



MANAGING RECORDS DAY TO DAY

UN offices need to work with the record-keeping experts at UN ARMS to make long-term decisions about the value of official records. It is critical, though, that everyone in your office manages the records properly every day, so that valuable records are safe now and into the future.

MANAGING RECORDS EFFECTIVELY EVERY DAY

To manage records effectively in your office, follow these important guidelines:

- Distinguish between information and records as soon as possible after creating or receiving them. Keep records safe for ongoing use by storing them in official records systems and remove non-record information as soon as possible.
- If you want to keep reference information so you can use it later, set up information library systems that are separate from your official records systems, so that you do not mix up your information resources with your official records.
- Be sure all records under your care and control, whether paper or electronic, are “declared” as records, which means that they are properly stored in repositories according to formally approved records classification system or file plans.
- If the records you receive are convenience copies – sent to you for information purposes only but officially owned by another office within the UN – destroy them as soon as you no longer need them; do not store them in official records systems.
- Assign clear and understandable names to all records, including file folders for paper records and titles for electronic records, so the records can easily be retrieved from storage systems.
- Do not destroy official records without formal review and approval from the appropriate representatives within your office in consultation with UN ARMS.
- If your office does not have a formal classification system or a records retention schedule, contact UN ARMS for help. These tools are critical to the successful protection of your valuable records, whether in paper or electronic form.

Any time that you create or receive a document that can serve as evidence of official actions, transactions, or decisions, you need to declare that document as a record. Declaring a record means storing that record appropriately in your official records system.

SEPARATING INFORMATION, DOCUMENTS, AND RECORDS

To manage information, documents, and records effectively, follow these guidelines.

- If you receive a document for **reference** only and another office within the UN is responsible for keeping that record, then you have a **convenience copy**. The Office of Record is responsible for keeping the official copy; you should destroy your copy as soon as you no longer need it.
- If you create several drafts of a document, such as when you are writing a report or plan, the drafts are **works in progress**. If a superseded draft or work in progress is not needed later as evidence, it should be destroyed. For instance, a draft memo may not be needed once the final memo is sent out. However, if the draft document provides evidence, it should be declared a record and kept for as long as needed. For example, a draft report that is sent out for external comments now contains evidence of the inputs received into the report, so the draft should be declared a record, along with the final version of the report.

- If you create or receive a document and use it only for a very short time, to complete a routine action, that **transitory record** should be destroyed when you no longer need it. For example, if you send an email confirming a luncheon appointment, you should destroy the email once the meeting is over.
- If you created or received a document in the course of your work, and it provides **evidence** of an activity, decision, or transaction, you need to declare that document as a record and store it safely.
- Once you have declared a record and stored it in official records systems, you **must not destroy** that record without adhering to official retention schedules.

Decisions about how long to keep records are made by appropriate managers within your office in consultation with UN ARMS. All decisions are documented in **official retention schedules**.

DISPOSING OF INFORMATION, DOCUMENTS, AND RECORDS

You may dispose of information and documents when you no longer need them. However, **you must not destroy any official records** without receiving formal permission from your senior managers, who will consult with UN ARMS before confirming any destruction decision. Records are disposed of or destroyed only according to established and approved records retention schedules. Remember, destruction is not the same as disposition.

Disposition refers to the range of actions undertaken to manage records over time, which may include retention, destruction, or transfer to archival storage. All disposition actions must follow formal policies and meet UN requirements for record-keeping.

Destruction is the act of disposing of records **permanently** by obliterating records so that the information in them can no longer be physically or electronically reconstructed or recovered. All destruction decisions must be formally approved before action is taken.

Remember... Keeping obsolete or superseded documents can be just as hazardous as not keeping valuable records. Effective records management depends following formally approved retention schedules and then keeping records systems up to date so all records are safely stored and all non-records are disposed of appropriately.

Contact the records professionals at UN ARMS for guidance on developing or applying retention schedules and for advice on when and how to dispose of information, documents, and records.