

# Properly Formatted Document Guide

## Document Standardization Guide

All documents submitted for recording in Washington State must conform to standards set by RCW 36.18 and 65.04. These standards were enacted to make documents more accessible to the public by bringing the most important information to the document's first page, thus aiding document indexing and research. Documents that do not conform to the standards will be returned for correction.

The following list summarizes these requirements, with more detailed information accessible by clicking the link. Certain information or formatting shortcomings can be corrected with the addition of a cover page. Please add \$1.00 to the fee for the cost of recording the extra page if this option is taken.

### First Page Requirements:

The first page of the document, or the cover sheet, must include the following information:

- Title(s)
- Reference Number
- Grantor / Grantee
- Legal Description
- Assessor's Parcel Number

**Margins:** Top margin must be at least 3" , all others, 1" . Margins must be clear of all writing and free of hole punches.

**Return Address:** Return name & address must be on the first page in the top left corner

**Title(s):** listed just below the 3" top margin of the first page. If using a cover sheet, the title(s) on the cover sheet must be the same as the title(s) on the document.

**Reference Number:** A reference number is the Auditor's File Number (AFN) and volume and page (if applicable) of the document being assigned, released, referenced, terminated or amended. In addition to fulfilling statutory and practical requirements, this enables documents to be electronically linked.

**Grantor(s) and Grantee(s):** The party listed as the document's grantor is typically yielding something to another party, be it a property conveyance or a promise to repay a mortgage. In

all but a few cases, the person that signs the document is the grantor. A lien or judgment debtor is also a grantor, though in this case the “granting” may be somewhat involuntary and the document will be not be signed by them. To find the appropriate party/parties to place in this field, you can view or download “Document Titles”.

**Legal Description - Entire or Abbreviated:** If the entire legal description is on the first page, there is no need or requirement to also abbreviate it on the first page. In cases where the entire legal description does not appear on the first page it must be abbreviated on the first page of the document or cover sheet with a reference to the page number where the entire legal description is located. Appropriate abbreviations are: Lot Block Subdivision or Section-Township-Range quarter-quarter section (i.e., 04-20-22 NE NE) Please Note: It is not acceptable to put “See attached” or “refer to Appendix A” in place of abbreviating the legal description.

**Assessor’s Parcel Number:** The Assessor’s 12-digit tax parcel number must appear on the first page of the document/cover sheet if a legal description is included in the document. If there are too many parcel numbers to fit on the first page, you can enter what will fit and reference the page number where the remainder are located. If you need help finding the number you can refer to your tax statement or contact the County Assessor’s Office. If the parcel number has not yet been assigned, put “Not Yet Assigned” in the space for parcel number. If a parcel number is on the document, the legal description must also be included.

**Legibility:** The text must be crisp enough to distinguish each character individually.

**Font:** The font size must be eight (8) point type or larger.

**Page Size:** 8.5” x 11” minimum, 8.5” x 14” maximum.

**Attachments:** No attachment may be affixed to documents presented for recording. Attachments, for purposes of this legislation, refers to notary seals, sticky notes, or other items stapled, taped, etc. on the face of the document. Attachment does not refer to additional pages added to the end of a document such as addenda, schedules, or expanded legal descriptions which may be referred to in the body of the document as “Attachment A” or “Appendix A,” etc.

**Effective January 1, 1997, the first page of all documents presented for recording must include:**

- A three-inch margin at the top and a one-inch margin on the sides and bottom
- A return address
- The title of the instrument (i.e. : Deed of Trust)
- The reference number of documents assigned or released (if applicable)
- Name(s) of Grantor and Grantee
- Abbreviated legal description with Lot, Block, and Plat or Section, Township and Range
- Assessor’s tax parcel number

**If the first page of your document does not meet these recording requirements, [click here to download a coversheet](#).**

## **Additional Pages Must Adhere to these rules:**

- Each additional page must have a one inch margin on all sides.
- All pages of the document must be on paper of a weight and color capable of producing a legible image.
- Pages must not be larger than 8 ½ inches wide by 14 inches long.
- The text of the document must be printed in 8 point font (approximately 1/8 inch) or larger.
- All documents must be prepared in an ink color capable of being imaged.
- All seals must be legible and capable of producing a legible image.
- No attachments may be taped, stapled or glued to the pages of the document.

Documents which were signed and dated PRIOR to the January 1, 1997 law, may be recorded without re-formatting the document, but a cover sheet will be required. Documents signed and dated AFTER January 1, 1997 must conform to the new recording requirements or they will be rejected.