Organising and naming files

During the course of a research project, a large amount of data is often generated; therefore it is important to adopt a **logical and consistent file naming and folder structure**, which will allow you and others to easily locate and use your data. Ideally, you should think of naming and structuring your files before you start collecting the data.

There are many ways to name your files "correctly" and it will always depend on the type of data you collect. Generally, file names should not be too long but they should include enough information to enable you to identify the file by its name. Here are some useful tips for file naming:

- Use **date** in the YYYYMMDD format for chronological ordering
- Unless you use a tool that enables versioning (e.g., OSF), it is useful to include the **document version** in the name
- **Do not use special characters** which may be used for specific tasks in different operating systems, such as ! @ # $ % & *
- If you work in a team, it may be useful to include the **initials of the author** of the document, or the author of the last change in the file
- If you generate multiple types of documents, you may distinguish them by using **identifiers**, e.g., questionnaire, interview, test etc.
- If you have multiple research participants, you may wish to **identify individual participants** (e.g., by using the participant's initials or code number)
- If you work on multiple projects at the same time, you may wish to **identify the project** to which the data relate
- Decide on the **order of the individual elements** in the file name and the separator used (e.g., underscore or hyphen)

If you use abbreviations or codes in the file names, you should prepare a document that would explain what each abbreviation or code means.

When organising and naming files, the most important thing is to be **consistent** and to ensure that all co-workers know how to name the files and in which directory to save them.