

Document and PDF SEO Guidelines (2022)

Why document SEO is important

A strategic and consistent file naming convention for documents can help our website get found faster, since search engines index document and media files separately from web content.

This document outlines best practices for naming documents in the WordPress media library.

File Names

We want search engines and screen readers to know what our documents are. This is primarily determined by the file name associated with each document file.

There are two aspects to having a good file naming convention:

- Naming files in an SEO-friendly way (File Name Format)
- Naming files consistently (File Name Style)

File Name Format

All files will have a default file name at the time of upload. Usually this default file name is inappropriate for our goals.

Important: When uploading files into the WordPress media library, *you must rename the file on your local device before you upload it*, as WordPress will generate a URL for the file based on its original name.

When editing file names, **do** limit the length of the title as much as possible (only include relevant words), use all lowercase letters, and separate words with hyphens (-).

Good examples:

- coca-cola-brand-guidelines.doc
- italian-lesson-1-nouns.pdf
- apple-vs-samsung-complaint-los-angeles-superior-court.pdf

When editing file names, **do not** combine uppercase and lowercase letters, use spaces between words, use underscores (_) between words, leave random numbers or other alphanumeric characters in the title.

Bad examples:

- complaint_4567.pdf
- Coca Cola sues Pepsi Co for wrongdoing.pdf
- AOC-Twitter-PDF-1.pdf
- NewSarahWatersNovelAdvacnedChapter.doc

File Name Style

The majority of documents we upload for our purposes are complaints and other court filings. Because of this, we can establish a relatively consistent naming convention.

When uploading complaints, include the following in the title (in the order prescribed):

1. primary plaintiff name (either last name only or first name and last name); example: *girdner* or *bill-girdner*
2. v or versus; example: *girdner-v* or *girdner-versus-*
3. primary defendant name (either last name only or first name and last name)
4. filing type; example *complaint* or *opinion*
5. court name; example *los-angeles-superior-court* or *usdc-san-francisco*

Some good examples:

- hikind-v-ocasio-cortez-complaint-usdc-new-york.pdf
- sponsel-v-adel-complaint-maricopa-county.pdf
- united-states-v-hinds-county-order-contempt-usdc-mississippi.pdf

File Metadata

There are three metadata fields for documents in the media library: title, caption and description.

Here are guidelines for completing these fields *after* uploading a correctly-named file.

File Name Format (after uploading)

After you upload a file, you should modify its title in the media library editor to use proper sentence and title casing.

Using the good examples above:

- Coca Cola Brand Guidelines
- Italian Lessons Number 1: Nouns
- Apple v Samsung in Los Angeles Superior Court

Captions

(Try to limit to 140 characters or less)

In the caption field, you can write the title as a grammatically correct sentence, using proper spacing and title casing.

Some examples using the same file names from above:

- Dov Hikind files complaint against Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in USDC Eastern District of New York.
- April Sponsel files complaint against Allister Adel in Superior Court of Arizona, Maricopa County.
- United States of America brings order of contempt against Hinds County.

Descriptions

(Try to limit to 280 characters or less)

If there is no designated file description, then search engine bots will attempt to read the document in order to tell people what the document is about. The problem with this is that these bots usually start from the top of a document, which could result in a description like this:

April 22, 2019 cV11234 Plaintiff Adel v. Defendant Sponsel Superior Court...

The above example doesn't give enough context to help a site visitor determine that it's the document or information they are looking for.

Instead, try writing a short summary that:

- briefly describes what the complaint is about, for example:
 - In this complaint filed in the USDC Eastern District of New York, Dov Hikind alleges Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez violated his civil rights by deleting his posts on her Facebook page.
- or, describes what type of case it is and what the case relates to, for example:
 - U.S. District Judge Allen dismisses Dov Hikind's civil rights complaint against Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez relating to the removal of his posts on her Facebook page, or
 - U.S. District Judge Allen grants Dov Hikind's request for a permanent injunction in his civil rights complaint against Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez to stop her from removing his Facebook posts
- or, includes both what type of case it is *and* a brief description of the reason why the judge ruled the way they did, for example:
 - U.S. District Judge Allen dismisses Dov Hikind's civil rights complaint against Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez for lack of subject matter jurisdiction
- since some PDFs we commonly upload are motions, not complaints, an example description could be:
 - Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez moves to stay proceedings in Dov Hikind's civil rights suit against her

Basic formulas for writing opinion summaries

Reporters for the Daily Brief use formulas for writing case summaries which can also be helpful as guides to writing effective PDF descriptions.

- For civil cases in state and circuit appellate courts:
 - J. (short for judge) Soandso finds that the lower court properly/improperly ruled in favor of plaintiff/defendant in this type of (civil rights, contract) action relating to XYZ. [This second sentence is the judge's reasoning for why she ruled the way she did].
 - Note: use the plaintiffs and defendants' names or, if the parties aren't well known, use basic descriptions such as the hardware store, the accountant
- For criminal cases out of those courts:
 - J. Soandso finds that the lower court properly/improperly convicted/sentenced defendant (or denied defendant's request for whatever) of murder/to life in prison. Reason why the conviction/sentence/whatever was reversed or affirmed.
- For writing summaries of USDC rulings:
 - J. Soandso grants/denies summary judgment/motion to dismiss/request for an injunction, etc. to plaintiff/defendant on whatever claims are being decided/whichever claim is the most important that's being decided (if there are multiple claims being dealt with in the same ruling). Then the reasoning.

Here is an example incorporating the formulas above:

J. Moss grants summary judgment to a former employee of the Federal Emergency Management Agency on her retaliation claim, finding the agency fired her because of her testimony before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which was a violation of Title VII's participation clause.

