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how to store everything

And store it right

by Teri Cettina



You've cleared out the clutter and bought nifty containers for everything you've decided to keep. But wait: Are you sure that chic fabric-covered box will keep your favorite sweater safe from moths? And have you figured out how to keep your grandparents' love letters around for the next generation to enjoy?

Smart storage isn't just about beautiful boxes and color-coordinated hangers. Excessive light, moisture and pests are just a few of the invaders that can quickly ruin your favorite things. We'll show you how to keep everything you own safe this season and for many more to come.

top-drawer storage techniques

Keep it clean Before you store off-season clothing, give it a good cleaning. "Materials you leave behind on soiled clothes—food particles, body oils—are nutritional sources for beetles and moth larvae. Don't tempt them," says Donald Williams, senior conservator at The Smithsonian Institution. This is especially true

for wool and silk, which are serious bug magnets.

- Don't assume an item is clean just because you don't see stains. Invisible residue such as perspiration and alcohol may not be apparent until the damage is done.
- To clean, follow care labels on fabrics. Use fragrance-free and nonbleach detergents; bleach can weaken fibers and yellow fabric over time.

Be good to your basics Everyday items you use regularly benefit from some TLC, too.

- Suit jackets, coats and delicate blouses maintain their shape best if you hang them on padded or wooden hangers. Plastic tubular hangers are sufficient (and less costly!) for lighter-weight clothing.
- Never use plastic covers on your clothes; they trap moisture and invite mildew. Use fabric garment bags to prevent dust. You can even use old pillowcases: Cut small holes in them to thread hangers through.
- T-shirts, tank tops, shorts and sweaters are happiest in drawers. For smooth results, roll them up like burritos and store them side by side in a single layer. Use tissue paper or drawer liners to prevent fabric snags.

Fabrics hate wrinkles, too Creases don't just show age—they can permanently damage clothing and quilts. Clothes should be pressed or steamed but not creased—unless you're OK with those creases becoming (Please turn to 164)

HOW TO STORE EVERYTHING

Continued

permanent. Center creases may be fine in men's trousers, but not in your skirts or tablecloths.

● To store cashmere sweaters and other pricey items, support all folds and slightly stuff clothing sleeves with acid-free tissue paper to minimize wrinkles, says Jonathan Scheer of J. Scheer & Co., a wedding gown and textile preservation specialist in New York.

● How about those storage bags that use vacuum action to compress clothes? Avoid them at all costs, advises Scheer. "Even if you store things that way for just a short time, you may never get the wrinkles out," he says. "For long-term storage it's a disaster."

keep it fresher longer

Store valuables where you live

Whenever possible, your favorite things will be most comfortable living where you are—in your main quarters, rather than your basement, garage or attic. Why? Your primary living space is usually temperature-controlled, free of varmints and not too humid—the best conditions for safe storage. A temperature increase of just 18°F causes many items, from fabrics to photographs, to disintegrate twice as fast as usual.

Invest in kitty litter Believe it or not, the unscented, clumping stuff is a simple way to eliminate damaging moisture.

● Put a handful of it in a sock or sachet (don't let it directly touch stored items) and toss it into the corners of your closet or storage bins.

● Or make sachets of silica gel (what's in those packets that come with new shoes and electronics). Store with everything from clothing to tools.

Pick plastic Storage pros give a thumbs-up to sturdy plastic storage tubs with lids, underbed containers and the like. Major brands are made of polyethylene, which resists moisture and won't leach chemicals into whatever you're storing.

Go acid-free Good storage and crafts

stores stock acid-free boxes, photo albums, tissue paper and more. These materials are worth buying because they won't stain or damage contents over time. If you have a choice between acid-free and "archival" products, always choose the former.

special care for special cases

Leather items Never put leather away wet. "Once it mildews, those items are ruined," says Jackie Langlitz, owner of Langlitz Leather in Portland, Oregon. Clean leather jackets, shoes and purses with leather cleaner, dry completely and apply leather dressing, a conditioner sold at most stores that carry leather goods.

China and silver Keep china safe by handling gently and using padded disks between stacked dishes to prevent chipping.

● Grandma's silverware, on the other hand, is more sensitive. Never store it in wool or plastic wrap. Both cause tarnish, which actually is corrosion of

Display copies of old family photos—keep the originals safe.



the metal. Instead, store silver in a special silverware box lined with anti-tarnish cloth.

Your wedding dress If you didn't do it right after your wedding (tsk, tsk!), clean right away.

● Antique or fragile dresses should be handled by an expert, says Scheer, the wedding dress specialist. Call wedding dress shops, a museum or

the American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (aic.stanford.edu) for a referral.

● Avoid companies that promise to "vacuum-seal" your dress in a box or bag, Scheer says. Instead, wrap your clean dress in acid-free tissue paper, fold and store in a lidded conservation box. Be sure to layer the dress's arms and any folds with tissue.

● Take out the dress once a year to give it some air. Avoid creases by refolding it in a slightly different position before storing.

Baby clothes Hand-wash. Fold gently, using acid-free tissue paper. Don't forget to include a note (on long-lasting linen stationery) detailing who wore the clothes and when!

Letters and documents Preserve precious love letters or newspaper clippings by photocopying them onto fine linen or cotton stationery that hasn't been recycled. Rag paper, as it's also called, is much longer-lasting than today's wood-pulp paper.

● Store documents unfolded in a dark place; remove paper clips or staples. Stack letters and photocopied clippings between pieces of acid-free paper in a tight-fitting storage box. Roll, don't fold, larger papers.

Favorite photos When possible, store photos electronically.

Scan the originals and store new digital pics on a portable computer hard drive. "You can quickly unplug it and take with you in case of an emergency," says Williams.

Portable drives are usually less than \$200.

● It's also smart to make color copies of photos you'd like to frame. Display the copies and store the originals.

● Most other prints are best stored in archival-quality photo albums, using old-fashioned stick-on photo corners. You can also save them safely in polyethylene photo sleeves. **wd**



To learn more about what should be stored where, go to womansday.com/storage.