

File Naming Best Practices

The most important things to remember about file naming are to **be consistent and descriptive** in naming and organizing your files so that it's obvious where to find a file and what it contains.

Information to consider including in file names

1. Topic or Project name
2. Author's name/initials
3. Date or date range
4. Type of record (e.g. newsletter)
5. Version number of document (e.g. v1)

These are suggestions; include whatever information will allow you to distinguish your files from each other and clearly indicate to you what is in them.

Other tips for file naming

1. A good format for dates is YYYYMMDD (or YYMMDD). This makes sure all your files stay in chronological order, even over many years.
2. Don't make file names too long; longer names do not work well with all types of software.
3. Special characters should be avoided: ~ ! @ # \$ % ^ & * () ` ; < > ? , [] { } ' “
4. For sequential numbering, use leading zeros to ensure files sort properly. For example, use “0001, 0002...1001, etc” instead of “1, 2...1001, etc.”
5. Do not use spaces, because they are not recognized by some software. Instead use underscores (file_name), dashes (file-name), no separation (filename or FileName).

Consider including a README.txt file in your directory that explains your naming convention along with any abbreviations or codes you have used.

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