

Personal Digital Archiving



Scan using your printer or smartphone



When scanning your papers and photographs, use the glass scanning feature on your printer. Avoid the document feeder option, as paper jams could damage your documents. A smartphone's free scanning app is another option, if you don't have a printer.

Sort by date or subject



Computers will automatically sort documents and images into different folders, which can help in finding specific items. Date and subject can also be useful sorting categories for digital files. If downloading materials, transfer items from the downloads folder to store in folders according to your preferred arrangement.

Use consistent file names



To make your materials easier to search in your file explorer, use a consistent syntax when naming your files. We recommend [date]_[subject]_[format], using either underscores or hyphens. For example, a photo from a 1999 New Year's Eve Party could be named 19991231_NYEParty_Photo. Or, a page of your grandma's 1945 journal could be named 1945-GrandmasGraduation-DiaryEntry.

Backup to the cloud



The best practice for digital files is having a second copy stored in a different location. Keep one copy on a hard drive or computer and upload another copy to the cloud. Google Drive can be a useful free option if you have less than 15 GB worth of digital records. Archive.org is a nonprofit library with free and unlimited use. It accepts downloads of most file formats but does not have private listing options.

Use YouTube



Upload digitized home movies to YouTube, which has unlimited storage for videos. Accounts have the option to be restricted so that videos are private. Link can then be shared with family members. Creating playlists is another option and can help organize videos to share multiple files with a single link.

Maintain access



Remember, digital backups stored on these platforms are only accessible for as long as you maintain an account and login information. Consider creating a schedule and sharing logins with a trusted family member or friend to make sure your content remains available and active. Note too that platforms such as YouTube can change their unlimited video storage policy at any point.