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## Vertical File Cabinets

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### Q1. What is the standard size for a vertical file cabinet?

**A:** The two standard width options are letter-size (15" wide) for standard 8.5"×11" documents and legal-size (18" wide) for 8.5"×14" legal documents. Both sizes come in 2-, 4-, and 5-drawer configurations. Depth is typically 27" to 28" for most commercial models. Letter-size 4-drawer units are the most common format in modern offices, fitting the majority of standard business documents while occupying a compact floor footprint.

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### Q2. How many files does a vertical file cabinet hold?

**A:** Each drawer of a standard vertical file cabinet holds approximately 25" to 27" of linear filing space, which translates to roughly 25 to 35 standard hanging file folders with contents at comfortable file density. A 4-drawer cabinet holds approximately 100 to 140 hanging folders total, which accommodates thousands of individual documents. For planning purposes, a 4-drawer letter-size vertical cabinet is typically sufficient for 1 to 2 active employees' personal file storage needs.

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### Q3. Are vertical file cabinets still relevant in a digital office?

**A:** Yes — even primarily digital offices need physical storage for documents that require wet signatures, original regulatory filings, notarized documents, and confidential personnel records that must be maintained physically. The quantity has decreased, but the need hasn't disappeared for most organizations. A smaller number of 2- or 4-drawer cabinets, properly secured, covers the residual physical filing needs of organizations that have otherwise transitioned to digital workflows.

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### Q4. What is an anti-tip interlock on a file cabinet?

**A:** An anti-tip interlock is a mechanical system in a multi-drawer file cabinet that prevents more than one drawer from being opened at a time. When one drawer is open, the interlock locks the other drawers in the closed position. This prevents the cabinet from tipping forward under the weight of an open fully loaded drawer — a real safety hazard without this mechanism. All commercial-grade multi-drawer file cabinets should include this feature. Verify its presence before purchasing any 4- or 5-drawer cabinet.

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### Q5. What is a fire-rated file cabinet?

**A:** A fire-rated file cabinet is specifically insulated to protect its contents during a building fire. While a standard steel file cabinet offers no fire protection (the steel conducts heat quickly), a fire-rated cabinet uses insulating materials between the inner and outer walls to maintain an internal temperature below 350°F — the temperature at which paper ignites — for the cabinet's rated duration (typically 1 hour at UL Class 350). Fire-rated file cabinets are substantially heavier than standard cabinets and significantly more expensive, but are appropriate for storing irreplaceable documents.

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### Q6. What colors are available for vertical file cabinets?

**A:** Steel vertical file cabinets are typically available in black, putty/sand (a light tan), light gray, and charcoal gray. Putty and light gray are the most common 'office neutral' tones that coordinate with most office environments. Black is popular for modern offices and executive settings. White is available in some product lines and is popular for home offices. Custom colors are available from some manufacturers for large orders.

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#### **Q7. Can I add casters to a vertical file cabinet?**

**A:** Some vertical file cabinet models are available with optional caster bases that allow the cabinet to be rolled. Aftermarket caster bases are also available for many standard cabinet sizes. However, be cautious about adding casters to fully loaded 4- or 5-drawer cabinets — the weight on smaller casters can be significant, and the added height from a caster base may make the top drawer harder to access. For mobile filing needs, a mobile pedestal (2-drawer, sized to fit under a desk) is typically better than a caster-base tall cabinet.

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#### **Q8. How do I open a vertical file cabinet if I've lost the key?**

**A:** Standard file cabinet locks use a standardized key code system. If you've lost the key, a locksmith can usually open the lock and cut a replacement key from the lock code, which is stamped on the lock cylinder. You can also contact the cabinet manufacturer with proof of purchase and they can often provide a replacement key based on the lock code. As a last resort, the lock cylinder can be drilled out and replaced — a straightforward repair for a locksmith.

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#### **Q9. What is the weight capacity of a vertical file cabinet?**

**A:** Each drawer of a commercial-grade vertical file cabinet is rated for approximately 60 to 100 lbs of content load. Most drawers will never reach this limit in a normal filing application — a fully loaded drawer of hanging file folders typically weighs 20 to 40 lbs. The total loaded weight of a 4-drawer cabinet can reach 250 to 350 lbs, which should be considered when placing the cabinet in upper-floor locations or on thin subfloor construction.

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#### **Q10. What should I put in the bottom drawer of a vertical file cabinet?**

**A:** The bottom drawer should hold the heaviest files and the least-frequently accessed materials. This keeps the cabinet's center of gravity low (improving stability) and places the most-used files at a more ergonomically accessible height (middle drawers). Common bottom-drawer items: archived files, rarely accessed reference materials, and large or heavy documents. Avoid putting high-frequency, active files in the bottom drawer — the bending and crouching involved in accessing bottom-drawer files causes fatigue and disincentivizes proper filing.

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