FREE PRINTABLE

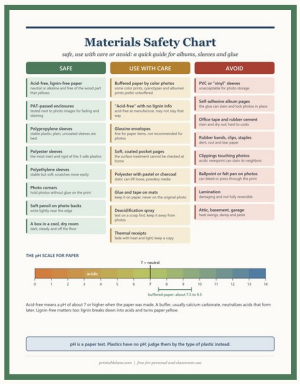
What Does ACID-FREE MEAN?

archival scrapbooking checklist + 7 printable pages

8 pages | US Letter | 300 dpi



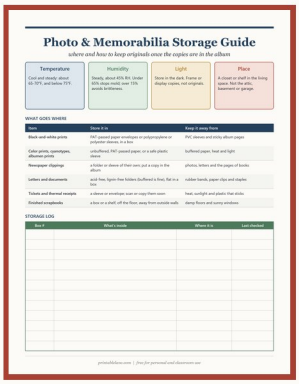
page 2



page 3



page 4



page 5



page 6



page 7



page 8

checklist · safety chart · pH log · storage guide · planner · photo tags · copy sleeve

acid-free · lignin-free · PAT tested · PVC-free

Is It Archival? Supplies Checklist

check every supply before it touches a photo or a keepsake

Supply	What to look for	Yes	No	?
PAPER & CARDSTOCK				
Patterned paper and cardstock	acid-free AND lignin-free on the label	☐	☐	☐
Paper you print at home	acid-free, lignin-free copy or photo paper	☐	☐	☐
Mats, backing boards, page bases	acid-free and lignin-free; buffered is fine for paper items	☐	☐	☐
ANYTHING TOUCHING PHOTOS				
Envelopes, sleeves and mats for photos	passed the Photographic Activity Test (PAT)	☐	☐	☐
Enclosures for color prints	unbuffered paper or a safe plastic, PAT passed	☐	☐	☐
Photo corners	paper, polyethylene or polypropylene corners	☐	☐	☐
PLASTICS				
Page protectors and pocket pages	polypropylene, polyester or polyethylene	☐	☐	☐
Sleeves with no label	no PVC, no "vinyl", no strong plastic smell	☐	☐	☐
Album with sticky pages	skip self-adhesive ("magnetic") pages	☐	☐	☐
ADHESIVES				
Glue stick or liquid glue	acid-free; use on paper, not on photo faces	☐	☐	☐
Double-sided tape and dots	acid-free; on mats and paper only	☐	☐	☐
Office tape, rubber cement	keep off keepsakes completely	☐	☐	☐
PENS, LABELS & EXTRAS				
Journaling pen	pigment ink labeled acid-free	☐	☐	☐
Writing on photo backs	soft pencil at the edge, or label the sleeve	☐	☐	☐
Stickers and embellishments	acid-free; keep metal and bulky pieces off photos	☐	☐	☐
Clippings, receipts, tickets	use copies on the page; file the originals	☐	☐	☐

Ticked "?" Test the supply with a pH testing pen (page 4) and check the package for "PAT passed". Until you know, keep it away from original photos and one-of-a-kind papers. Acid-free and archival are not the same promise: "archival" has no legal definition.

Materials Safety Chart

safe, use with care or avoid: a quick guide for albums, sleeves and glue

SAFE

Acid-free, lignin-free paper
neutral or alkaline and free of the wood part that yellows

PAT-passed enclosures
tested next to photo images for fading and staining

Polypropylene sleeves
stable plastic; plain, uncoated sleeves are best

Polyester sleeves
the most inert and rigid of the 3 safe plastics

Polyethylene sleeves
stable but soft; scratches more easily

Photo corners
hold photos without glue on the print

Soft pencil on photo backs
write lightly near the edge

A box in a cool, dry room
dark, steady and off the floor

USE WITH CARE

Buffered paper by color photos
some color prints, cyanotypes and albumen prints prefer unbuffered

"Acid-free" with no lignin info
acid-free at manufacture, may not stay that way

Glassine envelopes
fine for paper items, not recommended for photos

Soft, coated pocket pages
the surface treatment cannot be checked at home

Polyester with pastel or charcoal
static can lift loose, powdery media

Glue and tape on mats
keep it on paper, never on the original photo

Deacidification spray
test on a scrap first; keep it away from photos

Thermal receipts
fade with heat and light; keep a copy

AVOID

PVC or "vinyl" sleeves
unacceptable for photo storage

Self-adhesive album pages
the glue can stain and lock photos in place

Office tape and rubber cement
stain and dry out; hard to undo

Rubber bands, clips, staples
dent, rust and tear paper

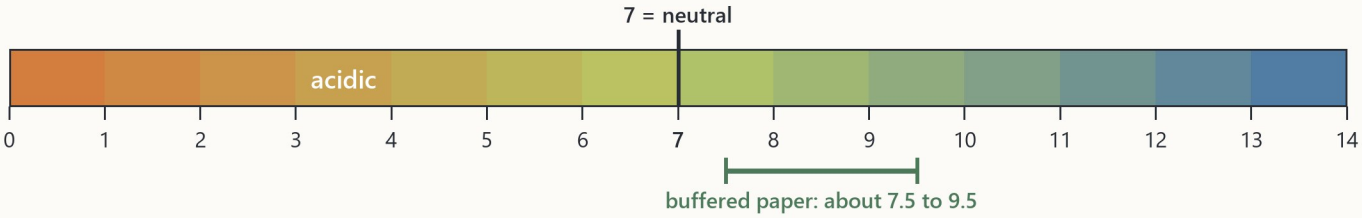
Clippings touching photos
acidic newsprint can stain its neighbors

Ballpoint or felt pen on photos
can bleed or press through the print

Lamination
damaging and not fully reversible

Attic, basement, garage
heat swings, damp and pests

THE pH SCALE FOR PAPER



Acid-free means a pH of about 7 or higher when the paper was made. A buffer, usually calcium carbonate, neutralizes acids that form later. Lignin-free matters too: lignin breaks down into acids and turns paper yellow.

pH is a paper test. Plastics have no pH: judge them by the type of plastic instead.

Supply pH Test Log

spot-test new papers and cardstock with a pH testing pen

1. Test a scrap or a hidden corner of a new supply. The mark is permanent: never test a photo or an heirloom.
2. Draw a short line and let it dry for a moment.
3. Purple means neutral or alkaline. Yellow means acidic. A muddy mix is borderline.
4. The pen reads only the surface and is approximate. Colored or coated papers can mislead it.

purple: OK mix: borderline yellow: acidic

Date	Supply	Where from	Color	Use?	Notes
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	
			(P) (M) (Y)	☐ yes ☐ no	

Photo & Memorabilia Storage Guide

where and how to keep originals once the copies are in the album

Temperature

Cool and steady: about 65-70°F, and below 75°F.

Humidity

Steady, about 45% RH. Under 65% stops mold; over 15% avoids brittleness.

Light

Store in the dark. Frame or display copies, not originals.

Place

A closet or shelf in the living space. Not the attic, basement or garage.

WHAT GOES WHERE

Item	Store it in	Keep it away from
Black-and-white prints	PAT-passed paper envelopes or polypropylene or polyester sleeves, in a box	PVC sleeves and sticky album pages
Color prints, cyanotypes, albumen prints	unbuffered, PAT-passed paper, or a safe plastic sleeve	buffered paper, heat and light
Newspaper clippings	a folder or sleeve of their own; put a copy in the album	photos, letters and the pages of books
Letters and documents	acid-free, lignin-free folders (buffered is fine), flat in a box	rubber bands, paper clips and staples
Tickets and thermal receipts	a sleeve or envelope; scan or copy them soon	heat, sunlight and plastic that sticks
Finished scrapbooks	a box or a shelf, off the floor, away from outside walls	damp floors and sunny windows

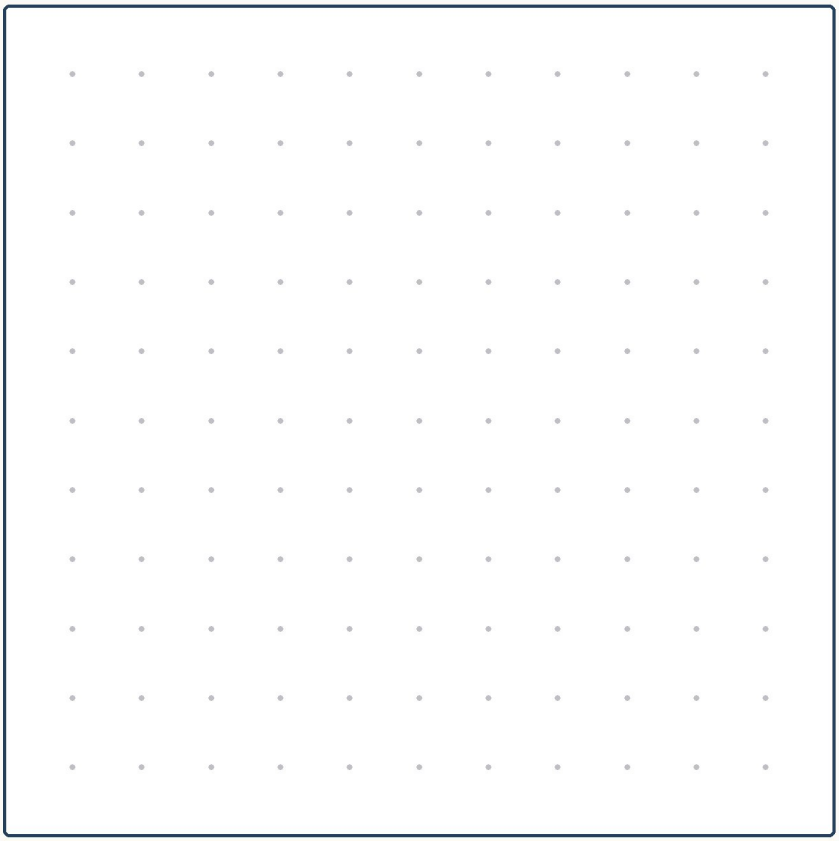
STORAGE LOG

Box #	What's inside	Where it is	Last checked

Scrapbook Page Planning Sheet

sketch the layout, list the photos and check the materials first

Page title: _____ **Event / date:** _____



layout sketch (each dot = 1 in on a 12 x 12 in page)

Photos & pieces	copy?
1. _____	☐
2. _____	☐
3. _____	☐
4. _____	☐
5. _____	☐
6. _____	☐
7. _____	☐
8. _____	☐
9. _____	☐
10. _____	☐

tick "copy?" for clippings, receipts and one-of-a-kind papers

Materials check

- ☐ Paper and cardstock are acid-free and lignin-free
- ☐ Sleeve or protector is PP, PET or PE, not PVC
- ☐ Clippings and receipts on the page are copies
- ☐ Anything touching a photo passed the PAT
- ☐ Glue and tape stay off the photo faces
- ☐ Every photo has a label or a tag (page 7)

Journaling notes

Photo Label & Date Tags

8 tags, 3.5 x 1.75 in each: write the story here, not on the photo

Who: _____
Where: _____
When: _____
Event: _____
Photo by: _____

Who: _____
Where: _____
When: _____
Event: _____
Photo by: _____

Who: _____
Where: _____
When: _____
Event: _____
Photo by: _____

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When: _____
Event: _____
Photo by: _____

Who: _____
Where: _____
When: _____
Event: _____
Photo by: _____

Who: _____
Where: _____
When: _____
Event: _____
Photo by: _____

cut on the grey lines | write in pencil or pigment ink | slip the tag into the sleeve behind the photo

Keep Copies, Not Originals: Ephemera Sleeve

a fold-up sleeve for a copy up to 6 x 4 in; file the original separately

glue

FRONT

copy inside

What it is: _____

Original kept in: _____

Copied on: _____

Copied by: _____

glue

BACK (folds behind the front)

1. Cut on the solid outline, flaps included.
2. Fold the back panel behind the front on the long dashed line.
3. Fold both glue flaps back and glue them to the back panel.
4. Leave the top edge open. Slide in the copy, label the front.

solid line = cut | dashed line = fold | blue = glue flap, 0.5 in
each panel 6.5 x 4.25 in | print at 100% (Actual size)