Transitory Information Quick Tips

Not all government information needs to be retained. These quick tips will help you identify information that is transitory and understand your responsibilities as an employee. For in-depth guidance, see the [Transitory Information RM Guide](#) or contact your [Records Officer](#).

What Is Transitory Information?

Information is transitory if it is not required to support or document a government body's actions and decision-making. Transitory information is information of temporary usefulness that is only needed to complete a routine action or prepare a subsequent record (e.g. a new version). Transitory information requirements are established in the [Transitory Information Schedule](#).

Content and context determine whether recorded information is transitory, not its format or medium. Just like other records, transitory information can exist in any format (paper or digital) and can be created and shared over a variety of media (e.g. email, social media, handwritten notes, voice mail, MS Teams, SharePoint, wikis, digital systems).

See next page for common categories of transitory information.

What Is Not Transitory Information?

It is important to understand which records are not transitory. Critical information, such as documentation of decisions, needs to be filed in an [appropriate recordkeeping system](#) organized according to the relevant [information schedule](#).
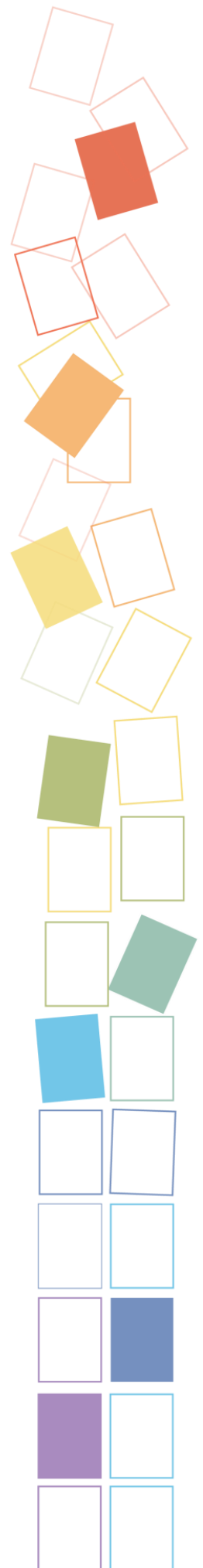
Consider: is the record

- ☐ required to [document a decision](#)?
- ☐ required to meet legal or financial obligations?
- ☐ needed to sustain government operations, programs, or administration?
- ☐ integral to a case (i.e. needed as context for related records in a case file)?
- ☐ needed for accountability purposes?
- ☐ covered by an information schedule (i.e. *ARCS*, *ORCS*, or a special schedule)?

If you answer "YES" to any of these questions, the information is NOT transitory.

DO NOT destroy any transitory information that:
- may be relevant to a *FOIPPA* request or legal discovery, or
- is stored in backup systems, which are an essential part of protecting government's information assets (i.e. "triple deleting" is not allowed).

Common Categories of Transitory Information

What	Features	Examples
1. **Transitory Messages** e.g. emails, MS Team chats, voice mail	Messages and attachments that do not document a business activity or decision (i.e. content lacks substance)	° Correspondence about meetings ° Announcement of a social event ° "cc" and "FYI" messages ° Message about drafts & revisions
2. **Transitory Drafts**	Drafts with no significant annotations, comments, approvals, or substantial changes	° Draft with minor edits & formatting updates but no changed content ° Incomplete draft that has been superseded by later versions
3. **Transitory Rough Notes and Working Materials**	Information used to support projects and develop official records	° Summary (précis) of an official record ° List of ideas or suggestions ° Flipchart (& other brainstorming records)
4. **Transitory Copies**	Copies not needed as evidence of decisions, actions, or consultation	° Convenience copy for a meeting ° Partial copy/extract ° Supplies of reports, flyers, or forms
5. **Transitory Systems Information**	Information that is no longer needed after it is entered into systems or generated as output Unneeded systems & internet usage documentation	° Cookies ° Data input forms ° Internet browsing history ° System output created for reference or for provision to clients
6. **Transitory Information from External Sources**	Published, solicited, & unsolicited items that have been ° only used for reference, ° referred to another office, or ° returned to sender.	° Advertising in various formats - pamphlets, catalogues, DVDs ° Newspapers & magazines ° Spam or junk mail ° Unsolicited correspondence not used for any actions or decisions ° Information redirected to the appropriate office ° Confidential information returned to sender

Dispose of transitory information as soon as you are finished with it!