



Preserving Old Photographs

The National Archives provides recommendations regarding how old photographs and documents should be stored. If it is difficult to perform all of these suggestions, do what is possible – the more that can be done to protect these treasures, the better. Photos are sensitive to light and may fade or discolour if exposed for long periods. To get started:

- Carefully scan old photos and negatives
- Print and frame copies for display
- Store the originals in a controlled environment

Storage

Keep photographs and negatives in folders or pockets to protect them from dust and light and provide physical support during use. It is recommended to use archival quality paper or cardboard to store photos. This means the pages in photo albums should be acid-free. The material of photo box should be the same. Stable plastic photo pockets or sleeves can be used, such as products made of polyester, polyethylene, or polypropylene.

When placing old family photos in a photo album, do not use tape or glue to keep them in place as this can lead to staining and paper damage. Also, avoid magnetic photo pages. Mount photos on acid-free paper album pages using acid-free or stable plastic mounting corners or place photos in stable plastic album pages.

Store film-based negatives (single sheets or strips of 4-6 frames) separately from other photographic materials, as they can produce acidic gases as they age.

If storing your old photos in a box, make sure the box is big enough that your photos can be stored flat or upright with no creasing or bending. If storing photos upright, use spacer boards to keep photos from bending.

Environment

Store photographs in cool, dark, dry, well-ventilated areas. Avoid roof spaces, sheds or garages where temperatures and humidity can fluctuate.

Captioning

Avoid ink and markers around photographs. Lightly write identifying information on the backs with pencil or write captions on the photo storage sheets. A record can be created with identifying information alongside digital copies of the photos.

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