

Lateral File Cabinets

1 **A 42" Wide Lateral May Not Fit Through a Standard Doorway**
Standard interior doorways are 36" wide. A 42" lateral file cabinet is wider than most interior doors and must be angled or tilted to pass through during installation. If your office has narrow hallways or interior doorways, measure the passage before ordering a 42" unit — or choose a 36" unit that passes through without issue.

3 **Check the Anti-Tip Interlock Before You Buy**
Not all lateral file cabinets include a functional anti-tip interlock mechanism. Ask specifically whether the product includes this feature. A 4-drawer lateral fully loaded with files can tip forward dangerously if two drawers are opened simultaneously. This is a safety requirement, not a nice-to-have.

5 **Counterweight Files Toward the Back of Drawers to Prevent Tipping**
If your cabinet doesn't have an anti-tip interlock (or as a supplementary safety measure), distribute files with heavier items toward the back of each drawer, not the front. This counterweights the drawer and reduces the tipping risk when drawers are opened. Always keep bottom drawers more heavily loaded than top drawers.

7 **A Key Override Is Important for Shared Filing Systems**
For cabinets in shared environments where multiple staff members need access, use a master-key system where a manager or administrator has a key override for all cabinets. Standard commercial file cabinet locks use a key code system — when ordering multiple cabinets, specify that all be keyed alike for simplified key management.

9 **Laminate Lateral Cabinets Need Corner Protectors During Moving**
Laminate surfaces on lateral file cabinets are vulnerable to corner impact during moves — the exposed edges can chip or crack if the cabinet is bumped hard. If you're moving or reorganizing, cover the cabinet corners with cardboard padding or furniture blankets before sliding or tilting the unit. Steel cabinets are far more forgiving of rough handling.

2 **Full-Extension Drawer Slides Are Worth the Premium**
Some lateral file cabinets use standard draw slides that only extend 75% of the drawer length, requiring users to reach into the back of the drawer to access rear files. Full-extension slides allow the drawer to extend completely, making all files visible and reachable from the front. This is a significant functional improvement for high-use filing environments.

4 **Calculate File Capacity in Linear Filing Inches, Not Just Drawer Count**
A 36" wide 4-drawer lateral file cabinet provides approximately 144 linear filing inches (4 drawers × 36" each). A 42" wide 4-drawer provides 168 linear inches. Compare products by total linear filing capacity, not just by the number of drawers, to get an accurate comparison of storage value.

6 **Color-Code Your Filing System Before Installing the Cabinet**
The wide, shallow drawers of a lateral file cabinet reward a well-organized filing system. Before the cabinet arrives, decide on your color-coding and labeling system. Color-coded hanging folder tabs that span the drawer's width (visible immediately when the drawer is opened) allow instant visual location of any file category without reading individual labels.

8 **Mobile Lateral Pedestals Work Well Under Standard Desks**
Smaller lateral file cabinets on casters (typically 2-drawer units) fit under standard 29" to 30" tall desks and can be pulled out and repositioned easily. These mobile pedestals are extremely versatile for flexible workspaces but should always have locking casters to prevent rolling when in use.

10 **Load the Bottom Drawers First When Setting Up a New Cabinet**
When filling a new lateral file cabinet, start with the bottom drawers and work upward. This keeps the cabinet's center of gravity low during the fill-in process, preventing instability while some drawers are full and others are empty. A half-filled top drawer with empty bottom drawers creates the highest tipping risk.