

# What is an "apostille" ? How do I get one?

According to Merriam Webster, ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)), the legal definition of apostille is:

*a document used in international law that is issued by a government in accordance with the Hague Convention and that certifies that another document has been signed by a notary public.*

It has two accepted pronunciations, \ə- 'päs-təl, a-pə-'stēl\ ; or as English syllables: "uh - POSS - til" or "ah - puh - STEEL"

There are occasions when you need to send authenticated photocopies of documents to be used outside the United States.

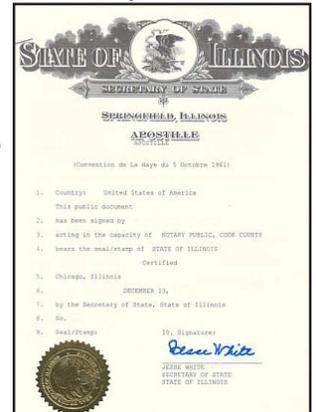
**The document must be presented to be certified. What is a document certification?** If you have an original document, such as a birth certificate, school transcript, or something else that might be difficult to replace, that document can be copied and the copy certified, making it as good as the original.

**Can a notary public certify a document?** No, a licensed attorney must do this. The attorney reviews the original document, then compares it with a copy. The attorney then verifies that it is identical to the original, signs the certification language placed by the law office on the photocopy, and his or her signature is then notarized. This method of certification is effective in most situations.

To use these copies outside the United States, in countries that signed the Hague Convention, they often need additional governmental authorization, called an "apostille".

**In Illinois, this is a two step process.** First, you take the certified photocopy to the County Clerk where the Notary is registered. In Champaign County, the Clerk is at 1776 E. Washington St. in Urbana. The green bus can take you there. Check [mtd.org](http://mtd.org) for the bus route and schedule.

That document is then sent with a \$2.00 fee, for each document, to the Secretary of State in Springfield, IL. A separate letter is provided establishing the authenticity of the document; in effect, it is an official state stamp of approval.



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