



Tip Sheet: Naming Records

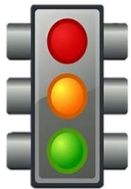
Employees often need to retrieve files and documents that they did not create. Naming conventions promote consistency, which makes retrieval easier, regardless of when the documents were created. Offices may need to adopt recordkeeping rules that define the terminology or formatting of file and document names so all employees are doing the same thing.

Elements of a File Name:

- What is it?
 - Contract, License Application, Complaint, Meeting Agenda, Budget Approval, etc.
- Who or what does it represent?
 - Company, Person, Litigation Case, Project, Group, Agency, etc.
- When was it created?
 - Specific date (meeting date, filing date), Cycle (calendar year, fiscal year), Version (draft number, final, superseded)

Worth the Effort:

Naming files consistently when they are created saves time later. See the example below:



Minutes.docx
[What]

Minutes - Executive Committee.docx
[What] [Who]

Minutes - Executive Committee 2022-10-07
[What] [Who] [When]

Naming Tips:

- Use the fewest words possible.
- Names should be unique, so there is no confusion about the content and purpose of the records.
- Name the record based upon the information that users generally have about the content, so they don't have to refer to an index to locate it.
 - Example: "Lansing Hospital Licensing File" instead of "License #34567"
- Assigned numbers or codes can be used in the name when the records are voluminous, or when there is a need to protect sensitive information. When using numbers or codes, create an index to help with retrieval and store the index in a shared location.
- When using numbers, know the maximum number of digits to be used and insert zeros as placeholders, so files sort correctly.
- Consistently use abbreviations, shortened names, acronyms, uppercase and lowercase characters, etc.



- If the file or document is about a person, use their last name first.
- If a person or business changes its name, determine how/when/who will modify the name on the documentation.
- Names may need to identify a document type, form number, name of “subject,” date, etc.
 - Example: “Lansing Hospital License” or “Lansing Hospital Complaint”
- If electronic, don’t spell out months, use numbers to represent dates.
- It is useful to identify drafts versus final versions in document names.
- Use default application extensions for electronic documents, so the computer can open them.
 - Example: s:\Hospital Licensing Files\Lansing Hospital\Lansing Hospital License 2015.pdf
- Capitalize the first letter of every word.
- Avoid special characters \: * " < > | [] { } & \$, .
- Use dashes between words instead of underscores if a space cannot be used. This is especially helpful if naming a document that will be published online.
- Think about how the computer will sort the files and documents. Which word do you want to appear first to help find things? It is recommended that nouns appear before adjectives.
- Use consistent terminology that is common to the business process, and frequently used by most office employees.
- All employees within an office should apply the naming conventions consistently.

CATEGORY		
Grammar: noun then adjective	Minutes Web Governance 2021-12-06.docx	Web Governance Minutes 2021-12-06.docx
Readability: capitalize every word	Tips - File Naming.docx	tips file naming.docx
Special Characters: dashes or spaces, no underscores or other characters	Tips - File Naming – v02.docx	\: * " < > [] { } & \$, . _ Tips_ File Naming_#02.docx
Dates: YYYYMMDD	20211206 2021-12-06	12062021 12-6-2021 December 6, 2021
Versioning: use zeros for single-digit numbers for sorting	v01, v02 Version01, Version 02 Final	v1, v10, v11, v2, v20, v3, v4
Spelling, Abbreviations: be consistent	Minutes Web Governance 2021-12-06.docx Minutes Web Governance 2021-12-20.docx	Minutes Web Governance 2021-12-06.docx Min Web Gov 2021-12- 20.docx