
Flat File Cabinets

Q1. What documents are stored in flat file cabinets?

A: Flat file cabinets store any large-format, flat documents that can't be folded or rolled without damage: architectural blueprints, engineering drawings, topographic maps, fine art prints, museum-quality documents, construction plans, GIS maps, large-format photography, and oversized technical illustrations.

Q2. What size flat file cabinet do I need for architectural drawings?

A: Standard architectural drawings are Arch D (24" x 36") or Arch E (36" x 48"). Choose a cabinet with a drawer interior at least 1"–2" larger than your maximum sheet size — so a 36" x 48" drawer interior for Arch E drawings, or a 26" x 38" drawer interior minimum for Arch D.

Q3. What is the difference between ANSI D and ANSI E drawing sizes?

A: ANSI D is 22" x 34" — the most common standard engineering drawing size for plan sets and technical drawings. ANSI E is 34" x 44" — used for larger mechanical, civil, or electrical drawings requiring more detail at scale. Most engineering firms need ANSI E-rated flat file storage.

Q4. How many sheets fit in one flat file drawer?

A: A standard flat file drawer holds approximately 50–75 sheets of standard 20-pound bond paper. Heavier stock, mylar, or illustration board reduces this. Don't overfill drawers — overfull drawers are hard to open and can wrinkle or damage materials.

Q5. Steel or wood flat file cabinet — which is better?

A: Steel is the practical choice for most professional environments — more durable, more affordable, better humidity resistance. Wood veneer is preferred in art studios, galleries, and executive creative spaces where aesthetics matter. For archival storage, steel is generally the safer choice as it doesn't off-gas acids like some wood composites.

Q6. Can flat file cabinets be stacked?

A: Yes — most flat file cabinet lines are designed as modular systems. A base unit (5 drawers) can accept stack units on top for 10, 15, or more drawers total. Plan stack height so the top drawer remains accessible without a stool — typically 2 stacks maximum for comfortable standing access.

Q7. Do flat file cabinets come with casters?

A: Some do, and caster bases are available as accessories for most lines. Casters are useful in studios or offices where the cabinet is moved between workstations or project areas. Look for locking casters so the cabinet stays stable during use. Fixed-leg bases are standard for cabinets in permanent positions.

Q8. How do I protect documents from dust in flat file drawers?

A: Quality flat file drawers have overlapping front lips that create a tight closure against dust. For added protection in dusty environments, use mylar or polyester sleeves for individual documents. Fabric dust covers that drape over the entire cabinet when not in use are available separately.

Q9. Are flat file cabinets suitable for museum archival storage?

A: Metal flat file cabinets with powder-coat finishes are widely used in archival settings. For true museum-grade archival storage, use acid-free interleaving tissue between documents, maintain 30%–50% relative humidity with climate control, and avoid wood composite materials that may off-gas harmful acids.

Q10. What is the price range for flat file cabinets?

A: Commercial-grade steel flat file cabinets (5-drawer, ANSI E or Arch E size) typically run \$300–\$600. Premium and wood units are \$600–\$2,500. The cost per year of a \$500 cabinet used for 20 years is \$25/year — quality flat file storage is a long-term investment worth making correctly the first time.
