CHAPTER - V

FILING SYSTEM

5.1 Introduction — Every office follows a set of rules and regulations for the disposal of its work. Every action of the office should be in consonance with rules, decisions and, therefore, the decision-making process needs to be sufficiently and clearly documented for this purpose. The practice, therefore, is to record the process in writing, in the form of internal notes and correspondence. This record is required to be systematically kept in files as per a prescribed procedure.

5.2 Composition of a file — A file is a systematic arrangement of papers on a specific subject matter, with the following parts:

(a) Notes;

(b) Correspondence;

(c) Appendix to notes; and

(d) Appendix to correspondence.

"Notes" are generally the views or summary of facts recorded by officials of the office in respect of a Paper Under Consideration (PUC) or a Fresh Receipt (FR).

The *'Correspondence'* portion contains all communications (Receipts or Issue) received or sent. The correspondence thus consists of the raw data while the notes reveal the 'thinking process', which results in a decision.

'Appendix to Notes' is a complete summary of the case containing detailed information, the incorporation of which into the main note will obscure the main point or make the main point lengthy. It is usually prepared where a case is likely to be examined several times and in great depth, for instance, in court cases, etc. In such matters, the office note merely gives the latest developments and refers to the 'Appendix to Notes' in case details are required.

'Appendix to Correspondence' consists of lengthy enclosures to communication, the inclusion of which is likely to obstruct the smooth reading of the correspondence portion.

5.3 Arrangements of papers in a file — A 'Case', as explained in the definitions, is a proposal examined on a file relating to that subject. Generally, information required for examination of the case is in the form of letters or notes or other papers. For convenience and easy reference, they are placed in a file cover in the manner described below:

(i) All papers required to be placed in any part of the file are to be punched on the left corner and tagged in chronological order. The latest paper should be at the bottom. The practice of reverse filing (last paper on top) of papers is not compatible with the system of page numbering, and should be avoided.

(ii) The Notes portion of the file on blue-green coloured noting paper is paged and tagged separately while the correspondence portion is paged and tagged into a file (on both sides) so that the ends of the tags are secured onto the other side of the file cover.

(iii) The Notes portion is then loosely placed inside the file cover, on top of the correspondence portion (or, in case of bulky or secret notes, similarly placed inside a separate file cover and tied alongwith the correspondence portion into the same file board).

(iv) Note sheets should be kept loose within the file cover of the correspondence file and *not* tagged into the file cover containing the correspondence as linking it into the file cover impedes the writing of notes.

(v) As far as possible notes should be written/typed on both sides of the note sheet, and the first page of the note sheet should indicate the name of the organisation and office, the subject and the file number.

(vi) Notes of casual discussions on points of secondary importance, routine correspondence like reminders, etc. generated during examination of a case are not to be put in correspondence and can be placed in a separate cover (called 'keepwith' file or K W file) below the file.

(vii) No file should generally contain more than 200 sheets of notes and correspondence combined. On the maximum limit being reached the file should be closed and a new volume of the same file should be opened *with the same file number,* showing Vol. I, Vol. II and so on, (with entry in the file opening register as well as on the closed volume of the file showing the opening of the new volume).

(viii) The following arrangement must be utilized, from top downwards, while submitting a case for orders:

    (a) reference books, if added;

    (b) notes portion of the current file, ending with the last note for consideration;

    (c) running summary of the facts, if added;

    (d) draft for approval, if added;

    (e) correspondence portion of the current file ending with the latest communication dealt with (i.e. receipt or issue) as the case may be;

    (f) appendix to notes and appendix to correspondence;

    (g) standing guard file or precedent register, if added;

    (h) other papers, if any, referred to e.g. extracts of notes or correspondence from other files, routine notes, copies of orders, gazettes etc. arranged in chronological order; and

    (i) recorded files, if any, arranged in chronological order.

5.4 Page and Serial Numbering — Page numbering should be done for every page of notes and correspondence in separate series. This should be done at the top right corner *in ink*. Blank intervening pages, if any, should not be numbered. Blank pages, if any, should be marked with 'x' mark in ink. The page numbers once allotted should not be changed without the orders of the Section in-Charge. Fresh receipts should be placed into the file cover in the correspondence portion and page numbered at its proper location.

Serial numbers are to be given in red ink, at the top centre of the first page, of every communication. whether receipt or issue. The communication received (R) or issued (I) are to be marked in serial order e.g. Sl. No. 1(R), 2(R) etc. or Sl.No. 1 (I), 2(I) etc. This serial numbering ensures that the chain of receipts and issued letters remains unbroken. As will be explained in Chapter 7 on Noting, this serial number is also entered into the note sheet in a process called 'Docketing'.

5.5 Flagging — Paper Under Consideration, which is the first reference and initiation of the case is to be flagged "PUC". A fresh receipt on the same issue, received later, is to be flagged as "FR". In a current file, no other slips or flags are to be attached to a paper. There is a general tendency to flag every paper referred to in a note, instead of referring to it by its page number. This should be avoided as far as possible, as it often results in page number not being recorded on the note portion at the time of referencing. If there is more than one FR, they can be flagged FR-I. FR-II etc.

If use of alphabetical flags on other papers is unavoidable, as in the case of files put up to Chairman, page numbering should still be done, and reference to the paper in the note sheet should be by means of page number and reference to flag 'A' or 'B' etc. made in pencil in the margin. While making reference to the page number of the recorded file on the notes, the file number is invariably required to be mentioned in the notes.

5.6 File Movement Slip — Unlike in some Government Offices where open files are circulated to officers in the hierarchy, in the Secretariat files move from one officer to another in closed form. To facilitate indication of next destination of file without opening it, a slip known as File Movement Slip is used. File movement slip indicates to and fro movement of files from Section to different levels in the hierarchy and movement is indicated by designation of the officers to whom it has been marked on the file movement slip. The file movement slip should be put on the top of the file. This slip indicates the name of the Section to whom the file concerns and below that officer/Section to whom it has been marked. This slip should be stapled in the file.

5.7 Referencing — When reference is made either to a paper in the file to another file or to any other attached document, a note is made in the margin of the note sheet. This process is called referencing.

Thus if page 52 of the file is referred to and for some reason (though the practice is not recommended), the page is flagged as F/A, then on the margin of the note, at the margin of the line where reference is made to 'Page 52', the words 'F/A' are indicated. The same practice is followed if reference is to another file or document flagged for reference. Needless to add, referencing of PUC's and FRs in this way is a must.

Acts, rules, regulations or compilations referred to in a case need not be put up if copies thereof are expected to be available with the officer to whom the case is submitted. The fact of such compilation not having been put up will also be indicated in the margin of the note in pencil, as part of the referencing process.

5.8 Linking of Files — Linking of files is resorted to, if the issues raised in two or more current files are so inter-connected that they need be dealt with together/simultaneously. In such a case, the files are to be linked in such a way that the strings of the file board of the lower file (but not its flaps) are to be tied round the upper file and the upper file's board strings tied underneath it in a bow out of the way so that each file is intact with all connected papers arranged on its file board and the flap. Similar linking might also be required to be made if papers on a current file are required for reference in dealing with another current file unless copies of the papers from the other current file can be conveniently placed on the file to be submitted.

When two files are linked as cited above, a file label is to be attached to the left-hand flap of each of the two files stating that the file is linked with another file. This will ensure that the two files are not inadvertently de-linked.

Linked current files will be flagged LF-I, LF-II etc. and referred to as such in the notes, after mentioning the file numbers of all the linked files in the margin of the note.

After the completion of action, the linked files are to be de-linked, taking relevant extract and placing them on the linked files wherever necessary. The de-linking of the files will be mentioned in the margin of the note sheets of both files with date, in pencil.

5.9 Title of a File — 'Title to a file' means the subject given to a file. It should be very concise and should indicate the contents of the file at a glance. The 'title' consists of:

(a)   Standard-Head

(b)   Sub-Head

(c)   Subject or Contents

The 'Standard-Head' is a single important word, which is placed first in the title. It indicates the main subject heading and helps in identifying files in the Index of the Register.

The 'Standard-Head' is followed by a 'Sub-Head', which should be more indicative of the precise classification of the file than the head. If it is essential to have more than one Sub-Head in the title, the more abstract or general should precede the concrete and specific. Each part will begin with a capital letter and will be separated by a bold-dash.

'Contents' is given after Standard-Head and Sub-Head. It should be brief and clearly indicative of the question or issue in relation to the standard-head and sub-head and where necessary, the specific institution, person, place or thing involved, rather like a newspaper headline. A 'contents' worded in general terms is of little practical use, for, if it does not distinguish a file from others relating to closely similar but not identical subjects, time may be wasted in taking out and examining several files.

5.10. Separate File for each Subject — There should be a separate file for each distinct subject. If the subject of a file is too wide or too general; there will be a tendency to place in it receipts dealing with different aspects of the matter which, apart from making the file unwieldy will impede quick disposal of the business. If the issues raised in a receipt or in the notes or in the orders are beyond the original subject, relevant extracts should be taken and dealt with separately in new files.

Before opening a new file, the Assistant will first find out the Standard-Head to which the PUC relates. He/she can then propose a suitable title of the file for the approval of the Section-in-Charge.

The file number will consist of:

(i)   It will start with R.S., which stands for Rajya Sabha in abbreviated form;

(ii)   after R.S., serial number of the Standard Head;

(iii)   serial no. of the file opened during the year;

(iv)   last two digits of the year in which opened;

(v)   abbreviated symbol identifying the Section; and

(vi)   after R.S., three components of the number will be separated by slant strokes and the last by a hyphen. Example: R.S.1/2/01-O&M

Illustration:

File opened in O & M Section during the year 1999 under the Standard Head-I:—

"Preparation of a Manual on Rules and Orders of the Secretariat" will be numbered as follows:

Standard-Head I: "*Preparation of a Manual on Rules and Orders of the Secretariat.*"

Sub-Head: 1/1-*Procedure and Practice of Legislative Section.*

                  1/2- *Procedure and Practice of Question Branch.*

                  1/3- *Procedure and Practice of Lobby Office, etc.*

After Sub-Heads, a Separate number is given to each file based on the subject in the following manner:–

Standard-Head (1)   (*Preparation of a Manual on Rules and Orders of the Secretariat*)

Sub-Head :   1/2-*Procedure and Practice relating to Question Branch.*

Subject: 1/2-(1)-*Work load of the Section during Session period.*

                  1/2(2)-*Utilisation of manpower during Inter-Session period.*

The full file number of the file which has Standard-Head, 'Preparation of Manual'; Sub-Head as 'Procedure and Practice in Question Branch', and Subject as 'Work load of the Section during Session period is thus: **1/2(1)99-O & M,** where '99' denotes the year in which the file with this subject was opened and 'O&M' the Section opening the file.

A file on a new subject should be opened only if the subject content of the old file is inadequate to deal with a PUC, files are opened year-wise/session-wise only if the title makes it clear that the subject relates to a particular year/session, *e.g.* 'Parking Labels for 1999' or 'Summoning and Proroguing of the 185th Session'. In such a case a file will be opened for each year or session as the case may be. However, if the tile of the file is not of this nature, new files should not be opened each year/session but new volume should be created as soon as the requisite numbers of pages have been filed. For the example, '*Purchase of spares for Car No. DEH-81*' will be a single file which will continue from year to year, since otherwise year-wise old files on the same subject may have to be requisitioned and linked each time a paper is received referring to a matter pertaining to that year.

Files on a new subject should be opened by an Assistant only under orders of the Assistant Director/Executive/ Legislative/Committee Officer etc. so that file are not opened indiscriminately. It should however be understood that opening of a new volume of an existing file after it has reached 200 pages is a different matter from opening a new file.

5.11 Creation of new Heads and Sub-Heads — Normally the filing system as it has evolved, should be sufficient to cater to all the Heads and Sub-Heads and only new 'subject' files may be required to be opened from time to time.

However in certain cases, new Sub-Heads or even new Heads may be required if a new class of cases is likely to require a separate set of files. For instance 'Office Computerization' as a subject may not be appropriate since below this subject, further sub-headings like 'Purchase of Computers', 'Preparation of Software' etc. may be required, indicating that 'Office Computerization' should be either a new 'Sub-Head, or even, in case of say, the IT Sections (H&S), where a large number of files are required to be maintained, a new 'Standard Head'.

New 'Sub-Heads' should be opened only with the approval of the Branch Officer *i.e.* Deputy Director/Joint Director so that new Heads are not created indiscriminately. New 'Standard-Heads, should be created only with the approval of the Joint Director/Director who should, at such times, review the entire list of Standard-Heads and rationalize the 'Sub- head' and 'Subject' allocations.

5.12 Part File — A part file usually consists of a note and correspondence in order to explain a particular point. It is only used when the main file on a subject is under submission to a higher authority and a Fresh Receipt is required to be dealt without waiting for return of the main file in view of its urgency. The Part File is to be amalgamated to the main file as soon as the main file is returned and action thereon is completed. Part files should be opened sparingly and only in urgent cases. It will be the responsibility of the Section-in-Charge (Assistant Director/ Committee/Executive/Legislative Officer) to ensure that the part file is amalgamated into the main file as soon as possible by the dealing hand and all pages of the notes and correspondence are renumbered accordingly, and changes made in the reference numbers by drawing a line below the part file reference number and giving the equivalent number for the main file. Branch Officers and above must be vigilant in ensuring that 'Part Files' are using sparingly and not as a substitute for a bulky main file. In all cases where Part File has to be opened, it must be specified if the Main File is under action and in other cases give reasons why a Part File is being moved.

5.13 File Opening Register — Each Section must maintain a classified list of files opened during the calendar year in a File Opening Register. It is maintained "Head-wise". On the first page of the register, a list of approved Standard-Heads with serial numbers should be written, as an index to the register. The page numbers at which the sub-heads for the Standard. Head are available will be indicated here. Sufficient pages for entering the Sub-Heads and subjects of files likely to be opened in the course of the year should be provided for. One or more pages should be reserved for each Sub-Head, and entry regarding opening of files made therein, in the following format:—

FILE OPENING REGISTER

Section .... Year ....

No. & Name of Head ....

No. & Name of Sub-Head ....

Sl.No.	File No.	Subject	Date of Opening File	Name of Dealing Hand	Signature of Section-in-Charge

Whenever orders are passed to open a new Head/Sub-Head/File, appropriate entry is to be made in the Register by the dealing hand concerned. The Registers will be kept in the custody of the Assistant Director/Legislative/ Executive/ Committee Officer, with a separate register opened each year, to record the file opened during that year.

5.14 Movement and Location of Files — Movement of files will be entered in a File Location Register which will be maintained with the Section Diarist. In Sections where large scale movement of files takes place, individual registers may be maintained by the dealing Assistants themselves. A separate page or pages will be given to each file and the arrangement of the pages will be similar to the file opening register *i.e.* head wise, sub head wise arrangement will be made to enable easy location of the page reserved for a particular file. Adequate space should be provided in the register so that files which are put up frequently have place for the requisite number of entries. The register should be opened afresh each calendar year, with last entry carried forward. The format of the register is as follows:

File No. ....

Subject (Title) ....

Sl.No.	To who sent	Date	Date of Receipt back

On receipt back, of a file, the dealing hand will note the date in the margin of the note sheet opposite the last note.

To easily trace files that are put up to Branch Officers and above, personal staff of the officers are to enter the file as soon as it is received in their File Movement Register maintained date-wise on the following format:—

Date ....

Sl. No.	File No.	Received from	Sent to	On Date

The entry should be made as soon as file is received and columns completed when the file is to be sent to the officer to whom it is marked.

5.15 Document Management Information System (DMIS) or File Tracking System (FTS) — A web based application for tracking the movement of files, introduced in some sections of the Secretariat on pilot basis with effect from 1st September, 2008, enables the users to maintain a constant watch over the movement of various files. After receipts in sections using the system are diarised on the computer, the processing of these receipts and disposal thereof are also monitored on the system by the concerned Section and each of the officers in the hierarchy. The Controlling Officer of each Division/Section can view the movements of files and could take appropriate decisions.

5.16 Files received and sent unofficially — It is essential that the files received from other organizations, *e.g.* the Lok Sabha Secretariat unofficially, should be diarised, in a separate Register of Files Received unofficially. Entries regarding movement of these files should also be made in that Register. The Section-in-Charge will examine the register at regular weekly intervals to satisfy himself/herself that return of files received is not delayed. Reminders for return of files, which are held up for more than two weeks should be issued by the Section-in-Charge. A similar practice is required to be followed in respect of files sent unofficially to Lok Sabha Secretariat etc.

5.17 Removal of Papers from a file — Specific written orders of the Section-in-Charge are necessary to remove original pages from a file, either from the correspondence or from the notes portion. A sheet indicating the purpose of removal together with the Section/Office where the same were sent, attested by the Section-in-Charge, should be attached at the relevant place. Where such papers are likely to be required in the interim, photocopies should be retained. When the papers are returned, the same should be replaced properly and the photocopy removed.

5.18 Use of Urgency Labels —

(i) Normally one of the two urgency labels are to be used when required on cases viz. "*Priority*" or "*Immediate*". The other labels required to be used where relevant are "*Rajya Sabha Question*", "*Motion*", "*Bill*", or "*Secret*" or "*Confidential*".

(ii) The label "*Priority*" is used for cases requiring disposal in precedence to all other cases. The label "*Immediate*" is used only in cases requiring prompt attention.

(iii) The other labels as indicated in sub para (i) above are to be invariably used for all relevant cases for either prompt attention and disposal or maintaining secrecy.

(iv) The urgency labels assigned to a case are to be reviewed by all concerned at all different stages of progress of the case and where necessary the urgency label can be revised.

(v) Files marked '*Secret*' or '*Confidential*' should not be allowed to move in routine but should be sent '*by hand*' or '*in a sealed cover*'. While marking the file, the words '*by hand' or 'in cover*' should be added next to the designation of the officer to whom the file has been marked. It should be ensured that files with urgency labels reach the next level as soon as it is possible and should not be sent in routine.