

Online Service for Self Assessment 2008/09

Acceptable Characters

Changes from 2007/08 – Further clarification on the use of the “£” sign added.

The following is a list of characters which will be accepted by the HM Revenue & Customs Computer Environment for Self Assessment (CESA) service.

- A to Z (upper case)
- a to z (lower case)
- 0 to 9 (numeric)
- space & ' () * , - . / @ £
- Please note that the ampersand (&) and pound sign (£) characters **must** be transmitted in escaped format within your XML submission:
 - & = &
 - £ = £

If the “£” sign is properly encoded (see above) it can be sent in any of the fields where it is permitted. The characters “GBP” can be used as a substitute if preferred.

You must ensure that all characters contained within your XML submissions are in accordance with the patterns defined for each field within the Schema.

No other characters will be accepted by CESA and any Self Assessment Tax Return submitted electronically which contains any invalid characters will be rejected.

Submissions that are rejected due to an invalid character will usually return an error message identifying the offending character, however certain invalid characters may cause the submission to become stuck in a continuous ‘polling’ loop at the Government Gateway.

Important: If an escaped character appears within your XML at the end of a line, you must ensure that the complete entity is included in the same line of your XML, or on the next line if applicable. You must not truncate or split the escaped character otherwise this may invalidate your XML message.