Phase 1: Planning & Preparation

1. **Inventory & Analyze Existing Documents:**
    - **Locate:** Identify *all* current storage locations (e.g., network file shares, older SharePoint versions, personal drives (OneDrive), existing Teams sites needing consolidation, potentially even physical documents needing scanning).
    - **Quantify:** Estimate the volume (number of files, total GB/TB) and types of files in each location. Note any very large files or potentially unsupported file types.
    - **Analyze:** Understand the current folder structure (if any), identify key owners/departments for the data, and note any existing metadata or naming conventions (even informal ones). Identify Redundant, Obsolete, and Trivial (ROT) data. Source: SPMT Planning Guide
2. **Define Migration Scope & Strategy:**
    - **What Moves:** Clearly define which documents/folders/locations are in scope for migration.
    - **What Stays/Archives:** Decide what to do with out-of-scope data (e.g., archive to cheaper storage, delete if truly obsolete according to retention policies).
    - **Approach:** Choose between a **Phased Migration** (recommended for larger volumes - migrate department by department, site by site, or based on content type) or a **Big Bang** (migrate everything over a specific cutover period - riskier, usually only for smaller datasets). Source: Migration Planning Principles
3. **Select Migration Tool(s):**
    - **Manual:** Only feasible for *very* small amounts of non-critical data. Loses version history and makes metadata application difficult.
    - **Microsoft SharePoint Migration Tool (SPMT):** Free tool, good for migrating from SharePoint On-Premises and file shares. Preserves basic file metadata (Created/Modified dates/users) and can migrate version history (from SharePoint sources). Limited metadata mapping capabilities. Source: SPMT Overview
    - **Microsoft Migration Manager:** A more orchestrated approach within the M365 Admin center for migrating file shares and other cloud sources. Source: Migration Manager Overview
    - **Third-Party Tools (e.g., ShareGate, AvePoint, Metalogix):** Often provide more advanced features like detailed pre-migration analysis, advanced metadata mapping/transformation, granular content selection, better reporting, preservation of more source details (permissions, workflows - depending on source/target), scheduling, and delta migrations. Often worth the investment for significant migrations.
    - *Base the decision on data volume, source complexity, need to preserve versions/metadata, budget, and technical expertise.*
4. **Allocate Resources & Schedule:**
    - Assign a migration lead and team members (IT, potentially representatives from business departments).

- Develop a realistic timeline including planning, cleanup, pilot testing, execution waves, validation, and user communication. Factor in potential throttling by Microsoft 365 during large uploads. Source: Migration Performance Guide
- Schedule communications to stakeholders and end-users.

Phase 2: Pre-Migration Tasks

1. **Prepare the Target Environment:**
   - Double-check that all target SharePoint sites, Hub associations, libraries, Content Types, metadata columns, and views are created, configured correctly, and tested.
   - Ensure target permissions are set up according to your plan.
2. **Clean Up Source Data:**
   - **Delete ROT:** Remove redundant, obsolete, and trivial files from the source locations. This reduces migration volume and prevents cluttering the new system.
   - **Fix File/Folder Names:** Address issues like excessively long paths/names (SharePoint limit is 400 characters for the full decoded path), and remove any invalid characters (e.g., `~`, `#`, `%`, `&`, `*`, `{`, `}`, `\`, `:`, `<`, `>`, `?`, `/`, `|`, `"`). Source: Invalid Characters, [1] SPMT Pre-reqs
   - **Flatten Deep Folders (Optional but Recommended):** If source structures are excessively nested, consider restructuring/flattening where possible before migration, relying on metadata tagging post-migration.
3. **Metadata Mapping:**
   - Create a clear map showing how information from the source (e.g., folder names, existing properties) will translate into the new SharePoint Content Types and metadata columns. Example: `Source Folder: \\Files\HR\Policies` maps to `Target Site: HR Hub`, `Library: Policies`, `Content Type: Policy Document`, `Metadata Column 'Department': HR`.
   - Prepare any necessary lookup files (e.g., CSVs) if your chosen tool supports bulk metadata tagging during or after migration.
4. **Conduct a Pilot Migration:**
   - Select a small, representative data set (e.g., one project folder, one non-critical sub-department).
   - Perform an end-to-end migration using the chosen tool and process.
   - **Validate:** Check file integrity, metadata accuracy, version history (if applicable), permissions in the target location. Involve key users from the pilot group to test access and usability.
   - **Learn & Refine:** Identify any issues (tool configuration, throttling, errors), adjust the process, update documentation, and refine time estimates based on the pilot results.

Phase 3: Execution (The Migration Waves)

1. **Communicate Kick-off:** Inform relevant users *before* starting each migration wave about the schedule, which data is moving, potential read-only periods on the source, and where to find support.
2. **Set Source to Read-Only (If Possible):** During the active migration of a specific dataset, make the source location read-only to prevent users from making changes that won't be migrated.
3. **Run the Migration Jobs:**
    - Execute the migration using your chosen tool, following the planned waves/phases.
    - Monitor progress closely using the tool's dashboard or logs.
    - Troubleshoot errors as they occur (e.g., skipped files due to locks, throttling, path issues). Document resolutions.
4. **Perform Delta/Incremental Syncs (If Needed):** If the source remained active during migration, run delta syncs after the main pass to catch any files that were added or modified during the process (most third-party tools and Migration Manager support this).

Phase 4: Post-Migration & Validation

1. **Validate Migrated Content:**
    - **Quantitative Checks:** Compare file counts and total data size between source and target for migrated batches (use tool reports or basic checks).
    - **Qualitative Checks:** Spot-check critical files to ensure they open correctly and content is intact. Verify metadata has been applied as expected using SharePoint views. Check version history if it was part of the scope.
    - **Permission Testing:** Have representative users test their access to the migrated content in the new SharePoint locations.
    - **Review Logs:** Check migration logs thoroughly for any final errors or skipped items that require manual intervention.
2. **Communicate Completion & Provide Support:**
    - Inform users when their data migration is complete and the new location is ready.
    - Provide clear instructions and links to access the content in SharePoint.
    - Offer dedicated support channels for migration-related questions or issues. Reinforce training on using the new system (metadata, views, search).
3. **Decommission Source Locations:**
    - **Transition Period:** Keep the source locations accessible (perhaps read-only) for a defined period (e.g., 2-4 weeks) after migration validation for user confidence.
    - **Remove Access:** After the transition period, remove user access permissions from the old locations.
    - **Archive/Delete:** According to company policy and schedule, perform final backups if needed, and then decommission/delete the old storage. Communicate this final step clearly.
4. **Monitor & Optimize:** Continue to monitor the performance and usage of the new SharePoint repository. Gather user feedback and make ongoing improvements to views, metadata definitions, or provide additional training as needed.