

ARCHIVES

Archives is a word that can be used in 3 ways: to reference a set of materials that are kept for their value of documenting the past; to reference the organization that collects and preserves valuable materials; and to reference the place where the materials are kept. Archival materials are housed in institutions as well as people's homes. Regardless of where the materials are housed, they need to be properly cared for to keep them safe and preserve them for generations.

Individuals caring for their home archives follow the same process as professional archivists to preserve their materials. They appraise their collection, arrange and describe the materials in the collection, and take appropriate steps to preserve their collection.

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PRESERVING HOME ARCHIVES



1 APPRAISE

Begin the process of archiving your home collection by surveying and evaluating your materials.

What types of items do you have?

- ★ Examples: documents, certificates, diaries, scrapbooks, photographs, home videos, letters, books, souvenirs

Where are these items?

- ★ Examples: basement, closet, garage, bookshelves

2 ARRANGE & DESCRIBE

The next step is to gather all your materials, arrange them by type or subject, and describe them by identifying people, places, dates, and other important details. If possible, write down memories you have about the items. Write your notes on a separate piece of paper, not on the archival material, and keep the paper with the item it goes with. Everyone's story is unique and interesting, and making notes helps share your story with others. It's understandable if you can't answer all these questions. Just record what you know. Any information is helpful!

3 PRESERVE

The final step is to prepare the materials for preservation. This includes thinking about how the individual items are being stored and where the entire collection is being stored.

First, look at each item and decide how it should be stored. Use archival supplies (acid-free folders and boxes, photo sleeves, etc.) if you can, but basic office and home supplies can be cheaper alternatives.

Consider the following preservation techniques:

- ★ Try to use undyed supplies, like manila file folders, because dye can transfer to documents.
- ★ Plastic bins rather than cardboard boxes are a good alternative to archival boxes.
- ★ Store photos in photo sleeves that don't contain adhesive, glue, or tape.
- ★ Flatten folded items to prevent cracking/tearing at the creases.
- ★ Remove rusty fasteners (staples, paper clips, etc.).
- ★ Store similar materials together. For example, put documents in one box and home videos in a different box.
- ★ Create digital files of your physical materials. For example, you can convert tapes and movies to digital files, and scan photos to create digital copies on your computer.