



IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS MADE EASY

How to Send a Real PDF

Scanning your documents with your phone — step by step

What This Guide Is For

When our office, USCIS, or the National Visa Center asks you for a copy of a document, we need a **clean PDF**, **not a photograph**. A photo taken at an angle, in poor light, with a shadow across the page, usually cannot be used and will be sent back to you.

You do not need to buy a scanner. Your phone can do this in about **ninety seconds**. This handout shows you exactly how.

Which App to Use

iPhone, built in	Notes app or Files app. Free, no watermark, no ads. Recommended.
Android, built in	Google Drive → plus button → Scan. Free, no watermark, no ads. Recommended.
Also free	Adobe Scan or Microsoft Lens, on either kind of phone.
CamScanner	Works on iPhone and Android. The free version adds a small watermark to each page and shows ads.

Our office is not affiliated with any of these apps. See "Important Notices" at the end of this handout.

Step 1 — Set Up Before You Scan (30 seconds)

- Put the document on a flat, **DARK** surface. A dark table is best.
- Turn on good overhead light, or sit near a window.
- Turn the camera flash **OFF**.
- Take the document out of any plastic sleeve or folder.
- Remove staples. Flatten folded pages under a heavy book.
- Hold the phone flat and directly above the page, not at an angle.
- Make sure your own shadow is not on the page.

Step 2 — Scan the Page

Using an iPhone (no app needed)

- 1 Open **Notes**. Start a new note.
- 2 Tap the camera icon, then tap **Scan Documents**.
- 3 Hold the phone over the page. It captures by itself.
- 4 Adjust the corners, tap **Keep Scan**, then tap **Save**.
- 5 Tap the share button and save or send it as a PDF.

Using an Android phone (no app needed)

- 1 Open **Google Drive**.
- 2 Tap the plus button, then tap **Scan**.
- 3 Photograph the page and adjust the corners.
- 4 Add more pages with the plus icon.
- 5 Name the file and tap **Save**. It saves as a PDF.

Using CamScanner

- 1 Open the app and tap the camera button.
- 2 Hold the phone above the page until a frame appears around it, then take the picture.
- 3 Drag the four corners so they sit on the corners of the page.
- 4 Choose your filter (see Step 3), then tap the check mark.

Step 3 — Pick the Right Filter

IF THE DOCUMENT HAS A SEAL, STAMP, SIGNATURE, OR COLORED PAPER → use **MAGIC COLOR** (or **Color / Auto**).

IF IT IS A PLAIN TYPED PAGE IN BLACK INK ONLY → **Black and White** is fine.

Black and White can completely erase a light blue seal or an embossed seal. Almost every birth certificate, marriage certificate, and court record has one. **When in doubt, use color.**

Step 4 — Multi-Page Documents: ONE File, Not Eight

- Turn on batch mode or “multiple pages” **BEFORE** you start.
- Photograph every page, in order.
- Scan the **BACK** of any page that has printing on it. Certifications and court seals are often on the back.
- Pages out of order? Press and hold a thumbnail and drag it into place.

Step 5 — Never Crop Into the Seal

When you adjust the corners, leave a small margin of the table visible around the whole page. Do not crop tight to the edge of the paper. **A cut-off seal or stamp can get your document rejected.**

Step 6 — Name the File

Use this format every time:

LASTNAME_FIRSTNAME_WhatItIs_Year.pdf

Examples:

SILVA_MARIA_BirthCertificate_1994.pdf

SILVA_MARIA_MarriageCertificate_2019.pdf

SILVA_JOAO_DivorceJudgment_2011.pdf

SILVA_MARIA_TaxTranscript_2023.pdf

Please do not send files named *scan001*, *image4472*, or *new document*. Files with no name get separated from your case.

Step 7 — Export and Send

- Choose **PDF**. Not JPG. Not image.
- Choose standard or high quality, never the smallest size.
- **OPEN THE FILE AND READ IT** before you send. If you cannot read it, neither can we.
- Attach it to your email and send. *If you are not yet a client, please read “Before You Send Us Anything” on the last page first.*

Our Document Rules — Please Follow These

- 1 One document equals one PDF file.** Do not combine a birth certificate and a marriage certificate into the same file.
- 2** All pages of the document, in order, including the back of any page with printing on it.
- 3** Color scan for anything with a seal, stamp, or signature.
- 4** Nothing cut off. All four corners and the full seal must be visible.
- 5** Named using the format in Step 6.
- 6** Readable. Check it yourself before sending.
- 7** If the document is in another language, it also needs a certified English translation. Ask us.

The 8 Most Common Mistakes

- ✖ Sending 8 separate images instead of one PDF
- ✖ Cropping so tight that the seal is cut off
- ✖ Forgetting the back of the page
- ✖ Using black and white on a document with a colored seal
- ✖ Scanning through a plastic sleeve (glare)
- ✖ Compressing the file so small the text turns to mush
- ✖ Leaving the file named image4472
- ✖ Never opening the file to check that it is readable

If Something Goes Wrong

The app cannot find the edges	Move to a darker surface and add more light.
There is glare across the page	Turn off the flash and take it out of the plastic sleeve.
The seal disappeared	You used black and white. Rescan using Magic Color.
The file is too big to upload	Export at standard quality instead of maximum.
The text is blurry	Brace your elbows on the table and hold still, or set the phone down and use the timer.
Pages are in the wrong order	Press and hold the thumbnail and drag it.

Before You Send — Final Checklist

- ☐ All pages included, in order
- ☐ Both sides scanned where needed
- ☐ Nothing cut off, seal fully visible
- ☐ Right filter used
- ☐ Saved as a PDF
- ☐ Named correctly
- ☐ Opened and read it myself

Doing Your Case Yourself?

If you are not hiring a law firm, that is your right. But do not take help from people who do not know immigration law. Do not use friends. Do not use family members. Do not use a *notario* or *notarista* — in the United States a notary public is not a lawyer and cannot give legal advice. Do not use someone who works at city hall. Do not use a paralegal who works at an immigration firm and takes cases on the side. If you are going to do this on your own, learn to do it correctly first. Our full video course is linked on the blog post where you downloaded this handout.

BOTELHO LAW GROUP PLLC

901 Eastern Avenue, Fall River, MA 02723
508-500-1551 · intake@botelholawgroup.com
www.botelholawgroup.com

© 2026 Botelho Law Group PLLC. All rights reserved. You may print and share this handout in its complete, unaltered form for personal, non-commercial use.

Important Notices

Attorney Advertising

This handout is attorney advertising, published by Botelho Law Group PLLC, 901 Eastern Avenue, Fall River, MA 02723, which is responsible for its content.

General Information Only — Not Legal Advice

This handout provides general, educational information about scanning and organizing documents. It is not legal advice and is not a substitute for advice from a qualified attorney about your specific situation. Every immigration case is different. Do not act, or fail to act, based on this handout without first consulting a licensed attorney.

No Attorney-Client Relationship

Reading, downloading, or using this handout, or contacting our office, does not create an attorney-client relationship between you and Botelho Law Group PLLC. An attorney-client relationship is formed only when both you and our firm have signed a written engagement agreement.

Before You Send Us Anything

If you are not yet a client, please do not send us documents or confidential information until we have confirmed in writing that we represent you. Information sent before that time may not be treated as confidential or privileged, and sending it does not obligate our firm to take your case or to review what you sent.

Always Follow Official Instructions

Government requirements, forms, filing procedures, and fees change often. This handout was accurate to the best of our knowledge when published (September 2026) and may not reflect later changes. If a request, notice, or instruction from USCIS, the National Visa Center, the Department of State, an immigration court, or any other agency differs from this handout, follow the agency's instructions.

No Guarantee of Results

Following these steps does not guarantee that any document will be accepted or that any application, petition, or case will be approved. Decisions are made by government agencies, not by our firm.

Third-Party Apps and Trademarks

Botelho Law Group PLLC is not affiliated with, sponsored by, or endorsed by the makers of any app named in this handout, and we receive nothing for mentioning them. All product names and trademarks belong to their respective owners. App features, menus, and pricing may change. Some scanning apps store copies of your documents on their own servers; review each app's privacy settings, and consider deleting sensitive scans from your phone and cloud storage after they have been delivered.

Protecting Your Information

Immigration documents contain sensitive personal information. Regular email is not a fully secure method of communication. Ask our office about secure ways to send documents, and never send documents to anyone who contacts you claiming to be from our firm or a government agency without first verifying who they are.

Use at Your Own Risk

This handout is provided "as is." To the fullest extent permitted by law, Botelho Law Group PLLC disclaims liability for any loss or damage arising from the use of, or reliance on, this handout or any third-party app or service it mentions.

Not a Referral

The warning about notarios, notaristas, and unlicensed helpers is general consumer guidance and is not a comment on any specific person or business. Only licensed attorneys and representatives accredited by the U.S. Department of Justice may give immigration legal advice.