



CARING FOR BOOKS AND OTHER PAPER BASED MATERIALS

1. Always handle books and papers with clean hands or while wearing clean gloves. Dirt can damage paper and natural oils on skin can affect paper, as well.
2. If your fingernails are painted, wear gloves when handling books and papers. Nail polish can rub off onto materials when your fingertips brush against surfaces.
3. Only use pencil while working with your valuable books and papers. Inks can cause permanent damage.
4. Store books and papers in a cool, dry environment away from direct sunlight. Humidity can cause mold and mildew to form on the materials.

Sunlight causes fading. As temperature and humidity fluctuations are damaging to materials storage in a garage, basement, or attic typically is not good.

5. Physically support books when handling them. Give proper support to the book by cradling it around the spine when open.

Take care not to force a book to lie flat.

6. Never remove a book from its shelf by pulling on the top of its spine or headcap. Over time this causes damage to the structure of the book. Instead you should grasp the fore edge of the book.

When picking up heavy books, grasp the lower edge as it moved off the shelf in order to support its weight.

7. Store materials away from food and water in order to prevent damage from insect infestations. Cockroaches, ants, termites, silverfish, booklice, and firebrats are pests often found in collections of books and papers.

While some do not actually eat the paper they may be an indication of other problems. For instance, booklice eat mold on the materials. Other pests eat the pastes that bind books. For more information on the subject of pests consult *Common Sense Pest Control* by William Olkowski, et al.

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8. Place books on shelves alongside books of similar height and weight. Placing a small book next to a taller one can create tension and cause damage.
9. Store large books flat. Atlases, scrapbooks, and other large, heavy books should be stored flat to avoid damage to spines, bindings, and covers.
10. Improve the storage conditions of individual items, especially fragile materials, by enclosing them in wrappers, folders, or boxes.

Look for paper and cardboard enclosures that are acid-free or plastic enclosures that are PVC-free (such as Mylar, polypropylene and polyethylene). When wrapping an item in a plastic medium, be sure to leave an opening for air and moisture to escape.

11. Remove extraneous materials including metal paper clips, rubber bands, staples, acidic wrapping paper and folders, etc. Try alternative methods for keeping papers together such as inserting them in a Mylar sleeve or acid-free folder.

While plastic paperclips and bands are not ideal, they are better than metal and rubber, which stain materials as they age and deteriorate.

12. Isolate newsprint because it is highly acidic, stains adjacent paper, and deteriorates quickly. Clippings can be photocopied on alkaline or acid-free paper or placed in Mylar sleeves.

Scrapbooks can be interleaved with acid-free tissue, but be careful not to over-expand the book causing stress to the spine and binding.

13. Unfold and flatten papers wherever possible without causing damage to the folds. Remove letters from envelopes.
14. Use archival-quality supplies whenever possible. Look for the words “acid-free” for paper and cardboard and “PVC-free” for plastics.

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2