



TRANSITORY RECORDS

Identifying and disposing of transitory records reduces the amount of information cluttering our inboxes, digital storage spaces, and physical offices. Not every record without a permanent retention is transitory, however. Transitory refers to a limited scope of the records and data that we produce.

We officially define transitory as having the following qualities:

Transitory Records are Records of temporary usefulness, required only for a limited period of time for the completion of a routine action or the preparation of an ongoing Record. Transitory Records do not include those Records required to meet statutory obligations, or to sustain administrative or operational functions. Transitory Records **may** (*emphasis added*) include drafts, notes, calculations, and superseded documents. ([IM7700, RM Procedures](#))

The central concepts in the above definition are:

- the completion of an action, or
- the preparation of a record that supersedes the transitory one.

Do you or others need the record to make more decisions? Then it's not transitory.

Do the records sustain administrative or operational functions? That is, are they needed as evidence of the academic progress of a student, or the execution of a project, etc? Then they're not transitory.

How short is the timespan of a record's usefulness? One week would be transitory, but it's a working record, not transitory, if you need it for 6 months while you're working on a project.

Another way of thinking about it: Is it finished/dealt with, and you (or anyone else) no longer need its contents? Vs: Is it finished/dealt with, and it needs to remain on file (literally or conceptually) for some period of time, such as 5 years?

Here are a couple of examples of transitory records:

- messages in an email thread where committee members suggest agenda items;
- notes from a meeting that are edited into minutes and/or further records that communicate decisions taken at the meeting.

Transitory	NOT transitory
Useful to you for a week	You or others need it to make more decisions
Notes from a meeting that are later finalized as meeting minutes	The records are needed as evidence of action taken.
The matter is finished, you will never need that record again.	Useful for a year while you're working on a project
	Approved meeting minutes; emails that communicate key decisions from the meeting
	The matter is finished, that record will be useful the next time around, or for my successor.