

Caring for Important Documents

Knowing what's what

It is a good idea to record some information about your documents. You should do this on a separate piece of paper that you store with the original document.

Displaying your documents

When displaying documents the main danger is exposure to light, this can fade them.

- If you can, display copies of important documents instead of the originals
- If originals are displayed, keep light exposure to a minimum:
- Display a document for a while and then put it away so that no single item is exposed to light for long periods of time.
- Turn off the lights when no one is in a room. Use low wattage bulbs.
- Place them on walls that get the least amount of sun.
- Close curtains and blinds when out of the room for extended periods of time or when not at home.

Storing your documents

- Store important documents in a cool, dry place. Changes in temperature and humidity can damage your documents. Generally avoid lofts, garages and basements.
- Letters and other documents are best stored unfolded and flat. Items too large to store flat are better stored rolled than folded.
- Use acid-free sleeves, envelopes, storage boxes, or albums. Polyester or polypropylene sleeves and pages are also acceptable.
- Never put an adhesive on a document or paper that you wish to keep permanently. Use photo corners or sleeves to mount items in albums.
- Remove paper clips and rubber bands, both of which can cause permanent damage to paper.
- Keep highly acidic paper such as newspapers and clippings from touching other paper items.
- Handle your important paper items by their edges and with clean hands to avoid marking the surface

Copying your originals

It is a good idea to make a copy of your original documents. You can do this by scanning your document to create a digital version. You should still keep your original document.