

Storage TM

MUST-HAVE FIXES FOR
SMALL SPACES

MAXIMIZE CLOSETS,
SHELVES & DRAWERS

STOP FOOD STORAGE CONTAINER CHAOS p. 16

PAPER PILEUPS, BE GONE!
PICK THE RIGHT SORTER FOR YOU

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR PHOTOS
EXPERT TIPS FOR PRINT & DIGITAL

LOW-COST BATH SOLUTIONS



A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

Stop shuffling through mounds of yellowing prints and dumping digital files on multiple devices. Your journey to organizing all your photos starts here.

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The key to successful photo organizing is consistency. "The only 'right way' is the way that lets you access the photos you want as quickly as possible," professional organizer Deborah J. Cabral says. If the process seems overwhelming, think of this article as a road map that will always be available for you. You can tackle this project in 15- to 20-minute increments.

You likely have both print and digital photos in your personal collection. Some strategies apply to any type of photo, but for print-specific tip, follow the **red** path. For digital, pay attention to the **blue** path. Happy traveling!

print photos are historical documents, but you still need to sort, share, store, and discard them as you do any piece of paper in a file cabinet.

digital photos seem to multiply on various devices. Stem the flood of images by taking a breath before snapping a pic and then decide if you truly need to capture the moment.

STEP 1 GATHER YOUR PHOTOS

Pull together all your albums, boxes, and envelopes in one spot, so you know what you're truly dealing with.

Decide at this point how important negatives are to you. If you already have scanned and printed copies (see Step 4), you can probably let go of negatives. Passionate photographers might cringe, but you need negatives only for photos you plan to reprint or enlarge—and in a pinch you can accomplish both of these goals fairly well with professionally scanned prints.

Migrate all digital photos to one device, ideally a computer with a large screen and fast processor. If you know that you have digital files on a device but can't find them, use the Picture Keeper on any device with a USB port. This handy tool locates all digital photo files and makes copies. You can then download the copies to a designated spot on your laptop for sorting and editing.

BUY THIS
 PICTURE KEEPER DEVICES ARE AVAILABLE IN SEVERAL SIZES. THE PK4 HOLDS UP TO 4,000 FILES. \$30; [PICTUREKEEPER.COM](http://picturekeeper.com)



Create a master folder for each year on your laptop. Inside each year folder, create monthly folders. Label them with a number (09 rather than September) to aid in automatic chronological sorting. Within each month folder, create event subfolders with concise labels, like "Carly's Basketball Games" or "Family Trip to Disney."

Sort prints first by decade, then by theme or story. "Who knows for sure if a photo is from Christmas 1972 or 1973?," Cabral asks. "And does it really matter?" After all your photos are in decade piles, refine as much as you desire. Cabral likes to spread index card labels on a counter or table as a guide.

STEP 2 SORT YOUR PHOTOS BY DATE, THEN TOPIC

ARCHIVING PRODUCTS



FOREVER scans and retains files for your lifetime plus 100 years. Starting at \$4/month; forever.com



3-RING BINDER BOXES organize pocketed sheets and block dust. Starting at \$4; unikeep.com



ACID-FREE RESEALABLE BAGS slip over prints in seconds. Starting at \$4 for 25; containerstore.com

STEP 3 PRIORITIZE YOUR PHOTOS

Look at each print in each pile and rate it. The Association of Professional Photo Organizers (see "Help, I'm drowning in photos!," page 13) recommends the ABC method figure out what to do with photos.

- A** YOUR BEST PHOTOS: DISPLAY, PUT IN ALBUM, OR ARCHIVE.
- B** GOOD PHOTOS: STORE IN AN ACID-FREE BOX, USE, OR GIVE TO OTHERS.
- C** POOR AND EXTRA PHOTOS: GIVE AWAY DUPLICATES OR DISCARD.

Using image management software, rate or tag digital photos as A, B, or C. Or append file names with a number or special character.

STEP 4 ARCHIVE YOUR A PHOTOS

Your most precious prints will inevitably age over time.

Colors shift, whites yellow, and paper becomes brittle. Your goal is two-fold: to slow down this process as much as possible with acid-free storage containers and to create high-quality digital versions of all your A-level prints.

Have your prints scanned in batches, starting with images that are most important, oldest, or most recent. And don't rely on your home scanner. Yours will not produce archive-worthy, high-resolution scans. Seek out a scanning professional in your area or try a service like Ever Present (everpresentonline.com), which can assess your prints and make recommendations about restoring and preserving your images.

Save your most precious digital files in multiple ways.

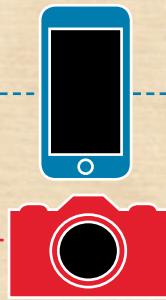
Copy your files to CDs, DVDs, jump drives, or external hard drives—but realize that all external storage methods require hardware to be read at some point in the future. Store one copy of a disc or drive in a fire-safe container or safe-deposit box.

Supplement physical storage with online storage, but be cautious. Free online storage offered by many photo printing services often involves compressing files and reducing image quality. Most also assume the right to use and reproduce your images. Look for online storage providers, such as Forever (forever.com), that guarantee to store your digital files for your use only in a high-quality format even as technology changes over the next century.

TRY THIS

SCAN ENTIRE PAGES FROM SCRAPBOOKS OR MAGNETIC PHOTO ALBUMS. STORE THE SCANNED PAGE AS YOU DO INDIVIDUAL





▶ BUY THIS
USE ONLY PENS WITH ARCHIVAL INK TO WRITE ON PRINTS. \$4; AKURAOFAMERICA.COM



▶ TRY THIS
CHOOSE ALBUMS WITH ACID-FREE PLASTIC AND PAPER. AVOID ANY ALBUM MADE FROM PVC OR CONTAINING STICKY PAGES.



▶ TRY THIS
PUNCH HOLES IN EACH YEAR'S HOLIDAY PHOTOS, THREAD WITH A RIBBON, AND DISPLAY AS PART OF YOUR DECOR.



STEP 5 STORE OR USE YOUR A & B PHOTOS

Show the prints you're keeping some respect. A few thoughtful strategies extend their lives:

Label smartly While you're putting prints into albums or boxes, you have the perfect chance to add information. Use a photo-safe pen to list location, date (or decade), and any notable people or subjects. Thorough descriptions are best, but realize a great label on a folder or the top of an album page can count for all the images. Avoid personalized labels like "Dad" or "Aunt Helen" or "Our Cabin," which require future viewers to know historical or personal details.

Pay attention to plastics You can safely store prints in plastic albums, sleeves, and boxes, as long as the material is polyethylene, polypropylene, or polyester (often list as Mylar D or Mellines 516).

Use B-level prints Rather than boxing up, slide prints under a glass tabletop or decoupage onto a decorative item.

Give away Share prints that others might enjoy more than you. Labeled and organized prints can be a thoughtful gift for a young person starting out.

▶ TRY THIS
CHOOSE A PHOTO BOOK PRINTER THAT OFFERS EASY ONLINE SOFTWARE, GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE, AND PAPER AND PRINTING SAMPLES.



Digital images don't consume physical space, but they do clutter your devices and offer few clues about their subject matter or quality. Here's how to bring order to the chaos:

Polish your pics Take time after sorting to color-correct, remove red eye, crop, and make other adjustments to all A-level images. Some passionate digital photographers save raw, unedited files, but keeping only your best versions of images will probably suffice.

Back up in batches Whenever you're done with a folder of images, back up the files using at least two methods discussed in Step 4.

Show off Explore high-quality printing options beyond traditional prints. Try online services that print on canvas, ceramic, metal, wallpaper, and peel-and-stick vinyl. A well-curated slideshow is a welcome addition to most gatherings.

STEP 6 PART WITH YOUR C PHOTOS

If you haven't done so, discard or delete your C-level photos. "If you save everything, nothing has value," Cabral says. Try to identify a collection of photos you'll want to look at again in the future. "Five hundred images you enjoy every year is much better than 5,000 that you never look at ever again."

KEEP OR DELETE?

YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER YES TO ALL THE FOLLOWING FOR ANY PHOTO YOU KEEP:

- If the photo includes people, are all eyes open and free of red-eye?
- If the photo doesn't include people, is the image exceptional in some way?
- Is everything important in the photo clear and sharp?
- Does the image have meaning to me?

STEP 7 SET UP A SYSTEM

Printed photos will always come into your life—even with the popularity of digital photography. You need a plan you can start following now, not just a goal you work toward. "Success is not about getting there someday," Cabral says. "It's about being able to keep the system you establish going." When you find a photo box or album that suits your output and style, stock up because products change. Plan to go through all seven steps outlined in this story the same day an envelope of newly printed photos comes into your home. Attending to a few dozen images takes a few minutes.

Establish one computer as your family's official download destination. Set a calendar reminder to prompt you to download photos from all devices monthly. Each January create a new batch of folders and subfolders so sorting is as easy as possible. Put your digital pics to regular use by creating annual photo books for your entire family or for each child. As children grow, involve them in the process of selecting images and designing layouts.

▶ TRY THIS
USE A DATE-BASED SORTING AND LABELING SYSTEM TO CREATE CUSTOM PHOTO BOOKS FOR EACH CHILD AT A YEAR'S END.



Deborah J. Cabral is a Certified Professional Organizer and owner of Cabral Enterprises, which includes The DeClutter Coach, LLC, and offers photo organizing services.

Help, I'm drowning in photos!

More than 880 billion photos are taken daily. How do you identify the ones you want to look at in five—or 50—years?

Whether prints or digital files, photos carry emotional significance. The objective insights of a Certified Professional Photo Organizer, or CPPO, can help you take control of your personal archive once and for all.

"We take photos chronologically, but we get frustrated when we try to organize chronologically—because we live thematically," says Cathi Nelson, Founder of the Association of Personal Photo Organizers (appo.org). A CPPO can help you identify the themes in your life, then establish a system that fits the amount and type of photos you actually take.

Some CPPOs are professional organizers, but the majority are people passionate about taking, sharing, and preserving photos. You can find CPPOs skilled in photo restoration, historical archiving, film-to-digital conversion, scrapbooking, and graphic design.

Depending on your needs and budget, your CPPO can do the organizing for you, do it with you, or teach you to do it yourself. Ask up front about project and hourly rates, and expect fees comparable to other service providers (personal trainers, professional organizers, life coaches) in your area.

STORAGE BOXES



THE LEGACY BOX has acid-free subboxes and dividers. Starting at \$40, through Association of Personal Photo Organizers; appo.org



THE PHOTOGUARD PHOTO VAULT is a petite, stackable organizer for prints and other media. \$15; bedbathandbeyond.com



IRIS PHOTO BOXES cluster photos in color-coded containers that can stack within a larger carrier. \$2 each; michaels.com