

Opening Electronic Records

Electronic records should be created as soon as the first document relevant to the record is received or created so as to ensure that all relating documents can be stored together without the risk of loss. For instance, if a letter of appeal is received, that letter triggers the creation of a folder (within the relevant section of the departments file plan) relating to that appeal. All subsequent electronic documents (letters, notes, email attachments etc) that relate to that appeal can then be saved to the folder as and when required.

As each item is added to the folder should be saved using a logical filename.

Electronic File Naming

These guidelines are to be used as a basis for naming electronic folders and documents using a sensible and as consistent an approach as possible so as to enable grouping of related documents under a common label (in a folder group or a group of documents). This will enable users to distinguish items with similar names and enable them to identify documents without the need to open and view them

Elements in a file name should be sorted in the most logical way to retrieve the record, which may differ from record to record but should not have a negative impact on working practice.

If current working practice is to have records retrieved according to their date then the date element should appear first in the filename. For instance, minutes and papers of the meetings are likely to be retrieved on the basis of the date of the meeting, which means it makes sense to have the date at the start of the file name as this will group items with the same date, not the same document 'type' i.e. agendas, minutes, papers etc.

Instead of	Use
Agenda 1Feb2005.doc Agenda 20Jan2005.doc Agenda 30June2004.doc Minutes 1Feb2005.doc Minutes 20Jan2005.doc Minutes 30June2004.doc PaperA 1Feb2005.doc PaperB 1Feb2005.doc	20040630Agenda.doc 20040630Minutes.doc 20050120Agenda.doc 20050120Minutes.doc 20050201Agenda.doc 20050201Minutes.doc 20050201PaperA.doc 20050201PaperB.doc
<i>(As the system sorts files)</i>	<i>(As the system sorts files)</i>

However, if it is more appropriate to retrieve records by their type or description (for example where items refer to an event not the date) then this should take the lead in the filename.

Instead of	Use
20051214ChristmasDinner.doc 20060601GardenParty.doc 20061214ChristmasDinner.doc 20070601GardenParty.doc	ChristmasDinner20051214.doc ChristmasDinner20061214.doc GardenParty20060601.doc GardenParty20070601.doc
<i>(As the system sorts files)</i>	<i>(As the System sorts files)</i>

The following naming conventions are designed to assist people, not cause them to change their whole way of working and should be tailored to most suit your working methods.

1. Short Meaningful Names

Short Filenames are used because a long filename means a long file path or, when posting a document on the web, a long URL. This increased the risk of 'broken' links from web pages and error messages when users attempt to documents.

Meaningful names are used so as to provide a clear indication of the content. Folders using general terms such as “**miscellaneous**” provide no explanation as to the nature of the documents inside. A folder named “**Letters**” might sound like it works, but when the letters are all of a different nature (subject, incoming, outgoing etc) it offers no assistance in retrieval. Likewise filenames like “**James letter**” might be descriptive to the person who created the document, but another user doesn't know if James is a family name or first name or whether the letter was sent out or received.

A filename does not require every single word in the document title to be used in order to identify it. It is also possible to abbreviate words through the use of standard abbreviations. e.g. “cttee” is a standard abbreviation for “committee” and can be used in all committee related areas providing it is commonly understood.

Abbreviations only work if everyone uses them, making up new abbreviations that only one person understands will negate the ease and efficiency of the system.

Example:

Instead of naming a document **the_employment_and_finance_committee.doc**

It can be called: **EmpFINCttee.doc**

2. Separating Words

Spaces, dashes - and underscores are not universally recognised within filenames and can cause problems where files are published on the web. Instead of separating the words, each word can be identified using capital letters to identify the start of each word.

Instead of naming a document **staff appeal.doc** or **staff_appeal.doc**

It can be called: **StaffAppeal.doc**

When using acronyms, each letter should appear in capitals, as should the first letter of the following word. Only the first letter of an abbreviated word should be a capital

Example:

Instead of naming a document **empfinCtteeemofref.doc**

It can be called: **EFCtteeTOR.doc**

3. Duplication

Do not duplicate the folder name within the file names as all the files stored within in a folder will relate to the same subject, which is already recorded in the folder name. For example, all files are stored in a folder called “Complaints” should refer to that subject, so it is not necessary to include the word “Complaints” in the file names.

Example:

Instead of **/Complaints/ComplaintsProcedure.doc**

It can be: **/Complaints/Procedure.doc**

4. Numbering

Two-digit numbers, using a zero before numbers 0-9 as this will maintain the alphanumeric ordering, and assist retrieval by placing the latest files last.

Instead of	Use
ExampleV1.doc	ExampleV01.doc
ExampleV10.doc	ExampleV02.doc
ExampleV11.doc	ExampleV03.doc
ExampleV2.doc	ExampleV04.doc
ExampleV3.doc	ExampleV05.doc
ExampleV4.doc	ExampleV06.doc
ExampleV5.doc	ExampleV07.doc
ExampleV6.doc	ExampleV08.doc
ExampleV7.doc	ExampleV09.doc
ExampleV8.doc	ExampleV10.doc
ExampleV9.doc	ExampleV11.doc
<i>(As the system sorts files)</i>	<i>(As the system sorts files)</i>

5. Dating

Backwards dating is used to sort files where it is useful to maintain the chronology of their creation within a folder. The date format should always follow the style four digit years, two digit months and two digit days. i.e. **YYYYMMDD = 20080801 = 1st September 2008**

Presenting the date with the day first (i.e. 01082008) will sort the files based upon the first digits in the order, which may result in later documents appearing in the list ahead of those produced first. This can be very important with items such as tracking the history of a set of correspondence or when documents relating to regular meetings held over the course of a year are stored in the one folder.

Instead of	Use
1Feb2005Agenda.pdf	20040324Agenda.pdf
1Feb2005Minutes.pdf	20040324Enclosure1.pdf
24March2004Agenda.pdf	20040324Minutes.pdf
24March2004Minutes.pdf	20050201Agenda.pdf
24March2004 Enclosure1.pdf	20050201Minutes.pdf
<i>(As the system sorts files)</i>	<i>(As the system sorts files)</i>

Not all dates will require the actual day of creation to be included in the filename; some may require just the month, the year or a date range. These should still follow the rules of backwards dating.

Example:

YYYYMM = 200808 = September 2008

YYYY = 2008 = 2008

YYYY – YYYY = 2007-2008

6. Naming an Individual

Always put ‘The Family’ name first, followed by the initials when saving items that require the use inclusion of a persons name. This will arrange the files by surname which should make it easier for others looking for a file.

Example:

BrownP.doc

JamesA.doc

JamesD.doc

JonesD.doc

7. Common Words

Common words will always be used in file names as a useful means of identifying the file. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as it aids identification, however using words like “draft”, “agenda”, “minutes” or “enclosure” at the start of a file name will have an affect the order in which files are sorted.

For example, placing the word ‘draft’ at the start will group all files beginning with that word together, placing unrelated items into groups. It is far more useful to have the subject at the start of the filename so related subjects will group together.

Instead of	Use
DraftFinancePlan.xls DraftBudgetReport.doc FinalFinancePlan.xls FinalBudgetReport.doc	BudgetReportDraft.doc BudgetReportFinal.doc FinPlanDraft.xls FinPlanFinal.xls
<i>(As the system sorts files)</i>	<i>(As the system sorts files)</i>

7. Correspondence

Naming of correspondence files should include either the name of the person to whom it is sent/received from (unless that name is already contained within the folder name in which it will be stored), the date if was received/sent and a description of the correspondence which can be include using a standard abbreviation. Abbreviations that might be used include:

Rcvd – For Correspondence received not relating to a specified ‘type’ of letter.

Comp – For Complaints received in writing

App – Appeal Received in writing
Ack - Acknowledgement of letters received
Res – Response letters (final or interim)

Example Correspondence files names:

Where the individuals name does not appear in the folder:

20080822JamesD0Comp.doc – First letter received
20080823JamesD0Ack.doc – Letter Acknowledged
20080824JamesDRes.doc - Response to the

Where the individuals name appears in the folder name ‘James’:

20080822Rcvd.doc
20080823Ack.doc
20080824Res.doc

Correspondence will include those received by email (see main section on managing emails) which might include attachments which will be stored alongside the email. When saving an attachment the abbreviation ‘attch’ and an indication of the number of attachments sent with the covering email should be shown in the filename.

Example Correspondence with attachments files names

BloggsJ20031205attch01of02.pdf
BloggsJ20031205attch02of02.pdf
BloggsJ20031205rcvd.txt