

Best Practices for File-Naming

Avoid using special characters in a file name:

\ / : * ? “ < > | [] & \$, .

The characters listed above are frequently used for specific tasks in an electronic environment. For example, a forward slash is used to identify folder levels in Microsoft products, while Mac operating systems use the colon. Periods are used in front of file-name extensions to denote file formats such as .jpg and .doc; using them in a file name could result in lost files or errors.

****Use underscores or dashes instead of periods or spaces****

As mentioned above, periods already have a specific function in a file name, which is to tell the computer program where the file-name extension begins. Spaces are frequently translated in a Web environment to be read as “%20”. For example,

Naming tutorial.doc would appear as
Naming%20tutorial.doc

If it were available online, this alteration can cause confusion in identifying the actual file name. Spaces in file names can also cause broken links, because word processing tools like Microsoft Word, and e-mail clients like Microsoft Outlook, recognize spaces as an opportunity to move to another line.

Having Dates as folder names or file names:

The best way to list the date is based on an international standard – ISO 8601. ISO 8601 specifies numeric representations of date and time to be used in electronic format. The international standard date notation is:
YYYY_MM_DD or YYYYMMDD

File Name Length:

Generally about 25 characters is a sufficient length to capture enough descriptive information for naming a record.

Be consistent:

The most important rule of file-naming is to be consistent.