

Bulletin 2015-04 Appendix B

1. General.

Computer operating and file systems vary in the file and folder naming conventions that they support. Common operating systems such as Microsoft Windows, Macintosh OS, and Linux/Unix support different file systems. The file system determines the maximum length of a file name, file path (i.e., the file name and the names of any folders that contain it), and the supported character sets. When files and folders are moved between file systems, any differences can result in errors. To support the sustainability of electronic records it is advisable to choose file and folder naming conventions that are platform independent.

In addition to the technical considerations described above, agencies should also consider the structure and meaning given to file and folder names. Consistently and meaningfully named folders, sub-folders, and files facilitate the maintenance, identification, and transfer of electronic records. Agencies should develop file and folder naming conventions that support the management of scheduled electronic records.

2. File path.

If a file is transferred in a directory structure of folders and subfolders, the number of characters in the names of any folders and subfolders are combined with the number of characters in the file's name to make up a file path. File systems provide support for file names and paths of differing lengths. A general requirement for file paths is:

- 1) File paths should not exceed a total of 255 characters.

3. Folder naming.

Agencies should develop folder and subfolder naming conventions that relate the electronic records that they house to an item in a file plan. Folders are often named for the major functions or activities related to the records. Subfolders are frequently named by year or month. Folder names should be easy to interpret and unique. A folder hierarchy should contain no more than eight levels. Specific requirements for folder and subfolder names are:

- 1) Folders should not contain a period (.); and
- 2) Folders should include only combinations of the characters a-z, the numbers 0-9, and underscores (_) and hyphens (-).

4. File naming.

Agencies should develop file-naming conventions that are descriptive, consistent, and meaningful. If the file-naming convention incorporates components such as project names and dates or versions, they should always retain the same position. For example, report_name_year_month_day. Specific requirements for file names include:

- 1) File names should not include more than one period (.). Usually this period is generated by the application that creates a file and precedes the application defined 3 or 4 character extension;
- 2) File names should not contain spaces;
- 3) File names should include only combinations of the characters a-z, the numbers 0-9, and underscores (_) and hyphens (-); and
- 4) File names should contribute to a file path that contains no more than 255 characters in total length.

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