, the filing will be treated as public, unless filed into a civil commitment case.³⁷ Even though medical records (outside of civil commitment cases) are treated as public unless the filer designates them as non-public, judges are free to sanction filers for failing to identify and mark medical records upon filing.

Rejection and Administrative Striking

Court administration staff are authorized to reject filings if the filer has failed to identify and designate non-public information or filings, as required by General Rule of Practice 11.03.³⁸ This rejection reason does not extend to criminal cases, civil commitment cases, juvenile protection, or juvenile delinquency cases, petitions for orders for protection or harassment restraining orders, fee waiver applications,³⁹ or to medical records (which will be accepted and treated as

³⁵ Minn. R. Pub. Access 4, subd. 4.

³⁶ Minn. R. Pub. Access 8, subd. 5(b)

³⁷ Minn. R. Pub. Access 4, subd. 1(f).

³⁸ Minn. R. Civ. P. 5.04(c)(4).

³⁹ Order Exempting Certain Submissions from Administrative Filing Requirements and Clarifying the Application of the Rules of Public Access, ADM04-8001, ADM09-8009, ADM10-8050 (Minn. Nov. 20, 2020).

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public if not identified and designated as medical records). If a filing is rejected, the court may, upon motion and in the interests of justice, deem the filing to be filed as of the time and date it was originally submitted for filing.⁴⁰

Court administration staff are not responsible for checking that non-public filings have been properly identified and separated. If a filing is accepted and later found to contain non-public information, staff will start the administrative striking process.⁴¹ Public access is restricted, and the filer must either submit a corrected filing or file a motion for court relief within three days. If the filer does not act within the three days, the filing is removed from the record. Only a judge can restore the filing based on the interests of justice. Administrative striking does not apply to criminal, civil commitment, juvenile delinquency, or juvenile protection cases, petitions for protection orders, fee waiver applications, or medical records.⁴²

Confidential Document Separation and Redaction

There are two ways to keep non-public information out of public court filings: confidential document separation and redaction.

Confidential Document Separation

This means that non-public information is not part of the public document.

Example:

An attorney is drafting a petition for dissolution of marriage. She does not type the petitioner's Social Security number in the petition. Instead, she types languages such as: "Petitioner's Social Security number is listed on Confidential Form 11.1 and submitted along with the Petition."

⁴⁰ Minn. R. Civ. P. 5.04(d).

⁴¹ Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 11.05.

⁴² Minn. R. Civ. P. 5.04(d).

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The Social Security number is placed on a separate Confidential Information Form (Form 11.1), which is filed with the court but kept non-public. The Social Security number is not part of the public dissolution petition.

Redaction

Use this to remove non-public information that is already present in a public document. Filers must take care to ensure that redaction removes confidential information in a way that cannot be retrieved. Methods that may have worked for paper documents, such as blacking out text, highlighting in Black, shrinking, or changing text color to white, are generally not effective for electronic documents. Text covered in these ways can often be recovered.

Filers must also ensure that confidential information is not stored in a document's metadata. Any filer who fails to properly redact confidential information may be sanctioned by the courts.

Example:

An attorney is preparing to file statements from a charged-off credit card account in a consumer credit contract case. Statements from charged-off accounts can be filed as public documents under General Rule of Practice 11. However, the account numbers remain non-public. The attorney redacts the account numbers from the statements before filing them as public documents.

Mandatory Formatting and Technical Requirements

These formatting and technical requirements help make sure documents can be processed correctly through eFS. They also make documents easier for judges, court staff, government agencies, and the public to use and access.

Anyone filing a document in eFS is responsible for following these requirements. If a document does not meet them, it may not go through eFS. If that happens, the filer must fix the document and submit it again. If a document does not process successfully, it is not considered filed with the court. This means the filer could miss important deadlines. It is the filer's responsibility to make sure documents meet all requirements.

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You should not print documents and then scan them to file. Scanned documents are more likely to be rejected by the eFS System. If you choose to scan a document and it doesn't go through eFS, you are responsible for fixing and resubmitting it.

PDF Format

All documents filed electronically must be submitted as PDF files. When possible, use text-based PDFs.

Text-Based PDFs

Most word processing programs can save or convert documents directly to text-based PDFs. This helps make sure the documents are easy for judges and court staff to use and accessible to the public.

Text-based PDFs are better than scanned (image-based PDFs) for several reasons:

- They have smaller file sizes, so they open faster in the courts' case management system, are easier to store, and download more quickly.
- They are quicker and less expensive to create since they don't require printing or scanning.
- They can be searched for specific text, making them easier for judges and others to review. Scanned PDFs cannot be searched unless OCR (optical character recognition) is added. OCR is not allowed for court filings because it can cause technical issues.
- They are more accessible for people who use screen readers or other assistive technology. Adding OCR to scanned documents does not always make them accessible.

Image-Based PDFs

Scanners create PDFs by taking a picture of each page. This results in an image-based PDF. Courts will accept scanned (image-based) PDFs, but scanned PDFs should only be used when necessary. Always convert documents directly to a text-based PDF if possible.

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If you must scan a document, follow these guidelines:

- Save it as a non-searchable, image-based PDF.
- Do not include OCR (optical character recognition). Some scanners add OCR automatically, so make sure this setting is turned off. Including OCR can cause eFS to reject your document, which could lead to missed deadlines.
- Use black and white, not color—even if the original document (like a signature) is in color. Color scans create larger file sizes and may not display properly in appellate courts. Larger files are also harder for judges, court staff, and others to use.

Examples of documents that may need to be scanned include:

- Documents that only exist on paper.
- Contracts or agreements signed on paper.
- Handwritten documents.
- Photos that are not available electronically.

Static PDF

When you file a static PDF, ensure that your document is read only document in which text and images cannot be edited and that contains no fillable fields or interactive features. To create a static PDF, prepare the document in Word or another program and save or export it as a PDF, then verify that the file is not editable. Prior to submission, review the PDF to confirm that no elements can be altered or interacted with. Only static PDFs should be filed, as they preserve document consistency and security; non-static PDFs may fail to submit through eFS.

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Combining Text-Based and Image-Based PDFs

Filers may combine text-based and scanned (image-based) parts into one PDF. If a document is created electronically but signed on paper, filers can:

- Convert the main part of the document to a text-based PDF, and
- Scan the signature page as an image-based PDF.

Then, combine both into one file. This way, most of the documents remain searchable.

Viewable and Legible

Every document you file must be readily viewable in its entirety with PDF viewing software. If a file is incomplete or damaged (corrupted), it may not go through eFS. Before filing, make sure your document opens properly and is complete and not corrupted.

All text and images must be clear and easy to read. If you scan a document, you are responsible for making sure it is readable after scanning. (You can still submit a document to show that it is illegible if that is the purpose).

Separate Documents as Separate PDFs

When filing multiple documents, each must be submitted as a **separate PDF**. Do **not** combine separate documents into a single PDF, PDF Portfolio, or PDF Package.

- Confidential attachments to public documents should be filed as **separate PDFs**.
- Public cover sheets for confidential documents must also be filed separately.
- A stipulation and a proposed order must be filed as **two separate documents**. In family law cases where combined stipulations and orders are allowed, file **two copies** to ensure correct file stamps.
- An affidavit and its attachments can be filed as a single PDF **only if all exhibits are public**.

While each document is filed separately, related documents should be filed in the **same envelope** to help court staff process them correctly. For example:

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- A motion and its supporting affidavit are filed as two separate PDFs in the same envelope.
- A stipulation and a proposed order are filed as two PDFs in the same envelope, so file stamps reflect the correct dates for each.
- In a medical malpractice case, an affidavit (public) and attached medical records (non-public) are filed as two PDFs in the same envelope using separate filing codes or a Cover Sheet for Non-Public Documents (Form 11.2). This ensures the affidavit is public while the medical records remain non-public.

Limits on File Size

The filer is responsible for ensuring that all filings comply with the following file size limits:

- Single document: 26.21 megabytes
- Envelope of documents: 36.70 megabytes

If a document is too large, it may not upload successfully. If a filing is over the size limit, try compressing the file or splitting the document into smaller parts that meet the file size limit. Label each part clearly (for example, “Part 1 of 3,” “Part 2 of 3”) in the Filing Description field when filing.

Tips:

It’s best to keep file sizes as small as possible. Larger files take longer to open and download.

Smaller files are easier for judges to review, especially on devices like tablets.

File sizes can become larger when you:

- Use scanned (image-based) PDFs instead of text-based PDFs
- Scanning documents in color or grayscale instead of black and white
- Include pictures

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Resolution of Scanned (Image-Based) Documents Page Formatting

When you scan a document, use the correct resolution:

- Minimum: 200 DPI
- Recommended maximum: 300 DPI

If a document is scanned above 300 DPI, the document may fail to submit.

Page Formatting

All documents must meet the following page and formatting requirements:

- **Page Size:** 8.5-by-11-inch pages

Note: When scanning a document, check that the settings will produce a document that has a page size of 8.5 by 11 inches.

- **Orientation:** Portrait
- **Margins:** The top margin must be at least one inch and be entirely blank.

Note: Portrait orientation and a blank top margin are necessary for eFS to properly apply electronic file stamps.

- **Page Numbers:** All documents must have consecutive page numbers. The page numbers must continue through any attachments to the document.

Prohibited Formatting

No document shall contain any:

- Embedded files.
- Encryption or password protection, or other features that limit access.
- Unreadable words, unviewable images, or invalid or corrupted tables.
- Any other form of information that cannot readily be viewed in its entirety with PDF viewing software.

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- File names that are longer than 24 characters.
- File names that include special characters, such as a comma, an apostrophe, or a dash.

Fonts

Do not use character identifier (CID) fonts or embedded fonts. Documents with these fonts may fail to submit.

Some programs and scanners automatically embed fonts, so the document looks the same on different devices. You should turn off this setting when creating PDFs.

Before filing, make sure your PDF does not include embedded fonts.

Bookmarks and Hyperlinks

Documents can include bookmarks to help readers move through the document more easily. Bookmarks are optional, but many judges find them helpful, especially in longer documents.

Documents can also include internal links, which are links in a document that go to another place in the same document. Links can be used to make it easier to access reference material. Active external links, meaning links that go to a source outside the document, can cause a document to fail to submit. An active link is one that is clickable. Do not include active (clickable) external links in your documents. Filers must still include full, standard citations. Links cannot replace citations.

Example:

If you reference the Minnesota Human Rights Act, you can include an inactive link to it online. However, you must also include the full legal citation.

Non-Conforming Documents

Sometimes a document cannot be made into a compliant electronic file. Examples include large maps or blueprints, audio files, and videos. If this happens, you must first file a request (motion)

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asking the court for permission to file the item in a different (non-electronic) way.⁴² You can only do this if the court approves your request.

Evidentiary exhibits used in a trial or evidentiary hearing is not filed through eFS. The exception is exhibits submitted at an omnibus hearing under the Rules of Criminal Procedure.

Questions About Technical Compatibility

Filers who have questions about whether a document is compatible with eFS requirements are encouraged to contact the Minnesota Judicial Branch eFS Support Center:

eFile and eServe Support Center

Staff are available Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., except for court holidays.

Phone:

(612) 902-9585

(844) 918-1724 (if calling long distance from a landline phone)

Email: [Email Contact Form](#)

Separate System for Appellate Courts

This Guide applies only to Minnesota's district courts. The Minnesota Supreme Court and Minnesota Court of Appeals use a different electronic filing system called E-MACS. This Guide does not apply to E-MACS.

Information about E-MACS is available at <https://mncourts.gov/clerk-of-appellate-courts/appellate-efiling>. The legal and formatting rules for E-MACS are different in several ways from the requirements used for district court electronic filing. Anyone filing documents with Minnesota's appellate courts should become familiar with E-MACS and the appellate court e-filing process.

⁴² Minn. Gen. R. Prac. 14.03(h).

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Minnesota Judicial Branch Resources

Judicial Branch website:

www.mncourts.gov

Court Rules:

www.mncourts.gov/rules

eFS System, Resources, Training Materials, and Support Center:

<https://mncourts.gov/file-a-case/file-in-a-district-trial-court/efile-and-eserve-resources>

Examples of Financial Account Numbers:

https://mncourts.gov/mncourtsgov/media/scao_library/eFS/Examples-of-Financial-Account-Numbers.pdf

Confidential Documents and Confidential Information in CHIPS Proceedings:

<https://mncourts.gov/getforms/child-protection/forms-packet-confidential-documents-and-confidential-information-chips>

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Revision History

Date	Description of Changes
July 1, 2015	Registered User Guide formatting requirements become mandatory for e-filers.
October 2, 2015	Layout updated to make the Guide more user-friendly. Overviews of permissible forms of signatures and filers' duty to separate public and non-public information expanded. Formatting requirements clarified to discourage printing and scanning documents unless necessary and to emphasize filing separate documents as separate PDFs. A Useful URLs section added to assist filers who print the Guide.
July 1, 2016	Guide updated to replace broken URLs in hyperlinks.
January 13, 2017	"About this Guide" description revised to emphasize filers' responsibility to designate and separate non-public information and the risk of missed deadlines if formatting requirements are not followed. Overview of the eFS System clarifies that the Guide does not apply to the appellate courts' E-MACS system. Outdated references to eCourtMN pilot counties removed. Reminder added that the eFS System should only be used for documents that belong in the case file. Clarifications were added regarding obtaining copies of court documents. Expanded description of filers' responsibility to designate information as public, confidential, or sealed, including additional guidance regarding minor victims of criminal sexual conduct, distinctions between medical records and medical information, and the difference between segregation and redaction of non-public information. Formatting requirements updated to emphasize risks of scanning paper

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documents and note that court documents should generally be prepared electronically and do not require handwritten signatures. Scanning documents in color is prohibited. Link to Court Rules added to the Useful URLs section.

- September 1, 2018
- Language regarding filing wills and adding oneself as a service contact updated to reflect amendments to General Rule of Practice 14. Added guidance is that filers should designate a single email address for service in each case. Signature requirements updated to remind attorneys that typographical signatures are legally valid and appropriate for routine filings. Terminology updated to use text-based PDF and image-based PDF. Prohibition on bullet points, checkboxes, and special characters removed. Section added explaining that appellate courts use a separate e-filing system (E-MACS). Revision History section added.
- February 10, 2020
- Contact information for the eFS Support Center updated.
- January 1, 2021
- Reference to submitting materials for *in camera* review through eFS removed due to availability of chambers email addresses. Clarification added that evidentiary exhibits are generally not filed through eFS. Explanation for the prohibition on digital signatures added. Discussion of appropriate use of cover letters added. Description of administrative rejection and striking filings for failure to separate non-public information expanded. Examples for filing separate documents as separate PDFs updated.
- November 29, 2021
- Contact information for the eFS Support Center updated. “Separate Documents as Separate PDFs” section revised to clarify procedures for submitting combined stipulations and proposed orders in family law cases. Added explicit prohibition on PDF Portfolios and PDF Packages.

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April 24, 2026 All sections in this document were updated and reformatted.