How to Sign a PDF on iPhone Without Printing It

Sign a PDF on an iPhone with no printer, no account and no subscription - plus what makes a phone signature legally hold up.

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You can sign a PDF on an iPhone without a printer by opening it in a signing app, drawing the signature once with your finger, then placing and exporting it. Scan to PDF does this entirely offline on iOS 15.5 and later, free, with no account, no subscription and no watermark on the exported file.

Disclosure: AppStoryo is operated by the studio that develops Scan to PDF. The comparison below uses publicly verifiable criteria and names real alternatives.

The print-sign-scan ritual survives only because nobody replaced it with something equally obvious, and it costs document quality every time. Scan to PDF is free on the App Store and on Google Play as Document Scanner PDF.

How do you sign a PDF on an iPhone without printing it?

Open the PDF, draw the signature once, place it, export a new file. In Scan to PDF the sequence is: open the document from Files or scan the paper version with the camera, tap the signature tool, draw with a finger or stylus, drag it into position, then export. The signature is stored after the first time, so the second document takes about fifteen seconds.

Apple ships a version of this too. The iPhone user guide covers filling out forms, signing documents and creating signatures in Preview and Markup, which is genuinely enough for a one-page consent slip. The gap appears on the fourth document of the afternoon, when you want stamps, dates, page numbering and a password on the export. Either way, export to a

new file rather than overwriting the original.

Why is print, sign and rescan still a bad idea in 2026?

Each pass through paper destroys information the PDF already had. A born-digital PDF carries a real text layer; printing it and photographing the page turns that text into pixels, leaving a file nobody can search. Apple's PDFKit documentation describes a PDF as a structured document with selectable text and annotations, not an image of one.

It also leaks. A printed contract in an office tray is readable by anyone walking past. With Scan to PDF the document never leaves the device: the App Store privacy label on its listing reports Data Not Collected, and the app needs no sign-up.

Is a signature drawn with your finger legally binding?

In most everyday cases, yes. In the United States the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act, in force since 2000 and codified at 15 U.S.C. 7001, says a signature or record may not be denied legal effect solely because it is electronic. In the European Union, Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of 23 July 2014 sets out the same principle and defines the tiers above a simple signature.

The caveat is those tiers. A drawn signature is a simple electronic signature: fine for a lease, a school form, a delivery waiver or an invoice. It is not a qualified electronic signature, which under the EU regulation must rest on a qualified certificate from a supervised provider. Wills, some family-law documents and certain court filings are carved out of electronic signing altogether.

How do you stop a signed PDF from being altered afterwards?

Three measures, in increasing strength. Flatten the signature into the page so it is not a removable layer. Encrypt the export - Scan to PDF uses AES-256, the cipher standardised by NIST in FIPS 197 - so the file needs a password to open. Then sign with a certificate, which binds the contents to a key: change one byte and the signature stops validating.

Version 2.0 of Scan to PDF, released on 7 July 2026, added certificate signing protected by Face ID, AES-256 export, an audit-trail summary page, Bates numbering and PDF/A-2b archival export. Docusign's own App Store listing makes the same argument for recording the event rather than only the mark on the page:

> There is a complete audit trail to track who signed when and where.

What can Scan to PDF do that Markup cannot?

Markup draws on a page. Scan to PDF treats the page as a document that has to leave the phone and be accepted by somebody. The practical gaps: stamps such as PAID and CONFIDENTIAL, a date stamp on every page, Bates numbering across a set, exhibit labels with a generated cover sheet, offline OCR, redaction baked into the export rather than a

removable black rectangle, and a Face ID-locked library.

It also scans. If the thing you must sign arrived on paper, the same app does edge detection, perspective correction, batch pages and contrast repair, then the signature and the export. The build is 92.7 MB, runs on iOS 15.5 or later across 130 device models, and is localised in 44 languages. Download Scan to PDF on iOS.

Which signing app should you actually use?

All three alternatives were checked against their live App Store listings on 16 September 2026. Every app here is free to download; the free tiers are what differ.

Choose Acrobat Reader if you need Adobe's ecosystem

- Adobe Inc., version 26.08.01 of 9 September 2026, 652,515 ratings averaging 4.65.
- Its listing states Fill & Sign is free in the app, while editing, OCR and password protection sit behind a subscription after a 7-day trial.
- The build is 521.4 MB and requires iOS 18.3, so older iPhones cannot install it.

Choose Docusign if other people have to sign too

- Docusign, version 3.47.3 of 28 August 2026, 826,730 ratings averaging 4.87, 90.8 MB, iOS 17.0 or later.
- Its listing promises unlimited free signing for all parties, with an audit trail and ISO 27001 compliance; sending documents out for signature is a paid plan.
- The right tool for a countersigned contract - a job Scan to PDF cannot do, because it never uploads anything.

Choose Signeasy if you sign for a small business every week

- Glykka LLC, version 20.0.0 of 12 September 2026, 34,065 ratings averaging 4.85, 259.5 MB, iOS 16.0 or later.
- Its listing cites use in 180 countries and compliance with ESIGN, UETA, eIDAS, HIPAA and SOC 2, with templates and shareable signing links.
- Download and a 7-day trial are free; continued use is a subscription.

Choose Scan to PDF if the document should never leave the phone

- Free, no account, no subscription, no watermark, no ads; 92.7 MB; iOS 15.5 or later.
- Scanning, OCR, redaction, signing, AES-256 encryption and PDF/A-2b export all run on-device, and it is the only one of the four that installs on iOS 15 or 16.
- It has no cloud, so it cannot route a document to a second signer.

The Android build is on Google Play as Document Scanner PDF. The stores list it under different names: on iOS the title is Scan to PDF: Sign & Redact, on Google Play it is Document Scanner PDF.

When is Scan to PDF the wrong tool for the job?

When somebody else has to sign. There is no cloud, no email routing and no signing order, so a two-party contract needs Docusign or an equivalent. If an employer mandates a specific platform, use it. When a document requires a qualified electronic signature under the EU regulation, a self-issued certificate is not enough.

Two smaller limits. The app has no ratings yet on the App Store, so there is no crowd verdict. And because nothing is uploaded there is no server-side copy: export to Files as soon as you finish.

Frequently asked questions about signing a PDF on an iPhone

Do I need to buy anything to sign a PDF on an iPhone?

No. Apple's Preview and Markup place a drawn signature on a PDF at no cost, and Scan to PDF is free with no subscription and no watermark. Paid tiers elsewhere mostly unlock sending documents to other signers, not the act of signing itself.

Can I sign a PDF on an iPhone with no internet connection?

Yes, if the app works offline. Scan to PDF performs scanning, OCR, redaction, signing and export entirely on the device, so a plane or a basement makes no difference. Cloud-first services such as Docusign need a connection to record the signing event.

What is the difference between a drawn signature and a digital signature?

A drawn signature is an image of your hand-written mark on the page. A digital signature is a cryptographic operation binding the file's contents to a key, so any later edit breaks it. Scan to PDF version 2.0 does both, the certificate protected by Face ID.

Is a stored photo of my signature good enough?

For routine paperwork it usually is, and it is what most apps keep after the first drawing. The weakness is that an image can be lifted from one document and pasted onto another, so encryption and a certificate matter more than a neat squiggle.

How do I protect a signed PDF with a password?

Export it encrypted. Scan to PDF offers AES-256 password protection on export, the cipher standardised by NIST as FIPS 197. Send the password through a different channel from the file itself, or the protection buys you very little.

Can I sign a scanned paper document, not just a PDF someone sent me?

Yes. Scan the page with the camera first, let edge detection and perspective correction straighten it, then sign the result. Doing both in one app avoids exporting an image and losing quality in another editor.

Does signing on an iPhone work for tax and expense paperwork?

For most submissions, yes, and the same app numbers pages and stamps dates across a set of receipts. Tax authorities differ on retention format, so check whether yours wants an archival file; Scan to PDF exports PDF/A-2b for archives.

What if the recipient says my signature is not valid?

Ask which standard they mean. If they want a qualified electronic signature under Regulation (EU) No 910/2014, no consumer app produces one without a supervised trust service provider. If they want proof of when it was signed, a certificate-signed export usually answers it.

If the only thing between you and a finished document is a printer, this is a five-minute problem. Get Scan to PDF on the App Store or Document Scanner PDF on Google Play.

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