

The Basics About Records

What is a Record?

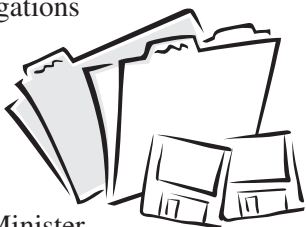
A record is not something you play on your old stereo turntable. The *Government Records Act* defines a record as "...information or data that is recorded or stored by graphic, photographic, electronic, mechanical or other means."

Records will describe and document:

- the activities of the Department
- the work we carry out
- the decisions that we make
- the funding we provide
- how we administer programs
- the permits or licences we issue
- the advice that we provide
- the support we provide to industry
- our policies and procedures
- our legal obligations
- our financial obligations

Some examples of records are:

- briefing notes prepared for the Minister
- application for a loan or program funding
- an agreement with the federal government
- photos taken in support of an investigation
- maps prepared showing the location of a proposed aquaculture site
- an e-mail sent in response to a letter to the Minister
- minutes from the Occupational Health and Safety committee
- correspondence with local fisheries organization
- an electronic spreadsheet that contains statistical data
- data on funding provided to clients maintained in a database



- a memo requesting a decision on a project
- inspection reports for restaurants

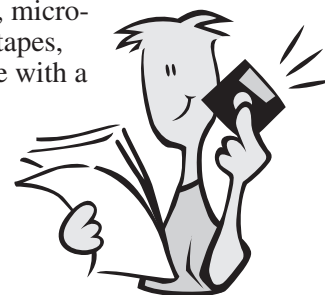
Is everything I receive or create a record?

No, not everything will be a record. The following are not considered government records:

- Copies you keep regarding your employment such as performance appraisals.
- An e-mail regarding lunch with a colleague.
- Draft copies of a letter are not a record, but the signed final version is.
- Blank forms are not considered records, but become a record once they are completed.
- Unsolicited mail such as a conference brochure is not a record unless you attend the conference.
- Extra copies of a record made to hand out at a meeting are not a record.
- Books are not normally considered records as they are published.

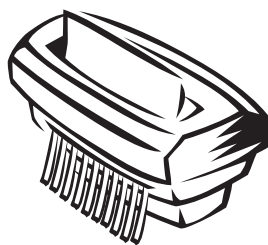
Do records only exist on paper?

As the definition states, records can be in formats other than paper. E-mail messages can be records. For example, if an e-mail requests or documents a decision, initiates a process, comments on a situation, documents a business transaction, then consider those e-mails to be records. Records can also be in the form of photographs, microfilm, video tapes, audio tapes, and documents we create with a spreadsheet, word processing or presentation software or data that we maintain in a database.



I don't need these records anymore, so can I throw them out?

All records, regardless of their format, have a life span: we create or receive them, we use them to do our work, we maintain them in files and when they come to the end of their life they can be disposed of. That life span is documented in a retention schedule that states the length of time government records must be kept. We cannot simply get rid of the records when we think we no longer need them. When it is time to dispose of records which no longer have a life according to the retention schedule, the required documentation must be completed and the required authorization must be obtained. Records can only be destroyed once the documentation is completed and authorization is given by the Deputy Minister.



To shred or recycle that is the question?

Records that are authorized for destruction must be securely destroyed through shredding at the Provincial Records Centre or by a commercial shredder. These records must never be disposed of in the recycle bins or thrown out in the garbage.

Recycle bins should only be used to dispose of:

- rough notes or drafts where the final version is not considered to be a confidential document.
- extra photocopies of documents but only if the original is not confidential
- junk mail such as seminar brochures, product or company advertising brochures or letters
- newspapers, magazines, catalogues, journals
- copies of out-of-date or no longer given out publications

As a good practice, always tear up drafts, extra photocopies and rough notes before putting them in the recycle bin.

Office shredders should be used in place of the recycle bin when it is not adequate just to tear up the documents, as the drafts, photocopies or rough notes contain confidential or personal information such as home addresses, recommendations, advice or client business information.



Records Management *Managing, Maintaining, Protecting and Preserving Corporate Information Assets.*

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