

ORGANIZING TIPS TO PREPARE YOUR PHOTOS FOR SCANNING

it's not about perfection



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We've gathered some handy tips to help you prepare your photo collection for scanning. These are some of the first steps to launch your photo organizing journey. If you've started this process multiple times, don't worry, we've got your back.

These tips will optimize the scanning process and provide you with a searchable digital photo collection. Rest assured, it doesn't have to be perfectly organized. Finding the balance between perfection and completion is where you'll want to find yourself. Remember, no matter the level of organization you achieve here, it will be better than when you started. Once your photos are digitized, you can always add more organization, move photos around, and change file names.

So let's dive in and get you started!



establish your sorting rules



TIP 1

- This will speed up the process for sorting and weeding out the photos you don’t want to keep. If you establish your rules at the beginning, it makes the decision-making process easier and faster. You'll be making lots of micro decisions. It’s likely one of the reasons you’ve burned out on the process previously. It can be tiresome, but having a framework can reduce the decision fatigue.

- Define what’s important: Are there photos you’ve been searching for: family, friends, pets, a particular trip? For me, it was our camp. Any photos of “camp” or our dog Trixie—I always keep.

- Define the duds: These could be exact duplicates, blurry, poorly exposed, landscapes and flower photos, photos with no people, badly faded. It’s your project, so define what makes sense to you.

Hint: You don't have to scan everything. There might be photos that you want to keep but not scan. That's ok, too.

TIP 2

organize by date if you know it



- This will return a much more organized digital collection. If you're not sure of an exact date, assign a decade. For example: 1980s.

- Pay attention to the envelopes, receipts and extra paper for important information. Time to put the detective hat on! When did you wear those puffy sleeves (Hint: 1980s) or the patchwork sneakers (Hint: 1970s)?

- Either write the additional information right on the envelope or transfer those details to an index card that's separating each group of photos.

TIP 3

transferring info to backs of photos

If you want to add information to a photo, write lightly on the back, near the edge, with a soft graphite pencil. A #2 works on older paper-backed prints. For glossy or plastic-feeling backs (most prints from the 1960s on), use a softer 4B or 6B pencil. Write on a hard, clean surface so the pencil doesn't press through to the front. Avoid permanent markers and ink pens.

TIP 4

remove photos from albums



- If you'd like to control the budget of your project, we recommend removing photos from albums that you want to have scanned. You have permission to be selective here. How you curated 30 years ago may be different now.

- Record the dates and themes of the album on your index card that goes with each group of photos.

- Sticky & magnetic pages and albums: If your photos are in sticky/magnetic albums and they are super sticky, leave them on the pages for now. Better to have them scanned first and then remove. If you're working with Photo Archivers, we can take care of this step for you as well.

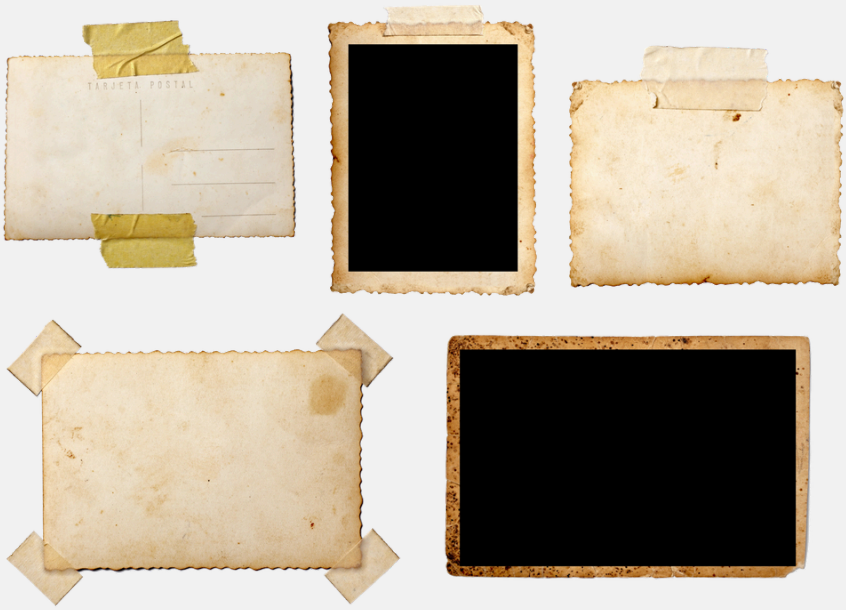
- If there is sticky debris on the backs of the photos after removing from albums, place a piece of paper between those photos to keep them from sticking together. We can always replace that with archival paper here in our shop for long-term storage.

- If there are captions that you want to capture, use your soft graphite pencil to write on the backs of your photos, and we can scan the back as well.

- ***Hint***: If you're planning to return photos to slide-in albums and you're concerned about the photos getting out of order, number the backs of the photos with your soft graphite pencil.

TIP 5

avoid the temptation to tape torn photos



If you've discovered a torn or otherwise fragile photo that requires extra attention, place the pieces in a separate envelope or baggy with some notes. We'll give it the special care that it deserves and capture a good digital copy using our best practices.

TIP 6

group your photos by size within each section

This is an optional step. If the order of your photos in a particular group doesn't matter, sorting by size will make scanning smoother on our side. Much appreciated but not necessary.

Hint: By grouping photos by size and shape you may find other photos that belong together. It's quite satisfying.

TIP 7

how about those negatives & slides



- Your negatives will most often create the best copy of your photo. Your negative is your original. Making a copy of the original is almost always the best option.
- Keep them with their associated prints.
- If you've got some negatives that have been separated from their prints, place them together in an envelope for scanning.
- Slides can remain in their boxes and carousels. We'll use any information on those boxes.

TIP 8

research your scanning company



Before you hand over your photos, do a little homework. Read reviews and testimonials, and talk to someone at the company. You only want to do this once.

Questions to ask:

- Is the scanning done in-house?
- Can I visit your location?
- Are you certified by a professional organization?

TIP 9

getting your photos to us



Local to Baltimore/DC? Bring your collection to our shop in Columbia, Monday through Thursday, 9am to 4pm, and Fridays by appointment. We always recommend calling ahead so that we can prepare for your arrival. Can't make it in? Ask us about arranging a pickup.

Shipping?

- Seal your photos and materials in a zipper bag for extra protection.
- Use a well-known carrier with signature required.
- Plan your shipment so someone is there to receive it.
- Take a few reference photos before you pack, and let us know when it's on the way. We will confirm as soon as it arrives at our shop.

Ready to get started?

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