



California Notary Public

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Practice Questions

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1. A California notary public is appointed by which official?

- A. The Governor of California
- B. The California Secretary of State
- C. The county clerk of the notary's county
- D. The California State Bar

2. In a certificate of acknowledgment, what does the signer acknowledge?

- A. That the document's contents are true and correct
- B. That the document was witnessed by two credible witnesses
- C. That the signer executed the document as their free and voluntary act
- D. That the signer took an oath before signing

3. Which of the following is an acceptable form of identification for a signer appearing before a California notary?

- A. A photocopy of a driver's license
- B. A California driver's license that is not more than five years expired
- C. A foreign passport that expired two years ago
- D. A credit card with the signer's name and photo

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4. A California notary's sequential journal is required to be kept in what type of book?

- A. A permanently bound book with numbered pages
- B. A three-ring binder that can be expanded as needed
- C. Either a bound book or a computer database, at the notary's option
- D. A government-issued journal obtained from the Secretary of State



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5. A California notary public's official seal must include which of the following elements?

- A. The notary's photograph and personal signature
- B. The notary's name, the state seal or the words 'Notary Public', the county of principal place of business, and the commission expiration date
- C. The notary's Social Security number and bond information
- D. The issuing county recorder's stamp and file number

6. What is the maximum fee a California notary public may charge for taking an acknowledgment on a document with one signature?

- A. \$15
- B. \$10
- C. \$20
- D. \$25

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7. A notary public may NOT notarize a document if:

- A. The document is in a language the notary does not understand
- B. The document has blank spaces that may be filled in later
- C. The notary is named as a party to, or has a direct financial interest in, the transaction
- D. The signer does not provide a reason for the notarization

8. To be eligible for a California notary public commission, an applicant must be at least how old?

- A. 18 years old
- B. 21 years old
- C. 25 years old
- D. No minimum age requirement

9. What is the primary purpose of a notary public in California?

- A. To provide legal advice on documents
- B. To draft legal documents for clients
- C. To serve as an impartial witness to deter fraud
- D. To certify that documents are legally valid

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10. A California notary public commission is valid for how many years?

- A. 2 years
- B. 3 years
- C. 4 years
- D. 5 years

11. What is the key difference between a jurat and an acknowledgment?

- A. A jurat requires the signer to sign in the notary's presence and swear or affirm the truthfulness of the document's contents
- B. A jurat is used only for real property documents
- C. A jurat does not require personal appearance by the signer
- D. A jurat and an acknowledgment are interchangeable notarial acts

12. A U.S. passport presented as identification for notarization must be:

- A. Current (not expired)
- B. Less than five years expired
- C. Issued within the last ten years
- D. Accompanied by a secondary photo ID

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13. For which notarial act is it mandatory to record a thumbprint in the notary's journal?

- A. Every acknowledgment
- B. Every jurat
- C. Deeds or quitclaim deeds affecting real property
- D. Any document involving a credible witness

14. A California notary's official seal impression must be:

- A. Photographically reproducible
- B. Embossed (raised) and not reproducible
- C. In red ink only
- D. At least 3 inches in diameter



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15. The maximum fee a California notary may charge for administering an oath or affirmation is:

- A. \$10 per person
- B. \$15 per person
- C. \$20 per person
- D. \$25 per person

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16. Practicing law without a license by a notary public—such as advising a client on which notarial act to use—is:

- A. Permitted if the notary has experience with similar documents
- B. A violation subject to criminal prosecution and commission revocation
- C. Allowed if the notary discloses they are not an attorney
- D. Permitted when the client cannot afford a lawyer

17. What is the residency requirement for becoming a California notary public?

- A. Must have been a California resident for at least five years
- B. Must be a U.S. citizen
- C. Must be a legal California resident at the time of appointment
- D. Must reside in the specific county in which notarial acts will be performed

18. How long is a California notary public commission?

- A. 2 years
- B. 4 years
- C. 5 years
- D. 6 years

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19. In which county may a California notary public perform notarial acts?

- A. Anywhere in California, regardless of which county the commission is filed in
- B. Only in the county where the notary's bond is filed
- C. Only in the county listed on the notary's certificate
- D. Only in the county where the document was signed



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20. For a jurat, when must the signer physically sign the document?

- A. Any time before presenting it to the notary
- B. At least one day before appearing before the notary
- C. Within 30 days before the notarization
- D. In the physical presence of the notary

21. A credible identifying witness used to identify a signer must:

- A. Be related to the signer by blood or marriage
- B. Be a licensed attorney
- C. Be personally known to both the notary and the signer
- D. Be personally known to the notary and take an oath regarding the signer's identity

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22. For how many years must a California notary retain their journal after it is full or the commission expires?

- A. 2 years
- B. 5 years
- C. 7 years
- D. 10 years

23. If a notary's official seal is stolen or lost, the notary must:

- A. Wait until a new seal arrives before notifying anyone
- B. Notify only the surety bond company
- C. Notify the county clerk within 30 days
- D. Notify the Secretary of State and local law enforcement

24. For certifying a copy of a power of attorney, the maximum California notary fee per signature is:

- A. \$10
- B. \$15
- C. \$15
- D. \$20

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25. A notary who uses the title 'notario' or 'notario público' in advertising is:

- A. In violation of California law, because those titles imply legal authority the notary does not have
- B. Permitted to do so if the advertisement also states they are not an attorney
- C. Permitted if the advertisement is in Spanish for a Spanish-speaking clientele
- D. In compliance, because 'notario' simply translates 'notary'

26. What examination must a California notary public applicant pass?

- A. A federal notary examination administered by the National Notary Association
- B. A written examination administered by or on behalf of the Secretary of State
- C. An oral examination conducted by a county clerk
- D. A background check examination conducted by the California Department of Justice

27. What is the maximum fee a California notary may charge per signature for an acknowledgment?

- A. \$5
- B. \$10
- C. \$15
- D. \$20

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28. Which of the following is NOT a duty of a California notary public?

- A. Administering oaths and affirmations
- B. Taking acknowledgments
- C. Certifying copies of certain documents
- D. Providing legal advice to document signers

29. An oath administered by a notary public is distinguished from an affirmation in that:

- A. An oath does not require the notary to use any specific wording
- B. An oath involves a reference to a supreme being, whereas an affirmation does not
- C. An affirmation has greater legal weight than an oath
- D. Only attorneys may administer oaths; notaries may only administer affirmations



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30. How many credible witnesses are required when neither the notary nor any single witness personally knows the signer?

- A. One witness who knows the notary
- B. One witness personally known to the notary
- C. Two credible witnesses, both personally known to the notary
- D. Three witnesses approved by the county clerk



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Answer Key & Explanations

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1. B — The California Secretary of State

The Secretary of State appoints and commissions notaries public in California under Government Code section 8200.

2. C — That the signer executed the document as their free and voluntary act

An acknowledgment is the signer's declaration that they executed the instrument as their free and voluntary act. The notary certifies the signer personally appeared and made this declaration.

3. B — A California driver's license that is not more than five years expired

California law (Government Code 8220) allows a California driver's license that is not more than five years past its expiration date as satisfactory evidence of identity.

4. A — A permanently bound book with numbered pages

California requires notaries to record all notarial acts in a permanently bound sequential journal with numbered pages to prevent tampering or removal of entries.

5. B — The notary's name, the state seal or the words 'Notary Public', the county of principal place of business, and the commission expiration date

California Government Code 8207 requires the seal to contain: the notary's name, 'Notary Public – State of California' or the state seal, the county of principal place of business, and the commission expiration date.

6. A — \$15

California Government Code 8211 sets the maximum fee for an acknowledgment at \$15 per signature.

7. C — The notary is named as a party to, or has a direct financial interest in, the transaction

A notary who is named in the document or has a direct financial or beneficial interest in the transaction is disqualified from notarizing that document due to conflict of interest.

8. A — 18 years old

California Government Code 8201 requires that a notary public applicant be at least 18 years of age at the time of appointment.

9. C — To serve as an impartial witness to deter fraud

A notary acts as an impartial witness appointed by the state to help prevent fraud by verifying signer identity and witnessing signatures.

10. C — 4 years

A California notary public commission term is 4 years from the date of commission.

11. A — A jurat requires the signer to sign in the notary's presence and swear or affirm the truthfulness of the document's contents

In a jurat, the signer must both sign the document in the notary's presence AND swear or affirm that the contents are true, making the oath or affirmation an essential element.



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12. A — Current (not expired)

A U.S. passport used as satisfactory evidence of identity must be current (not expired), unlike a California driver's license which can be up to five years expired.

13. C — Deeds or quitclaim deeds affecting real property

California Government Code 8206 requires a right thumbprint (or, if unavailable, another fingerprint) in the journal for deeds of trust, quitclaim deeds, and other instruments affecting real property.

14. A — Photographically reproducible

California law requires a photographically reproducible seal (i.e., inked stamp), so the seal can appear on photocopies of notarized documents.

15. B — \$15 per person

Under California Government Code 8211, the maximum fee for administering an oath or affirmation, with or without a certificate, is \$15 per person.

16. B — A violation subject to criminal prosecution and commission revocation

Unauthorized practice of law is illegal regardless of the notary's experience or the client's situation. It is a criminal offense and grounds for revocation of the notary commission.

17. C — Must be a legal California resident at the time of appointment

California requires only that the applicant be a legal resident of California at the time of appointment. There is no minimum duration of residency and no citizenship requirement.

18. B — 4 years

Commissions last 4 years from commencement date; renewal requires completing a new education course and exam.

19. A — Anywhere in California, regardless of which county the commission is filed in

A California notary public has statewide authority and may perform notarial acts anywhere within the state of California.

20. D — In the physical presence of the notary

A jurat requires the signer to sign the document in the notary's physical presence, unlike an acknowledgment where a prior signature can be acknowledged.

21. D — Be personally known to the notary and take an oath regarding the signer's identity

A credible identifying witness must be personally known to the notary, must personally know the signer, and must take an oath before the notary that the signer is the person named in the document.

22. D — 10 years

Under California Government Code 8206, a notary must retain their journal for 10 years after the last entry recorded in it.

23. D — Notify the Secretary of State and local law enforcement

Loss or theft of an official seal must be reported to both local law enforcement and the Secretary of State, just as with a stolen journal.

24. C — \$15

Certifying a copy of a power of attorney follows the same fee schedule as other notarial acts—\$15 per



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signature under Government Code 8211.

25. A — In violation of California law, because those titles imply legal authority the notary does not have

California law prohibits notaries who are not attorneys from using the titles 'notario' or 'notario público' because in many Latin American countries those titles denote a person with legal authority equivalent to an attorney, which is misleading.

26. B — A written examination administered by or on behalf of the Secretary of State

Applicants must pass a written examination approved and administered by the Secretary of State. The examination tests knowledge of notarial laws and procedures.

27. C — \$15

California law establishes \$15 as the ceiling for notary fees per signature for acknowledgments, jurats, and other notarial acts.

28. D — Providing legal advice to document signers

Notaries may not provide legal advice; doing so constitutes the unauthorized practice of law. Their duties are limited to notarial acts defined by statute.

29. B — An oath involves a reference to a supreme being, whereas an affirmation does not

An oath invokes a deity or supreme being, while an affirmation is a solemn pledge without religious reference. Both are legally equivalent.

30. C — Two credible witnesses, both personally known to the notary

When a single credible witness cannot independently identify the signer, two credible witnesses—both personally known to the notary—may together identify the signer.



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