This worksheet will help you identify and prioritize your file organization needs and develop a system for naming and organizing your files and folders.

To develop and document your file organization system:
- Answer Parts A-C in **this worksheet** to construct your file names, folder names, and a folder hierarchy.
- Fill out the **README: File & Folder Schema** as a final document to keep for your or your group's reference.

Contact data-management@mit.edu with any questions.

Part A. Defining your organizational needs

1. How do you currently organize your files? Consider the file hierarchy on your computer. Take a screenshot of your folders window or sketch that out here.

2. Reflect on this current system and how you have recently used it. What works and what doesn't work? What do you like / don't like about your system?

3. Who are you designing your organization system for? You? Collaborators? Your PI? List all the people that will need to access the files in your system. If you know of any organization preferences or needs of this group, note those here too.

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Part B. Creating a file-naming schema

1. Create your file inventory

Consider all your current and anticipated files. If it's difficult to think of ALL your files, start with a specific project or subproject.

Use the table below to capture the information on all your different data file types.

        Column A: What different **types of data** are you using/creating? (e.g., microscope image, field observations in tabular form, interview transcripts, figures, protocols, etc.)

        Column B: What are the **file formats**? (e.g., .csv, .jpeg)

        Column C: What are the **unique characteristics** of this data file (e.g., date created, project name, experimental conditions)? Are there standard abbreviations for any of these characteristics? You may have more than one unique characteristic.

        Column D: Will you have **multiple versions** of the same file? If so, will there be multiple versions in a given day? How many?

        Column E: Keep blank; we'll tackle that in the next section.

A. Data Type	B. File Format	C. Unique characteristics	D. Multiple versions?	E. Draft file name
Ex: Microscope image	*Ex: tiff*	*Ex: Date collected Experiment number Collector name Image description Microscope setting*	*Ex: Y More than 1 per day (~50/day)*	*Ex: MMDDYYYY_exp001_v01.tif*

2. Draft your file names

Things to include: The unique characteristics that you've identified in Column C can be used to create a file name. Pick the characteristics that you think you will use to find these files.

If you will have multiple versions of a file (indicated in Column D), make sure to add version information into your file name. If you anticipate having more than one version in a day, you can't rely on the date alone and should add a version number to the file name. For example, MMDDYYYY_exp001_v01.tif

Ordering: Put the unique characteristics in the order that you want your data files to sort by. For example, if you prefer to sort by date and then experiment number, the date should be first followed by the experiment number and so on, eg: MMDDYYYY_exp001_.

For more specifics on file naming best practices, see the **File Naming Best Practices** handout.

Put your draft file names in Column E of the table.

Part C. Creating a systematic file folder hierarchy

1. Review your different data types in the table in Part B. Think about how you would group these files together into categories. By file type? By time period? By project? By instrument?

2. Using these categories, determine a standard and consistent folder naming convention. These may mimic part(s) of your file names.

3. Consider the hierarchy of your folders. How do the folders relate to each other? Are some of these folders subfolders of another folder? Sketch out your hierarchy below.

Does this folder hierarchy address the strengths and weaknesses of your existing system that you identified in Part A? If not, revise your system to address any concerns.
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