

Guideline: Storage



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Storage



It is very difficult to find a one-size-fits-all storage solution for archive material (papers, films, cassettes and other storage media) because each medium and each material requires different conditions.

One medium can sometimes be made up of several different materials. Light, air purity, temperature and humidity are the main factors that can affect archive items.

Light

Almost all materials are light-sensitive. UV and infrared radiation damage the archive items. Colour photographs change colour, paper documents disintegrate, writing and images fade. It is therefore important that the archive materials are protected from light as much as possible. Opaque packaging is advisable and in the event of frequent use the documents should be handled in rooms with little or no daylight.

Air purity

Heating air and engine and machine exhaust contain contaminants. Private premises rarely have filter systems suited to such conditions. It should therefore be ensured that the archive items are not stored close to contaminants or machines and devices that emit contaminants, e.g. in boiler rooms or rooms adjacent to them.

Temperature

The lower the temperature, the slower the archive item ages. Chemical and biological decay processes slow down in line with the temperature. Film, photo and audio materials should therefore be kept as cool as possible. Each reduction of 5°C halves the decay rate and thus doubles the lifespan. Where possible, items should be stored below 16°C, ideally at about 5°C.

The following **temperatures** are recommended for **archive rooms**:

Winter: 15° – 18°C

Summer: 20° - 22°C (by no means above 26°C)

Temperature plays a major role where relative humidity is concerned, because the two factors are interdependent. The lower the temperature, the less damp (water vapour) the air absorbs. In the event of a sudden temperature drop to dew point within seconds, for example on cooler wall areas, water vapour condenses. This can significantly damage documents. Major temperature fluctuations should therefore be avoided!

Humidity

Water is the most common cause of damage to archive items. In a room with high humidity (a relative humidity of 60 % and above), the risk of mould increases. There are however materials where the risk of crumbling increases if they are stored at very low relative humidity (below 35 %). However, the general rule of thumb is: **the drier, the better.**

The following relative **humidity values** are recommended:

Winter: 45 % - 55 %

Summer: 50 % - 60 %

It is advisable to regularly air the rooms. Standard hygrometers available from electrical shops or specialist retailers are adequate for measuring humidity.

Suppliers of shelf systems and archive cabinets in NRW (excerpt)

(Pay attention to the depth of the cabinet to be purchased when considering optimal use of shelves and archive cabinets! It should be at least the length of a portfolio box, approx. 40 cm.)

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