

How to Create a Scanned Digital Signature

2011 by [Mark Shead](#)

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If you want to create a scanned electronic version of your signature, there are several ways to do it. The “right” way would be to send your signature to a company that will create a [truetype font of your entire signature](#) so you can print it at any size and still have the beautiful vector drawn lines.

The easy way to do it is to scan in your signature and remove the background. If you make it large enough and scan at a high enough resolution, you don’t have to worry about it looking bad when it gets printed.

I’m going to walk you through the “easy” way. I’ll be using Photoshop simply because you probably know someone who has it and wouldn’t mind doing this for you. I’m sure you can do it with other programs as well.

Note: When people talk about “digital signatures” they usually aren’t referring to a scanned version of your handwriting. Digital electronic signatures are an electronic way to prove that someone signed something even if the end product is being transmitted through a network where malicious people may try to tamper with it.

1. Sign a piece of paper

This is harder than it sounds because you’ll be very critical of the way it looks. I suggest signing with large letters. When you shrink it down, it will look better. I used a blue gel pen and got decent results. Sign a piece of paper several times and then scan it in. This will give you some options to choose the best looking image.

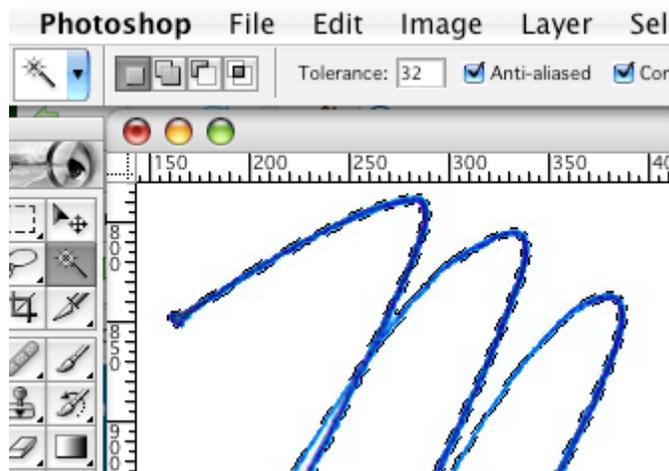
2. Scan the paper

You probably want to use a high resolution for best results. I wouldn’t go below 600 dpi.

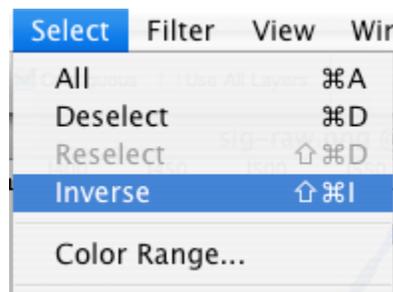
3. Crop down to the best signature

You also may need to straighten the image at this point so it is level and will line up with horizontal lines on paper.

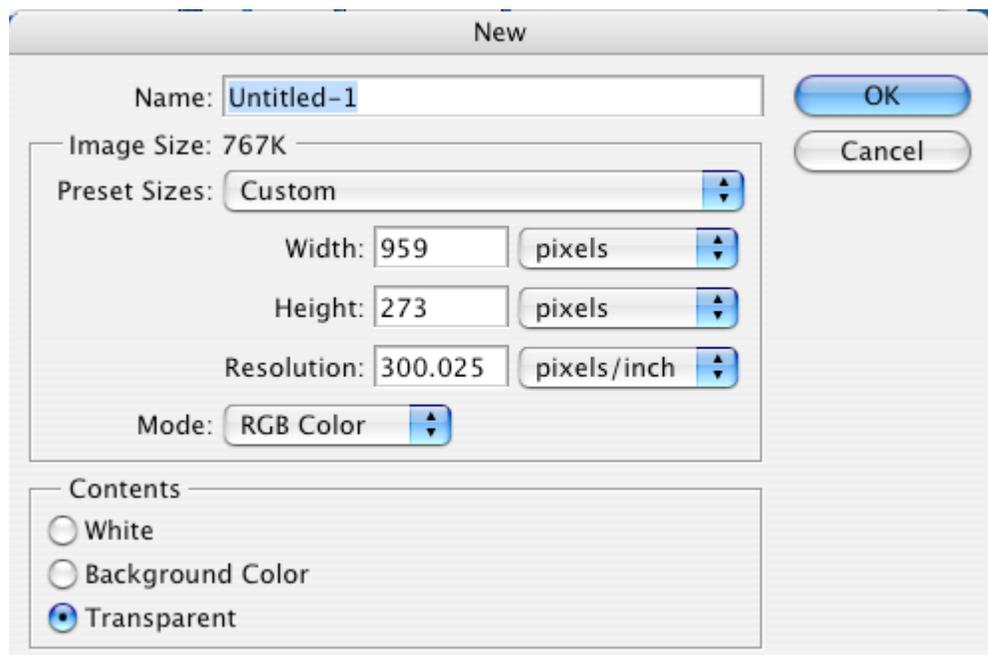
4. Use the magic wand to select the area around the signature



5. Invert the selection and copy



6. Paste the signature into a new document with a transparent background





7. Use the magic wand to remove any white still left inside letters.

8. Save the image in a format that supports transparent backgrounds.

I'd suggest using PNG. It can be imported into Acrobat, supports transparency, and doesn't have problems with "artifacts" like some other formats. You don't want to use JPEG because of the artifact problem.

So what can you use your scanned digital signature for? Here are some suggestions:

- **Email Signature** – I'm not a big fan of using an image in an email signature, but I know a lot of people think it gives emails a nice personal touch. If you do decide to use this in your email as an electronic signature, be sure to send test messages to several email programs to make sure that it looks the way you expect.
- **Digital Signature Representation** – Acrobat can support digital electronic signatures using public key infrastructure. They also allow you to attach a digital representation of your signature—so there is an actual signature on the document even though the real legal weight is being handled by a bunch of numbers behind the scene. This is particularly useful if you are sending a document with a digital signature to someone who may not be particularly technology savvy. They may not understand how the digital signature works, but they will have a signature that they recognize when they print the document out.
- **Signing Faxes** – This is one of my main uses for a scanned signature. I can receive a fax, sign it and fax it back without ever printing the document out.