

Top Tab Filing Vs. End Tab Filing: Which is Best for Your Office?



One of the first decisions you must make when designing a filing system is whether it will be a “top tab” system or an “end tab” system. Top tab, or drawer filing is the most familiar. File folders have tabs on the top with file headings that can be read while the folders are in a drawer. End tab, or shelf filing uses folder that have tabs on the side or end of the folder. The tabs are readable when folders are placed on shelving, such as in a central filing area or in overhead bins at a workstation.

Which Style Is Best For Your Office?

The tab style you choose depends on a number of factors within your office. Both top tab and end tab have distinct advantages. Consider these criteria as you plan your filing solution:

- Total number of records you plan to keep in the system
- Amount of available office space you have for a filing system
- Number of personnel who will access the records
- Type of filing equipment you have or plan to buy

Pros and Cons of Top Tab and End Tab Filing Systems

A top tab system is generally best when:

- You have relatively small amounts of records.
- Files are used by only a few personnel
- Records are kept in desk drawers
- Hanging folders are preferred

End tab systems work best when:

- Office space for a filing system is limited
- There are very large numbers of files



- Many people need to access the files at the same time
- Equipment costs need to be kept at a minimum

Either system can be very efficient if a color-coded indexing method is used, and Out Guides are used to track folders that are removed from the system. End tab systems are the most efficient and least costly, but top tab systems are still widely used by most small offices.

