File Naming Guidelines

East Lothian Council

These Guidelines are for all Council staff, and apply to all Council records, including both digital and paper records.

Guidelines

File names should be…

1	**Consistent**	Specific naming conventions may vary slightly between Service areas, but they can still comply with these Guidelines. Choose a style and stick to it for the files in your remit.
2	**Unique**	Every record must have its own specific name that does not conflict with other file names. Most digital filing systems won't allow conflicting file names, so this applies to paper files in particular.
3	**Short as possible**	There are limits to the number of characters that can be used for file names in most digital systems (the Council file network included). Keep it short and simple.
4	**Structured and predictable**	It should be possible for someone completely unfamiliar with your records to recognise and replicate your naming convention.
5	**Meaningful**	Names should be specific and clearly relate to the content of the records.
6	**Version controlled**	Assign version numbers to your files to avoid confusion and make it clear which document is the most up-to-date. For major versions making significant changes, use ordinals: 1.0, 2.0, 3.0. For minor versions making minimal updates, use decimals: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3. For drafts use a zero: 0.1, 0.2, 0.3. You can reinforce this with Document Control tables within your records.

Key Components

Vocabulary – choose a standard vocabulary for file names so that everyone uses a common language.

Punctuation – decide when and how you will use full stops, capitals, hyphens and spaces. For digital files, avoid using special characters (/, &, #, etc.)

Dates – use the format YYYYMMDD at the start of the file name to ensure that digital files display in chronological order. This is particularly useful for emails and case files where you need to track actions over time.

Order – decide which element should go first, so that files on the same theme are listed together.

Numbers – specify the number of digits that will be used. Think ahead – don't start with 01 if the number of similar files is likely to exceed 99.

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Examples

Guideline 1 - Consistent	
Correct	**Incorrect**
20220209_ImportantFileA_v1.0	A 09 March
20220210_ImportantFileA_v1.1	FileA_new version
20220210_ImportantFileB_v1.0	File B_final_FINAL 2
Guideline 2 - Unique	
Correct	**Incorrect**
Joe Smith vol 1 of 3	Joe Smith
Joe Smith vol 2 of 3	Joe Smith
Joe Smith vol 3 of 3	Joe Smith
Guideline 3 – Short as possible	
Correct	**Incorrect**
20220210_FilePlan_v1.3	20220210_EastLothianCouncil_FilePlan_JoeEdits_JoanEdits_Signed
Guideline 4 – Structured and predictable	
Correct	**Incorrect**
20220130_Agenda	Agenda
20220130_Minutes_v0.1	Minutes for meeting 30 Jan-draft
20220130_Minutes_v1.0	30 January – final minutes
Guideline 5 - Meaningful	
Correct	**Incorrect**
Data Protection Policy v1.3	Policy new version
Guideline 6 – Version controlled	
Correct	**Incorrect**
Very Important Report v0.1	Very Important Report draft
Very Important Report v0.2	Very Important Report
Very Important Report v1.0	Very Important Report new final
Very Important Report v1.1	Very Important report updated
Very Important Report v2.0	New Very Important Report

Document Control			
Date	**Version**	**Updated by**	**Reason**

Document Control

Footer

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