

Helpful tips for preserving your precious documents & memorabilia

Tips on Creating an Archival Scrapbook or Photo Album

by Nancy Kraft, for the Iowa Conservation and Preservation Consortium

Extend the life of your scrapbook by using archival material. The ideal scrapbook would be constructed with 100% archival materials, including a protective cover, a hinge that allows the book to comfortably expand, and a size that is easy to shelve or store.

Tip #1—Select a scrapbook with a hinge that allows the book to comfortably expand. "D" or "O" type three-ring, poly post, multi-ring, and strap are popular bindings that allow for expansion.

Tip #2—Use only the right hand page or tear out every other sheet if the scrapbook is bound or the hinge does not provide enough room to expand.

Tip #3—Pages should be white or off-white archival, acid-free 80 lb weight or better.

Tip #4—A charcoal or artist's pad that is 100% cotton rag with sturdy weight pages can be used as a scrapbook. These pads are bound. To prevent the book from bulging, attach the items to the right-hand side of the page only. Leave the first and last page blank to provide extra protection. You can strengthen the cover by attaching a title sheet with a glue stick.

Tip #5—A good functioning 3-ring binder, preferably fabric covered, can also be used to create a scrapbook. Check to be certain the rings will not pop open on their own and will close completely (even a small opening will allow pages to slip out).

Tip # 6—Archival paper which is 80 lb weight or better can be used as well as archival plastic page protectors and photograph pages available in a variety of combinations for scrapbook pages. Leave a blank page at the beginning and end of the notebook for added protection against wear and tear.

Tip #7—If you choose to use plastic page protectors, purchase them from a recognized archival products company. Many "PVC-free" plastics that are available through discount stores are not archival. Archival plastics include DuPont Mylar™ polyester, polypropylene, and polyethylene. These pages are often available at a photo shop.

Tip #8—Resources for archival quality scrapbooks include Creative Memories, Gaylord, Light Impressions, LBS/Archival Products, and other companies that offer archival quality products.

Tip #9—Attach your photographs, postcards, and other items with archival photo corners. Mylar mounting corners are often available from a photographic supply store and are recognized as archival. Avoid tape as much as possible since it will eventually cause yellowing and may "ooze" and cause items and pages to stick together.

Tip #10—Attach newspaper clippings to the pages with a water-soluble or washable, non-toxic glue stick. Cut your clipping long enough so that you can create a hinge for the glue.

Tip #11—Make sure to identify the origin of your clippings, photographs, and other memorabilia. Provide the date, the source of the item, names, and places.

Tip #12—Flowers and other objects can be put into a polyethylene zip-lock bag then attached to the page using white cotton thread.

If you have questions about this tip sheet or other preservation topics, contact:

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