



Organizing the File Room

Organizing physical records for retention, disposition, and transfer.

Phase #1: Planning & Preparation

- Gather records, support staff, supplies, and set up your workspace.
- Watch [Basics of Managing Records](#) & review your agency's landing page.
- Locate your approved retention schedules and practice applying retention.

Phase #2: Initial Review & Categorization

- Open each box/file cabinet and consider the contents for ~5 minutes.
- Separate your records into functional categories based on your approved schedules' Table of Contents headings. Use color-coding or labeling to distinguish each category.

Phase #3: Detailed Review & Retention

- Clear space for 4 sorting boxes/piles: Retain, Dispose, Transfer, & Unsure.
- Start with the easiest functional category, and box-by-box, file-by-file, determine the retention of each record.
- Place records in the appropriate box/pile with the retention noted (e.g., on sticky notes).
- Work through each functional category from easiest to hardest until you've determined the retention for ALL records. Revisit your "Unsure" pile last before moving on.
- [Create an inventory](#) for your "Retain" records. Include fields: DAN, Location, Date Range, Destruction/Transfer Date.
- Organize your "Retain" records into subcategories (by year, department, etc.) and label the folders/boxes with the appropriate retention/disposition dates.

Phase #4: Disposition & Transfer

- Double check the retention of your "Dispose" pile and create a [destruction log](#) of the records.
- After completing your destruction log, securely destroy the records.
- Complete a [Box Content List](#) for your "Transfer" pile and contact your regional branch archives to arrange pick-up/appraisal.

Phase #5: Wrap-Up & Follow-Up

- Place your "Retain" boxes away in a safe and secure storage location & update your inventory with new storage locations.
- Regularly review and update your inventory to retain, dispose, transfer, and re-organize records based on retention schedules.