A simple guide to determine what documents to keep and what documents are OK to toss!

**Keep these documents forever**
- Birth/death certificates and Social Security cards
- Marriage licenses and divorce decrees
- Will, trust, and probate documents
- murky discharge papers
- Copies of burial deeds and plots
- Safe-deposit box inventory

**Keep these documents as long as you own the asset**
- Car titles and loan documents
- Real estate deeds
- Insurance policies
- Vehicle titles and loan documents

**Toss these documents**
- ATM deposit and withdrawal slips
- Utility and phone bills
- Credit card statements
- Bank statements
- Pay stubs
- Medical records
- Tax returns and supporting documents
- Investment statements

**Keep these documents for as long as you own the asset**
- Appliance manuals and warranties
- House and mortgage documents
- Insurance policies
- Vehicle titles and loan documents

- **Birth/death certificates and Social Security cards**
- **Marriage licenses and divorce decrees**
- **Pension plan documents**
- **Copies of wills, living wills, trusts, and powers of attorney**
- **Military discharge papers**
- **Copies of burial deeds and plots**
- **Safe-deposit box inventory**

**Toss after**
- ATM deposit and withdrawal slips: 30 days
- Utility and phone bills: 30 days
- Credit card statements: 45 days
- Bank statements: 1 year
- Pay stubs: 1 year
- Medical records: 5 years
- Tax returns and supporting documents: 7 years
- Investment statements: 7 years

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**Make sure that the transaction is reflected on your bank statement and then get rid of the ATM slip.**

**Keep for one year; be sure to match them to your W-2 form before you shred.**

**Shred them after you’ve paid them, unless they contain tax-deductible expenses.**

**You need to hold onto your returns and all supporting documents for seven years.**

**You only need to keep bank statements for one year. However, if records are related to your taxes, business expenses, home improvements, mortgage payments or major purchases, hold onto them for seven years.**

**Shred monthly statements as new ones arrive, but keep annual statements until the sale of each asset within the account occurs and for seven years thereafter, in case you get audited.**

A good rule of thumb: If you will need to use this document in government offices, keep it in a safe deposit box or in the safe of your bank or at home. If you don’t, throw it away. After you have thrown away important documents, be sure to shred them after you’ve paid them, unless they contain tax-deductible expenses.