



How Should I Quality Control My Images?

Quality control and assurance of scanned images.

Why should I perform Quality Control? To ensure that:

- All pages have been captured, including two-sided pages.
- Images are complete (not cut off at the edges)
- Images are clear, readable and usable.
- Images are not skewed.
- Images are in the correct order.
- Images that can't meet the scanning standards are labeled as "Best possible scan."

How do I determine what is an acceptable scan?

No scanning project is 100% accurate, so an acceptability rate should be determined at the beginning of the project. The more important the records are to the agency, the more time and care should be taken to ensure accuracy. The higher the acceptability levels, the greater the number of items that must be inspected to ensure that the work product meets the established expectations.

Do I need to check every document?

Depending on your project, you may need to inspect as many as 100% of the images or as little as 5% or 10% selected at random. This should be decided at the outset and followed through the entirety of the project. As you decide the level of QC, think about what the consequences might be if a document were scanned poorly or not scanned at all? If the documents you're scanning are used by citizens to prove their citizenship or to help them obtain government benefits or prove land ownership, the loss of even a single document might be unacceptable. In such cases, all images should be compared to their original documents during QC. On the other hand, the loss of a routine document that is duplicated elsewhere may pose no more risk than the aggravation of securing a copy if the lost image is ever needed.

QC of documents can help determine if something is wrong with your equipment or process. Consistently poor image quality may be addressed by cleaning the scanners regularly or by getting them serviced. Consistent misfeeds will lead you to look at the scanners and the prep process. You should have a reporting system that allows you to see these trends so that they can be addressed systematically.

When do I QC the documents?

If possible, documents should be checked quickly as they are being scanned so that an equipment failure will be discovered right away. More detailed QC, though, will be performed after the scanning, particularly if the scanning is being done in batches using high speed sheet feed scanners. Each image should be reviewed and, if necessary, compared to its original document using a standard checklist of QC criteria. Quality assurance must be conducted before the original documents are destroyed. Keep a Quality Control Log to note any image issues.



What QC criteria should I use?

You should determine your own Quality Control criteria, which may include:

- Is the document legible overall?
- Was the document's smallest detail captured legibly?
- Is the document complete—every page present, including two-sided pages?
- Have images of poor quality originals been labeled "Best possible scan"?
- Are the dimensions of the scan accurate to the original document (height to width)?
- Is there unacceptable level of scanner-generated speckle?
- Is the overall image area complete (no words or images at the edges cut off)?
- Is the color accurate to the original (if that is important)?
- Is the image skew unacceptably?
- Is the image rotated to the correct direction for reading?
- Was the image cropped properly (if cropping was done to remove unnecessary black borders)?
- Was the image indexed accurately?

If a document must be rescanned, the new image should go through the same QC process.