

Home Office Guidelines

If you use a room in your home exclusively for a place to conduct business, you may be able to deduct that portion of your home as a home office expense on your income tax return. Save utility bills, receipts for mortgage payments, mortgage interest, real estate tax, office equipment, and vehicle records if the vehicle is used for business.

Safe Deposit Box Guidelines

Every household should invest in a safe deposit box to store important documents. Among the most common ways people lose important documents are fire, burglary and natural disasters as well as simply not organizing and keeping papers together in one place. Storing items in a dresser drawer, a closet, or worse yet, not in any particular place, is inviting trouble. Your immediate family should know where your papers are located in the unfortunate circumstance that something would happen to you. Your family should know the name of your attorney and accountant. Write down that information as well as at what banks you have accounts, account numbers, prepaid funeral arrangements, etc., and place it into a sealed envelope inside your safe deposit box. Be sure to let a trusted family member or friend know that you do have a safe deposit box, and where you keep the keys. They will not be able to access your safe deposit box without your permission or without a power of attorney document that you have prepared in advance giving them permission to do so.

Mortgage papers, deeds, wills, trusts, birth, marriage, and death certificates, advanced directives for medical care, stock certificates, cancelled checks for major purchases, vehicle purchase receipts, passport, copies of investment account statements, court decrees, etc., are examples of documents to include in a safe deposit box.



Record Retention Guidelines – Individuals

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| Accident reports and claims (settled cases) | 7 years |
| Audit reports of accountants | Permanently |
| Bank statements | 7 years |
| Bank deposit slips | 1 year |
| Bank reconciliations | 1 year |
| Checks (cancelled, but see exception below) | 7 years |
| Checks (cancelled, for important payments, i.e., taxes, purchases of property, special contracts, etc. (checks should be filed with the papers pertaining to the underlying transaction)) | Permanently |
| Contracts and leases (expired) | 7 years |
| Correspondence (legal and important matters only) | Permanently |
| Deeds, mortgages, and bills of sale | Permanently |
| Insurance policies (expired) | 10 year |
| Insurance records, current accident reports, claims, policies, etc. | Permanently |
| Investment account statements | Permanently |
| Property appraisals by outside appraisers | Permanently |
| Property records, blueprints and plans, deeds, mortgages, remodeling/renovation records. | Permanently |
| Safety deposit box record storage, include documents such as birth, marriage and death certificates, wills, stock certificates, advanced medical directives, deeds, passport, (check with your accountant and attorney if you have questions) | Permanently |
| Sales receipts for major purchases (car, appliances, furniture, etc.) after disposition of the asset | 7 years |
| Savings bond registration records | 3 year |
| Stock and bond certificates (cancelled) | Permanently |
| Stock and bond certificates (current) | Permanently |
| Tax returns and worksheets, revenue agents' reports and other documents relating to determination of income tax liability, including W-2s, 1099s, estimated payment vouchers, K-1s, charitable giving receipts. | Permanently |
| Utility bill receipts (save permanently with tax returns if you take a deduction for home office) | 1 year |

Record Retention Guidelines – Business

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| Accident reports and claims (settled cases) | 7 years | Inventories of products, materials, and supplies | 7 years |
| Accounts payable ledgers and schedules | 7 years | Invoices to customers | 7 years |
| Accounts receivable ledgers and schedules, deposit books and slips, credit files, authorization, collection file | 7 years | Invoices from vendors | 7 years |
| Acquisition documents (after disposition) | 7 years | Journals | Permanently |
| Audit reports of accountants | Permanently | Minute books for directors and stockholders, including by-laws and charters | Permanently |
| Bank statements | 7 years | Notes receivable ledgers and schedules | 7 years |
| Bank reconciliations | 1 year | Option records (expired) | 7 years |
| Capital stock and bond records, ledgers, transfer registers, stubs showing issues, record of interest coupons, options, etc. | 7 years | Personnel records: payroll, time reports, benefits, withholding tax records, contracts, insurance, disability and sick benefits, payments to pensioners, etc. (after termination) | 7 years |
| Cash books | Permanently | Petty cash vouchers | 3 years |
| Charts of accounts | Permanently | Physical inventory tags | 3 years |
| Checks (cancelled, but see exception below) | 7 years | Property appraisals by outside appraisers | Permanently |
| Checks (cancelled, for important payments, i.e., taxes, purchases of property, special contracts, etc. (checks should be filed with the papers pertaining to the underlying transaction)) | Permanently | Property records—including costs, depreciation reserves, end-of-year trial balances, depreciation schedules, blueprints and plans | Permanently |
| Contracts and leases (after expiration) | 7 years | Purchase orders & purchase requisitions, quotations, acknowledgements (except purchasing department copy) | 3 years |
| Corporate charter, by-laws, minute books | Permanently | Purchase orders (purchasing department copy) | 7 years |
| Correspondence (general) | 3 year | Receiving sheets | 3 years |
| Correspondence (legal and important matters only) | Permanently | Requisitions | 3 years |
| Deeds, mortgages, and bills of sale | Permanently | Sales records and reports, customer correspondence, customer orders | 7 years |
| Depreciation schedules | Permanently | Savings bond registration records of employees | 3 years |
| Deposit slips, duplicate deposit slips | 7 years | Scrap and salvage records (inventories, sales, etc.) | 7 years |
| Employment applications (if individual becomes an employee, this becomes a part of employee's permanent record) | 3 year | Shipping reports, bills of lading, receiving reports, inspection reports | 3 years |
| Expense analyses and expense distribution schedules | 7 years | Stenographer's notebooks | 7 years |
| Expense reports | 7 years | Stock and bond certificates (cancelled) | Permanently |
| Financial statements (end-of-year, other months optional) | Permanently | Stockroom withdrawal forms | 1 year |
| General and private ledgers (and end-of-year trial balances) | Permanently | Subsidiary ledgers (including A/P and A/R ledgers) | 7 years |
| Insurance policies (after expiration) | 10 years | Tax returns and worksheets, revenue agents' reports and other documents relating to determination of income tax liability | Permanently |
| Insurance records, current accident reports, fire inspection reports, safety reports, etc. | 7 years | Trade mark registrations and copyrights | Permanently |
| Internal audit reports (in some situations, longer retention periods may be desirable) | 3 years | Voucher register and schedules | 7 years |
| Internal reports (miscellaneous) | 3 years | Vouchers for payments to vendors, employees, etc., (includes allowances and reimbursement of employees, officers, etc. for travel and entertainment expenses) | 7 years |