

# ECF START-UP GUIDE

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## Introduction

This manual provides instructions for using the Electronic Case Filing (ECF) system to file documents with the court, or to view and retrieve docket sheets and documents for all cases. Users should have a working knowledge of an ECF-compatible web browser and Adobe Acrobat for creating and reading Portable Document Format (PDF) files.

## Help Desk

Registrants may call one of the following telephone numbers between 9:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M., Monday through Friday, to discuss computer system requirements and receive guidance in electronically filing documents.

### Operational Filing Assistance

**Civil ECF Helpline:** (202) 354-3190

**Criminal ECF Helpline:** (202) 354-3060

### Technical Assistance

**Office of Information Technology Help Desk:** (202) 354-3210

Users may also visit the court's website for further ECF documentation and information:  
<http://www.dcd.uscourts.gov/ECFCR>

## Requirements

### Hardware and Software Requirements

The following hardware and software are needed to electronically file, view, and retrieve case documents in ECF, and pay fees electronically using Pay.gov.

- Internet Explorer (9.0 or higher), Google Chrome (4 or higher), Mozilla Firefox (9.0 or higher), or Apple Safari (5.1 or higher).
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (to view PDF documents) and Adobe Acrobat Writer (to create PDF documents).
- A scanner to convert paper documents (i.e., exhibits, signed declarations, etc.) to PDF format.

**Note:** When scanning documents for ECF, scan at a resolution of **300 ppi**. National Archives and Records Administration has requested that courts increase the ppi of scanned documents to 300 or greater for long-term archival purposes. Users are requested to adjust scanners accordingly.

## PACER Registration

ECF users must have a PACER account in order to use the **Query** and **Report** features of the ECF system. If you do not have a PACER login, contact the PACER Service Center to establish an account via phone ((800) 676-6856 or (210) 301-6440) or online (<http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov>).

**Note:** Computer terminals are available for public use in the Clerk's Office (Room 1725) and may be used to file documents in ECF or view documents and docket sheets through PACER.

## ECF Registration

Attorneys who require access to the ECF system **must** obtain a registration form from the court's ECF website (<http://www.dcd.uscourts.gov/ecf-forms-instructions-and-other-information>). The form includes instructions for completing and returning the ECF registration form to the Clerk's Office. After processing the properly completed registration form, the Clerk's Office will open a user account and contact you with your ECF login and password.

**Note:** The Clerk's Office will only issue an ECF login and password to attorneys who are members of this court's bar and attorneys who have been admitted *pro hac vice* or *pro bono* by the court. Pro se filers must petition the court for permission to file in ECF.

## Scope of Electronic Case Filing

All documents in civil, criminal, magistrate and miscellaneous cases are to be filed by the use of the court's ECF system. Except as expressly provided herein, by order of court, or in exceptional circumstances (e.g., technical difficulties), attorneys must file all case documents electronically. In addition, all civil cases initiated by a Complaint or Notice of Removal must be opened and filed in ECF by the attorney.

## Preparation

### Setting Up Adobe Acrobat or Acrobat Reader

Users must install Adobe Acrobat or Acrobat Reader in order to view documents that have been electronically filed with the court. Users may also need to install the full version of Adobe Acrobat software to convert electronic files from their native application format (e.g. Word or Word Perfect) to PDF. All new documents prepared for ECF cases must be converted to PDF before entering them into ECF or transmitting them to the court. After installing these products, review and follow Adobe's directions for using Acrobat or Acrobat Reader.

### Portable Document Format (PDF)

Only documents in PDF format may be filed with the court using its ECF system. Before sending the file to the court, users should preview the actual PDF document to ensure it is complete and in the proper format.

## Converting Electronic Documents to PDF Format

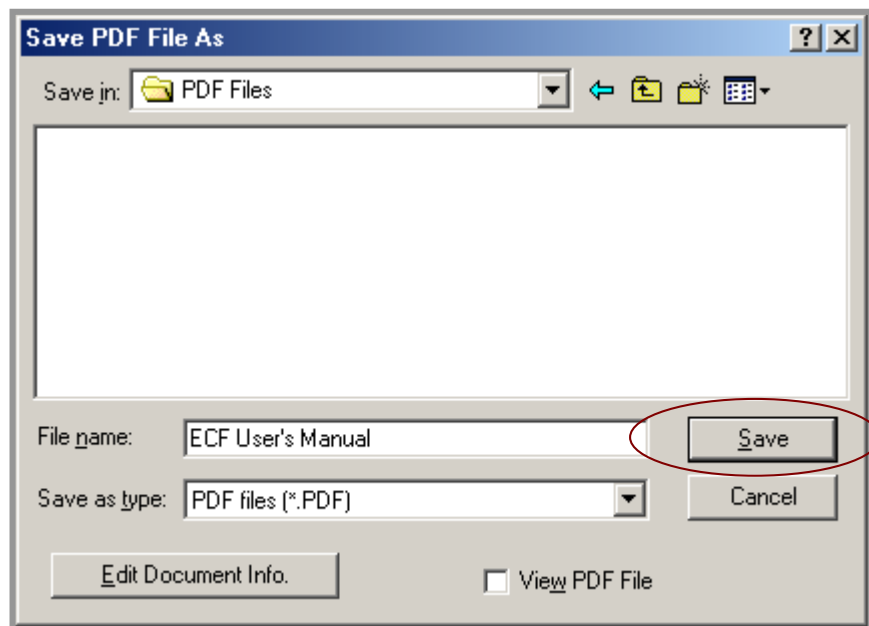
Users must convert all documents from their native application to PDF format before submitting them to the Court through its ECF system. The conversion process requires Adobe Acrobat or a word-processing application (e.g., Microsoft Word) with a built-in PDF conversion capabilities.

### From Microsoft Word and other Microsoft Office products:

- Open the document in Microsoft Word or other Microsoft program.
- From the File menu, select **[Save as Adobe PDF]**.
- Save the document as a PDF file, giving it a .pdf extension.
- The file is now in Adobe PDF format under the newly designated name. The original document remains in its native format with its original file name.

### For Word Perfect and other Adobe Acrobat-supported software applications:

- Install Adobe Acrobat on your computer.
- Open the document you wish to convert.
- Select **[Print]** from the menu bar. Within the **Current Printer** field of the **Printer** window, select the option to change the selected printer. A drop-down menu opens and a list of printer choices is displayed.
- Select **[Adobe PDF]**.
- Click **[OK]** to “print” the file. Instead of the file printing to your printer, the following window opens.



- Name the document, verify the “saved file type” is .pdf, and click the **[Save]** button.
- The document is now saved as a PDF file.

**Note:** This process of printing to a PDF is especially important when dealing with fillable forms already in PDF format. Simply saving the original PDF document will keep the text fields on the form fillable and editable, whereas printing the form to a new PDF fixes the text fields so that they can no longer be edited.

## ECF Basics

### Incorrectly Filed Documents

A document incorrectly filed in a case may result from: a) posting the wrong PDF file to a docket entry; b) selecting the wrong docket event; or c) entering the wrong case number and not discovering the error before completing the transaction.

To request a correction, call the Clerk's Office Help Desk at **(202) 354-3190 (Civil) or (202) 354-3060 (Criminal)**, and ask for assistance. You will need to provide the case and document numbers for the document requiring correction. If appropriate, the Clerk's Office will make an entry indicating that the document was filed in error. You will be advised if you need to refile the document. The ECF system does not permit you to make changes to the misfiled document(s) or to correct erroneous docket entries after the transaction has been accepted.

### ECF Mass Mailing Notification

The Clerk's Office has set up a mass mailing email notification service for all registered ECF users. Users will receive an email message whenever the court needs to notify all ECF registrants of pertinent information, such as system outages, new procedures, and ECF newsletters.

### ECF Privacy Notice

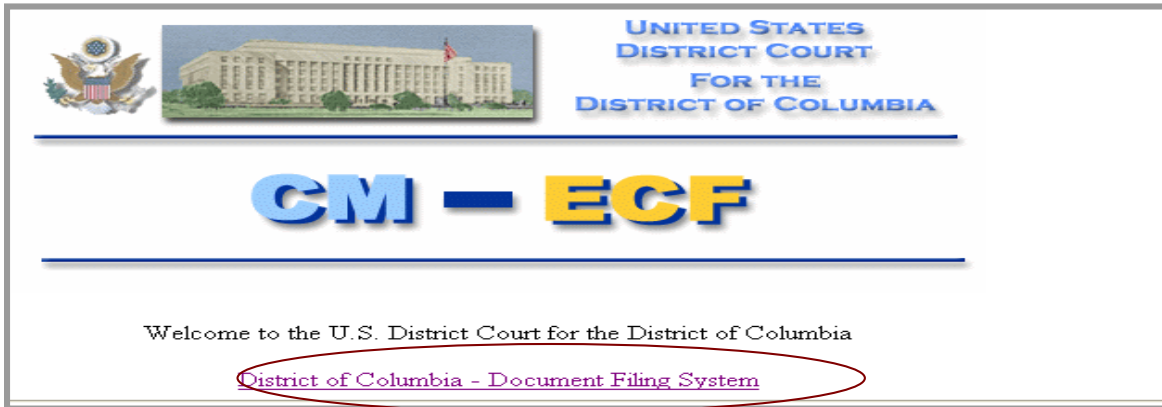
You should not include sensitive information in any document filed with the court unless such inclusion is necessary and relevant to the case. You must remember that any personal information not otherwise protected will be made available over the internet via PACER. If sensitive information must be included, certain personal data identifiers must be partially redacted from the pleading, whether it is filed traditionally or electronically. **The responsibility for redacting personal identifiers rests solely with counsel and the parties. The Clerk's Office will not review each pleading for compliance with this rule.** All ECF registrants should read the notices regarding privacy and public access to electronic case files which are available on the court's website (<http://www.dcd.uscourts.gov/dcd/ecf-forms-instructions-and-other-information>), or as attachments to this manual.

## Entering the ECF System

You may enter the ECF system here: <https://ecf.dcd.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/ShowIndex.pl>

This URL connects you directly to the District Court's ECF welcome screen shown in Figure 1. Select **District of Columbia –Document Filing System** to open the login screen and log in to ECF.

**Figure 1**



## Logging In

Figure 2 shows the login screen.

**Figure 2**

**CM/ECF Filer or PACER Login**

**Notice**  
This is a **Restricted Web Site** for Official Court Business only. Unauthorized entry is prohibited and subject to prosecution under Title 18 of the U.S. Code. All activities and access attempts are logged.

**Instructions for filing:**  
Enter your CM/ECF filer login and password if you are electronically filing something with the court.

**If you received this login page as a result of a link from a Notice of Electronic Filing email:**  
Enter your CM/ECF filer login and password. The system prompts customers for a CM/ECF login and password when attempting to view certain types of documents.

**If you have trouble viewing a document:**  
After successful entry of your CM/ECF login, you should be able to view the document. If you receive the message "You do not have permission to view this document," viewing the document is restricted to attorneys of record in the case and the system does not recognize you as such. If the login prompt appears again, after you have entered your CM/ECF login and password, it means that the "free look" link has expired. You will need to enter your PACER login and password to view the document.

**Instructions for viewing filed documents and case information:**  
If you do not need filing capabilities, enter your PACER login and password. If you do not have a PACER login, you may register online at <http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov>.

**Authentication**

Login:   
Password:   
client code:

**IMPORTANT NOTICE OF REDACTION RESPONSIBILITY:** All filers must redact Social Security or taxpayer-identification numbers; dates of birth; names of minor children; financial account numbers; and, in criminal cases, home addresses, in compliance with [Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2](#) or [Fed. R. Crim. P. 49.1](#). This requirement applies to all documents, including attachments.

I understand that, if I file, I must comply with the redaction rules. I have read this notice.

**Notice**  
An access fee of \$0.08 per page, as approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States, will be assessed for access to this service. For more information about CM/ECF, [click here](#) or contact the PACER Service Center at (800) 676-6856.

*CM/ECF has been tested and works correctly with Firefox 3.0, and Internet Explorer 6 and 7.*

Enter your ECF login name and password in the appropriate data entry fields. It is important to remember that all ECF login names and passwords are case sensitive (be sure to remove CAPS and NUM locks). The field for client code is not a required field but can be used for billing purposes in law firms. If you want PACER to break out your charges by client, enter your own internal client codes in this field. Also, the login screen now features a redaction policy reminder/check box. The attorney/filer must check this box before submitting a PACER login and password information to indicate he/she is familiar with the redaction policy. Once you enter your login and password, click **[Login]**.

**Note:** Use your **ECF** login and password if you are entering the system to **file** a pleading or to maintain your account. If you only wish to enter ECF to **query** the database for case information or to view a document, enter your **PACER** login and password. **PACER** charges a fee of \$.10 per page to view documents in ECF. There is a \$3.00 cap (30 pages) on each document viewed. This cap applies to all case documents, including docket sheets and case-specific reports, with the exception of transcripts of federal court proceedings. If you accrue a total of less than \$15.00 worth of charges in any given quarter, fees are waived for that quarter. Viewed documents open as PDF files and can be printed and/or saved to your computer.

- If the ECF system does not recognize your login and password, it will display the following error message:  
**Login failed either your login name or key is incorrect.**
- Click on the browser **[Back]** button and re-enter your correct login and password.
- Once ECF accepts your login and password, the main screen with a **blue** menu bar at the top will be displayed in ECF.

## ECF Menu Features

The following features are accessible from the **blue** menu bar at the top of the screen in ECF:

- |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b><u>Civil:</u></b>     | Select <b>[Civil]</b> to electronically file all <b>civil or miscellaneous</b> case pleadings, motions, and other court documents.                                                                      |
| <b><u>Criminal:</u></b>  | Select <b>[Criminal]</b> to electronically file all <b>criminal or magistrate</b> case pleadings, motions, and other court documents.                                                                   |
| <b><u>Query:</u></b>     | Select <b>[Query]</b> to search ECF by specific case number or party name to retrieve information and documents that are relevant to the case. You must login to <b>PACER</b> before you can query ECF. |
| <b><u>Reports:</u></b>   | Select <b>[Reports]</b> to retrieve calendar events, cases-filed reports, and docket sheets. You must login to <b>PACER</b> before you can view an ECF report.                                          |
| <b><u>Utilities:</u></b> | Select <b>[Utilities]</b> to view your personal ECF transaction log and maintain personal ECF account information.                                                                                      |
| <b><u>Search:</u></b>    | Select <b>[Search]</b> to enter a key word or phrase to aid in locating a proper docket entry or report.                                                                                                |
| <b><u>Logout:</u></b>    | Select <b>[Logout]</b> to exit the ECF system.                                                                                                                                                          |

## Entering a Case Number

To enter a civil, miscellaneous, criminal or magistrate case number, follow the guide below:

|                                   |                                                |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Civil case number:</b>         | 1:10-cv-00210 may be entered as <b>10cv210</b> |
| <b>Miscellaneous case number:</b> | 1:10-mc-00210 may be entered as <b>10mc210</b> |
| <b>Criminal case number:</b>      | 1:10-cr-00210 may be entered as <b>10cr210</b> |
| <b>Magistrate case number:</b>    | 1:10-mj-00210 may be entered as <b>10mj210</b> |

OR

Simply enter the case number as **10-210** and select a case by checking the appropriate box:

|                                     |                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Case number</b> 10-210           | Hide Case List                                                                                |
| Select a case:                      |                                                                                               |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 1:10-cr-00210-RWR USA v. GARCIA                                                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | 1:10-cv-00210-PLF LAIL et al v. UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT et al (closed 03/24/2011)            |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | 1:10-mc-00210-RWR GARMIN INTERNATIONAL, INC. et al v. PIONEER CORPORATION (closed 05/20/2010) |

## Additional Information Regarding ECF and PACER

### Deadline Calculation

All deadlines will be calculated using calendar days only in multiples of seven (7). If the calculated date falls on a weekend or holiday, it is extended until the next working day.

### Sealed Documents

Sealed documents in **completely sealed cases** are **not** to be filed electronically nor emailed to the court. They should be delivered to the Intake section of the Clerk's Office during normal business hours. **Do not place sealed documents in the overnight drop box at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue entrance to the courthouse.** The sealed material should include the original documents, copies for the judge, and PDF files on CD.

**Note:** As of May 2013, attorneys are permitted to file sealed documents in **otherwise unsealed cases**. Please refer to our website (<http://www.dcd.uscourts.gov/ECFCR>) for more detailed information.

### How to File if ECF is Out of Service

If ECF is out of service or unavailable, email the court at [dcd\\_cmecf@dcd.uscourts.gov](mailto:dcd_cmecf@dcd.uscourts.gov) (civil) or [dcd\\_cmecf\\_cr@dcd.uscourts.gov](mailto:dcd_cmecf_cr@dcd.uscourts.gov) (criminal) with your document(s) attached as a PDF file.

## PACER Billing

When the **Review Billing History** option is selected under **[Utilities]**, a new browser window will open outside of ECF (Figure 3A). From this screen the user will be able to specify one or more courts for which data should be reported. It also provides a wider range of billing data (up to 24 months old). A message inside the *Date Range* box provides a specific range of dates for which transactions are available. The court from which the PACER user logged in is selected by default.

**Figure 3A**

**PACER Billing History Report**

User: cc0520 - Oca/Td

**Courts**

All Courts  
 Other Court  
 Arizona Test Bankruptcy

**Date Range**

Today  
 this Week  
 this Month  
 this Quarter  
 other date range:  
 Transactions available: 03/01/2007 to current

**Sort Order**

Date  
 Client Code  
 Court/Date  
 Court/Client Code

**Display**

Details  
 Summary

**View**

Formatted Report  
 Download Report

**Run Report** **Clear** **Close**

Data is retrieved from the central billing transaction database and formatted according to the options selected by the user (Figure 3B).

**Figure 3B**

**PACER Billing History Report**

**Detailed Transaction Report by Date**  
 Arizona Test Bankruptcy  
 for the day 11/1/2007

Thu Nov 1 08:56:18 2007  
 User: cc0520 - Oca/Td

| Date               | Time     | Pages | Court | Client Code | Description | Search         |
|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| 11/01/2007         | 09:54:14 | 1     | AZTC  | abc,456     | Search      | LName: Goodman |
|                    | 09:54:24 | 11    | AZTC  | abc,456     | Search      | LName: Goodman |
| <b>Subtotal</b>    |          | 12    | pages |             |             |                |
|                    |          |       |       |             |             | \$ 0.96        |
| <b>Grand Total</b> |          | 12    | pages |             |             |                |
|                    |          |       |       |             |             | \$ 0.96        |

Transactions for other months are available through the **Review Transaction History** option within the **Account Information** section of the PACER Service Center (PSC) site (Figure 3C).



**Figure 3C**

**Review Transaction History**

PACER User:      ao0581 Aousc  
Date:             Wednesday June 20, 2007

Transaction details are archived on this web site for a maximum period of 24 months.

\*Specify Court:    All

\*Specify Client Code:    

Transactions between:    05/01/2007   and   05/31/2007

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**Sort Options:**

- Court / Date
- Court/Search Criteria/Date
- Client code / Date

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**Display Options:**

- Details
- Summed Details
- Totals Only

---

**Report Options:**

- Display Report in Text Format
- Write Transactions to a Text File
- Show Transaction File Layout

---

**NOTE:** This utility gives subtotals by court/client code for your convenience only. If you have dial-up transactions in the time frame specified above, when calculating your total due, your total time is rounded after adding the time for ALL transactions. Twenty-nine seconds and below is rounded down. Thirty seconds and above is rounded up. For this reason, the client/court subtotals given may not add up to exactly the account total.

\* These fields are optional. You can enter data in one or both of these fields to limit the transactions selected. If you do not specify a court or client code, all transactions for the specified time frame will be processed.

In the finished report, duplicate and zero-page transactions will have been removed, so that it will correspond to the statement the user receives at the end of the quarter.