

Smart File Naming: Keep Your Files From Being “space-y” and more...

Start proper file naming practices today!

Why Should I Care About File Naming?

Best practice file naming conventions help you easily sort and find files in order to delete, edit, or move them, instead of a file-by-file review nightmare. Appropriate file naming will also aid search, increase accessibility and improve user experience.

How Do I Make Smart File Names?

Name files so EVERYONE understands

Your file names should be relevant to its content but also to the final user—your website’s visitor. Create file names that make sense using keywords relevant to the subject of the file.

Not useful:

R12.pdf

Useful:

Adult-Softball-Program-Closes.pdf

Make file names unique

The file name should also be uniquely distinguishable from similar files including other versions of itself.

Not:

WorkshopAgenda.pdf

Instead:

2015-0805-NameOfProjectWorkshopAgenda.pdf

Determine important elements of a file name

File names can be made up of multiple components, each element providing increasingly granular detail. Decide what the most important pieces of information are about any file you create and put them in order of importance, e.g., **Youth-Recreation-Fee-Waiver-FAQ.pdf**

Ensure the file name is brief, concise, contains a keyword and **does not contain spaces**.

So how do I keep my file names from being "space-y" and why does this matter?

File names with spaces, such as this:

SCT-ECR to Heatherstone with Oak Grove.pdf

resolves to this in the URL as "%20" is automatically input in place of spaces by HTML:

SCT-ECR%20to%20Heatherstone%20with%20Oak%20Grove.pdf

This makes an ugly, overly long, and not useful file name.

String the name all together with no special characters or spaces

Long file names can sometimes be cut off depending on what kind of computer operating system or server the file resides on or is accessed by. Work to keep file names brief, but useful.

Examples:

SCTrail-Map-ECRtoHeatherstone.pdf

or:

SCTrail-Map-section.pdf

To 'Dash' Or 'Underscore'

If deciding between the use of dashes and underscoring, use dashes, e.g., **Civic-Center-Work.pdf**.

Why? First, underscores are a bit difficult to see, and second, dashes are better for technical reasons you don't really care about, plus, Google doesn't algorithmically penalize for dashes.

Camel Case

You may also use Camel Case which is the use of upper and lower case, e.g., **CivicCenterWork.pdf**.

Avoid Reserved or Unsafe Characters in File Names

For a variety of reasons (related to Internet protocols and schemes) several characters should not be used in File names or Blog titles. When you name a file, image or create a blog title, ensure the following characters are **not** included:

Reserved characters: \$ & + , / : ; = ? @

Unsafe characters: Includes the blank/empty space and " < > # % { } | \ ^ ~ [] `

To Date or Not to Date?

Don't put dates in file names unless you must keep multiple versions of a file online VISIBLY to site visitors.

If you don't date, you can just upload an updated version of the same-named file without having to change the hyperlink.

If you need to date, a good format for date designations is YYYYMMDD or YYMMDD. This format makes sure all of your files stay in chronological order, e.g. **20150805-NameOfFile.pdf** or even, **2015-0805-NameOfFile.pdf** or **150805-NameOfFile.pdf**.

Don't Forget About File Sizes and Images

File Size: Files should be compressed so they do not exceed 4MB in size which is the upload limit.

Image File Names: The naming practices above apply to image file names as well. Keep image file names as brief as possible, exclude reserved or unsafe characters in the name, and **eliminate spaces**.

Rename and compress your files BEFORE uploading.