

APS Essentials - Records Management

The aim of this course is to introduce principles, obligations and behaviours expected of employees in relation to records management in the Australian Public Service.

This course will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Course Overview

Understanding records

The lifecycle of a record

Keeping records

Conclusion

Course Overview

Contents

This course contains the following content:

- Understanding records
- The lifecycle of a record
- Keeping records


Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, you will understand:

- what records are, why they matter, and when to make them
- how to manage records, including naming conventions, record storage and destruction
- your roles and responsibilities for supporting records management in your agency
- legislation which governs records management in the APS

CONTINUE

Understanding records



"Information collected and created by the Australia Government upholds integrity and accountability of government processes. Trust in the public record is a foundation for our democracy and values."

Director-General, National Archives of Australia

CONTINUE

What is a record?

A record is all information created, sent or received while carrying out your work in the APS. Records can be in paper, digital or other formats.

Records help us substantiate our decision-making, gain insight from our mistakes, and work together on large tasks. Records are an essential part of an accountable and transparent government that is trusted for its integrity.

Creating and managing records are mandatory obligations as a public servant. Comprehensive and accessible records are a big part of what ensures a government operates with integrity.

Records might consist of:



emails you send and receive



photos you take

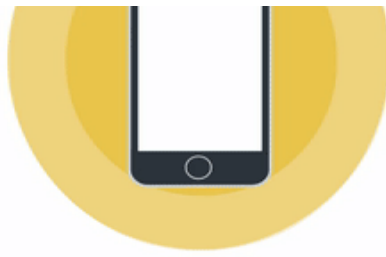


text messages you send and receive





databases/dataset you
administer



your social media posts
and feedback



reports you write



Complete the content above before moving on.

Identifying records

The following questions can also help identify if an activity needs to be captured in a record:

Did I write, send, or use this in the course of my work?

Am I (or someone else) required to action this?

Does it show what happened, when it happened, and who was involved?

Does it show what was decided and recommended and by whom?

Does it approve or authorise actions?

Is it a formal communication between staff relating to work?

Does it signify a policy change or development?

Does it commit the department to an arrangement or business deal?

Does it contain advice, provide instruction, guidance or constitute internal/external formal communication?

Does it relate to intellectual property rights?

Does it relate to ownership, lease or access to property?

Will anyone need this information in the future?

If you answer **YES** to any of these questions then you **must** create or capture the activity in a record.

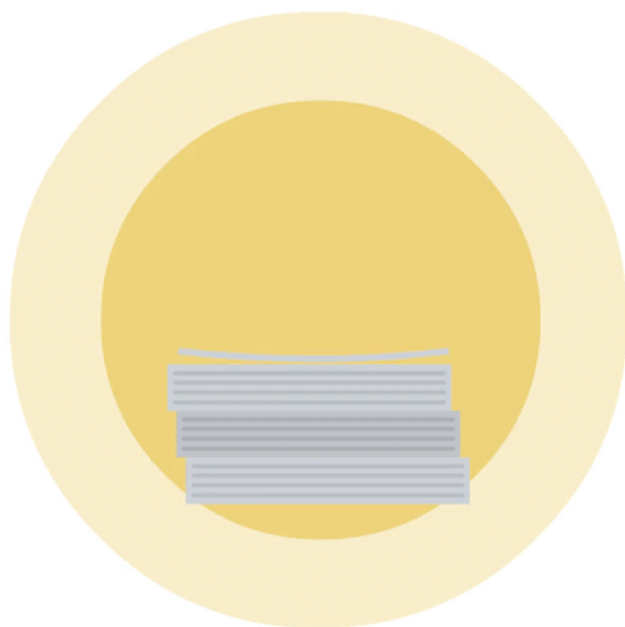
CONTINUE

Why are records important?

Managing your data, information and records correctly, is one of the most important things you can do to contribute to the integrity and accountability of the Australian Government.

Have you ever lost an important document and spent hours searching for it? Maybe you've forgotten to save your work and wasted time re-creating it? That's when you realise how important good records management is!

Records provide evidence, document decisions and demonstrate the process followed. They can also have value for re-use far beyond their original purpose.



In the longer term, creating and keeping records helps future generations understand Australia's history, society, culture and people.

Records provide evidence of a business transaction and your agency's authority in carrying out its legislative and administrative responsibilities. Some records you use today might even become part of our national history.



The most valuable government records will be kept permanently by the National Archives.

Practicing correct information management means:

Select each heading to read information.

You save time —

Records help us save time by re-using good work or picking up where others left off. You can learn from how other people do things. This is sometimes called 'corporate memory'.

Your decisions are justified —

Can you remember why you made a decision two years ago? Most of us can't. Keeping records helps you prove and defend those decisions if they're ever challenged.

You are accountable —

The business of government operates within a framework that requires us all to make and keep records.

Public sector values and principles (such as the APS Values and Code of Conduct) carry the same message – all Australian Government employees need to be accountable for their actions.

When we record our actions and decision-making, we all become accountable for our work, and can demonstrate integrity. This is essential for the protection of rights and entitlements in a transparent and trustworthy government.

You stop corruption —

Corruption hides in the dark. When you follow good practices and keep records accurately, you demonstrate how you came to the decisions you made and the information you had available to you.

Complete records prepare your decision-making for any scrutiny that may arise. They do this by identifying issues or defending against allegations related to fraud and corruption. This creates trust in government and the public service.



Complete the content above before moving on.

Making a record (2:15)



Play the video or read the following transcript to learn more.



Making a record

Video and transcript provided by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Note: Although sending a follow-up email is a good start to creating a record, it must be saved in an approved records management system as evidence of what happened.

 **Transcript - Making a record.pdf**
415.9 KB 

CONTINUE

Is this a record?

Data, information and records should be kept on your agency's records management systems or in an approved business information system. It can sometimes be difficult to tell whether something counts as a record, but practice makes perfect.

Have a go for yourself and decide if each of the below require a record to be made:

Select all scenarios that will require a record.

Have a go for yourself and decide if each of the below require a record to be made: Select all scenarios that will require a record to be made.

- a) Your supervisor sent you a great sourdough recipe.
- b) Your team mailbox is being sent a lot of marketing material.
- c) Your supervisor will need to act on some information in a brief you sent them.
- d) You have a table of original data that you submit for use in your agency's annual report.
- e) You decide that you would like to apply for higher duties.
- f) You just finished a phone call with a client about their case.
- g) You received an email from a colleague to schedule dinner after work.
- h) Your supervisor sent you approval for a purchase.

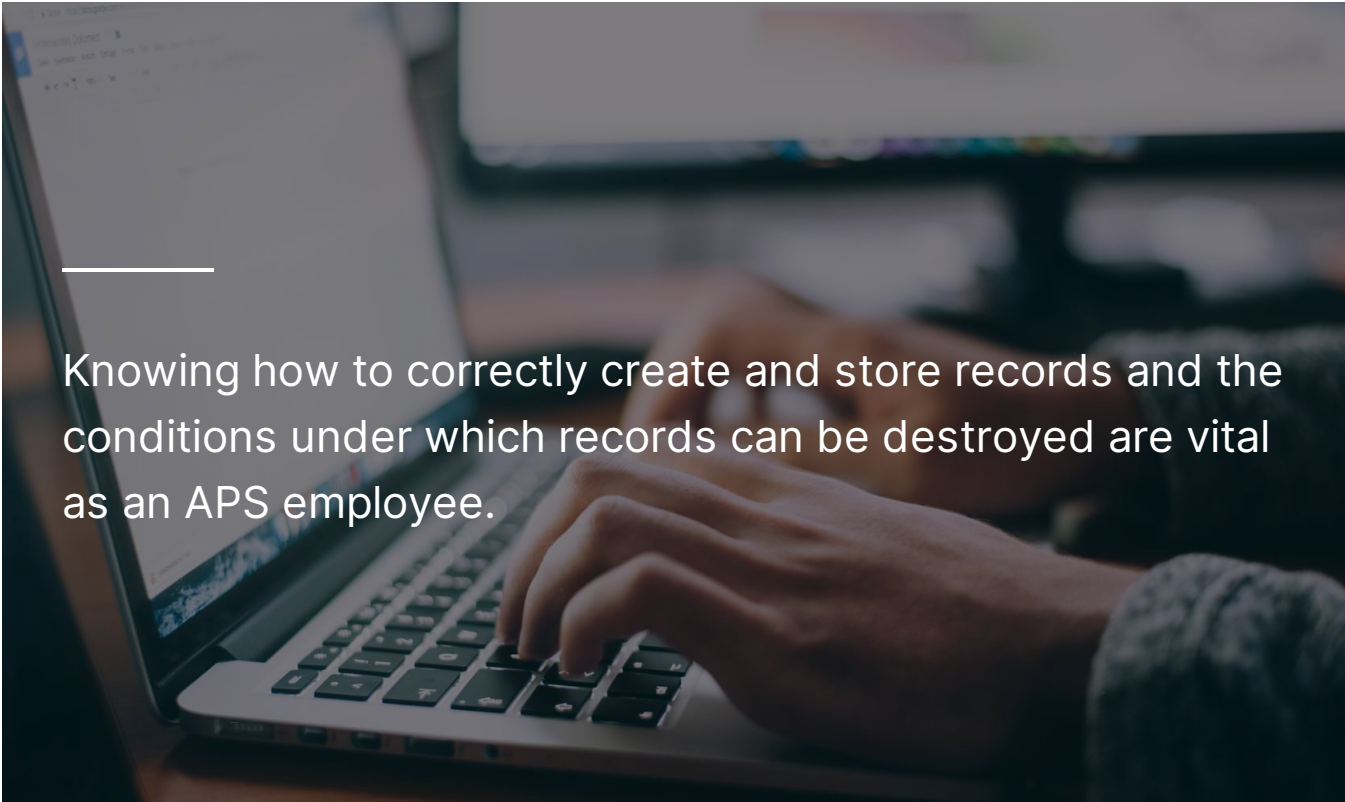
i) You received legal advice on the wording of a disclaimer for a document.

SUBMIT



Complete the content above before moving on.

The lifecycle of a record



Knowing how to correctly create and store records and the conditions under which records can be destroyed are vital as an APS employee.

The creation of a record

Depending on the system you're working in, creating records can happen as a deliberate action on your part or as an automated system process. It's important for you to understand which actions you perform are saved as a record.

When creating a record, you'll often have to choose a name or title. Naming your records can be challenging but is very much worth your while. It doesn't matter how important the information in your record is if no one can find it.

When you name a record you should ask yourself:

'Will I (or someone else from my team) be able to find this in two years?'

If the answer is no, the name you've chosen for your record is not suitable.

Three steps to naming records

**STEP 1: MAKE IT
MEANINGFUL**

**STEP 2: MAKE IT
UNIQUE**

**STEP 3: MAKE IT
CONSISTENT**

TIPS TO REMEMBER

Everyone should be able to tell what's in your document based upon its title. This means you should include important information in titles, like: **Subject matter, purpose** and **specific dates** e.g. financial year or date of project or grant round.

You should also **avoid acronyms** because you can't be sure everyone will know what they mean, and acronyms can change over time. In the event you do use an acronym they need to be spelled out in the description.



**STEP 1: MAKE IT
MEANINGFUL**

**STEP 2: MAKE IT
UNIQUE**

**STEP 3: MAKE IT
CONSISTENT**

TIPS TO REMEMBER

Many of the documents you work on will be very similar, but they still need to be distinguished from one another.

For example: if you take the minutes at your branch meeting each month you can't just call them all "**Minutes – Branch meeting**".

You'll need to include information like the **date** and **which branch** you work in. This way your documents can be distinguished from each other (and all the other branch meeting minutes).



**STEP 1: MAKE IT
MEANINGFUL**

**STEP 2: MAKE IT
UNIQUE**

**STEP 3: MAKE IT
CONSISTENT**

TIPS TO REMEMBER

Finally, you should make sure your titles are **consistent** with the titles of other records. This will make it easier to search through a lot of records at once and identify differences easily.



**STEP 1: MAKE IT
MEANINGFUL**

**STEP 2: MAKE IT
UNIQUE**

**STEP 3: MAKE IT
CONSISTENT**

TIPS TO REMEMBER

- Be consistent and standardise the names you give to records.
- Avoid using jargon, acronyms and abbreviations others may not understand.
- Avoid unnecessary repetition and redundancy in file names and file paths.

- Use dashes to separate elements in your title, do not use punctuation such as commas and apostrophes.
- Discuss file titling in your branch, section or project meetings - apply guidelines and conventions.
- Check whether your agency has standardised naming conventions and business rules for staff use.

CONTINUE

Keeping and storing records

Now that you've created and named your record, let's take a look at where it belongs.

Data, information and records must be kept on each agency's records management systems or in approved business information systems. To correctly manage data, information and records, you will need to ensure you are familiar with the systems approved for use within your agency and which system is best suited for any record you create.

This helps us ensure we are meeting our legislative obligations and makes our work easier.



All records must be:

- stored according to approved procedure
- version and access controlled, so users have the most up-to-date and correct information
- protected against tampering, corruption, loss and damage
- readily accessible to those who require them for their work
- made to preserve our history.

i Reach out to your supervisor if you are unsure of what record keeping tool your department uses.

CONTINUE

Destruction

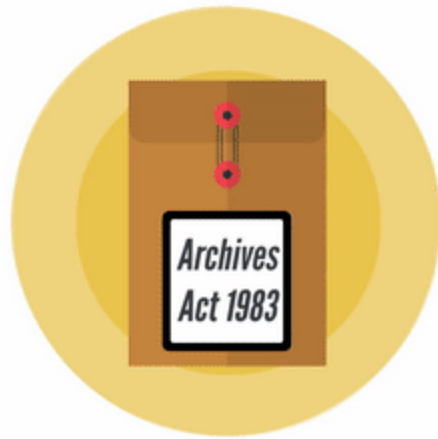
In general, **most APS staff should not need to destroy records.**

However, some low-value information can be destroyed under a normal administrative practice (NAP) process and do not need to be captured as a record. Things that are often covered under NAP include:

- Short-term items like calendar invites
- Copies made purely for reference
- Externally published material like marketing emails

Remember the list of identifying questions to ask when deciding whether to make a record? If you answered no to all those questions, you could consider destroying the material as a NAP. Each agency is different, so refer to your agency's endorsed policies and procedures to understand what you can destroy under NAP. If you are unsure about a record or need to dispose of some more information, please contact the Information Management team in your agency for advice or training.

Each agency's information management policies have been developed according to the ***Archives Act 1983*** and other legislation, and strictly limit the destruction of records unless under certain circumstances following exact processes.



Deciding whether a record can be destroyed can be complicated because there are a lot of legal requirements you need to meet.

Any record entered into electronic records management or business information systems with records management functionality will be managed for you and you do not need to worry about how long the records need to be kept.



CONTINUE

Keeping records



With great recordkeeping comes great responsibility, so it is important to understand your information and records management responsibilities and obligations.

Your responsibilities and obligations

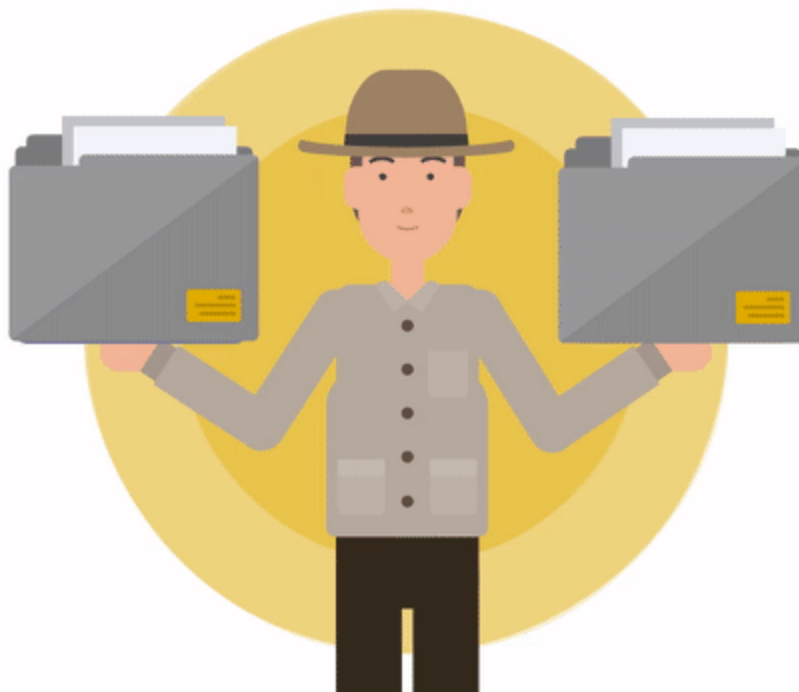
We've mentioned a lot of these responsibilities so far, like:

- making records of your work
- giving your records meaningful titles
- storing records according to your agency's policies
- following correct procedures of how and when it is appropriate to destroy records.

You should also be careful with the records you create, by making sure they are secure and can't be lost, modified or damaged.

Important!

You should also be careful with the records you create, by making sure they are secure and can't be lost, modified or damaged.



CONTINUE

On the record

Our responsibilities for recordkeeping and records management are written into Australian law. It is important we understand this to know why we do it this way.

Let's have a look at some existing laws that govern recordkeeping.



*Freedom of
Information
Act 1982*

Freedom of Information Act 1982

Allows the public to request access to government information.



*The Archives
Act 1983*

The Archives Act 1983

Provides for the preservation of the archival records of the Commonwealth, and governs access to those



*Public
Governance,
Performance and
Accountability
Act 2013*

Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013

The main governance legislation for the APS. It imposes recordkeeping

records.

requirements for business and accounting records.

A circular icon with a yellow-to-gold gradient, consisting of an outer ring and an inner circle. The text "Public Service Act 1999" is centered in the inner circle.

*Public Service
Act 1999*

Public Service Act 1999

One key object (s3(d)) is to establish rights and obligations of APS employees.

A circular icon with a yellow-to-gold gradient, consisting of an outer ring and an inner circle. The text "Privacy Act 1988" is centered in the inner circle.

*Privacy
Act 1988*

Privacy Act 1988

This Act affects the way both the public service and the private sector handle personal information.

A circular icon with a yellow-to-gold gradient, consisting of an outer ring and an inner circle. The text "The Electronic Transaction Act 1999" is centered in the inner circle.

*The Electronic
Transaction
Act 1999*


***The Electronic
Transaction Act 1999***

Imposes recordkeeping requirements similar to those upon physical transactions to electronic transaction.

A circular icon with a yellow-to-gold gradient, consisting of an outer ring and an inner circle. The text "Evidence Act 1995" is centered in the inner circle.

*Evidence
Act 1995*

Evidence Act 1995

A circular icon with a yellow-to-gold gradient, consisting of an outer ring and an inner circle. The text "Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977" is centered in the inner circle.

*Administrative
Decisions
(Judicial Review)
Act 1977*

***Administrative Decisions
(Judicial Review) Act***

A circular icon with a yellow-to-gold gradient, consisting of an outer ring and an inner circle. The text "Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF)" is centered in the inner circle.

*Protective
Security Policy
Framework
(PSPF)*

**Protective Security
Policy Framework (PSPF)**

Affects how evidence is treated, and how Commonwealth records can be used as evidence.

1977

Affects the way administrative decision can be reviewed by the courts.

The basis for the way we classify and secure our information. This includes markers and information management markers.



Complete the content above before moving on.

Classifying documents

- The **Protective Security Policy Framework** is the basis for the way to classify and secure information in the APS. It covers protective markings and choosing the right storage or transmission method.
- If you work with **classified** information you should make sure you correctly classify it and apply the appropriate security controls to protect the information.
- **Over-classified** documents can make it more difficult for your colleagues to access the documents they need, and **under-classified** documents are a security risk.
- Certain protective markings and security classifications carry strict guidelines for how they can be stored, accessed, transferred and destroyed.
- More specific information relating to protectively marked and security classified information and records can be found in the **Security Essentials** course.

CONTINUE

The digital transition

The entire Australian Government operates in a digital environment to meet just about all of its business needs. This is also true for data, information and records management.



Some physical records can be digitised where there is a business need and there are limited exceptions where only a physical record is acceptable. Otherwise, we as public servants must make records in digital formats and transition from physical processes wherever possible. For example, we should no longer expect wet ink signatures and use a digital approval process instead.

Digital records should remain digital throughout their lifecycle. Once created, you must not print them and scan them back into the agency's records management or business information systems. Digital records can be printed out for reference purposes, but the original record must be maintained as the authoritative record.



CONTINUE

Advice in your agency

Each agency deals with different records management systems, local file naming practices and levels of security obligations.

It is important to familiarise yourself with your local procedures.

If you have any questions about your record-keeping obligations discuss with your supervisor or your local information management professionals.

CONTINUE

Conclusion

Key points to remember

- A record is all information created, sent or received while carrying out your work in the APS. Records can be in paper, digital or other formats.
- Records provide evidence, document decisions and demonstrate the process followed.
- Knowing how to correctly create and store records and the conditions under which records can be destroyed are vital as an APS employee.
- You should be careful with the records you create, by making sure they are secure and can't be lost, modified or damaged.
- Data, information and records should be kept on your agency's records management systems or in an approved business information system.
- Our responsibilities for recordkeeping and records management are written into Australian law.
- Each agency deals with different records management systems, local file naming practices and levels of security obligations. **It is important to familiarise yourself with your local procedures.**

Summary

You should now be understand:

- what records are, why they matter, and when to make them
- how to correctly title a record
- where and how to store records
- the conditions under which a record can be destroyed
- your roles and responsibilities for supporting records management in your agency
- legislation which governs records management in your agency
- the need to refer to records management advice within your agency.

Course complete

Well done! You have now completed the APS Essentials - Records Management course.