



COMMON RECORDING REJECTION REASONS

Things to avoid to prevent your recording from getting pulled and delaying closings.

In California, county recorder offices operate under strict statutory guidelines and will reject documents that fail to meet the recording requirements set forth in the Government Code and Civil Code. Recorders are ministerial officers—they do not evaluate the legal sufficiency of a document's content, but they must ensure that it complies with formatting, acknowledgment, and fee requirements before accepting it into the public record. Because recording establishes constructive notice and lien priority, even minor technical deficiencies can result in rejection and delay a transaction.

Formatting is one of the most common causes of rejection in California. Documents must meet specific margin requirements (including a minimum 2.5-inch top margin on the first page for recording information), be legible, and comply with page size standards. Required elements such as "Recording Requested By" and "Return To" must appear on the first page. If space is insufficient for the recorder's stamp or required indexing information, the document may be rejected or assessed additional fees.

Execution and acknowledgment issues are also frequent problems. California requires proper notarial acknowledgments that strictly comply with statutory acknowledgment wording. If the notary language is outdated, altered, incomplete, missing required consumer protection wording, or if the notary seal is illegible or expired, the recorder will reject the document. Signatures must also match vesting and capacity (for example, trustees, LLC managers, or corporate officers must sign in the correct capacity).

Substantive omissions can also trigger rejection. A deed must contain a complete legal description—not just an assessor's parcel number (APN). Transfer

documents must include documentary transfer tax statements or proper exemption language, and most counties require a completed Preliminary Change of Ownership Report (PCOR) at the time of recording. Incorrect fees, missing transfer tax calculations, or failure to include required supplemental forms are among the most common administrative causes of rejection.

Common Reasons for Rejection in California

- Insufficient 2.5-inch top margin on first page
- Missing "Recording Requested By" or "Return To" information
- Illegible text or poor print quality
- Missing or incomplete legal description (APN alone is not sufficient)
- Improper vesting or mismatch with prior recorded interest
- Missing signatures or incorrect signing capacity
- Non-compliant or outdated California notary acknowledgment wording
- Illegible, expired, or improperly affixed notary seal
- Missing documentary transfer tax statement or incorrect exemption language
- Failure to include Preliminary Change of Ownership Report (PCOR)
- Incorrect recording fees or transfer tax calculations
- Referenced exhibits not attached
- Pages not securely fastened or improperly assembled
- Assessor discretion - different counties have different requirements. What's acceptable in one county may not be in another county.

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