



What Do I File?

Part 1: Substantive vs. Transitory Records

What is a record?

Records take many forms. A record can be anything that has been written down or recorded in some format. A record can be a report, note, e-mail message, photograph, tape recording, or computer file. Government records are any records that you create or receive while doing your job.

Does this mean that I have to file everything?

The short answer is, no, you do not have to file everything. Some records are more important than other records. The important records are needed because they give evidence of the department's actions, transactions, decisions, and policies. They tell us why things were done, why decisions were made, and how money was spent. They support the department's programs, services, and activities. The important records are called **substantive records**.

The opposite of a substantive record is a **transitory record**. Transitory records are only needed for a short time. They can be destroyed once you have used them or acted on them. They do not contain information that will be needed in the future.

A checklist on the next page will help you decide if your records are substantive or transitory.

So, I Have Decided That I Have a Substantive Record – Now What?

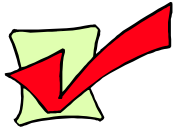
Substantive records should be filed in the official filing system. In most departments, this means that the records should be classified into ARCS or ORCS. See Bulletin # 1 for more information on ARCS and ORCS.

So, I Have Decided That I Have a Transitory Record – Now What?

You can destroy transitory records when you no longer need them. In most cases, you can delete or recycle them in your office. However, transitory records that contain private or personal information should be shredded or burned. Contact the Records Management Unit to arrange to have transitory records destroyed.

Transitory records are scheduled in a Records Disposition Authority (RDA), number 1997-02. It is approved for all departments and agencies. The RDA gives them permission to destroy transitory records.

For more information on substantive and transitory records, contact your department's Records Coordinator, or contact the Records Management Unit at 920-3009 or 873-7627.



Checklist for Substantive and Transitory Records

Check the table to find out if your records are substantive or transitory.

Substantive Records Keep as official records.	Transitory Records Destroy when no longer needed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Advice, recommendations, and decisions, as well as background material.▪ Policies and procedures, as well as background material.▪ Planning and budget records, as well as all background material.▪ Records of contacts with clients, consultants, vendors, partners, agents, and the public. Examples: letters, memos, minutes, and meeting notes.▪ Important telephone, e-mail, and face-to-face discussions.▪ Contracts and other legal agreements, as well as background material.▪ Proposed legislation and regulations, as well as background material.▪ Work done for government by consultants and others.▪ All financial transactions.▪ All records showing that services have been provided, or obligations have been incurred.▪ All information that shows that the government's information systems have been maintained and are reliable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Temporary information, such as simple messages, routing slips, and post-it notes. Note: this information should be filed if it helps to show how a department reached a decision.▪ Duplicate copies of a substantive record that do not have comments written on them.▪ Notes and rough drafts of letters, memos, reports, minutes, etc. Note: this information should be filed if it contains major revisions or helps to show how the final document was created. It should also be filed if it records official decisions. Draft legislation, budgets, policies, standards, guidelines, procedures, contracts, and other legal documents should be kept as a substantive record.▪ Publications from outside your office, such as supply catalogues, brochures, and newsletters.▪ Junk mail.▪ Mass distribution notices, messages, and memos that do not directly affect your duties. If you sent out the message, you should file it.▪ Blank information media, such as unused forms, erased audiotapes, erased videotapes, CDs, etc. Note: Accountable forms must be logged before they are destroyed.



Some e-mail messages are substantive records and should be filed.

