

CONSERVATION FOR TEXTILES

1. Textiles should not be dirty. New items such as wedding dresses and christening clothing should be dry cleaned or laundered prior to putting away. Older items and antique textiles should be examined by textile conservator before storing them.
2. Be sure to photograph items for record keeping and insurance purposes. It is a good idea to also write down a description of each item and include why it is important and details about its importance (monetary or not) and history. Also, label the box.
3. A work space is needed to pack. It should be large enough to lay the item out completely. A large dining table can be used or a clean floor space covered with a large, clean, white cotton sheet.
4. Before you begin; remove all jewelry, watches, belt buckles, and abrasive items. Clean, dry hands are essential for safe handling of textiles, but wearing white cotton gloves is recommended, especially if your hands are prone to sweating.
5. To prepare textiles for storage fold each as few times as possible and pad each fold of the item with sufficient tissue that the folds are gradual enough that the fibers along the fold edges will be protected from stress and breakage along the crease. Too much tissue is usually better than too little, but the item must still fit in the box.
6. Start by fully extending the object on the work surface. Figure out the best way to fold the object so that the number of folds is minimized. Any stiff or especially fragile or deteriorated elements should not be located along a fold. Take advantage of existing seams. Line the interior of the box with two layers of tissue at right angles. Leave some tissue extended out side of the box on each side. This will be folded over the top of the stored textile before the box is closed.
7. Take the corners of a few sheets of tissue in each hand and crinkle the tissue, roughly pleat the tissue and draw it into a sausage shape. The sausage should be firm enough to hold the weight of the textile. Place this sausage along the location of the first fold. Make enough sausages to line the entire length of the fold. Fold the textile over the sausages. Repeat this process with each fold until completely folded and place in box.
8. Garments can have extremely complicated structures. All major areas should be padded. Puffed sleeves of a shirt or dress should be filled with tissue. Remember the item still must fit in the box.
10. When the item is fully padded and folded, place it into the box and over lap the extending tissue over the top of the item(s). Place the lid on the box. If the box will be stored where there is the risk of leaks or flooding, the box can be placed in a polyethylene bag that is sealed tape; a 2" clear polypropylene adhesive tape works best.

