

file easily again in the future:

1. Pick a category that is broad enough to encompass more than just a couple of pieces of paper. It's quicker and easier to search through a few thicker folders whose contents are all related, than a dozen different "onesie and twosie" files which have nothing in common with each other.
2. Think about where you would LOOK for that piece of paper when you need it again. This will help you create a logical file label that makes sense to you both now and down the road.
3. Start your labels with a category that can be applied to a group of folders, and then attach the subcategory (see example below)

Before: Your folders are labeled "electric", "water", "gas", and "phone"

After: You label folders "utilities: electric", "utilities: water", "utilities: gas", "utilities: phone"

If you organize your folders alphabetically, all the utilities are grouped together and therefore easier to find when you need them.

4. Choose one type of filing system and stick with it – it doesn't matter if you file chronologically, alphabetically, or another way – just be consistent and do it the same way, all the time, throughout your entire system.
5. When your files get overstuffed, it's time to divide that category out into a couple of smaller subcategories if your "client file: Marjory Jones" folder is now way too big, you can break it out chronologically ("client file: Marjory Jones 2013", "client file: Marjory Jones 2014")

("client file: Marjory Jones communication", "client file: Marjory Jones contracts", etc.)

This manages to keep documents all together while you have fewer pages per folder.

These are some very simple, yet effective steps for developing a desktop reference filing system that will take most of the work out of filing – and retrieving – your important documents. Many of these techniques you can even take beyond your desktop reference filing system and use with your other files.

by Ramona Creel

