

Organize a Home Filing System

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Guide G-229

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An organized filing system is essential to good record keeping. Haven't we all experienced the frustration of not being able to find some important paper?

Stuffing papers in the kitchen drawer or hall closet can be classified as records-keeping, but obviously it is not the best system. The amount of time spent developing an orderly system for keeping your personal and financial records will be well spent and need not be difficult. Consider it a creative task.

There are many benefits to an organized filing system:

- Other family members can find documents.
- Records are available for income tax preparation.
- It saves time and money in processing insurance claims.
- Records may be needed in legal matters, such as divorces, law suits, estate settlements or tax audits.
- Records may be needed on short notice in case of an accident, illness or other emergency.
- Systematic record-keeping aids in financial planning for matters, such as preparing wills, net worth statements, investments and retirement plans.

An elaborate office is not necessary. Many reasonably priced items on the market, such as portable metal file boxes, ledger books and inexpensive filing cabinets, simplify record keeping. Even sturdy paper cartons can be used to hold file folders. Old records can be boxed and stored in the attic or garage. Keep current records where they will be safe and convenient to use in your home.

Some items listed should go in a safety deposit box. However, you may want a file folder with related items or correspondence even though the main docu-

ments are in the safety deposit box. Put irreplaceable documents in safety deposit with others that would be costly or time-consuming to replace. Examples are mortgages, deeds, stock certificates, some contracts, an inventory of household goods, one copy of your will, and divorce papers. Negotiable securities or bonds that could be cashed by someone else should always go in the safety deposit box. Keep a list at home of the contents of the safety deposit box.

Some suggested categories and headings for filing systems are listed below. It is not intended to be a complete list. You may not want a separate file folder for all items listed. This list is intended as a guideline that you can adapt to your needs. You may wish to consolidate some of the suggested items, use different headings or groupings, and include other items. For example, you may want a divider for insurance or you may want to file insurance papers under separate headings of "auto," "home" or "health."

GUIDE TO FILES

Addresses, Dates

- Business
- Personal
- Christmas card list
- Birthdays, etc
- Magazine subscriptions

Autos and Vehicles

- Titles
- Maintenance/Repair
- R.V.s
- Boats

Bank Records

- Checking accounts
- Savings accounts
- Loan contracts
- Safety deposit box
(list of contents)

To find more resources for your business, home, or family, visit the College of Agriculture and Home Economics on the World Wide Web at www.cahe.nmsu.edu

Correspondence

Business
Personal

Employment Records

Employment contracts
Retirement or pension plans
Social security records
Fringe benefits

Equipment, Appliances

Warranties
Use-and-care manuals
 Kitchen
 Range, refrigerator
 Air conditioner
 Heating
 Laundry
 Small appliances
 Personal care appliances
 Outdoor
 Lawn mower
 Recreation equipment
 Camera
 Other

Financial Records

Budget
Net worth statement
Records of earnings
Records of expenditures
Loan contracts
Credit card numbers
Property tax records
Receipts and paid bills

Housing

Mortgage payments
Lease and rent payments
Capital improvements
Household inventory
 (second copy in safety
 deposit box)
Utilities
Floor plan
Wiring diagrams

Income Tax

Previous returns
Cancelled checks
 (related to tax)
Current year information
 (medical receipts,
 contributions)

Insurance Policies

Automobile
Health
Disability
Homeowners
Life
Other

Investments

Annuities
Bonds—records of
Stocks—records of
Real estate investments
Other investments

Organizations, Clubs

Civic
Business
School
Church

Personal Records

Educational records
Marriage license
Medical records
Pet papers
Military records
Wills, copy of
Birth certificate
Divorce papers

Reference Material

Cleaning
Crafts or hobbies
Gardening
Home furnishings
Laundry
 Hang tags
 Stain removal
Maps
Vacations
Magazine articles
Nutrition
Others of interest to you

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