

Subjects covered in this guide

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What is a Deed Poll?
What is a Deed of Change of Name?
What is the purpose of a Deed Poll?
When signing a Deed Poll, what am I committing myself to?
Do I need to get a solicitor to witness me sign my Deed Poll?
Will my Deed Poll have a stamp or official seal on it?
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What is a Deed Poll?

A Deed Poll is a legal document (not a certificate). Although it is a form of legal contract, it is different from other legal contracts in that it concerns only a single individual and requires that person's signature in the presence of a witness.

Deed Poll documents are used for various purposes by individuals and companies who wish to legally commit to doing something. By signing a Deed Poll the signee is committing himself/herself to the particular course of action outlined on the Deed Poll, in this case a change of name.

What is Deed of Change of Name?

The correct legal term for a deed that has been drawn up to change someone's name is a 'Deed of Change of Name'. However, these days, most people refer to this document simply as a Deed Poll.

What is the purpose of a Deed Poll?

Unless you are getting married and thereby taking just your partners' surname, a Deed Poll will be required by all UK Government departments, companies and organisations before they will change your name on their records, for example, your passport or driving licence, etc.

By Deed Poll you can add names, remove names, rearrange your names and/or change the spelling of your name. You can choose to change your name to almost anything although there are some name restrictions, for example you cannot change your name by Deed Poll to a name which could be construed as being offensive or blasphemous.

Deed Polls can be used to change an adults or a child's name. However, before changing a child's name, you may need to obtain consent from any other person with parental responsibility.

A Deed Poll works in the same way as a marriage certificate does for married women who take their husbands surname. She will write (enclosing a copy of her marriage certificate) to all of the government departments, companies and organisations that hold records about her, requesting them to change their records to show her new married name.

You need to follow the same process when changing your name by Deed Poll i.e. write to all of the organisations that hold records about you (enclosing a copy of your Deed Poll document), requesting them to change your records to show your new legal name.

You should note that the law in the UK does not usually allow you to change your name on your birth certificate or educational certificates. However, if you are asked to produce your birth certificate or educational certificates in the future, you must present your Deed Poll at the same time, to prove that you have changed your name from the name printed on the certificate. In some circumstances, you may be able to change the name on a child's birth certificate.

When signing a Deed Poll, what am I committing myself to?

Your Deed Poll document will contain three declarations and by signing, dating and having your signature witnessed, you are legally committing yourself to:

- Abandoning the use of your former name;
- Using your new name at all times in the future;
- Requiring all persons to address you by your new name.

Please note: that when you sign your Deed Poll, you are signing to declare that you will stop using your old name and use only your new name in the future. This means that you have a duty to notify all of the organisations that hold your records, for example the UK Identity and Passport Service, DVLA and your bank, etc.

You can't simply notify just some of the organisations that hold your records and not others - you must inform them all.

Do I need to get a solicitor to witness me sign my Deed Poll?

When you receive your Deed Poll through the post you will need to 'execute' it (sign, date and have your signing witnessed).

As soon as you have signed your Deed Poll with your witness, you can use it immediately to change all your official documents and records to your new legal name, for example, your passport, driving licence, bank account, medical, tax and National Insurance records, etc.

The following explains whether or not you need to ask a solicitor, notary public or simply an independent person, to witness your signature.

If you are British and living in the UK

You will need to ask an independent person to witness the signing of your Deed Poll document, and the law stipulates that this person must be somebody who:

- Knows you;
- Is not related to you;
- Does not live at the same address as you;
- Is at least 18 years old.

Your witness does not need to be a professional person, like a solicitor, doctor or a teacher. The most suitable witness would be, for example, a friend, neighbour or work colleague.

If you are NOT British and living in the UK

You may need to ask a solicitor or notary public to witness your signature. The passport section of your Embassy will be able to tell you if you need to get your Deed Poll signature witnessed, either by a UK solicitor or notary public.

Please note: that you will only need to ask a solicitor or notary public to witness your signature if you intend to change documents and records held or issued by a foreign country. If you are simply changing your name on documents and records held or issued in the UK, you will not to ask a solicitor or public notary to witness your signature.

If you do need to ask a solicitor/public notary, he/she will charge you up to £10 for witnessing your signature.

Will my Deed Poll have an official seal or stamp on it?

Our Deed Polls are printed on security paper and carry our official seal, so there is no question whatsoever about their authenticity.

Your Deed Poll from the Legal Deed Poll Service is guaranteed to be accepted by all government departments, companies and organisations throughout the United Kingdom and by all British Embassies and High Commissions around the world - enabling you to change all your official documents and records to your new name.



Image of a Deed Poll.