

We all have items at home that we keep as reminders of people, events, and places that hold a special significance for us. It may be a family photograph album, newspaper clippings, a wedding or baptism dress, or a ticket stub from the first concert you attended. These items were often not intended to last a long time, and how we care for them (including display, handling, and storage) plays an important role in how long they last. The following is a list of recommendations that will help you care for your special items at home, ensuring that they can be enjoyed in the future!

General Care

- Reduce direct sunlight exposure.
- Handle materials with clean, dry hands.
- Store everything more than 1 foot off the floor, in case of flooding.
- Store in a cool dry place. Warmer temperatures speed up the natural deterioration processes in these materials and high humidity increases risk of mold.
- Cardboard boxes and office supply materials are acceptable short-term storage solutions. Acid-free paper-based materials, polyethylene, and polyester are ideal materials for long term storage.
- Actively monitor for and store materials away from pest activity to reduce pest damage risk.

Loose Photographs

- Sort and organize your photographs in a way that makes sense for you.
- Label the photographs on the back with pencil. Include date, names of people, and a brief description.
- Try to digitize your photographs for easier sharing and reduced handling. Prioritize photos that are the most faded and/or favorites.
- Ideally photographs are stored flat in archival acid free boxes or polyester sleeves.

Photograph Albums

- When looking through the album, turn the pages carefully as the paper may be weak/ photographs may be loose inside.
- Loose contents are okay. Place them in an envelope, folder, or polyester sleeve and put back between the pages it was found.
- For digitization, opt for taking a photo or using a scanning app on a smartphone to avoid placing the entire album on a scanner as this could damage the album structure.

Books

- Use thin flat flexible materials (e.g. paper, ribbons) to mark your place.
- When pulling a book off the shelf, push in the books on either side of it and hold the book by its spine to pull it out. Pulling from the top can cause spine damage and crush the bottom of the spine (even with paper back books).
- If you like to write in your books, use a pencil.
- Dust your books and bookshelves every once in a while.
- Store books upright or laying down. Use bookends to support upright storage if needed.

Textiles

- Textiles are best stored flat with as few folds as possible. When storing folded items, pad the folds to prevent creases from developing over time.
- To pad folds or hangers, acid-free tissue paper, polyester fabrics (e.g. stockinette), polyester batting, and polyethylene foam are ideal materials to use.
- Unbleached cotton and muslin are ideal for dust covers, drawer liners, and wraps for textiles.
- Clean the textiles before placing them in storage.

Water Emergencies

- Create an emergency salvage kit of non-water-absorbent gloves, (K)N95 masks, eye protection, clean towels, and some plastic bins (any type of plastic is fine).
- Take thorough photos of the damage. This may be useful for insurance.
- Your safety is top priority. Ensure the area is safe to enter before trying to salvage items. Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) including long sleeves, long pants, waterproof footwear, and non-water-absorbent gloves.
- Mold can grow within 48 hours of a water event. If there is a chance of mold, wear a (K)N95 mask and eye protection.
- Towel dry/ air dry materials and use fans to circulate air around the room without blowing directly on the objects. Avoid using a hairdryer.
- Damp books should be stood upright and fanned out to allow for air circulation.
- Materials in frames and sleeves should be gently removed and laid out to air dry.
- Contact a professional in cases of severe mold, sewage, and structural damages.
- Textiles, paper, books, and photographs that cannot be air dried immediately can be wrapped in butcher or wax paper and frozen until they can be treated by a professional.

Archival Material Suppliers

- Talas <https://www.talasonline.com/> - Check out the “Archival Storage” section of the website.
- Hollinger Metal Edge <https://www.hollingermetalede.com/>
- University Products <https://www.universityproducts.com/>

These three sites offer similar materials but the prices may vary.

Art supply or office supply stores may have archival grade products. Ideal paper-based materials for long-term storage are acid-free or lignin-free. Ideal plastics are polyethylene (might say LDPE or HDPE for low density and high density polyethylene respectively) or polyester. Polyester is more stable than polyethylene however polyethylene is usually cheaper and still sufficient for long term storage.