

Guideline: Packaging



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Packaging

Correctly packaging archive items offers **protection from light, dust and mechanical damages**. It can even prevent more major damage from water or smoke gas from fires. Correct packaging therefore extends the lifespan of historical documents! Nevertheless, archives can also be damaged by the acids contained in paper, by the formation of mould, or by ink corrosion. However, the majority of damage to archive material is caused by poor storage or transport.

Deburring / Demetallisation

The first step is "**deburring**" or "**demetallisation**". For the various archive items like papers, films, photos and other media it is first necessary to remove damaging substances such as metals, adhesive residues and plastics. Most of these things can often be removed without damaging the materials using simple tools, for instance with a small knife or spatula.

When removing them it must be noted that joined items can still be stuck together after removing a staple or paper clip and should not be prised apart. In this instance it can be helpful to simply number the pages with a soft pencil (HB, 2B). Acidic transparent pockets must also be removed!

Particular care should be taken when **removing old adhesive tape**. That can very quickly cause mechanical damage. Archive-friendly binders and adhesive tapes can be used as a substitute for the previous material.



Transfer

The items are then **transferred** to **acid-free portfolios**. Specialist retailers offer various materials in many different sizes. If not only A4 items are being indexed but also folio formats (approx. 21 cm x 33 cm), uniform packing in larger envelope portfolios is advisable.

Special storage media are offered for photos, ranging from "simple" envelope portfolios and divisible photo boxes to PAT-tested plastic sleeves^[1] that are then stored in acid-free folders.



Special boxes in various formats and sizes are also available for other archive items such as **plans, films or slides**. Customised solutions are often available too.

The archive items in the portfolios are then packed into **archive boxes**. Pre-stapled archive boxes and self-assembly packaging material is available. A differentiation is made between archive-approved ISO 9706^[2] and accordingly tested, acid-free DIN 16245-A boxes. It is particularly important to ensure that the



boxes used are stable. Triple-wall packaging materials naturally provide better protection than double-wall boxes.

The numbered documents are in the archive boxes. These are labelled with details regarding the location, the inventory and the numbers that are packed inside. The boxes are generally stored on open **metal shelves** or in **metal cabinets**. When purchasing these it is important to make sure they are **deep enough** (min. 40 cm) for standard archive boxes to be placed on the shelves lengthwise. When stacked in threes, nine boxes fit on one shelf (one metre wide), and thus 45 boxes fit into a metal shelf unit with five shelves.

- ^[1] The "Photographic Activity Test" (PAT) is carried out by the Image Permanence Institute in Rochester, USA in accordance with ISO 14523 (replaced by ISO 18916) and is currently the strictest evaluation of storage systems for photographic material. These tests monitor the effect of density changes in archive materials on photographic emulsion.
- ^[2] Archive-approved boxes contain fewer harmful substances than standard boxes. They fulfil four main criteria: alkaline pH value, alkaline reserve, minimum strength and oxidation resistance. Further features are regulated by international norm ISO 16245.