



# Top Apostille Questions and Answers

A comprehensive guide to the most frequently asked questions about apostilles, authentication, and international document legalization.

## **What is an apostille?**

An apostille is a certificate issued under the Hague Convention authenticating a public document for international use.

## **What documents can receive an apostille?**

Eligible documents include birth, marriage, death records, notarized documents, school records, corporate documents, and court records.

## **Who issues apostilles in the United States?**

Each state's Secretary of State issues apostilles for state documents; the U.S. Department of State issues federal apostilles.

## **Do apostilles expire?**

Apostilles do not expire, but some foreign authorities require recently issued underlying documents.

### **Can I apostille a photocopy?**

Only certified copies or notarized copies (where allowed) can be apostilled — not plain photocopies.

### **How long does it take to get an apostille?**

Processing varies by state — anywhere from same-day service to several weeks.

### **Can I walk in to request an apostille?**

Some states allow walk-ins; others require mail-only submissions.

### **What is the difference between a certification and an apostille?**

A certification is used for non-Hague countries and must be followed by embassy legalization.

### **Do I need a translation before or after the apostille?**

Most countries require the apostille first, then translation — unless the country specifies otherwise.

### **Can I apostille my naturalization certificate?**

No. The original cannot be apostilled. Only a notarized copy may be authenticated.

### **Can I apostille FBI background checks?**

Yes. FBI background checks must be apostilled by the U.S. Department of State.

### **What is the Hague Apostille Convention?**

A treaty simplifying acceptance of public documents between member countries.

### **What if the destination country is not part of the Hague Convention?**

You must use the full embassy legalization process instead of an apostille.

### **Do apostilles verify document content?**

No. Apostilles only verify the signature, capacity, and seal of the issuing official.

### **Can I apostille school transcripts?**

Yes, if they are properly certified by the school or notarized.

### **Can notarized documents be apostilled?**

Yes, if the notarial act is correct and the notary's signature is on file with the state.

**Can I get an apostille for a document issued in another state?**

No. Apostilles must be issued by the state that originated the document.

**Can electronic documents be apostilled?**

Yes, in states that issue electronic apostilles (e-Apostilles).

**What is an e-Apostille?**

A digital apostille issued electronically under the e-APP program.

**Can I apostille a marriage certificate from a county clerk?**

Yes, if it is a certified copy.

### **What is required to apostille a birth certificate?**

A certified long-form copy issued by the state or local registrar.

### **Do apostilles work for immigration?**

Yes. Apostilled vital records are commonly required for immigration outside the U.S.

### **Does the apostille need to remain attached?**

Yes — removing staples invalidates the apostille.

### **What if my document is old?**

Some countries require recent certified copies (often within 90 days).

**Can I apostille documents for someone else?**

Yes, with a notarized authorization letter.

**Can an apostille be rejected abroad?**

Yes, if the underlying document is outdated, incomplete, or improperly notarized.

**What is a certified copy?**

A copy issued or authenticated by the official custodian of the record.

**Are hospital birth certificates acceptable?**

No. Only certified state-issued vital records are eligible.

### **Can I apostille divorce decrees?**

Yes, if they are certified court documents.

### **Do foreign authorities verify apostilles?**

Yes, typically using the issuing state's online verification system or apostille register.

### **Can I apostille corporate documents?**

Yes — including good standing certificates, resolutions, bylaws, etc.

### **Can I apostille IRS documents?**

No. IRS documents must be authenticated by the U.S. Department of State, not state offices.

### **What if my notarization is incorrect?**

It must be corrected. Incorrect notarial wording cannot be apostilled.

### **Are online notarizations accepted?**

Some states accept them; acceptance abroad varies by country.

### **Can electronic signatures be apostilled?**

Only if permitted by both the issuing state and the destination country.

### **What is chain authentication?**

A multi-step process used for non-Hague countries requiring state certification followed by embassy legalization.

### **Can a death certificate be apostilled?**

Yes, if it is a certified copy.

### **Can I apostille documents for dual citizenship?**

Yes — this is one of the most common reasons for apostille requests.

### **Can I apostille a will?**

Only notarized wills or court-certified copies can be apostilled.

### **What is a non-Hague country?**

A country that requires embassy legalization instead of an apostille.

### **What is embassy legalization?**

The traditional authentication process involving multiple government authorities and a foreign embassy.

### **Can I apostille fingerprints?**

Only if attached to an official background check.

### **Can I apostille adoption records?**

Yes, if they are certified court documents or notarized where applicable.

### **Can I apostille IRS EIN letters?**

No. These must be authenticated by the U.S. Department of State.

### **Can I apostille Social Security documents?**

No. Only federal authentication is allowed for these documents.

### **What if my country requires original documents?**

You must provide certified originals or state-issued certified copies.

### **Are apostilles valid everywhere?**

Apostilles are valid only in Hague Convention member countries.

### **Can I apostille medical records?**

Yes — but only if they are notarized alongside a HIPAA-compliant release.

### **Can I apostille power of attorney documents?**

Yes, once properly notarized.

### **Is removing staples allowed?**

No. Removing staples breaks the chain of authentication and invalidates the apostille.