

photo realism

You don't have to be an archivist to manage your family photographs. Here, stress-free steps to tackling the backlog of frozen memories.



BY ADAM BLUESTEIN

139 Say what you will about the advantages of editing your film on screen. With the advent of digital cameras, we've merely traded envelopes full of unsorted snapshots for scores of images stuck in another sort of purgatory: the virtual netherworld of a digital-camera memory card or a hard drive that is just a

system crash away from oblivion. What remains consistent in the digital and analog worlds is the need for rigorous maintenance. The following is not a project with the usual trappings of glue sticks and pinking shears, but a four-step plan for organizing your photos that actually works—even if you're starved for time. And sleep deprived. And desperately in need of a pedicure.

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organizing • photos

THE ONE-HOUR-PER-MONTH PLAN

In the first year of parenthood, tackle a month's worth of photos at a time. Start build-up of unsorted photos you may have; just make sure they're in a photo-safe

FILM



THE PRINTS DO STACK UP. THINK OF ORGANIZING THEM AS A WAY TO KEEP MEMORIES CLOSE AT HAND.

1

DEVELOP

Don't let those little black canisters roll off to a final resting place beneath a couch or crib. For the best quality, take your rolls of film in for processing asap. Or, send your 35mm film to be developed by kodakgallery.com or snapfish.com from the comfort of your own home. Both of these sites will mail you postage-paid envelopes. Just log on and follow the instructions.

THE ESSENTIALS ALBUMS

Several smaller albums are better than one huge one—think how good you'll feel after completing an album in one sitting. Buy several at once, in matching colors or styles, for a uniform look. Opt for albums with slip-in pocket pages, not ones that require hundreds of tedious little photo corners.



THE PIONEER CLOTH FRAME PHOTO ALBUM
This album stores 200 photos in pocket pages and has memo space next to each pocket. Available in black, red, sky blue, and sage green. \$34. archivakusa.com



RAINBOW MINI PHOTO ALBUM SET
Colorful yet contained, this set of six cloth-covered albums comes in its own black slipcase. Each book fits 20 4-by-6-inch photos. \$40. momastore.org



SLIM THREE-RING BINDER
This binder can hold over 100 sheets of negative sleeves. Its nifty dry-erase interior is useful for labeling (and relabeling) contents. \$17 each. russe-hazel.com

DIGITAL



THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT YOU CAN SHOOT AD NAUSEUM. THE BAD NEWS? YOU STILL NEED TO SORT AND STORE THEM.

1

DOWNLOAD

Get the pictures off your camera and onto your computer as soon as you can after taking them. The longer you let digital photos collect and sit on your camera, the greater the risk of your memory card becoming corrupted—and the longer the uploading process will be when you finally face the music. Setting your camera charger next to your computer will encourage regular downloading.

Wirelessly, from A



with whatever is on your camera or in undeveloped rolls. Forget about the container (see below) and put them aside for later.

2

EDIT

Take care of your new prints right away. Ali Tenenbaum, a professional organizer in New York City, has found that only about half the pictures in an average roll are "keepers." Take her advice and toss the ones that don't work (you'll always have the negatives if you change your mind). Then, use an archival pen to label what's left. In a hurry? Jot some identifying info on the envelope the prints came in.

3

STOW AWAY

"It takes very little time to slide snapshots into a small album with slip-in photo pockets," says Tenenbaum. It takes even less time to store them in an acid-free, flip-top box. Nancy Laboz, owner of Parcel, a paper-goods store in Montclair, New Jersey, often recommends the boxes to customers. "They offer order without the permanence of an album. You can add to the box or refill as necessary."

4

SECURE THE NEGATIVES

Professionals keep their negatives safe and dirt-free with specially designed negative sleeves that fit in a three-ring binder. Label negatives either directly, with an archival pen, or on the negative holder, and store them in chronological order. If you're really short on time, at least secure the envelope of negatives with a binder clip to the inside back cover of your album.

THE ESSENTIALS BOXES

Boxes are an ideal storage solution: They keep photos safe, clean, and in one place, and you never have to fuss with photo albums. For the organizationally challenged among us, they offer efficiency and elegance all in one. They're also a great place to store the years of photos you just haven't gotten around to yet.



PORTOFINO PHOTO STORAGE BOX
With room for over 300 4-by-6-inch prints and six tabbed dividers, this faux-leather-covered box makes sorting simple. \$20. thecontainerstore.com



NEGAGUARD FLIP-TOP BOX
The reinforced corners on both box and lid make this acid-free container sturdy enough to stack. Available in various sizes, from \$20. lightimpressionsdirect.com



HAVANA PHOTO BOX
Inspired by classic cigar boxes, this shallow container is a hassle-free alternative to standard albums. Available in various sizes and colors. From \$32. katespaperie.com

2

FILE

Create clearly labeled photo folders for every year on your hard drive. Tonia Gustafson of Brooklyn, a self-employed asset manager and mother of two, makes one folder for each new year and subfolders labeled with the dates and descriptions of events. Another good strategy is to make a folder for each month (e.g., 11_05, 12_05), so the computer will automatically sort chronologically.

3

UPLOAD

Upload the edited photos to an online service, such as shutterfly.com or snapfish.com, both of which offer unlimited storage space and have a nice selection of fonts and album styles. To minimize confusion, create albums with the same names as the folders you've set up on your home computer. This kind of organization will allow you to easily e-mail photos of Junior's latest milestones to family and friends.

4

BACK IT UP

Now that you've got your photos up on a third-party site—and maybe even ordered prints—you don't have to worry about a personal-computer crash nuking your precious memories. Any techie worth his ponytail will tell you to back up your data frequently. Burn and label a new CD every month or so. Feeling lazy? Many online photo services let you order a backup CD of your photos.



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