

Record Retention Guide For Individuals

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Good record keeping can cut your taxes and make your financial life easier.

How long to keep records is a combination of judgment and state and federal statutes of limitations. Since federal tax records can generally be audited for up to three years after filing and up to six years if the IRS suspects underreported income, it's wise to keep records at least seven years after a return is filed. Requirements for records kept electronically are the same as for paper records.

Generally, follow these recommended retention periods for various documents:

<i>Record</i>	<i>Retention Period</i>
Tax returns	Permanent
Forms W-2	7 years
Forms 1099	7 years
Cancelled checks supporting tax deductions	7 years
Bank deposit slips	7 years
Bank statements	7 years
Charitable contribution documentation	7 years
Credit card statements	7 years
Receipts, diaries, logs pertaining to tax return	7 years
Investment purchase and sales slips	Ownership period + 7 years
Dividend reinvestment records	Ownership period + 7 years
Year-end brokerage statements	Ownership period + 7 years
Mutual fund annual statements	Ownership period + 7 years
Investment property purchase documents	Ownership period + 7 years
Home purchase documents	Ownership period + 7 years
Home improvement receipts and cancelled checks	Ownership period + 7 years
Home repair receipts and cancelled checks	Warranty period for item
Retirement plan annual reports	Permanent
IRA annual reports	Permanent
IRA nondeductible contributions (Form 8606)	Permanent
Divorce documents	Permanent
Loans	Term of loan + 7 years
Estate planning documents	Permanent