

# Organize Your Photos

Photos are the golden treasures that give life to your scrapbook album. Are they just in a pile? Or tossed haphazardly into a box? These haphazard piles are often inhibitors to starting a scrapbook album, so let's go through a series of steps to fix this problem.

Before you start, gather up all of your photographs. Although this may seem obvious, you might need to spend some effort locating them and its better to do this before you start, rather than having to stop several times to hunt them down.

You'll next need to select categories for sorting, and since many scrapbooks are done by theme, it makes sense to sort your pictures into broad theme categories. Here are a few category suggestions to help inspire your thinking:

travel & vacations	school
weddings	parties & celebrations
holidays	religious events
births & birthdays	places
friends	meals & recipes
work	military
family & relatives	reunions
gatherings	sports
heritage	fun & play

It might help to browse through your pictures first to get an idea of categories that are meaningful to you. For pictures that do not easily fit a theme, sort by other criteria such as individual: son, daughter, mom, etc. For some categories you may want to further sort with added criteria like person: birthday - son, daughter; heritage - mom, dad and so forth. Or event: Holidays - Christmas, July 4. Or time: Holidays - 2000, 2001. Or combine multiple criteria: Holidays – Christmas: 2000, 2001. Think of it like a file structure on your computer. The level of detail for further sorting is up to you. We recommend that you only sub-divide a category that has lots of pictures. The goal is to save you search time, leaving more “creative” time. So only sub-divide where it will benefit you.

When you're all done sorting, look at what's left. Now it's decision time. To keep or discard? It's often difficult to “trash” the left over items, but don't fret over it. For pictures that you're not sure about tossing, put them in their own

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container and label it with the date. In a year, see what items are still there and if you've used them or not. If you haven't, then consider discarding them. Another possibility is to check with family and friends to see if they would like any of your left over pictures.

With sorting done, the next task is to arrange them for easy and convenient access. Photos should go through two steps here. First is documenting a picture's facts. How many times have you looked at an old picture and wondered when or where it was taken? So make sure all are identified with a date, along with the who and where. Ideally, do not write on a photo, but rather, lightly put an identifier number on the back of the photo in pencil. Then list the photo details on a separate paper or notebook, kind of like a log. While this may be the ideal method for preservation, the downside is that if the log is lost, future generations will also lose the picture information. An alternative then is to write lightly with an acid-free pen on the picture back. The most important point is don't trust your memory for picture details... write them down!

The next step is organized storage. Store them by category in acid free containers. Accordion style works nicely or use archival boxes. Label each container with the appropriate category, and sub-categories if you've created any, to make picture retrieval simple.

Finally, as you handle your pictures, remember that you want them to be around for your great grandkids, so avoid spillage and excessive finger prints. If cleaning is needed, use only a cloth or cleaner designed for pictures. For your most precious pictures, make copies and use the copies in your scrapbook. Keep your originals safely stored for long term preservation.

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## **Scrapbook Organizers**

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