

Apostille Checklist (United States)

A free, general checklist from PaperworkPath (paperworkpath.pages.dev). Not legal advice. Always confirm current fees and forms with the official office before you send anything.

- 1. Confirm what the receiving country needs.** Hague Convention countries accept an apostille. Non-Hague countries need an authentication certificate (and often embassy legalization) instead. Check [travel.state.gov: Authenticate your document](https://travel.state.gov/Authenticate-your-document) and the [HCCH member list](#).
- 2. Identify who issued or signed the document.** State or local documents (birth, marriage and death certificates, notarized papers, court records, state diplomas) go to the **Secretary of State** (or equivalent) of the state where they were issued or notarized. Federal documents (FBI background checks, federal agency records) go to the **U.S. Department of State** Office of Authentications.
- 3. Get the right version of the document.** This is usually an original or a recently issued certified copy signed by a current official. Photocopies are generally not accepted. Some states require county clerk or court certification first.
- 4. If it needs notarizing, notarize it correctly.** The notary's commission state decides which Secretary of State issues the apostille. Online notarization is fine in many states, but the apostille then comes from the notary's state.
- 5. Get any translation done if required.** Many countries want a certified translation. Ask the receiving authority whether it should be translated before or after the apostille.
- 6. Fill out the state's request form.** Name the destination country and include payment. Fees range from about \$1 to \$20 per document, so check yours. Add a prepaid return envelope if mailing.
- 7. Send or deliver it.** Check mail and walk-in options, hours and current processing times on the official site. Keep your tracking numbers.
- 8. Check the apostille when it arrives.** Make sure the country, name and document match. Keep everything attached and don't remove staples.

Official sources

- U.S. Department of State: authentications (federal documents): <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/replace-certify-docs/authenticate-your-document.html>
- Find your state's Secretary of State (NASS directory): <https://www.nass.org/membership>
- California SOS: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/notary/request-apostille>
- Texas SOS: <https://www.sos.state.tx.us/authinfo.shtml>
- Florida Dept. of State: <https://notaries.dos.fl.gov/notproc7.html>
- New York DOS: <https://dos.ny.gov/apostille-certificate-authentication>
- Michigan SOS: <https://www.michigan.gov/sos/all-services/document-authentication-and-apostille>
- Maryland SOS: <https://sos.maryland.gov/Certifications/Pages/default.aspx>

State-by-state guides with fees and addresses: paperworkpath.pages.dev/what-is-an-apostille