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**Treasured Keepsakes or Clutter? A Look at Memorabilia**

**By Christine Sutton**

**Treasured Keepsakes or Clutter? A Look at Memorabilia**

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Handwritten notes, children's artwork, report cards, ticket stubs . . . little tidbits of our lives. What's worth keeping? What should be released? Only you can decide which items hold most meaning and importance for you.

As you decide which items to keep, we do offer a word of advice. Keep those items that truly stir your heart or capture important events, and allow yourself to release the rest. In her book, *The Gift of the Sea*, Anne Morrow Lindbergh compares our lives to the process of collecting seashells. Imagine that you are exploring the beach, gathering shells along the way. Each time you uncover a shell, you carefully consider its beauty and uniqueness. You decide whether or not it is worth keeping. By carefully choosing which shells to keep, you end up with a small collection of beautiful shells that bring you joy. If you had insisted on keeping every shell, then your beautiful shells would be lost in the mass of other shells.

The same can be said for your memorabilia. If you insist on keeping every item that is attached to a memory of an event or special person in your life, then you will soon be overwhelmed, and your truly precious keepsakes will be lost among the masses.

If you need more convincing, then just remember the major side benefit of purging. Your task of organizing your memorabilia will be so much easier!

Once you decide which items to keep, you can make the secondary decision on how to store or display the items. Whichever method you choose, you should be sure to protect your keepsakes from acid, lignin and PVC. Here's a quick explanation of these hazards:

**Acid:** A chemical substance that can weaken paper and cloth, causing it to brown and become brittle.

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**Lignin:** An organic substance that is present in wood pulp. It becomes more and more acidic as it deteriorates. (The yellowing effect of a newspaper is an example of lignin.)

**PVC:** (also known as polyvinyl chloride) A chemically active plastic that, when combined with moisture in the air can emit hydrochloric acid.

This may sound complicated, but you don't need to worry about remembering the details.

Just remember that acid, lignin and PVC will damage photographs and memorabilia! For ultimate protection of your precious keepsakes, be sure that all of your storage and display materials are acid-free, lignin-free, and PVC free.

If you would like to include your memorabilia in a scrapbook album, you have several options:

Test the item. A pH-testing pen will allow you to determine the level of acidity in your item. It might be

acid-free, in which case you can put it directly into your album. pH pens are very simple to use; most have a color and pH chart on the outside of the pen. You simply mark your item in an inconspicuous place and check the color against the chart.

Use a de-acidification spray to remove the acid from your items. If you choose this method, then please be aware that you may need to retreat items after a length of time.

Color photocopy your memorabilia on to acid-free paper.

Take photographs of your child's artwork. You can keep the remainder and get rid of the bulk. By the way, this is a great way to use up those last few pictures on a roll of film.

Use polypropylene memorabilia pockets to safely encapsulate and display small items such as ticket stubs, hospital tags or locks of hair.

Create a pocket page in your scrapbook album to hold awards, greeting cards, report cards or children's artwork. To do this you'll need two pieces of acid-free cardstock sized to fit your album. Cut the top off of one piece so that it is three to four inches shorter than the other piece (leaving the width as is). Place acid-free adhesive on the bottom and the two sides and adhere the shorter piece directly on top of the full-size piece of cardstock. This will provide you with a pocket to hold your assorted memorabilia, and you can embellish the front of the pocket as you choose.

Be sure to use acid-free adhesives when mounting memorabilia directly onto your album pages. You can use self-adhesive photo corners or a corner slot punch for those items that you don't want to permanently mount.

To safeguard your precious keepsakes, practice these "Don'ts":

Do not use rubber cement, tape or glue, which may contain acid and harmful chemicals that will

destroy your photos and memorabilia.

Do not laminate memorabilia. Laminating with common heat-sealing laminating machines permanently traps dust and contaminants in a closed environment. Laminating machines that use heat subject your memorabilia to high heat and strong pressure that can cause it to age more quickly. And, laminating with a heat-sealing laminating machine means that the lamination is irreversible.

Never put newspaper directly into your scrapbook albums. Newspaper is a cheap paper that contains lignin. Have you ever noticed how quickly a newspaper yellows especially if it exposed to sunlight? The yellowing effect is the result of lignin. Newspaper also contains acid. Storing photographs and memorabilia with newspaper creates a damaging environment for your keepsakes, as the acid will migrate from the newspaper.

If you do not want to create a scrapbook album, you can still enjoy your items in the future, by ensuring their safety with the use of archival-quality storage supplies such as: acid-free file folders, archival boxes or polypropylene enclosures. (Remember: All supplies for storing and displaying photos or memorabilia should be acid-free, lignin-free, and PVC free!)

If you've been feeling guilty because you haven't organized and protected your family's keepsakes, then take heart. This accomplishment pales in comparison to the significance of the journey you

embark on each day -- creating joyful memories with the people you cherish most in your life.

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Christine Sutton and her business partner, Tracey DuBois, have helped countless people organize, protect, and enjoy their precious photographs. They co-founded

, a website

that offers a fun approach to photo safety, organizing solutions, a FREE Photo Organizing Idea Kit and more!

## **7 Ways to Leave Your Clutter**

**By Barbara Myers**

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Everyone has some degree of clutter lurking at home. When you're tired of moving it around, stepping over it and losing important items in it, it's time to take control of the clutter. But what should you do with it? You have seven options:

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1. Dispose of it. Much of clutter is trash you either thought you might need or figured you'd throw out later.
2. Put it away. About half of the remaining clutter in most homes consists of items that simply haven't been put away. Fill a laundry basket then deliver the items to the proper rooms. Avoid this trap by making things easy to put away and by enforcing a family "use it and put it away" rule.
3. Donate it. If you don't use it, it's not a treasured decorative item or memento, and it's not an important piece of paper, get rid of it. Pass it along to someone who might need it.
4. Refer it. The novel you've been saving for Debbie, the recipe you copied for Aunt Jan and the gloves borrowed from Mom need to be sent or delivered to their rightful owners. Place them together and make your rounds tomorrow.
5. File it. Set up a "hold" file for wedding invitations and concert tickets (after you mark them in your calendar). Set up a "to file" file for all your important papers.
6. Fix it or have it repaired today. Those buttons aren't going to sew themselves. Either mend them or take them to a seamstress. The same goes for the broken toys and watches.
7. Give it a home. Everything else is something that belongs in your home but you don't know what to do with it. Where DO you put extra batteries and your kids' artwork? Designate a permanent place in your home for each group of items you find in a clutter pile. Simplify by making a list of items and where they belong.

Barbara Myers is an author, speaker and professional organizer. Enjoy a FREE "50 Ways to Manage Your Time" tips booklet. Visit <http://www.ineedmoretime.com>

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