

My Photo Organization Checklist

- Sort.** Separate photos to toss and photos to keep. Deciding factors: blurry, bad lighting or simply a bad photo.
- Organize by year.** Label several archival-safe large envelopes or photo boxes by year for a quick fix. Jot a note to remind you of what's inside.
- Categorize most recent photos first,** then work backwards.
Choose your method:
 - Event/Occasion
 - Holiday
 - Month
 - Person
- Label.** Use an acid-free photo-safe pencil or pen to date the backs of photos and write any keywords to help you identify them later.
- Separate the negatives.** Place negatives in letter envelopes, and label the outside with date and subject. Keep in a fire-safe box; if something happens to the photos you'll still have the negatives.
- Store** in a cool, dark and dry place, but avoid the attic, basement and garage.

Quick Tips

Can't decide which photos to keep? Liberate yourself from piles of never-looked-at photos by thinking of them as clothes: If you don't like how a photo looks, toss it. Never keep photos for posterity's sake; they'll just create clutter.

Can't find time to organize your photos? When you get your photos back from the store, sort and toss them immediately. Taking five minutes for an initial sort will save you hours of time later.

How do I deal with doubles? If you get duplicates and know you want to give them to relatives and friends, create a separate folder specifically for that purpose. Keep it on hand near your stationery and cards so you can quickly tuck a snapshot in the mail.