

A Legality Guide to eSignature

Unfortunately for many businesses in the UK, securing a “yes” — a legally binding agreement — in writing is still an unnecessarily difficult challenge.

DocuSign is here to change that for you.

Discover how integrating DocuSign eSignature creates a safe, secure, and simple agreement for you and your customers. Over 500,000 DocuSign customers have innovated their agreement process with us — now it’s your turn.

In this eBook we’ll look at:



What DocuSign eSignature is



Why electronic signatures are safe



Why electronic signatures are legally-binding



What eIDAS is and why it’s important

Simplify agreements with eSignature

A signature is the final step before making a big step: whether that's agreeing to a new contract, a new job, or a new home. Once a document is signed, possibilities begin, which is why customers and businesses alike want a fast, secure journey there.

That's where eSignature comes in.

Electronic signatures are a smart, efficient and secure way of capturing consent.

Instead of a wet signature on a piece of paper, electronic signatures let you capture consent digitally, anytime and from anywhere, using a digital mark. This digital mark is then attached to an electronic document and applied by the intended signatory.

The right fit, every time

DocuSign's eSignature gives you the freedom to customise your agreement needs to the demands of your business. Here's how we do it.

Standard	Built to make your business flow. Standard gives you and your team everything you need to sign, manage, and send important documents securely.
Custom	<p>Create a bespoke eSignature solution with our secure eSignature API. If you're not sure of what an API is, think of it like a menu in a restaurant: it lists all the options available to you that you can order – except that you also provide a couple of ingredients to contribute to the final meal.</p> <p>So, with our eSignature API, we'll work with you to understand your systems and needs (your 'ingredients') and then our team will work to create a more bespoke and integrated eSignature solution for you.</p> <p>This takes signing, requesting, and automation to the next level. You can also track documents in real-time, implement multi-factor authentication, download sealed documents and more.</p>

Integrate and innovate

We want to help you make things work.

So, when it comes to innovating your agreement process, there's numerous ways you can integrate eSignatures into your business.

HR

Streamline the sending out and management of employment contracts, benefits paperwork, and onboarding

Commercial

Automatically generate NDAs and sales agreements, and capture global consent anytime

Consumer

Simplify the customer journey by streamlining new account opening documents

Legal

Ensure compliance and minimise risk by using eSignature with NDAs, purchase agreements, employment contracts and beyond

Case Study: Temper BV

The DocuSign Agreement Cloud helps freelancers become tax efficient

The Netherlands has a bustling freelance economy with more than 3.1 million individuals considering themselves as freelance. So, it's vital that they can find employment opportunities.

Amsterdam-based Temper operates an online platform for employment opportunities, matching seekers with their ideal candidates. Yet despite posting more than 8,000 hours of work a week, Temper noticed a dramatic drop off in the number of individuals signing up for a second shift. This was because after completing their initial shift, freelancers had to manually apply for a VAT number from the Dutch tax authorities.

This required freelancers to download, print, complete and mail a VAT application form to Temper, who would manually check and verify each application before submitting to the tax office. It was a time and resource-consuming task – and not to mention environmentally unfriendly.

That's where DocuSign came in.

By integrating DocuSign eSignature into its platform, Temper has dramatically simplified the way candidates make themselves available to the business community.

Now freelancers can complete their VAT form safely and securely through Temper's website – making it much easier to apply for additional shifts and opportunities. The number of freelancers obtaining a VAT number has jumped from 75% to 85% and cut the average time between first and second shift from 25 to 14 days.

The Temper team have also been significantly freed up to add value to the wider business, which is playing a key role in accelerating the company's plans to expand into Belgium and Germany.

Try out eSignature today: Completely free for 30 days, no obligations, no credit cards.

Are electronic signatures safe?

Electronic signatures are arguably the best way to keep your agreements secure and confidential information secure. For most people, they are as safe – if not more so – than the traditional 'signature on a piece of paper'.

Once you use an electronic signature, you never go back. Here's why:

Be direct

Agreements in need of an electronic signature can land directly in the signer's password-protected inbox. That means no more opportunities for lost mail or vulnerable paper documents to be left lying on top of a desk.

Be authentic

DocuSign ID Verification comes fully integrated with DocuSign eSignature to help you authenticate user identities and minimise forgery. For faster, easier and more secure agreements you can verify identities via government IDs and European IDs; SMS, access codes and phone authentication; knowledge-based authentication and even custom verifications too.

Be transparent

End-to-end audit trails are created for each document throughout every transaction, capturing every change with time and date stamps.

Are electronic signatures legal?

Is eSignature legal in the UK?

Quite simply: yes, it is.

England, Wales and Northern Ireland have legally recognised eSignatures since 2002. And, following the introduction of the eIDAS Regulations in 2016, eSignature can help you to collect electronic signatures in a safe and compliant manner.

Brexit may affect eIDAS' application in the UK however, which we'll look at a little later in this eBook.

But to keep you up to speed, DocuSign will provide regular updates as developments in UK electronic signature law arise.

A few exceptions

There are a few exceptions in the UK where an eSignature isn't legally binding or suitable. Currently, most UK Land Registry deeds can't be electronically signed, while electronic signatures are only valid for wills or power of attorney depending on certain use cases - so it's worth double-checking.

You can find out more in our [country-specific legality guides](#).

DocuSign eSignature: safe and legal

DocuSign eSignature is safe and legal.

We don't just paste an image of a signature into a PDF. Such agreements can lack proof of authenticity and can even be edited after being signed, thus compromising safety as well as trust. Instead, our eSignature solution complies with the definition of an electronic signature under the Electronic Communications Act 2000.

We abide by the most stringent security standards and are ISO 27001 certified, so you can be assured of the highest levels of security.

Power in the palm of your hand: the DocuSign app

Whether you're chasing contracts, customers, or closure, time is everything.

The powerful DocuSign app is built with convenience, safety, and simplicity in mind. It brings you all the benefits of your DocuSign account on-the-go, meaning you can keep your business on-track, wherever you are.

Signing with the DocuSign app is legally binding, encrypted, and secure. Simply create your signature in-app, and use it to sign, send, and manage your documents.

Optimised for personal, business, and enterprise use, it's built and certified on the Good Dynamics platform – meeting the highest mobile device management (MDM) and mobile security standards.

Why does eIDAS matter?

You might have seen the word “eIDAS” crop up before.

eIDAS stands for Electronic Identification, Authentication and Trust Services, and is an EU law that oversees electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the European Union's internal market, including electronic signature transactions. It creates a predictable regulatory environment for easier cross border business.

eIDAS went into effect 2016 and is valid across the EU. Its creation helped eliminate ambiguity around the legal value of an electronic signature in the EU, allowing electronic signatures to be admitted in court as evidence and confirming that they cannot be denied legal effect because they are in electronic form.

Three different options

Just like running a business, one solution doesn't fit all. eIDAS provides three different signing options: Standard, Advanced, and Qualified. Each option provides different levels of assurance – and in turn, compliance – to the requester. Here's what each tier entails:

Standard electronic signature	A standard electronic signature covers most electronic signatures. It can be applied to a document as the evidence of the signer's approval or acceptance.
Advanced electronic signature	An advanced electronic signature adds extra layers of security to a Standard Electronic Signature so that it provides a higher level of signer ID verification, security and tamper-sealing. This includes requirements that uniquely link an electronic signature to the identity of the signer.
Qualified electronic signature	A qualified electronic signature has a special legal status in EU member states and is the legal equivalent of a written signature. It must meet the highest security measures and be backed by a qualified certificate. The signer's identity must be verified and vouched for by a trust service provider that is certified by an EU member state. Due to these stipulations, QES can be impractical for everyday use.

Future-facing

eIDAS has revolutionised the way EU member states interact with one another in the world of business, and beyond.

Its framework sets the standard for electronic identification and authentication. And, as the EU pursues its mission to create a single, digital society, eIDAS' potential to centralise and standardise the way in which different nations interact looks to be further boosted.

The eIDAS Regulation sets the precedent for future digital transformation and is helping to further regulate and encourage a level playing field for digital signatures, identity recognition, and more, across the EU.

eIDAS after Brexit

The UK officially left the European Union on 31 January, 2020. In a post-Brexit world, there are many agreements and new procedures outstanding - including how eIDAS will function.

It's likely that the eIDAS Regulations will be replicated in UK law following Brexit, regardless of whether there is a managed exit from the EU or not. EU Regulations relating to electronic signatures - including eIDAS - will continue to apply until 31 December 2020.

DocuSign will provide ongoing updates throughout the Brexit transition period if regulations look set to change.

DocuSign's commitment to trust & legality

Privacy, security, trust. For us, nothing is more important.

We uphold strict, monitored standards, ensuring that our products not only meet but exceed the most stringent of security requirements. This helps to ensure our approach complies with the latest local, EU, and international requirements

It's time to agree better

If you're looking to improve experiences for everyone, everywhere, let DocuSign eSignature transform how you do business.

We believe keeping agreements compliant, transparent, and legal shouldn't be a challenge. We believe it should be fast, simple, and secure. eSignature makes that possible.

Want to see how easy it is?

Start your eSignature free trial today.

About DocuSign

DocuSign helps organisations connect and automate how they prepare, sign, act on, and manage agreements. As part of the DocuSign Agreement Cloud, DocuSign offers eSignature: the world's #1 way to sign electronically on practically any device, from almost anywhere, at any time. Today, more than 500,000 customers and hundreds of millions of users in over 180 countries use DocuSign to accelerate the process of doing business and to simplify people's lives.

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