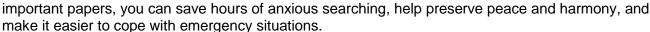
Organize Your **Important Papers**

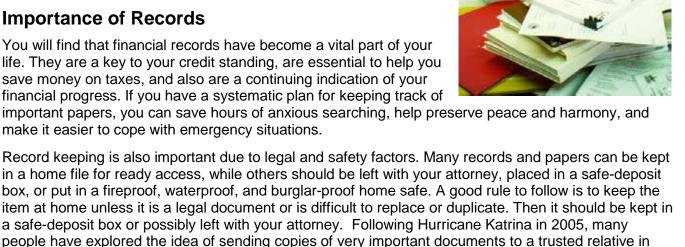
It is wise to periodically review your important papers. Take a fresh look at the types of records and papers you should be keeping at the beginning of each new stage or change in your life. The household might be considered a mini-business since many of the functions of planning, purchasing, and record keeping are the same as they are for any other type of business — large or small.

Importance of Records

notice.

You will find that financial records have become a vital part of your life. They are a key to your credit standing, are essential to help you save money on taxes, and also are a continuing indication of your financial progress. If you have a systematic plan for keeping track of





Filing and Storing Important Papers

Plan and evaluate which papers should be stored, where they should be stored, and which should be discarded. Make the decision and file each paper accordingly. Do not just stack papers and plan to return to them later. This is the way things become lost and cause you to waste valuable time in searching for or replacing them.

another state, and also having copies in a fireproof or waterproof file that could be lifted at a moment's

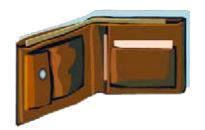
A home filing system with a space provided for the important things is the key to managing your important family papers. For items kept at home it is not necessary to have fancy filing cabinets or special "offices." A "business corner" can be set up in any room in the house. A cardboard drawer or metal box can serve adequately for storage of bills and family papers. Filing systems must be planned to meet your needs. You may not need detailed files at the present time. But remember, every type of important paper should be assigned a certain space, kept there until needed, and discarded if no longer useful.

The following guide to record keeping will help you work out a personalized and efficient system for preserving and safeguarding important family papers. It will also provide a handy reference for deciding what items to keep, why you need to keep them, where they should be kept, and how long to keep them.

You will note that duplicate copies of many family papers should be kept at home for immediate reference. Important reasons for storing some family papers at certain locations are explained beside each category. However, you must make the final decision about where you will store your documents.

Papers to Carry with You





Item to carry	Reason for carrying
Personal identification: Name, address, and phone for yourself and friend or relative contact	Identification, especially in case of emergency
Driver's license	Identification and evidence of legal eligibility to drive
Credit and/or electronic banking cards	Identification and to pay for or charge purchases; to make other transactions
Health insurance card (Medicare and/or other)	Identification to use during hospital admittance
Medical information: Blood type, allergies, diseases (such as diabetes, heart disease, epilepsy)	Emergency treatment. Place note in household files for ready reference in case of loss.
Donor card	To donate body organs and to donate body to medical school or training program for use in medical education or research
Doctor preferred	Notification in case of emergency
Auto insurance card	To identify issuer in case of accident
Organization membership cards	Identification and proof of membership

Records to Keep at Home





Item to keep	Reason for keeping	How long to keep
Name, address and phone numbers of relatives/people you want notified in an emergency	Reference when need arises	Update as people move, marry, change phone#
Family advisers: Names, addresses and telephone numbers	Ready reference when need (medical, legal, etc.) arises	Update when changes are made
Record of Important Papers	Reference	Indefinitely; update as needed
Keys (labeled) and safe combination safe-deposit box, car, house, home safe	Access as needed	Until property is sold or safe deposit box is relinquished
Education records/diplomas	Proof of attendance and degrees	Indefinitely
Employment records	To determine retirement benefits or if there is a worker's compensation claim	Keep last official announcement earned benefits; keep record until all worker's compensation claims are settled; keep beyond retirement in case you decide to re-enter the workforce
Insurance policies: Automobile; personal liability; homeowner's or renters; life; health; disability	Reference for details of coverage	Until property is sold or policy expires and until all claims are settled. Review annually. Until policy expires or is redeemed.
Licenses to practice (copy)	To verify credentials	Usually displayed; replace with most recent verification; keep copy in a safe place
Medical history: Immunizations, operations, illness, medications, etc.	Reference	Indefinitely on all family members; update often
Funeral plan documents	Reference	Indefinitely; update as needed
Subscriptions and buying clubs: Titles with order & renewal dates; membership details	Reference	Until subscription expires; handle complaints or cancellations
Organizational memberships	Reference	Until membership is dropped



Item to keep	Reason for keeping	How long to keep
Automobile: Certificate of title and bills of sale	Essential for transfer to new owner when car is sold	Until car is sold or disposed of
Guarantees and warranties	For proof of date of purchase; to determine service and parts guaranteed	Until no longer valid
Household inventories: Record item, cost and date of purchase or sale	For insurance claims to establish values; net worth statements. Pictures of items are helpful when making claims.	Keep list up-to-date as you dispose of or add household items; make a copy also for safe-deposit box
Appliance and other manuals	For reference on use and care	Until sold or discarded
Pets: Pedigree; health and license records	Identification	

Financial Records

Item to keep	Reason for keeping	How long to keep
Account books: Goals, spending plan, record of income and expenditures	For reference and comparison; used to determine net worth and make changes in income and spending patterns	Can show profit or loss over multiple years
Checking accounts: Number, location, and canceled checks or photocopy pages of checks	List all account numbers with addresses, phone numbers; save checks needed for income tax deductions and proof of important payments	Minimum of at least six years of checks
Credit card information: Names, addresses and phone numbers of issuing companies; card numbers	Purchase of items on credit; use of card and payment of balances due can give you a good credit rating	If card is not in current use, cancel by writing to company; if lost or stolen, notify company immediately by phone
Housing records: Improvement receipts, lease/rental agreement copies, utility deposit receipts, mortgage payments, property tax records	Compute capital gains/losses; income tax basis in residential replacements	Keep records until property is sold
Receipts and receipted bills	Proof of payment. For charge accounts— if they are tax deductible; proof of value on insurance claims.	Keep credit card receipts until bill is paid; keep larger item receipts while items are in your possession

Safe-deposit box inventory	Information for family members	Revise list annually
Financial institution monthly statements and/or savings pass books	Reference for completed transactions: Deposits and withdrawals	Keep account locations and numbers in safe-deposit box; minimum of a year
Income tax returns: Federal and state (if applicable) returns with substantiating records	Verification of taxes paid	Three years minimum for possible IRS audit; six years if 25% of gross income omitted; unlimited if fraudulent report
Investments: Copies of mutual funds, stocks, bonds, real estate, CDs, etc.	Statement of earnings and transactions as reference information	Keep initial and current investment quarterly statements
Retirement records: Employee pensions, annuities, Keoghs and IRAs	For reference; proof of employer-employee contributions, payments and benefits received or payable	Until fund is exhausted

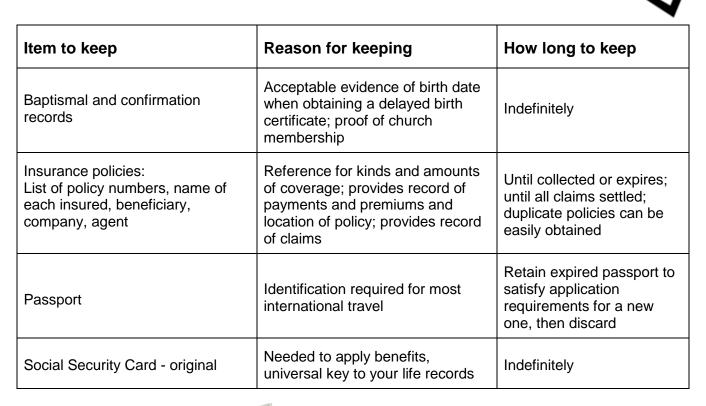
Legal Records

Item to keep	Reason for keeping	How long to keep
Living will (original with additional copies made)	For reference specifying your end- of-life care; instructions to your doctor and other health care providers (i.e., hospital, nursing facility, hospice, or home health agency; instructions for close family members)	Keep a list of where copies are distributed to be able to provide most recent copy if changes are made; don't store in a safe- deposit box that may be difficult to access without patient's permission
Will and/or trust (copies)	Unsigned copy for home reference	Update copy if will or trust is changed
Durable power of attorney: Specify the extent of power delegated to one or more persons: generally, for health care, and for financial decisions	Gives others the power to make health care and/or business decisions when you are no longer able to make decisions on your own	Replace by latest version if changes are made
Personal representative and guardian appointments	For official notification of agent to settle estate and provide care of children under legal age	Until official duties are completed
Social Security card copy for home file	Needed to apply for benefits; identification number needed on many types of applications and records	Indefinitely

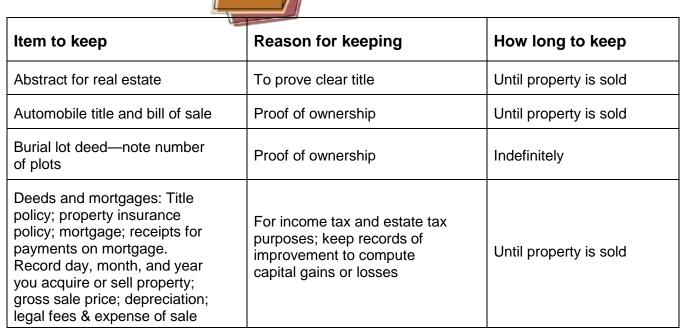
Permanent and Semi-Permanent Records

Keep in a safe deposit box or a fireproof, waterproof, burglar-proof home safe—with a list of the contents of the box in your home file.





Property Records



Household inventory: Appraisals, photos/videos of valuables, date purchased, purchase price, description	For insurance claims	Updated annually. Dispose of property no longer owned
Property easements	Proof of use rights	Until property is sold

Financial Records

Item to keep	Reason for keeping	How long to keep
Contracts, notes, debts: Promissory notes, mortgages, liens, installment contracts, and chattels	Evidence of collectible or payable debts; status for estate settlement	Until estate is settled
Investment certificates: Stocks, bonds, CDs, real estate	Proof of purchase	After redemption amount received and taxes are settled on gain or loss

Legal Records

Item to keep	Reason for keeping	How long to keep
Birth certificate (certified copy or original)	Proof of birth	Indefinitely
Death certificates	Proof of death for Social Security benefits and estate settlement	Until benefits are secured and estate settled; note cause of death for family health history
Marriage records	For proof of marriage to collect insurance, Social Security, and veteran's federal benefit pension compensations; to settle estate	Until all claims are settled, benefits are received, and estate is settled
Divorce decree	To clear legal requirements for remarriage	Indefinitely
Adoption papers	To prove ages to start to school; for obtaining birth certificates for some jobs; to obtain driver's license; for marriage license; for registering to vote; to qualify for Social Security benefits; to obtain passports; to determine estate heirs	Indefinitely

Military service: Service record; summary of benefits	To qualify for retirement, insurance, medical, education, and other benefits	Recommend that county or city clerk create additional official record of discharge certificates
Copyrights and patents	Proof of ownership rights	Indefinitely
Wills	Reference; essential for settlement of estate	Keep original indefinitely in safe or with attorney or clerk of district court
Citizenship and naturalization papers	To obtain certain types of jobs; to obtain passport; prove eligibility to vote	Indefinitely

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