

HDI Web File Naming Conventions

Audience

This document is intended for users who will update content on HDI Program Web or SharePoint sites or who will create and save files that will be posted on Web or SharePoint sites.

Background

File names are important because they become part of the URL in Web links.

- Web users often try to guess or remember URLs. A consistent directory structure helps people to navigate intuitively.
- When sites are well organized up front, directory and file names are less likely to change down the road, avoiding broken links and bookmarks.
- Site managers benefit from an organized structure when it comes time to determine ownership of files and clean up directories in order to keep pages current.
- Consistent structure and well-named files help developers when performing maintenance.
- A well-organized site structure can help site managers get more out of their statistics packages by providing more specific reporting on subsections of data.
- File and directory names within SharePoint sites can become awkward when spaces are used.

Acceptable Characters

Acceptable characters for directory and file names:

- a-z
- 0-9
- - (dash/hyphen) use sparingly in place of spaces in complex compound words

Illegal Characters

The following characters should not be used in directory or file names:

- spaces - no Web file name should include a space
- brackets of any kind: ()[]{}<>
- symbols such as # @ % ~ | * &
- quotation marks: " ' `
- forward or backslashes: / or \
- punctuation marks such as commas, question marks or exclamation marks: , ; ? !

Specific Guidelines

- Use lowercase letters for directory names. This will make your pages more portable.
- Use lowercase letters in simple file names. Only use mixed case in complex file names if it enhances readability.
- Eliminate dates unless the file is used for frequent regular communications such as meeting minutes or agendas
- Keep the most recent version of a file name tag-free. Previous versions should be labeled with simple version numbers and an "OLD" tag. For example, the most recent version

would be named “newsupdate.doc” and previous incarnations would be named “newsupdate_old_3.doc.”

- Eliminate spaces
- Use separate subdirectories for major sub-sites or content categories linked from the main site
- Avoid too many subdirectories. Most content categories should be limited to a top level directory and one subdirectory.
- Note that URLs, file names, and file extensions cannot contain spaces or special characters (e.g., & or \$), but may contain letters, numbers, underscores, and dashes
- Make sure that file names clearly denote their content
- Archive superseded, but important, files

Examples

Do not use spaces in directory names; use dashes or underscores instead.

- use: site_index.html
- not: site index.html

Use brief, logical, and meaningful names for your directories.

- use: naming.html
- not: wbp_namingfilesdirlinks.html

General Site/Directory Naming Rules

Use naming rules that are easy to enforce and remember

- short (12 characters or fewer)
- guessable
- easy to spell
- easy to type
- easy to say and pronounce
- memorable
- meaningful to customers
- meaningful to Web site partners
- run together without punctuation, if compound words and you are dealing with two short and easy-to-spell words (e.g., GobiernoUSA.gov)

SharePoint-specific Guidelines

SharePoint file names cannot exceed 128 characters in length. This includes the entire URL which is made up of the library name and file name. When naming document libraries or lists, follow a two-step process:

- When creating new libraries, first use a shorter, URL-friendly name with underscores or run-together words
- Do not use spaces when creating new library names.
- For readability, rename the SharePoint library after initial creation. The URL will remain the same, but the title will change. Spaces are permitted when renaming.
- Compound words that are run together are more readable with mixed case, and SharePoint can handle mixed case.

Example

When you use spaces during the creation of SharePoint libraries or in your file names, you can end up with long URLs such as:

```
https://vaww.portal.vhaco.va.gov/sites/HDI/HIA/Policy%20Documentation/  
Privacy%20and%20Security%20Documents/Privacy%20Act%20and%20HI  
PAA%20Reqs%20Summary.doc
```

Each space in the library names and file name is replaced by the %20 characters. Name your SharePoint libraries and files with potential URLs in mind.

- use: /PolicyDocumentation/PrivacySecurityDocuments/PrivacyAct-HIPAAReqsSummary.doc
- not: /Policy Documentation/Privacy and Security Documents/Privacy Act and HIPAA Reqs Summary.doc