
YOUR PERSONAL DOCUMENT ORGANIZER

FROM CHAOS TO CONFIDENCE

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ORGANIZING YOUR PERSONAL DOCUMENTS

Financial experts recommend that you keep your personal documents in 2 places. They are:

A. Your SAFE DEPOSIT BOX. As a general rule, keep any item in your safe deposit box if:

1. it must be used to prove ownership in case of an insurance loss;
2. it must be used to claim a future benefit, such as a pension;
3. it is small and valuable; or
4. it is difficult to replace.

You don't need to keep your insurance policies in your safe deposit box. Instead, if you keep just a description of them there, you can keep your policies in your home file where they are handy. Then, if they are lost or destroyed, you'll have everything your insurance companies will need to replace your policies quickly.

Check your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy to see if your valuables or negotiable bearer bonds are covered if you keep them in your safe deposit box. If they aren't, ask your bank if their insurance covers everything in your box at full market value. If not, we recommend that you add supplemental coverage to your own policy. And, if you do keep valuables in a safe deposit box, keep the receipts and appraisals for them in your home file.

Finally, be sure to check with your bank about any state laws which may limit access to your safe deposit box. For example, some states, for estate tax purposes, seal the box after the owner's death. Under what conditions can your heirs open your box? How long must they wait? Do you have a co-owner or co-signer for your safe deposit box?

B. Your HOME FILE. Most experts recommend that you keep your records in file folders in a fire resistant metal file cabinet, box or safe in a fire resistant location in your home. But if that isn't possible, you can also keep your records in a cardboard storage box in your closet. (A wide variety of sturdy cardboard file storage boxes are available at office supply stores.) For your convenience, you may also wish to keep in your home file photocopies of some of the more important documents in your safe deposit box.

We recommend that you arrange your home file into the following 15 categories. (Many people find it convenient to set up 2 file folders for each category, one for the current year and the other for older records.)

1. **Bank Accounts** -- This file is for canceled checks, monthly statements, etc., for all active accounts at banks, savings and loans, and credit unions.
2. **Cars and Boats** -- Keep purchase, maintenance and repair records, loan papers or lease agreements, and warranty information here, for as long as you own or lease each item.
3. **Charities** -- Keep records about gifts or donations to charities, as well as canceled checks, receipts, etc., for the current year in this file.
4. **Credit and Loans** -- This should include all documents related to your current credit cards, and other personal or installment loans. It should also include statements and receipts for your credit card purchases.
5. **Employment** -- All of your current year payroll check stubs should be kept here, along with records of current year expenses which are related to your job but which have not been reimbursed by your employer. This file should also include employee handbooks or other information which describe your employee or union benefit plans.
6. **Home** -- If you own your home, keep your title insurance policy, appraisal, property survey and tax assessments in this file. If you rent your home or an apartment, keep your current rental or lease agreement here.
7. **Insurance Claims** -- Keep all records about insurance claims which you will file or have filed with your insurance company, and documents about claims for which you have received payment during the current year.
8. **Insurance Policies** -- In this file, keep all insurance policies, except annuities. Keep your annuity policies and a detailed description of all other insurance policies in your safe deposit box.
9. **Investments** -- All records, receipts, purchase and sale orders and confirmations, account statements, prospectuses, etc., should be kept in this file.

10. **Legal Documents** -- Keep the original copy of each of these documents in this file:

Durable Powers of Attorney for Property
Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care (sometimes called
a health care proxy or health care surrogate)
Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment
Trust Agreements
Living Wills (also give original copies to your attorney and doctor)
Organ or Body Donor's Certification
Letters of Instruction

11. **Receipts for Valuables** -- If you keep any valuables in your safe deposit box, the receipts and appraisals for those items should be kept in this file.

12. **Retirement Plans** -- General information about your employee pension or profit-sharing plans, or personal retirement plans such as IRAs, Keoghs, 401(k)s, 403(b)s, annuities, etc., should be kept here. However, all certificates or other documents which describe the actual benefits to which you are entitled should be kept in your safe deposit box.

13. **Taxes** -- This file should be used to accumulate information about, or documents for, your federal, state or local income taxes, gift taxes, and/or estate taxes which have not been described in other categories. When preparing your tax returns each year, tax information which you have in other files should be moved into this one. Finally, keep your older tax returns in this file, including all of the documents needed to support your tax deductions, until 7 years after the date on which you filed the return.

14. **Warranties, Guarantees and Manuals** -- For your appliances and other household and yard equipment, use this file to keep warranties and guarantees (until they expire), and all manuals, maintenance and repair records.

15. **Miscellaneous** -- Use this file for anything else you wish to keep at home, including photocopies of important documents that you keep in your safe deposit box.

Three questions must be answered when working with your personal documents:

1. Which documents do I have to keep?
2. How long do I have to keep each document?
3. Where is it best to keep each document?

The **Master Document Locator** on pages 4 through 10 answers these questions for you and gives you space to fill in the locations of your own personal documents. We recommend that you keep this organizer updated by making changes as they occur.

Item	Keep Original How Long?	Recommended Location	Where We Keep Ours
GENERAL:			
Safe Deposit Box Inventory	Permanently	Organizer	_____
Professional Advisors	Permanently	Organizer	_____
Doctors, Dentists, Hospitals and Drug Stores	Permanently	Organizer	_____
General Household Information	Permanently	Organizer	_____
Critical Computer User IDs and Passwords.	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
PERSONAL and FAMILY:			
Marriage Certificate	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Pre-Nuptial Agreement	Permanently	1 - Safe Deposit Box 1 - Your Attorney	_____
Divorce and Separation Papers.	Permanently	1 - Safe Deposit Box 1 - Your Attorney	_____
Birth Certificates and Adoption Papers	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Religious Papers and Certificates	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Guardianship, Custody Agreements and Papers	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Court Decrees.	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Naturalization and Citizenship Papers	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Passports and Visas	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Personal History.	Permanently	Organizer	_____
Medical History and Prescription Drug Record	Permanently	Organizer	_____
Military Records and Discharge Papers.	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Education Records	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Employment Records	Permanently	Organizer	_____

MASTER DOCUMENT LOCATOR (continued)

Item	Keep Original How Long?	Recommended Location	Where We Keep Ours
HOUSEHOLD:			
Home Deed and Closing Statement	7 Years After You Sell	Safe Deposit Box . . .	_____
Home Mortgage, Title Insurance Policy, Property Survey and Appraisals.	While You Own Your Home	Home File	_____
Home Improvement Records and Receipts.	For each Home, for 7 Years after its Sale. . . .	Safe Deposit Box . . .	_____
Home Bill of Sale, Mortgage Release and Related Papers.	7 Years.	Safe Deposit Box . . .	_____
Property Tax Assessments.	7 Years	Home File	_____
Household Inventory, Receipts, Photographs, Video Tapes and Other Records.	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box . . .	_____
Auto, Boat, Plane, Other Vehicle Ownership Papers and Titles.	While You Own	Safe Deposit Box . . .	_____
Auto, Boat, Plane, Other Vehicle Sales Contracts, Receipts, Maintenance Records. License Information and Lease Agreements	While You Own	Home File	_____
Appliances and Home Equipment -- Receipts:			
If Permanently Installed	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box . . .	_____
If NOT Permanently Installed.	While You Own	Safe Deposit Box . . .	_____
Appliances and Home Equipment -- Manuals, Warranties and Maintenance Records.			
While You Own	Home File.	_____	_____
Personal Property, Artwork and Valuables:			
Receipts and Appraisals	While You Own	Safe Deposit Box*. . .	_____
Home and Apartment Lease Agreements.	While Leasing or Renting	Home File	_____

*If you keep a valuable item in your Safe Deposit Box, keep the receipt and/or appraisal for it in your home file.

MASTER DOCUMENT LOCATOR (continued)

Item	Keep Original How Long?	Recommended Location	Where We Keep Ours
HOUSEHOLD FINANCES:			
Checking Account Statements	1 Year	Home File	_____
Checkbook Records.	7 Years.	Home File	_____
Checks: if NOT Tax Deductible	2* Years	Home File	_____
if Tax Deductible	7 Years.	Home File	_____
Credit Cards and Charge Accounts:			
Statements.	2* Years	Home File	_____
Receipts:			
if NOT Tax Deductible	2* Years	Home File	_____
if Tax Deductible	7 Years.	Home File	_____
Paid Bills and Cash Receipts:			
if NOT Tax Deductible.	2* Years.	Home File	_____
if Tax Deductible	7 Years.	Home File	_____
Rent Receipts.	2 Years.	Home File	_____
Other Receipts, such as Groceries	DO NOT KEEP	Discard Immediately	
Salary and Wage Statements.	Until Compared at the End of the Year with Your W-2	Home File	_____

*If you had a dispute about a bill, keep the bill, your receipt and/or check, and all other related papers, for 7 years, even if the dispute was settled.

Item	Keep Original How Long?	Recommended Location	Where We Keep Ours
INSURANCE (Detailed Description)	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box . . .	_____
Annuities.	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box . . .	_____
Life Insurance	While In Force	Home File	_____
Accidental Death Insurance.	While In Force	Home File	_____
Health and Medical Insurance.	While In Force	Home File	_____
Medicare Supplement Insurance.	While In Force	Home File	_____
Long-Term Care Insurance	While In Force	Home File	_____
Disability Insurance	While In Force	Home File	_____
Credit and Credit Card Insurance.	While In Force	Home File	_____
Mortgage Insurance.	While In Force	Home File	_____
Travel Insurance.	While In Force	Home File	_____
Homeowners or Renters Insurance	While In Force*.	Home File	_____
Auto and Boat Insurance.	While In Force*.	Home File	_____
Liability Insurance	While In Force*.	Home File	_____

*If someone was injured in your home, by your car, or on your boat, keep the police accident report and the applicable insurance policies for at least 7 years after the accident, even if the policies are no longer in force. The actual length of time you should keep these papers depends on the laws of the state in which the accident occurred. Check with your attorney.

Item	Keep Original How Long?	Recommended Location	Where We Keep Ours
INVESTMENTS:			
Deadlines, Important Dates for CDs, Investments, Stock Options and Loans	Permanently.	Organizer	_____
Personal Financial Statement	Permanently.	Organizer	_____
Bank and Trust Account Information	Permanently.	Organizer	_____
Bank Statements.	7 Years.	Home File	_____
CDs.	While You Own	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Stocks, Bonds, Mutual Funds, Money Market Funds and Stock Options: Information	While You Own	Organizer	_____
Certificates and Options.	While You Own	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Transaction Statements, Trade Confirmations, Dividend Reinvestments, Year-End Account Statements and 1099s.	7 Years After You Sell.	Home File	_____
Other Investments, Information.	While You Own.	Organizer	_____
Other Investments, Ownership Documents	While You Own.	Safe Deposit Box	_____
. 7 Years After You Sell.		Home File	_____
Amounts We Owe, Information	While You Owe Loan.	Organizer	_____
Amounts We Owe, Documents.	7 Years After You Pay	Home File	_____
Amounts Owed To Us, Information.	While Owed to You.	Organizer	_____
Amounts Owed To Us, Documents, including Tenant Lease and Rental Agreements.	While Owed to You.	Safe Deposit Box	_____
. 7 Years After Paid		Home File	_____
Copyrights, Patents and Trademarks, License Agreements and Related Documents	While You Own.	Safe Deposit Box	_____

MASTER DOCUMENT LOCATOR (continued)

Item	Keep Original How Long?	Recommended Location	Where We Keep Ours
TAXES:			
Federal, State and Local Income Tax Returns and Documents to prove earnings and other income and to Support Deductions	7 Years.	Home File	_____
Federal, State and Local Gift Tax and/or Estate Tax Returns and supporting documents.	7 Years.	Home File	_____
IRS Form 8606, Non-Deductible IRA Contributions	Permanently.	Safe Deposit Box	_____
IRS Form 8582, Passive Activity Loss Limitations (Rental Property Losses).	7 Years After You Sell.	Home File	_____
RETIREMENT:			
W-2s and Social Security Earnings Records	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Social Security Cards	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Retirement Income Information (Pension and Profit-Sharing Plans, Deferred Compensation, Rents and Royalties, Individual Retirement Plans, IRAs, Keoghs, 401(k) Plans, 403(b) Plans, Annuities and Social Security).	Permanently.	Organizer.	_____
Retirement Plan Certificates	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
Other Benefits from Prior Employers.	Permanently.	Home File	_____
Survivor's Benefits	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____
BUSINESS:			
Employment Contracts, Buy-Sell Agreements, Partnership Agreements, Other Business Agreements and Documentation	7 Years After You Sell.	Home File	_____

Item	Keep Original How Long?	Recommended Location	Where We Keep Ours	
			His	Hers
FINAL PLANS:				
Durable Powers of Attorney for Property	Permanently	Home File*	_____	_____
Durable Powers of Attorney for Health Care	Permanently	Home File*	_____	_____
Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment.	Permanently	Home File*	_____	_____
Trust Agreements.	Permanently	1 - Safe Deposit Box 1 - Your Attorney 1 - Home File*	_____	_____
Living Will	Permanently	1 - Your Attorney 1 - Your Doctor 1 - Home File	_____	_____
Wills and Codicils**	Permanently	1 - Safe Deposit Box 1 - Your Attorney 1 - Home File*	_____	_____
Organ or Body Donor's Certification.	Permanently	Home File*	_____	_____
Letters of Instruction.	Permanently	Home File*	_____	_____
Funeral and Burial Instructions.	Permanently	Organizer*	_____	_____
Cemetery Plot Deed and Related Papers.	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____	_____
People and Organizations to Notify.	Permanently	Organizer*	_____	_____
Death Certificates	Permanently	Safe Deposit Box	_____	_____

*Keep a copy in your safe deposit box and give another copy to your attorney, or other trusted advisor, or family member.

**Do NOT make notes on the original copy of your will; doing so may make parts or all of it invalid.

