

Preserving Your Videos

Videotapes transport us to the past and allow us to revisit personal histories. Video camcorders are commonly used to document important events in life such as the birth of a child, high school and college graduations, vacations, birthday parties, and weddings. Video recordings have become an influential medium or artistic expression and visual documentation. They allow people to capture and portray events which shape our lives and our perception of the world.

The relative short life expectancy of video tapes (10-30 years) makes them inadequate for preserving home movies for future generations. However, treating videotapes carefully will maximize their life span.

Deterioration occurs slowly. A few noticeable symptoms of early deterioration are: fuzzy images, blank spots and "static" lines that run across the image... similar to that of a video that is not "tracking" properly. However, this problem can not be corrected with the tracking control.

The most **common causes of damage** are improper handling and fluctuations in heat and humidity since these factors accelerate the deterioration process.

Equipment

Dust and debris that get trapped between the layers of wound tape or accumulate in the equipment can also result in damage by scratching and contaminating the equipment. The VCR heads could become dirty and cause abrasion to the film by passing dust, dirt or oil from one film to another. The next time the tape is played, the oxide particles (no longer protected by the binder) peel off taking with them all of the recorded images. Videotapes in this condition will not play properly because they clog VRC heads.

Storage

- Store tapes in a COOL, VENTILATED, and DRY place, away from radiators, heating vents, air conditioners, and other appliances. The ideal temperature should be 40 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Humidity should be between 20 to 30%. Mold can grow on tapes where there is high humidity.
- Avoid storing tapes in a room with wood shelves or other combustibles.
- Keep tapes away from sun light; remember not to leave them in your car.
- Keep videotapes away from dust, dirt, and oil (such as cigarette smoke, oil and acid from fingers).
- Buy and use only the highest quality of tapes.
- Tape manufactures call top-of-the-line offerings "gold" or "premium."
- Store tapes away from strong electromagnetic fields such as speakers, and television sets.
- Store tapes vertically (like books on a library shelf) with the tape wound onto the bottom spool. Laying a videocassette on its long, flat side will eventually cause the bottom side of the tape to warp.

Handling

- Avoid using inexpensive rewind machines as they could cause damage to the tape
- Before recording or storing tapes, rewind them from end to end, in one complete, uninterrupted procedure to make sure the tape is wound evenly and uniformly.
- Break off the record tabs to protect recording
- Fast forward and rewind tapes at least once every three years. This keeps the video tapes from sticking and prevents creases in the tape.
- Use a cleaning cassette tape after playing a damaged tape.

- Follow the recommended maintenance practices for the VCR, and protect from dust.
- When playing a tape in the video recorder do not leave the tape in the pause mode for more than a minute since this tends to wear out the tape.
- Always eject tape at the beginning or the end.

In the Event of an Emergency:

If you need to evacuate your home it is best to keep all your family videos in one place so that they can be located quickly and removed.

Further Reading

Lindner, James. The Videotape Restoration Company - --VIDIPAX. *The Proper Care and Feeding of Videotape*. Retrieved September 30, 2002 from Rochester Regional Library Council. <http://www.rrlc.org/videotape.html>

Prepared by Debbie Hess Norris with assistance from Peter Adelstein, Deirdre Boyle, Connie Brooks, Alan Lewis, Jim Lindner and Paul Messier (1997). *Caring for your Home Videotape*. Retrieved September 30, 2002 from American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works <http://aic.stanford.edu/treasure/video.html>

Wheeler, James (1997). *The Dos and Don'ts of Videotape Care*. Retrieved September 30, 2002 from Conservation OnLine <http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/byauth/wheeler/wheeler3.html>

Online Resources

Care of Video Tapes

<http://www.pitt.edu/~olcpwg/>

Caring for Your Home Video Tape

<http://aic.stanford.edu/treasure/video.html>

Film and Video Preservation Tips

<http://www.amipa.org>

How to care for Videotapes

http://www.preservation.gc.ca/howto/articles/videotapes_e.asp

How to care for your Videos

<http://www.screenound.gov.au/ScreenSound/Screenso.nsf/HeadingPagesDisplay/PreservationHow+to+Care+for+your+Video?OpenDocument>

Preserving Your Precious Family Videos

<http://genealogy.about.com/library/authors/ucmishkin4a.htm>

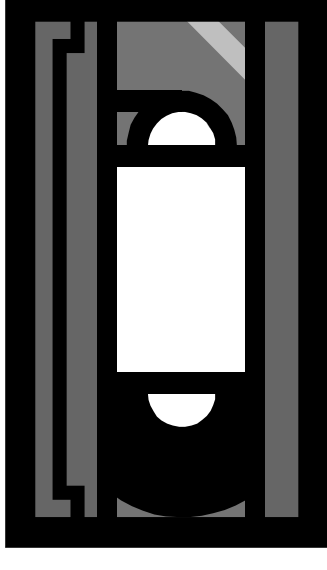
Shelf Lives and Videotapes

<http://www.kodak.com/country/US/en/motion/support/technical/shelf.shtml>

Hold on to the Memories

Preservation Information
From IELDRN

Leaflet no. 1



IELDRN

The Inland Empire Libraries Disaster Response Network (IELDRN) is a non-profit consortium of libraries in the Inland Empire. The group's primary mission is assisting libraries that are prepared for, able to respond to and recover from disasters that affect collections. "Hold on to the Memories" leaflets are provided as a service to libraries to assist in answering the public's question on preservation of personal possessions. Preservation leaflets are available on the IELDRN website:

<http://www.IELDRN.org> and the California Preservation

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