

Legacy Prep Checklist

The Family Archive: 5-Step Preparation Checklist

A Guide to Protecting Your History Before Your Professional Assessment

1. The "Quick Save" (Immediate Stabilization)

Before we meet, ensure your most fragile items are out of "environmental danger zones."

- **Relocate:** Move boxes out of unconditioned attics, damp basements, or garages.
- **Vertical Storage:** If possible, stand large albums upright rather than stacking them, which can cause photos to stick together under pressure.
- **The "Red Flag" Pile:** Separate any items with active mold (musty smell), water damage, or "vinegar syndrome" (sharp chemical smell) so they don't contaminate healthy materials.

2. The "Gather & Group" (Rough Sorting)

Don't worry about individual photos yet. Group items by "container type" to help us estimate volume.

- **Group by Era:** (e.g., "The 1950s Box," "College Years," "Grandma's Trunk").
- **Group by Format:** Keep loose photos, slides, negatives, and documents in separate zones.
- **Identify "The Masterpieces":** Set aside the 10–20 most important items (e.g., a 19th-century marriage certificate or a rare wartime letter) for priority handling.

3. The "Digital Treasure Hunt"

Modern family history is fragmented. Check these "hidden" locations for digital files:

- **Old Hardware:** Gather old laptops, external hard drives, and "thumb drives."
- **Obsolete Media:** Look for CDs, DVDs, or even floppy disks labeled "Photos."
- **Cloud Silos:** Note which family members have photos on Google Photos, iCloud, or Shutterfly.

4. The "Key Identifiers" (Context Building)

Context disappears faster than the photos themselves. Briefly note:

- **The Gatekeepers:** Who are the 2 or 3 living family members who still know the "who, what, and where" of the oldest photos?
- **The Mystery Box:** Mark any containers where the people/places are completely unknown. (We use professional imagery analysis to help solve these).

5. Your "Legacy Goals"

Think about what "success" looks like one year from today:

- **Preservation:** "I just want to know it's safe and backed up."
- **Searchability:** "I want to be able to find a specific letter by searching for a keyword."
- **Storytelling:** "I want to create a high-end heirloom book or web archive for my grandchildren."

Ready for Your Professional Assessment?

During our on-site visit, we will inventory these materials, assess their physical condition, and then provide a **Step-by-Step Archive Plan** to ensure your family's story survives for the next 100+ years.

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"Because context disappears faster than the photos."