

Exhibit Labeling & Organization Guidelines

ThreadLock.ai | Standardizing Evidence for Judicial Review

Professional Evidence Presentation for Family Court, Divorce, and Custody Proceedings

Judges appreciate organized evidence. Poorly labeled or disorganized exhibits create confusion, waste court time, and risk having your evidence excluded or ignored. These standardized guidelines ensure your documentation is admitted, easy to navigate, and professionally presented in family court proceedings nationwide.

Applicable to: Divorce hearings, child custody disputes, child support modifications, domestic violence restraining orders, paternity actions, and all family law evidentiary submissions in state courts across the United States.

1. Exhibit Naming Conventions: Clear Identification Standards

Always identify yourself in the exhibit label to prevent confusion with opposing party evidence. Courts often receive dozens of exhibits per case. Clear labeling is essential.

Standard Format

[Your Last Name] - Exhibit [Number/Letter] - [Brief Description]

Examples of Proper Exhibit Labeling

- Johnson - Exhibit 1 - Jan 2024 Text Messages.pdf
- Martinez - Exhibit A - Parenting Plan Violation Log.pdf
- Chen - Exhibit 3 - Bank Statements March-June 2024.pdf
- Williams - Exhibit 5 - Child's Report Card.pdf
- Rodriguez - Exhibit 7 - Police Report June 15 2024.pdf

Numbering Systems

- Numbers (1, 2, 3): Most common system. Use sequential numbering for all exhibits in chronological order or order of importance.

- Letters (A, B, C): Alternative system. Some courts prefer letters for exhibits. Check local rules or ask the court clerk.
- Sub-numbering (1A, 1B, 2A): Use when you have multiple related documents. Example: 'Smith - Exhibit 1A - Text Message Thread' and 'Smith - Exhibit 1B - Translation of Messages'

Pro Tip: If you are unsure which system to use, check the court's local rules online or review recent filings in your case type on the public docket. Consistency matters more than the specific system chosen.

2. Organizing Text Messages & Email Communications

Communication records are the most frequently submitted evidence in family court. Proper organization is critical for credibility.

Chronological Order is Essential

- **Always present messages in the order they occurred. Never rearrange messages to fit a narrative. Judges can spot manipulated timelines and will question your credibility.**
- Include date and time stamps on every page. If you use screenshots, ensure the phone's date/time is visible at the top of each image. For email exhibits, include the full email header showing sent date, time, sender, and recipient.
- Use consistent formatting. If you start with screenshots, use screenshots throughout. If you use PDF exports from messaging apps, use that format consistently. Mixed formats suggest selective editing.

Context and Completeness

- **Avoid 'cherry picking' isolated messages. If you present a text thread, include enough of the conversation so the judge can see the full context. Presenting only your favorable messages while hiding problematic exchanges destroys your credibility.**
- Include sender and receiver information clearly. Label each message as 'From: [Name]' and 'To: [Name]' if not obvious from the screenshot. This is especially important for group text threads.

- Note gaps in communication. If you are presenting messages from January, March, and May but skipping February and April, include a brief explanation: 'No communication occurred in February or April 2024.'

Technical Best Practices

- Screenshot quality matters. Use high resolution images. Avoid blurry or pixelated screenshots that make text difficult to read. Take screenshots in good lighting with phone brightness set to maximum.
- Use ThreadLock's export feature. ThreadLock automatically timestamps, organizes, and formats text message exhibits with proper headers and chronological ordering. This eliminates manual screenshot organization.
- Convert everything to PDF format before filing. Screenshots saved as JPG or PNG files should be compiled into a single PDF document with proper page numbering. Use free tools like Adobe Acrobat or online PDF converters.

3. Financial Documents: Disclosures and Redaction Requirements

Financial evidence requires careful attention to privacy rules while maintaining authenticity. Improper redaction can lead to exhibit rejection.

Required Redactions for Privacy Protection

- **Social Security Numbers:** Redact all but the last four digits. Show XXX-XX-1234 format. This applies to tax returns, W-2 forms, paystubs, government correspondence, and credit reports.
- **Bank account numbers:** Show only the last four digits. Example: Account ****6789. This applies to bank statements, canceled checks, deposit slips, and wire transfer records.
- **Credit card numbers:** Display only the last four digits. Format as **** * 5678. Applies to statements, receipts, and payment authorization forms.
- **Minor children's full names:** Some jurisdictions require using only initials (J.S.) or 'Minor Child' in public filings. Check your local court rules. This is especially important in documents that will be filed in the public court record.

Disclaimer: This material is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Laws, rules, and procedures vary by jurisdiction. Consult a qualified attorney for advice about your specific situation.

- Driver's license numbers: Redact all but the last 3-4 digits if the document must include identification verification.

How to Properly Redact Documents

- Use permanent redaction, not highlighting. Never use a highlighter marker to black out sensitive information. It can be read through or removed. Use a thick black permanent marker or digital redaction tools.
- Digital redaction tools: Use Adobe Acrobat Pro's redaction feature (apply redactions permanently), Preview on Mac (use annotation tools), or free online PDF redaction services. After redacting, save the file as a new PDF. Do not simply black out text with the drawing tool, as this can be undone.
- Physical document redaction: If redacting paper documents, use a thick black permanent marker. Make photocopies of the redacted pages to ensure the information cannot be seen through the paper. Then scan to PDF for electronic filing.
- Test your redactions. Before submitting, zoom into the PDF at 200% to confirm that redacted information is completely obscured. Email yourself the redacted PDF and open it on a different device to verify.

Creating Summary Cover Sheets for Lengthy Financial Records

If you are presenting 50+ pages of bank statements, credit card bills, or transaction records, create a one-page Summary Cover Sheet to help the judge quickly locate relevant data.

Summary Sheet Contents

- Document title and date range: 'Summary of Chase Bank Statements, January-June 2024'
- Total amounts: 'Total Monthly Expenses: \$4,200' or 'Total Income Deposits: \$8,500/month'
- Category breakdowns: List major expense or income categories with subtotals (Rent: \$1,500, Childcare: \$800, Groceries: \$600)
- Page references: 'Large cash withdrawal highlighted on page 14' or 'Child support payment shown on page 3'
- Highlight key transactions: Use yellow sticky tabs or digital highlighting on specific pages you want the judge to review first.

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4. Physical vs. Digital Exhibit Standards

Most courts now accept electronic filings, but some still require physical exhibits at hearings. Be prepared for both formats.

Digital Exhibit Requirements

- **PDF is the gold standard.** Always convert exhibits to PDF format before electronic filing. PDF files maintain formatting across all devices, are universally accepted by court electronic filing systems, and cannot be easily edited.
- **File size limits:** Most court portals limit uploads to 10-25 MB per file. If your exhibit exceeds this limit, split it into multiple files (e.g., 'Johnson - Exhibit 1A - Text Messages Jan-Mar.pdf' and 'Johnson - Exhibit 1B - Text Messages Apr-June.pdf').
- **File naming for electronic filing:** Use the same naming convention but ensure no special characters (!@#\$\$%^&*) or spaces are used if filing through an older court portal. Use underscores or hyphens: 'Smith_Exhibit_1_Text_Messages.pdf'
- **Bookmarks for long documents:** If submitting a PDF over 20 pages, add PDF bookmarks to help the judge navigate to specific sections. Most PDF editing software allows you to create bookmarks that link to page numbers.
- **ThreadLock integration:** ThreadLock automatically exports evidence in court-ready PDF format with proper naming conventions, page numbers, and timestamps. You can generate individual exhibit files or comprehensive evidence packages with one click.

Physical Exhibit Standards for In-Person Hearings

- **Use pre-printed exhibit stickers.** Available at office supply stores or online. Standard colors: Blue stickers for Plaintiff/Petitioner exhibits, Yellow stickers for Defendant/Respondent exhibits. Some courts use different color coding, so check local rules.
- **Sticker placement:** Affix the exhibit sticker to the bottom right corner of the first page of each exhibit. Write the exhibit number/letter clearly on the sticker. Use permanent marker, not pencil.
- **Prepare three complete sets:** One set for the judge, one set for opposing counsel or the opposing party, and one set for yourself. Use binder clips or labeled folders to keep each set separate.

- Three-hole punch and binders: For lengthy exhibits (20+ pages), consider placing each set in a three-ring binder with tabs separating each exhibit. This makes courtroom presentation smoother.
- Page numbering: Add page numbers to the bottom center of each page if your exhibit is more than 5 pages. Use format: 'Page 1 of 12' or 'Exhibit 3, Page 1 of 12'.

5. Special Exhibit Types: Photos, Videos, Medical Records, and School Documents

Photographic Evidence

- Include date, time, and location information. Either embed this data digitally using photo metadata or add a caption below each photo: 'Photo taken June 15, 2024 at 3:45 PM, 123 Main Street'.
- Explain what the photo shows. Add a brief description: 'This photo shows damage to the front door lock' or 'This image shows the child's bedroom at respondent's residence'.
- Print in color when relevant. If color is important to understanding the evidence (bruises, stains, property damage), print photos in color. If filing digitally, ensure the PDF preserves color images.

Video or Audio Evidence

- **Check admissibility rules first. Many states have strict rules about recording conversations. Ensure your recording was legally made before attempting to submit it as evidence.**
- Provide transcripts. Courts rarely have time to watch or listen to full recordings. Create a written transcript with timestamps. Format: '[00:02:15] Speaker A: [exact words]'.
- Submit files on USB drive or via court portal. Bring a USB drive with the video/audio file clearly labeled. For electronic filing, check the court's accepted file formats (usually MP4 for video, MP3 or WAV for audio).

Medical Records and Mental Health Documentation

- Obtain certified copies when possible. Contact the medical provider's records department and request certified copies with the provider's stamp or seal. Courts give certified records more weight than standard printouts.
- Redact non-relevant personal health information. If submitting your child's medical records to prove one parent missed appointments, you can redact unrelated diagnoses or treatment details that are not relevant to your motion.
- Include a cover sheet explaining relevance. Judges are not medical professionals. Include a brief summary: 'These records show the child attended 6 therapy sessions from March to June 2024, all scheduled by Petitioner.'

School Records and Report Cards

- Request official records from the school. Contact the school registrar or main office to obtain certified copies. Bring a copy of the court order or custody agreement that grants you access to school records if the other parent has tried to restrict your access.
- Highlight relevant information. If submitting attendance records to show one parent's lack of involvement in school communication, highlight the relevant dates or entries. Add sticky tabs to key pages.
- Include teacher or counselor communications. If school staff sent emails or letters regarding the child's performance or behavior, include these with proper redaction of other students' names.

How ThreadLock Simplifies Exhibit Organization


ThreadLock is designed specifically for family law evidence management. Whether you are working with an attorney or representing yourself, ThreadLock automates the exhibit organization process:

- Auto-formatted exhibits: Upload your evidence once and ThreadLock automatically applies proper naming conventions, timestamps, and PDF formatting.
- Chronological organization: Messages, incidents, and documents are automatically sorted by date and time. No manual reordering required.



- One-click PDF export: Generate court-ready exhibit files with proper page numbers, headers, and exhibit labels in seconds.
- Built-in redaction tools: Easily redact sensitive information while maintaining document authenticity and formatting.
- Evidence tracking: Tag exhibits by category (financial, communication, incidents) and quickly retrieve specific documents when needed.

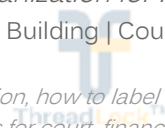
Stop spending hours manually formatting exhibits. ThreadLock handles the technical details so you can focus on presenting your case effectively.



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Professional Evidence Organization for Family Court
Automated Exhibit Preparation | Timeline Building | Court-Ready Documentation

Keywords: exhibit labeling family court, court evidence organization, how to label exhibits, redacting legal documents, PDF court filings, family law exhibit preparation, organizing text messages for court, financial document redaction, digital court exhibits, evidence presentation guidelines, family court documentation standards, pro se exhibit formatting, custody hearing evidence, divorce court exhibit rules





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