

# Conventions for Naming Electronic Files/Folders at MSU

Maintaining well-organized electronic directory and drive structures can only be accomplished by following specific conventions. The following tips will provide examples of suggested naming guidelines for MSU units which will:

- ✓ enable better access/retrieval of documents,
- ✓ create logical sequences for document sorting, and
- ✓ help users more easily identify items they are searching for.

## General guidelines

- ✓ Keep document name meaningful but short (255 character limit).  
**THIS:** HorseNamingInfo      **NOT THIS:** Getting the right names for horses
- ✓ Make sure document name describes document contents and makes sense to anyone if creator is unavailable.  
**THIS:** Budget2007      **NOT THIS:** Info for TD project 2007
- ✓ Use:
  - preferred method of capital letters to differentiate between words, and
  - underscores instead of spaces as a second choice.  
**THIS:** 2010\_OffProcedures      **NOT THIS:** 2010-office procedures
- ✓ When using personal names, give the surname first followed by the initials of the first name.  
**THIS:** Bletch,F\_Memo2008      **NOT THIS:** Memo Fred Bletch 2008
- ✓ Avoid:
  - using “stop” words such as if, but, so, for, etc.,
  - unnecessary repetition/redundancy in file names/paths, and
  - descriptive words such as draft, letter, or memo at the beginning of file names.

## Date

- ✓ When using a date, use the “year-month-day” format (4-digit year, 2-digit month, 2-digit day).
- ✓ Include a leading zero for numbers 0 – 9.  
**THIS:** 2006-03-24      **NOT THIS:** Mar 3 2006

## Naming order

- ✓ Order elements in a file name in the most appropriate way to retrieve the record:
  - If records are retrieved according to date, that element should appear first (appropriate for time-specific, recurring events).  
**THIS:** 2007-10-20Agenda      **NOT THIS:** Agenda 20 Oct 2007
  - If records are retrieved according to description, use that element first (usually appropriate for events that are infrequent).  
**THIS:** AnnualMtg2007-10-20      **NOT THIS:** October 2007 Annual Mtg
- ✓ Records relating to recurring events such as meeting minutes, regular periodic reports, or budget planning documents, should include both the date and the event in the file name.  
**THIS:** 2007BudgetDocs      **NOT THIS:** Info for last year’s budget docs

## Versions

- ✓ The version number of a record should be indicated in its file name by using “v” followed by the version number.
- ✓ Use the letter “d” to indicate a draft.

**THIS:** OrgChart2009\_v02

**NOT THIS:** Org Chart 2009 rev

**THIS:** OrgChart2009\_d

**NOT THIS:** Draft Org Chart 2009

## References

“Naming Conventions for Electronic Documents,” Information Management Branch of Alberta Government Services, Alberta, Canada, 2005.

<http://www.im.gov.ab.ca/publications/pdf/DocumentNamingConventions.pdf>

“Naming Conventions for Electronic Files and Folders.” York University, 2007.

[http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/infoprivacy/infotoolkit/docs/TipSheet6NamingConventions\\_EFilesFolders.pdf](http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/infoprivacy/infotoolkit/docs/TipSheet6NamingConventions_EFilesFolders.pdf)

“Standard Naming Conventions for Electronic Records,” Records Management Section, University of Edinburgh, 2005.

[http://www.sfu.ca/archives2/rm/rm\\_fundamentals/07UKFileNamingConventions.pdf](http://www.sfu.ca/archives2/rm/rm_fundamentals/07UKFileNamingConventions.pdf)