

Digital Signatures

How to create a digital ID for signing forms

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Introduction

University Facilities requires a **digital signature** on many of its forms. The purpose of this requirement is to speed up the signing process while reducing the use of paper. Whereas **in the past customers would be asked to print out a form, sign it, scan it, then e-mail back** to our organization (in which the process is repeated again and again until all necessary signatures are collected), **now they are instructed to sign** a PDF version of a form **electronically** using a digital signature. This document will guide you through the process of setting up your own self-signed **digital ID** which you'll then use to place your digital signature.

How to Create a Digital ID

This how-to is based on the latest version of Adobe Acrobat. Other PDF viewers can be used, but the process of creating a digital signature may vary. If you have trouble creating a digital ID, please contact Facilities Information & Technology Services for assistance.

To begin, open a form you wish to sign and look for a **digital signature field**. These fields typically resemble those in the image below.

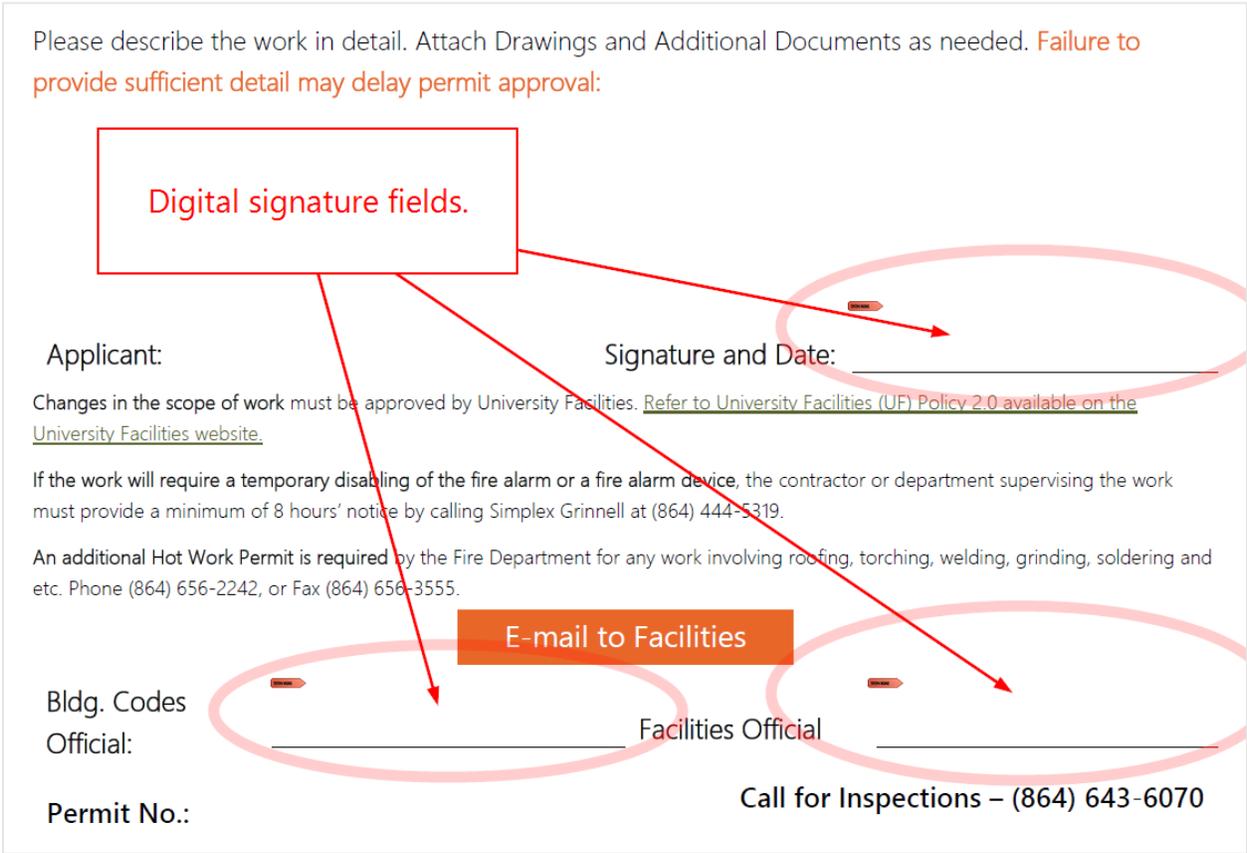


Figure 1 – Digital signature fields feature a small red "Sign Here" arrow.

If you do not have a digital signature, clicking a digital signature field will open a wizard that will prompt you to set one up. **Click a field to open the wizard.**

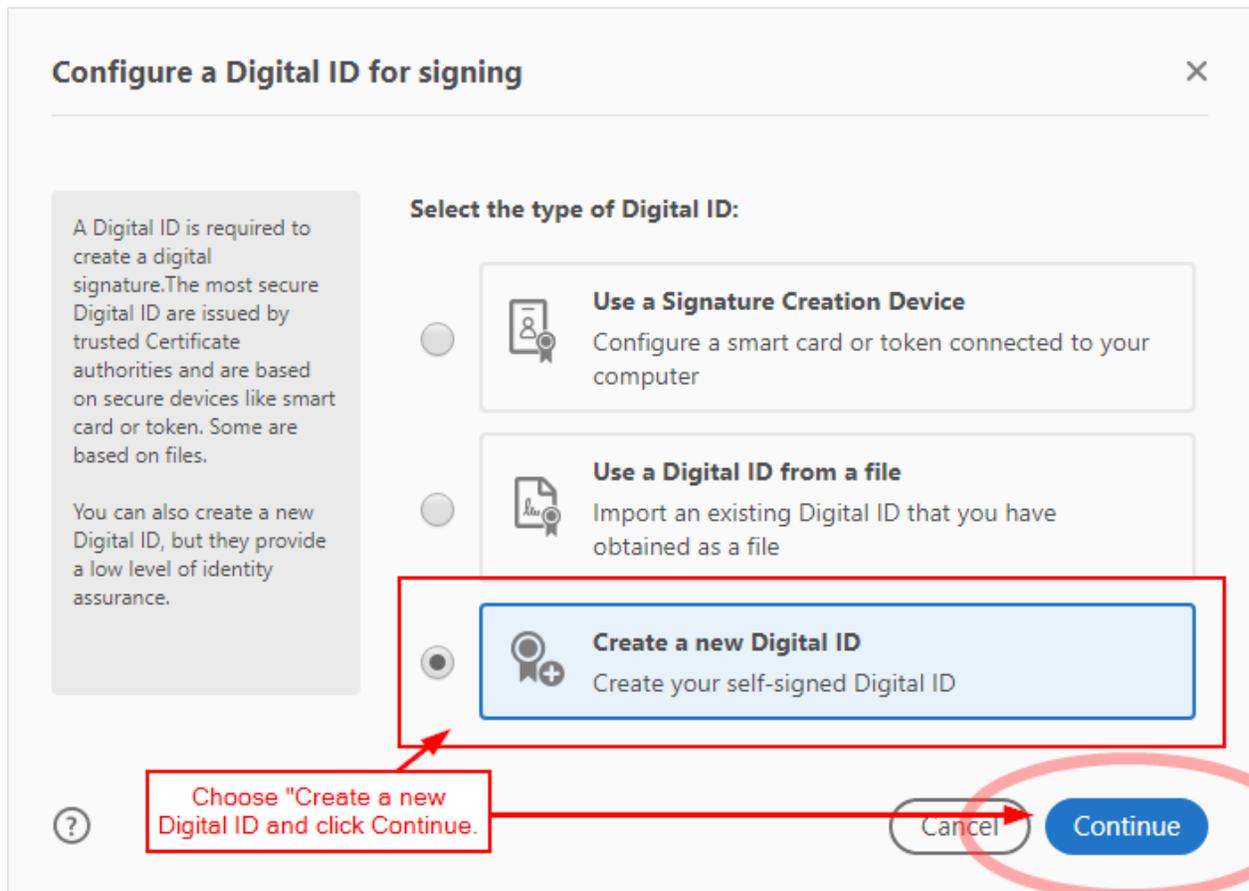


Figure 2 - If you already had a digital ID stored as a file, you could load it here. Since we're starting from scratch, choose "Create a new Digital ID" and click continue.

The process here is straightforward, and completed in just a few screens. As directed above, **click** the radio button for **Create a new Digital ID** and then **click Continue**. The proceeding screen depends on whether you're using a Windows PC or a Mac.

Windows Certificate Store

If you're a Windows user, you'll be presented with an option of saving your digital ID to a file or to Windows Certificate Store. Saving to File will require you to create a unique password. If you lose the password, you'll have to create another ID. Saving to Windows Certificate Store does not prompt you to create a new password.

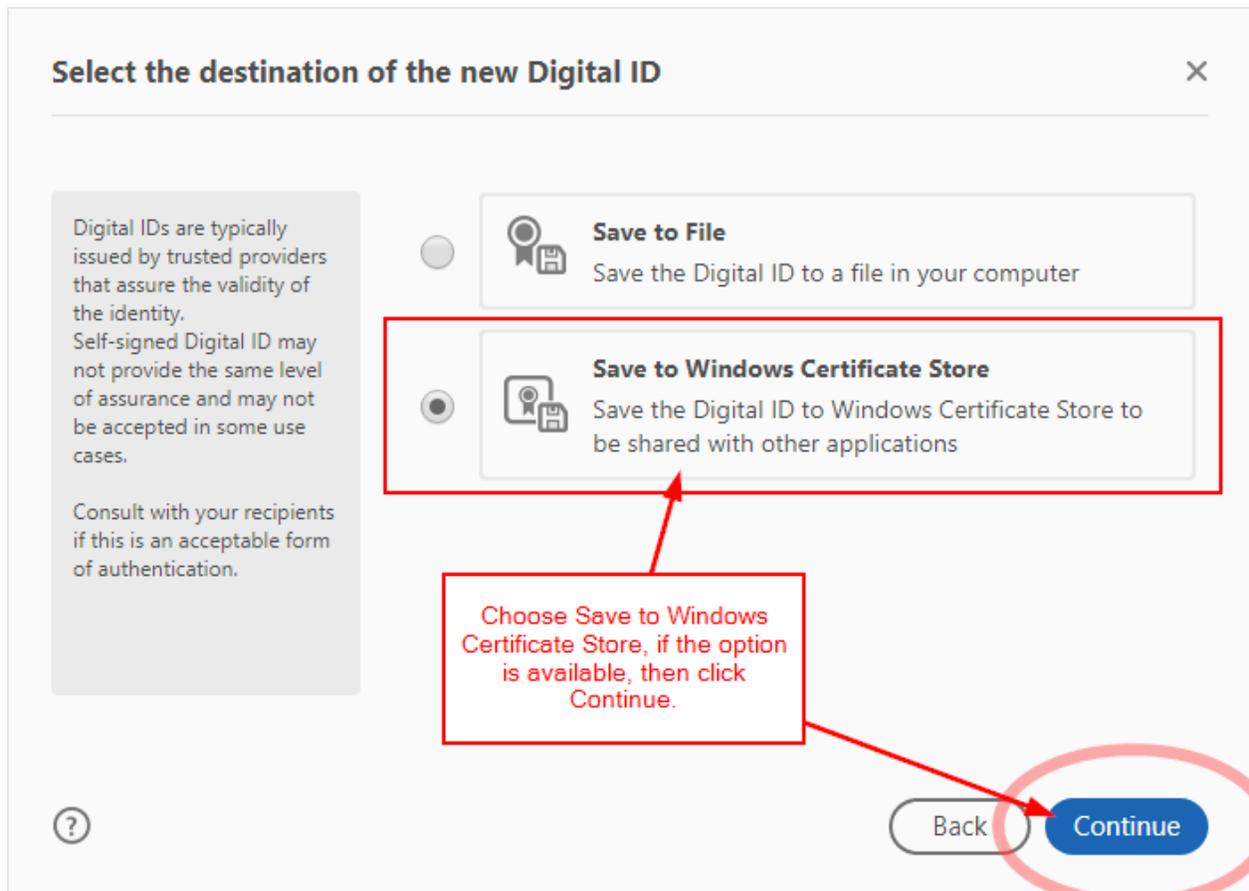


Figure 3 - Click Save to Windows Certificate Store and click Continue.

As indicated in the screenshot, if you're a Windows user choose **Save to Windows Certificate Store** and click **Continue**.

Mac Users

If you are using a Mac, you will be prompted to create a new ID with a password. Be careful to keep record of this password, as without it you'll be required to create a brand-new ID. **There is not Windows Certificate Store option on a Mac.**

Completing the Process

The final step asks for your personal identification. This will be included in your digital signature when you sign a form.

Create a self-signed Digital ID ×

Enter the identity information to be used for creating the self-signed Digital ID.

Digital IDs that are self-signed by individuals do not provide the assurance that the identity information is valid. For this reason they may not be accepted in some use cases.

Name	<input type="text" value="Enter Name..."/>
Organizational Unit	<input type="text" value="Enter Organizational Unit..."/>
Organization Name	<input type="text" value="Enter Organization Name..."/>
Email Address	<input type="text" value="Enter Email..."/>
Country/Region	US - UNITED STATES ▼
Key Algorithm	2048-bit RSA ▼
	Digital Signatures ▼

Enter your name, organizational unit (department), org name (Clemson University), and email address.
Disregard the remaining fields and click Save.

? Back Save

Figure 4 - Only your name, Organizational Unit and Name, and Email Address are needed here.

Enter your name as you'd like it to appear in your signature. Your Organizational Unit depends on your place of work. Examples include the College of Education, CUPD, or Planning & Design. Organizational Name is usually Clemson University. Finally, your Clemson e-mail address is fine in the respective field.

The default values of the remaining fields are sufficient for creating a digital ID. After entering your information, **click Save to exit the wizard.**

Using Your Digital ID to Sign Forms

With a newly created digital ID, you are now able to sign forms that contain digital signature fields. Now that you have an ID, clicking on a digital signature field will start a wizard for signing the document.

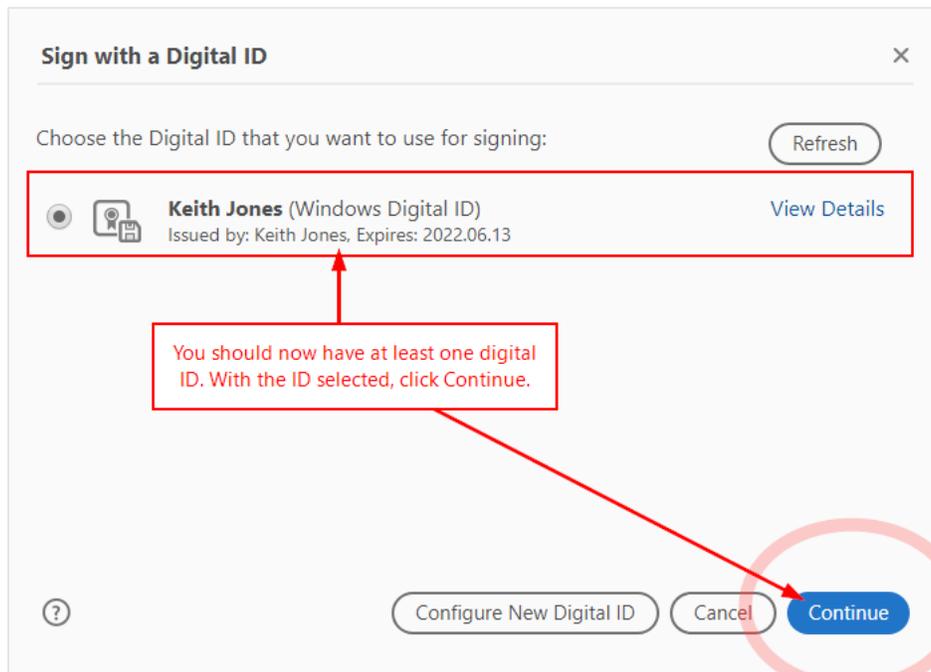


Figure 5 - With a newly created digital ID, you should now see a screen like the one above.

Choose your digital ID that you created and **click Continue**.

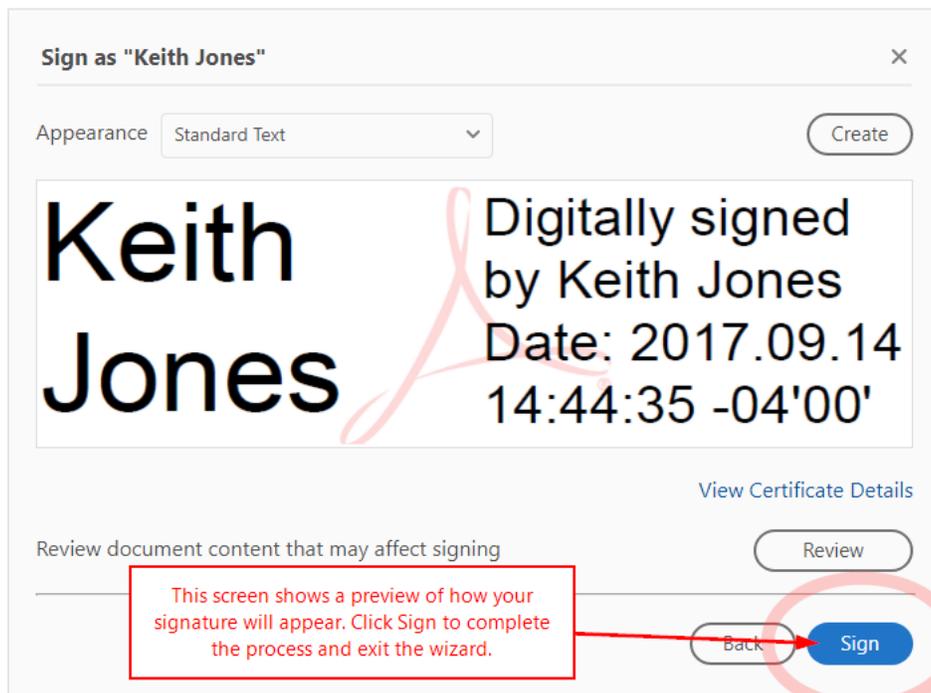


Figure 6 – The appearance of your signature may vary based on the size of the digital signature field.

The wizard will provide a sample of what your signature will look like when you apply it to the PDF document. **Click Sign to finish the wizard**, which will end with a prompt to save the file.

Signing is the Same as Saving

There is no need to save a document once it's been signed. However, if you make additional changes to a signed document, you will need to save those changes by using the typical Save / Save As option. Note that signing is usually the final step of submitting a document to University Facilities; **all fields should be filled prior to applying a digital signature**, save those fields that are intended for other signatories.

Final Thoughts

This guide is based on **Adobe Acrobat DC version 2017.012.20093** for Microsoft Windows. If you find that these instructions are dated or inaccurate, please contact [Facilities Information & Technology Services](#) to let them know.

Are Digital Signatures Valid?

Our application of **this practice is not intended to prevent forgery** but to reduce waste and improve efficiency. Digital signatures can be validated however, just as handwritten signatures can be validated by a notary public. We do not require forms with handwritten signatures to be validated by a third party, and this extends to our use of digital signatures.

Typically, parties involved in signing a document are aware of each other; **a signed electronic form is generally expected when received, and not acted on without question.**

What About 3rd Party Certificate Authorities?

[Certificate Authorities](#) are third parties that are used to easily validate the trustworthiness of a digital signature used in an organization. Clemson University does not actively encourage or enforce the use of certificate authorities to validate digital signatures when signing documents electronically. If this changes, University Facilities will comply with any policies set by the University.