

Here are some do's and don'ts when it comes to storing old photographs at home:

DO: Store photos in closets, cabinets, or under the bed. As part of your living quarters, these locations are likely to be more climate-controlled than other areas of the home.

DON'T: Store photos in a basement, attic, or garage where temperatures and humidity constantly fluctuate with the change of seasons.

DO: Store photos off the ground when possible. Even if they're stored in a plastic bin or tucked inside storage compartments, keeping your photos off the floor prevents potential damage from flooding.

DON'T: Store photos near a heating or cooling vent. The temperature will fluctuate as your air conditioning, or heat turns on and off, which could warp the photos and cause long-term damage

- **Ventilation** – A well-ventilated area with circulating air combats mold growth on photos and prevents other organic substances from causing any damage.
- **Temperature** – Generally, it's best to store physical photos in a cool room with a stable temperature. Storage temperatures above 75 degrees Fahrenheit can interfere with the chemicals used to process photos, which can cause discoloration.
- **Moisture** – Especially if you're considering storing old photos in your basement or attic, be aware of any potential moisture that could reach the space. From potential flooding to humidity levels in the air, it's best to keep physical photos away from any and all moisture if possible.
- **Lighting** – Light, and specifically sunlight, can cause photographs to fade. If you can't enclose your prints completely, be sure that you are storing them in a dark place.

How to Store Old Photos in Boxes or Envelopes

Once you've chosen where to store your photos and what type of container you'll use, it's time to pack and organize them properly. Unfortunately, that means more preventative measures must be taken than simply placing them inside photo-safe boxes.

Whether you're preparing to put your photos inside your storage unit or just tucking them inside your office closet, here are a few things to keep an eye on while you pack away photos for storage:

- **Keep photos flat:** Use stiff, flat materials, dividers, and containers to help your photos to stay flat. Piling them on top of each other in an unorganized manner can lead to bending and other permanent damage.
- **Find the right fit:** Especially if you're purchasing new photo storage containers or making your own dividers, it's important to ensure you've got the right fit. Cramming pictures, Polaroids, and prints into a box that's too small in length or width is one of the easiest ways to damage and dog-ear them before they've even made it to storage.
- **Don't under or overfill boxes:** Stuffing too many photos in one box can have the same effect as using a box that's too small. On the flip side, leaving too much room in your photo storage box can cause items to shift around in transport. If you have extra space, fill it with non-acidic tissue paper that won't damage your prints.

- **Non-acidic dividers are helpful:** If you've ever had to peel photos off one another, you already know it's not fun. Although it might feel meticulous, placing a sheet of paper or another type of divider between photos is a good idea. This can save you a headache in the long run, especially if your photos overheat or come in contact with water
- **Use albums with acid-free sleeves, sheet protectors, or photo corners:** If you can easily transfer photos from an existing album or start from scratch, choosing the right materials for your photo album can improve your preservation efforts. When shopping, look for materials like polyester, polypropylene, or polyethylene.
- **Choose the album itself carefully:** Avoid textiles that might be appealing to moths and other cloth-eating pests. Leather is your best bet on albums that will last and store well
- **Avoid adhesives:** Acids that can deteriorate the quality of printed photos hide in adhesives. Instead, opt for clear plastic photo sleeves that won't damage photos or subject them to additional materials.
- **Flat and well-fitting applies here, too:** Make sure photographs have been inserted into sleeves or corner tabs that fit their size and are positioned so they will stay flat. The less your photos are bent or jostled around inside the photo album, the better.
- **Don't overstuff your photo album:** This tip is more for preserving the album's quality rather than the photos. If maintaining the album's quality is important to you, overstuffing can cause damage to the spine of the album or cause pages to weaken and fall out over time.
- **Store albums within larger containers, free of chemicals:** Wrap your albums in tissue paper before placing them in boxes for an added level of protection.