Wolters Kluwer
When you have to be right

CCH Axcess™

At the Center of the Firm in Motion

CCH® eSign

Quick Start Guide

January 2022

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Chapter 1

Introducing CCH® eSign

Welcome to CCH eSign

CCH eSign allows you to securely send documents to your clients, employees, and other third parties to obtain their electronic signatures. Wolters Kluwer has collaborated with AssureSign to provide you with a secure eSign solution that is compliant with the ESIGN Act and the guidelines provided by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

You must obtain a separate license to use CCH eSign. There is no charge for the CCH eSign license, but transaction fees will be billed monthly based on usage. For more information on transaction charges please contact us at 800-739-9998, Option 1, Option 1.

Sending Form 8879 and State Equivalents for Electronic Signature

For Form 8879 and state e-file signature authorization forms, CCH eSign is uniquely integrated with CCH Axcess™ Tax and the Electronic Filing Status System to improve your workflow and save you time. You can initiate sending Form 8879 and state equivalents without leaving the Tax software. The Electronic Filing Status System is automatically updated as soon as Form 8879 and any state equivalents are electronically signed by your clients.

Note: Refer to State eSign Approval Status for a list of states that permit electronic signatures.

Because Form 8879 and the accompanying tax return contain Personally Identifiable Information (PII), the IRS requires the identities of the taxpayer and spouse to be verified before they can see the forms and electronically sign. CCH eSign does this using dynamic Knowledge Based Authentication (KBA). Dynamic KBA meets the requirements of IRS Publication 1345 and is also used by other government agencies and financial institutions.

At this time, the IRS accepts electronic signatures on Form 8879 for Individual (1040) returns only. In the future, we expect the IRS to accept electronic signatures for other entities, such as Form 8879-PE.

What Else Can Be Electronically Signed?

While most documents can be legally electronically signed per the ESIGN Act, the IRS does not accept electronic signatures on all forms at this time. Other documents and forms that can be electronically signed include the following:

- Engagement letters and representation letters
- Internal Human Resources documents
- Partnership agreements
- Audit confirmations
- New client acceptance forms
- The following IRS forms and documents:
  - Form 4506-T Request for Transcript of Tax Return (can be scanned and then sent). Click the link below to view the form.
    - http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f4506t.pdf
  - Form W-4 and W-9 (can be scanned and then sent)

What Forms Cannot Be Electronically Signed?

Examples of forms the IRS has not yet approved for electronic signature include the following:

- Form 8879 for return types other than Form 1040, such as Form 8879-PE and Form 8879-C
- Form 2848, Power of Attorney and Declaration of Representative

The Process Flow for Form 8879 and State Equivalent Forms

Tax Preparer Steps	Automatic CCH eSign Steps	Taxpayer/Spouse Steps
Ensures email addresses are entered in the Tax software		
Initiates the return export and selects the *Send for eSign* option	Sends an email to the taxpayer (and reminders, if needed)	Receives an email and clicks the signing link in the email
	Launches the secure web page and walks the taxpayer through each step	Reads the Welcome screen and selects *Continue*
	Asks dynamic KBA questions to verify identity	Answers 3 of 4 questions correctly*

Tax Preparer Steps	Automatic CCH eSign Steps	Taxpayer/Spouse Steps
	Tells taxpayer if identity is verified	If identity verified, provides a password (in case the taxpayer wants to finish later)
	Asks the taxpayer to agree to terms (accept document and sign electronically)	Reads and accepts the agreement terms, and then selects *Preview Document*
	Presents a PDF image of the tax return with 8879 on top	Reviews and selects *Start Signing*
	Presents an image of Form 8879 with a signature box	Signs in the signature box and selects *Finish*
	Sends a confirmation email to the taxpayer and tax preparer and updates the Electronic Filing Status System	Reviews the confirmation screen with an option to download return
Receives email confirming receipt of the signed 8879		Receives a confirmation email with a link to download the return
Releases the return for electronic filing		

* One question may be skipped, but an incorrect answer results in KBA failure (for example, the identity is not verified, so the tax return is not shown and Form 8879 cannot be electronically signed). If the taxpayer fails the KBA, the tax preparer is notified and can either resend the return for electronic signature or send Form 8879 for manual signature.

Chapter 2

SETTING UP CCH ESIGN

The integration of CCH® eSign with CCH Axcess™ Tax begins with setting up your eSign account, setting up AssureSign users, and activating the Send for eSign option. Form 8879 and qualified state e-file signature authorization forms can then be sent from Tax to CCH eSign for qualified Individual (1040) returns.

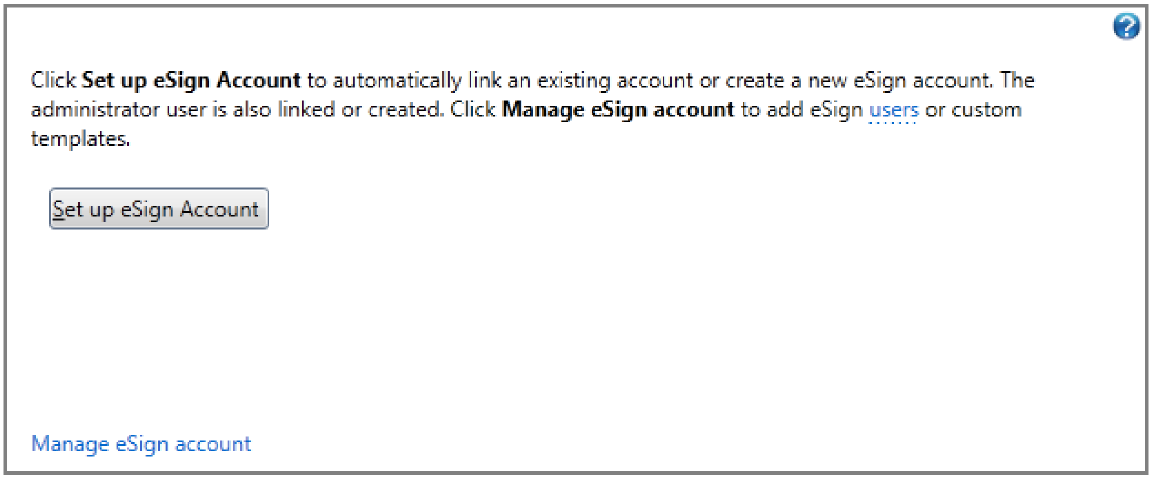
After authorization forms are sent to CCH eSign, the client receives an email requesting an electronic signature. The client clicks a signing link in the email that opens a secure web page. For Form 8879, where identity verification is required by the IRS, CCH eSign provides dynamic Knowledge Based Authentication (KBA). The taxpayer and spouse cannot see Form 8879 and the accompanying tax return until their identity is successfully verified using the dynamic KBA process. See *Chapter 4 - The Signer Experience for an e-file Signature Authorization Form with KBA* on page 13 for more information.

Setting up Your eSign Account

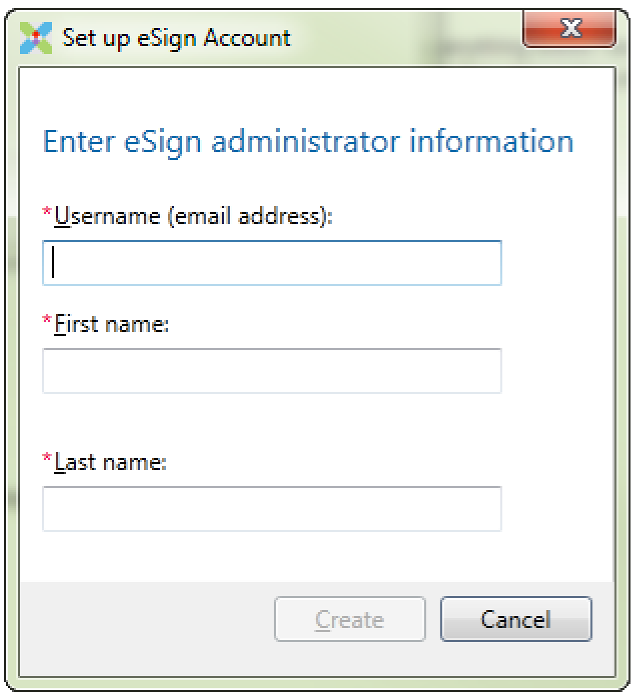
The initial set up of CCH eSign is done in CCH Axcess™ Tax to establish the integration that is used for Form 8879 and state e-file signature authorization forms. The initial setup in CCH Axcess™Tax includes designating a CCH eSign Administrator. After the initial setup is complete, the CCH eSign Administrator can set up additional users, customize communications, and complete other tasks in AssureSign.

Complete the following procedure to initiate CCH eSign integration.

1. In CCH Axcess, open Dashboard, click **Application Links** on the navigation panel, and then click **Settings and defaults** under Firm.
2. Click **eSign** on the Firm navigation panel.
3. Click **Set up eSign Account**. If an eSign account exists, it will automatically link to CCH Axcess; otherwise, continue to step 4.



4. Enter the eSign administrator's information.
    a. Enter the username for the account, which is the administrator's email address.
    b. Enter the administrator's first and last names.
    c. Click **Create**. The administrator user is also created.



5. Accept the default template for each module type and click **OK**, or select a custom template from a list in the grid, and then click **OK**. eSign templates define the email notification content that is sent during the eSign process. See *Chapter 6 - Customizing Email Notifications* on page 19 for more information.

Activating the Send for eSign Option

The Send for eSign option is located on the Upload Returns window that displays when exporting returns for electronic filing. The option must be activated in either the return configuration set or manually in the return.

- Return configuration set. Activate eSign for all returns associated to a return configuration set. Open the Electronic Filing Options > 1040/Individual window in the return configuration set and select one or both of the following options:
  - Electronically sign authorization form(s). Electronically file authorization forms with a digital signature for federal and qualifying states.
  - Enable eSign if state returns do not qualify. Electronically file authorization forms with a digital signature for federal and qualifying states when a state that does not qualify for eSign exists in the return.
- Single return. On a return-by-return basis, activate eSign by selecting **Yes** to *Electronically sign 8879* under Printing options in the General > Electronic Filing worksheet.

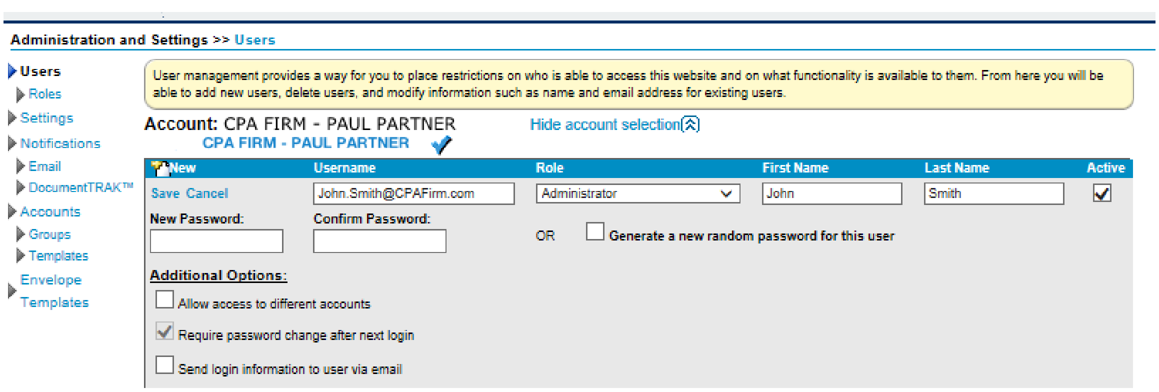
Accessing Your eSign Account and Setting up Users

The eSign administrator will receive an email with a temporary password and a URL to access the account. After logging in to the eSign account, the eSign administrator can start sending documents for electronic signatures. Your administrator can also set up other users to access the eSign account, which is required for the preparers to be able to send returns for eSign.

Adding Users

To add a user, do the following:

1. In your eSign account, click the **Administration** tab and select **Users**.
2. Click **New** to create a user.
3. The username (email address), role, and first and last name fields are required.
4. Click **Save**.



Selecting a Role

The following roles are available for selection:

- Administrator. Allows complete access to all functions and documents.
- Power User. Allows access to all documents, but does not allow access to administration

functions.

- **Limited User**. Limits the access to documents created by specified users.

Configuring Signers in CCH Axcess Tax

Set up signers as users in the eSign account, entering the same email address used for the signer in CCH Axcess .

If your firm uses a centralized email address as the signer email address, use this email address to establish a user in your eSign account. If your firm uses multiple signers with separate email addresses, each signer must be set up as a user in your eSign account.

When uploading the return for eSign, Tax will assign the signer email address as follows:

1. Signer email address entered in the General > Return Options > Preparer Information-Override Office Manager > Preparer e-mail address field.
2. If address #1 is not provided, the email address entered on the Tax > Signer window of the staff profile for the signer code specified in the General > Electronic Filing > Electronic Return Originator Override > Individual preparer code field.
3. If addresses #1 and #2 are not provided, the signer address entered in the General > Electronic Filing > Electronic Return Originator Override > Preparer e-mail address field.
4. If email addresses are not provided for # 1, #2, and #3, the email address provided for the ERO on the Electronic Filing Options window of the return configuration set.

Warning! If the signer email address is not set up in your eSign account, the return upload from CCH Axcess will not complete.

Tip: If you do not want signers to access other signer's returns, you can set up the signer as a limited user, or alternately, modify the Document and Reporting permissions to prevent access to documents created by other users.

Customizing Account Settings

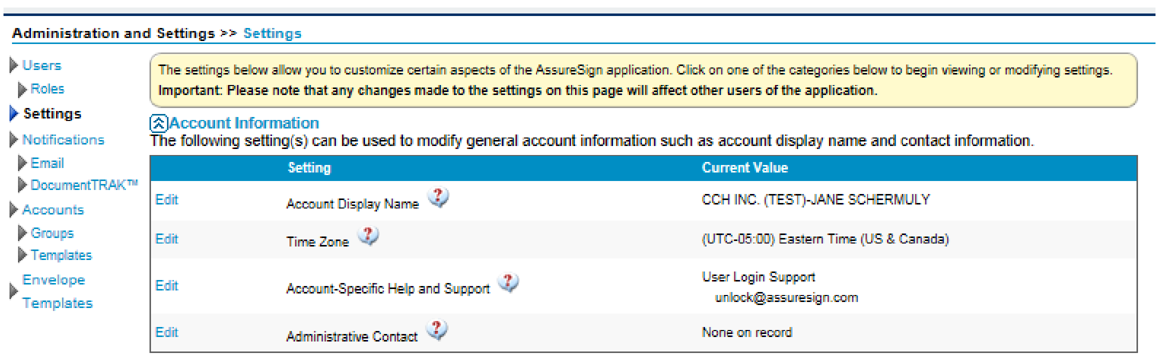
You can customize the firm name, security policies, and notification preferences according to the needs of your firm. To modify account settings, do the following:

1. In your eSign account, select the **Administration** tab.
2. Click **Settings** on the navigation panel.
3. Click **Edit** in any of the categories to view or modify the firm settings.

Customizing the Firm Name

When the account is set up, the firm name entered in CCH Axcess™ using *Firm > Settings and defaults* is automatically populated. To change the name, do the following:

1. Click **Edit** beside Account Display Name under Account Information to modify settings, such as Account Display Name, Time Zone, and Administrative Contact.



2. Enter a name in the Current Value column.
3. Click **Save**.

Customizing Security Policies

You can modify the default security policies by clicking any of the Edit links under Security Preferences.

Security Preferences

The following setting(s) can be used to control security settings for accounts.

	Setting	Current Value
Edit	Security Strength	Custom
Edit	Require New Users to Change Password After First Login	Yes
Edit	Automatic Lockout After Bad Password Attempts	3 Attempts
Edit	Password Strength	High
Edit	Minimum Password Length	8
Edit	Number of Days Until Password Expiration	60 Days
Edit	Number of Password Changes Before Password Reuse	5 Change(s)
Edit	Number of Idle Minutes Until Session Timeout	60

Customizing Notification Preferences

You can modify default notification preferences by clicking any of the Edit links under the Administration tab > Settings > Notification Preferences.

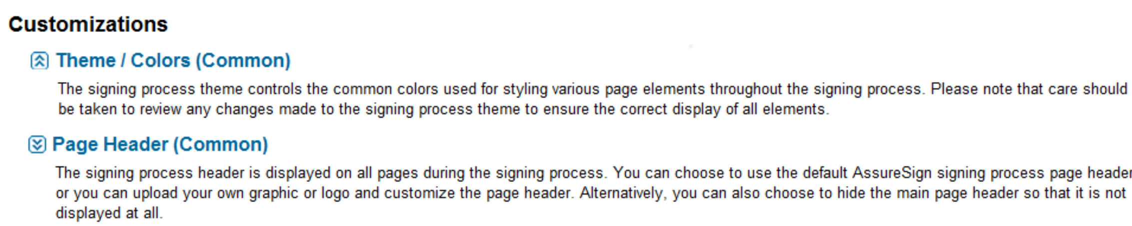
Email notification sender information can be customized for the signer or for the firm in the following ways:

- Using the signer email address
- Using a common firm-wide sender name and AssureSign domain
- Using a common firm-wide sender name and email address

Managing Branding

You can add your firm's logo and modify color preferences for signing screens according to your firm's branding. In your eSign account, select the **Administration** tab, click **Customization**, and do the following:

- To customize colors, select **Theme / Colors (Common)** and make the appropriate selections.
- To upload your logo, follow the instructions under **Page Header (Common)**.



Chapter 3

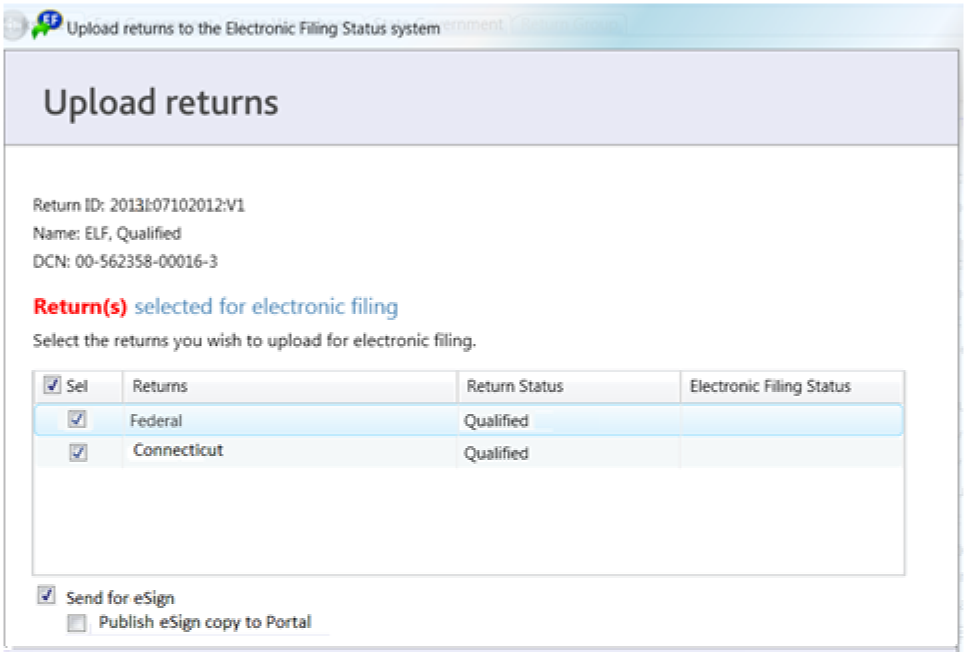
Sending e-file Signature Authorization Forms

After completing the setup tasks explained in Chapter 2, you can send e-file Signature Authorization Forms for eSign from CCH Axcess Tax.

Complete the process below only after you do the following:

- Designate the return for electronic filing and correct any errors identified in the return diagnostics which disqualify the return for electronic filing. You must also clear any unresolved diagnostics for the following required eSign information:
    - Taxpayer name
    - Taxpayer email address
    - Taxpayer SSN
    - Spouse name (if filing jointly)
    - Spouse email address (if filing jointly)
    - Spouse SSN (if filing jointly)
    - Taxpayer address
    - Firm name from the signature block, ERO, or return override information
    - ERO email address, signer's email address, or return override information
- Ensure the following:
    - An email address exists for the taxpayer and, if filing a joint return, for the spouse in the General section of the General > Basic Data worksheet. The taxpayer and spouse must have separate email addresses.
    - *Create an electronic data file to be transmitted with third party software* is not enabled on the General > Electronic Filing > Electronic Filing Options worksheet.

1. Select **EFS > Return** on the Import/Export ribbon tab to open the Upload Returns window. All qualified return units are selected.



2. Select the return units to file electronically. Qualified units are selected by default. Disqualified or unapproved return units are unavailable for selection.
3. Select the **Send for eSign** option.
4. Click **Next**. The Send for eSign window displays.
5. Verify the return information and click **Start** create a CCH eSign package consisting of e-file signature authorization forms, the client copy of the return, any user attached PDFs, and any requested filing instructions. The print set assigned to the return's organizational unit is used; however, Authorization forms print first, regardless of the print set print order.

   Note: The CCH eSign package cannot exceed 20 MB or 2,000 pages. For tax years 2015 and higher, if the CCH eSign package exceeds 20 MB, you are given the option to exclude user attached PDFs to reduce the file size. If the CCH eSign package exceeds 2,000 pages, return information cannot be sent to CCH eSign, regardless if the file size is under 20 MB.

6. Click **Upload and hold** to upload the eSign PDF to the Electronic Filing Status system (EFS).

   Note: The *Upload and release* option is not available when sending returns to eSign.

7. Click **Export** to continue the export process.
8. When the upload is complete, click **Finish**.

Notes:

- If the upload to EFS is unsuccessful, you will have the options to cancel your eSign request.
- E-file signature authorization form requests sent on October 20 or prior will be available for eSign until October 20. Tax returns sent for eSign after October 20 will be available for eSign for 60 days.

Important:

- E-file signature authorization form requests sent prior to or on October 20 will be available for eSign until October 20. Tax returns sent for eSign after October 20 will be available for eSign for 60 days.
- Although CCH eSign maintains a copy of signed documents for up to 24 months, CCH eSign is not designed for indefinite storage. Just as you maintain and store your clients' tax returns, we encourage you to maintain and store copies of their e-signed Form 8879 and other important documents that have been e-signed.
- When state e-file signature authorization forms are sent with IRS Form 8879 for electronic signature in the same export batch, the taxpayer will receive an email request to electronically sign them after completing identity verification (KBA). This results in only one CCH eSign 8879 transaction charge when they are electronically signed. However, if federal and state e-file signature authorization forms are sent to taxpayers at different times (in separate export batches), a CCH eSign 8879 transaction charge will apply to each export when electronically signed.

Tracking eSign Status in the Electronic Filing Status System

The Electronic Filing Status system (EFS) tracks returns that are sent for eSign and the date signed documents are received on the e-filing Status tab. When a return requesting eSign is uploaded for electronic filing, it is tagged with the sent for eSign icon that displays in the Return ID column.

Upon completion of the signatures, the Signature Form-Received column is automatically updated with the date of the signature in blue font. For a joint return, this is the date the second spouse signs.

If the taxpayer does not eSign and instead sends a paper signature, you can manually enter the date of receipt. The manually entered date is shown in black font.

To prevent releasing returns before a signature is received, returns sent for eSign do not show on the Release Returns tab until a date is entered in the Signature Form-Received column.

Chapter 4

The Signer Experience for an e-file Signature Authorization Form with KBA

Authenticating signers ensures that the document you send for eSign does not fall into the wrong hands. It also provides proof of a signer's identification, making the electronic signature more credible and less likely to be rejected.

Knowledge Based Authentication

To provide additional security for your clients' tax return information, we provide the ability to require a Knowledge Based Authentication (KBA). KBA requires that the signer answer questions correctly before accessing documents. The questions are based on public records and credit history information that are likely known only to the signer.

Receiving Email Notifications

The taxpayer and, if applicable, the spouse will each receive a notification email.

The following is the default email notification sent for requesting signatures.

Dear PATRICIA BAKER,

Your 2016 income tax return is complete and ready for electronic filing. In order to e-file, we need you to review the return and sign the e-file Signature Authorization form(s).

For your convenience you may electronically sign the form(s) on a computer, tablet or smartphone. This method requires that you verify your identity to ensure the privacy of your confidential information.

To verify your identity you will be asked to answer 3 randomly generated questions from a third party based on information available through public records and credit reports. This information is not shared with anyone including the IRS. This dynamic knowledge-based authentication process is used by many financial institutions and government agencies as a means of fraud prevention and does not create a credit inquiry or affect your credit report.

Please click on "Begin Signing" below to proceed. If you choose not to electronically sign or have any questions regarding the return, please email me at esign admin@cpafirm.com.

Thank you.

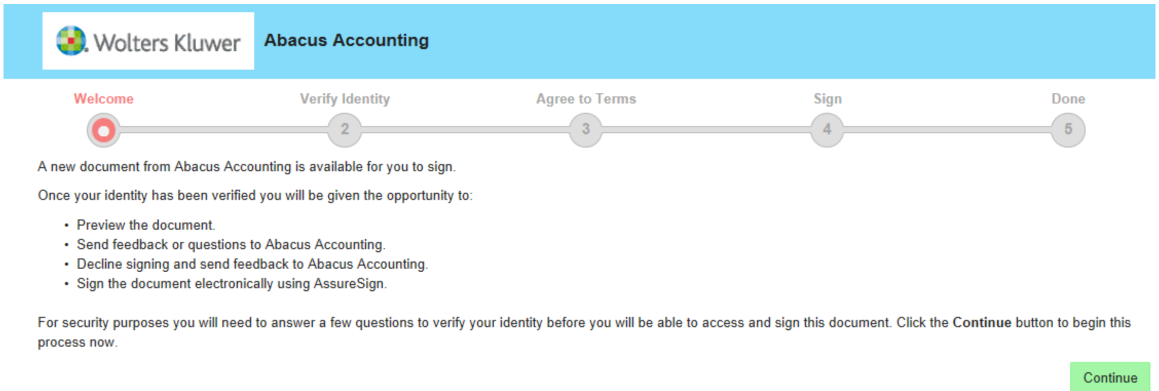
Paul Partner

CPA Firm – Tax Preparer
Begin Signing

Note: You can customize the email text according to your firm's standards and branding. For more information about customizing emails, refer to *Chapter 6 - Customizing Email Notifications* on page 19.

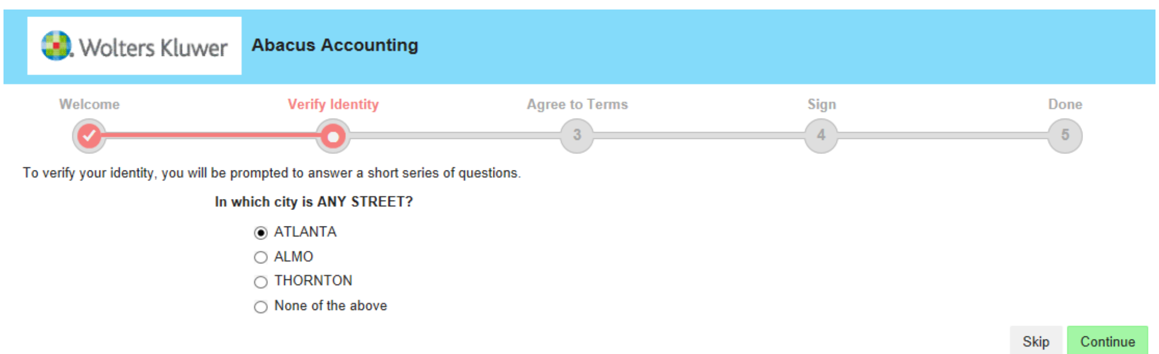
Beginning the Signing Process

The email contains a link to the AssureSign Web site. From the email, the signer clicks **Begin Signing** to open the Welcome page on the site. After reading the information, the signer clicks **Continue** to begin the signature process.



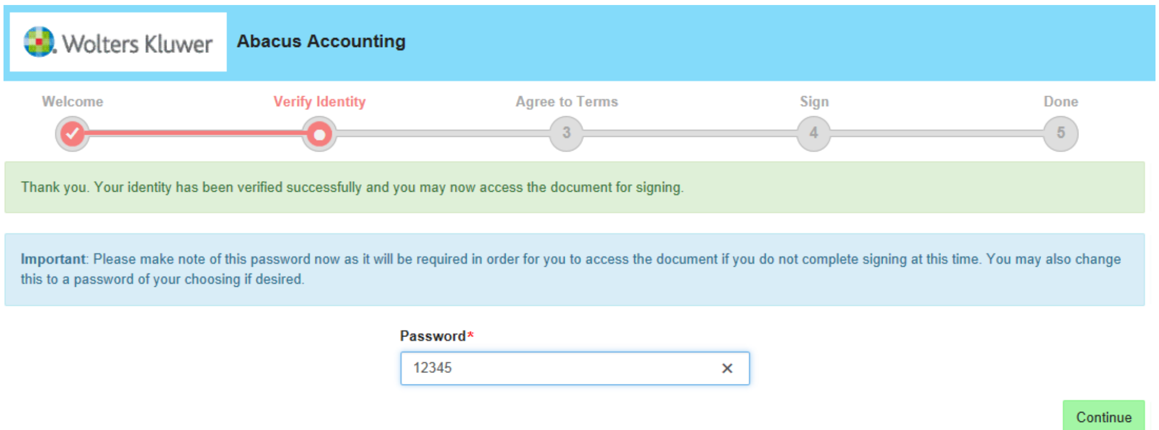
Providing Responses to KBA Questions

The signer will be prompted to answer the KBA questions. The signer can click **Skip** to go to the next question or click **Continue** after the appropriate selection is made. Signers are able to skip one question during the authentication process.



Providing a PIN

Once the signer successfully answers the KBA questions, a Signing Password is provided. This allows the signer to stop and re-start the signing process at a later time.

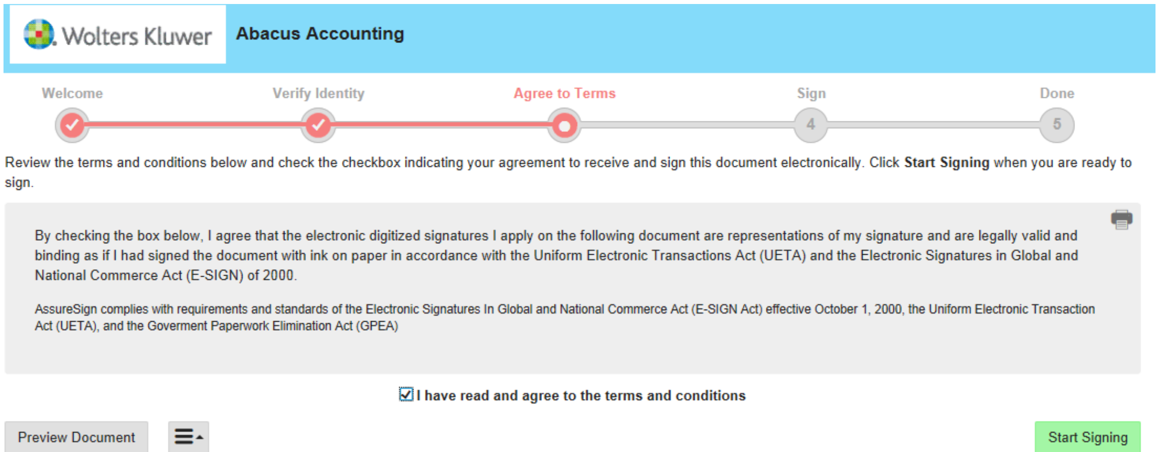


If the signer fails to respond with the correct responses, the document signing is canceled. The tax signer is notified by an email. The e-file signature authorization form must be resent to the taxpayer for another attempt to pass the KBA, and then eSign. After three failed attempts to pass the KBA, the IRS requires the taxpayer to manually sign the e-file signature authorization form.

Providing Consent per Requirements of the ESIGN Act

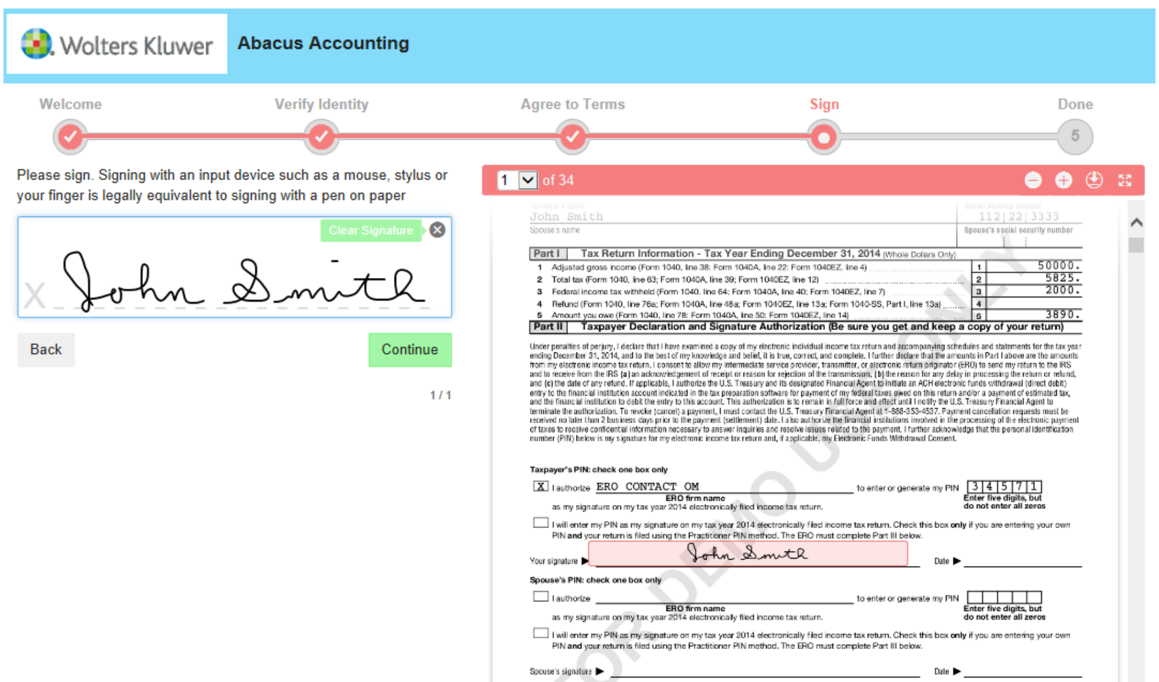
On the Sign Document tab, the signer reviews the agreement, selects **I have read and agree to the above terms and conditions**, and then clicks **Start Signing**.

During this step, the signer can also download a copy of the tax return for review, send feedback, and decline to sign. The signer can also select to continue at a later time by using the Options menu. If the signer sends feedback or declines to sign, an email is sent to the signer with the relevant information.



Providing a Signature

The signer can provide a signature using a mouse, stylus, or a touch pad, following the on-screen instructions to complete the signing.



Sending Reminders

Reminders for eSign are sent weekly until the document is signed. An additional reminder is configured to be sent on April 12 in time for the April tax deadline.

Dear JOHNNY BROWN,

Your 2016 income tax return is complete and ready for electronic filing. In order to e-file, we need you to review the return and sign the e-file Signature Authorization form(s).

For your convenience you may electronically sign the form(s) on a computer, tablet or smartphone. This method requires that you verify your identity to ensure the privacy of your confidential information.

To verify your identity you will be asked to answer 3 randomly generated questions from a third party based on information available through public records and credit reports. This information is not shared with anyone including the IRS. This dynamic knowledge-based authentication process is used by many financial institutions and government agencies as a means of fraud prevention and does not create a credit inquiry or affect your credit report.

Please click on "Begin Signing" below to proceed. If you choose not to electronically sign or have any questions regarding the return, please email me at Paul.Partner@CPAFirm.com.

Thank you.

Paul Partner
CPA Firm-eSign Administrator
Begin Signing
Document ID:611f9fda-8531-4fee-9f1d-a4d100ccc708

Chapter 5

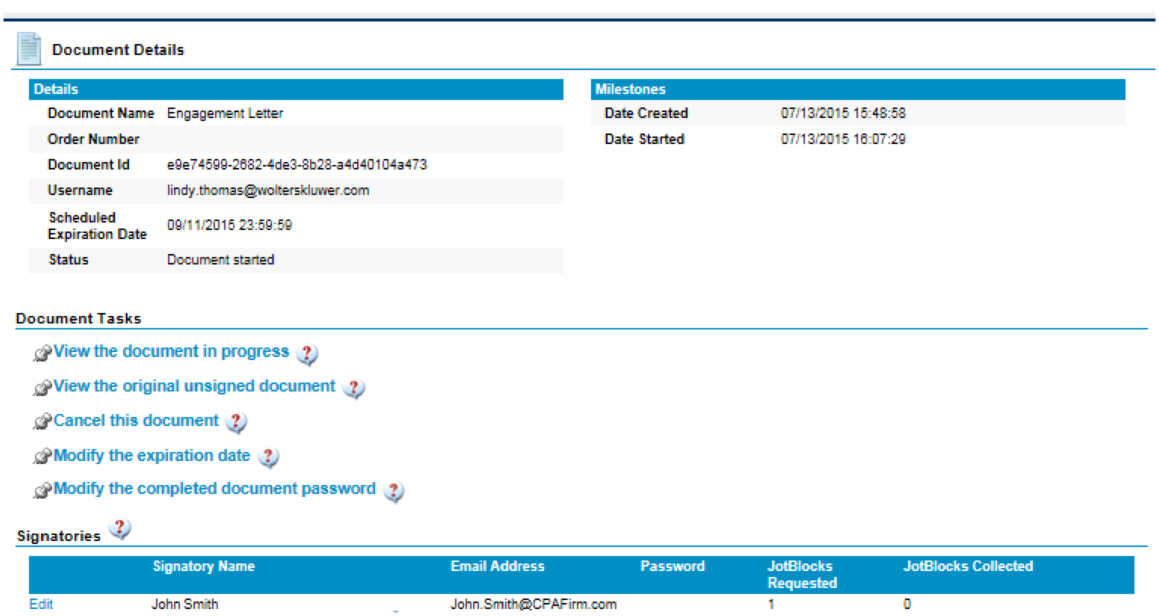
Document Management Functions

Once a document has been sent for eSign, you can do the following:

- View the document
- Cancel the document
- Modify the password to view the completed document
- Modify the recipient's email addresses

In your eSign account, do the following:

1. Navigate to **Reports > Document Search**.
2. Enter the date or other criteria for the search.
3. Select the document by clicking the **Document Name**.
4. Select the desired tasks under Document Tasks and follow the on-screen instructions.
5. To modify the recipient's email addresses, click **Edit** under Signatories.



Chapter 6

Customizing Email Notifications

Email notifications are event-based emails sent to inform the signatories or the sender of the status of documents. This chapter explains the process of configuring and customizing email notifications.

Your eSign account comes with a set of default email designs that are configured for sending emails to the appropriate parties based on the events in the signing process. For example, there is an email design that requests your client provide a signature and another email design to inform the sender that the document has been signed.

These default email designs cannot be changed. To customize emails, make a copy of the appropriate default email design, and then click **Edit** to make modifications. You can customize the text in the emails per your firm's standards, add branding, or create additional notifications relevant to the type of document you are sending.

Modifying eSign Email Designs

Modifying eSign email designs is a three-step process.

1. Import eSign templates.
2. Edit eSign email designs.
3. Associate custom templates with the appropriate return types in CCH Axcess™ using *Firm > Settings and defaults*.

Importing eSign Templates

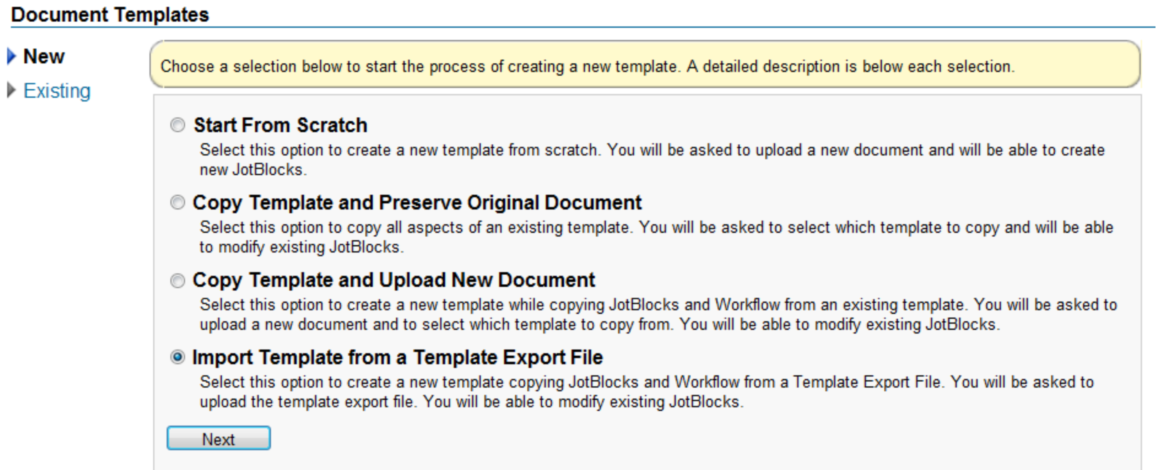
Templates provide a starting point for customizing your email notifications. The following templates can be downloaded from the Customer Support site:

- **Single.adt**. Used when sending single returns from CCH Axcess Tax.
- **Joint.adt**. Used when sending joint returns from CCH Axcess Tax.

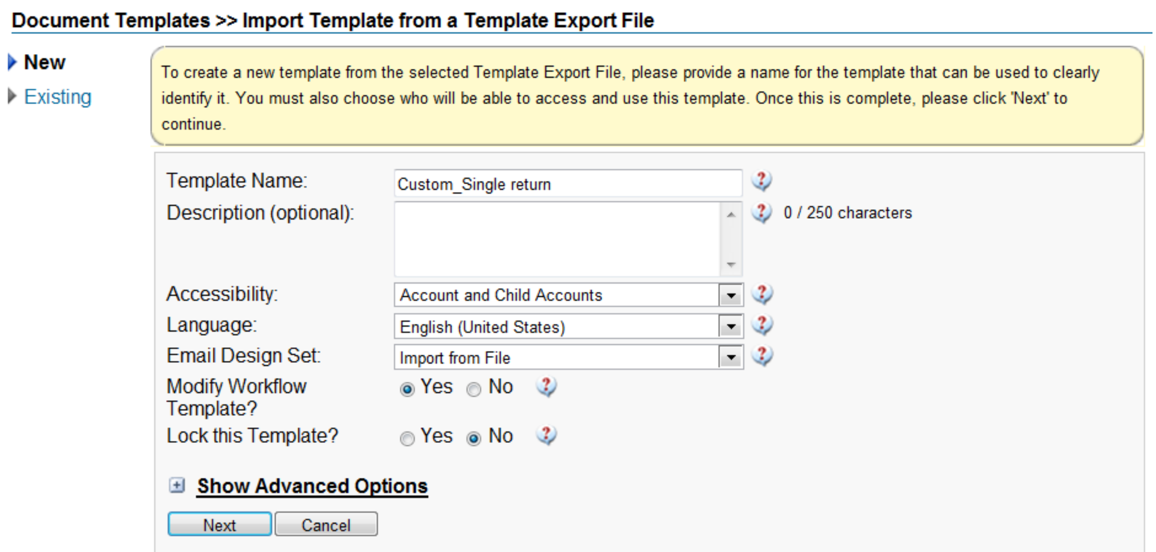
Perform the following steps to import the templates:

1. In your eSign account, click the **Templates** tab.
2. Click **New**.

3. Select **Import Template from a Template Export File**.



4. Click **Next**.
5. Select the appropriate .adt file.
6. Rename the template.
7. Select **Account and Child Accounts** from the Accessibility list.



8. Complete the process by clicking **Next** on each of the screens.

   Warning! Do not change any settings during this process.

9. Click **Finish** to complete the import.

Editing eSign Email Designs

After you import eSign templates, the following email designs are available. Navigate to Administration > Notifications > Email and click **Edit** to open the email design. Save your edits.

Edit Copy Preview	1_CCH-8879 Available for e-Sign_Single	CCH-8879
Edit Copy Preview	2_CCH-8879 Available for e-Sign_Joint	CCH-8879
Edit Copy Preview	3_CCH-8879 Sent confirmation to preparer	CCH-8879
Edit Copy Preview	4_CCH-8879 Reminders	CCH-8879
Edit Copy Preview	5_CCH-8879 Reminder 4/15	CCH-8879
Edit Copy Preview	6a_CCH-8879 Signature complete	CCH-8879
Edit Copy Preview	6b_CCH-8879 Signature complete to preparer	CCH-8879
Edit Copy Preview	7_CCH-8879 Declined esign	CCH-8879
Edit Copy Preview	8_CCH-8879 Authentication failed	CCH-8879
Edit Copy Preview	9_CCH-Document feedback submitted	CCH-8879

Associating Custom Templates to Return Types

1. Open Dashboard, click **Application Links** on the navigation panel, and then click **Settings and defaults** under Firm.
2. Click **eSign** on the Firm navigation panel.
3. Select a custom template for the return type from a list in the grid, and then click **OK**.

Using Merge Fields

Merge fields can be used to automatically populate email notifications with information, such as names, phone number, and email addresses, that are entered in eSign documents. In addition to the customization features available in the default email designs, for all eSign templates, the following template-specific merge fields are available to add to email design text:

Firm Name	Preparer Phone	ERO Phone
Firm Phone	Account Number	ERO Email Address
Preparer Name	Client ID	Return ID
Preparer Email Address	ERO Name	

To use a merge field, enclose the merge field text in square brackets. This marks the text as *merge field information* and it will function as a formula field in the subject or body of the email.

Chapter 7

Managing Reminders

Reminders are automatically sent when documents are not signed by all signatories. Reminders are associated with the document's expiration date and are sent a configurable number of days prior to the expiration date.

The text of the reminder email and the frequency of the reminder can be configured:

- For the entire eSign account
- For an account template
- On a document-by-document basis

It is possible to resend previously sent reminders or create new reminders, as needed.

Configuring Reminders for the eSign Account

In your eSign account, do the following:

1. Go to **Administration** > **Settings** > **Document Preferences**.
2. Click **Edit** beside *Default Number of Days until Document Expiration* and *Default Expiration Warning Period* to change the number of days, as appropriate. If your default number of days until document expiration is set to 60 and the default expiration warning period is set to 7, all documents will expire and will no longer be available for eSign 60 days after creation. A reminder will be sent seven days prior to the expiration date.