

What's in a Name?

Best practices when naming your files, so they will be useful to you and others

Best Practices for File Naming

- Context: provides content-specific or descriptive information
- Short+ : Keep file names short but meaningful
- No Generics: Avoid using generic data file names that may conflict when moved from one location to another
- Consistency: choose a naming convention and ensure that the rules are followed systematically
- Documentation: Document your system but don't rely on file names as your sole source of documentation

Potential Elements in File Names

- Project or grant name and/or number
- Date of creation: (useful for version control), e.g., YYYYMMDD
- Name of creator/investigator: last name first followed by initials of first name
- Name of research team/department associated with the data
- Description of content/subject descriptor
- Data collection method (instrument, site, etc.)
- Version number

Some Specific Considerations

- Dashes or underscores can be used to differentiate between words
- Avoid special characters and spaces such as: &-amp; * % \$ £] { ! @ /
- If numbering files for a specific order, use leading zeros : e.g., 001, 002, 003, etc. will order files up to 999
- Consider how scalable your data file naming policy needs to be: e.g. , don't limit your project number to two digits, or you can only have ninety nine projects
- Capitals in file names affect ordering – be consistent. Not all systems/software are case-sensitive and recognize capitals; assume that TANGO, Tango and tango are the same
- Version control - which files have been updated by other files, etc

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