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Storing Family Papers and Photographs

Store items at a low temperature and a low relative humidity

- The lower the temperature the longer your items will last, because cooler temperatures slow the rate of chemical decay and reduce insect activity. Keep the temperature below 75 degrees Fahrenheit (F).
- Keep the relative humidity (RH) below 65% to prevent mold growth and reduce insect activity.
- Avoid very low relative humidity because relative humidity below 15% can cause brittleness.



Different storage conditions changed how these two photographs aged.

Consider cold storage for acetate negatives, color negatives, prints, and slides

- Acetate negatives and color negatives, slides, and prints are vulnerable to fading and deterioration within decades, if stored at room temperature. Cold storage can slow this deterioration, but it requires special packaging and steps. Learn how to prepare items for cold storage at National Park Service Cold Storage website.

Reduce the risk of damage from water, insects, and rodents

- Store items out of damp basements, garages, and hot attics.

- Keep items away from sources of leaks and floods, such as pipes, windows, or known roof leaks.
- Store items on a shelf so they don't get wet.
- Store items away from food and water which are attractive to insects and rodents.

Packaging family papers and photographs for storage. Boxes, folders, rolls, sleeves, albums, and scrapbooks, oh my!



Box with folders that fit exactly inside.



What not to do: papers are bent and folded to fit inside the box.



Document box with spacer boards

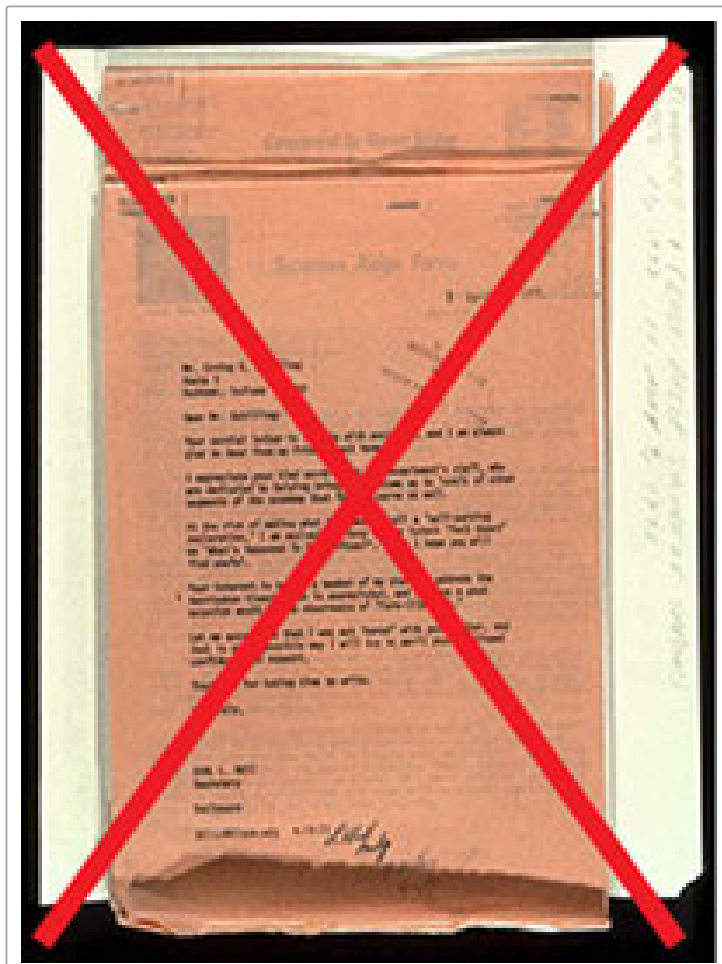


Image of what not to do, items are hanging outside the folder resulting in creased and crumpled edges

Use containers that:

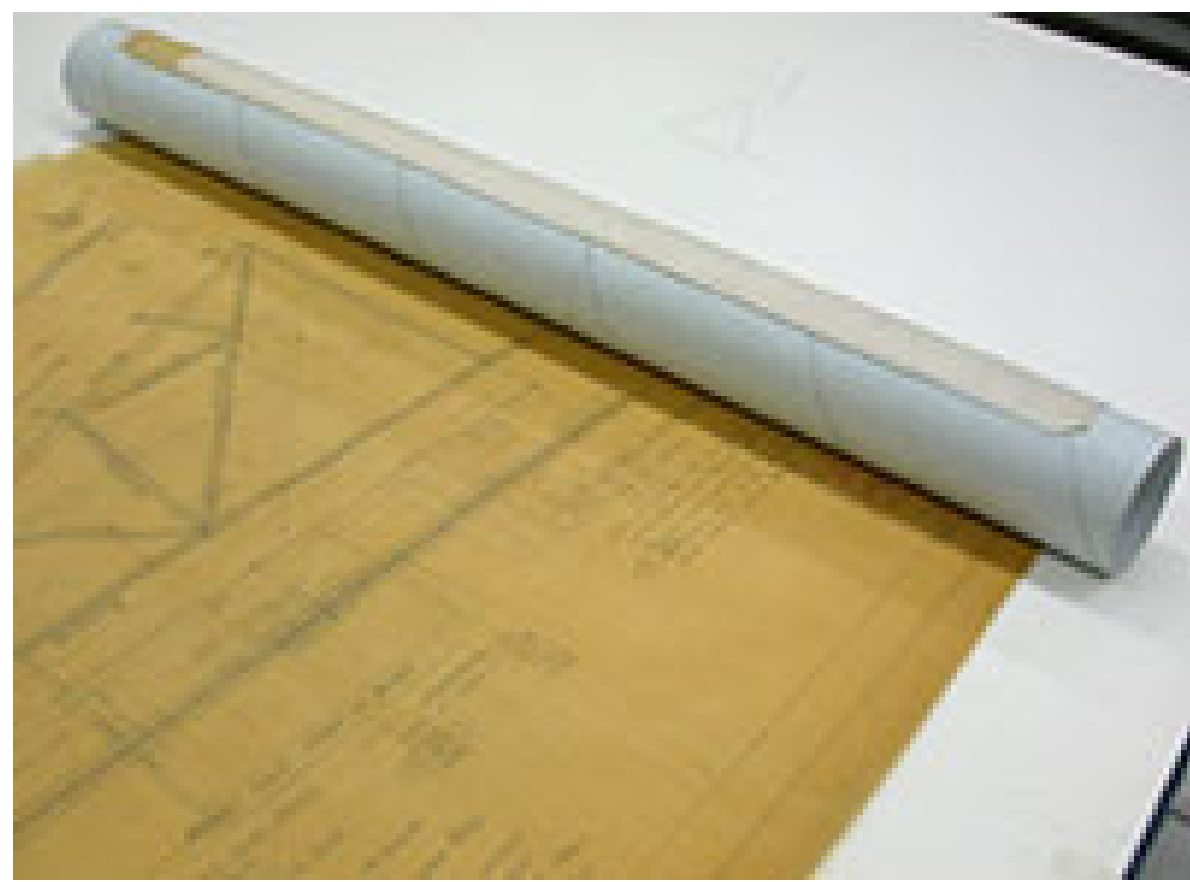
- Are big enough for the originals to lay flat or upright without folding or bending
- Are the right sizes, so items don't shift
 - Use a spacer board if there are not enough items to fill an upright box.
 - Don't overstuff the box.
- Are made of board or folder stock that is lignin-free and acid-free or buffered.
- Have passed the PAT [↗](#) if storing photographs

Rolls

Large flexible sheets can be stored rolled.

- Roll onto a sturdy tube so it is less likely to be crushed.
- Use an archival quality paper tube that is buffered with low-lignin content.
- Select a tube that is at least two inches longer than the width of the widest sheet.
- Five sheets may be rolled on to one tube. Roll all five sheets onto the tube at the same time, not one after the other.

How to roll onto a tube:



Line up the originals on the tube. Make sure the tube is larger than the originals with extra room in case it doesn't roll straight.



Slowly roll the tube so that the originals roll around it. Keep the tube at right angles to the long edges of the originals as you roll. This helps the originals roll straight onto the tube.



Once the originals have been wrapped around the tube, wrap the rolled originals with acid free tissue or bond paper. This will protect them from light damage.



Cover the paper wrapper with polyester film. The polyester film will protect the original and the paper wrapper from water. Polyester film is being rolled on the tube to protect the originals from water.



Loosely tie with cotton twill tape or flat ribbon to secure the polyester film. Cotton twill tape or flat ribbon being loosely tied around the roll to secure the polyester film

Sleeves



A document in polyester sleeve