



Reading a Retention Schedule

How do I read a Retention Schedule?

A retention schedule is a timetable that tells you how long you should keep your records and what you should do with them when you no longer need them. You will find retention schedules next to each secondary in the GNWT ARCS or in your department's ORCS.

There is a master file retention schedule and a copy file retention schedule for each secondary in ARCS and ORCS. Use the master file retention schedule for your department's official master or original records, and the copy file retention schedule for copies of the master records.

Both the master and copy file retention schedules are divided into three columns:

- **Active (A):** The active period refers to the length of time that records will be kept in active storage in the office after they are closed. Active records are needed in the office for reference purposes.
- **Semi-Active (SA):** The semi-active period refers to the length of time that the records will be kept after the active period ends. Semi-active records are not used very often, but they must be kept for legal, fiscal, administrative, or other reasons. Semi-active records can be sent to the Records Centre, where they are kept in low-cost storage.
- **Final Disposition (FD):** Final disposition refers to the action that will be taken to dispose of (get rid of) the records when they have reached the end of their active and semi-active periods. There are three main methods of final disposition: transferring the records to the NWT Archives, destroying them, or transferring them to another organization.

The **total retention period** is the total length of time that the records will be kept after they have closed.



Sample Retention Schedule

SECONDARIES		MASTER FILE			COPY FILE		
		A	SA	FD	A	SA	FD
00	Policy and Procedures	S/O	7	AS/D	S/O	nil	D
01	General	2	nil	D	2	nil	D
20	Intergovernmental Committees	3	4	AS/D	2	nil	D

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If the **active column (A)** shows:

- A number, then the records must be kept in the office for that many years after they have **closed**.
- The abbreviation S/O, then the records are kept open and in the office until they are **superseded** (replaced) or **obsolete** (out of date).
- Another symbol or abbreviation, then check for notes on how to use the schedule.

If the **semi-active column (SA)** shows:

- A number, then this is number of years that the records must be kept after the active period ends.
- The word “nil”, then the records do not have a semi-active period.
- Another symbol or abbreviation, then check for notes on how to use the schedule.

If the **final disposition column (FD)** shows:

- The abbreviation “D”, then the records will be destroyed at the end of the semi-active period.
- The abbreviation “AS/D”, then the records will be sent to the NWT Archives (AS). The records will be destroyed if the Archives decides not to keep them (D).
- The abbreviation “FR”, then the department has decided to keep the records permanently.
- Another symbol or abbreviation, then check for notes on how to use the schedule.

Calculating Disposition Dates

You can figure out the date of final disposition for a record by adding the total retention period to the closed date.

For example, if the retention period is A = 2, SA = 5, and FD = D, and the file closed on March 31, 2002, then the final disposition date is:

Closed date: March 31, 2002
+ Active: 2 Years
+ Semi-active: 5 Years
Disposition date: March 31, 2009

If the retention period is A = S/O, SA = 10, and FD = AS/D, and the file closed on July 3, 1999, then the final disposition date is:

Closed date: July 3, 1999
+ Active: S/O
+ Semi-active: 10 Years
Disposition date: July 3, 2009

The final disposition date does not change, even if the records are not sent to the Records Centre as soon as the semi-active period starts. This is because the final disposition date is calculated from the closed date of the records, and not from the date that the records were sent to the Records Centre.

Also check out these bulletins:

- #5 Master & Copy Files
- #6 Life Cycle of Records
- #7 Records Disposition Authorities
- #9 GNWT ARCS

For more information, contact your department's records coordinator, or contact the Records Management Unit at 920-3009 or 873-7627