# IPC Section 29: “Document”.

## Section 29 of the Indian Penal Code: "Document" – A Detailed Analysis  
  
Section 29 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) defines "document." This definition is crucial for various offences related to forgery, using forged documents, and other crimes involving written or recorded information. A clear understanding of what constitutes a "document" is essential for the proper application of these provisions.  
  
The section states:  
  
> The word “document” denotes any matter expressed or described upon any substance by means of letters, figures or marks, or by more than one of those means, intended to be used, or which may be used, as evidence of that matter.  
  
  
This definition encompasses a broad range of items beyond traditional paper documents. Let's break down the elements:  
  
\*\*1. Matter Expressed or Described:\*\*  
  
A document must contain some "matter expressed or described." This refers to information, ideas, or concepts conveyed or represented on a substance. This matter can be anything from a simple message to a complex legal agreement, a drawing, a photograph, or even a series of symbols.  
  
\*\*2. Substance:\*\*  
  
The matter must be expressed or described on a "substance." This refers to any material object that can serve as a medium for recording information. While traditionally this would be paper, the definition encompasses a much wider range of materials, including:  
  
\* \*\*Paper:\*\* This includes traditional paper documents like letters, contracts, and certificates.  
\* \*\*Electronic storage media:\*\* This includes hard drives, USB drives, memory cards, and other digital storage devices.  
\* \*\*Metal:\*\* This can include inscriptions on metal plates, engravings on jewelry, or markings on tools.  
\* \*\*Wood:\*\* This can include carvings on wooden objects or writing on wooden planks.  
\* \*\*Cloth:\*\* This can include writing on fabric, embroidery, or patterns on textiles.  
\* \*\*Stone:\*\* This can include inscriptions on stone tablets or carvings on monuments.  
\* \*\*Walls:\*\* Graffiti or writing on walls can also be considered a document.  
  
  
\*\*3. Means of Expression:\*\*  
  
The matter must be expressed using "letters, figures, or marks, or by more than one of those means." This refers to the method used to record the information on the substance. This includes:  
  
\* \*\*Letters:\*\* Alphabetical characters used for writing.  
\* \*\*Figures:\*\* Numerical symbols.  
\* \*\*Marks:\*\* Any other symbols, signs, or graphic representations that convey meaning. This can include punctuation marks, logos, diagrams, drawings, photographs, and even fingerprints.  
  
  
\*\*4. Intended to be Used, or Which May be Used, as Evidence:\*\*  
  
This is a crucial aspect of the definition. The matter expressed on the substance must be intended to be used, or have the potential to be used, as evidence of that matter. This implies that the document has a communicative purpose, aiming to convey information that can be relied upon as proof or evidence of something.   
  
\* \*\*Potential Use as Evidence:\*\* The document doesn't necessarily have to be currently used as evidence. The mere potential for its use as evidence is sufficient. This covers documents created for future use as evidence, even if that use hasn't yet materialized.  
  
  
\*\*5. Illustrations:\*\*  
  
\* \*\*Contract:\*\* A written agreement on paper is a document as it records the terms of the agreement and can be used as evidence of the parties' intentions.  
\* \*\*Will:\*\* A testamentary document outlining the distribution of property after death is a document as it serves as evidence of the deceased's wishes.  
\* \*\*Photograph:\*\* A photograph can be a document as it captures a visual representation of a scene or event and can be used as evidence of what it depicts.  
\* \*\*Map:\*\* A map representing geographical features can be a document as it provides information about locations and can be used as evidence of geographical boundaries.  
\* \*\*Email:\*\* An electronic message stored on a server or device can be a document as it records communication and can be used as evidence of what was communicated.  
\* \*\*CCTV footage:\*\* Video footage recorded on a storage device can be a document as it captures events and can be used as evidence of what transpired.  
\* \*\*Fingerprint:\*\* A fingerprint on a surface can be a document as it represents a unique identifier and can be used as evidence of a person's presence.  
  
  
\*\*6. Application in IPC:\*\*  
  
The definition of "document" in Section 29 is essential for understanding various offences under the IPC, including:  
  
\* \*\*Section 463 (Forgery):\*\* This section defines forgery and relies on the definition of "document" to specify the subject matter of the forgery.  
\* \*\*Section 464 (Making a false document):\*\* This section criminalizes the creation of false documents, relying on the definition in Section 29.  
\* \*\*Section 471 (Using as genuine a forged document):\*\* This section penalizes the use of a forged document as if it were genuine, and the definition of "document" is crucial for determining the scope of this offence.  
  
  
\*\*7. Judicial Interpretations:\*\*  
  
Numerous judicial pronouncements have shaped the interpretation of "document." Courts have emphasized the broad and inclusive nature of the definition, extending it to encompass various forms of recorded information beyond traditional paper documents. They have also highlighted the importance of the potential use of the material as evidence.  
  
\*\*8. Electronic Documents:\*\*  
  
With the increasing use of electronic communication and storage, the definition of "document" has been interpreted to include electronic records. The Information Technology Act, 2000, further clarifies the legal validity and admissibility of electronic documents.  
  
  
\*\*9. Conclusion:\*\*  
  
Section 29 of the IPC provides a comprehensive definition of "document," encompassing a wide array of materials and methods of recording information. The definition emphasizes the potential use of the material as evidence, making it applicable to various forms of written, visual, and electronic records. Understanding the broad scope of this definition is essential for the correct application of various provisions within the IPC related to forgery, using forged documents, and other offences involving recorded information.