

# Records Management Terms for FOIA Teams

## Record

Federal records, as they are defined in agency records management programs, are officially defined in 44 U.S.C. 3301. Most agency records management programs focus on recorded information in all formats. Federal records are created and received by the agency under federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business. They are preserved because they document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the U.S. Government or because of the informational value of the data in them.

Learn more in our free online lessons about [Temporary Records](#), [Permanent Records](#), and the [Records Lifecycle](#).

## Non-record Materials

44 U.S. Code 3301 excludes a few categories of documentary materials from record status. Those are: a) library and museum material acquired and preserved solely for reference or exhibition purposes, such as physical exhibits, artifacts, and reference books; b) extra copies of documents kept only for convenience of reference; and c) stocks of publications such as catalogs, trade journals, and publications received from other agencies and institutions.

Learn to recognize records and non-records in our free online lesson, [Recognizing Records, Non-records, and Personal Files](#).

## Records Schedule

Records schedules are formally-submitted plans which are reviewed and approved by the National Archives and Records Administration. Records schedules list and describe the categories of recorded information created and received by the agency. The schedule specifies how long each type of record is to be retained, and whether each type is ultimately to be deleted/destroyed or transferred to the National Archives for permanent retention.

Learn more in our free online lesson, [What is a Records Schedule?](#)

## Temporary Record

A temporary record is a type of federal record that has been approved by the National Archives for deletion or destruction after a specified retention period that meets operational, legal, or fiscal needs. For example, an agency might have contract files which must be closed at the end of the contract, retained for six years, and then deleted at the end of that retention period.

Learn more in our free online lesson, [What are Temporary Records?](#)

## Permanent Record

A permanent record is a type of federal record that has been approved by the National Archives for preservation in the Archives because of its historical or other informational value. Approximately 3% - 5% of records in the federal government are categorized as permanent. For example, high-level agency policies, information about agency decisions, operations, and actions, and information documenting key events and interactions are often identified as candidates for permanent retention. Permanent records are ultimately transferred into the custody of the National Archives, which then becomes responsible for providing access.

Learn more in our free online lesson, [What are Permanent Records?](#)

## File Plan

A file plan is a plan which identifies the types of records and information held by a specific program or office. The file plan typically describes each type and lists its approved retention time and instructions, along with information about the locations which hold the records.

[Learn more about file plans](#) and [learn to build your own file plan](#) in our free online lessons.

## Learn More

You'll find more [records management terminology](#) and [free, self-paced online records management training](#) on [archives.gov](#).