



WA5: Filing System Documentation and Databases

3.7 Use filing skills to design and maintain a filing system given specific instructions



Module Details



Work Area Code:	5
Work area title:	Filing System Documentation and Databases
Unit Code:	3.7
Unit Title:	Use filing skills to design and maintain a filing system given specific instructions
Learning Outcomes Ids:	LO58, LO59
Learning Outcomes titles:	Demonstrate File Management skills including the design and maintenance of an efficient filing system given specific instructions (as well as the identification of the equipment or electronic methods required for filing). (LO58) Demonstrate the ability to analyse current organisational File Management practice and recommend improvements within the roles and responsibilities. (LO59)
Recommended Duration:	3 hours
Trainer:	



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

- **Filing = the process of designing, documenting and implementing standard procedures for classifying, sorting and storing information to assure their cost effective and timely retrieval**



Introduction to filing



- The basic premise for establishing filing systems within an organization is the **ability to retrieve records**.
- Appropriate storage of records is the key to records retrieval; a means to an end, with the end being retrieval.
- The term **records management** refers to a group of events or activities that are designed for the controlling, maintaining, use, and eventual disposal of records.
- **A well-planned system contributes significantly to efficiency of operation as well as to a company's image. Whether records are filed in a computer or in a steel cabinet, they have to be readily accessible.**



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

10 Principles of filing



1. Simplicity
2. Sustainability
3. Adaptability
4. Economy
5. Protection

6. Efficiency
7. Accessibility
8. Flexibility
9. Cross reference
10. Guide



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



1. Simplicity

Filing system must be simple enough to easy operate, so that all staff of the office can udrestand and use it. It should not be over-elaborated or very complicated

2. Sustainability

Filing system should be completely applicable to the specific company and suit the nature and business requirements for which it has been created, should be able to be in place for a long time



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



3. Adaptability

System must be adaptable depending on the changing environment

4. Economy

The cost of the system must be appropriate to the results , the desired result must be achieved by utilizing less resources (finance, time, staff,...) with the system in place compared to the situation without the system

5. Protection

The filed documents must be available to the person, who needs them, so they must be filed properly and securely. Documents should not be damaged by dust, insects, thefts, mishandling, fire, etc.

Certain documents have to be kept for a longer time or for the life-time of the concern. They must be housed in suitable equipment.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



6. Less space / Efficiency

High rent means high costs, the system should require minimum floor space, the office should destroy or digitalize files not needed

7. Accessibility

The files should be arranged in a way that the documents can be found and picked up quickly and easily. Efficient index system is necessary

8. Flexibility

The filing system is able to expand when needed

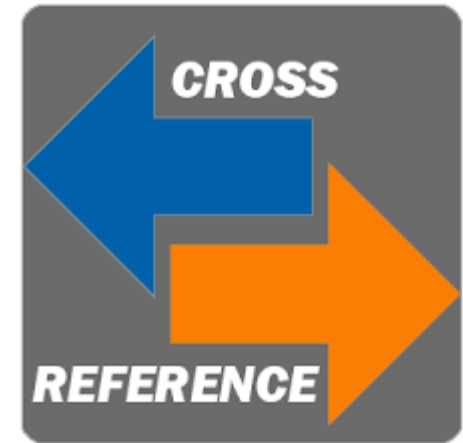


Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

9. Cross reference

When the single document needs to be kept in more than one file, a cross reference should be placed in the other file, so that the person using the file can find a document easily



10. The Guide

Whenever a file or document is taken out, an indicator should be placed at the same place, if possible with the signature of the recipient, to show the file or document has been removed. When it is returned, the indicator will be removed.





- **Electronic filing**

- „file“ refers to a piece of document
- Files are organized in folders



- **Physical file**

- Paper based documents
- Stored or grouped in a „box“ or „folder“
- This box or folder is called „file“ and contains a number of documents



Designing a filing system



When we want to create a filing system that will be efficient, we need to take into account different criteria, such as:

- Company industry
- Legal requirements – certain types of organizations need to comply to specific legislation when it comes to keeping records (universities, hospitals, public bodies,...)
- ISO requirements
- Stakeholder requirements – different types of employees require different records and different access



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Designing a filing system



Also think about the following:

- What are the records
- Where should they be filed
- Who uses the records / Entities of interaction
- Who is responsible / Ownership of files
- How often are they used
- How are they used
- How are the records referred to
- What is the size of each record
- How many of each record are filed
- Who else has copies of the same record/ how to share records



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

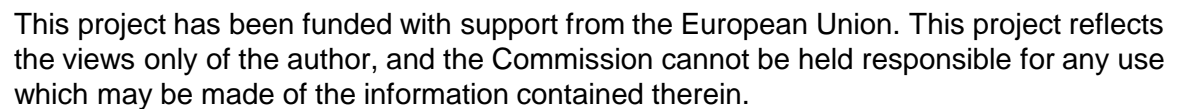
This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

- **Physical filing**

- Filing cabinets – partialy lockable
- Different types of boxes, binders, folders and files - color coding
- Envelopes
- Clear plastic pockets



EUROPEAN PERSONAL ASSISTANT LEVEL 3



Required equipment



- **Electronic filing**

- Computer, usually with shared service to allow access to more employees
- Automatic backing up system is recommended
- Enough hard drive storage or cloud service
- Consider out of office accessibility
- Scanner – to store copies of paper documents



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Records management



An organizational record is any document that contains information about a transaction, activity, or event related to the organization.

The record can be stored on paper or electronically via email, digital file, database, or spreadsheet.

Records also can be photographs, audio files, or videos.

Some examples of record classifications are legal, financial, historical, and daily operations.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Categories of Business Records

- **Enterprise** records are records commonly found in the majority of enterprises or other similar businesses. They are normally related to the everyday business activities of the company.
- **Industry** records are records commonly found in a specific industry.
- **Legal hold** records are records that a business may be required to keep for legal purposes. These records could be requested for an audit, in the case of litigation, or by a government agency.



Records management



- RM is the system used to control an organization's records from the creation of the record until the record is archived or destroyed. It is comprised of identifying records, classifying records, storing records and coordinating internal and external access.
- RM may also incorporate policies and practices on how to create and approve records, as well as the enforcement of those policies and practices.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Ownership of files processes must be clearly stated in the file management policy.

Following questions should be asked:

- Who in your organization creates documents?
- What types of documents do they create?
- Who reviews documents?
- Who edits documents?
- Who uses documents?
- Who approves the publication of documents?
- Who sets guidelines and policies for managing documents?
- Who manages records in your organization?



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Records management



Effective RECORD MANAGEMENT Process



RECORD MAINTENANCE



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Record Creation

- There are many ways to create business records. Sending or receiving an email, creating a spreadsheet, database or document, or receiving a document from outside the organization all create records.
- Contracts, budgets, bank statements, policy manuals, and meeting minutes are all things that can be considered records.
- It is important to note that every piece of paper or email may not be worth keeping. It is up to the organization to determine the criteria for record creation.



Record Distribution

- Should the record be emailed, or printed and physically distributed? For externally distributed records, will it be emailed or delivered via mail or a delivery service?
- The organization should have policies in place that determine internal and external distribution methods.



Record Usage

- After a record is created or received, a records management process can assist in determining how the record should be used. Will the record be used to make a decision, determine a direction, or in some other way? An organization needs to have a way to classify records.



Archive or Disposal

- **Active records** are files accessed and used on a regular basis. Files or documents that no longer serve a purpose are **inactive records**. Depending on the type of records management system, one or multiple people may make decisions on the status of a record. If the record is no longer needed, should it be archived or destroyed? An effective records management system will include a process to archive historical or inactive files.
- When the organization determines that a file is no longer valuable, how is it destroyed? Paper files should be shredded to ensure that confidential information is not accessible to those outside the organization.



Record Maintenance

- How will the records be filed or stored, and how will they be accessed? Any record, whether it be paper or digital, should be able to be easily located. It should be in a safe and confidential space.
- If it is a paper document, it may be stored in an easily accessible file cabinet that can be secured and/or locked. If it is a digital document, it should be located in an accessible virtual space. Many organizations have an intranet, internal website or file directory that offers space for digital documents. An intranet system or virtual cloud can provide a central location to store and retrieve digital records.



Records confidentiality



Record confidentiality refers to any type of document that contains information of a sensitive nature that would cause harm to the privacy of individuals or organizations if disclosed.

It's imperative that organizations protect record confidentiality.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Records confidentiality



Keep sensitive materials in locked rooms or filing cabinets.

Use passwords to protect computer files, and restrict access to only the necessary staff.

Use pre-employment processes such as screenings, in-person interview questions, and background screenings to get the most trustworthy employees as possible.

Encrypt information, install firewalls, run anti-virus software.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Physical records are kept in the files,
There are additional procedures related to filing:

- Inspecting
- Marking
- Cross-refferencing
- Sorting
- Filing itself





- **Inspecting**

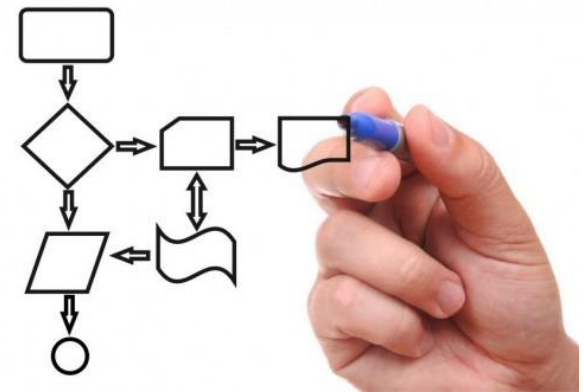
Each document is inspected to see that it has been released. If not, it should be returned to the interested party.

- **Marking**

Determine under what name or caption the paper is to be filed

- **Follow-up and Cross-reference**

If the letter is marked for follow-up, then a record should be made and placed in the follow-up file. If there is more than one place in which to file the document, make a cross-reference.





- **Sorting**

Sorting is the preliminary arrangement of papers according to the first filing unit of the name or number. This is the last step prior to actual filing. Sorting also makes documents easy to find if they are needed while out of the file. Documents should be arranged in sequence so they can be placed in the proper folders quickly, without moving back and forth

- **Filing**

Filing is the actual placing of documents in folders in a pre-determined plan. Torn papers should be mended before they are filed. Raise the folders slightly in the file drawer when placing papers in them so the papers will go entirely to the bottom of the folder.

- **All documents should be placed with the tops to the left as you face the folder. Never overcrowd folders. Break them down by date, name or subject using additional folders.**



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Filing Methods

- Alphabetical
- Numeric
- Geographil
- Subject
- Chronologic



Alphabetical filing - group documents together by letters of the name from A - Z. These systems can be used for any volume of records.

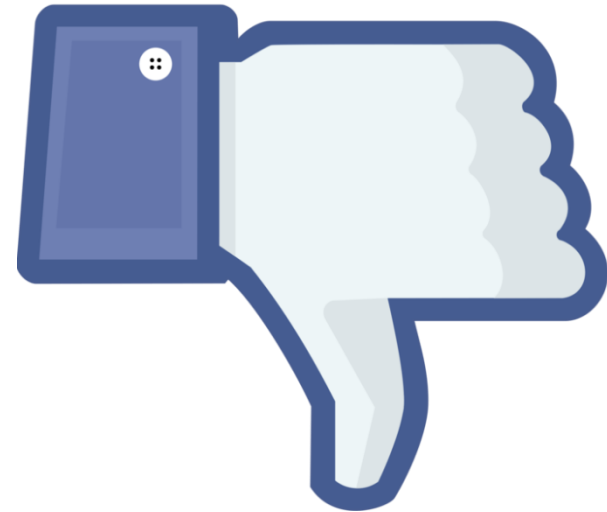
- **Advantages:**

It gives direct reference and also groups common and/or family names together. It enables files to be read and accessed quickly and is also readily expandable.



- **Disadvantages:**

By the same token, common names do not occur evenly throughout the alphabet. Items within a named file require some additional system of classification - letters to an account client may need to be numbered or filed chronologically, making cross-referencing laborious.





Numerical Filing - refers to all systems in which documents are prenumbered to distinguish them from each other or from alpha documents. Numerical systems can be as simple as numbering and filing from the lowest number to the highest

- **Advantages**

Speed of filing and finding. It is twice as fast to file and find by number than by name. Even though a numeric file requires a cross index, it can increase production time by 40 to 50%.

- Provide both a positive identification of the record and a degree of confidentiality. This system is capable of infinite expansions and can cope with a very large number of sub-sections

- **Disadvantage** - requires good indexing which can be time-consuming



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Geographic filing

Geographic filing systems operate generally by county or country and then alphabetically or numerically by account name or number.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Chronologic Filing

Chronologic filing is filing by date. This system is necessary to file items according to the day/date received - such as applications for permits or licences or the dates when vehicles in a company fleet were services.

- **Advantages:**

Particularly useful when actions need to be taken on a cyclical basis - like relicensing cars annually, good for cross-referencing - file on vehicle and relicensing date records can be quickly matched.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



- **Disadvantages:**

This system requires an index and explanatory back-up system. It is time-consuming to access data held in a manual filing system.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Combinations

- The common drawbacks of simple alphabetical, chronological or categorical filing system might hamper retrieval of your documents. To achieve the desired efficiency, businesses often combine elements of two or more filing systems. You can improve a categorical system by creating alphabetical or date subsections. Subtopics or categories that fit the main functions of your business might improve the efficiency of a chronological filing system.





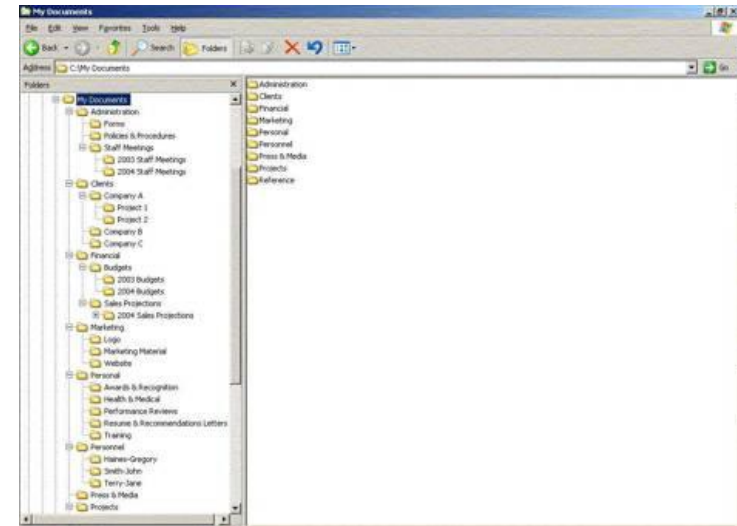
- **Space**
- **Index Guide**
- **Folder Tabs**
- **File Overload**
- **Cross Indexing**
- **Noting Files In Use**



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

- **Electronic File Structure**
- It is best to create an electronic file **hierarchy structure** that is parallel to your physical file structures. This keeps data organized under one structure instead of trying to maintain multiple structures.



“HOW DO I FIND THE FILE I WANT?”

Develop a mutually understood indexing method or labeling system. Each file must have its own unique identifier, and there must be only one correct place for it in the system. The identifying elements must follow a clearly defined format for document indexing that never varies. It should make it easy to identify files both in and out of the filing equipment. Everyone who uses it must understand how to locate and return a record.



Document indexing is the process of associating or tagging documents with different “search” terms.



Developing Standard Naming Conventions

- Choosing standard naming conventions for your filing system will help you name, file, and locate your electronic documents. To create standard naming conventions, consider the data that should always be entered in first, then the next set of data, and then the next.
- Example: Financial Reports: date_type of report_name of company, for example, "04-01-2005_Balance Sheet_ABC Company"



Sharing electronic files



- **Internal server**
- Google Drive
- Dropbox for business
- Office 365 / Sharepoint



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Methodological tool

Filing system design EUPA_LO_058_M_001



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Problems related to filing



- You find the information you need is difficult to obtain due to your system or lack of one
- You are repeatedly having to expand your file system capacity
- You are maintaining duplicate files of the same information
- You are filing material to protect the function and not because of information or legal requirements
- You are using your filing system or equipment for non-records storage
- Your file folders, filing drawers or shelves are too full for easy access
- You are not finding the information you require in the first place you look



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Have you experienced any of those?

How did you solve it?

What can you do for the problem not to repeat itself in the future?



- Wasted time
- Lower productivity
- Lost files
- Clutter and chaos
- Increased stress
- Financial loss (missing records, unsuccessful audit, fines)
- Failure of compliance
- Wrong decision making



Group discussion



- What is the filing process in your organization?
- Is physical filing structure different from electronic?
- Please describe the filing structure to other learners.
- Would you make any changes to the existing filing structure and procedures?



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

File Formats

- ✓ Retains the original unedited files
- ✓ Do not edit or alter the raw data file. Keep it in its native format and create a copy for editing or further manipulation.
- ✓ Ensure future access to your data files by using standard, stable, commonly used file formats.
- ✓ It is clear what software is required to view and process data files



File Organization

- ✓ Avoid complex directory hierarchies and consider that folder names will sort alphabetically
- ✓ Avoid keeping duplicate working copies of files (backup copies are not considered duplicates in this context).
- ✓ Develop a file and folder naming convention and document it so all team members can follow it.



File Organization

- ✓ Uniquely name each file.
- ✓ Consistent and includes similar information in all file names of the same file type.
- ✓ Consider sorting order (usually lexicographic) and logical hierarchies in file directories.
- ✓ Avoid ambiguous and confusing names, such as 'MyData'



File Organization

- ✓ Derivatives and versions should have similar (but differentiated) names to keep them colocated but still uniquely identified.
- ✓ Names should reflect the contents of the file and/or the stage of development.
- ✓ Use only alphanumeric characters , use dashes instead of spaces to avoid special characters
- ✓ Avoid using case differences to distinguish between files: 'Record', 'record', and 'RECORD' may be three different file names or the same file name, depending on the operating system.
- ✓ Digitize (scan) relevant paper notes so that they can be more easily shared
- ✓ Store the metadata file close to the data (or embedded if possible) to ensure discovery.



Storage and Security

- ✓ Ensure data redundancy and replication, and avoid single points of failure.
- ✓ Have at least two backup copies (with at least one in a remote location) in addition to the working copy.
- ✓ Back up data regularly
- ✓ Use managed, networked storage whenever possible
- ✓ Data files protected by ownership rights or licenses.
- ✓ Protect sensitive and confidential information.



Methodological tool

Fille management system and practice analysis
EUPA_LO_059_M_001



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

- Review Question 1
 - Describe principles of efficient filing system.
- Review Question 2
 - Explain problems that may arise with innacurate filing.



- **Physical filing system**
 - Accuracy
 - Effectivity
 - Simplicity
 - Maintanance
- **Electronic filing system**
 - Importance of indexing
 - Confidentiality and access
 - Data Backup





Well Done!

You have completed this unit



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This project reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.