

When developing your naming schema:

1. **Be Consistent!** For related files, use the same elements (e.g., date, experiment number, version number) in the same order.
2. **Document It!** Keep a record of your naming schemas in a plain text readme file that lives with your data files.

	BEST PRACTICE	EXAMPLES
LENGTH	Limit the file name to 32 characters (preferably less!)	32CharactersLooksExactlyLikeThis.csv
SPACES, PERIODS & SPECIAL CHARACTERS	<p>Don't use*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spaces • hyphens & dashes • periods (except before file extension) • other special characters (& , * % # ; * ! @\$ ^ ~ ' { } [] ? < >) <p>Use†:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • underscores (_) • camelCase 	<p>NO name.date.txt</p> <p>NO name date v1.txt</p> <p>NO name-date-v1.txt (hyphen)</p> <p>NO name—date—v1.txt (en dash)</p> <p>NO name—date—v1.txt (em dash)</p> <p>NO name&date.txt</p> <p>YES name_date.txt</p> <p>YES Handout_fileNaming_20180215.pdf</p>
DATES	Use a consistent date format for sorting and easy file finding.	YYYYMMDD is a good default format.
NUMBERING	<p>Use leading zeros to allow for multi-digit versions when using sequential numbering.</p> <p>This will help keep files in your intended order when you sort them by name.</p>	<p>For a sequence of 1-10: 01-10</p> <p>For a sequence of 1-100: 001-010-100</p> <p>NO ProjID_v1.csv ProjID_v12.csv</p> <p>YES ProjID_v01.csv ProjID_v12.csv</p>

* Can you tell the difference between a hyphen, an en dash, or an em dash? Was that space part of your file name or inserted by a line break? How will that @ or % be interpreted by your analysis program or your collaborator? These characters can introduce errors, sorting issues, etc.

† Need to visually create space in your file names? Use underscores and/or camelCase lettering. Among the special characters, underscores create the least amount of issues. camelCase is writing compound words/phrases where each word or abbreviation in the middle of the phrase begins with a capital letter, with no intervening spaces or punctuation. Ex: myCoolData