

# California Notary License Practice Exam (Sample)

## Study Guide



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**SAMPLE**

## **Questions**

- 1. Are notarized documents considered public records?**
  - A. Yes, they are not subject to public inspection**
  - B. Yes, they can be subject to public inspection depending on the document type**
  - C. No, they are always confidential**
  - D. Only if requested by law enforcement**
- 2. What may notaries not certify a copy of?**
  - A. A public record**
  - B. A birth certificate**
  - C. A photograph**
  - D. Journal entry requested by a member of the public**
- 3. If your employer asks to see your notarial journal for business purposes, you should:**
  - A. Refuse to show them**
  - B. Let him see only items pertaining to his business**
  - C. Show the entire journal**
  - D. Report him to the authorities**
- 4. What is the statute of limitations for making a statement known to be false?**
  - A. 2 years**
  - B. 3 years**
  - C. 4 years**
  - D. 5 years**
- 5. Can a notary notarize their own documents?**
  - A. Yes, as long as they are present**
  - B. No, notaries cannot notarize documents in which they have a direct interest**
  - C. Yes, but only with another witness present**
  - D. No, but they can certify copies of their own documents**

- 6. How frequently must a notary public renew their commission in California?**
- A. Every two years**
  - B. Every five years**
  - C. Every four years**
  - D. Every year**
- 7. To whom do you deliver your papers when you resign a commission?**
- A. State Notary Commission**
  - B. County Clerk where your current oath is on file**
  - C. The Secretary of State**
  - D. Your employer**
- 8. When a notary is employed by a public agency, where should the fees collected for non-agency related notarization be remitted?**
- A. To the notary's personal account**
  - B. To the employing agency**
  - C. To the state treasury**
  - D. To charity**
- 9. Which items must always be put in the journal?**
- A. Personal information**
  - B. Date, time, type of document, fees**
  - C. Client's social security number**
  - D. Witness names**
- 10. How recent must IDs be to be acceptable?**
- A. Issued within the past 3 years**
  - B. Issued within the past 4 years**
  - C. Issued within the past 5 years**
  - D. Issued within the past 6 years**

## **Answers**

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1. B
2. B
3. B
4. C
5. B
6. C
7. B
8. B
9. B
10. C

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## **Explanations**

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**1. Are notarized documents considered public records?**

- A. Yes, they are not subject to public inspection
- B. Yes, they can be subject to public inspection depending on the document type**
- C. No, they are always confidential
- D. Only if requested by law enforcement

Notarized documents can indeed be subject to public inspection, depending on the type of document and the laws governing its confidentiality. Generally, notarization serves to authenticate a document and validate the identities of the signers, which may make the document a matter of public record. For instance, documents such as property deeds, certain court filings, and other legal instruments that are notarized may be accessible by the public. However, some types of documents, like those involving sensitive personal information or that are subject to legal confidentiality, may not be openly available for public inspection even if they are notarized. Therefore, the accessibility largely depends on the nature of the document and the regulations surrounding its use. This understanding helps clarify that while many notarized documents can contribute to public records, there are exceptions based on the content and context of the document.

**2. What may notaries not certify a copy of?**

- A. A public record
- B. A birth certificate**
- C. A photograph
- D. Journal entry requested by a member of the public

Notaries are prohibited from certifying copies of certain documents, and one of those is a birth certificate. This restriction stems from the sensitivity and legal significance attached to original vital records such as birth certificates. States have specific laws regarding who can issue certified copies of such documents. Typically, certified copies must be issued directly by the vital records office or government entity that originally created the document, ensuring that the copy is valid and accurate. In contrast, public records and other types of documents (like photographs, under certain conditions) can often be certified by a notary, provided that proper procedures are followed. Notaries are not authorized to provide certification for certain types of vital records to maintain the integrity of these important documents.

**3. If your employer asks to see your notarial journal for business purposes, you should:**

- A. Refuse to show them
- B. Let him see only items pertaining to his business**
- C. Show the entire journal
- D. Report him to the authorities

The reason why options A and C are incorrect is because refusing to show the journal may raise suspicion and showing the entire journal may reveal personal information of other clients. Option D is incorrect because it is not necessary to report the employer to the authorities unless there is evidence of illegal activity. Option B is the most appropriate response as it allows the employer to see relevant information, while still protecting the privacy of other clients.

**4. What is the statute of limitations for making a statement known to be false?**

- A. 2 years**
- B. 3 years**
- C. 4 years**
- D. 5 years**

The other options of 2, 3, and 5 years are incorrect because they do not align with the general statute of limitations for making a false statement. For example, many states have a statute of limitations of 3 years for general civil cases, which is why option B may seem like a plausible answer. However, making a knowingly false statement is considered a more serious offense and may have a longer statute of limitations. On the other hand, option A of 2 years may not give enough time for the consequences of the false statement to fully come to light. Option D of 5 years may seem reasonable, but 4 years is the most common statute of limitations for this type of offense. Therefore, option C is the best answer because it aligns with the most common and reasonable statute of limitations for making a known false statement.

**5. Can a notary notarize their own documents?**

- A. Yes, as long as they are present**
- B. No, notaries cannot notarize documents in which they have a direct interest**
- C. Yes, but only with another witness present**
- D. No, but they can certify copies of their own documents**

The correct answer indicates that notaries are prohibited from notarizing documents in which they have a direct interest. This restriction is in place to ensure the integrity and impartiality of the notarization process. A notary's primary role is to act as an impartial witness to the signing of documents; thus, they must avoid any conflicts of interest that could compromise their neutrality. When a notary attempts to notarize their own documents, it raises potential questions about the authenticity of the signature and the reliability of the notarization. This rule protects the public by ensuring that notaries maintain an objective stance and do not benefit from the documents they are notarizing. Notarizing one's own document could lead to situations where the notary's personal interests might influence the notarization, undermining the trust placed in the notarial act. Therefore, notaries must refrain from notarizing documents where they have a vested interest to uphold the ethical standards of their profession.

**6. How frequently must a notary public renew their commission in California?**

- A. Every two years**
- B. Every five years**
- C. Every four years**
- D. Every year**

In California, a notary public must renew their commission every four years. This requirement is set to ensure that notaries maintain their knowledge and competency in the laws surrounding notarial acts, as well as to keep their backgrounds clear of any disqualifying factors. By renewing every four years, the state can confirm that notaries are still eligible to perform their duties and are compliant with current regulations, which may evolve over time. The four-year renewal cycle allows for a balance between maintaining sufficient oversight of notaries and providing them with a reasonable timeframe in which they can serve the public. Frequent renewal, such as annually, would impose unnecessary burdens on notaries and the administrative process, while a longer interval could increase the risk of outdated practices and knowledge. Hence, the four-year renewal period is designed to uphold the integrity and reliability of notaries in California.

**7. To whom do you deliver your papers when you resign a commission?**

- A. State Notary Commission**
- B. County Clerk where your current oath is on file**
- C. The Secretary of State**
- D. Your employer**

When resigning a commission, the correct person to deliver your papers to is the County Clerk where your current oath is on file. This is because the County Clerk is responsible for recording and maintaining official documents, including oaths of office. The other options, while related to government entities, are not directly involved in the acceptance of your resignation. The State Notary Commission authorizes individuals to perform notarial acts, the Secretary of State is responsible for overseeing state elections and governmental functions, and your employer does not have the authority to accept your resignation from a commission. Therefore, the County Clerk is the most appropriate choice in this scenario.

**8. When a notary is employed by a public agency, where should the fees collected for non-agency related notarization be remitted?**

**A. To the notary's personal account**

**B. To the employing agency**

**C. To the state treasury**

**D. To charity**

When a notary is employed by a public agency and collects fees for notarizations that are unrelated to their agency responsibilities, those fees are required to be remitted to the employing agency. This practice aligns with the principles of public accountability and ensures that the fees contribute to the financial resources of the agency that employs the notary. This policy helps maintain transparency and proper management of public funds, rather than allowing individual notaries to keep those fees as personal income. The expectation is that fees earned in the scope of public agency employment should be used to benefit the agency and, by extension, the public, rather than being funneled into individual accounts or other unrelated areas. This principle is key to maintaining the integrity and transparency of public service roles.

**9. Which items must always be put in the journal?**

**A. Personal information**

**B. Date, time, type of document, fees**

**C. Client's social security number**

**D. Witness names**

A Personal information should not be included in a journal as it is not relevant to the content being recorded. C: The client's social security number should not be included in a journal for privacy and security reasons. D: Witness names may be included in a journal depending on the type of document being recorded, but it is not a requirement for all journal entries. The most essential items that should always be included are the date, time, type of document, and any associated fees. These pieces of information provide important context and allow for accurate record-keeping.

**10. How recent must IDs be to be acceptable?**

**A. Issued within the past 3 years**

**B. Issued within the past 4 years**

**C. Issued within the past 5 years**

**D. Issued within the past 6 years**

IDs must typically be issued within the last few years to be considered valid. Option A is incorrect because 3 years may be too short of a time frame for an ID to remain valid. Option B and D are incorrect because 4 and 6 years may be too long for an ID to still be considered current. Option C, issued within the past 5 years, is the most reasonable and common standard for the validity of an ID.