

Using Digital Signatures in Adobe Acrobat Forms


This guide explains two (2) options for digitally signing PDF forms using Adobe Acrobat DC. Please discuss the appropriate option to use with your department administration.

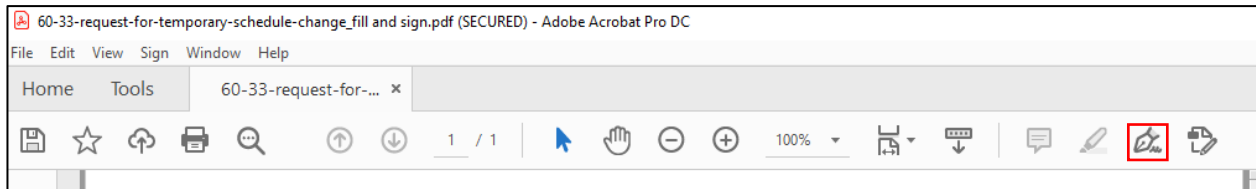
NOTE: Because some browsers do not show existing digital signature fields in PDF forms, it is necessary to download PDF documents to your computer hard drive before adding digital signatures.

Option 1 – Fill and Sign

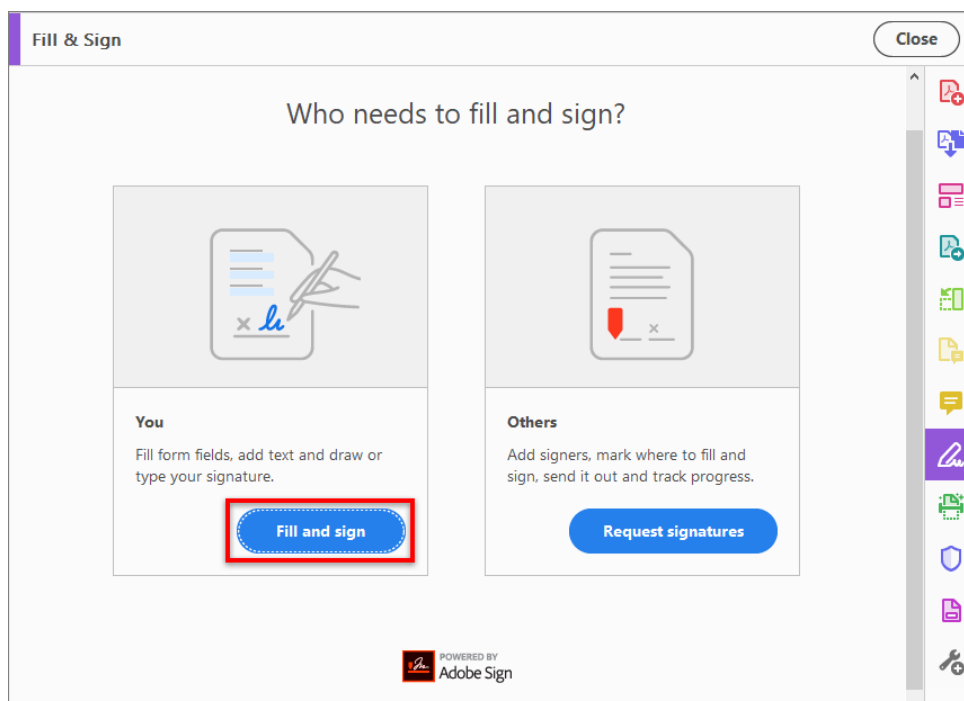
This method uses an image for the signature and does not contain any metadata to authenticate the signer's identity. This type of digital signature may be entered in a PDF document whether it contains a digital signature form field or not.


IMPORTANT! When a PDF document is signed and saved with a signature using this method, the document is locked. No form fields are available to fill in and no more signatures can be added to the document.

1. Open the PDF form that you want to sign.
2. Click the Sign icon  in the toolbar. Alternatively, you may choose **Tools > Fill & Sign** or **choose Fill & Sign** from the right pane.



3. The Fill & Sign tool is displayed. Click **Fill and Sign**.

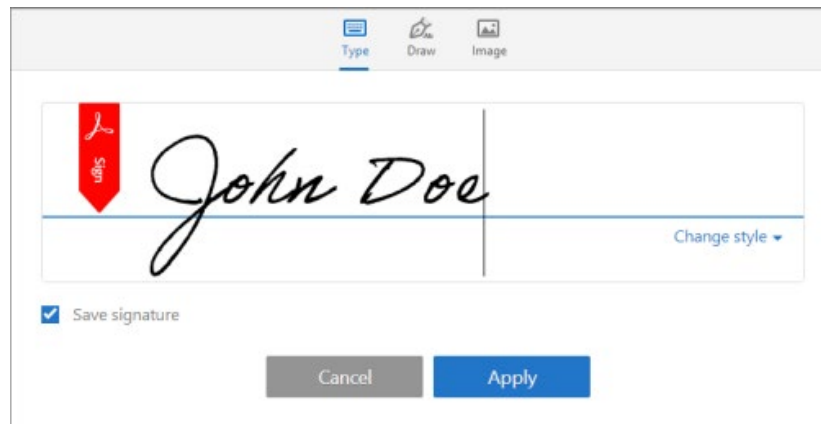


4. Click the Sign icon  in the toolbar, and then choose whether you want to add your signature or just initials. (If you have already added signatures or initials, they are displayed as options to choose from.)



5. If you have already added your signature or initials, just select it from the Sign options, then click at the place in the PDF where you want to add your signature.

If you are signing for the first time, you see the Signature or Initials panel.



You can choose to type, draw, or import a signature image as follows:

- **Type** your name in the field. Choose from a selection of signature styles by clicking on **Change Style**.
- **Draw** your signature in the field.
- Browse and select an **image** of your signature that you have previously saved on your computer.

Click **Apply**, then click at the location in the PDF where you want to place your signature or initials.

For more detailed information on Option 1, please see: <https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/signing-pdfs.html>.

Option 2 – Certificate-Based Signature

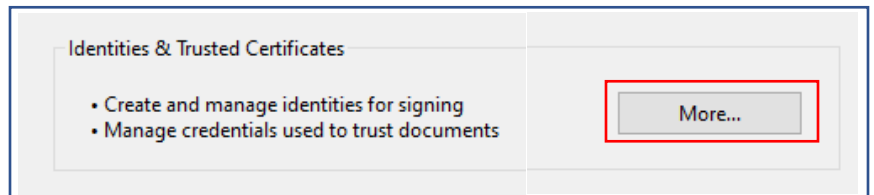
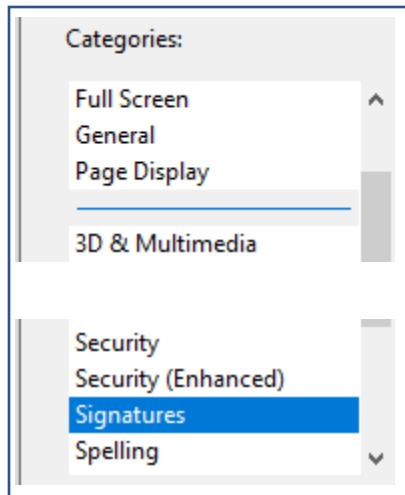
This method uses public and private keys to authenticate the signer's identity. This method is preferred when signing documents that need to meet compliance regulations. To use a certificate-based signature, the signer needs to have an Adobe Digital ID.

More information about certificate-based signatures may be found at:

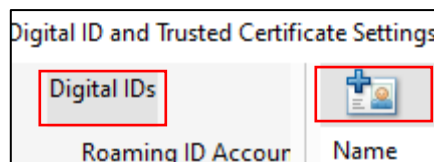
- <https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/certificate-based-signatures.html>
- <https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/digital-ids.html>

Create an Adobe Digital ID

1. In Adobe Acrobat, click on the **Edit > Preferences** menu.
2. Under Categories: Choose **Signatures**, then click on **More** under Identities & Trusted Certificates.



3. Click on **Digital IDs**, then click on the **add Digital ID** button.



4. Select the option **A new digital ID I want to create now**.

Add Digital ID

Add or create a digital ID to sign and encrypt documents. The certificate that comes with your digital ID is sent to others so that they can verify your signature. Add or create a digital ID using:

- My existing digital ID from:**
 - A file
 - A roaming digital ID accessed via a server
 - A device connected to this computer
- A new digital ID I want to create now**

5. Select the option **New PKCS#12 digital ID file** and click **Next**.

Add Digital ID

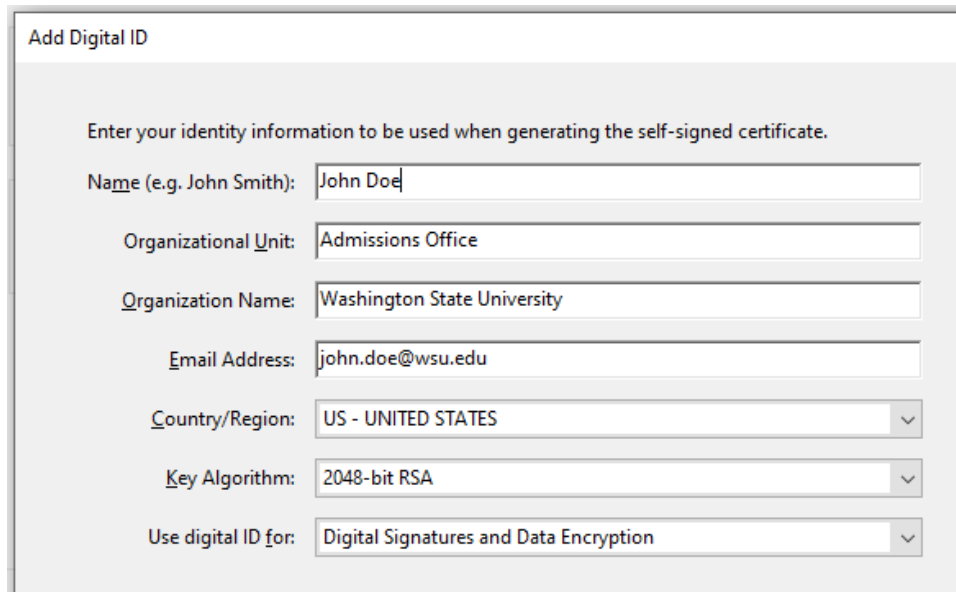
Where would you like to store your self-signed digital ID?

- New PKCS#12 digital ID file**

Creates a new password protected digital ID file that uses the standard PKCS#12 format. This common digital ID file format is supported by most security software applications, including major web browsers. PKCS#12 files have a .pfx or .p12 file extension.
- Windows Certificate Store**

Your digital ID will be stored in the Windows Certificate Store where it will also be available to other Windows applications. The digital ID will be protected by your Windows login.

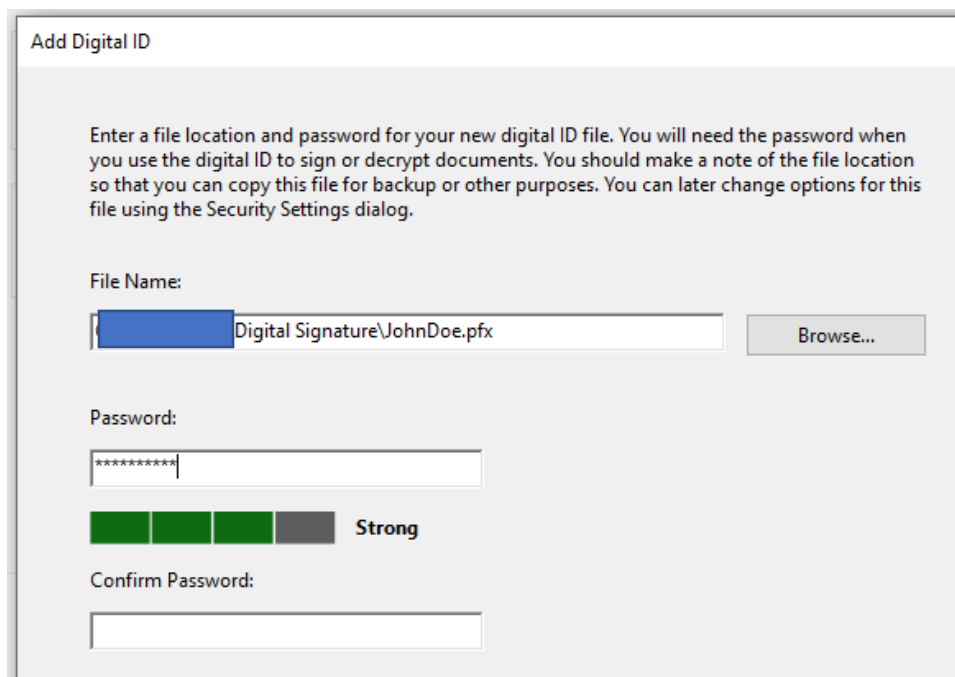
6. On the next screen enter the information you want included in your digital certificate. Your e-mail address is required.



The screenshot shows a dialog box titled "Add Digital ID". Below the title is the instruction: "Enter your identity information to be used when generating the self-signed certificate." The form contains the following fields:

- Name (e.g. John Smith): John Doe
- Organizational Unit: Admissions Office
- Organization Name: Washington State University
- Email Address: john.doe@wsu.edu
- Country/Region: US - UNITED STATES (dropdown menu)
- Key Algorithm: 2048-bit RSA (dropdown menu)
- Use digital ID for: Digital Signatures and Data Encryption (dropdown menu)

7. Click **Browse** to choose a location to save the file if other than the default location. Type a password for the digital ID file.



The screenshot shows the same "Add Digital ID" dialog box, but now it prompts for file location and password. Below the instruction: "Enter a file location and password for your new digital ID file. You will need the password when you use the digital ID to sign or decrypt documents. You should make a note of the file location so that you can copy this file for backup or other purposes. You can later change options for this file using the Security Settings dialog." the form contains the following fields:

- File Name: Digital Signature\JohnDoe.pfx (with a "Browse..." button to the right)
- Password: [masked with asterisks]
- Strength indicator: A progress bar with four segments, the first three are green and the last is grey, followed by the text "Strong".
- Confirm Password: [empty text box]

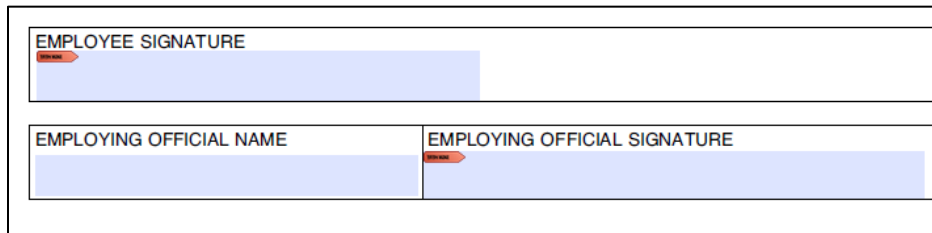
8. Click **Finish**.

Add a Certificate-Based Signature to a PDF form.

The PDF forms housed on the Procedures, Records, and Forms website now contain digital signature fields to enable users that have an Adobe digital ID to quickly sign in the appropriate signature field. Perform the following steps to sign PDF forms that contain digital signature fields.

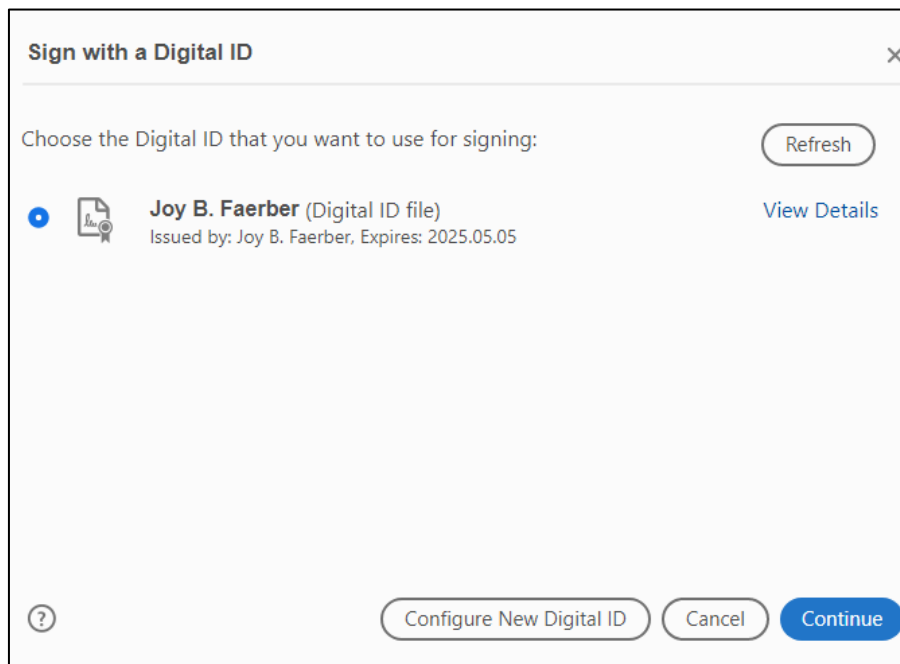
To add a certificate-based signature to a PDF document without designated signature fields, skip to [Add a Certificate-Based Signature to a blank PDF form.](#)

1. Open the PDF form that you want to sign.
2. Click on the digital signature field where you want to sign. Digital signature fields are identified by a small red flag in the top left-hand corner.



The image shows a portion of a PDF form with three signature fields. The top field is labeled 'EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE' and has a small red flag icon in its top-left corner. Below it are two fields: 'EMPLOYING OFFICIAL NAME' on the left and 'EMPLOYING OFFICIAL SIGNATURE' on the right. The 'EMPLOYING OFFICIAL SIGNATURE' field also has a small red flag icon in its top-left corner. All fields are currently empty and have a light blue background.

3. Choose the digital signature you want to use in the Sign with a Digital ID box (if you have more than one digital signature saved on your computer) then click **Continue**.

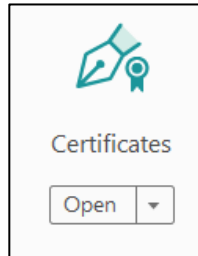


The image shows a dialog box titled 'Sign with a Digital ID' with a close button (X) in the top right corner. The main text says 'Choose the Digital ID that you want to use for signing:'. To the right of this text is a 'Refresh' button. Below the text, there is a list of digital IDs. The first and only visible entry is 'Joy B. Faerber (Digital ID file)' with a blue selection circle to its left. Below the name, it says 'Issued by: Joy B. Faerber, Expires: 2025.05.05'. To the right of this entry is a 'View Details' link. At the bottom of the dialog box, there are three buttons: 'Configure New Digital ID' (disabled), 'Cancel' (disabled), and 'Continue' (active).

4. You will be prompted to save the file. You may now send the form to the next signer. The next signer should follow steps 1-5 to sign the form in a different signature field.

Add a Certificate-Based Signature to a blank PDF form

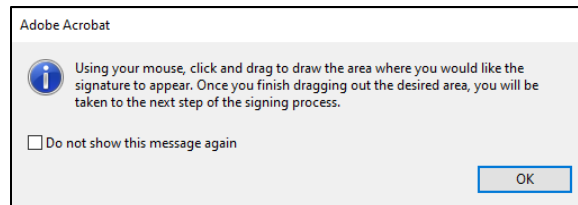
1. Open the PDF form that you want to sign.
2. Open the **Certificates** tool from the **Tools** page.



3. Choose **Digitally Sign** from the Certificates tool bar.

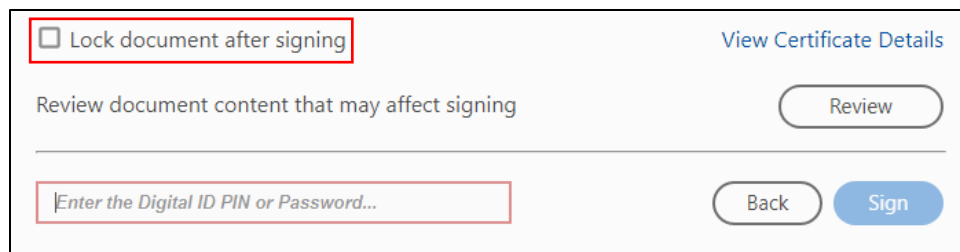


4. Follow the instructions in the pop-up window to create a digital signature box where you want your signature located on the document.



5. Choose the signature you want to use and click **Continue** in the Sign with a Digital ID box.

IMPORTANT! The Sign as [your signature text] box has a checkbox giving you the option to lock the document after signing. If any more changes need to be made to the document, do not check this box.

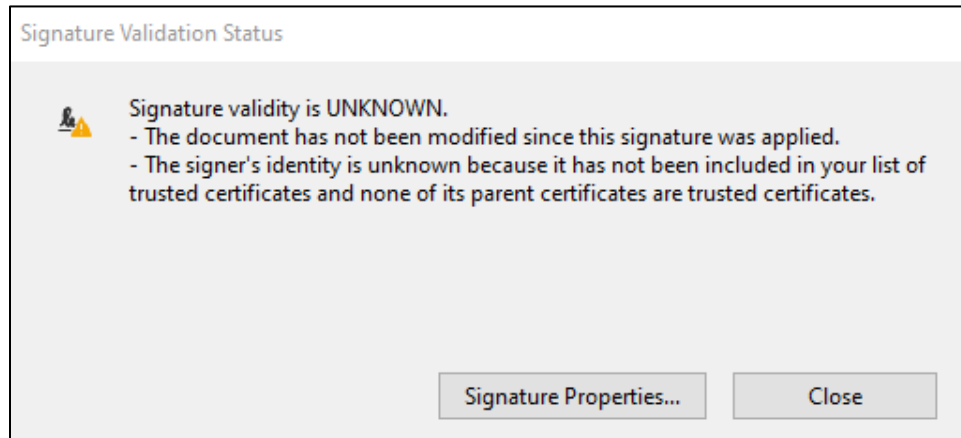


6. Enter your password and click **Sign**. You will be prompted to save the file. After saving the file, your certificate-based digital signature will appear in the document.

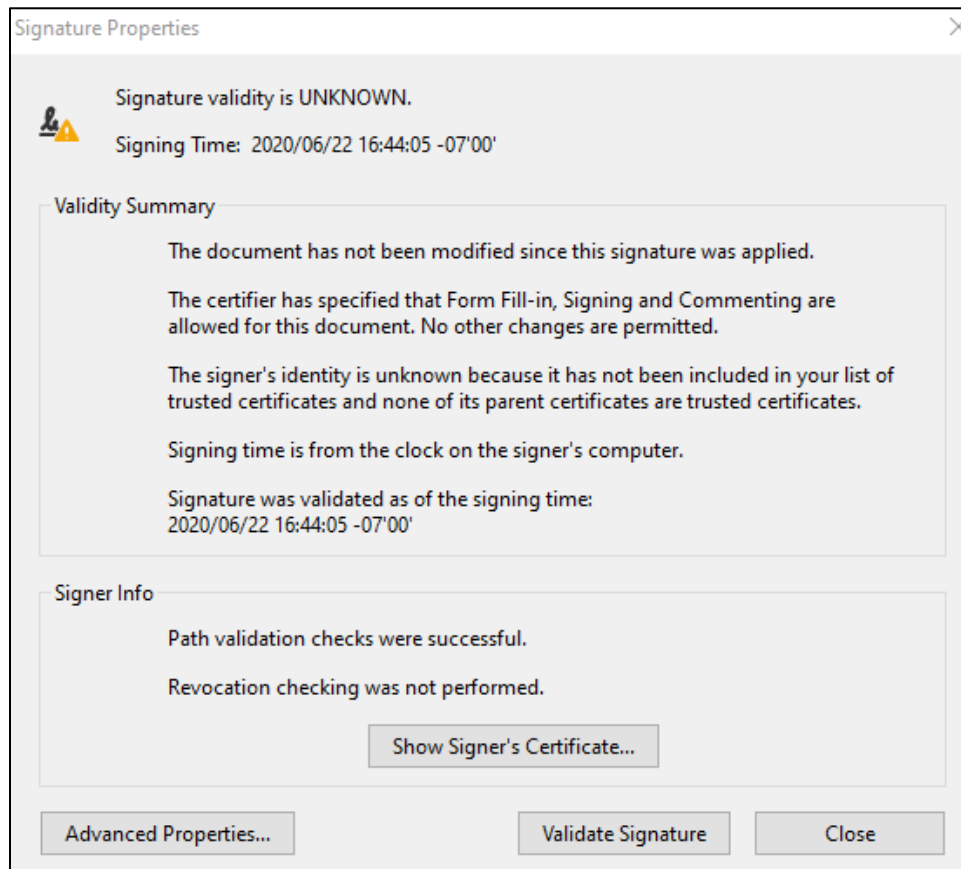
Troubleshooting

Certificate-based signatures need to be validated by the receiver. When you right click on a digital signature a signature validation status may appear indicating that the signature is not validated.

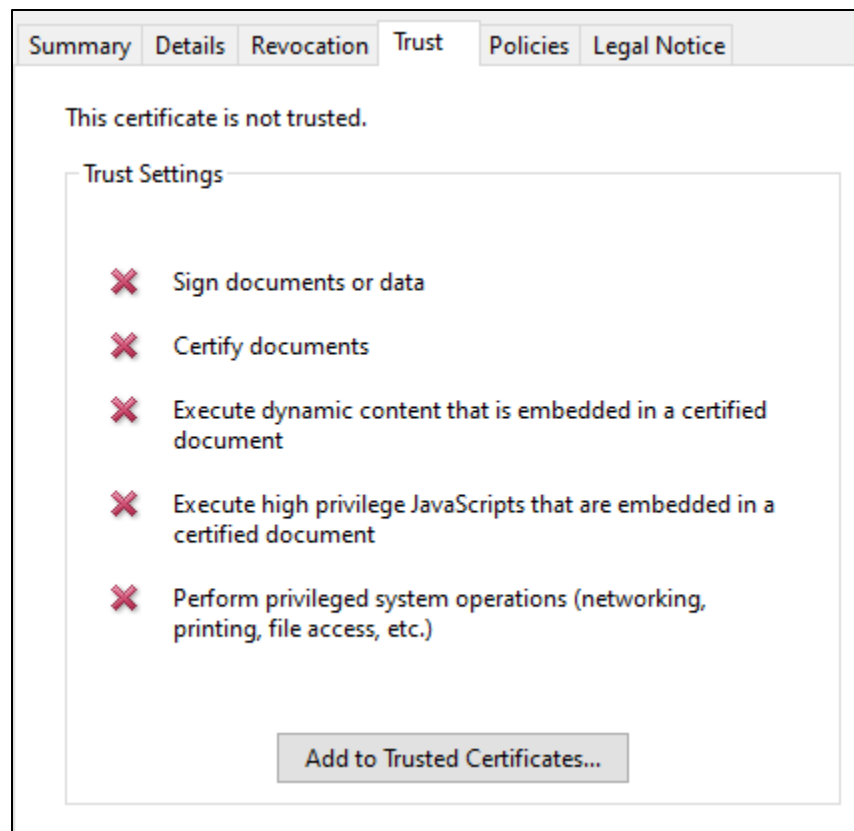
1. Click on **Signature Properties**.



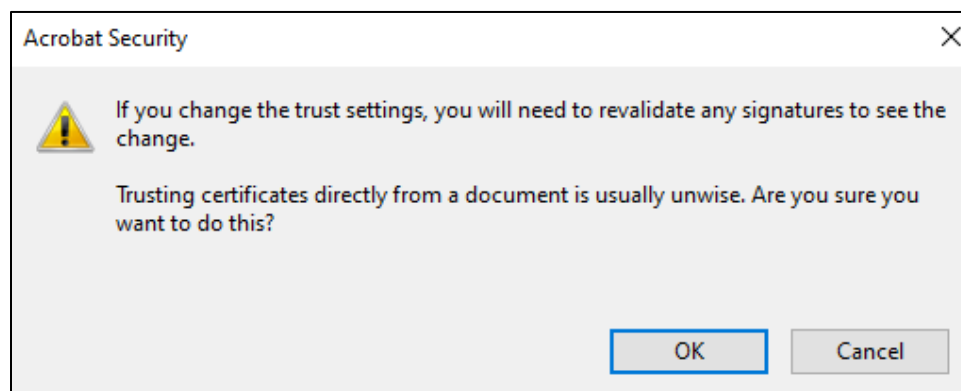
2. In the Signature Properties box, click on **Show Signer's Certificate**.



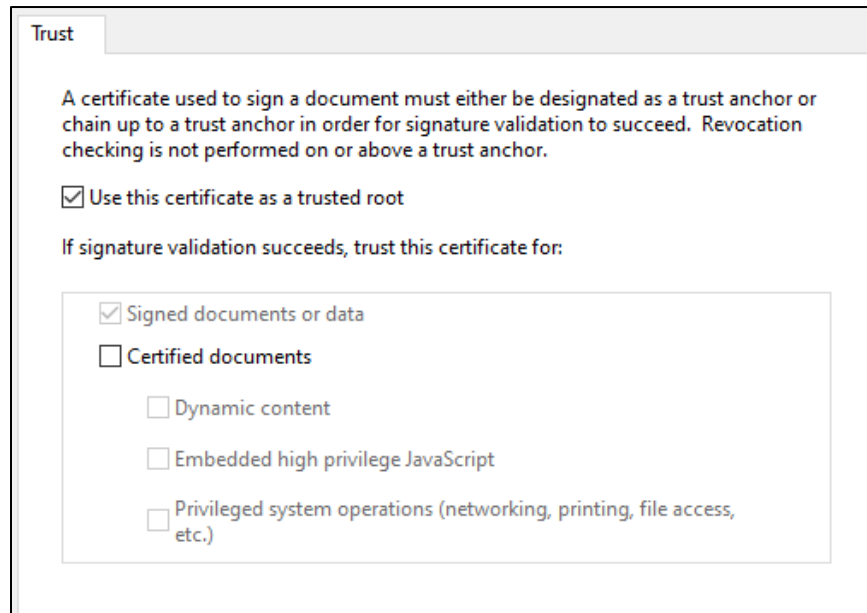
3. In the Certificate Viewer box, choose the **Trust** tab.



4. An Acrobat Security notice appears, click OK.



5. The Certificate Details appear, click **OK**, then close the Signature Properties box.



6. Open the digital signatures verification icon on the left of the screen. Right click the signature that needs validated and click on **Validate Signature**.



7. The digital signature is now validated. This step will not need to be repeated when a form with that same digital signature is received at your computer again.

