Guidelines for File Naming Conventions

These guidelines are recommendations intended to support you and your department in creating consistent file names, especially for documents shared by multiple staff members on a departmental shared drive. Please consider contacting the Office of Archives and Records at records@archatl.com for assistance with file management and file naming conventions. *See also: Best Practices for Managing Shared Drives*

- If using spaces, include only one space between each words to make searching and reading easier.

- Avoid special characters except underscores (_) and dashes (-).

- Use descriptive words, of a realistic character length.
    - Could someone from the future find and understand what the file is by the filename alone?
    - Windows' max character limit is 256 characters. This includes the full file path.
    - File names that exceed the max character limit will error, losing data or the full document.

- Use standard abbreviations/terms for department, date, version, and document type in file names.
    - See "Offices and Ministries Standard Names" or "Parishes and Missions Standard Names" for standard abbreviations.
    - International Date Standard is YYYYMMDD
    - Use version numbers, avoid vague terms like "update," "old," or "new."
    - Document type identifiers will quickly explain what the file is.

        AGD=Agenda   MEM=Memo   RPT=Report
        ANN=Announcement   MIN=Minutes   DRAFT=Draft version
        COR=Correspondence   NSL=Newsletter   FINAL=Final approved
        FOR=Form   POL=Policy   version
        LTR=Letter   PUB=Publication

- Avoid nesting folders more than 3 folders deep.
    - Nested folders are difficult to maintain and to search.
    - Nested folders adds to the file character length.
    - A file name should include all descriptive information regardless of where the file is kept.

- Take leadership to benefit self and others.
    - Take ownership of your own files.
    - Train others to follow file naming and organizational guidelines.
    - An organized file structure will:
        - Save the entire department time in searching for documents.
        - Avoid mistakes when finding and saving final versions.
        - Simplify records retention by easily identifying file content.
        - Prevent duplication of files or recreation of work.

- Be consistent.