

## FILE NAMING STANDARDS

April 13, 2018

### Dates:

**Use the date format YYYY-MM-DD as the beginning of file names.**

- This will allow files to sort by year, month, and day in folders.

### Length:

**Limit file and folder names to no more than 30 characters.**

- The acceptable length of file names may be different among operating systems and software. Some systems allow up to 256 characters, while others allow far fewer.

### Meaningful Names:

**Make the file names have some semblance of meaning without the folder structures.**

- Imagine that someday these files will be moved to another folder or emailed to someone for viewing. As an example, naming photos *parrish-2018-03-18-001.jpg* and *parrish-2018-03-18-002.jpg* is better than having a bunch of photos named 001.jpg, 002.jpg, etc. in a folder called 'parrish'. It is not necessary to try to stuff all the relevant information into the filename, but one should be able to answer, in a very general way, 'What is in this file?' without opening it. With *parrish-2018-03-18-001.jpg*, we know it's a picture of Parrish. With 001.jpg, we have no idea what is in the file.

### Numbers:

**For sequential numbering, use leading zeros to ensure files sort properly.**

- For example, use "0001, 0002 ... 1001, etc." instead of "1, 2 ... 1001, etc."

### Spaces:

**Do not use spaces in file and folder names.**

- Spaces are not recognized by some software.
- Instead use underscores (file\_name), dashes (file-name), no separation (filename), or camel case (FileName).

### Special Characters:

**Avoid the following special characters in file and folder names:**

. , ~ ! @ # \$ % ^ & \* ( ) ` ; < > ? [ ] { } ' " " "

- These characters used in a file name could result in lost files or errors. Some of these characters are used for specific tasks in an electronic environment.

### Versions:

**Be consistent with file versions.**

- If you need to distinguish versions beyond the date, use the common naming convention of adding 'v[number]' at the end of a filename: *parrish-proposal-v1.pdf*, *parrish-proposal-v2.pdf*. The date in the file name may be sufficient to distinguish the files. You may want to start adding the version number at the second version as often on the first version you don't know whether there will be a second version or not.

*Rename: Programs exist to rename files in bulk in Windows, Mac, or Linux.*

Sources:

*“Best Practices for File Naming,” Stanford University, 2015, <http://library.stanford.edu/research/data-management-services/data-best-practices/best-practices-file-naming>*

*“Electronic File Organization Tips,” NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) Weights and Measures, March 2016, <https://www.nist.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pml/wmd/labmetrology/ElectronicFileOrganizationTips-2016-03.pdf>*