

Flat File Cabinets

1

Size Up, Not Down

Buy a cabinet sized for the largest sheet you'll ever store. Trying to fit a 36" x 48" drawing in a 24" x 36" drawer doesn't work — you can't un-crease a folded blueprint.

2

Don't Overfill Drawers

50–75 sheets per drawer max for standard bond paper. Overfilled drawers drag, stick, and damage what's inside. Half-full drawers are easier to search and access.

3

Label Every Drawer

Flat file drawers with no labeling system become a mystery within months. Label by project number, date, or category — and index the contents on a sheet taped inside the drawer front.

4

Use Interleaving for Archival

For museum or archival documents, place acid-free tissue between sheets. Standard documents touching each other are fine, but mixed materials (dyes, inks) can transfer over time.

5

Buy Stackable Units

Even if you only need 5 drawers now, buy a line that's stackable. Your collection will grow. Adding a stack unit later costs far less than buying a whole new cabinet system.

6

Use Mylar Sleeves

For frequently accessed drawings, clear mylar sleeves protect surfaces from oils and handling damage. Documents in sleeves also slide in and out of drawers more easily.

7

Steel for Job Sites

If the cabinet will live in a construction trailer or non-climate-controlled space, steel is the only acceptable choice. Wood swells, warps, and deteriorates in humidity swings.

8

Consider a Caster Base

A caster base lets you roll the cabinet to the worktable when pulling drawings. Far easier than carrying rolled drawings across the room. Lock casters when the cabinet is in position.

9

Keep a Master Index

Maintain a log (paper or digital) of what's in each drawer. Large flat file collections become unsearchable without an index. One person should own the indexing responsibility.

10

Climate Matters for Archival

No cabinet substitutes for proper climate control in a true archival environment. Target 30–50% relative humidity and 60–70°F for long-term document preservation.