

## Vertical File Cabinets

### 1 Audit Your Current Files Before Ordering Any Cabinet

Before ordering filing capacity, measure what you actually have. Run a tape measure along your current filing drawers to count linear filing inches. Divide by the linear capacity of the new cabinet's drawer (typically 26" to 27" per drawer) to calculate the exact number of drawers you need. This prevents both over-buying and under-buying.

### 3 Full-Extension Slides Make a Tangible Difference in Daily Use

Partial-extension drawer slides (which extend the drawer 75% of the way) require reaching into the back of the drawer for rear files. Full-extension slides let the drawer fully open and make every file accessible from the front. For drawers that are opened multiple times per day, full-extension slides are worth the small price premium.

### 5 Color-Coding Drawer Labels Makes Filing Much Faster

A system of color-coded drawer label holders (replaceable card inserts in a color-coded holder mounted on the drawer face) dramatically speeds up navigation in a multi-cabinet filing system. Assign a color to each category or department, and staff can locate the right drawer in seconds. Label holder kits are inexpensive and make a big difference in filing efficiency.

### 7 Match File Cabinet Width Exactly to Your Document Format

Don't buy a legal-size cabinet if you only have letter-size documents — the 3" of extra width per cabinet adds up in a row and wastes wall space. Conversely, don't buy letter-size if you have any legal documents. If your organization uses both, either buy legal-size for everything (and use adapters for letter files) or use separate cabinet types by document format.

### 9 Keep the Bottom Drawer Heaviest for Stability

When distributing files across multiple drawers, put the heaviest files in the bottom drawer and the lightest at the top. This keeps the center of gravity low, which maximizes stability and reduces the risk of the cabinet tipping when a drawer is opened. This is especially important for cabinets placed on hard-floor surfaces where the cabinet can't shift into carpet to compensate.

### 2 Letter-Size Cabinets Don't Accommodate Legal Files Without Adapters

A 15" wide letter-size vertical file cabinet will not fit legal-size files (which need at least an 18" wide drawer). You can use a hanging folder adapter to fit legal files in a larger cabinet, but you cannot retrofit a letter-size cabinet to hold legal files. Confirm your document sizes before ordering.

### 4 Place New File Cabinets Before Filling Them — They're Heavy

An empty 4-drawer vertical file cabinet weighs 100 to 150 lbs. A fully loaded one can reach 250 to 350 lbs. Position the cabinet in its final location while it's empty, before you load files. Moving a fully loaded file cabinet is a significant effort and risks injury and damage.

### 6 Use Hanging File Folders, Not Just Manila Folders

Manila folders dropped directly into a filing drawer migrate and collapse into a pile at the bottom of the drawer. Hanging folders suspended on the drawer rails stay vertical, maintain organization, and make individual files easy to identify and remove. Use hanging folders with label tabs and store manila folders inside them for a two-level filing system.

### 8 Consider Fire Rating for Documents That Are Hard to Replace

Standard steel file cabinets provide zero fire protection. For documents that would be costly or impossible to replace — signed contracts, property deeds, insurance policies, critical personnel files — a fire-rated filing cabinet (rated to UL 350 standard) provides 1 to 2 hours of protection in a standard building fire. The weight and cost premium is significant but worth it for genuinely irreplaceable documents.

### 10 Order All Cabinets in the Same Batch for Color Consistency

If you're buying multiple vertical file cabinets for the same visible area, order them all at the same time from the same product line. Powder-coat finishes can vary slightly between production batches — cabinets ordered six months apart may have a slight color difference that's visible when placed side by side.