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Tax returns can generally be audited for up to three years after filing and up to six years if the IRS suspects underreported income. It is wise to keep tax 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 periods for various documents:

Individual Records Retention Period

Tax returns	Permanent
W-2s.....	7 years
1099s.....	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 slip.....	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
Insurance policies.....	Life of policy + 3 years
Divorce documents.....	Permanent
Loans.....	Term of loan + 7 years
Estate planning documents.....	Permanent

BUSINESS

Accounting Records Retention Period

Accounts payable.....	7 years
Accounts receivable.....	7 years
Audit reports.....	Permanent
Chart of accounts.....	Permanent
Depreciation schedules.....	Permanent
Expense records.....	7 years
Financial statements (annual).....	Permanent
Fixed asset purchases.....	Permanent
General ledger.....	Permanent
Inventory records.....	7 years
Loan payment schedules.....	7 years
Purchase orders (1 copy).....	7 years
Sales records.....	7 years
Tax returns.....	Permanent

Bank Records Retention Period

Bank reconciliations.....	2 years
Bank statements.....	7 years
Cancelled checks.....	7 years
Electronic payment records.....	7 years

Corporate Records Retention Period

Board minutes.....	Permanent
Bylaws.....	Permanent
Business licenses.....	Permanent
Contracts—major.....	Permanent
Contracts—minor.....	Life + 4 years
Insurance policies.....	Life + 3 years
Leases/mortgages.....	Permanent
Patents/trademarks.....	Permanent
Shareholder records.....	Permanent
Stock registers.....	Permanent
Stock transactions.....	Permanent

Employee Records Retention Period

Benefit plans.....	Permanent
Employee files (ex-employees).....	7 years
Employment applications.....	3 years
Employment taxes.....	10 years
Payroll records.....	10 years
Pension/profit sharing plans.....	Permanent

Real Property Records Retention Period

Construction records.....	Permanent
Leasehold improvements.....	Permanent
Lease payment records.....	Life + 4 years
Real estate purchases.....	Permanent