

What's in a name – transcript

Introduction

This transcript is a record of the **words spoken** in the YouTube video: *What's in a name?* The words may differ from what is seen in the video. Some of the words on the screen are included in square brackets below.

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What's in a name? A short module from the National Archives of Australia.

Shakespeare said that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

Maybe. But what if you go looking for your rose which someone's put it in a box marked gladioli? Or flower? Maybe there are boxes for roses but the rose you're looking for is special. Or maybe it's not that sort of rose at all.

Do you ever find yourself struggling to find documents you're looking for or struggling to understand what a record is or what a file contains, based on its name?

Looking for a document with a poor title can be time-consuming not to mention frustrating for you and your colleagues as well as costly to your organisation. Some estimates put time spent searching for information at 20% of total work time or higher!

Making good titles for your documents or files is not rocket science –

[Inter-Departmental Committee – Meeting agendas and minutes – Jul – Dec 2014]

– it may be one of the easiest things you do in your working day. Good titles will make life easier for someone in your organisation. It might even be you!

If your agency or work area has agreed naming or titling rules or guidelines, you should follow those.

If not, here are three simple rules to help you. You could use these rules to develop naming guidelines for your work area or agency.

Rule 1... Make it meaningful

Keep it succinct and include all information necessary for others to find and understand its contents. To do this you need to capture what it contains such as the topic, subject, or project as well as the action.

Avoid using generic terms such as miscellaneous, correspondence or general jargon that is specific to a project or business area.

Abbreviations including acronyms and initialisations. These can mean different things to different people and lose their meaning over time e.g. RAOB has several meanings.

However, you may have some terms that are so commonly used or understood within your agency it may be appropriate to use them. For example: OH&S or WH&S

[ABC ANZAC GST NSW]

You should keep an easily accessible list of authorised abbreviated terms approved for use in your agency.

The second rule is to make your title unique.

These details should ensure it can be distinguished from all other documents or files. For example, when did it happen or what period does it relate to? It might be a calendar or financial year. First, second, third or fourth quarter or a date. Depending on your local requirements, it might look something like this:

[Attendance record Wilson 08-Dec-15]

You might need to include who the document or file is about including the names of individuals, business areas, organisations involved or a case number.

If there are a large number of case files, it might be best to use a unique number for each case to avoid confusion between

[Smith A. doc Smith D. doc Smith G. doc Smith K. doc]

People with similar names.

[01SA Smith A. doc 02SD Smith D. doc 03SG Smith G. doc 04SK Smith K. doc]

Including the version can also help make it unique. For version control you may use something like these or a numbering system.

[01SA Smith A v2. Doc 02SD Smith D v1. Doc 03SG Smith G v1. Doc 04SK Smith K v3. Doc]

The third rule is all about keeping names consistent

[Logo – ABC – Colour.jpg]

[NSW – colour logo.jpg]

Using a consistent approach to naming throughout your agency will help you and other people find and understand records more easily. Keep the elements in the same order.

[Records Authority PowerPoint 2015 02 01 Exec Minutes May 12 2015 DRA for external (PowerPoint) 2015 08 02 DRA for external (PowerPoint) 2015 08 02 NAA Meeting Minutes 2014 01 25 Developing a Records Authority 09 06 2015 Archival description – final 20150811 National Archive Minutes 15 10 18]

Make the format of dates, versions, names or other details consistent.

[NAA Meeting Minutes 2014 01 25

Exec Minutes May 12 2015

National Archive Minutes 15 10 18
Developing a Records Authority 09 06 2015

Records Authority PowerPoint 2015 02 01
DRA for external (PowerPoint) 2015 08 02

Mediaflex Guide 6th February

Archival description – final 20150811

National Archives of Australia – Board meeting minutes 2014 01 25

National Archives of Australia – Board meeting minutes 2015 12 05

National Archives of Australia – Board meeting minutes 2015 10 18

Records Authority Presentation – external distribution 2015 02 01

Records Authority Presentation – external distribution 2015 06 09

Records Authority Presentation – external distribution 2015 08 02]

For example, dates can be used in different ways.

[Mediaflex User Guide – final version 2015 02 06

Mediaflex User Guide – final version 2015 08 11]

Keeping the format consistent will make it easier to sort and find what you're looking for. Dates can appear different in a number of combinations.

[DD MM YYYY 16 02 2015

DD MM YY 16 02 15

DD Month YYYY 16 Feb 2015

YYYY MM DD 2015 02 16]

All of these rules can be determined according to your workplace's preferences however the only date order that will ensure chronological order is: YYYY MM DD. Names should also be in the same format:

[John M Smith John May Smith Smith John Smith John May Smith J]

It's that easy. Think about how you might let other people know these simple rules. For example share this module. Discuss and agree a consistent approach with your colleagues. Include the rules into local procedures or style guides.

[In summary: You should follow your agency's rules and procedures, or speak to your Records Management area for titling advice specific to your agency.]