

## Vertical File Cabinets – 10 Pro Tips

### 1 Confirm letter vs. legal before ordering — this cannot be changed after delivery

Letter (15" wide) and legal (18" wide) vertical cabinets are completely different products. A letter cabinet cannot be converted to legal, and legal documents will not fit in a letter cabinet. Confirm the dominant file size in the environment before the order is placed.

### 6 Plan 44"–52" of clearance in front of the cabinet for drawer access

A vertical file drawer extends 25"–27" from the cabinet face. Add 18"–24" for a person to stand comfortably while filing. Without this clearance, the cabinet cannot be used properly — file against a wall only when adequate access space exists in front.

### 2 Full-extension ball-bearing drawers are required — partial extension wastes capacity

Partial-extension drawers leave the back 25–50% of the drawer inaccessible without leaning in. Files filed in that zone become unused over time. Specify full extension explicitly — it is not always the default and may not be listed as a feature unless asked.

### 7 Fire-rated cabinets are significantly heavier — check floor load ratings

A standard 4-drawer vertical weighs 100–180 lbs. A fire-rated 4-drawer vertical weighs 300–500 lbs. Position fire-rated cabinets on load-bearing floors, never on raised access flooring without engineering review.

### 3 Anti-tip interlock is mandatory — verify ANSI/BIFMA certification

A loaded vertical drawer weighs 60–100 lbs. Extended forward 26", it creates significant tip risk. The mechanical interlock prevents multiple drawers from opening simultaneously. Verify ANSI/BIFMA compliance — non-certified budget units pose injury liability.

### 8 Wall-anchor 5-drawer and 4-drawer verticals even with interlocks in place

Interlocks prevent tip-overs from normal use but not from external forces — someone leaning on an extended drawer, or a heavy item placed on top. The hardware is typically included. Always install it for any cabinet over 3 drawers.

### 4 4-drawer verticals are the commercial sweet spot — more capacity, accessible height

A 2-drawer unit is too limited for full-time filing; a 5-drawer requires a step stool for the top drawer. The 4-drawer at 52"–54" gives the best balance of capacity and accessibility. It's the most common commercial specification for good reason.

### 9 Use vertical cabinets where lateral cabinets won't fit — not everywhere

Verticals have a narrow wall footprint (15"–18") but extend deep into the room (25"–27"). In rooms where wall space is the constraint, verticals win. In rooms where the floor footprint depth is the constraint, consider laterals, which are shallower front-to-back.

### 5 Core removable locks add minimal cost upfront but save significantly on re-keying

Every time a key is lost or an employee leaves, a standard lock requires a locksmith visit. A core removable lock cylinder is swapped by the facility manager in minutes at a fraction of the locksmith cost. Specify CR locks for any multi-user environment.

### 10 Match quantities to actual filing volume — overfull drawers damage suspension

A drawer loaded to more than 80% capacity is difficult to open and close smoothly and places excessive stress on the suspension mechanism. If drawers are routinely overfull, add more drawer units rather than forcing files into undersized capacity.