

# How long (and where) to keep financial documents

This chart can help you determine the safest place to keep some of your most important documents. These are guidelines only. If in doubt, consult your legal and tax advisor.

## In a safe deposit box

Type of record	How long to keep
Insurance household inventory (DVDs, photos, receipts for major purchases)	Permanently / until updated
Permanent life insurance policies	Permanently
Term life insurance policies	Until the term expires
Car title	Until you sell the car
Home deed / title	Keep a copy until four years after the house is sold
Passports	Until receipt of renewed passport
Savings bonds	Until maturity
Birth certificates / adoption papers	Permanently
Social Security cards	Permanently
Divorce decrees	Permanently
Military service record	Permanently
Death certificates	Permanently
Wills	Permanently
Health care proxy	Permanently / until updated
Living will	Permanently / until updated
Power of attorney	Permanently / until updated
Guardianship papers	Permanently / until updated

*A word about safe deposit boxes: Always keep a copy at home of everything placed in a safe deposit box. If the boxes owner dies you may need a court order to open a sealed box (particularly in the case of a single signer or lost key. You'll also want to make sure the executor of your estate (or anyone who has power of attorney over your affairs has access to the box.*

# How long (and where) to keep financial documents

## In a fire- and water-resistant container at home

Type of record	How long to keep
Annually renewed insurance policy	Until renewed
Bank statements	One year; seven years if needed to support tax filings
Pay stubs	One year: OK to shred after reconciled with W2 form
Check registers	One year; seven years if needed to support tax filings
Deposit slips	Until you reconcile your statements
Certificates of deposit	Four years after account is closed
IRA / pension documents	Four years after account is closed
Investment statements	Until new one is received; keep annual statements until you sell the investment
Social Security statements	Until new one is received
Receipts	When warranty expires; seven years if needed to support tax filings
Product warranties	Until expired
W2 forms	Permanently as part of your employment records
Federal income tax forms	Seven years
Home appraisal	Until home is sold
Home improvement papers	Until home is sold
Medical bills	Four years for tax purposes
Vehicle maintenance records	Until you sell the car

*A word about keeping documents at home: Water damage is a leading cause of document loss. Be sure to keep documents up off the floor. And when it's time to destroy outdated documents, be sure to shred.*