

Tips & Resources

Tips

Books

Most modern books have an adhesive binding. The pages are all stacked together, fanned in one direction, then glued, fanned in the other direction, then glued, and a paper wrapper (paperback) or a hard case (hard back) is attached. The information here is applicable to books with adhesive bindings.

Handling

- If you're going to move your book or object from one location to another, take the time to **prepare your landing area**. Make sure it's flat and clean, and set up your supports.
- Before handling your book, **make sure your hands are clean and dry**. For books and papers, clean, dry hands are preferable to gloves. Gloves decrease dexterity, and the discomfort of wearing them for long stretches can be a deterrent from regular use. Use gentle soap and clean thoroughly – unscented is a bonus! You may choose to use gloves when handling graphic novels, as fingerprints tend to show more on coated paper. Powder-free nitrile gloves like [these](#) offer the best protection for you and your book.
- While handling your book, do your best to **support the spine and avoid letting the front and back covers sit flat** - you want them to sit at a slight angle when the book is open. You can use an acrylic book cradle, a polyethylene foam book cradle, or a book pillow purchased from an archival provider. For a more affordable option, use a clean, unbleached and undyed cotton or linen towel rolled up on either end. It should look something like [this](#).
- **Don't pull the books off the shelf by grabbing the head of the book with your finger**. This puts pressure on the spine and can cause tears. Instead, reach over the top of the book and push gently on the foreedge (the page edges that are visible even when the book is closed) until you can gently grasp the book from the middle of the spine. Pull outward slowly. You can also push the books on either side of the one you wish to retrieve inward slightly – that should expose the spine of your book enough for you to gently grasp it from the middle. [This video](#) illustrates both methods very well.

- Be kind to the spine! **Try not to crack the spine** as this will permanently fracture the brittle adhesive layer along the spine. Hard backs are slightly more resilient than paperbacks, but both should be handled with care.

Storage

- Most **books can be stored upright on a shelf, supported by the weight of the other books on either side of them.** If your books are slumping to one side, add something to the shelf for additional support like bookends, blocks, placeholders, or boxes to keep everything as upright as possible. **Do not allow your books to remain slumped**, as this will stress and warp the spine.
- Books can also be stacked horizontally. **When stacking, place larger, heavier items on the bottom and smaller, lighter items on top.** Avoid placing too much weight on the bottom book, as this can warp the spine and cover.
- For books in poorer condition (detached spine or cover, worn binding, fraying edges, loose pages), you can **consider a box**. Common options include:
 - o [Four-flap enclosures](#) and [phase boxes](#)
 - o [Clamshell boxes](#)
 - o [Drop-front boxes](#)
 - o [Custom-made boxes](#)

Keep in mind that **four-flap enclosures and phase boxes will not provide structural support or space for padding.** Think of them more like slightly thicker, stiffer envelopes – they are designed to wrap very snugly around your book to protect against abrasions and pollutants. **If your book is very degraded, go for a box with rigid sides and corners** (all other box types listed above should work).

- If you loan a book to someone, you can **label the books' placeholder with the person and date of the loan.** This will help you keep track of your items and keep you organized.
- **Keep it under wraps!** Dust jackets are a major component of a collectible's value, as well as being prone to damage. Mylar or paper wrappers can be a big help in protecting one of the most decorative parts of the book.

Comics

Comics can be purchased as **single issue** comics, aka “floppies,” or a **graphic novel**, aka “trade paperback,” which are often anthologies of the single issues. Graphic novels are bound similarly to books, both as hard cover and paperback, and should be treated accordingly.

Handling

- **Prepare your landing area** before moving your comic from its home. Make sure the space is flat and clean, and set up your supports.
- Fingerprints tend to show more on coated paper, so **you may choose to wear gloves when handling your comics**. Powder-free nitrile gloves like [these](#) offer the best protection for you and your comic.
- While handling your comic, do your best to **avoid letting it sit flat**. You want the front and back to sit at a slight angle. You can use an acrylic book cradle, a polyethylene foam book cradle, or a book pillow purchased from an archival provider. For a more affordable option, use a clean, unbleached and undyed cotton or linen towel rolled up on either end. It should look something like [this](#).

Storage

- **“Bagging and boarding”** is the industry standard for how to store your collection. The comic is placed in a clear plastic sleeve that is welded on three sides with a rigid board inserted behind the comic for added support (again being kind to the spine is key!).
- Use sleeves made of a more stable plastic like **polyester (aka “Mylar”), polyethylene, or polypropylene**. These plastics do not cause damaging effects on the comics as they age. Polyethylene and polypropylene are more prone to yellowing than polyester. Make sure to avoid polyvinyl chloride (PVC) sleeves, which can degrade and stick to the pages over time.
- Don’t get bored of boards! They have a critical impact on the life of the comic so choose carefully. **Look for key words and phrases like “acid-free,” “buffered,” “alkaline,” and “lignin-free.”** This means the board has fewer components that can put the comic at risk as they get old together.
- **For damaged, fragile, or prized comics, consider a storage method that has less sliding and manipulation.** Buffered paper folders, Mylar L-sleeves (a plastic enclosure welded on only 2 sides for easier access), or four-flap folders will protect the fragile object without the risk of dinging an edge or creasing the comic as it gets pushed into a sleeve.
- **Comics stored on shelves can be placed in [magazine files](#) for additional support.** This will help keep them upright, as well as organize and protect thinner and/or weaker materials from bulkier neighbors.

- **Comics can also be stored in bins** made of [coroplast](#) or [corrugated board](#) and in [pamphlet boxes](#). Just like with books, make sure nothing is slumping inside.

Collectibles

Collectibles are most often thought of as early editions, signed copies, or special releases, but they can include anything that has unique value to the owner and community. A shared sense of value is one of the biggest differences between a personally sentimental object and a collectible. The tips above still apply, but here are some additional considerations to keep in mind.

- If applicable, consider what is collectible about the object. **Signatures, limited editions or special releases, advance reader copies, annotations, and unique provenance are all features that can impact value and care concerns.** Identifying the biggest factor in the object's value can help figure out best care practices.
 - o **Make sure you document this somewhere!** Labeling a plastic or paper protective cover or starting an inventory are great ways to ensure the value is known and maintained.
- **Avoid alterations.** Many collectible communities have strict guidelines on what type of interventions, conservation included, can be done without negatively impacting value.
 - o **NEVER USE TAPES!** Not only will this reduce the object's value, but removal itself can be an intervention that decreases value.
- Online guidelines for what can impact value can be found for some collectible communities. For example, the Certified Guaranty Company has the [Restoration Grading Scale | CGC](#) for comic book collectors.
- Is there special artwork? Printed images and decorative elements will be prone to abrasion. **Take extra care in setting up a clean landing space.** A smooth surface on your landing space, such as glassine (or parchment paper for a cheap temporary option), can help protect against scratches.

Disaster!

Tips here will be mostly focused on recovery from a water event or spill. This is because water emergencies are the most common problems faced by home collectors and because most disasters involve water at some point.

Crumbs and Dirt

- If something other than a liquid (like crumbs or dirt) makes its way onto your book or comic, you may be able to handle it at home. First, ensure that it is not adhered to the cover or pages. If the substance is stuck, stop and contact a conservator. If the substance is just sitting on the object's surface, you're good to move forward. Take a [hake brush](#) and, using short, gentle motions, sweep the material off the pages/cover. Brush away from the gutter (where the pages come together on the inside of the book).

Water: Books

- If your book gets a little wet (a small spill affecting very few pages), you have two options:
 1. Interleave the pages with an absorbent material like paper towels or blank newsprint.
 2. Stand the book upright and gently fan out the pages. Let it air dry in this position.

In both scenarios, encourage air flow using windows and fans. This will accelerate the drying process and discourage mold development. **Do not allow air to blow directly on your book.**

- If your book becomes damp (about 50% of the pages are wet), begin by placing it on an absorbent surface like blank newsprint, blotter paper, or a clean, undyed cotton towel. Next, interleave the pages with an absorbent material like blank newsprint or paper towels. Place your interleaving about every 5-10 pages and swap it out when it becomes saturated. When the book is a little drier, you can stand it up and gently fan out the pages. **Encourage air flow, but do not allow air to blow directly on your book.**
- If your book becomes saturated, you have two options:
 1. Place it on an absorbent surface, preferably something thicker like blotter paper, or a clean, undyed cotton towel. Next, interleave the pages with an absorbent material like blank newsprint or paper towels. Place your interleaving about every 5-10 pages and swap it out when it becomes saturated, which will be often. When the book is a little drier, you can stand it up and gently fan out the pages. **Encourage air flow, but do not allow air to blow directly on your book.**

2. If you do not have the time or resources to dry your book by hand, you can freeze it. Freezing the book will stop any additional degradation while you plan your next steps. Wrap the outside cover with freezer or wax paper and gently place it in a polyethylene bag (Ziploc works fine in a pinch). Press the air out of the bag and seal it. When you are ready, thaw the book and follow the steps laid out in [this guide](#) published by the Northeast Document Conservation Center.

Water: Comics

- If your comic or coated paper becomes wet, your best option is to immediately freeze it (following the instructions in the previous section) and [consult a conservator](#) to discuss safe drying options. This is because coated paper sticks together as it air dries.

Resources

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