Digital Signatures: Ensuring Integrity and Authentication

**What is a Digital Signature?**  
Digital signatures are cryptographic tools that ensure the **integrity** and **authentication** of digital messages or documents. They allow recipients to verify that a message has not been altered and confirm the identity of the sender. Digital signatures are widely used in secure communications, online transactions, legal documents, and software distribution.

**How They Work**

1. **Key Generation:**
   * Each user generates a key pair: a **private key** (kept secret) and a **public key** (shared with others).
2. **Signing:**
   * The sender uses their private key to sign a message.
   * Typically, the message is first hashed (converted into a fixed-size digest), and then this hash is encrypted with the private key.
3. **Verification:**
   * The recipient uses the sender’s public key to verify the signature.
   * If the decrypted hash matches the hash of the received message, then the message is **authentic** and **unaltered**.

**Ensuring Integrity:**

* **Hash Function:** Converts the message into a fixed-size string. Any change in the message produces a different hash, indicating tampering.
* **Tamper Detection:** If the hashes do not match during verification, it signals that the message has been altered.

**Ensuring Authentication:**

* **Identity Verification:** Only the owner of the private key can create the signature, confirming their identity.
* It also provides **non-repudiation** → the sender can’t deny signing it later, since it’s uniquely tied to their private key..

Example of Signing and Verifying a Message in Python

from cryptography.hazmat.backends import default\_backend

from cryptography.hazmat.primitives.asymmetric import rsa

from cryptography.hazmat.primitives import serialization

from cryptography.hazmat.primitives.asymmetric import padding

from cryptography.hazmat.primitives import hashes

private\_key = rsa.generate\_private\_key(

    public\_exponent=65537,

    key\_size=2048,

    backend=default\_backend()

)

public\_key = private\_key.public\_key()

data = b"This is some data to be signed."

signature = private\_key.sign(

    data,

    padding.PSS(

        mgf=padding.MGF1(hashes.SHA256()),

        salt\_length=padding.PSS.MAX\_LENGTH

    ),

    hashes.SHA256()

)

try:

    public\_key.verify(

        signature,

        data,

        padding.PSS(

            mgf=padding.MGF1(hashes.SHA256()),

            salt\_length=padding.PSS.MAX\_LENGTH

        ),

        hashes.SHA256()

    )

    print("Signature is valid.")

except Exception as e:

    print("Signature verification failed:", str(e))