

Signature Comparison

This guide recommends thinking about signatures at two levels: quick analysis of the general character of the signature, then sharp focus on individual details. No threshold of minor discrepancies should outweigh your judgment that the general character of two signatures is so similar that they must have been written by the same hand. Yet, a single detail that is difficult to reproduce might compensate for several small differences, perhaps even outweighing a strong initial judgment of discrepancy. Signature comparison is an art, not a science. Teach yourself what to look for, and then trust your judgment.

General Analysis

The Type of Writing

Voter Record Signature



Mail Ballot Signature



The type of writing is perhaps the easiest characteristic to notice a difference, after spelling errors. A significant difference in the type of writing may be an immediate sign that the signature should be referred/rejected.

Speed of Writing

Voter Record Signature



Mail Ballot Signature



People will sign their signature thousands of times, usually signing very quickly and without hesitation. If someone is attempting to forge a voter's signature, you may notice hesitation marks. Conversely, an older voter or voter who may have a disability may take more time to sign their signature. It may not be as smooth, or it may have hesitation marks. If the signature on the mail ballot certificate envelope appears to be smoother, it may be a sign of a signature that should be rejected. In both scenarios, it is consistency that matters. The overall form of the letters should be consistent.

Spacing Between Names

Voter Record Signature



Mail Ballot Signature



Writing your signature is very much a habit, so the spacing should be similar. If the spacing on the ballot envelope signature is not consistent with the signature in the SVRS, it may be a sign the signature should be rejected.

Proportions and Size of Signature

Voter Record Signature



Mail Ballot Signature



A person's signature should have consistency in terms of the size and proportion of the signature as well. In the example above, the proportions are different between the two signatures.

Slant of Writing

Voter Record Signature



Mail Ballot Signature



The slant of a signature is an easy characteristic to identify when looking for fraud. People usually hold their pen the same way, which creates consistency in the direction of the signature slant. The slant of a signature matters, especially a left slant, which is uncommon.

Incorrect Spelling

Voter Record Signature

John Kennedy

Mail Ballot Signature

John Kenedy 

This is a very straightforward issue. If the name is misspelled, you should reject the signature.

Detailed Analysis

Letter Spacing

Voter Record Signature



Mail Ballot Signature



As discussed previously, the spacing of letters within a signature should be relatively consistent, including the spacing of letters within the name. If there is a spacing variance not present in any signature in the voter’s SVRS file, it could be a sign of a forged signature.

Size of Specific Letters

Voter Record Signature



Mail Ballot Signature



In the example above, the proportion of the first letter of the mail ballot signature is different than the voter record signature. Also, the last letter of the mail ballot signature is not the same size and as the voter record signature.

Other Distinguishing Features

Voter Record Signature



Mail Ballot Signature



Most signatures have very distinctive features such as strong curves, loops, and cross-points. Curves and loops tend to be consistent over the course of time. Cross-points may be affected by external factors, such as the quality of the pen or writing surface used when signing the ballot envelope. Pay close attention to the crossing of “t” and the dotting of “i”.

Pen Lifts

Voter Record Signature

Cleveland

Mail Ballot Signature

Cleveland

When a forger is trying to copy a signature, they may need to slow down or stop to verify their work. This may lead to pen lifts that would not be there when a person is comfortable signing their own signature.

Beginning and Ending Strokes

Voter Record Signature

Harold Washington

Mail Ballot Signature

Harold Washington

When a person writes their signature, they tend to begin writing before their pen hits the paper. A forger will be much more deliberate when trying to copy a signature. This may lead to a difference in the beginning and end stroke of a signature, perhaps leaving larger ink dots or stray marks around the signature.

Acceptable Signature Examples

It can be difficult to know when a signature variation should or should not lead to rejecting a ballot envelope. The presence of a signature variance does not mean a signature should be rejected. The following examples detail common signature variations that should be accepted.

Age / Other Factors

Voter Record Signature

Theodore Canyon

Mail Ballot Signature

Theodore Canyon

Signing With A Nickname

Voter Record Signature

Isabella Jones

Mail Ballot Signature

Bella Jones

Signing With Initials

Voter Record Signature

Terry Jones Woods

Mail Ballot Signature

TJ Woods

Electronic Signature

Voter Record Signature

Michael Green

Mail Ballot Signature

Michael Green

Signature Comparison Exercise

Match the Signature Exemplar to its mate:
Example:

State

A. *State* B. *State* C. *State* D. *State*

1. *Precinct*

A. *Precinet* B. *Procinct* C. *Precimet* D. *Procinct*

2. *Ballot*

A. *Ballot* B. *Ballot* C. *Ballot* D. *Ballot*

3. *Voter*

A. *Voter* B. *Voter* C. *Voter* D. *Voter*

4. *Elections*

A. *Election* B. *Electiuns* C. *Elections* D. *Electiuns*

5. *Results*

A. *Results* B. *Results* C. *Results* D. *Results*

Exercise: Attempting Some Else's Signature

Signing for someone without a Model:

In the event someone tries to submit the ballot of another voter, it's very unlikely they'll have examples of the voter's signature to use as models. To see what the results might look like, try to sign the name of a colleague who is present. After you make your attempt, ask them to sign their name.

Your attempt at their signature ...

Your colleague's actual signature

Now compare them.

How should this exercise guide your effort to compare voter signatures?

Signature Comparison Exercise (ANSWER KEY)

1. C
2. B
3. D
4. C
5. B