File Naming Conventions

Best Practices

Importance

- Compliance with public records law
- Compliance with university records management policy
- Easy disposition of records
- Efficient office operations
  - Faster searching and retrieval
  - Save your colleagues' time, effort, and sanity

Unstructured Storage

Can contain important documents & records

But is intermingled with useless information

- Duplicates
- Non-Records
- Records past retention time

Generally lacks standard naming conventions

Ownership is unclear

Terminated/transferred employees

- Nobody wants to take responsibility for remaining records

Searching

- Less terms = more results
  - =more time spent reviewing results

- More terms = refined results
  - =gift of time for you

- You didn't create the file that you're looking for…what did Joe call it?

Characteristics of a good naming convention

Consistency

Uniformity

Standardization

Accuracy

Distinguishable

Distinguishable

- From other files

- From versions of the same file

- To others in your department or with whom you are collaborating

Elements of a File Name

- ## What is it?
  - Type of document (*not* file type, ex. *not* Doc, PPT, PDF, JPG)

- ## Who/what does it represent?
  - Group
  - Unit
  - Person
  - Case/Project

- ## When?
  - Date of meeting

A file name should be clear and concise, yet include sufficient description for the file to stand on its own, independent of where it is stored.

A few extra seconds upfront to carefully name a file will save exponential time later on.
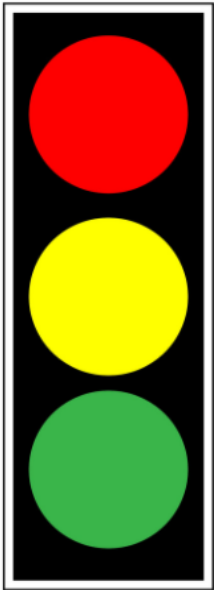
Minutes.docx

Minutes_Exec_Committee.docx

Minutes_Exec_Committee_20191021.docx

[What]   [Who]   [When]

A file name should be clear and concise, yet include sufficient description for the file to stand on its own, independent of where it is stored.

Records Management > CRD > Approved Certificates of Records Destruction > 13 University Hospitals > JamesCare for Life > 2020

University_Hospitals_JamesCare_20200417.pdf

Example

Records Management's naming convention for the Certificate of Records Destruction

- *CRD-Unit-Subunit-YYYYMMDD*

  - Every word should be capitalized
  - Use an underscore between every word
  - The date is when the CRD was *submitted* to Records Management, not the approval date

CRD-University-Hospitals-Radiology-20200318.pdf
CRD-University-Hospitals-Radiology-20200507.pdf
CRD-University-Hospitals-Radiology-20200624.pdf
CRD-University-Hospitals-Radiology-20200626.pdf
CRD-University-Hospitals-Radiology-20200813.pdf

CRD-University-Hospital-James-Pharmacy-20200617.pdf
CRD-University-Hospital-James-Pharmacy-20200717.pdf
CRD-University-Hospital-Pharmacy-20200617.pdf
CRD-University-Hospital-Pharmacy-20200717.pdf

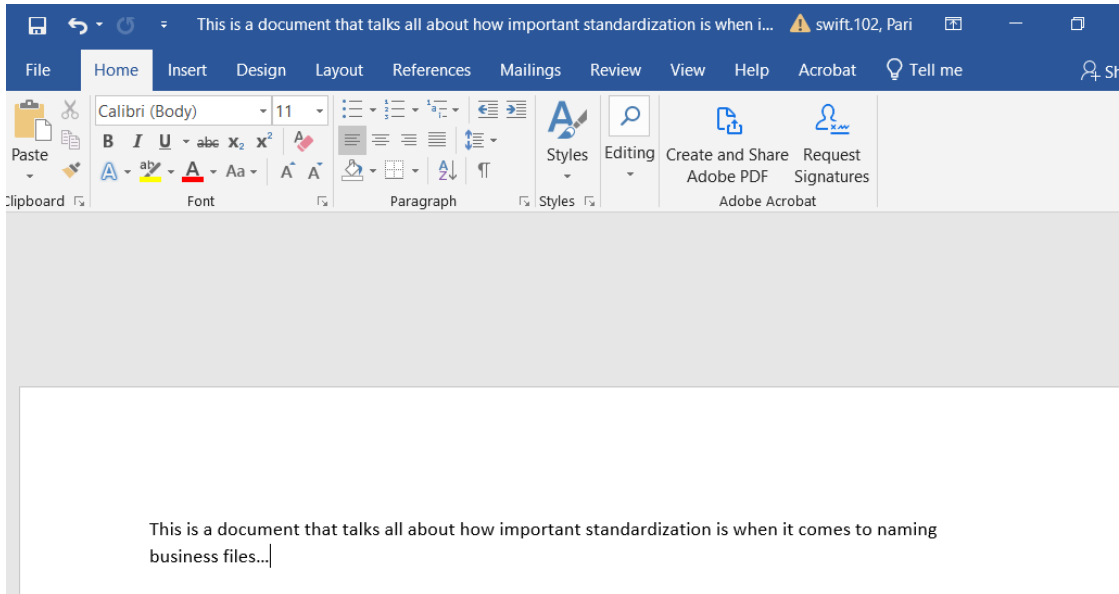CRD-Student-Life-Human-Resources-20200228.pdf

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Hints
&
Tips

What happens when you allow a file to be saved under its auto-name?

Grammar Matters

Order is generally Noun, Adjective(s)

👍 Good: **Minutes-Web-Governance-20150728.docx**

👎 Bad: **Web-Governance-Minutes-20150728.docx** (they would show up in the Ws and not appear with the other minutes)

- Might need a compound noun

👎 It would be odd if this document **"File-Naming-Convention.docx"** were named **Convention-File- Naming.docx."**

👍 It is more appropriate to say **"floor plan"** than **"plan, floor."** Therefore, the file should be named: **Floor-Plan-18th-Avenue- 3rd-Floor.CAD**.

- Leads to logical search/retrieval

Alternate: What, Who

Special Characters

Dash -

Parenthesis ( )

\ / : ; ! @ # $ % & * [ ] < > . , _

- Used in electronic records coding
- Using them results in errors

Spacing – Use Dashes

File-Naming-Convention-20150810.docx

In a web address

File Naming Convention 20201002.docx

becomes

File%20Naming%20Convention%2020201002.docx

In a link File_Naming_Convention_20201002.docx becomes

File_Naming_Convention_20201002.docx

Readability – Capitalize

File-Name.docx

file-name.docx

Dates - Format

Consistency – everyone uses same format

- Affects sorting

- Lessens confusion

10022020
1022020
2020102
20102
10-02-2020
02-10-2020
2020-10-02
2020-02-10
Oct2020

VS

YYYYMMDD

20201020

Date – Placement for Sorting

- ## End of file name (alphanumeric/chronological)

  👍 Annual-Report-Exhibits-Committee-20150630.docx
  👍 Annual-Report-Web-Governance-Committee-20141231.docx
  👍 Minutes-Web-overnance-Committee-20150229.docx
  👍 Minutes-Web-Governance-Committee-20150728.docx

- ## Beginning of file name (chronological)

  👎 20141231-Annual-Report-Web-Governance-Committee.docx
  👎 20150229-Minutes-Web-Governance-Committee.docx
  👎 220150422-Report-Web-Governance-Committee-.docx
  👎 20150515-Report-Web-Governance-Committee.docx
  👎 20150630-Annual-Report-Exhibits-Committee.docx
  👎 20150728-Minutes-Web-Governance-Committee-.docx

Versioning

Consistency

- Version2 –or- v2 –or- (v2) –or- v02
- Zero-fill for sorting
  - v1, v10, v11, v2, v3
  - v01, v01, v03 … v10, v11

Status Notation

- Final
- Superseded

Consistency

- Spelling or abbreviations
  - Certificate of Records Destruction –or- CRD
  - Purchase Order –or- PO

👍 Do:
→ Minutes-Web-Governance-Committee-20150113.docx
→ Minutes-Web-Governance-Committee-20150217.docx
→ Minutes-Web-Governance-Committee-20150317.docx

👎 Don't:
→ Minutes-Web-Gov-Committee-20150113.docx
→ Minutes-WebGovernance-20150113.docx
→ Minutes-WG-Committee-20150113.docx

- Order of elements
- Date Formats and placement

Unified Naming Conventions

- **Standardizing your own approach to file naming is a start**

- **A unified departmental approach is the next step**
    - Small working group
    - Consider records that multiple people create/receive
    - For each type of record, think about how it makes sense to have results sort
    - Document the naming convention

- **Standardized filing structure**

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