Find Things Faster with File Guides

Everyone can use a little guidance once in a while to save them time when looking for something. A fishing guide takes you directly to the “hot spot” where the fish are waiting. A travel guide points out the places you don’t want to miss on an upcoming trip. So why not make use of file guides when you want something quickly from your filing system?

Guides Are The Signposts Of Your Filing System

File guides are used to break large numbers of records into smaller groups so you can find them faster. Like signposts on a highway, guides stand out from the folders to signal major divisions in the filing system. A glance at the guides helps quickly identify the section where a particular folder is located.

Guiding Principles

In a numeric filing system, place a guide at every interval of 100 folders. With alphabetic systems, use a guide where each new letter of the alphabet occurs. In large alphabetic systems, a guide should be used at the beginning of significant intervals, usually about 100 folders each. Even if you use color-coded labeling to break your system into smaller groups of folders, use a file guide at major divisions to indicate significant changes in numbers or letters.

Be sure to look for these features when choosing file guides for your system:

Tab Size

Make sure there is room to easily see the headings of the guides. Most top-tab guides are “guide-height” (½ inch higher than standard folders) so they stick up above the folder tabs in the drawer. Some folders are also guide-height, so be sure to check that the tab position does not interfere with visibility of the guides.

Material

Guides are generally made of more rigid material than file folders. Manila guides work well in most filing systems. Pressboard guides are heavier and will stand up to more abuse over time. Filing systems that get frequent access, or are exposed to extreme conditions should use guides with metal tabs.

Indexing

Guides can be used to signal other types of divisions in a file, such as a new year in accounting records, or different regions in a geographic filing system. 1-31 and Jan-Dec guides are helpful for tracking actions that require follow up at a later date. Use blank guides to create your own subdivisions. Break down your system by criteria that helps you find files faster, such as project type, client or other distinctions.

Put file guides to work in your filing system, and you'll save time for everyone who uses it.