

Court Records

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the MTAS website ([mtas.tennessee.edu](https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu)). This website is maintained daily by MTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee municipal government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Court Records

Reference Number: MTAS-683

COURTS RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE		
Description of Record	Retention Period	Legal Authority/ Rationale
C-1. Affidavit of Complaint. A written statement alleging that a person has committed an offense and alleging the essential facts instituting the offense charged made upon oath before a magistrate or court clerk.	*Permanent Record.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-2. Appeal Dockets. Record of cases going to appellate courts showing style of case, date, and ruling of the court; may show court costs	*Retain 10 years after last entry.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-3. Appearance and Rule Dockets. Record of first appearance of all causes in court, showing date filed, names of attorneys, style of case, security, and action taken.	*Permanent Record	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-4. Appearance and Bail Bond Records. Bonds and recordings of bonds executed by defendants and sureties showing defendant's name, name of person serving as surety, amount of bond, and signatures of the accused and sureties.	*Retain 10 years after final judgment.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-5. Attachment and Injunction Bonds. Bonds executed in attachment and injunction cases insuring defendant against damages likely to occur as a result of wrongful suing, showing date of bond, name of principal and sureties, amount of bond, condition of the obligation, and signatures of principal and sureties.	*Retain 10 years after final judgment.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-6. Attachments on Personal Property. Writs issued during court action to seize the personal property of the defendant to be held as security for the satisfaction of such judgment as the plaintiff may recover.	*Retain 10 years after final settlement of case.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-7. Attachments on Real Property. Writs issued during court action to seize the real property of the defendant to be held as security for the satisfaction of such judgment as the plaintiff may recover.	*Retain 10 years after final settlement of the case.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-8. Bills of Costs-Courts with Concurrent Jurisdiction. Certified bills of cost in criminal cases in courts having concurrent general sessions court jurisdiction and submitted for payment by the city court clerk, showing names of the plaintiff and defendant, offense charged, date of initial action, items of cost, amount of each, date process issued, signature of office issuing warrant, date filed with city court clerk for trial (if applicable), clerk's certification, date judgment paid, and number of warrant issued in payment.	Retain 5 years after close of case.	Keep for audit and review purposes.
C-9. Bills of Costs-Ordinance Violation Cases. Bills of costs submitted for payment showing names of plaintiff and defendant, date of initial action, items of cost, amount of each, date process issued, signature of official issuing	Retain 5 years after close of case.	Keep for audit and review purposes.

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warrant, date filed for court for trial, clerk's certification, date judgment paid, and number of warrant issued in payment.		
C-10. Bond Books, Miscellaneous. Receivers, appearance, costs, etc., bonds, showing names of principal and sureties, style of case, amount and date of bond, condition of the obligation, and signatures of principal and sureties.	*Retain 10 years after release, replacement, or expiration of all bonds in book.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-11. Briefs, Civil Cases. Statements of the case, legal theory and arguments for a party in a case.	*Maintain for 3 years after final disposition of the case, then destroy after notice is given to parties.	Notice permits parties to retrieve records. T.C.A. § 18-1-202(b).
C-12. Capias. The general name for several types of writs that require an officer to take the body of the defendant into custody; they are writs of attachment or arrest.	*Permanent Record	Original process must be kept permanently. T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-13. Case Ledgers. Records of case funds received and distributed.	Permanent Record.	Recommended by the comptroller in the Internal Control and Compliance Manual for Tennessee Municipalities.
C-14. Citation. A demand that the defendant cited appear in court at a stated time to answer to a misdemeanor or civil offense charge. The citation states the name and address of the person cited, the name of the issuing officer, and the offense charged.	*Permanent Record	Original process must be kept permanently. T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-15. Cost Bonds, Civil Cases. Bonds executed to insure payment of court costs, showing names of plaintiff and defendant, amount and date of bond, condition of the obligation, and signatures of principal and sureties.	*Maintain for 3 years after final disposition of the case, then destroy after notice is given to parties.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-16. Court Action Reports.	Retain 10 years	Keep for audit purposes.
C-17. Criminal Actions, Record of. All original process, case papers, and documents in criminal cases, including judge's orders, in both felony and misdemeanor cases.	*Permanent Record	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-18. Delinquent Tax Collection Reports. Copies of the reports made by the clerk to the cities, county, and state of tax collections in litigation, showing docket number, case number, names of complainant and respondent, amount collected, total, and date of report.	*Retain 10 years.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).

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C-19. Detainer Warrants. Instrument authorizing the keeper of a prison to keep a person in custody. Shows name of person in custody, length of time to be detained, and signature of issuing official.	*Retain 10 years.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-20. Discovery Records, Civil Cases. Interrogatories, depositions, and other legal devices to obtain information concerning a case prior to trial.	*Maintain for 3 years after final disposition of the case, then destroy after notice is given to the parties.	Notice permits parties to retrieve records. T.C.A. § 18-1-202(b).
C-21. Distress Warrants and Warrant Stubs. Original warrants and warrant stubs issued against persons, showing name and address of person for whom warrant is issued, date of issue, amount of tax due, fees, and penalties.	If court action results, retain until final settlement of case; if no court action, retain 5 years.	Keep for audit purposes.
C-22. Executions. Writs or orders providing that an act or course of conduct be carried out.	*Retain 10 years after issuance.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-23. General Account Ledgers (execution docket). Ledger accounts or funds received from payments of judgments and court costs; money distributed by the clerk showing style and number of case, date of collection, name of person from whom received, and amount; date of payment, name of payee, number of check issued, and amount; may show cash book and page number from which entry was posted.	*Permanent Record.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-24. General Index. Index to all original case papers, showing file number and names of complaint and respondent.	*Permanent Record.	Necessary for use of other permanent records.
C-25. Habeas Corpus, Writs of. Writs issued to change the place of trial, to move from custody of one court to another, directing that a detained person be produced, etc.	*Permanent Record.	Original process must be kept permanently. T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-26. Judge's Opinions. Statements by the judge of the decision reached in regard to a cause heard before him relating the laws as applied to the case and giving reasons on which the judgment is based.	*Permanent Record.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-27. Litigation Tax Reports. A record of all state and city litigation taxes collected by the clerk showing number of cases and amount received.	Retain 10 years after last entry.	Keep for audit purposes.
C-28. Minute Books and Indexes. Minutes show the course and proceedings in all cases from their origin to termination, giving name of defendant, offense charged, date of trial, verdict, and sentence of the court.	Permanent Record.	Necessary for use of other permanent records.

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C-29. Mittimuses. Commitments to jail, showing name of person committed, offense charged, name of prosecutor, amount of bail, date, and signature of clerk of the court.	*Retain 10 years.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-30. Municipal Court with Concurrent Jurisdiction Docket Book, Criminal (State). Dockets showing date of trial, case number, name of defendant, action of the court, name of returning officer, and list of witnesses claiming fees.	Permanent Record.	Keep permanently as a basic record of the actions of the court.
C-31. Processes Served, Record of. Record of warrants, capiases, summonses, and other papers served.	Retain 3 years after last entry. Note: Do not confuse this record with original process that must be kept as a permanent record to comply with T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).	Keep for audit purposes.
C-32. Receipts for Papers. Record of all files and papers removed from the office, showing date and by whom taken, and date returned.	Retain until all files and papers are returned.	Working papers as defined in T.C.A. § 10-7-301(14).
C-33. Reports, Municipal Court with Concurrent Jurisdiction. Duplicates of monthly reports to the county and the state of all revenue collected by the clerk, showing dates of quarter, from whom received or source of collection, costs, fees and mileage of witnesses, and fees, commissions and emoluments of the sheriff, his deputies, constables, game wardens, state highway patrolmen, and other officers for services to the court, the fines and forfeitures adjudged by the court, and all other funds coming into the hands of the clerk and judge.	Retain 10 years after clerk's tenure is broken.	Keep for audit purposes.
C-34. Rule Dockets and Indexes. A record of original processes issued and files incident to cases tried in court, showing number of case, date and hour filed, names of complainant, respondent, and solicitors; also date and nature of process, names of bondmen, date process served, note of officer's return, and rules and orders of the court.	*Permanent Record	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-35. Search Warrants. A written order issued in the name of the state and directed to a law enforcement officer commanding him to search a specific house, business establishment, or other premises.	*Retain 10 years.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-36. Subpoenas. Copies of summonses to appear in court as witnesses in lawsuits, showing name of person summoned, day and hour to appear, in whose behalf, and signature of the clerk.	*In criminal cases, retain 10 years. *In civil cases, retain 3 years.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202.

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C-37. Summonses. A writ notifying a person that a court action has commenced against him and that he is required to appear on a day named and answer the complaint in such action.	*Permanent Record	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-38. Trial Exhibits and Evidence. Any evidence and exhibits presented at trial that become part of the record of the case.	*Retain 10 years after final judgment, unless local rule of court provides for a different retention period.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-39. Unclaimed Funds, Record of. Record of funds in hands of clerk unclaimed for 7 years and turned over to the state, showing style of case, case number, respondent, and amount.	*Permanent Record	Keep record for audit purposes and a reasonable period to allow interested parties to make inquiries.
C-40. Warrants. Writs issued in both civil and criminal cases requiring an officer of the law to arrest the person named therein and bring him before the court to answer charges of some offense that he is alleged to have committed.	*Permanent Record	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).
C-41. Witness Books. Record of witnesses appearing in court cases, showing date of court term, style of case, names of witnesses for complainant, names of witnesses for respondent, number of days attended, miles traveled, amount due, and date of payment.	*Retain 10 years after last entry.	T.C.A. § 18-1-202(a).

*Indicates a mandatory retention period based on state and federal law.

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