

# FOIA Office Guidance: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## Introduction

Welcome to the FOIA Office Guidance FAQ! This document is designed to help FOIA processors by providing clear, practical answers to common questions encountered during document review for release.

## Redaction Procedures

### Wet Signatures

Question: Should we redact wet (handwritten) signatures from documents?

Answer: No, wet signatures do not generally need to be redacted before releasing documents under FOIA, unless a specific request or issue arises. These signatures typically do not pose a privacy concern.

### Personal Emails

Question: What format should we use to redact personal email addresses?

Answer: Use a black box that fully conceals the entire email address, including the domain.

### Cell Phone Numbers in Signature Blocks

Question: Do we redact cell phone numbers found in signature blocks?

Answer: Generally, cell phone numbers in signature blocks are not redacted. As with most things there are exceptions, including but not limited to 1) when another agency specifically requests redaction (e.g. OMB, State Department); 2) it is White House contact information; 3) it is LEO related such as a security detail's number.

### Leave Type Information

Question: Do we redact leave type information? If so, do we redact the name or the leave type?

Answer: Leave type (like sick or annual leave) should be redacted if it is linked to a specific individual and could reveal personal or medical details. In such cases, redact the leave type. Leave types not linked to individuals are generally not redacted.

## SF-50 Forms

Question: What boxes should be removed or redacted in SF-50 forms?

Answer: Redact any boxes containing personally identifiable information (PII), such as Social Security Numbers, birth dates, home addresses, or other sensitive private details. Boxes containing only employment information (like job title or department) do not usually require redaction unless they reveal sensitive personal data. The following are specifics:

- Block 2. social security numbers
- Block 3. date of birth
- Block 23. Veterans preference
- Block 26. Veterans Preference for RIF (redact both the Yes and No boxes)
- Block 27. FEGLI
- Block 28. Annuitant Indicator
- Block 29. Pay Rate Determinant
- Block 30. Retirement Plan
- Block 41 if it mentions veterans status
- Block 45: Creditable Military Service: redact information after the colon, Previous Retirement Coverage: redact information after the colon, “Employee is automatically covered under” redact the coverage information (for example FERS, etc.), “Frozen Service” redact after “Service” (typically it is stating “none” or “prior”)

## Travel-Related Items:

### Items to Generally Release

- Approval codes, unless there is a decline.
- Merchant ID
- Seat number
- Flight tail number or flight number (typically a combination of 4 alpha/numeric characters)

- Airport code (usually 3 letters)
- Issuing location
- Booking agent code
- Ticket number, unless it is pre-travel.
- Locator number, unless it is pre-travel.
- Travel ID if it is a one-time code.
- TV and TA numbers, unless pre-travel

## Items to Generally Withhold

- Frequent Flyer number (FF#)
- Flight confirmation number
- Home address
- Credit card numbers (B5 Commercial), unless it is clearly indicated to be a personal card.
- TSA Precheck or Known Traveler numbers.

## Additional Guidance

Question: What should I do if I encounter a situation that isn't covered here?

Answer: If you face a scenario not addressed in this FAQ, consult your supervisor or designated FOIA coordinator. Document what you encounter and your approach. You are encouraged to submit questions for inclusion in future guidance updates.

## Have More Questions?

This FAQ is a living document. If you have additional questions about redaction, document handling, or FOIA procedures, please contact your FOIA coordinator or supervisor. Your input helps us improve and expand this resource!

Thank you for your diligence and commitment to protecting sensitive information while fulfilling FOIA requests!