
Federal Register Document Drafting Handbook

October 1998 Revision; Supplement 3, as amended.

Chapter 5: Can I Submit a Computer File?

October 1, 2007

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Note: In this chapter, "we," "our," or "OFR" refer to the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, and "you" or "your" to Federal agencies that prepare documents for publication in the Federal Register.

Use the examples in this chapter as models for style, not content. Although many of these are single spaced for visual impact, you must double-space your document.

5.1 Can I submit a computer file for publication in the Federal Register?

You can submit a computer file as an electronic original document (digitally authenticated), or as an electronic certified copy on disk.

Electronic originals must be digitally signed, and can be submitted via e-mail or the web. Submitting an electronic original eliminates the need for paper copies. For more information, see section 5.3.

Electronic certified copies, submitted on disk (CD, floppy diskette), accompany a paper original and certified paper copies. For more information, see section 5.4.

Note: For continuity of operations purposes, including pandemic readiness, agencies should implement our currently available digital signature technology for Federal Register documents. The Federal Register system is a National Essential Function, which must be sustained under all conditions. Agencies should make digitally signed Federal Register documents a part of their daily business process to satisfy Presidential continuity directives (NSPD-51/HSPD-20).

5.2 What are the requirements for submitting computer files?

Document drafting guidelines.

Follow the drafting guidelines in Chapter 1, 2, or 3 of this handbook when you draft any Federal Register document, whether you plan to submit it on paper or as a computer file.

File format.

OFR accepts electronic originals or electronic certified copies in two formats. These are based on GPO (Government Printing Office) requirements.

- **MS-Word.** A word processor file, prepared according to your agency's requirements, with no GPO typesetting codes.
- **SGML coded and validated.** A file, usually in ASCII format, that is fully coded for GPO typesetting, accompanied by Microcomp page proof. For more information on GPO coding and Microcomp, contact your agency's printing officer or customer service representative at GPO.

Note: OFR and GPO no longer accept Unformatted ASCII (except as fully coded SGML files). OFR edits your documents using MS-Word. Word Perfect users should contact the OFR Technical Services staff for guidance at (202) 741-6020. OFR does not accept PDF files. PDF files cannot be converted reliably to word processor files.

If GPO uses your electronic file, they typically discount your agency's printing cost:

- \$33 per Federal Register page discount for MS-Word.
- \$171 per Federal Register page discount for SGML coded and validated files.

GPO determines the discount that you receive for each document, based on their ability to use your data. GPO adjusts page rates and discounts periodically. The discounts cited above are from March 2006. Check GPO's web site for current discounts:
www.gpo.gov/updates/index.html.

Billing Code.

For detailed information about billing codes, see section 1.3, 2.3, or 3.3 of this handbook. To assist GPO in billing your agency correctly, change the final letter of the billing code to reflect the document's file format. For MS-Word, use "P." For SGML coded and validated, use "S."

Example 1: Billing Codes for electronic documents:

For a Word file:

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

For an SGML coded file:

BILLING CODE 4000-01-S

5.3 What are the specific requirements for electronic originals?

You may submit electronic original documents via e-mail or the web. These must be signed with a medium assurance level digital signature certificate, cross-certified by the Federal Bridge Certification Authority. Because this electronic file is the original document, submitting in this manner eliminates the need for paper copies.

You must agree to comply with OFR's procedures for submitting electronic originals, and your agency must acquire appropriate digital signature certificates. For up-to-date information, contact OFR's Technical Services Staff at (202) 741-6020.

OFR accepts MS-Word or coded SGML files as digitally signed originals.

5.4 What are the specific requirements for certified electronic copies?

If you submit a signed paper original and two certified paper copies, you may include a certified electronic copy on CD-ROM or floppy diskette. Submitting this certified electronic copy may reduce your printing costs and promote accuracy.

Certified electronic copies, whether MS-Word or coded in SGML, must follow these requirements:

Verification / Certification letter.

The certified electronic copy on disk should be saved from the same file used to print the signed paper original. Include a verification/certification letter certifying that the electronic copy on disk is an identical version of the enclosed paper original. The Certifying Officer, Liaison Officer, or signer of the document may sign this letter. (See Appendix A for a model letter.)

Note: Certifying a disk as a true copy is a formal legal attestation. Certifiers must take extraordinary care to ensure that the copy on disk is exactly the same as the signed paper

original. The certified copy is used as evidentiary material, both for Public Inspection and in the published edition of the Federal Register, and is relied upon by the regulated public. It will stand as evidence of your agency's action, unless your agency discovers and corrects discrepancies in a timely manner. If OFR finds any discrepancies in the certified disk copy prior to publication, we may immediately remove the document from production stream, and issue notice of the agency error if the document has been placed on public inspection.

Type of disk.

CD-ROM. OFR accepts certified electronic copies on CD-ROM and similar optical disk formats. Finalize the CD so it can be read without proprietary software.

High Density 3.5 Diskettes. OFR accepts certified electronic copies on high density (HD), 3.5 inch diskettes, formatted for PC. We cannot accept double density (DD) diskettes. Use new or reformatted diskettes to ensure that we receive a readable diskette with no extra files. Scan the diskette to ensure that it is virus-free.

Disk Preparation.

If the document spans two or more files, merge these as a single file, in sequence to match the paper original. If files are too large to fit on floppy diskette, submit it on CD-ROM.

Submit only one document per disk. Send a separate disk, and include a separate verification / certification letter for each document.

The certified electronic copy must be the only file on the disk. Delete drafts, supporting documents, or any other files before you send the disk to OFR.

Do not submit password protected or encrypted files, or files with track-changes or comments.

Disk Labeling.

Include the following information on the label of the disk:

- Name of your agency.
- Name of the file on the disk.
- File format: Word or SGML.
- Subject heading, CFR citation, or agency docket number, tying it to the paper document.

5.5 How do I make changes to an electronic submission?

To correct any document, you must follow the procedures in section 4.2. The following requirements also apply to documents accompanied by disk submissions.

Changes to word processor files. If the changes are extensive, we may require you to submit a new original document, a new certified electronic copy, and a new verification/certification letter, or we may return your submission to you for correction and resubmission.

If the GPO must make editorial corrections to your file, they may revoke your printing discount.

Changes to SGML files. We will make no changes to an SGML coded file, other than computing and inserting dates and completing the file line at the end of the document. To make other changes, you must submit a corrected file, a new verification/certification letter, and new Microcomp pages (see section 4.3).