

# Adobe Sign: Standard E-Signature vs Digital Signature Fields FAQ

When a recipient is unable to sign in Adobe Sign and instead sees a message or prompt related to setting up a digital ID, certificate, or digital signature, it typically means the PDF they are being asked to sign was created with a digital signature field (certificate-based), rather than a standard e-signature field, for added security. This distinction is important - *e-signatures* and *digital signatures* are not the same. The difference originates outside of Adobe Sign, usually based on how the original PDF was built in Adobe Acrobat Pro or another PDF design tool.

## Key Points

- If a PDF was built in Acrobat using “Prepare Form” and includes a *digital signature field*, that field remains embedded in the document. When uploaded, it carries over - forcing recipients to use a tool like Acrobat or Reader to configure a digital ID. Even when editing fields in Adobe Sign, the editor provides no clear indicator that an uploaded PDF contains a digital signature field if/when the digital signature field option has been disabled in Adobe Sign.
- To check a PDF before uploading (highly recommended – especially if you will be uploading it as a reusable template) - navigate the following path: open the PDF document in Acrobat Pro → Tools → Prepare Form. If a field shows as a “Digital Signature” field, it will likely cause issues in Adobe Sign. To fix: delete the Digital Signature field(s) or use File → Save as Other → Optimized PDF → Discard all form fields. You can then add a standard e-signature fields directly in Adobe Sign after uploading the form.
- Since legacy PDFs may contain certificate-based fields, you should always review (and/or revise, or rebuild if necessary, older PDFs (or PDFs you did not create yourself) before uploading into Adobe Sign to ensure recipients can sign in their browser.

## Quick Summary

<b>Symptom</b>	<b>Likely Cause</b>	<b>Fix</b>
Document recipient sees message or prompt to configure a digital ID/certificate (which happens outside of Adobe Sign) when attempting to sign an Adobe Sign form	PDF contains digital signature field(s) which requires signers to have a pre-configured digital ID (through a digital id service provider) to verify their identity	Remove or rebuild the field in Acrobat; Remove the digital id field in Adobe Sign and add a standard e-signature field
No “Digital Signature” option visible in Adobe Sign	Feature disabled at account/group level to streamline the signing process and to help requestors and recipients avoid confusion	If a more strictly controlled signing field is required for specific end-users, they can submit a support ticket to initiate further discussion.