

Are Emails Considered Public Records?

Yes. Most email messages you send and receive through your government email account or while doing government work will be Public Records. If it **documents the transaction of government business**, and it's not a duplicate of information someone else is responsible for preserving, it's a Public Record.

How Long Do I Keep Email?

Email is a format in which records can be stored, not a Record Series (a group of records with the same subject matter and retention requirements). Format does not dictate retention, so there is no single answer to how long to retain an email.

However, we *can* tell you the most common categories:

Email That Can Be Deleted Immediately

Personal emails: delete or move personal emails elsewhere as soon as possible.

Non-Record Materials: Any piece of recorded information that is created or received by your office but does NOT document the activities of your office, OR that is a duplicate of information that is a public record (e.g. advertisements, mailing list messages).

Duplicates: Information that reproduces the exact content, in any format, of a record an agency is retaining under an approved retention schedule (e.g. a policy announcement from your agency director that was sent to all staff).

Transitory Information: Records that are required for only a short time AND your office does not need the records to meet legal or fiscal obligations, or to initiate, sustain, evaluate, or provide evidence of decision-making. (Such as: "There are cookies in the break room.")

The Most Common Email Record Series

Email discussing a topic specific to your work may fall under a Record Series on an agency/office retention schedule, or on the *General Retention Schedule* for [State](#) or [County/Local](#) government.

However, *most* email that is a government record tends to fall under one of the following *General Retention Schedule* Record Series:

- [GRADM-3](#) (state) and [GEN 10-03](#) (county/local): Correspondence of Directors, Deputy Directors, and other policy-making positions - Transfer to the Indiana Archives after 3 years.
- [GRADM-4](#) (state) and [GEN 10-04](#): (county/local): General correspondence - Destroy after 3 years.

How Do I Classify My Emails?

For each email message, answer the following two questions:

1. Is it a Public Record?

2. Is it my responsibility?

- If you were the sender: yes.
- If you participated in the conversation: yes.

UNLESS: there is a designated person in the agency responsible for retaining all records on this topic, and the email has been sent to that person.

- If there's a dedicated person and it's *you*: yes.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When can I delete my email?

A: Transitory, non-record and duplicate email may be deleted after it is no longer useful for business purposes.

Email that is a *public record* must not be deleted prior to the end of its record retention period. To calculate the date records are eligible for destruction, start with the date (month and year) of the most recent records in a container or folder, then add the period specified in the retention schedule. The disposition date will be the first day of the following month.

Q: Can email be stored in IARA's Records Center?

A: No. The Records Center only stores physical records.

Q: What happens to my email after it is deleted?

A: Deleted email becomes unavailable to the user after the Deleted Items folder is emptied.

Q: Will my email go to the State Archives after I leave state government?

A: Depending on your role and responsibilities, your email may go to the State Archives after you leave State government, it may be retained in-agency for business use purposes, or a combination thereof. For a list of job codes with mailboxes that may fall under permanent archival retention please refer to [IARA Policy 22-01](#).

Am I Responsible for Keeping this Email?

Maybe! If you're a government employee, start here

and ask yourself some questions:

