



CONSUMER CREDIT COUNSELING  
SERVICE OF CENTRAL NEW YORK

## **FAMILY BUDGET COUNSELING PROGRAM**

### **Record Keeping: Valuable Papers Checklist**

#### ***What are valuable papers?***

Valuable papers are documents that you may need sometime during your lifetime for various reasons. For example, a birth certificate is used to prove age when obtaining a drivers license.

Valuable papers include documents such as birth, marriage and death certificates, deeds, leases, contacts, wills, insurance policies, military papers and social security records.

#### ***Why worry about valuable papers?***

In cases of fire or theft, it would be difficult to remember or identify exactly what was lost. If you could remember, it would take a long time to replace the lost documents. Valuable time or money would be lost. Therefore, it's much better to protect valuable papers than to replace them.

#### ***A safe place***

Each of us has valuables that should be kept in fireproof, theft-proof storage: either a home safe or a bank safe deposit box. Because many documents are difficult if not impossible to replace and with the increasing number of home burglaries and fires, it is important to store valuables and documents in a safe place.

If you choose to rent a safe deposit box, here are some tips to help you get organized.

- Make an inventory of what is in your box and put the list in a safe place at home. Be sure to keep the inventory current.
- Check your homeowners insurance coverage to find out if it covers the contents of your safe deposit box and if so, to what extent it insures you against loss. In addition check the agreement you have signed with the bank for any limitations on protection.
- Keep family members informed about the location of your safe deposit box, and the number of the box in the event that the box may be sealed upon your death. Instead, your will should be filed at home in a safe, with your attorney, or with the probate court. Birth certificates and burial lot deeds should be kept in a safe place since they will be needed before the funeral.

### **Valuable Papers Checklist**

The checklist that follows will help you to get organized. Begin by dusting off those valuable papers. Mark the items on the checklist that you need to collect and file.

Some papers may need revising. Be sure to keep information current by examining valuable papers for ownership, beneficiaries and revisions. File original documents in a fireproof, theft-proof place and copies of originals in your permanent file.

## Record Keeping

### *Which records should you keep and which ones should you discard?*

Keep all records that might be used for proof of ownership, resale purposes, and income tax or future reference.

### *When should you discard home records?*

After once getting organized, sort through your temporary files and transfer seldom used records to your permanent files annually. Discard records, which you are sure you will never need again.

### *Tax records*

The Internal Revenue Service has three years in which to audit federal income tax returns. However, this limit does not apply in unusual cases where the party filing has:

- Failed to report more than 25% of his or her gross income. In this case the government has six years to collect the tax or start legal proceedings to do so.
- Filed a fraudulent return. In this case there is no time limitation.
- Failed to file a return. In this case there is no limitation.

Any receipt or statement used for income tax purposes should be kept indefinitely. Store them with your income tax records.

### *Tips on what to throw away*

Remember; do not throw away any record that you may need for proof of ownership, future reference, resale value or income tax. Each year you should sort through your temporary files and throw away records you have no further use for. At the same time, store records you want to keep indefinitely in your permanent files.

### *Annually toss:*

- Bank statements and receipt of transactions for closed accounts or which are no longer meaningful.
- Bill receipts that are paid or recorded under the proper category in you account book.
- Sales slips that have been recorded under the proper category in your account book.
- Cancelled checks that are not needed for receipts for proof of purchase or income tax purposes. These might include checks for groceries, clothing or cash.
- Receipts that are recorded in your account book and ones that will not be needed for resale.
- Records of appliances that have been replaced.
- Warranties which have expired.
- Washing and cleaning instructions for fabrics and garments no longer used.

WHAT TO KEEP	WHY	HOW LONG
Account books	Record of income and expenditures for reference, comparison, and management	Permanently.
Adoption papers	For inheritance purposes For social security claims	Permanently.
Bank statement	Proof for income tax Loan records	Permanently.
Birth certificates	To prove age For obtaining jobs For obtaining a drivers license For a marriage license To register to vote To qualify for social security To obtain passports	Permanently.
Burial lot deed	Proof of ownership	Permanently.
Cancelled checks	Income Tax Proof of payments	Permanently: Those used for income tax Or proof payment.
Church records: Baptismal Confirmation	Acceptable evidence of birth date when obtaining a delayed birth certificate	Permanently.
Citizenship	To obtain certain jobs To obtain passports To prove eligibility to vote	Permanently.
Copyrights and Patents	Proof of ownership rights	Discard when no longer Have the credit card.
Credit card information	Reference information in case of loss or theft	Permanently.
Death certificates	To make social security claims (minors) For inheritance purposes For insurance claims	Permanently.

WHAT TO KEEP	WHY	HOW LONG
Deeds/mortgages/ Abstracts	Income Tax purposes Estate tax purposes Improvement records necessary to compute Capital gain. To show sale price of property, legal fees and Expense of sale	Permanently.
Divorce decree	To clear legal requirements For remarriage For inheritance purposes For social security claims For insurance claims	Permanently.
Education and Employment Records	Lists education and job experience Lists qualifications For tenure To show reliability For retirement benefits	Permanently.
Government bonds	Needed for income tax Needed for gift tax	Permanently.
Guarantees and Warranties	Proof of purchase Determines services and parts guaranteed	Discard when item is Disposed of.
Health records	For employment For future diagnosis For changing physicians For reference or immunizations, injuries, Diseases, illnesses	Permanently.
Household inventories	To determine amount of insurance needed For insurance claims To establish value of items For net worth statements	Keep up-to-date as you add or dispose of Household items.
Instruction books	For reference for use and care	Until item is sold or Discarded.

WHAT TO KEEP	WHY	HOW LONG
Insurance policies: Auto/vehicle Personal liability Property Life Health	For reference on coverage For reference on coverage For reference on coverage For reference on coverage For reference on coverage	Keep until sold or policy expires. Keep until policy expires. Keep until policy expires. Keep until policy expires. Keep until policy expires.
Investments (U.S. savings bonds, stocks, Mutual funds)	Proof of ownership needed for Evaluation of estate to determine Maturity date needed for income tax	Permanently.
List of insurance policies	Reference for dms and amounts To coverage	Keep until collected Or policy expires.
Marriage records	Needed to collect certain benefits: Insurance, retirement, social security, Proof of marriage For inheritance purposes To settle estates	Permanently.
Military records	To collect benefits; health, disability, Education	Permanently: Permanent Records may be held at city clerks office.
Receipts and receipted Bills	Proof of payment	For charge accounts keep until new bill comes and Show payment. For installment contracts, keep 5 years after final payment
Sales slips	For income tax For proof of ownership For resale	Keep until merchandise has Performed satisfactorily. Keep If item has a guarantee. Keep if item is tax deductible. If needed for insurance claims.

WHAT TO KEEP	WHY	HOW LONG
Savings	For income tax	Permanently.
Tax returns	Proof of deductions	Permanently.
Vehicle title and bill of Sale	Proof of ownership. Assists in determining money Invested	Discard when you sell Or dispose of vehicle.
Will	To settle estate	Permanently.
Identification Cards* Credit Cards Drivers License Medical information Blood type, doctor Preferred, who to notify In case of emergency, Allergic reactions, diabetic, epileptic, etc. Organization Member-ship.	To charge purchases Shows legal eligibility to drive For emergency treatment	Until replaced Or discontinued. Permanently. Permanently.
Social security card	To collect benefits	Permanently.
Voter registration card	Proof of eligibility to vote	Permanently.

\* Carry identification cards in your billfold

## **File in your billfold**

- Auto insurance card
- Blood type card
- Cards showing if you are diabetic, Epileptic or allergic to certain drugs
- Credit cards
- Drivers license
- Employee ID card
- Health & accident insurance card
- Name of person to notify in case of accident
- Organization membership
- Uniform Donor Card (Eye, bone, kidney, etc)

## **File in your bank safe deposit box or home safe**

- Animal records
- Automobile titles

### Contracts:

- Installment
- Mortgage
- Notes owed
- Security

### Education Records:

- Diplomas
- Transcripts
- Employment records
- Family history
- Household inventories
- Income records

### Insurance Policies:

- Disability
- Health
- Homeowners
- Liability
- Life

### Investments:

- Bonds (Corporate, Savings, Municipal)
- Certificates of deposit
  
- Coins
- Gold/silver
- Jewelry/gems
- Money market funds
- Notes to collect
- Stamps
- Stock certificates
- Valuable collections
- Keys
- Medical and immunization records

### MILITARY RECORDS

- Discharge papers
- Veteran's claim number
- Patents or copyrights

### Personal Records:

- Adoption papers
- Baptismal records
- Birth certificate
- Citizenship papers
- Death certificate
- Divorce papers
- Marriage certificate
- Passports
- Photos-family

### Property Records:

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