

3 Steps to set up document retention via retention labels

By Gregory Zelfond

<https://sharepointmaven.com/how-to-set-up-document-retention-via-retention-labels-in-sharepoint-and-onedrive/>

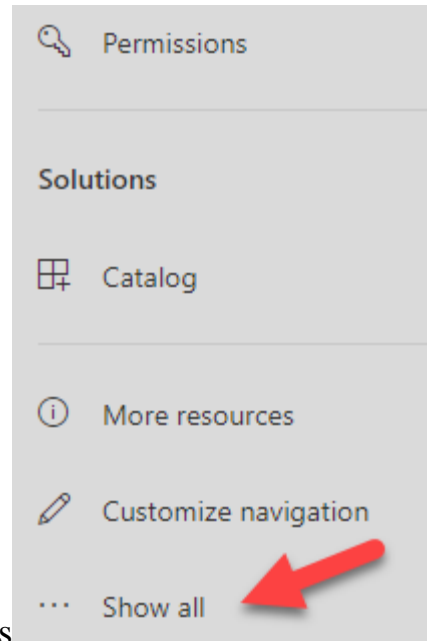
There are three steps involved when it comes to setting up document retention via retention labels in SharePoint.

1. **Create** Retention Labels (specify the retention period)
2. **Create and Publish** Retention Policies (specify which sites the retention labels will be applied to)
3. **Label (tag)** the content with Retention Labels

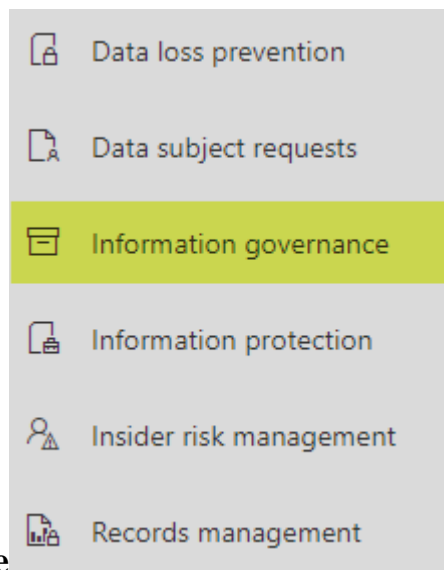
STEP 1: Create Retention Labels

With this step, all we are doing is specifying what the retention period will be for documents that will eventually be tagged with the label.

1. Navigate to the **New Compliance Center** in Office 365:
<https://compliance.microsoft.com>



2. Click on **Show all** to expand all of the features



3. Click on **Information Governance**

4. You will now see the area that shows all the existing retention labels. I already have a few created, if this is a first time accessing it – it will be

blank

Information governance

Show in navigation

Labels Label policies Import Retention Archive

When published, retention labels appear in your users' apps, such as Outlook, SharePoint, and OneDrive. When a label is applied to email or docs (automatically or by the user), the content is retained based on the settings you chose. For example, you can create labels that retain content for a certain time or ones that simply delete content when it reaches a certain age. [Learn more about retention labels](#)

+ Create a label Publish labels Auto-apply a label Refresh

Name	Created by	Retention duration	Last modified
Financial Document	Gregory Zelfond	7 years	10/30/2019
Financial Test	Gregory Zelfond	1 days	11/10/2019
Contract Document Test	Gregory Zelfond	2 days	02/01/2020

5. Click on **Create a label** to create a new retention label

Information governance

Labels Label policies Import Retention Archive

When published, retention labels appear in your users' apps (automatically or by the user), the content is retained based on the time or ones that simply delete content when it reaches a certain age.

+ Create a label

Publish labels

Auto-apply a label

Name



Financial Document

6. Create the label name as well as a description, click **Next**. **NOTE:** **Description for users** text will come in handy later when the user tags the document as it will provide additional context/information on what will

happen to items tagged with the label. **Don't skip it!**

Create a label to help users classify their content.

- Name your label**
- Label settings
- Review your settings

Name your label

Name * ⓘ **1**

Customer Record

Description for admins ⓘ **2**

Items tagged with this label will be kept for 7 years, then deleted

Description for users ⓘ **3**

Items tagged with this label will be kept for 7 years, then deleted

4


7. On the next screen, toggle the Retention switch to **On**

Create a label to help users classify their content.

- Name your label
- Label settings**
- Review your settings

Label settings

Retention ⓘ

Off 

8. Once you toggle above switch to **On**, you will find the options to set up the retention label. In the first step, you can specify the retention period.

Typically, you will keep the content for years, but you can also specify days

or months. Since I am doing this here for this demo/tutorial and don't feel like waiting for seven years for results, I am setting this up to retain content for just two days (because in 7 years I plan to win a lottery and live on a

Label settings

Retention ⓘ



On

When this label is applied to content...

Retain the content ⓘ

1 For this long... 2 days

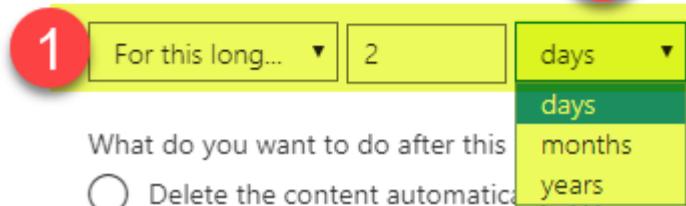
What do you want to do after this

2 days

months

years

2

A screenshot of the retention settings interface. A yellow box highlights the 'For this long...' dropdown menu, which is set to '2 days'. A red circle with the number '1' is next to the dropdown. Another red circle with the number '2' is next to the 'Retain the content' radio button. The dropdown menu is open, showing options for 'days', 'months', and 'years'. The 'days' option is highlighted in green.

paradise island somewhere)

9. Next, you need to specify what you want to do with the content at the end of the retention period (in our case, after two days). You can either **delete it** (will go to the [Recycle Bin](#)), **trigger a disposition review** (will send an email to a designated reviewer to decide on what to do with content) or **leave the content as is** (will leave the documents in the library and let the user delete it manually). For this demo, I will let it be **deleted** to show you

what happens at the end of the retention period.

When this label is applied to content...

Retain the content [i](#)

For this long... days

What do you want to do after this time?

- Delete the content automatically. [i](#)
- Trigger a disposition review. [i](#)
- Nothing. Leave the content as is. [i](#)

Don't retain the content. Just delete it if it's older than [i](#)

10. Lastly, you have to specify how retention will be calculated (when the retention clock will start ticking). The choices are: **When it was created** (date the document uploaded to the library), **when it was last modified**, **when it was labeled**, **an event**. Different uses cases might prompt you to choose one over the other, but again, in our case, let's keep it simple and choose **when it was created**. Click **Next**

Don't retain the content. Just delete it if it's older than [i](#)

years

Retain or delete the content based on

[i](#)

- when it was created
- when it was last modified
- when it was labeled
- an event

11. You then get a screen where you can review the settings and adjust as necessary, click **Create this label** to create a label

Create a label to help users classify their content.

- ✓ Name your label
- ✓ Label settings
- Review your settings

Review your settings

Name Edit
Customer Record

Description for admins Edit
Items tagged with this label will be kept for 7 years, then deleted

Description for users Edit
Items tagged with this label will be kept for 7 years, then deleted

Retention Edit
2 days
Retain and Delete
Based on when it was created

[Back](#) [Create this label](#) [Cancel](#)

12. You will now see the label appear in the table/dashboard

Create a label [Publish labels](#) [Auto-apply a label](#) [Refresh](#)

Name	Created by	Retention duration	Last modified
Customer Record	Gregory Zelfond	2 days	02/01/2020

STEP 2: Create a label Retention Policy




All we did in the previous steps was to create a label. We now need to tell SharePoint where this label will be applied (which SharePoint sites). To do this, we need to publish a **Retention Policy**. To do this:

1. From the same Information Governance dashboard, click on **Label Policies**

Information governance




Labels **Label policies** Import Retention Archive

Create retention label policies to either publish or auto-apply labels. When you publish labels to locations such as manually apply the labels to retain their content. When you auto-apply labels, users will see the labels automatic conditions (such as content containing specific sensitive info). [Learn more about retention label policies](#)

 Publish labels  Auto-apply a label  Refresh

Name	Created by	Last modified
Makes Financial documents a permanent record	Gregory Zelfond	10/30/2019
Retaining documents forever	Gregory Zelfond	10/30/2019
Contract Doc Policy	Gregory Zelfond	02/01/2020

2. Next, click on **Publish Labels**

 Publish labels  Auto-apply a label  Refresh

Name

Makes Financial documents a permanent record

Retaining documents forever

Contract Doc Policy

3. On the next screen, click on **Choose labels to publish**

Publish labels so users can apply them to their content.

- Choose labels to publish
- Publish to users and groups
- Name your policy
- Review your settings

Choose labels to publish

Choose the labels you want to publish to you
you don't see the labels you want, you'll be e

The list is currently empty.

Choose labels to publish

Next Cancel

Choose labels

+ Add - Remove

Search

Tags (0)

4. Click **Add**
5. Choose the label(s) you would like to apply to the policy. **You can have multiple labels as part of a single policy.** For example, a scenario would be, I want to have two labels available on a SharePoint site, one that will classify and keep content for seven years and one that would keep the document forever (so the user can choose which one to apply to a file). In our case, for simplicity purposes, I will select one label (Customer Record),

we set up in **STEP 1 above**. Once you select the label(s), click **Add**

Choose labels

Choose which tags to add from the list below.

Need a different tag? [Create new tags](#)

∨ Added (1)

∧ Tags (7)

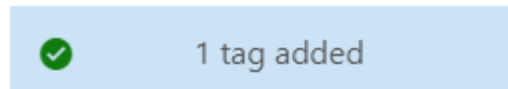
<input type="checkbox"/> Name	Retention
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Document	7 years keep + delete
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Test	1 day keep
<input type="checkbox"/> Contract Document Test	2 days keep + delete
<input type="checkbox"/> Record Label Test	7 years keep + delete
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customer Record	2 days keep + delete
<input type="checkbox"/> Contract Doc Test	2 days keep + delete
<input type="checkbox"/> Contract agreement	Forever keep

Add

2

Cancel

Choose labels



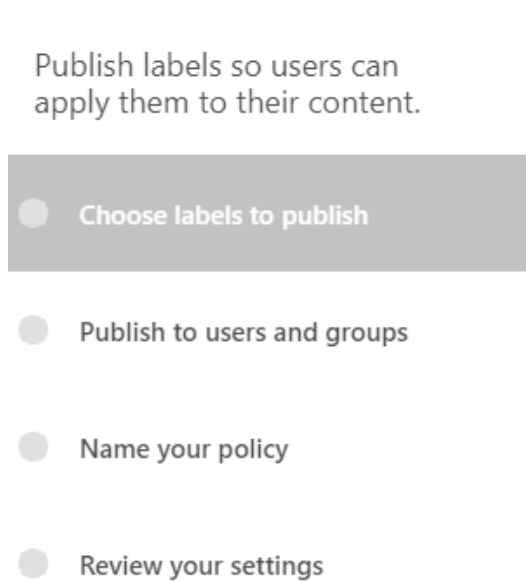
^ Tags (1)

Customer Record



6. Click **Done**

7. Click **Next**



Choose labels to publish

Choose the labels you want to publish to your c
you don't see the labels you want, you'll be able

Publish these labels (1 label(s))

Customer Record 2 days keep + delete

[Edit](#)



8. On the next screen, we specify the location(s) where we want to publish our label. By default, it will publish it everywhere, but in most cases, you want to specify certain sites, groups, etc. – so make sure to click on **Let me**

choose specific locations radio button

Publish labels so users can apply them to their content.





- ✓ Choose labels to publish
- Publish to users and groups**
- Name your policy
- Review your settings

Choose locations

We'll publish the labels to the locations you choose.

Default All locations. Includes content in Exchange email, Office 365 groups, OneDrive and SharePoint documents.

Let me choose specific locations.

Status	Location	Include	Exclude
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	 Exchange email	All Choose recipients	None Exclude recipients
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	 SharePoint sites	All Choose sites	None Exclude sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	 OneDrive accounts	All Choose accounts	None Exclude accounts
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	 Office 365 groups	All Choose groups	None Exclude groups

[Back](#) [Next](#) [Cancel](#)

9. In my case, I want to apply the label to just one site that is part of an [Office 365 Group](#), so I unchecked all the other radio buttons/locations and chose **Choose groups**, so I can specify which Office 365 Group the label will be

published to

Publish labels so users can apply them to their content.

Choose labels to publish

Publish to users and groups

Name your policy





Review your settings

Choose locations

We'll publish the labels to the locations you choose.

All locations. Includes content in Exchange email, Office 365 groups, OneDrive and SharePoint documents.

Let me choose specific locations.

Status	Location	Include	Exclude
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	 Exchange email		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	 SharePoint sites		
<input type="checkbox"/>	 OneDrive accounts		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	 Office 365 groups	All Choose groups	None Exclude groups

Edit locations



Office 365 groups

[Choose groups](#)

∨ Groups (0) Clear all

10. Click **Choose groups**

11. Select the group and click **Choose**, then on the next screen click **Done**

Edit locations



Office 365 groups

Choose which groups to choose from the list below.

financial **1**

✓ Added (1)

^ Groups (1)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name	Email
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Financial Docs 2	FinancialDocs@sharepointmaven.com

3 Choose Cancel

12. Click **Next**

OneDrive accounts


Office 365 groups **1 group**
Choose groups

Back **Next** Cancel

13. Provide a name and description (optional) for your policy, click **Next**

Name your policy

Name * 

Retention of Customer Documents 

Description

Retention of Customer Documents 



Back

Next


Cancel

14. On the final review screen, it shows everything you have set up. If you are happy with everything, click **Publish labels**

Publish labels so users can apply them to their content.

- Choose labels to publish
- Publish to users and groups**
- Name your policy
- Review your settings

Review your settings ×

 It will take up to 1 day for labels to appear to your users. Labels will appear in Outlook and Outlook web app only for mailboxes that have at least 10 MB of data.

Choose labels to publish [Edit](#)

1 label(s) will be published (made available) so your users can classify their content

Customer Record2 days keep + delete

Publish to users and groups [Edit](#)

Office 365 groups


Policy name [Edit](#)

Retention of Customer Documents




Description [Edit](#)

Retention of Customer Documents

[Back](#) [Publish labels](#) [Cancel](#)



15. You will now see your policy appearing in the policies dashboard

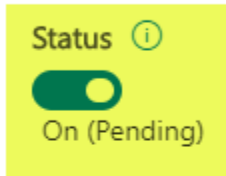
 Publish labels  Auto-apply a label  Refresh

Name	Created by	Last modified
Retention of Customer Documents	Gregory Zelfond	02/01/2020

16. If you click on the policy name again, you will see its status (**Pending**) – meaning that policy publishing to the sites is in progress. The retention labels will not show up in the SharePoint site until the policy is published –

On (Success)

Retention of Customer Documents



Policy name

Retention of Customer Documents

Description

Retention of Customer Documents

[Edit](#)

Applies to content in these locations

Office 365 groups

[Edit](#)

Settings

Publish labels for your users

[Edit](#)

17. It might take from a few minutes up to 24 hours to fully publish the label (depending on a SharePoint site or group you have chosen). Once that happens, when you go back to the Policy, you will see **On (Success)**. That means that we successfully published the policy and retention labels are now

available in the SharePoint Site.

Retention of Customer Documents

[Edit policy](#)

[Delete policy](#)

Status ⓘ

On (Success)

Policy name

Retention of Customer Documents

Description [Edit](#)

Retention of Customer Documents

Applies to content in these locations [Edit](#)

Office 365 groups

Settings [Edit](#)

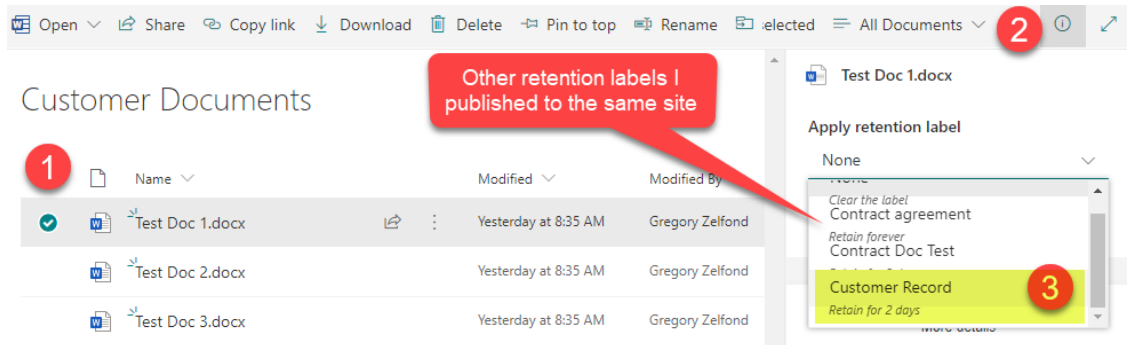
Publish labels for your users

- Customer Record

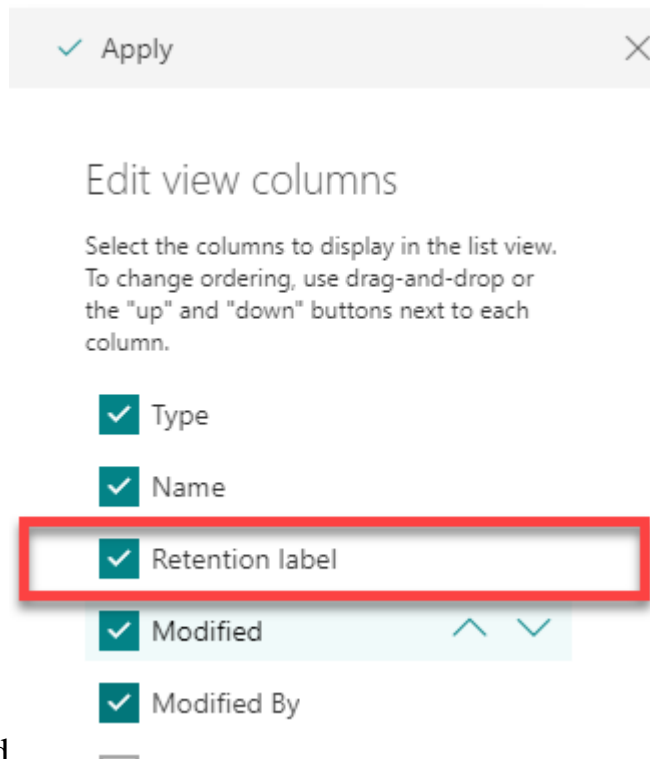
STEP 3: Label Documents with a Retention Label

Well, honey, now it is the most exciting stuff. This is where we now tag the documents against the labels published.

1. Tag the document as you would with any other metadata. Since we published the label to the site – you will now see it available in the document information panel. In my case, I also have other labels published, so in my case, you can see additional retention labels appearing in the drop-down below



2. It always helps to have an additional column displayed – so you can see the



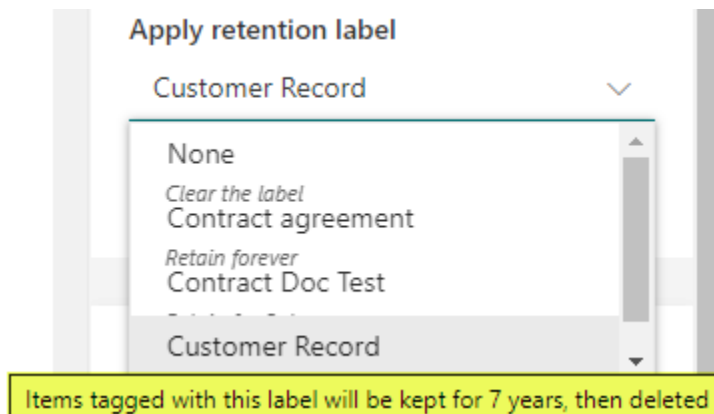
retention label applied

3. So now your library will look like this

Customer Documents

Name	Retention label	Modified	Modified By
Test Doc 1.docx	Customer Record	Yesterday at 8:35 AM	Gregory Zelfond
Test Doc 2.docx	Customer Record	Yesterday at 8:35 AM	Gregory Zelfond
Test Doc 3.docx	Customer Record	Yesterday at 8:35 AM	Gregory Zelfond
Test Doc 4.docx		9 minutes ago	Gregory Zelfond
Test Doc 5.docx		9 minutes ago	Gregory Zelfond
Test Doc 6.docx		8 minutes ago	Gregory Zelfond
Test Doc 7.docx		8 minutes ago	Gregory Zelfond

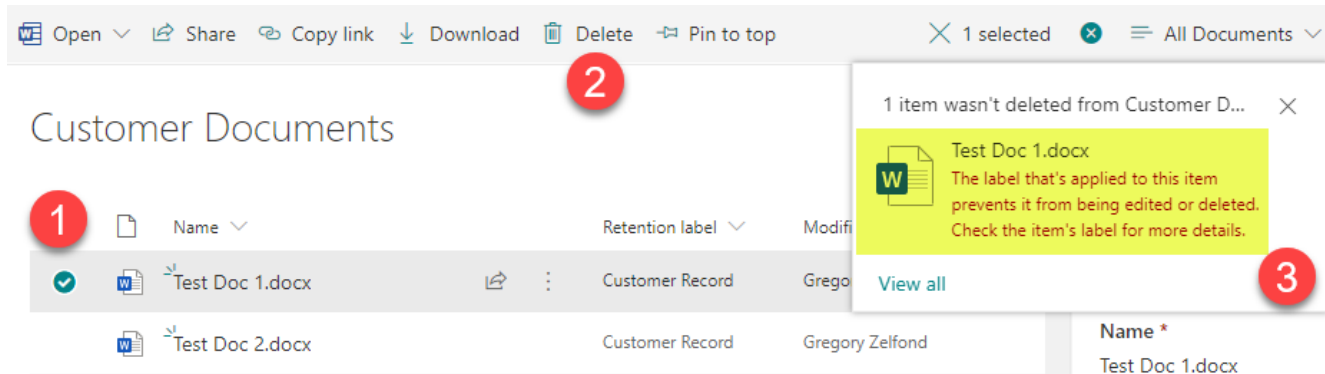
4. By the way, remember that optional description for the users we did in **Step 1**? When users hover over the label, they will get to see this additional information. **So don't skip it!**



Just for the record, there are many ways to apply the retention label to a document. In the example above, I showed you the most basic one, where the retention label is applied at the file level. There are other ways to apply labels too – please check out [this wonderful post/presentation from Joanne Klein](#).

What happens during the retention period?

1. Since this is just the retention label and not a label that marks the document as a record, anyone with the **Edit** permission level (**Members**) can edit the document, just like they did it before.
2. When the users try to delete a document during the retention period (2 days in our case), they will now get to see the following message: **“The label that’s applied to this item prevents it from being edited or deleted. Check the item’s label for more details.”**



3. Any member of the site (those with the **Edit** privileges) will be able to **assign or remove** the retention label from the document, just like with any other piece of metadata

What happens after the retention period expires?

Well, you probably expected the files to be automatically deleted after the two days have gone by, did not you? And I expected Hillary Clinton to win the 2016 presidential election, but the reality is different, my friend.

The library looks the same a few days **after the expiration of the retention policy**. If you look at the screenshot before, the files should have been deleted automatically two days after they were created, but yet, they are still here four days after being created. Moreover, when trying to delete them manually – you get the same error message as you did during the expiration period.

Files are still here 2 days after the expiration of the retention policy

1 item wasn't deleted from Customer D...
 Test Doc 1.docx
 The label that's applied to this item prevents it from being edited or deleted. Check the item's label for more details.

... and they cannot be manually deleted either

Name	Created	Retention label	Retention label Applied
Test Doc 1.docx	4 days ago	Customer Record	2/2/2020, 5:40:00 PM
Test Doc 2.docx	4 days ago	Customer Record	2/2/2020, 5:15:00 PM
Test Doc 3.docx	4 days ago	Customer Record	2/2/2020, 5:24:00 PM

The reason for this is that Microsoft runs a weekly timer job behind the scenes that checks for all the documents that are affected by the retention policy and takes action at that point in time. Below is a screenshot from [their article](#), proving what I just said. Moreover, the timing of this job cannot be changed.

Note: Information management policies are compiled by an Information Management Policy Timer Job, managed by Microsoft, which runs weekly. Therefore, your policies may not take effect immediately. The frequency and date of the Information Management Policy Timer Job cannot be changed.

Finally, six days after the expiration date of the label, the documents have disappeared from the library (got deleted and moved to the Recycle Bin).

Recycle bin

Name	Date deleted	Deleted by	Created by	Original location
Test Doc 1.docx	2/9/2020 6:39 AM	System Account	Gregory Zelfond	sites/FinancialDocs/Customer Documents
Test Doc 2.docx	2/9/2020 6:39 AM	System Account	Gregory Zelfond	sites/FinancialDocs/Customer Documents
Test Doc 3.docx	2/9/2020 6:39 AM	System Account	Gregory Zelfond	sites/FinancialDocs/Customer Documents
Test Doc 4.docx	2/9/2020 6:39 AM	System Account	Gregory Zelfond	sites/FinancialDocs/Customer Documents
Test Doc 5.docx	2/9/2020 6:39 AM	System Account	Gregory Zelfond	sites/FinancialDocs/Customer Documents
Test Doc 6.docx	2/9/2020 6:39 AM	System Account	Gregory Zelfond	sites/FinancialDocs/Customer Documents

At this point, they will follow the regular cycle of the [Recycle Bin](#) (will stay there for 93 days, then purged forever).