

HOW TO PACK WET DOCUMENTS



IMPORTANT

- **MOULD can begin to grow in as little as 48 hours** after paper comes into contact with water. *Please take precautions: wear a mask, gloves, and goggles* when handling wet records and materials.
- **If possible, freeze wet records ASAP.** Freezing halts mould-growth and will give you time to source supplies for dry, flattening, and removing mould, dirt, etc. (and give you time to clean-up your site).
- **Items that cannot be frozen** include vellum, floppy disks, CDs, DVDs, audio or video recordings on tape (eg. VHS), glass-plate negatives, ambrotypes, tintypes, and daguerreotypes.



Packing Wet Documents

1. **If the original boxes are unstable or heavily soiled, repack** the records into boxes lined with polyethylene sheeting.
2. **Try your best to maintain original order.** If the records are still in their folders, keep them there – do not remove individual items.
3. **Handle with care**, especially papers with creases or weak spots, which will be more susceptible to damage when wet.
4. **If any records or boxes are mouldy, isolate them immediately** from unaffected collections and label the items/box accordingly.
5. **If you are *not* freezing the records**, place a sheet **paper towel** between every few folders to soak-up excess liquid.
6. **If you *are* freezing the records**, place a sheet of **freezer paper** between every few folders to prevent items from sticking to one another.
7. **Stop packing when the box is $\frac{3}{4}$ full.**
8. **Number and label boxes** according to contents and level wetness – wet, damp, or dry.



Packing Wet Bound Volumes

1. **Pack books of similar size** into boxes lined with polyethylene sheeting. Keep **spines facing down** to help the books maintain their shape.
2. **Wrap wet books in freezer paper** or wax paper before placing them in the box.
3. **Isolate any items with mold.**
4. **Stop packing when the box is $\frac{3}{4}$ full.**
5. **Number and label boxes** according to contents and level wetness – wet, damp, or dry.

Watch this and other how-to videos on basic salvage techniques by the Archives Society of Alberta:

<https://archivesalberta.org>