



## **FILING IN the LEGAL OFFICE**

The word 'filing' conjures up many feelings for staff working in offices. Some enjoy the chore, believe it or not, and others absolutely dread the laborious task of filing papers in files. Filing is, however, a very important task and it is vital that it is done properly. Filing should be carried out daily and papers put in the right file. This is extremely important as valuable evidence, people's statements, Wills and property deeds are all stored in legal offices. When the documents need to be accessed, the filing clerk or secretary must be able to find and retrieve them quickly.

Letters or documents should have a filing reference which usually relates to the file it are stored on. Once the file is located, then the document is filed in chronological order? The filing reference can be the name of the client and therefore the files are in alphabetical order. If your filing reference is a number, then the numerical system will have been adopted, in which case files are stored numerically. Both classifications have advantages and disadvantages. The alphabetical system is simple and most people can understand it. However, some drawers can become congested with popular letters in the alphabet, eg there are lots of people with surnames beginning with the letter 'D' but far fewer with the letter 'Z'. To alleviate the problem of over-crowded drawers, files have to be moved from drawer to drawer to accommodate the expanding files.

The numerical system has the advantage that the next new file is allocated the next number in the sequence and therefore the new file is placed after the last file in the filing system. The biggest disadvantage of the numerical system is that an alphabetical index is required to cross-reference the name and file number.

Often filing is given to the junior to do as most people find filing tedious'. However, this job should be carried out by someone with knowledge of the filing matter and a good knowledge of the filing system.

Filing systems vary from office to office. Some use a lateral system whereby files hang in a line in a long cabinet. Others use suspended files held in drawers in a filing cabinet. Rotary filing systems have files suspended in a circular cabinet allowing the filing clerk to rotate the files whilst standing still.

Archiving is another important job. This is where files are no longer required. Cases are finished but the papers and files can not be thrown away.: They need to be labelled and stored in a secure area for at least 7 years in case they are needed. This job is often kept until a work experience student is on placement and they help tie up the files label them and take them to a storage area which is sometimes in the basement or even in another building.

Imagine if papers were filed incorrectly and lost! A solicitor may be looking for a specific, important document which is vital to the success of a case. This is the reason why filing should be done by someone who understands filing and the Filing system used. They must have comprehensive training in filing systems to avoid mistakes occurring.

**For examiner's use only**

Spelling	Punctuation	Consistency Grammar Presentation	Total