

State of Iowa File Naming Conventions

Recommended File Naming Convention

All docs should have clear, descriptive, *unique* document titles AND file names. [When your document is available for public download from your website, or another site like Iowa Publications online or documents.iowa.gov, it is important the public understand what the file is about.](#) When your document is available for the public to download from your website, or another site like Iowa Publications online or documents.iowa.gov, it is important the public understand what the file is about.

Required File Title

Each document must have a Title as required by the federal accessibility law. The Title is internal to the document and is read by screen readers. The Title is created by using the styling “Title” in Microsoft Word or other platforms. Your Title should also be unique and descriptive. The document Title will use most of the elements as a File Name but should not use dashes between words and likely will not include **Agency. Document Title**
Example: “*Broadband Grant Administrative Guide 2025*”

Recommended Naming Elements

- Agency (division optional) abbreviation and/or proper noun associated with the document
 - e.g. HHS-Medicare, IWB, DOE, Wellmark, Acme Tree Service, Story County
- Type or Purpose of the document
 - Admin order, financial statement, discipline, agenda, map, annual report, training presentation, user guide, application instructions, worksheet, brochure, etc.
- Optional: Language of the document (if not English)
- Optional: Final versions can be indicated by the date or with “-approved” or “-final”
- Date (Format YYYYMMDD, YYYYMM, or YYYY)
- Dash (-) rather than space or underline (_) for documents a web browser might be ranking, indexing, or searching.
- Consider double hyphens (--) between sections of the file’s name to enhance readability.

File Name Example: *DOM-Broadband-Grant-Administrative-Guide-20250108.pdf*

(Google, 2024)

File Naming Convention Dos

- Do consider using an 8-digit date in the `yyyymmdd` format
 - Alternatively, `yyyymm` or `yyyy`
- Do consider sorting impacts
 - Start with the date if it's important to sort by the year
 - End with the date if it's important to sort by the proper name
- Do keep it as short as practical
 - File paths longer than ~260 characters typically don't work properly
- Do use leading zeros
 - "001" and "002" instead of "1" and "2", etc."

File Naming Convention Don'ts

- Do NOT use spaces. Instead use:
 - dashes: `file-name.doc` (preferred for search engines)
 - or underscores: `file_name.doc`
 - or camel case: `FileName.doc`
- Do NOT use special characters
 - `~!@#$%^&*() ` ; < > ? , [] { } ' " ``
- Do NOT use dots except just prior to the file extension

(Google, 2024)

Examples

Reports, Guides, Plans, and Brochures:

[Agency]-[*optional Division*]-[Document Type or Purpose]-[*optional alternate language*]-[YYYYMMDD].[extension]

examples:

IDOE-BNHS-11978601-State-Review-Report-20241120.pdf

20240829-IDOE-BNHS-11978601-State-Review-Report.pdf

2009-Iowa-Railroad-System-Plan.pdf

HHS-Iowa-Medicaid-Program-Integrity-Reporting-Guide-2019.docx

HHS-Asthma-Action-Plan-Home-and-School-Spanish.pdf

Meeting Notes, Newsletters, and Photographs:

[YYYYMMDD]-[Meeting or subject]-[Agency]-[*optional Division*].[extension]

examples:

20240829-lowAccess-Project-Kickoff-DOM-DoIT.docx

20240829-Team-Photo-DOM-DoIT.jpg

1860-George-Bancroft-County-Fair-Board.jpg

Code Files:

[Project Name]-[Module Name]-[Version].[extension]

examples:

HHS-Website-Homepage-Redesign-V3.html

IDOE-iowastics-2024 Maintenance.cpp

IWD-iowaWorks-LMI-Update-2024.cs

Job Description:

[Agency]-[*optional Division*]-[Document Type or Purpose]-[YYYY].[extension]

examples:

DAS-JD-06440-Correctional-Pharmacy-Director-2024.docx

DAS-JD-00717-Performance-Results-Facilitator -2024.docx

DAS-Job-Class-Description-86411.docx

Why Should You Use This Naming Convention?

In today's world, we deal with tons of digital files every day, which can get confusing. Using a good system for naming your files isn't just helpful—it's necessary. Here's why a strong file naming system makes life easier:

1. Better Organization and Easy Search

When you name files in a clear and consistent way, it's much easier to find what you need. A good name can tell you what's inside the file, when it was made, and even its version. For example, a file named *2024-08-29_ProjectReport_V1.docx* quickly shows the date, what it is, and which version it is.

2. Teamwork Made Simple

When working with others, clear file names prevent mix-ups. Everyone on the team knows the naming rules, so it's easier to keep track of changes and updates. For example, naming files like *ProjectName_TeamMember_Version* helps everyone know who worked on what and when.

3. **Keeping Track of Versions**

It's easy to lose track of file updates without a system. Including version numbers like *V1*, *V2*, or *Final* in the name makes it simple to see which file is the most recent. Plus, you can go back to an older version if needed.

4. **Works Across Different Systems**

Not all computers or programs handle file names the same way. Special characters or spaces in names can cause problems when moving files between systems. Using underscores or hyphens instead of spaces keeps your files working everywhere.

5. **Saves Time and Effort**

Searching for files or figuring out their contents can waste a lot of time. Clear names make it faster to find what you need, so you can focus on your work. For businesses, this efficiency can save money too.

6. **Looks Professional**

A well-organized file system shows that you are detail-oriented and professional. Whether you're sharing files with coworkers, clients, or managers, good file names reflect your organizational skills and boost your credibility.

Creating a solid file naming system is an easy way to stay organized and save time. It helps with file searches, teamwork, version control, and even makes your work look more professional. Taking the time to set up and stick to a good naming system can make your daily tasks and overall productivity much smoother.