



ORC GUIDE SERIES

NORTH CAROLINA NOTARY KNOWLEDGE COLLECTION

Before Your North Carolina Notarization

A Practical Readiness Guide

ORC PROMISE

This resource helps you prepare for a notarization. It does not select a notarial act, explain a document's legal effect, advise whether you should sign, or replace legal advice.

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PREPARE THE DOCUMENT. CONFIRM THE ACT. PROTECT THE SIGNER.

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Publication Information

ORC Guides are educational publications created to remove confusion, create clarity, and help readers prepare carefully through plain-language, practical information.

PURPOSE

Help a signer organize the document, identification, notarial-act instructions, fees, and appointment logistics before a North Carolina notarization begins.

Important service boundary

A notary verifies limited facts required for the identified notarial act. ORC does not select a notarial certificate, explain a document's legal effect, advise whether a person should sign, draft or complete a document requiring legal judgment, or provide legal advice through a notarial engagement.

Evidence standard

The factual review was completed on August 9, 2026 using current North Carolina sources. The publication is scheduled for August 12, 2026. Because the law, fees, electronic-notary implementation, and video-notarization rules may change, a final source refresh is required before release.

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Before You Begin

A notarization can look simple: bring a document, show identification, sign, and receive a stamp. The legal act is narrower and more structured. The notary must identify the signer or witness, require the proper appearance, perform the notarial act indicated for the record, and complete the certificate accurately.

You may be wondering

- May I sign before the appointment?
- What identification can the notary accept?
- What is the difference between an acknowledgment and an oath or affirmation?
- Can the notary tell me which certificate I need?
- When must a notary decline or discontinue the act?
- What will ORC need from me before the appointment?

IN TWO MINUTES

Confirm the appointment method, ask the document issuer or recipient which notarial act is required, bring the complete document and current qualifying identification, wait for the notary's signing instructions, appear willing and aware, and review the disclosed fee before the act begins.

What a notary does

A North Carolina notary is a public officer who performs authorized notarial acts. Depending on the act, the notary may identify the individual, take an acknowledgment, administer an oath or affirmation, or take a verification or proof. The notary's certificate states the limited facts the notary is authorized to certify.

WHAT NOTARIZATION DOES NOT PROVE

A notarial seal does not automatically establish that a document is legally effective, accurate, enforceable, complete for the recipient's purposes, or advisable for the signer.

1. Confirm the Appointment Method

Traditional, electronic, remote, and emergency-video notarizations are different pathways.

For a traditional paper notarization, the individual and notary generally appear together in close physical proximity so they can see and communicate with one another and exchange the record. An in-person electronic notarization still uses electronic signatures and records but ordinarily keeps the notary and signer in the same physical location.

Before traveling or sending documents

- Confirm whether the appointment is traditional paper, in-person electronic, remote electronic, or another legally authorized video process.
- Confirm whether the specific document is eligible for that method.
- Confirm where the signer and notary must be physically located.
- Confirm what technology, account, device, or original-paper delivery is required.
- Do not assume that a general video call is the same as a remote electronic notarization.

ORC APPOINTMENT RULE

Unless ORC expressly confirms another authorized method in writing, prepare for an in-person appointment. Availability of an electronic or video pathway does not mean ORC offers that pathway for every document.

North Carolina's electronic and video-notarization rules are changing. Session Law 2026-52 recently modified the emergency-video-notarization sunset, while remote electronic notarization has separate registration, platform, identity-proofing, recording, journal, and document-eligibility requirements. Recheck the current official rule on the appointment date.

2. Bring Identification the Notary Can Evaluate

Identification must support the identity the notary is being asked to certify.

North Carolina defines satisfactory evidence to include at least one current document issued by a federal, state, or federally or state-recognized tribal government agency that bears the individual's photograph and either the individual's signature or a physical description.

Identity may be established through

- The notary's personal knowledge developed through interactions sufficient to eliminate reasonable doubt about the individual's identity.
- A current qualifying government-issued identification document.
- The oath or affirmation of one credible witness who is personally known to the notary, is believed to be honest and reliable, and is not a party to or beneficiary of the transaction.

Check before the appointment

- The identification is current, legible, and not damaged or altered.
- The photograph reasonably matches the person appearing.
- The name on the identification can be reconciled with the name on the document and certificate.
- Any credible-witness arrangement has been discussed with the notary in advance.
- The notary has not promised acceptance before personally examining the identification and circumstances.

NAME MISMATCH

Do not change a name, add an alias, or edit the document based only on a notary appointment. Ask the document's issuer or recipient what name format it requires, and obtain legal advice when the discrepancy affects rights or identity.

3. Bring the Right Document in Ready Condition

The notary performs an act on the record presented; the notary does not become the document's drafter or legal adviser.

Bring

- The complete document the issuer or recipient expects to receive.
- All pages, attachments, exhibits, and certificate wording supplied for the transaction.
- Clear instructions about the receiving organization and delivery method.
- Any required witnesses who are separate from the notary, after confirming the witness requirements with the issuer or an attorney.
- A second copy for your records when appropriate; do not expect the notary to retain or certify a copy unless authorized.

Before signing

Ask whether the act is an acknowledgment or an oath/affirmation with a jurat. A signer may acknowledge an existing signature, but an oath or affirmation involves a vow of truthfulness and may require signing in the notary's presence under the transaction's instructions. The safest administrative practice is to wait for the notary's direction unless the issuer has clearly instructed otherwise.

DO NOT ASK THE NOTARY TO COMPLETE THE TRANSACTION

A nonattorney notary may not draft, complete, select, or explain a record or transaction requiring a notarial act. The notary may identify an administrative gap but cannot supply legal content or decide what the document should say.

4. Confirm the Required Notarial Act

The document's issuer, recipient, or a licensed attorney should identify the act.

Acknowledgment

The individual appears before the notary, is identified, presents the record, and either indicates that the signature is the individual's signature or signs while the notary personally observes.

Oath or affirmation

The individual appears, is identified, and makes a vow of truthfulness on penalty of perjury. An oath invokes a deity or uses a form of the word 'swear'; an affirmation is legally equivalent and is based on personal honor without invoking a deity. A jurat is the certificate evidencing administration of an oath or affirmation.

Verification or proof

This is a distinct act involving a subscribing or other qualifying witness who appears, is identified, is not a party to or beneficiary of the transaction, and gives sworn or affirmed testimony about a signature. It is not a universal substitute for the principal's appearance and is unavailable for some methods and documents.

THE NOTARY CANNOT CHOOSE FOR YOU

If the record does not provide or indicate certificate wording, a nonattorney notary may offer recognized certificate forms but may not decide which act or certificate the transaction requires. Contact the issuer, recipient, or a licensed attorney before the appointment.

5. Be Ready to Participate Freely and Knowingly

The signer must be present, identifiable, willing, and sufficiently aware for the act.

By completing a certificate for an acknowledgment or an oath or affirmation, the notary certifies that the signer did not appear, in the notary's judgment, to be incompetent, lacking in understanding of the nature and consequences of the transaction, or acting involuntarily, under duress, or undue influence.

Expect the notary to

- Communicate directly with the signer rather than rely only on a companion.
- Confirm identity and the required appearance.
- Ask what act is requested and whether the signature is acknowledged or sworn/affirmed as applicable.
- Pause if pressure, confusion, inability to communicate, or inconsistent answers create concern.
- Protect confidential documents and information subject to the exceptions in North Carolina law.

A PAUSE PROTECTS THE PROCESS

A notary's refusal or decision to discontinue does not decide the validity of the document or the signer's rights. It means the notary cannot lawfully or confidently complete that notarial act under the circumstances presented.

6. Understand Fees and Travel Arrangements

Review the fee schedule before the act begins.

As of the evidence-review date, North Carolina law authorizes maximum notarial fees of \$10 per notarized principal signature for acknowledgments, jurats, verifications, or proofs; \$10 per person for an oath or affirmation without a signature; \$15 per electronically notarized principal signature for an electronic acknowledgment or jurat; \$15 per person for an electronic oath or affirmation without a signature; and \$25 per remotely notarized principal signature.

A notary may also charge actual mileage at the federal business mileage rate if the principal agrees to the travel reimbursement in writing before the travel. A notary is not required to charge a fee, must disclose a fee schedule as required, and may not charge for witnessing and affixing a seal to an absentee-ballot application or certificate.

CONFIRM BEFORE THE APPOINTMENT

Ask for the notarial fee, number of principal signatures, travel mileage, payment method, cancellation terms, and any separate non-notarial service charge. ORC will disclose the applicable arrangement before accepting payment.

7. When a Notarization Must Pause or Stop

The notary must remain within the law and the identified act.

A notary must decline, pause, or discontinue when a required element cannot be established or the requested conduct would exceed the notary's authority.

- The required personal appearance or authorized remote appearance is not satisfied.
- Identity cannot be established through personal knowledge or satisfactory evidence.
- The signer appears unable to understand the nature and consequences of the transaction, or appears unwilling, coerced, or under undue influence.
- The notary is a signer, party, or beneficiary, or has another disqualifying interest.
- The certificate contains information the notary knows or believes is false, or the certificate is not in English.
- The record has no certificate indicating the notarial act, and the requester has not identified the act.
- The requester asks the notary to select the act, explain legal effect, complete substantive content, or provide legal advice.
- A separate electronic, remote, video, witness, platform, location, recording, journal, or document-eligibility rule is not satisfied.

NEXT STEP AFTER A PAUSE

Contact the document issuer or recipient for administrative instructions. Consult a licensed attorney when the issue requires legal interpretation, drafting, capacity advice, rights analysis, or a decision about whether to sign.

8. Working With ORC

Prepare carefully. Keep the boundaries clear.

ORC provides notarial services through a commissioned North Carolina notary public. The notary performs only the act authorized by law and identified for the record.

ORC may

- Confirm appointment time, location, method, and disclosed fee.
- Provide a general readiness checklist for identification, documents, witnesses, and logistics.
- Review the record for administrative readiness without evaluating legal sufficiency.
- Verify identity, observe an acknowledgment or signature, or administer an oath or affirmation as authorized.
- Complete the applicable notarial certificate and return the document as agreed.

ORC does not

- Select a notarial certificate for a client.
- Explain the legal effect of a document or advise whether the client should sign.
- Prepare or complete a document requiring legal judgment.
- Determine whether the document will be accepted or is legally effective.
- Proceed when identity, presence, willingness, awareness, or another required element cannot be established.
- Provide legal advice through a notarial engagement.

A TYPICAL ORC APPOINTMENT

1. You identify the document and required act. 2. ORC confirms logistics and fees. 3. You bring the complete document and acceptable identification. 4. The notary independently verifies the required elements. 5. The act and certificate are completed only if the legal requirements are satisfied.

Your final five checks

- I confirmed the appointment method.
- The issuer or recipient identified the notarial act.
- I have the complete document and required witnesses.
- I have current qualifying identification.
- I understand the disclosed fee and will participate freely and directly.

9. Official Sources and Publication Control

Version 1.0 was evidence-checked on August 9, 2026 and is scheduled for publication on August 12, 2026. A deployment-date source refresh is mandatory.

North Carolina General Statutes - Chapter 10B - Controlling North Carolina Notary Public Act and Electronic Notary Public Act.

N.C.G.S. 10B-3 - Definitions - Acknowledgments, oaths, affirmations, personal appearance, credible witnesses, and satisfactory evidence of identity.

N.C.G.S. 10B-20 - Powers and Limitations - Presence, identification, conflicts, unauthorized-practice limits, certificate selection, and confidentiality.

N.C.G.S. 10B-22 and 10B-23 - Certificates and Improper Records - False or non-English certificates and the requirement for a certificate identifying the notarial act.

N.C.G.S. 10B-30 through 10B-32 - Fees - Maximum notarial fees, written mileage agreement, fee notice, and absentee-ballot fee prohibition.

N.C.G.S. 10B-38 - Journal - Traditional notary journal authorization; separate rules apply to remote electronic notarizations.

N.C.G.S. 10B-40 through 10B-43 - Notarial Certificates - Required certifications and statutory forms for acknowledgments, verifications or proofs, oaths, and affirmations.

N.C.G.S. 10B-134.1 through 10B-134.25 - Remote Electronic Notarization - Separate authorization, technology, identity-proofing, journal, recording, and prohibited-document rules for remote electronic notarization.

North Carolina Notary Public Manual (2026) - Current official manual prepared by the North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State; replaces the 2016 edition.

House Bill 517 / Session Law 2026-52 - Recent modification affecting the emergency-video-notarization sunset; recheck on the publication date.

Publication Control

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Thank you for allowing ORC to be part of your learning journey.

Learn • Organize • Advance