



PAPER RETENTION GUIDELINES

KEEP

- Consult your “Record Retention Guidelines” handout, accountant, lawyer, or office manager for guidance.
- Place papers you are keeping for legal reasons in safe storage.
- Keep the source, toss the paper. Maintain a list of sources in your Rolodex or contact manager.
- Keep “core information” (the materials you actually use).
- Ask yourself these questions to decide what to keep for your business paperwork:
 - ✓ Does this paper tie in with the core activities of my business?
 - ✓ Will this help me complete a project I am working on right now?
 - ✓ Does this paper represent a viable business opportunity?
 - ✓ Do I refer to this paper on a regular basis?
 - ✓ Will this paper help me make money?
 - ✓ Can I get this information easily and/or in a different form?
 - ✓ Do I have time to do anything with this paper?
 - ✓ Are there tax or legal reasons to save this?
 - ✓ Would my life/work change if I didn't have this piece of paper?





PURGE

- Product solicitations for things you aren't ready to buy
- Old magazines, books, and articles you haven't referred to in the last twelve months
- Old research materials and literature
- Duplicates of documents
- Previous drafts of letters and proposals
- Information you already know
- Business stationery you no longer use (Keep one or two sheets in a history file and toss the rest.)
- Old receipts, bank statements, auto records (unless needed for tax purposes, or less than seven years old)
- Early drafts of creative writing (unless you really do refer back to them)
- Newspapers (If they are more than a week old, they are ancient history.)
- Junk mail
- Expired coupons
- Outdated schedules
- Old greeting cards (unless they are precious to you or contain a special message)
- Old grocery receipts
- Invitations to past events
- Expired warranties and service contracts
- Instructions for items you no longer own
- Expired insurance policies
- Investment and banking brochures you've never read
- Business cards from people whose names you don't recognize
- Old tourist brochures from past vacations
- Road maps you haven't referred to in ten years
- Solicitations from charities you don't intend to give to
- Recipes you haven't tried in three years
- College notebooks and textbooks (If you can't part with them all, keep a box of your best papers and reports and let the rest go.)

