

# H O M E P R E S E R V A T I O N C H E C K L I S T



LEARN THE STEPS TO  
PRESERVING

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NEWSPAPERS  
OLD PHOTOGRAPHS  
IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS  
ARTWORK  
BOOKS  
BIBLES  
AND OTHER FAMILY MEMORIES



**small changes you can make  
in your home to extend the  
life of important paper &  
book material**

# HI THERE!

You know that old photo you have of your grandfather in his youth? Or that letter you've kept all these years? How about the bible that belonged to your grandma that is now stored in the attic? These family heirlooms fade, yellow and tear in time and require a little extra love from us in order to preserve them.

You are in luck, though because you have this nifty checklist that will lovingly and sternly suggest small steps you can take in the direction of preserving your treasures. The goal of the checklist is to help you create an environment that will preserve the life of your book and paper heirlooms including photographs, documents, bibles, art on paper, maps, plans, among others. With simple tweaks and a knowledge of what harms your valuables, you can increase the life of your belongings exponentially. Check out the blog posts on environmental monitoring and damages (links below) to learn more about the effects of light, temperature, humidity, pollution and insects on your objects.

# THE LIST

Checking off most of the items listed below will ensure the life of your objects. Do not worry if you cannot manage to make all the changes necessary, even small ones will add years to your heirlooms. Let's get started:

- Your paper and books are stored in cool and dry places**

Attics and basements are not recommended. They tend to be damp, stuffy, dusty and depending on the season, too hot or too cold. This type of setting is suitable for insects and mold and promotes chemical deterioration.

- Your collections are kept away from heating sources such as radiators, heating vents, fireplaces and windows**

Heat can speed up chemical deterioration and insect activity. Finding a spot away from these common household items will reduce yellowing, distortion and adhesion of your material. Try to store your objects away from windows as well since sunlight causes the same damage.

**Books, photographs and documents are not stored in shelves along outer walls**

Placing your shelving and selected storage for your memories against walls that face into your home on either side of them is safer than propping them against outer walls. Outer walls (those that face outdoor spaces on one side) experience temperature changes and rapid fluctuations.

**Valuables are not stored near water sources or areas prone to leaks and dampness**

Inspect your storage areas for cracks and leaks often and make sure to remove objects near spaces prone to condensation. These include: drains, bathrooms, outer walls and areas near rainwater collection.

**Bottom shelves are four inches off the floor**

Flood and leak damage is less likely on materials stored higher off the ground.

**Dust does not accumulate on your objects or shelves**

Housekeeping practices discourage pests from munching on our heirlooms. Keeping a regular cleaning schedule and strict rules in areas where your heirlooms are stored is recommended.

## **Winter heat is kept low**

Relative humidity goes down if temperatures rise. In the winter, heated, warm air absorbs the moisture of your paper and books and will lead to cracking as air will essentially rob the moisture contained in your papers and books.

## **Windows and doors close properly and are weatherstriped**

Please refer to the explanation above.

## **Cracks and leaks are sealed**

Please refer to the explanation below winter heating.

## **Smoking, eating or drinking is not allowed near the heirlooms you are trying to protect**

Cigarette smoke, photocopying machines, some construction materials, paints, sealants and wooden storage/display materials emit harmful substances that affect your objects. Eating near your heirlooms attract pests that will eventually feast on your material (paper, leather, adhesives, etc.).

**When viewing your objects, your hands are washed and lotion-free**

Lotions stain paper and gloves are not recommended for handling. Ensuring your hands are clean is the best policy for your objects. Literature shows that cotton gloves prove cumbersome and cause more damage than they prevent. **Note:** photographs and negatives should be handled with gloves, as fingerprints can cause damage to their surface. Latex or nitrile gloves are ideal for this situation.

**Albums, scrapbooks, sets of documents and delicate or rare volumes are stored in preservation quality boxes**

Preservation quality (acid-free, lignin-free and alkaline buffered) enclosures provide protection to your loose objects without causing acid migration from the box onto the paper.

**Your valuable paper and books have minimal exposure to light and no direct exposure to sunlight**

Light exposure causes fading and yellowing. Installing blinds and curtains will prevent sunlight from affecting your objects. Boxed material is also protected from artificial lighting and sunlight.

- Maps, documents, plans and letters are stored flat or rolled (in the case of oversized material)**

Storing these items flat prevents handling damage that could take place when unfolding. If oversized materials are to be rolled, place tissue paper on the outside of the roll to protect the paper from the possible acids in the storage tube. In addition, place acid-free paper between the roll and the material used to keep the roll closed (rubber band, staple, string, etc.).

- Yellow, cracking, brittle (acidic) paper is stored separate from other documents and books to prevent their inherent acid from attacking nearby paper.**

Acidic paper can be stored in buffered folders, which provide contact with an alkaline material and slow down the acid degradation of the object.

- Suitable enclosures are used for photos and negatives**

Paper enclosures that are acid-free and lignin-free are recommended. You'll notice that some materials state they pass the PAT test (ANSI Photographic Activity Test), these are the best products for your photos. Alkaline buffered enclosures can be used for brittle prints but are not recommended for color photos or blueprints as they can cause damage to these objects.

**Soft pencil is used to label the back of your photos, documents and books**

HB or #2 pencils are used to mark objects. Write on the back of your material, without pressing hard on it. If you're dealing with a soft, light paper, use a softer pencil.

**Books are shelved upright or flat and leaning is avoided**

Shelve books of similar sizes together and prevent sagging or leaning by using bookends. These actions avoid distortions and broken book joints.

**Acid-free, lignin-free and buffered materials should be used for storing documents**

Paper enclosures that are archival quality, acid-free and lignin-free are recommended. Beware of enclosures that state they are 'acid free', at times this does not mean that they will not become acidic. By purchasing from trusted sources such as Talas, Gaylord Archival and University Products to name a few, you will ensure that the material obtained will be of preservation quality.



- Preservation-grade polyester (Melinex® or Mylar®), polyethylene or polypropylene are used as enclosures for paper objects.**

These types of plastics are the safest as they are of archival quality and inert. They do not deteriorate over time which makes them perfect for storing personal treasures.

- Newspaper clippings are photocopied onto buffered, lignin-free and acid-free paper.**

Newspapers produce harmful acidic compounds that affect surrounding material. Photocopying them and displaying the copy or placing the copy in a scrapbook, will extend the life of the original newspaper piece as well as the objects surrounding it. The original clipping should be placed in a buffered, acid-free and lignin-free enclosure by itself.

- Separate harmful objects from your treasures**

Acetates deteriorate and affect the appearance of the objects within them. Melinex® or Mylar® is the most stable and recommended plastic for enclosure materials but the cheaper polyethylene or polypropylene can be used as well. As in the case of photographs, ensuring that these materials pass the PAT test will guarantee their safety.

## **Ensure that there is good air circulation where your paper and book valuables are stored**

Creating space in between the back of shelves or walls and your objects promotes good air circulation in cabinets and shelving. Cover objects exposed to open air (and therefore pollutants) with breathable material such as Tyvek® or Gore-Tex®. These include cellulose nitrate film or hardwoods like oak, beech wood, birch, particle board, plywood and veneers.

## **LINKS TO RELEVANT BLOG POSTS**

[Light damage to books](#)

[How temperature and humidity affect books](#)

[Mold and your books](#)

[How pollution damages your paper and book materials](#)

[Insects on paper and books](#)

[How to eliminate the threat of insects in your book and paper collections](#)

**You're well on your way to becoming  
a cultural superhero! Thanks for  
downloading this checklist.**

**Make sure to get other great  
resources to help you care for your  
books and papers at  
[www.paperandbookrepair.com](http://www.paperandbookrepair.com).**

natARTlie (Natalie Ivick)

