



Records Management Tip

Records management advice prepared for GNWT records professionals by the Records Management Unit, PWS

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**Records
Disposition
Authority Series**

The Block-Numeric Classification System

What is the Block-Numeric Classification System?

The GNWT ARCS/ORCS system is based on the **block-numeric** classification system.

The block-numeric system is a hierarchical classification system. This means that each subject or function in the classification system is placed in a hierarchy, relative to other subjects or functions in the system. Broader subjects or functions are placed at the top of the hierarchy, while more specific subjects or functions are placed at a lower level. The inverted triangle below shows the idea (Figure 1). As you move down through the hierarchy, the subjects or functions become more specific. A **classification number** is used to identify each subject or function in the hierarchy.

The Records Disposition Authority series gives you tips on how to develop a records disposition authority.

Classification Hierarchy

Sections or **blocks** are the highest level in the ARCS/ORCS version of the block-numeric system. Sections are used to bring a broad range of related subjects or functions, called primaries, together. The GNWT ARCS has six sections. An ORCS may have one or more sections.

Primaries are the next level in the hierarchy. A primary describes a specific subject or function, such as budgeting or staffing. Each primary is assigned a **primary number** in order to make filing and retrieval easier. Primaries that belong to the same section have numbers that are close to one another. For example, in the GNWT ARCS, all of the primaries that deal with buildings are numbered between 2000 and 2999.

The **secondary** is the next level in the classification hierarchy. Secondaries classify sub-topics or sub-functions under each primary. Secondaries are assigned a unique number between 00 and 99. The secondary number builds on the primary number, and looks like this: 2110-35.

In the ARCS/ORCS system, secondaries are linked to records retention and disposition schedules, which are approved by the Public Records Committee (PRC). Because changes to sections, primaries, and secondaries may affect the approved retention and disposition, departments must get the PRC's approval to make any changes to an ORCS classification system. Likewise,

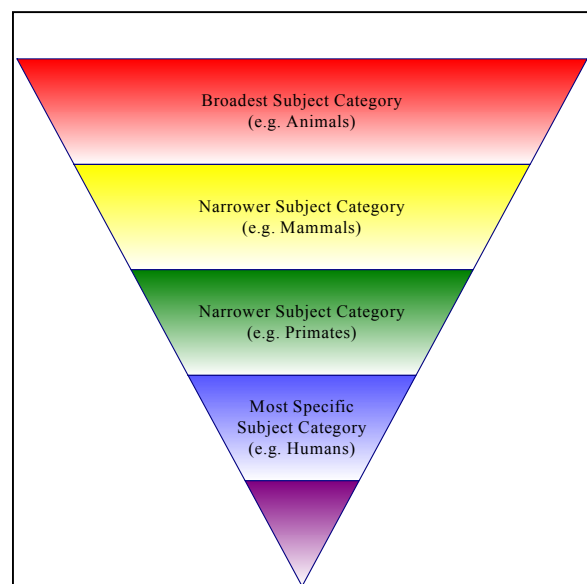


Figure 1: Classification Hierarchy

Public Works and Services must get the PRC's approval for any changes to the GNWT ARCS' classification system.

Secondaries can be broken down into **tertiaries**. Tertiaries can then be broken down into **quaternaries**. Tertiaries and quaternaries are also assigned classification numbers. These numbers build on the primary and secondary numbers, and look like this: 2110-35-10 (tertiary) and 2110-35-10-02 (quaternary).

Block-Numeric Rules

The following are standard block-numeric system rules.

1. Standard Primaries and Secondaries

The first primary in a section is always a "General" primary. Every primary has two standard secondaries:

- Secondary 00 is always used for "Policies and Procedures." The reason for this is that an organization can have a policy dealing with any and every topic.
- Secondary 01 is always used for "General." The general file is used as a holding place for documents. New secondaries can be created when the general file contains three to five documents on the same sub-topic.

2. General to Specific

Most systems for classifying information have a rule that says that information should be organized from the general to the specific. The block-numeric system follows this rule by having a General primary at the beginning of each section and a General secondary in each primary. The General primary and secondary are used to classify records that cannot be classified to a more specific primary or secondary.

3. Alphabetization

All of the primaries that belong to the same section should be sorted alphabetically, after for the General primary. So, the General primary comes first, and is followed by primaries that are arranged from "A" to "Z". Similarly, secondaries should be arranged alphabetically after the two standard secondaries. Alphabetization is used to make filing and retrieval easier.

4. Numbering

The final block-numeric rule states that gaps should be left between primary numbers and between secondary numbers. The gaps are there to let you add new primaries and secondaries in alphabetical order. Leave gaps of at least 10 numbers between primaries, and leave gaps of at least 5 numbers between secondaries.

GNWT Numbering System

The GNWT uses 4-digit numbers for its primary numbers. The primary numbers between 1000 and 6999 have been reserved for administrative records.

The primary numbers for operational records range from 0000 to 0999, and from 7000 on up.