# Checklist for a Document Retention Policy

Companion to [WSBA’s Law Firm Guide to Document Retention](https://wsbacms.wsba.org/docs/default-source/resources-services/practice-management-(lomap)/guide-to-best-practices-for-client-file-retention-and-management.pdf?sfvrsn=306a3df1_10)

Records regarding property that you safeguard for the client or a third party must be preserved for 7 years per RPC/LLLT RPC 1.15A.

Trust account records and related documents preserved for 7 years per RPC/LLLT RPC 1.15B.

Each client matter assigned a unique identifier

For example, a new client matter might be assigned “Jones20190102,” where Jones is the client’s last name and “20190102” is the date the client retained you.

Physical file is indexed

For practices that tend to include a lot of physical documents and records, you may want to use an index to keep track of how many notebooks, folders, and accordion files exist. If you practice in a group with others, you may want to devise a system to “check out” parts of the file so you always know where it is.

Physical files are always locked in a secure cabinet at the close of business day

Physical files that are received are scanned and filed within 1 business day

Email correspondence (ingoing and outgoing) is preserved and saved throughout the course of the client matter. Email accounts for departing employees are archived for future reference.

Within 2 days of conclusion of client matter, responsible attorney reviews the contents of the client file and identifies intrinsically-valuable files and original documents

Original documents and files are not retained by the firm and/or are only held for the duration of the client matter and then returned to the client.

Within 7 days of conclusion of client matter, original documents and valuable files are returned/provided to the client along with a summary of the document retention policy

Retention policy includes a file closing checklist