

California Notary Cheat Sheet 2026

The night-before summary, built like the exam.

—	—	70%
Questions	Time limit	Passing score
\$40	California Secretary of St...	
Exam fee	Governing body	

Scannable, high-yield facts and rules for exam day. Numbers you must memorize are in bold.

Exam Fast Facts

- Passing score: **70%** — a score of 70 or more is required to pass.
- Fee: **\$40** exam and application processing fee.
- Provider: CPS HR Consulting (administers and mails results).
- A written exam prescribed by the Secretary of State is required.
- Commission term: 4 years.

The Notary Role (1 line)

A notary public is a state-commissioned public officer who acts as an impartial witness to signings and deters fraud.

Acknowledgment vs. Jurat (know cold)

- Acknowledgment: signer declares the signature is genuine and made willingly. Signer need NOT sign in the notary's presence. No oath.
- Jurat: signer **MUST** sign in the notary's presence **AND** take an oath/affirmation that the statements are true. Used for affidavits and sworn statements.
- Memory hook: Jurat = swear + sign in front of you; Acknowledgment = just admit it's your signature.

Identifying the Signer

Positively identify the signer by (1) personal knowledge OR (2) satisfactory evidence — e.g., a current government-issued ID.

Prohibited Acts (auto-fail scenarios)

- No self-interest: never notarize a document you are a party to or have a direct financial/beneficial interest in.
- Signer must be present: never notarize unless the signer is physically present at the time of notarization.
- No legal advice (non-attorneys): a non-attorney notary may not give legal advice, charge for it, or prepare legal documents for others.

Duty to Refuse

You **MUST** refuse if the signer is coerced, does not understand the transaction, or cannot be properly identified.

Journal — Record Every Time (5 items)

- Date & time of the act
- Type of act
- Type of document
- Name & address of each signer

- Identification method used

Seal — 4 Required Elements

- Notary's name
- The words "Notary Public"
- Commissioning state
- Commission expiration date

Seal & Journal Security

Keep the seal and journal under your exclusive control; never let another person use them.

Official sources

- California Secretary of State — Notary Public Qualifications: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/notary/qualifications>
- California Secretary of State — Notary Public Frequently Asked Questions: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/notary/faqs>
- California Legislature — California Government Code Section 8201 (Notary Qualifications):
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=GOV§ionNum=8201.

Free practice questions for this exam: www.everyexamprep.com/exams/ca-notary/practice-test