

What to keep, where to store and when to shred

A guide to safekeeping and managing paper records

Below is a list of what you need to keep, where we recommend you keep it and when you can discard it. Keeping these records stored safely, where you and others can find them, can save you time and greatly increases the likelihood that they will not get lost.

Tax and investment documents	Store in:	Shred after:	Copies to:
Annuity contracts	Locked filing cabinet	Annuity paid out	
Bank statements & canceled checks	Locked filing cabinet	7 years	
Credit card statements	Locked filing cabinet	7 years	
Form 8606	Locked filing cabinet	7 years after IRA is liquidated	
Home purchase/improvement*	Locked filing cabinet	10 years after home is sold	
Investment account statements	Locked filing cabinet	7 years after investments are sold	
Loan agreements	Locked filing cabinet	10 years after repaid	
Pension plan documents	Locked filing cabinet	Never discard	Financial Advisor
Real estate purchase/improvements	Locked filing cabinet	10 years after sold	
Stock/bond certificates	Fire and burglar resistant safe	N/A — Surrender upon sale	
Tax return/supporting documents	Locked filing cabinet	Never discard	

*Deeds, surveys, title policies, blueprints, loan papers, receipts, etc.

Originals you may need	Store in:	Shred after:	Copies to:
Adoption papers	Bank safety deposit box	Never discard	Executor, Lawyer
Birth certificate	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Never discard	
Cemetery deed	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Never discard	Heir
Citizenship papers	Bank safety deposit box	Never discard	Executor
Death certificates	Locked filing cabinet	Never discard	Executor
Diplomas	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Never discard	
Divorce decree	Bank safety deposit box	Never discard	Lawyer
Guardianship arrangements	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Never discard	Executor, Guardian
Health/immunization records	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Never discard	Doctor
Household inventory with photos	Bank safety deposit box	Never discard	Insurance Agent
Lawsuits	Bank safety deposit box	Never discard	Lawyer
Marriage certificates	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Never discard	Executor
Medical directive	Fire and burglar resistant safe	New one signed	Doctor, Heir
Military discharge	Bank safety deposit box	Never discard	
Naturalization certification	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Never discard	
Passports	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Shred after replaced	
Powers of attorney	Fire and burglar resistant safe	New one signed	Attorney-In-Fact
Real estate deeds	Fire and burglar resistant safe	10 years after sold	
Retirement plan benefits	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Never discard	Financial Advisor
Social Security card	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Never discard	
Trusts	Fire and burglar resistant safe	New one signed	Executor, Heir
Vehicle titles/warranties	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Vehicle is sold	
Veteran's papers	Bank safety deposit box	Never discard	
Wills	Fire and burglar resistant safe	New one signed	Executor, Heir

Other documents	Store in:	Shred after:	Copies to:
College financial aid	Locked filing cabinet	10 years after repaid	
Employment contract	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Change jobs	
Insurance policies/invoices	Locked filing cabinet	1 year after termination	Agent
Letter of last instructions	Fire and burglar resistant safe	After writing a new one	Executor
Loan statements	Locked filing cabinet	10 years after repaid	
Passwords	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Change password	
Personal property tax receipts	Locked filing cabinet	2 years	
Property tax assessment	Locked filing cabinet	New one arrives	
Receipts (items under warranty)	Locked filing cabinet	Warranty expires	
Receipts (expensive items)	Fire and burglar resistant safe	Item sold or donated	
Social Security statement	Locked filing cabinet	New one arrives	Financial Advisor
Vehicle registration	Locked filing cabinet	New one arrives	
Warranties (with stapled receipts)	Locked filing cabinet	Dispose of item	