

Dear HR Knowledge, how do I avoid common Form I-9 mistakes?

Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, is used by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to process and verify the identity and authorization of your employees to work in the US. Your employees must have their portion of the I-9 completed on their first day of employment, and, within the first three days of employment, they must provide you with the required documents listed on the form to prove their eligibility to work. As the employer, you need to determine whether the documents appear to be genuine and relate to the employee; the I-9 [Handbook for Employers](#) is a great tool to utilize in this process. You also need to hold on to the I-9s you've received for a designated period of time and make them available for inspection by authorized government officers.

While the I-9 process may appear simple, it's important to carefully verify your work to ensure all the information your employees provide is genuine in order to avoid potential audits and noncompliance fees. To help you avoid these pitfalls, here's a list of common errors and what to do to make sure your I-9s are completed correctly:

#### **Ensure the entire form is filled out**

As a rule of thumb, all sections of the I-9 need to be filled out and there should be no blank spaces. Remember that Section 1 needs to be filled out by the employee, and that the preparer/translator section cannot be filled out by the employer.

#### **Make sure the form is in on time**

Your new hires should have their I-9 filled out on their first day of employment. It's also a best practice for you as the employer to fill out your required section and to verify their documentation on the same day your new employee starts.

#### **Are you using the most up-to-date form?**

The USCIS updates the I-9 periodically to fix errors in the form, and add new functionality when necessary. As of this writing (September 2017), the most current version of the Form I-9 is dated 07/17/17. The previous form, dated 11/14/16, can be used through September 17 of this year, but beginning September 18, you must use the [new form](#).

#### **Be thorough when inspecting documents**

Note the lists of required verification documents on the I-9. Your new employees only need to provide either one document from List A, or one from List B and one from List C. The USCIS website states that "you are not required to be a document expert. You must accept documents that reasonably appear to be genuine and to relate to the person presenting them. However, if your new employee provides a document that does not



reasonably appear to be genuine and relate to them, you must reject that document and ask for other documents that satisfy the requirements of Form I-9.” Also ensure the documents are originals; photocopies are not allowed.

### Storing completed I-9s

Make sure all copies of I-9s are stored securely to protect your employees’ personal information. I-9s should not be stored with employee files. The form for each worker must be kept for either one year after the worker leaves employment or for three years after the worker is hired – whichever is longer.

### Consider a cloud-based I-9 management system

Online I-9 solutions such as *I-9 Advantage* allow you to complete and verify employee I-9s digitally, and reduce the risk of error with real-time data validation. If you are interested in learning more about an online I-9 solution, please [contact us](#).

### About HR Knowledge

Founded in 2001, HR Knowledge, Inc. is a privately funded company providing integrated outsourced HR services tailored to our clients' needs. Our full array of offerings includes managed payroll, employee benefits administration, and HR consulting and support services, such as training, compliance, custom-built software solutions, and Hiring Process Management™, our comprehensive recruitment service that takes you from finding to onboarding new talent. Our major markets are fast-growing small- and medium-sized businesses, many of which are venture-capital-backed; foreign companies expanding into the states; and charter schools. Partnering with HR Knowledge can reduce your administrative costs, minimize your legal risk, help you find and develop talent, and alleviate the HR burden so that you can focus on your core business.

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