

BEST PRACTICE NAMING CONVENTIONS

Please note that the following rules apply to naming conventions of electronic files but in many instances can be applied within content.

For example, if my document has a heading RDM and my file is called RDM Policy then searching for my “records policy” will bring up a zero result. Terminology such as MSP or RDM or SI or IC, to name a few, may be common use vocabulary but trying to find all “Spatial” documents in a network structure will prove challenging.

1. Keep document names short, but meaningful.
2. Avoid unnecessary repetition and redundancy in document names and file paths.
3. Use capital letters to delimit words, not spaces or underscores.
4. When including a number in a document name always give it as a two-digit number, i.e. 01-99, unless it is a year or another number with more than two digits.
5. If using a date in the document name always state the date ‘back to front’, and use four-digit years, two-digit months and two digit days: YYYYMMDD or YYYYMM or YYYY or YYYY-YYYY.
6. When including a personal name in a document name give the family name first followed by the initials.
7. Avoid using common words such as ‘draft’ or ‘letter’ at the start of document names, unless doing so will make it easier to retrieve the record.
8. Order the elements in a document name in the most appropriate way to retrieve the record.
9. The document names of records relating to recurring events should include the date and a description of the event, except where the inclusion of any of either of these elements would be incompatible with rule 2.
10. The document names of correspondence should include the name of the correspondent, an indication of the subject, the date of the correspondence and whether it is incoming or outgoing correspondence, except where the inclusion of any of these elements would be incompatible with rule 2.
11. The document name of an email attachment should include the name of the correspondent, an indication of the subject, the date of the correspondence, ‘attch’, and an indication of the number of attachments sent with the covering email, except where the inclusion of any of these elements would be incompatible with rule 2.
12. The version number of a record should be indicated in its document name by the inclusion of ‘V’ followed by the version number and, where applicable, ‘Draft’.
13. Avoid using non-alphanumeric characters in document names.

Rule 1 KEEP DOCUMENT NAMES SHORT BUT MEANINGFUL - Example		
	Correct	Incorrect
Document name	SausageMashCtteeRemit.rtf or Sausage Mash Committee Remit.rtf	The_sausage_and_mash_committee_remit.rtf
Explanation	Some words add length to a document name but do not contribute towards the meaning, for example words like “the”, “a”, and “and”. Where the remaining document name is still meaningful within the context of the file directory these elements can be removed. Sometimes words have standard abbreviations, e.g. “cttee” is a standard abbreviation for “committee”; where this is the case the standard abbreviation can be used. REMEMBER – if you use abbreviations they can only be used for retrieval, the full term will not be identifiable.	
Rule 2 AVOID UNNECESSARY REPETITION & REDUNDANCY - Example		
	Correct	Incorrect
Document name	../Court/20041030Minutes.rtf or 20041030 Court Minutes.rtf ../Procedures/Appeals.rtf	../Court/20041030CourtMinutes.rtf ../Procedures/AppealsProcedures.rtf
Explanation	In the first example the folder is called “Court” so it may not be necessary to include the word “Court” in the document name because all the records in that folder are Court records. In the second example the folder is called “Procedures” so it may not be necessary to include the word “Procedures” in the document name because all the records in that folder are procedure records. REMEMBER – if the file name does not have the work “Court” in it you will not be able to find it!	
Rule 3 USE CAPITAL LETTERS TO DELIMIT WORDS - Example		
	Correct	Incorrect
Document name	RiskManagement.rtf or Risk Management.rtf RAEInstructions.html	Risk_management.rtf RAE_instructions.html Research Assessment Exercise instructions.html
Explanation	Removing the space or underscore reduces the length of the document name, but by using capital letters to differentiate between the words the document name is still readily recognisable. REMEMBER - When naming an item Risk Management what.....	
Rule 4 WHEN INCLUDING A NUMBER IN THE DOCUMENT NAME - Example		
	Correct	Incorrect
Document name	OfficeProceduresV01 or Office Procedures V01 OfficeProceduresV02 OfficeProceduresV03 OfficeProceduresV04 (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)	OfficeProceduresV1 OfficeProceduresV2 OfficeProceduresV3 OfficeProceduresV4 (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	This example shows the successive versions of an office procedures document. If two-digit numbers are used the latest version will always be at the bottom of the list REMEMBER – Version 01 should be used indicate approved documents, drafts may use V1.1, 1.2, etc. .	
Rule 5 WHEN USING A DATE - Example		
	Correct	Incorrect
Document name	20040324Agenda.rtf or 20040324 Agenda.rtf 20040324Minutes.rtf 20040324PaperA.rtf 20050201Agenda.rtf (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)	1Feb2005Agenda.rtf 1Feb2005Minutes.rtf 24March2004Agenda.rtf 24March2004Minutes.rtf (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	This example shows the minutes and papers of a committee. By stating the year ‘back to front’ the minutes and papers from the most recent meeting appear at the bottom of the directory list. REMEMBER – if you use the same date format them the Agenda, Attendance List, Minutes, Presentations, etc. are all grouped together.	
Rule 6 - INCLUDING PERSONAL NAME - Example		
	Correct	Incorrect
Document name	BrownSR20041201.rtf or Brown SR 20041201	SamRBrown20041201.rtf

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Explanation	This is a letter to Mr Samuel R Brown. By putting the family name first the file directory will display this file next to the b's, which is where you would expect to find a letter to Mr Brown. REMEMBER – in this case date follows TO	
Rule 7 AVOID USING COMMON WORDS OR IN THE WRONG ORDER - Example		
	Correct	Incorrect
Document name	/.../Publicity/ AdvertisingV01Draft.rtf or Advertising ????? V01 Draft.rtf AdvertisingV05Final.rtf BudgetReport2002-2003V20Final.rtf BudgetReport2003-2004V15Draft.rtf GrantS20040312.rtf OfficeProceduresV10Draft.rtf ThomasA20031205.rtf (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)	/.../Publicity/ DraftAdvertising.rtf DraftBudgetReport2003-2004.rtf DraftOfficeProcedures.rtf FinalAdvertising.rtf FinalBudgetReport2002-2003.rtf LetterAThomas.rtf (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	A file directory will list files in alphanumeric order. This means that all records with document names starting "Draft" will be listed together. When retrieving files it will be more useful to find the draft budget report next to the previous year's budget, rather than next to an unrelated draft record. REMEMBER – if you omit keywords, what will be missing when you try and retrieve information.	
Rule 8 ORDER THE ELEMENTS - Example		
	Correct	Incorrect
Document name	/.../SausageCttee/ 20040630Agenda.rtf or 20040630 Agenda or xx Agenda Sausage xx 20040630Minutes.rtf 20050120Agenda.rtf 20050120Minutes.rtf /.../Events/ GardenParty20040630.rtf or Garden Party 20040630 ProcurementAward20040905.rtf WeddingDinner20030304.rtf (Ordered alphabetically as the files would be in the directory list)	/.../SausageCttee/ Agenda1Feb2005.rtf Agenda20Jan2005.rtf Agenda30June2004.rtf Minutes1Feb2005.rtf /.../Events/ 20030304WeddingDinner.rtf 20040630GardenParty.rtf 20040905ProcurementAward.rtf (Ordered alphabetically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	The first example shows minutes and agenda of the Sausage Committee. Minutes and papers of a meeting are likely to be retrieved on the basis of the date of the meeting, it is therefore best to have the date at the start of the document name, otherwise all the Agendas will come at the top of the directory list, followed by all of the minutes, and then by the papers. The second example shows the document names of the files in the Events folder. Because events are likely to be retrieved by the name of the event rather than the date of the event, it is most useful to have that element first. REMEMBER – if you are familiar with your information the above examples will suffice, if used by others you may need to add context.	
Rule 9 RECURRING EVENTS - Example		
	Correct	Incorrect
Document name	/.../Website/ 20040301WebStats.rtf or 20040301 WebStats 20040401WebStats.rtf /.../Planning/ Budget2003-2004V10.xls Budget2004-2005V01Draft.xls (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)	/.../Website/ WebStats20040301.rtf WebStats20040401.rtf /.../Planning/ 2003-2004BudgetV10.xls 2004-2005BudgetV01Draft.xls (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	The first example shows the website statistic reports which are created on a monthly basis. Because the reports recur frequently and are retrieved by date it is most appropriate that the date is given first. Also remember rule 2; in some cases it may be appropriate for the folder to be called "WebStats", in which case the document names only need to include the date. For another example see the first rule 8 example. The second example shows annual budget reports. Because the reports are annual and likely to be retrieved by the description rather than the date, it is likely that it will be most appropriate for the description element to come first. Also remember rule 2; in some cases it may be appropriate for the folder to be called "Planning 2003 - 2004", in which case the document names only need to include a description. For another example see the second rule 8 example. REMEMBER - as in Rule 8.	
Rule 10 CORRESPONDENCE - Example		
	Correct	Incorrect
Document name	/.../Complaints/ BloggsJ20031205.rtf. or Bloggs J 20031205 optional reply BloggsJ20040105rcvd.rtf optional rcvd BloggsJ20040220.rtf ThomasH20030610rcvd.txt ThomasH20030710.rtf /.../ EvansWAppeal20040715rcvd.rtf EvansWAppeal20040820.rtf EvansWAppeal20040905rcvd.rtf (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)	/.../Complaints/ EmailFromHelenThomas10Jun03.txt LetterFromJoeBloggs5Jan04.rtf LetterToHelenThomas10Jul03.rtf LetterToJoeBloggs20Feb04.rtf LetterToJoeBloggs5Dec03.rtf /.../Correspondence/ WilliamEvans15Jul04.rtf WilliamEvans20Aug04.rtf WilliamEvans5Sep04.rtf (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	The first example shows some incoming and outgoing correspondence concerning complaints. All the correspondence with Mr Joe Bloggs appears together in chronological order and it is easy to pick out the incoming correspondence because it is indicated by 'rcvd'. The same is true of the correspondence with Miss Helen Thomas. In this example it is not necessary to include an indication of the subject in the document name because it is given in the folder name. The second example shows some incoming and outgoing correspondence with Mr William Evans regarding an appeal. All the correspondence is listed in chronological order, it is easy to see what the correspondence is about, who it is with and whether it is incoming or outgoing correspondence. In reality it is likely that it will not be necessary to include an indication of the subject matter in the document name because the folder title would be likely to be 'Appeals'. REMEMBER – it is not recommended to give folders very general names such as 'correspondence'.	
Rule 11 EMAIL ATTACHMENTS - Example		
	Correct	Incorrect

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Document name	/.../Complaints/ BloggsJ20031205attch01of02.pdf BloggsJ20031205attch02of02.pdf BloggsJ20031205rcvd.txt BloggsJ20040105.rtf BloggsJ20040220.rtf ThomasH20030610attch01of01.rtf ThomasH20030610rcvd.txt ThomasH20030710.rtf (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)	/.../Complaints/ AttachmentFromHThomas10Jun03.rtf Attachment1FromJBloggs.pdf Attachment2FromJBloggs.pdf EmailFromHelenThomas10Jun03.txt EmailToJoeBloggs5Dec03.txt LetterFromJoeBloggs5Jan04.rtf LetterToHelenThomas10Jul03.rtf (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	This example shows the incoming and outgoing correspondence concerning complaints. The email received from Mr Joe Bloggs on 5 December 2003 included two attachments. The attachments are listed above the email and are numbered so that it is easy to see that there were two attachments and both of them are listed. This folder also includes an email from Miss Helen Thomas on 10 June 2003, which included one attachment. REMEMBER – attachments may have different names; thus it may be wise to include them in the file name	
Rule 12 VERSION NUMBER - Example		
	Correct	Incorrect
Document name	IEAM2003-2004V03Draft.htm IEAM2003-2004V04Final.htm OrgHier2002V02.xls OrgHier2002V03.xls OrgHier2002V04.xls	Iemodel0304_draftv3.htm Iemodle0304_finalv4htm Org_Hier_2002_v2.xls Org_Hier_2002_v3.xls Org_Hier_2002_v4.xls
Explanation	The first example shows two versions of the income and expenditure attribution model for 2003-2004, version 3 is a draft version and version 4 is the final version. The common abbreviation for the model is used. The covering years are given in four-digit format. The version number is given with two digits so that the versions will appear in numeric order. The second example shows a number of versions of the organisational hierarchy for 2002. In this case none of the versions are marked as draft or final because the nature of the record means that 'draft' and 'final' are not applicable. REMEMBER – using 2 digits for versions will allow a number of versions and facilitate sorting correctly	
Rule 13 AVOID NON-ALPHANUMERIC CHARACTERS - Example		
	Correct	Incorrect
Document name	SmithJohn20070507.txt DavidLaingCollection.rtf GuidelinesAndRegulations.pdf Budget2006-2007	Smith,John20070507.txt "DavidLaingCollection".rtf Guidelines&Regulations.pdf Budget2006/07
Explanation	Most non alphanumeric characters can be omitted without much loss of meaning, e.g. commas and quotation marks. Others can be replaced with alphanumeric characters, e.g. "&" and "+" can be replaced with "And" and "Plus". Hyphens can be used in place of forward slashes and brackets. REMEMBER – as far as possible naming should be as exact as the subject or title of the document.	