

California Notary Penalty Cheat Sheet

Every fine amount you need to know for the 2026 notary exam

\$500

THE PAPERWORK FINE

- Failing to notify SOS of a **name change**
- Failing to notify SOS of an **address change**

Exam tip: Cheapest fine. Simple paperwork mistakes.

\$750

THE NEGLIGENCE FINE

- **Overcharging fees** beyond the statutory max
- Failing to complete an acknowledgment **at time of signing**
- Failing to **administer the oath** for a jurat
- Other acts of **negligence**

Exam tip: If the question says "negligent" or "careless," it's almost always \$750.

\$1,500

THE WILLFUL MISCONDUCT FINE

- **False advertising** as a notary
- Claiming to be an **immigration specialist** without certification
- **Willfully failing** to perform a notarial duty
- Unauthorized **seal manufacturing**

Exam tip: If the question says "willful" or "intentional," it jumps to \$1,500.

\$2,500

THE JOURNAL FINE

- Failing to provide journal to a **peace officer**
- Failing to obtain a **thumbprint** when required

Exam tip: Always involves your journal. Peace officer + journal = \$2,500.

\$10,000

THE MAXIMUM CIVIL PENALTY

- Willfully stating a **material fact as true that you know is false**
- Failing to properly identify via **single credible witness**

Exam tip: Fraud and perjury. The worst things a notary can do.

The pattern: Fines increase with intent. Forgetting paperwork (\$500) → being careless (\$750) → doing it on purpose (\$1,500) → obstructing law enforcement (\$2,500) → outright fraud (\$10,000).

Misdemeanor vs. Felony

Most notary violations are **misdemeanors** (up to \$1,000 fine / 6 months jail). It becomes a **felony** only when the document involves **real property** or the notary **forged a signature**.

Quick Reference

Amount	Trigger Words	What It Covers
\$500	Name, address, SOS notification	Failing to update personal info with SOS
\$750	Negligent, careless	Overcharging, skipping oath, incomplete ack.
\$1,500	Willful, intentional	False advertising, unauthorized seal
\$2,500	Journal, thumbprint, peace officer	Refusing journal, missing thumbprint
\$10,000	Perjury, false statement	Knowingly certifying false info

Preparing for the California notary exam? Take our SOS-approved 6-hour course at californiaceacademy.com