

Guide: Naming Conventions for Electronic Documents, Records & Folders

Purpose of guide:

This guide provides advice on applying standard naming rules or conventions to your electronic documents, records and folders.

- The search facility within the corporate Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) is so powerful that every instance of a search term in the title or content of a document, record or folder you are authorised to access will be located immediately.
- If you follow these simple rules at the same time you will find it both easier to name and save your work, without having to use complex sets of sub-folders, and to find a specific document when you need it without having to check the contents of any others.

Benefits of Using Standard Naming Conventions

- Facilitates better access and retrieval of documents into the future.
- Helps you create consistent, logical and predictable titles.
- Allows the sorting of documents in a meaningful way.
- Helps you interpret file names - distinguish between documents at a glance.
- Consistency of practice reduces the burden of decision making every time.
- Joined up government - functions and activities described using the same terms.

General Rules

- Titles should be brief and yet comprehensive enough to describe contents. Balance a helpful title, containing sufficient information for you and your colleagues, with clarity and conciseness. Think, is this title: Short and specific? Meaningful and sensible? Helpful to others?
- Use formal structured language rather than informal terms or names.
- Avoid unnecessary repetition and the use of obscure or non-specific terms which will not help you locate an item later, (E.g. 'Misc1', 'General', 'report3').
- Avoid using common words such as 'Letter' or 'Draft' at the start of filenames - arrange the title in a logical way with the highest level of information first.
- There is no need to include the format of the document (e.g. Word document) - this is recognised as the object type when saving.
- There is no need to include the document creator's name - this information will be in a system field.
- References can be used to support titles but must be standardised and understood by all creators and users
- Use only alpha-numeric characters (a-z, A-Z, 0-9) and underscores. Avoid:.,; , &, %, £, \$, @, (). This includes not using commas or full stops.
- Document (file)names need underscores_between_words and not spaces. This is because If you provide space in between then SharePoint takes as "%20" which is

not user-friendly and readable. For example Records Management would become Records%20Management.

- Documents that require a date in the title as an identifier (i.e Minutes of Meetings) should have this at the start in the format YYYYMMDD or YYYYMM.
- Single digits (numbers 1-9) should have a zero added to the front to confirm this is the intended number for example 01, 02, 03 and so on.

N.B - SharePoint restricts File names to 255 characters, so it's important to balance concise yet descriptive. Too long a file name is as bad as one that is too short.

How to Order or Structure Document Names



- Document or file names should be ordered in the most appropriate and effective way for access and retrieval. This will depend on the function of your team and the way that you work.
- Documents stored and retrieved according to their date, (E.g. budget and financial records), should have the date entered first and then the subject (E.g. '2008-2009 Older People Commissioning OPC Monitoring Period 01').
- Documents retrieved according to their function or subject should have the description component entered first with the most useful top level of information at the start (E.g. ISIS User Group Meeting agenda 20070927).
- Documents relating to recurring events (E.g. meetings or monthly reports) should include the date and description of the event unless this will lead to too much repetition of class or folder names. Date first if frequent and retrieved by date; event first if infrequent and retrieved by event.

Subject and Names in Titles

- Subject of the document should be written in full using sentence case (first letter capitalised and others lower case).
- Names and proper nouns should have a capital letter.
- Structure personal names should be in surname then forename order.
- Only use the rank and title of an individual if it is relevant to your business.
- Use the role or job title of a person in full rather than their name in a document title. E.g. 'Comments on Local Government Re-organisation by the Leader of the Council', not 'Comments on LGR by Leader'.
- Document titles for correspondence should include the name of the correspondent, an indication of the subject, the date and whether incoming or outgoing, unless this repeats information in the folder titles.

How to use Dates in Titles

- Dates applied at the start of the description (see 2.) should be completed in the format of four digit years, two digit months and two digit days; YYYY-YYYY or YYYYMM or YYYYMMDD - to sort them in chronological order.
- Dates entered at the end of the description should be maintained in the same format YYYYMMDD. Once entered directly into CERMS they can be entered as DD/MM/YYYY but still searchable via YYYYMMDD.
- Don't spell months alphabetically – they do not file chronologically.



	
2016-2017_a_file_name 201711_a_file_name 20180315_a_file_name A_file_name_20180315	16-17 2016_to_2017 Mar 2018 15/03/18 15/03/2018 15-03-2018 2018_03_15 15.03.18 15 Mar 18 20181503 (US format)

How to use Numbers in Titles

- If you need to use a number in a file name always use two digit numbers e.g. 01, 02, 03, unless it is a year, another number with more than two digits. This will sort documents into numerical order (E.g. Monitoring Period 01, Monitoring Period 02).

Applying Version Numbers and Drafts to Titles

- Version control should be applied. This should be added at the end using the letter 'v' followed by the version number at the end of the title. If the version number is below 10, add a zero before the number such as 01, 02, 03 for example. Use 'Draft' or 'Final' at the end of the title to identify work in progress or completion. Not all documents will need this as SharePoint automates versioning when amendments are made.
- Avoid using Punctuation in Titles
- Try not to use punctuation as this can affect search results.
- Use spaces between words.
- If you do need to use punctuation – use a hyphen.
- Avoid using Acronyms, Abbreviations and Symbols
- Always use natural language and spell words in full. Do not use abbreviations for words or compacted old style 8-letter titles.
- Don't use abbreviations or acronyms as they often become obsolete over a period of time and can have more than one meaning. Write the name in full and then put the acronym in capitals.
- Always write the names of organisations in full, (E.g. LPA could be Lancashire Purchasing Agency or Lancashire Police Authority).
- If is absolutely necessary to use an abbreviation ensure the information is captured elsewhere, e.g. in the description field.
- Avoid using non-alphanumeric characters or symbols e.g. &, %, £, \$, @, (), “, “

	
_ - A to Z a to z 0 to 9	& % £ \$ @ () “ ’ , . * ^ / \ ~ # (in fact any symbol other than _ or -)

Naming E-mails

- All the same rules apply equally to naming e-mails but the title of an e-mail does not always reflect the reason for capturing it as a record.

- If the title does not accurately reflect the content of an e-mail, change the title at the point of saving it to the shared drive. Titles like 'Urgent' will soon become meaningless when the urgent issue is forgotten.
- Ensure the title contains sufficient information to enable any member of staff with authorisation for access to identify the relevance of the content. for themselves.
- Remove any instance of 'FW' or 'RE' as they do not provide any information about the content.
- You do not need to include 'email' or the date in the title. The file type is automatically captured.

Folders and Sub-Folders

- Folders and sub-folders bring together documents and records relating to the same activity or transaction and these should be reflected in their titles.
- Titles should be brief and yet comprehensive enough to describe the contents
- Folder names should reflect the transactions undertaken by a team as a result of their functions and activities.
- Use full titles, no abbreviations or non-specific terms (E.g. 'Miscellaneous' or 'General')
- It is not usually necessary to repeat the Folder Name in any Sub-Folder titles.
- When considering the names of new folders, checks must be made to see if a folder already exists. If it does, this may not be the correct place for your work, and you should refer to your Team Administrator or to the Records Management Service.

What Can You and Your Team Do?

- Use the file naming rules to name your electronic documents, records and folders
- Discuss and agree amongst your team common terminology already in use, preferred or non-preferred terms and standard practices for naming.
- Standard terms and forms of names should be used wherever possible for names of organisations and people you deal with, and for the names of your projects and activities. (E.g. Use E-Government not electronic government; use Combined Finance Team not CFT).
- Devise a guide of standard terms for your team. This can be added to a corporate thesaurus or controlled vocabulary for Lancashire County Council.

Managing your files on Microsoft Teams

- The size limit for an MS Teams file is 250GB. Files must be kept under that size.
- It is recommended to limit folders to no more than three levels deep and avoid file names becoming too long. As with folders, all files should follow a standard and intuitive naming convention.
- When moving files from one Team or channel to another, be sure not to lose the version history of the files. To keep the version history, move a file using the Move button in MS Teams.
- Non-confidential files can be uploaded to the Files tab in an applicable channel, they are then automatically saved to the SharePoint folder for that channel and are accessible to all members of the Team.
- It is recommended to protect all final versions of MS Office files. To do this go to the File tab in the MS Office Ribbon – info (from menu on left) and select protect document.