

Record Retention Guidelines for Individual Taxpayers

Type of Record/Document	How Long to Keep It	Notes/Details
Tax Returns (Form 1040, etc.)	At least 3 years after the date you filed the return (or the due date, if later)	Keep copies for at least 3 years; longer in some cases (see below)
Supporting Documents (W-2, 1099, etc.)	At least 3 years	Includes wage statements, interest/dividend statements, K-1s, etc.
Canceled Checks, Receipts, Sales Slips	At least 3 years	Used to substantiate deductions and credits claimed on your return
Bank Statements	At least 3 years	To support income, deductions, and credits
Proof of Payment (credit card, EFT, etc.)	At least 3 years	Must show amount, payee, and date of transaction
Records for Property (home, stocks, etc.)	Until the period of limitations expires for the year in which you dispose of the property	Needed to determine basis, gain, or loss on sale; may need to keep for much longer than 3 years
Records for Nondeductible IRA Contributions	Permanently, or until all funds are withdrawn from the IRA	Needed to prove basis and avoid double taxation
Records for Worthless Securities/Bad Debts	7 years	Special 7-year period for claims related to worthless securities or bad debt deductions
Records for Unreported Income (if >25% of gross income)	6 years	If you underreport income by more than 25%, keep records for 6 years
Records if No Return Filed or Fraudulent Return	Indefinitely (no limit)	No statute of limitations in these cases

Type of Record/Document	How Long to Keep It	Notes/Details
Healthcare Coverage Records	At least 3 years	To substantiate health insurance coverage and premium tax credit claims
Employment Tax Records (if you have household employees)	At least 4 years after the tax becomes due or is paid, whichever is later	Applies to records for nannies, housekeepers, etc.

-
- **General Rule:** Keep records that support items shown on your tax return until the period of limitations for that return runs out. For most taxpayers, this is 3 years from the date you filed the return or the due date, whichever is later. If you amend a return, keep records for 3 years from the date of that filing.
 - **Property Records:** Keep records relating to property (such as your home, stocks, or other investments) until the period of limitations expires for the year in which you dispose of the property. This is because you may need these records to determine your basis and calculate gain or loss.
 - **Canceled Checks and Proof of Payment:** These should be kept for at least 3 years, as they are often used to substantiate deductions (such as charitable contributions, mortgage interest, or tax payments).
 - **Special Situations:**
 - If you do not file a return or file a fraudulent return, keep records indefinitely.
 - If you claim a loss from worthless securities or a bad debt deduction, keep records for 7 years.
 - If you underreport income by more than 25% of the gross income shown on your return, keep records for 6 years.
 - **Healthcare Records:** Keep documentation of health insurance coverage and any advance premium tax credits for at least 3 years.
 - **Employment Tax Records:** If you have household employees, keep all employment tax records for at least 4 years after the tax becomes due or is paid, whichever is later.

Electronic Records: The IRS allows electronic storage of records, provided the system meets IRS requirements for accuracy, accessibility, and legibility. Electronic records must be kept for the same period as paper records.

When in Doubt: If you are unsure whether to keep a document, it is generally safer to retain it until you are certain it is no longer needed for tax, legal, or insurance purposes.

You can also refer to the following publications for more detail:

- IRS Publication 552, "Recordkeeping for Individuals" [Publication 552 \(Rev. January 2011\)](#)
- IRS Topic No. 305, Recordkeeping [Topic no. 305, Recordkeeping | Internal Revenue Service](#)
- Small Business Records [How long should I keep records? | Internal Revenue Service](#)