**What is a time capsule?**

A time capsule helps preserve the memory of a place, experience, or people at a special time. People often make time capsules for someone to open many years in the future—the 1938 World’s Fair buried one to be opened in 6939! You or your family can make one, too.

Your time capsule could celebrate a summer vacation; the year you were a special age; your friends, family, pet, or school; or something else important to you.

**What can I put in a time capsule?**

That depends on what you care about and the size of your capsule. Choose pictures or other items that remind you of the time the capsule celebrates. Clean, dry black-and-white photos, things written or printed on high-quality paper with “archival” ink, undamaged metal or fabric, and glass or the same plastics you’ll use for the container are good choices. Food, non-dried plants or anything alive are not. Digital media may not be readable when you open the capsule.

**Some very basic principles**

Every object is made of chemicals—liquid, solid, or gas; in many forms and combinations; from smaller-than-an-atom particles to elements and compounds. These interact to cause chemical reactions and damage. Water (moisture) starts reactions that damage materials. Undesirable pollutants in the environment (like dust and fumes) also contribute to deterioration. Heat and light speed damage. Some damage we can see easily, but often only a microscope or chemical analysis can reveal it.

**But what can I do?**

Use preservation-quality storage and exhibit materials. “Archival” and “acid free” have no sure meaning. Use high-quality buffered (pH 7-9.5) or neutral (pH 7) material, or plastic boxes, tissue, rolls, folders, mats, backing, and other coverings or padding. Look for products that pass the photographic activity test (PAT). Read labels and ask questions. The more protection, the safer your item.

**Celebrate Collections Preservation Week!**

www.atyourlibrary.org/passiton

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**Comics books**

Because comics delight the imagination

**Collections**

Because all treasures need special care

**Make a time capsule**

Because memories span time

**Textiles**

Because textiles weave us together

**Preserve Yours for future generations**

Because we use textiles almost constantly, we forget they need preservation, too.

**Find a stable storage space**

Store comics books in a clean storage area where temperature and relative humidity (RH) are moderate and stable: 68°F or less, and between 30-40% RH. Moisture and temperature speed decay. Low humidity can crack, peel, or curl pages. Avoid attics and basements and provide good air circulation. An air-conditioned room or closet is best.

Don’t expose paper to fumes, plywood, cleaning supplies, or cardboard. Good housekeeping helps protect your treasures. Check regularly for signs of rodents, silverfish, “book lice,” and other pests—eliminate them if found!

**Protect from light**

All light, especially the ultraviolet (UV) part of the spectrum, causes fading and other damage. Store and display items away from indoor lighting. UV-filters (in frames, or on windows and fluorescent lights) don’t prevent deterioration—only slow it.

**Use preservation storage enclosures**

Use preservation-quality enclosures to protect textiles from dirt, fading, and unnecessary handling. Use unbuffered (neutral) tissue for protein fibers (wool, silk, cotton, etc.).

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**Find a stable storage space**

Store textiles in a clean area with stable temperature, and relative humidity (RH) below 65%, since moisture encourages mold. Avoid attics, basements, and garages. Textiles are vulnerable to pests, which thrive in dark, undisturbed, dusty spaces. Prevent pests with good housekeeping, including vacuuming. Check regularly for signs of insects or rodents—eliminate them if found!

**Protect from light**

Light causes fading and speeds deterioration. Store textiles away from natural and artificial light and limit display; avoid sunlight, and minimize indoor lighting. UV-filters (in frames, or on windows and fluorescent lights) don’t prevent deterioration—only slow it.

**Use preservation storage enclosures**

Use preservation-quality enclosures to protect textiles from dirt, fading, and unnecessary handling. Use unbuffered (neutral) tissue for protein fibers (wool, silk, cotton, etc.).
Your container and everything inside should be made of materials that conservators call “stable.” This means the chemicals in your items won’t react quickly to cause rust, brittleness, fading, or other damage.

HOW DO I MAKE A TIME CAPSULE?

Only use uncoated polyester, cellulose (fur) or when fiber content is mixed or triacetate, polyethylene, or polypropylene plastic for storage—never PVC. If you can’t keep RH below 80%, don’t use plastic enclosures—items may stick.

Handle objects carefully. For handling, wash and dry your hands well and often. Use two hands to support larger or fragile flat items. Use see-through preservation enclosures to minimize handling and prevent edge damage, creases, and tears.

Box or wrap like items together with preservation storage materials, and pad them well. Pack the capsule full, with heavier things on the bottom and lighter on top. Fill any space with crumpled preservation tissue.

Handle gently. Wash and dry hands often, and use two hands or a support to prevent bending.

For more information:

www.loc.gov/preserv/careothr.html

www.imls.gov/collections/index.htm

This text is by the American Institute for Conservation, www.conservation-us.org

www.thehenryford.org/research/caring/textiles.aspx

www.textilemuseum.org/care/care.htm

www.si.edu/mci/english/learn_more/taking_care/timecaps.html

www.ehow.com/how_6637_make-family-time.html

For more information about time capsules:

USE PRESERVATION STORAGE ENCLOSURES

Use see-through preservation enclosures to minimize handling and prevent edge damage, creases, and tears.

USE NATURAL LIGHT

Natural and artificial light. Comics and newsprint are particularly vulnerable.

If you use plastic enclosures, use uncoated polyester, cellulose triacetate, polyethylene, or polypropylene—never PVC. If you can’t keep RH below 80%, don’t use plastic enclosures.

HANDLE WITH CARE

Don’t use paper clips, rubber bands, staples, marking pens, or highlighters—all can stick, stain, deform, or otherwise damage items. Store items of the same format and size together.

Store comic books vertically. Store like sizes and types together, with good support, preferably preservation-quality backing boards. Store comic books in preservation storage boxes that are the right size for the issues. Do not over fill the boxes.

Handle gently. Wash and dry hands often, and use two hands or a support to prevent bending.

Consider carefully before repairing damaged or worn issues yourself, as this may lower value. Send issues to specialists for flattening or dry-cleaning to avoid damage and decreased value. Special issues can be submitted to a commercial expert for grading and special encapsulation in hard-shell preservation-quality holders.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-99609

Keep storage areas clean, and check often for signs of bugs, rodents, and other pests. If you see them, eliminate them.

Look around your storage or exhibit areas for sources of damage—avoid them or fix them! Have a plan to relocate valuable items in an emergency.

Always consult a professional conservator before trying to clean or repair an item, which can reduce its value. Find a conservator through the American Institute for Conservation, www.conservation-us.org.

For more information:

www.loc.gov/preserv/careothr.html