

# Gaye's Filing System

Recently on the ANZAGL list somebody asked what to do with all those bits of Guiding-related paper accumulating all around her house. This was one leader's response, and we thought it was so good that it should go out to a far wider audience! Gaye's filing system has been adapted from a book by Pat Dorff called "File... Don't Pile: A Proven Filing System for Personal and Professional Use" (St Martin's Press, New York, 1986, ISBN 0-312-28931-6). Do try this one at home!

## 1. YOU NEED

- A looseleaf folder (or you could do this on a spreadsheet if you wanted to. Paper is better for retrieval — you don't have to turn the computer on first.)
- A pencil
- Forms (see 2a below)
- Vertical hanging files (probably not absolutely essential, but I like them, and they make it easy to find things)
- Boxes (several!) or filing cabinet(s) to file them in
- LOTS of manilla folders (tabbed ones are nice, but not essential, and they cost more). If you are interested, ask me how to use the tabbed ones.

## 2. SETTING UP YOUR FILING SYSTEM

a) Make up a full-page A4 form (and photocopy it) which has the following:

- a section at the top for a heading
- a place at the top right hand corner for a number
- 4 columns, headed respectively:

CODE

SUBJECT

SEE ALSO

SEE

It should look like this:

CODE	SUBJECT	SEE	SEE ALSO

b) Decide on the sorts of major categories you are going to need, eg

- Campfires
- Promise and Law
- Quotes
- Craft
- Themes
- Games

c) Once you know the major categories you are going to use (and yes, you will start more as you file), give each major category an alphabetical code of 2-4 letters, eg

- Campfires CF
- Promise and Law P&L
- Patrol System PS
- Quotes QT (or, as I have, IN- for Inspirational)
- Wide Games WG
- Craft CFT
- Themes TH
- Games GM

(this can be further divided into outdoor games (GMO), quiet games (GMQ), indoor games (GMI), card games (GMC), you get the idea, but **\*\*WARNING\*\*** Games are very hard to categorise)

Use whatever makes sense to you (those are only examples). You will need one form of about 30 lines each per category. **DON'T USE SINGLE LETTERS FOR YOUR CATEGORIES** (see below for why).

Make up a set of photocopied forms for each of the categories you have chosen, and write the name of the category in the heading section, and the code in the number box. For example:

<b>WIDE GAMES</b>			<b>WG-</b>
<b>CODE</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>SEE</b>	<b>SEE ALSO</b>

<b>THEMES</b>			<b>TH-</b>
<b>CODE</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>SEE</b>	<b>SEE ALSO</b>

Now you are ready to start filing.

### **3. HOW TO FILE**

- a) Pick up the first piece of paper, and decide what category it comes under.
- b) Flip to your sheet that has that category.

*Example:* Let's say it is a description of the wide game you learnt at your last training. You need to decide whether you would look for this in 2 years' time under TRAINING or under WIDE GAMES. Let's put it in the WIDE GAMES category. Flip to the WIDE GAMES sheet.

- c) On the first line in the CODE column, write WG-001. In the SUBJECT column, write the name of the particular wide game, *Pirates!*. On the paper you are filing, write **IN PENCIL ON THE TOP RIGHT HAND CORNER** the number you have just written down, ie WG-001. You now have the paper categorized, and numbered: WG-001, Pirates.

- d) Grab a manilla folder, and write on its label WG-001 (in pencil). TIP: If you write the first one on the left hand side, the second one in the middle, the third one on the right hand side, the fourth one on the left and so on, it is easy to see each one at a glance when you open the box or drawer.
- e) Place the paper in the folder.
- f) Place the folder in your WIDE GAMES box or filing cabinet drawer.

Your category sheet should now look like this:

WIDE GAMES			WG-
CODE	SUBJECT	SEE	SEE ALSO
WG-001	Pirates!		

Congratulations! You have just filed your first piece of paper! (The next time you want to file a Wide Game, you would give it the next available number in the WG Code column: WG-002, *Shipwrecked!*)

#### Why use AA-00x?

Because if you put this on a computer, it won't sort your numbers properly unless you put in the leading zeroes.

Eg. CF-10 would be sorted immediately after CF-1, so your list would go

CF-1  
 CF-10  
 CF-11  
 CF-12  
 CF-2  
 CF-20  
 CF-3  
 etc

If you put in a leading 0, you get

CF-001  
 CF-002  
 CF-003  
 CF-010  
 CF-020  
 etc

#### 4. POSSIBLE PROBLEMS

But wait, you discover, when you turn the paper over, that there is a motivational quote on the other side of it that you want to keep. AARGH!

***Don't panic!***

**a) Doublesided or multiple subjects on the same piece of paper**

- Flip to the QUOTES sheet you prepared when you were setting up your category sheets.
- In the SEE column, write the name of the motivational quote, and the code WG-001. You can also note that it is on the back of WG-001, if you want to. **DO NOT GIVE THE SHEET OF PAPER ANOTHER CODE.**

This saves having to copy the other side of the paper and file it separately. You file the one sheet of paper in one place, but cross reference it in the category sheets.

So, for example, your QUOTES page might look like this:

QUOTES			QT-
CODE	SUBJECT	SEE	SEE ALSO
QT-001	Fathers	Fathers Are Special - WG-001 (back)	
QT-002	Today ...		
QT-003	Friendship	GO-004 (Guides' Own on friendship)	

The SEE ALSO column is for cross-referencing if necessary, eg under the category of CAMP COOKING – FIRES, you could have a SEE ALSO pointing to the Council Fire under CAMPFIRES.

eg. COOK-035, Fires, *SEE ALSO* CF-012.

**b) Multiple articles in a magazine**

You have two choices here: cut up the magazine, and file each piece of paper separately as above, or cross reference all the articles you want to refer to under the appropriate SEE columns. You would also need a MAGAZINE category for this, and to number each magazine and file it in its own manilla folder or numbered magazine holder.

**NOW ...** Pick up the second piece of paper in your filing pile. Repeat steps 3a) to f) above.

**5. TO FIND A FILED PIECE OF PAPER**

- a) Decide what it is you want to look for. Think about what category it would be under.

*Example:* How to build a Council Fire for campfire.

*Possible Categories:* Fires/Campfire

Look under the Category that seems most appropriate.

- b) Flip to that sheet, and scan the SUBJECT column to find the appropriate one.

*Example:* Council Fire, CF-012

Look in the manilla folder marked CF-012, and hopefully, there are all the papers you have on Council Fires!

The **advantages** of this system are:

- ANYONE can use it, not only the person who set it up - the kids can find stuff, your co-leaders can find stuff, and EVERYONE can file categorised papers! **IT IS NO LONGER A ONE PERSON JOB!!!!!!** (Yippee!!)
- You don't need to do it all at once: you can sit down and categorise a pile of papers in one go, and then file them later, or even give them to the kids to file for you.

- You don't have to worry about alphabetising or putting the papers in any semblance of order, other than under major categories.
- You have all subjects of a category filed in the same box, so you can pick up a bunch all in one go when you are rushing out the door.

Clear as mud? I hope not. This is a brilliant filing system, which can be used for all sorts of things. I have 3 sets of files using this system:

- *Guiding files*, under categories, as detailed above.
- *Personal files* that can be categorised, as detailed above (eg Finance, Computer, Research Methods, Articles I am writing).
- *Alphabetical files*, for those items that need to be filed, but won't fit into a major category (or if you will have more than about 30 subjects in a major category). In this case, I use the same system, but alphabetically instead of under categories. Some entries of this type I have are:

**A:** A-001 Alpacas, A-002 Archaeology in Fiction

**C:** C-001 Coelacanths, C-002 Celtic Connections Newsletter

**E:** Exercises (fitness)

**F:** F-001 Fantasy Book List

Under the SEE column I have:

Fitness - see E-001

Fozhan Qianshou - see T-001

**P:** P-001 Polar Fleece, P-002 Edgar Allan Poe

**T:** T-001 Tai Chi/Chi Qung

If this doesn't make sense, please let me know. Like I said, this system is wonderful. It takes a little bit of thinking to set up the categories you want, and a bit of financial outlay for the folders etc, but it takes no more effort or time than any other filing system, and is much easier to retrieve things and replace them in the right spot after use.

Gaye Wilson

*Leader, Baulkham Hills Bat-Tacular Guides*

*(The Spectacular Bats)*

*1st May 2004*

[horus@hawknet.com.au](mailto:horus@hawknet.com.au)

