



File Naming Practices at WVNCC

Electronic files need to be properly named and organized so others can easily identify and access the material. The efficient retention and management of electronic records begins with an accurate file-naming schema.

File names should:

- Be accurate and consistently structured;
- Be constant and not tied to anything that changes over time or location. Files can be copied to other folders, downloaded, and emailed. Thus, it is important to ensure that the file name, independent of the location where the original file lives, is sufficiently descriptive. For example: Even if the folder is titled MCG, the file should still contain MCG in the file name in case it is downloaded. It would not require renaming (2014-BIO-218-MCG);
- Limit the character length to no more than 25-35 characters;
- Be saved as a pdf unless they are forms to be able to be revised and used later;
- Use lowercase letters. However, when a name has more than one word, start each word with an uppercase letter for example, "File-Name-Convention";
- Use numbers and/or letters but not characters such as symbols or spaces that could cause complications across operating platforms;
- Avoid blank spaces anywhere within the character string by using hyphens to separate words or numbers;
- Include dates and format them consistently with the least amount needed. Use international standard date notation (YYYY-MM-DD);
- Include version numbers in the name where needed. For example, use "v1, v2, v3";
- Do not use special characters (i.e. \ / : * ? " < > | [] & \$, .);and
- Do not use an overly complex or lengthy naming scheme that is susceptible to human error during manual input, such as "filenameconventionjoesfinalversioneditedfinal".

Sources

Adapted from the following:

"Best Practices for File Naming." National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed June 29, 2023.
<https://records-express.blogs.archives.gov/2017/08/22/best-practices-for-file-naming/>.

"State Archives of North Carolina." Best Practices for File-Naming | NC Archives. Accessed June 29, 2023.
<https://archives.ncdcr.gov/government/digital-records/digital-records-policies-and-guidelines/best-practices-file-naming>.

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