

Records Destruction Guidelines

Records that have met the retention requirements described in [General Records Schedule](#) or an office-specific schedule and are destined for destruction may be destroyed without additional approval by your [local records management office](#). However, before you begin destroying records, please be aware of the following:

- Do not destroy any records pertaining to any investigation, legal action or proceeding, litigation, audit, or program review in progress or if you know that one is about to be held.
- Records containing confidential information should be destroyed by shredding or other means of secure disposal.
- Do not destroy records with a retention plan of "transfer to archives" or "contact archives." Please contact your local records management office for information about transferring records to the archives.
- Do not destroy any records that date from 1970 or before, as they may be appropriate for the archives. Please contact your local records management office for assistance with the records.

In-office Records Destruction

Please document your records destruction using the [in-office records destruction form](#). You can use this form to keep track of what records you destroyed and when.

Harvard's preferred vendor for document shredding services is DataShredder, which operates in accordance with [Harvard Information Security](#). For regular shredding services, DataShredder will pick up materials for disposal from locked bins provided for your convenience as well as other designated sites, and will pick up materials in boxes from within buildings, at curbside or at a loading dock. DataShredder can also accommodate requests for occasion services, such as office clean ups, from University offices who are not regular clients. A certificate of destruction will be provided for all materials destroyed.

Information about DataShredder's relationship with Harvard is available on the [Harvard Strategic Procurement website](#).

Destruction of records at the Records Center

Your local records management office sends out routine notices to offices which have records eligible for destruction that are stored in the Records Center. **Records will not be destroyed without written authorization from your office.** If you have records that are ready for destruction, you will receive an authorization form that lists the eligible boxes. The form must be signed by the department head and returned to our office in order for the destruction to proceed. After the records have been destroyed, you will receive a letter of confirmation.

Legal Exception

The General Records Schedule must **not** be used to destroy any records pertaining to any investigation, legal action or proceeding, litigation, audit, or program review in progress or if you know that one is about to be held. This is so even if the retention period or disposition date specified for the records has already expired. In the event of an investigation, please contact the [Office of the General Counsel](#).