



Beginner's Guide to eFiling

An introduction to
electronic filing, its
benefits and your
firm's options.

More courts than ever before are switching from paper court filing to electronic filing (eFiling).

If your law firm is prepared, eFiling can help boost efficiency and cut costs – but if it's not, you might find yourself unable to file at all.

At Rapid Legal, we've made it our business to demystify eFiling and make it simple for legal professionals. This guide contains everything you need to know about eFiling so you can get started with confidence.

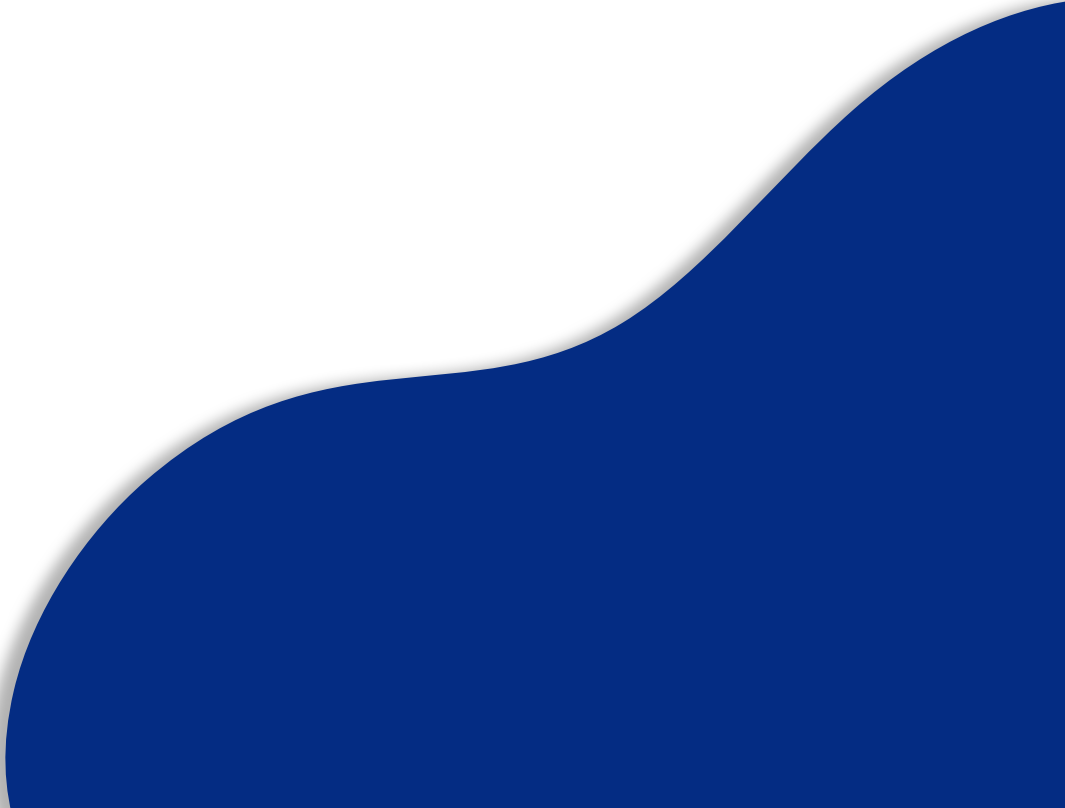


Table of Contents

4

What is eFiling?

5

How Does eFiling Work?

6

Now consider eFiling

7

Advantages of eFiling

8

How Do I Prepare for eFiling?

11

eFile with Confidence with Rapid Legal

12

Appendix

13

Glossary

What is eFiling?

eFiling is the method of electronically submitting your legal documents to a court via the internet, typically requiring you to select an approved [eFiling Service Provider \(EFSP\)](#) to file with.

Federal, state, and municipal courts have varying rules and regulations for eFiled documents. In many courts, electronic filing is mandatory, and they do not allow in-person physical filing. Thus, it is more important than ever to prepare your law firm for the eventual transition to eFiling.

How Does eFiling Work?

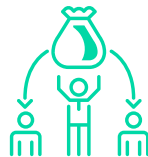
Before we dive into the eFiling process, let's review the alternative. Depending on the size of your firm, the traditional filing process probably looks a little something like this:

- 1 Finalize and print the document.
- 2 Get signatures and make copies.
- 3 Draft a cover letter, staple, and enclose everything into the package.
- 4 Call the clerk to confirm filing fees.
- 5 Pay filing fees (this may require a call to accounting).
- 6 Contact a runner or courier for pick-up.
- 7 Contact a process server to serve papers.
- 8 Wait for a file stamp from the runner/courier.
- 9 Scan and file hard copies of completed documents.

When all is said and done, this process typically takes between 1-2 hours, leading to:



Staff inefficiencies



Overhead expenses



Lost billable hours

When you add in court filing fees and copying expenses, a firm can easily spend \$500 or more to file a simple 10-page document the traditional way.

Now consider eFiling

In comparison, eFiling is tremendously simple. Here's how it works:



Step One

Go to your preferred Electronic Filing Service Provider's (EFSP) website and log into your account.



Step Two

Place your eFiling order and provide online payment.



Step Three

Upon hitting "Submit" for your order, the EFSP files your document directly with the court's electronic filing manager (EFM) where the documents can be processed into the court's case management system.



Step Four

The court accepts or rejects the eFiled documents. Then, the EFSP delivers a confirmation of processing and the associated conformed documents straight into your account when ready.



Step Five

Along the way, the EFSP sends you order status notifications from submission to completion to keep you informed.

In summary, eFiling is a truly integrated, end-to-end data exchange solution, connecting law firms and EFSPs directly to the courts.

Advantages of eFiling

Traditional filing requires administrative time, printed paper, and a designated document runner to deliver multiple copies of legal documents and pleadings to the corresponding courts and parties. Relying on a document runner increases both expenses and opportunities for human error in the filing process.

In contrast, eFiling eliminates the need for a document runner and reduces data entry errors as they will likely be caught before you complete the process.

Other key advantages of eFiling include:



Reducing the amount of time and resources it takes to file by 50% or more



Enabling your team to file documents whenever and wherever it's convenient



Creating flexibility to file documents after courts have closed



Decreasing the time and effort it takes to manage paper documents



Limiting the risk of paper files being misplaced, lost, tampered with or modified

How Do I Prepare for eFiling?

To fully reap the benefits of eFiling, you need to make sure your firm is prepared. Use this checklist to determine if you are ready:

1

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TOOLS IN PLACE.

First, you'll want to make sure you have a scanner with at least 300 dots per inch (dpi) resolution. You'll need to be able to create crystal clear text-searchable PDF documents for your eFiling submissions.

While most Electronic Filing Service Providers offer the ability to automatically convert your online documents to PDFs, there may be exceptions if your file is too large for their conversion capability. In this case, you'll need to do the conversion yourself with software such as Adobe Acrobat.

This program will allow you to easily organize and bookmark exhibits, as well as create text-searchable documents so you can comply with the local court's eFiling rules.

2

START EARLY AND PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED.

Just like any new technology, adopting eFiling into your law practice can require some time and patience at the start – and the unexpected will inevitably occur at the worst time.

Although you can theoretically file your documents at 11:59 PM on your filing deadline for a court, you should allow at least a 30-minute buffer in case of the unexpected.

3

BE FAMILIAR WITH COMMON EFILING REJECTION REASONS AND KNOW HOW TO AVOID THEM.

Here are the top 8 to watch out for:

✔ **Party's name does not match the name listed on the initial lead document**

For example: If the plaintiff's name on the caption of the complaint shows "Jane C. Doe", then it must be entered to match throughout the eFiling. If the defendant's name is "John Doe, an individual", it must also be entered to match, including "an individual".

✔ **Incorrect case type has been selected**

The case type must match the selection on the Civil Case Cover Sheet.

✔ **Incorrect document type has been selected**

If the document is for a "judgment", then that specific category must be selected.

Following that selection, choose the document title within that category.

✔ **Wrong case number has been listed somewhere on the filing**

The case number appears in multiple locations, and it must always be listed correctly, or the document may be rejected.

✔ **Wrong court location has been selected**

For example, on its website, San Diego Superior Court provides a Filing Court Locator that can help you determine which courthouse they should be using.

✔ **Issues with the filing itself**

For example: uploading the wrong filing, submitting the filing in the wrong format, having the wrong name on the saved filing, improper scanning, or not including the required attachments.

Some of these issues can be fixed through higher levels of diligence. Others are more technical, especially when it comes to scanning documents – ensuring you're saving scanned docs in black and white, and that these documents are being scanned exclusively in PDF format. Your printer settings should also be set to a resolution of 300 dots per inch (dpi) to make your scanned documents clearer and easy to read.

✔ **PDF is not text searchable**

Some states, such as California, require that electronic filings be text-searchable (although historically not all courts have been enforcing the requirement). PDFs are not automatically text searchable. They can be made text-searchable using tools such as Adobe Acrobat.

✔ **Improper file size**

File size limitations may vary by court and EFSP. In general, 25 megabytes per document and 60 megabytes per e-filing transaction is a good guideline. The majority of filings can be submitted with ease through the EFSP.

4

CAREFULLY CHOOSE YOUR ELECTRONIC FILING SERVICE PROVIDER (EFSP).

Your EFSP is the provider who connects you to the court and allows you to electronically submit your court documents, whether it's through a third-party electronic filing manager or directly into a court case management system (CCMS). Essentially, an EFSP is an intermediary that sits between the filer and the Court and provides value-added services, training, and support for eFiling.

When selecting your EFSP, some things you'll want to consider are:

Customer Support Coverage

- What are their hours of operation?
- How helpful and knowledgeable is the customer service team? Are there a variety of ways that you can reach them, such as email, chat, or a dedicated support line?
- Is there a dedicated Account Manager who you can readily speak to versus having to wait on hold with a call center?

Reliability and Experience

- What is their average system uptime and success rate?
- How will you be notified when your document has arrived at the court and it has been accepted.
- Do they have in-depth experience of filing in your state and have extensive knowledge of the Courts?

Accuracy of Service

- What is their average eFiling rejection rate? (For example, the average eFiling rejection rate is between 10-15% for California courts)

Court eFiling Coverage

- What courts, and how many, can eFile into? The cost to eFile can be a tenth of the cost to paper file, so an EFSP that has the capability to eFile into many courts eliminates the need to select multiple EFSPs due to their limited court eFiling coverage.

Range of Service Offerings

- What other services do you currently need and/or may need in the near future? E.g. physical filing, process servicing, records retrieval, courtesy copy delivery, Secretary of State Filing, and county recording.
- What value-added services do you need? For example, some EFSPs offer document review or concierge services where they will handle your submission from start to finish.

eFile with Confidence with Rapid Legal



When it's time to eFile, you need a partner you can trust to go above and beyond and get the job done right. For more than 25 years, Rapid Legal has helped thousands of law firms, government agencies and companies file their documents efficiently and confidently, while providing legendary customer service along the way.

Our broad eFiling coverage in California and flexible services ensure we're your one-stop partner for online legal support services. Whether you need [Expert Review](#), end-to-end [Concierge Services](#), or even [Physical Filing](#), we're here to help.

If you would like to get started with eFiling, you can [create an account here](#) or [contact us](#) for a demo!

Appendix

Helpful Links

Glossary of Legal Terms: <https://www.uscourts.gov/glossary>

Listing of all California Superior Courts: https://www.courts.ca.gov/find-my-court.htm?query=browse_courts

California Courts Newsroom: <https://newsroom.courts.ca.gov/>

California Courts Reports & Publications: <https://www.courts.ca.gov/626.htm>

California Courts Research & Statistics: <https://www.courts.ca.gov/627.htm>

California Courts FAQs: <https://www.courts.ca.gov/2954.htm>

Tips for an Effective Electronic Filing – LA Court: http://www.lacourt.org/division/efiling/pdf/Civil_efiling_Tips_for_Reducing_Rejections.pdf

Rapid Legal's California eFile Courts Guide: <https://legalconnect.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CA-eFile-Courts-Guide-05.2020.pdf>

Glossary

eFiling: Electronic filing, or eFiling, is the method of electronically submitting your legal documents to the court via the internet.

Electronic Filing Service Provider (EFSP): Any company that handles the submission of documents to a court through an online portal. Rapid Legal is an example of an EFSP.

Electronic Filing Manager (EFM): The EFM acts as an intermediate system on the court's side. This is the system that takes in filings and processes them for the courthouse clerks to view.

Case Management System (CMS): The stage following the EFM is the Case Management System. After your filing has been accepted, your documents become a permanent part of the court record. (Sometimes also referred to as "Court Case Management System" or "CCMS")

eService: After a case has been accepted into the CMS, the electronic exchange of additional litigation documents between the parties is referred to as eService.

Dots per inch (dpi): This unit of measurement refers to the quality of the scanned image or document that will eventually be printed. Courts typically require a minimum of 300dpi to ensure the readability of the printed copy.

Envelope: In the context of eFiling, an envelope refers to a group of filings that are submitted together as part of a single transaction.

Lead document: In the context of eFiling, a lead document is any document that requires its own file stamp. Combining lead documents in one PDF file will result in a rejection of the filing transaction.

Optical Character Recognition (OCR): OCR refers to the scanning and subsequent translation of printed and written text into machine-encoded, searchable text.

Portal Document Format (PDF): PDF is a file format developed by Adobe in the 1990s to present documents, including text formatting and images, in a manner independent of application software, hardware, and operating systems.

XML: Extensible Markup Language (XML) is used to describe data. The XML standard is a flexible way to create information formats and electronically share structured data via the public Internet, as well as via corporate networks. In the context of eFiling, XML is how the ESFP exchanges data with the court's EFM.