

# MANAGING GOVERNMENT RECORDS - MODULE 3

## LIFE CYCLES OF RECORDS

This module helps you:

- Understand the life cycle of records and files - how long they are kept open and active, what is their semi-active retention period, and what happens to them after that.
- Understand where to locate files when they are closed.

### Introduction

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You know that the process of opening files includes identifying primary and secondary numbers, as well as a possible file code. Sometimes a file code is referred to as a tertiary code. Selecting the numbers determines how long the record will be kept. In this module you will learn how the retention schedule works. This will help you make the right selection when you are coding. We will begin with the life cycle of a record and follow-up with the retention schedules.



### Life Cycle of a Record

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Once you create a file for your records it will go through several stages.



Understanding these stages helps you to classify documents and access files later. Each stage of the life cycle is determined by the retention and disposition schedules.

We will start with the "Active" phase.

### Active Stage

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"Active" means the length of time the record will be kept in the office for immediate access. The active period is when the records are being used on a regular basis.

The active phase can be based on the calendar or fiscal year, or on a consistent event or activity.

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CY = Calendar Year
Records created or received within the calendar year (January 01 to December 31).

FY = Fiscal Year
Records created or received within the fiscal year (April 01 to March 31).

**Note:** Even if records are created or received on the last day of the calendar or fiscal year they still go into the current year. For example

- Document created on December 31, 2004
- Placed in 2004 calendar year file
- 2004 calendar year file closed on January 01, 2005
- 2004 calendar year file now semi-active (unless the active period also includes additional time [ e.g., "+1y"])

SO = Superseded or Obsolete
Superseded/obsolete is most often assigned to case file series (project files). The definition or deciding criteria for SO active periods is spelled out for each classification.
The SO designation can provide flexibility in deciding how long to keep files open. In the case of project files, the SO designation allows you to decide when the file is superseded or obsolete. Similarly, the SO active period for contract files permits the contract administrator to decide when the contract is concluded.
On the other hand, the specified active phase of SO for policy and procedures files means that they're retained until they are superseded by another policy and procedure or it becomes obsolete.
Calculating the SO retention: e.g.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Active retention SO+1y</li><li>• File closed June 24, 2004</li><li>• File is closed but remains active until June 24, 2005</li><li>• File becomes semi-active June 25, 2005</li></ul>

We can start a classification example beginning with:

<b>Building our Example:</b>	CY+4y...
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## Semi-Active Stage

The semi-active stage means that the files remain accessible, but they will have to be retrieved from offsite storage.

Semi-active records are held in secure offsite records storage centres where the records can be accessed usually within 24 hours. The semi-active phase is expressed in a period of years. For example, 3y means the records will be retained and available for access for an additional three years.

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Semi-active digital records may be stored on an alternate server ("archived"), managed in TRIM, or temporarily held on the LAN.

So, adding this to our sample file retention code:

<b>Building our Example:</b>	CY+4Y 3Y
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## Final Disposition Stage

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When the semi-active retention period expires, the records move to their final disposition. There are four possible final disposition actions:

- Full transfer to the government archives.
- Selective transfer to the government archives.
- Destruction.
- Other disposition (e.g., alienation and transfer to another jurisdiction).

Let us look at the designations so you will understand what they mean if you are choosing a file number or if you are looking for the status of a file.

<b>FR = Full Retention</b>
Files that are fully retained are kept in their entirety by the government archives. You can no longer retrieve or reactivate the records once they are in archival custody. You can, however, visit the archives reference room to view them and take copies if necessary.

<b>SR = Selective Retention</b>
Files to be selectively retained by the government archives may be retained or destroyed, in full or in part, depending on the archival value of the records. Archival value is determined by government archivists. Once the selection is made the rest of the contents will be destroyed.

<b>DE = Destruction</b>
Files slated for destruction will be destroyed in their entirety. TIP: An archivist does not go through the box to "second guess" whether destruction is appropriate - that should have been considered at the time the document was classified and put into that file.

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**Note:** Before any records are transferred to the government archives or destroyed a 60-Day Notice of Final Disposition Action (ARS 196 form) will be issued. This is notice of an upcoming disposal action of all or part of an accession in offsite storage. If you need these records for any reason (e.g., litigation/FOI) you must notify your Ministry Records Management team before the 60 days is up. It is possible to put a hold on the final disposition action.

Continuing with our example, here is the full designation that now includes all three stages: active, semi-active, and final disposition (destruction).

<p><b>Building our Example:</b></p>	<p>OPR = CY+4Y 3Y DE <u>non-OPR = SO nil DE</u></p>	<p>As we learned in "Classifying Records", there are two retentions for every classification.</p> <p>The OPR office is the office that would have the most complete file and retains the file for a longer period of time than all other ministry offices (<u>non-OPR</u>).</p> <p>The OPR file is retained for long-term legal and historic value. The <u>non-OPR</u> office has the shorter retention period.</p>
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## Summary

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When you classify a record, you establish its the active, semi-active, and the final disposition.

## Congratulations!

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You've completed Module 3 and the core part of this training. You can wave good-bye to that record you started out trying to file! You're well on your way to effectively managing government records.

The next Module explains how files should be maintained: [Module 4 File Maintenance](#).