File Naming Convention

Standard Operating Procedure · Whitcombe Ashby Family Law LLP

SOP number	WA-SOP-001 · Version 1.0
Date	11 November 2026
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Applies to	Every document saved to the firm's shared drive or case management system, by anyone, for any matter

1. Why this exists

A file name has to do one job: let a person who has never seen the document know what it is, whose it is, which matter it belongs to and whether it is the current version, without opening it. A name that only makes sense inside its folder fails the moment the file is downloaded, emailed or renamed by someone else.

This SOP sets one format and one set of status labels. It is used the same way, every time, by everyone.

2. The format

THE PATTERN

ClientName_MatterRef_DocumentType_Date_Status.ext Example: **Okafor_WA-2026-0198_FormE_2026-11-10_FILED-STAMPED.pdf**

Part	What it means	The rule	Example
ClientName	Whose file this is	Client's surname only, first letter capital, no spaces. If the firm has two clients with the same surname, add the first initial after a hyphen.	Okafor Adeyemi-F
MatterRef	Which matter it belongs to	The firm's matter number with hyphens, never a slash, because slashes are not allowed in file names. Format WA-YYYY-NNNN.	WA-2026-0198
DocumentType	What kind of document it is	One word in CamelCase, taken from the approved list in Appendix A. If two files would end up with the same name, add a short hyphenated qualifier.	FormE EmailThreadCafcass
Date	The date on the document	Year-month-day. This is the date the document was signed, filed, sent or received, or the date a statement ends. It is never the date it was saved.	2026-11-10

Status	Where this version stands	One label from the list in section 3.	FILED-STAMPED

Part	What it means	The rule	Example
.ext	The file type	.pdf for anything final, sent, signed or filed. Word or Excel only while a document is still a working draft.	.pdf

3. Status labels

Every file carries exactly one status. These are the labels used in class, written with a hyphen so that the underscore stays free to separate the parts of the name.

Status	Use it when	Course label
v1-DRAFT	First working version. Still being written. Never sent outside the firm.	v1_DRAFT
v2-UPDATED	Each later working version: v3-UPDATED, v4-UPDATED and so on. The number always goes up.	v2_Updated
FINAL	Approved by the supervising solicitor, not yet signed or filed.	FINAL
FINAL-SIGNED	Signed by everyone who has to sign it.	FINAL_Signed
FILED-STAMPED	Filed at court, with the court's stamp or receipt on it.	FILED_Stamped
UNFILED	A document the court or the other side has served, or that is ready to file but not yet filed.	UNFILED
SUPERSEDED	Added to the end of the status when a newer version replaces it. The old file is renamed, never deleted.	Not used in class; added by this SOP

4. Four worked examples

Document	File name	Reading it back
A court form Form E, filed	Okafor_WA-2026-0198_FormE_2026-1110_FILED-STAMPED.pdf	Mr Okafor's financial statement for matter 0198, filed on 10 November 2026 and stamped by the court.
A firm letter Engagement letter, signed	Adeyemi_WA-2026-0211_EngagementLetter_2026-10-19_FINALSIGNED.pdf	The letter dated 19 October 2026 confirming the firm's instructions on matter 0211, signed by both sides.
An email thread Saved as a PDF	Adeyemi_WA-2026-0211_EmailThreadCafcass_2026-11-03_FINAL.pdf	The whole email exchange with Cafcass on 3 November 2026. The thread is saved to the matter, not left in an inbox.

A client document Bank statement received	Bello_WA-2026-0187_BankStatement_2026-1031_FINAL.pdf	A bank statement for matter 0187 that ends on 31 October 2026, received from the client and saved as received.

One document, three versions. This is what version control looks like on a single document:

- Rahman_WA-2026-0174_ConsentOrder_2026-11-05_v1-DRAFT.docx
- Rahman_WA-2026-0174_ConsentOrder_2026-11-09_v2-UPDATED.docx
- Rahman_WA-2026-0174_ConsentOrder_2026-11-12_FINAL-SIGNED.pdf

When the signed version is saved, the two drafts are renamed to end in SUPERSEDED and moved to folder 99. They are not deleted, because they are the audit trail.

5. Rules that apply every time

1. **Separators.** Use an underscore between parts and a hyphen inside a part. No spaces and no other symbols.
2. **Never save a file under a name like “final”, “copy”, “new”, “(2)” or “scan0043”.** A name that describes nothing is treated as an error and renamed.
3. **The matter reference is not optional.** A perfectly named file in the wrong matter is the one nobody notices. The matter reference is what catches it.
4. **Dates are year-month-day.** Sorted alphabetically, the files are then also in date order.

Code	Document	Code	Document
IntakeForm	New client enquiry form	**ConflictCheck**	Dated conflict check record
EngagementLetter	Letter confirming instructions	**FeeAgreement**	Fee and retainer agreement
ClientID	Identity and address check	**MIAMCertificate**	Mediation information meeting form
FormA	Application for a financial remedy	**FormC100**	Application for a child arrangements order

FormE	Financial statement	**FormD81**	Statement of information for a consent order

5. **Drafts and finals live apart.** Working drafts go in folder 99 Internal & Working Drafts. Only FINAL, FINAL-SIGNED, FILED-STAMPED and UNFILED files go in the numbered case folders.
6. **Never rename a file after it has been sent or filed.** If something changes, save a new version with a new date and mark the old one SUPERSEDED.
7. **One matter, one folder.** Never save documents from two matters in the same place, even for the same client.
8. **Save to the shared drive, never the desktop.** If a laptop fails, the matter should not go with it.
9. **Link it.** Every file saved to the drive is also linked to its matter in the case management system.

6. Check before you save

1	Could a stranger find this document in under thirty seconds?
2	Does the name contain all five parts, in the right order?
3	Is it a final version in a final folder, or a draft in folder 99?
4	Download it to a desktop. Can you still tell what it is and which matter it belongs to?

Appendix A. Approved document types

Code	Document	Code	Document
ConsentOrder	Draft or sealed consent order	**CourtOrder**	Order made by the court
NoticeOfHearing	Court notice of a hearing	**PositionStatement**	Statement of the client's position
WitnessStatement	Client or witness statement	**Bundle**	Hearing bundle
CafcassLetter	Cafcass safeguarding letter	**LetterOut**	Letter sent by the firm
LetterIn	Letter received	**EmailThread**	Email thread saved as PDF
AttendanceNote	Note of a call or meeting	**BankStatement**	Bank or card statement
PensionCETV	Pension valuation	**Invoice**	Bill sent to the client

Appendix B. Where the file goes

Every file sits in this path. The folder shows where you are. The file name shows what you are holding.

FOLDER PATH

Clients › Family Law › Adeyemi, Funmi › 2026 Child Arrangements - WA-2026-0211 › 01 Intake & Engagement › file

Folder	What goes in it
01 Intake & Engagement	Intake form, engagement letter, fee agreement, conflict check, client ID
02 Court Applications & Orders	Applications, forms, court orders, filing receipts
03 Financial Disclosure	Form E, bank and credit card statements, pensions, debts
04 Questionnaires & Disclosure	Questionnaires, replies, requests for documents
05 Children	Cafcass letters, parenting plan, school and medical records
06 Property & Debt	Property documents, valuations, mortgage and loan papers
07 Mediation & Settlement	MIAM papers, offers, FDR papers, draft and agreed consent orders
08 Court Dates & Notices	Notices of hearing, directions, case timetable
09 Correspondence	Every letter and email thread, saved as a PDF
10 Orders & After the Order	Final order, pension sharing papers, compliance
11 Billing	Invoices, payments on account, cost records
99 Internal & Working Drafts	Drafts, attendance notes, superseded versions. Restricted access