File Naming

Checklist

# Before beginning a project

[ ] Check for established file naming conventions in your discipline or group.

[ ]  Naming conventions should be documented so that others in your lab or department can follow the same standards.

[ ]  File names should be descriptive and provide enough contextual information to be understandable.

[ ]  Avoid making file names too long because various operating systems have different character number limits. In general, keep file names limited to 30-50 characters.

[ ]  The most important information should go first. Computers arrange files by name. If you want to sort files by date, put the date first.

[x] Use [ISO 8601 standard](https://www.iso.org/iso-8601-date-and-time-format.html) for date. Example: YYYYMMDD or YY-MM-DD.

[ ]  To add a timestamp to your file name, use a 24-hour time format. Example: YYYYMMDDhhmmss or YY-MM-DD-hh-mm-ss

[ ]  For a sequential numbering system, use leading zeros to ensure files sort in sequential order. Example; 001, 002, …010, 011.

[ ] Avoid special characters such as ~ ! @ # $ % ^ & \* ( ) ` ; : < > ? . , [ ] { } “ |

[ ]  Use underscores, dashes, camel case (first letter of each section of text is capitalized) or no separation in the file name instead of spaces.

Remember, file names should be:

1. Machine readable
2. Human readable
3. Work well with default ordering

# resources

* [Self-audit checklist for research team members](https://mdandersonorg.sharepoint.com/sites/compliance/Shared%20Documents/data-management-self-audit-checklist.pdf?web=1) [Inside Page]
* [Harvard File Naming Conventions [Examples included]](https://datamanagement.hms.harvard.edu/plan-design/file-naming-conventions)
* [Data Management and Sharing Assistance](https://www3.mdanderson.org/library/services/data_management_top.html)

This handout was adapted from [“How to Name a File](https://osf.io/dpu45)” by Julie Goldman and Harvard University. [Licensed under CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)