# File Naming Checklist

**Purpose:** To provide general guidance for naming files and support for research purposes.

**Scope:** All students, faculty, or staff that conduct a research project

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| **FILE NAMES SHOULD BE MACHINE READABLE, HUMAN READABLE, AND EASILY SORTABLE (i.e., DEFAULT ORDERING)** | |
|  | DO NOT put patient information or names within naming conventions |
|  | Check for established file naming conventions in the researcher’s discipline or department. Naming conventions should be documented so that project team members or department members can follow this standard. |
|  | File names should be descriptive and provide just enough contextual information |
|  | Try not to make file names too long. Operating systems have different limits to the number of characters. Generally, try to aim for a 40-50 character limit. |
|  | Put the most important information first. The computer arranges files by name, character by character.  *Note: If a researcher anticipates wanting to find a file by date, then put the date first*. |
|  | Use ISO 8601 standard for:   * Date (YYYYMMDD) * Date and timestamp (YYYYMMDDThhmm). Use 24-hour military time to avoid any confusion over a.m./p.m.   + Example: 202111240834 is November 24, 2021 at 8:34 a.m. |
|  | When using a sequential numbering system, use leading zeros to make sure files sort in sequential order.   * Example: 001, 002, …., 010, 011 …100, 101 |
|  | Use versioning to indicate the most current version of a file   * Example: filename\_v2.xxx |
|  | Avoid special characters, such as ~! @ # $ % ^ & \* ( ) ` ; : < > ? . , [ ] { } ’ ” | |
|  | Do not use spaces as some software will not recognize file names with spaces. Other options include underscores, dashes no separation, or camel case (first letter of each section of text is capitalized) |

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| **File Naming Convention Examples** |
| [investigator]\_[method]\_[subject]\_[YYYYMMDD]\_[version].[ext] |
| [project #]\_[method]\_[version]\_[YYYYMMDD].[ext] |
| [YYYYMMDD]\_[version]\_[subject]\_[datacollector].[ext] |
| [type of file]\_[author]\_[date].[ext] |

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| **File Naming Examples** | | |
| ***Examples of good naming convention*** |  | ***Examples of poor naming convention*** |
| 20190102\_AC\_smithlab\_utra\_exp01\_gel\_003.tiff |  | Test data 2016.xlsx |
| 20190501\_exp123\_analysis\_v01.pdf |  | Meeting notes Jan 17.doc |
| 20190811\_bioassay\_toxicity\_v1.sps |  | Notes Eric.txt |
| 2020-plos-manuscript-v26.pdf |  | Final last version.docx |