

PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

FILING SYSTEM METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to inform university employees on how to create a filing system that will be functional, easy to use and to make retrieving documents a lot quicker and to help make record disposition an easier process.

Methodology

A filing system is a planned method of classifying and arranging records for storage and retrieval. A disorganized system will incur needless costs in the form of duplication of effort and wasted time trying to respond to requests for information. Most important is to make sure that you are filing records that you are the custodian of and also make sure that the documents are complete records. A document that is incomplete or missing signatures should not be filed. A good filing system should be:

- Simple and user friendly – Create something that will be easily followed by staff. Group all documents that are related to a particular employee, contract, and subject matter together. (Make sure all records for John Doe are all in one folder).
- Transparent – It must make sense and meet the needs of your department.
- Follows Record Retention – This allows you to maintain accurate records as well as not store unnecessary records. Organize folders based on the retention period. (If documents always expire at the end of the fiscal year, then it would be best to group all of those files under a main folder for each fiscal year).

Filing Methods – Paper

Determine whether you are going to use an Alphabetic or Alphanumeric. Whatever method you choose, it is essential that you have documented procedures so that you can maintain the integrity of your filing system even if staff members change.

Alphabetic

This method involves grouping documents by the letters of the name. Here are the best practices for filing alphabetically:

- For personal names it is recommended that the filing be based on last name (Doe, John).
- Files are sequenced letter by letter.
 - William
 - Williams

- Williamson
- Ignore titles such as Mr, Mrs, Dr, or Prof.

Numeric

This method involves filing documents based on a predetermined numbers which are used to differentiate the documents. The sequence can be numbering from lowest to highest number or they can be filed based on sections that occur at regular intervals (100, 200, and 300) but it depends on how the numbers are sequenced. If you are using account numbers, then that's simple enough but if you have sub accounts then those documents can still be stored under the main account number but have a separate folder for each sub account.

General Tips

- Do not overfill your filing cabinets as it makes filing and locating documents very difficult.
- All folder labels should be typed with a standard naming convention (Last Name, First Name).
- Avoid mixing folders with varying tab heights and positions as this can make it difficult to locate files and eventually lead to duplication of files or misfiling of documents.
- Decide if you are going to place new documents to the front of the folder or to the back. This helps to make it easier to locate the most recent documents.