How to Name Your Files.

LAS 6292: Data Collection & Management
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In Your class you will learn:

(1) How to **organize** them   (2) how to **store** them   (3) How to keep them **safe**

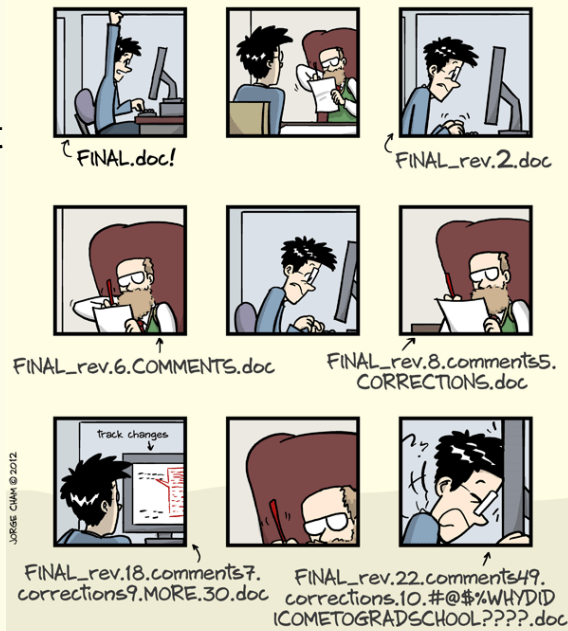**Lesson 1:** File names are really important.

Really important.

Yes...really.

(I'm serious.)

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It's so important that www.phdcomics.com made a cartoon about it

"FINAL".doc

FINAL.doc!

FINAL_rev.2.doc

FINAL_rev.6.COMMENTS.doc

FINAL_rev.8.comments5.
CORRECTIONS.doc

track changes

FINAL_rev.18.comments7.
corrections9.MORE.30.doc

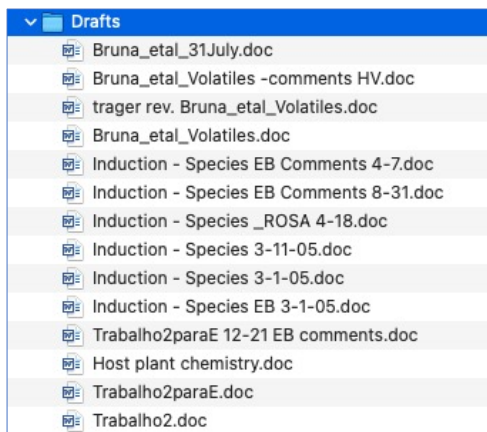FINAL_rev.22.comments49.
corrections.10.#@$%WHYDID
ICOMETOGRADSCHOOL????.doc

It's funny because it's true.

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It's funny because it's true.

These are examples of files found on Emilio's computer:

Drafts
- Bruna_etal_31July.doc
- Bruna_etal_Volatiles -comments HV.doc
- trager rev. Bruna_etal_Volatiles.doc
- Bruna_etal_Volatiles.doc
- Induction - Species EB Comments 4-7.doc
- Induction - Species EB Comments 8-31.doc
- Induction - Species _ROSA 4-18.doc
- Induction - Species 3-11-05.doc
- Induction - Species 3-1-05.doc
- Induction - Species EB 3-1-05.doc
- Trabalho2paraE 12-21 EB comments.doc
- Host plant chemistry.doc
- Trabalho2paraE.doc
- Trabalho2.doc

These are different drafts of the same manuscript.

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Example 2

AF_Biodiversity_-_Biotopica_-Review3_Last_FINAL

Apparently not.

AF_Biodiversity_-_Biotopica_-Review3_Last_FINAL_EBedits

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Example 3.
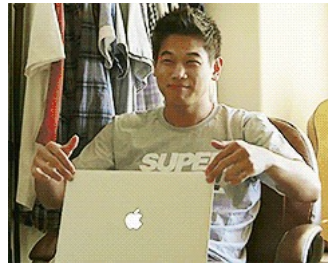
DO NOT USE-Costa et al MS 1 (Ch2)

This sounds...scary.

Example 4

📁 argh

We've all been there.

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The first (and easiest) step to well-managed data:

File and folder names that are **simple, clear,** & **consistent.**

➢ Files will be **easier to find**
No more opening files to see the contents

🔍

➢ Files will be **easier to organize**
Files will sort in chronological order

⇅

➢ Files will be **more secure**
prevent accidental overwriting or deletion

✕

➢ Files will be **easier to share**
Ensures use of the most recent version

↗

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How should you name files?

Here are 6 things to remember.
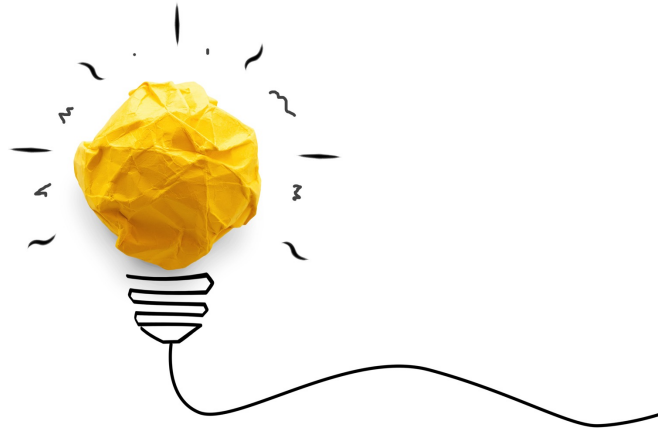
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1. Use a name that describes and uniquely identifies the file contents

Example 1		Example 2
'data'	**No.**	'data'
'survey data'	**Still no.**	'interviews'
'survey data 1998'	**A little better….**	'interviews 1998'
'mammal survey 1998'	**Good.**	'teacher interviews 1998'

You can use descriptors like these in the name:
project acronym, location where data were collected,
researcher name, year or month collected, type of data in file

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2. Keep names as short as possible

< 25 characters

3. Avoid using spaces & special characters*:

$ % ^ & # | : , ;

4. Start with letters, never numbers

1998_data No.

data_1998 Yes!

computer programs interpret these characters as special instructions, spaces, or breakpoints

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5. Include dates in names (but be careful!)

4-3-2021 means different things in different places.

April 3, 2021

March 4, 2021

This can lead to major problems when collaborating internationally or when team members use versions of software from different global regions

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Use file names with dates in standard format (ISO 8601)

YYYYMMDD   or   YYYY–MM–DD

census_data_20210403

Before long your files will look like this.

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BONUS
In addition to avoiding confusion, you can now quickly sort files chronologically

Characters are read and sorted in order, so files with "4 April" in the name will be sorted after those with "5 April", *regardless of the year....*

...but not when you use ISO format, which puts the year *first.*

Name
census_data_5-april-2017.csv
census_data_5-april-2018.csv
census_data_4-april-2017.csv
census_data_4-april-2018.csv
census_data_3-april-2017.csv
census_data_3-april-2018.csv

Name
census_data_20180405.csv
census_data_20180404.csv
census_data_20180403.csv
census_data_20170405.csv
census_data_20170404.csv
census_data_20170403.csv

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And finally…

6. Use a consistent method of dealing with spaces and letter case.

There are two preferred options:

'CAMEL CASE'

OR

'POTHOLE CASE'
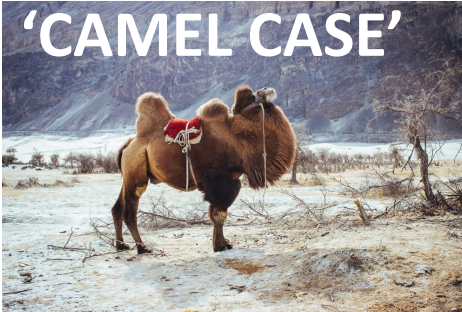
Option 1

'survey responses Florida'
becomes
'SurveyResponsesFlorida'
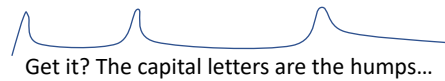
Get it? The capital letters are the humps…

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Option 2

'survey responses Florida'

becomes

'survey_responses_Florida' *or*
'survey_responses_florida' *or*
'survey-responses-florida'

Get it? the spaces are the potholes…

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I recommend Pothole Case *without* caps.

(that way you never have to remember what words are supposed to be capitalized)

Use either hyphens...
`'survey-responses-florida'`

...or underscores
`'survey_responses_florida'`

'POTHOLE CASE'

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Develop your system.

Write it down.

Stick to it.

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Sticking to it can be challenging at first, but it's worth the effort.

It will reduce your stress and allow you to work more efficiently. Trust me.

You can do it!
The Microsoft stock photo images for 'excited' all believe in you.

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PS:

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It's never too late, even if you have lots of files to rename.

There are **tools** to help you do this quickly**.**

See the class notes for a list.

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Fin.

Photos: Unsplash or EM Bruna
Music: www.bensound.com

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