



## WHAT TO DO WITH WATER DAMAGED PHOTOGRAPHS, BOOKS AND PAPERS, AUDIO OR VIDEO TAPES, DVDS AND CDS

This information is for first-aid treatment only for water-damaged objects. Conservation advice should be obtained where necessary. It is worth considering whether you can replace damaged books or documents, as attempting to dry them yourself might not always be successful.

### GENERAL POINTS

- Read these guidelines right through before proceeding
- Beware of serious health hazards associated with mud, mould and possible sewage contaminated water. Wear disposable gloves and protect clothing. Consider wearing goggles and face mask to protect yourself from splashes.
- It is important to act promptly as wet or damp paper can develop mould in warm conditions.
- Wet paper tears easily, so handle with care at all times.
- Water soaked materials should be kept as cool as possible by good air circulation, so keep area cool and ventilated while drying. Do not be tempted to speed up drying by using heat.
- A fan or hairdryer on a cool, gentle setting may be used with care to aid drying of individual items.

### PHOTOGRAPHS

- Remove from any frame or mountings.
- Where photographs are stuck together consult a photograph conservator. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO PEEL APART.** Keep them wet by placing in a clean polythene bag or in a container of water for no more than 48 hours until you can seek professional advice.
- Immerse photographs in cold water. If they are wrapped, leave in wrapping (take off later after immersion).

- Wash colour prints in cold water for 15 minutes. Wash black & white prints, and colour and black & white negatives for 30 minutes.
- Remove from their wrappings and lay out flat, image side up on blotting paper or absorbent paper towels.
- Ensure the drying environment is kept cool and as dust free as possible.
- If photographs are valuable, consider consulting a conservator.

If there are too many for immediate attention, either:

- Keep them wet by placing in a clean polythene bag or in a container of water for no more than 48 hours. Air-dry as above as soon as possible.
- Freeze. If possible, interleave each photo with waxed paper. Consult a photograph conservator.

## BOOKS

- If it is possible to buy replacements, this may be easier than trying to dry them.
- Books with only wet edges can be dried successfully. Very wet books will require specialist treatment.
- If book cover is wet and soiled it may be possible to rinse it carefully, holding book closed.
- Superficially wet or damp books can be dried by standing book open at 45-90° angle on bottom or top edge. Splay pages and leave to air-dry at a cool room temperature.
- Very wet books if open, should be laid flat on a clean surface. Interleave with absorbent material such as blotting paper and close (adding no more bulk than 20% of the book thickness). Replace interleaving when damp. **IMPORTANT – DO NOT TRY TO OPEN VERY WET BOOKS IF THEY ARE CLOSED**
- Soft bound books, magazines or pamphlets can be dried in the same way
- If **books or papers are valuable**, or if it is not possible to dry them because they are too big, too thick, too wet and closed, or there are too many of them to dry in 48 hours -
  - place books in individual polythene bags put in a freezer, supporting books spine downwards
  - if freezing is not possible, chill in a fridge to slow mould growth
  - consult a conservator
- Books with coated papers (look shiny) may not air dry very easily and pages are likely to stick together. It may be advisable to freeze the book and consult a conservator.

## **PAPER**

- Air-dry flat as individual sheets, or small piles up to 0.75cm, interleaved with absorbent material such as blotting paper. Do not use textured kitchen roll as the texture may transfer to the paper.
- Replace blotter when damp.
- Do not unfold or try to separate individual wet sheets.

If too many items for air-drying

- Interleave (by groups or individually) with waxed paper if time permits
- Pack papers or files into sturdy containers, to prevent further damage
- Freeze
- Consult a conservator

## **AUDIO OR VIDEO TAPES**

- If it is possible to replace them, this will be easier than trying to dry them
- Check whether the tape inside the cassette is wet.
- If so, place in a polythene bag for treatment by a conservator
- If cassette is dirty or wet and tape is only superficially wet –
  - Rinse cassette in clean lukewarm water
  - Carefully unravel the tape and hang to dry at room temperature
  - Re-assemble and copy to a new tape

If too many items for air-drying:

- Prevent tapes from drying out by placing in a polythene bag or a bucket of cold clean water
- Contact a conservator

## **DVDs OR CDs**

- Rinse carefully in cold clean water
- Do not rub disc, even gently, or use anything chemical or abrasive
- Blot gently or air dry

## CONTACTS

Collections Care, Gloucestershire Archives, Clarence Row, Alvin Street,  
Gloucester GL1 3DW

01452 425293

[www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives)

The Institute of Conservation (Icon)

020 7785 3807

[www.icon.org.uk](http://www.icon.org.uk)

Guidance on caring for a range of objects and materials is available via the Conservation Register website at [www.conservationregister.com/Caring.asp](http://www.conservationregister.com/Caring.asp). The information describes how you can help to preserve your possessions and gives examples of the types of deterioration and problems that should be referred to a professional conservator. The Conservation Register website can also be used to find qualified and experienced conservators in your local area. The Conservation Register is owned and operated by Icon, the Institute of Conservation.