

Document formats and their impact on image capture	
Format	Impact on image capture
Loose paper	Often damage along edges and creases Could be weak or brittle, have corrosive inks, be mould damaged and fragile – extra care required Could be varying sizes, weights and quality Sequence must be preserved – care needed!
Folded loose paper and ‘fastened’ papers	Same issues as with loose papers Can be difficult to unfold and re-fold – care and time needed! Associations and sequences must be preserved – care needed! May be much larger when opened May be deteriorated and weak along creases May contain fastenings like staples and paperclips - it should not be automatically assumed that they need to be removed (risk of dissociation) May not lie flat including where clipped or pinned together Fastenings may obscure information Damaged documents may be fastened to other documents (possibly also damaged) and need careful handling Metal fastenings can catch on, scratch and damage other items Fastenings might be an original part of a document and any removal of original material should be avoided as it could adversely affect the authenticity of an item, and some fastenings may be considered significant in themselves
Bundles of folded papers	Same issues as with folded and loose papers Fiddly to untie and re-tie bundles
Paper files	May contain variations in size, weight and quality May contain folded items Folders/bindings may restrict opening Bindings that are easily removed and replaced such as post-bindings or ring binders may be temporarily removed if required, although the loose pages may be more difficult to handle
Manuscript books	All bindings need to be supported appropriately at the required opening Non-printed material may have non-standard bindings May be old and the materials weak Where the sewing is broken extra care must be taken May be large and heavy Overall size when open will be much larger Tight bindings may restrict opening and cannot be imaged flat – will need careful support and restraint - pages may have to be imaged separately Inks may be corroded or faded May contain some blank pages May contain loose inserts Lighting can be adjusted to minimise shadows, and some correction can be made digitally after capture For a large collection of bindings, specialist equipment should be considered Also see printed books below
Printed books	Same issues as with manuscript books Binding structures could be weak due to the use of cheap/poor/aged materials Paper may be very thin and fragile or too thick for the binding Inner margins might be small and nearby information difficult to image
Paper rolls	May be difficult to unroll May have tears Will not lie flat – careful restraint required May need to image in sections and reposition

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Parchment	Ink is vulnerable to loss Document will not lie flat May be large documents when unfolded May be warped or cockled creating focus issues
Folded parchment	Careful unfolding required – may require assistance
Seals	Care due to brittle nature and risk of breakage/loss
Photographs	Negatives and photographs require handling with gloves Touching the surface should be avoided
Maps and works of art	Large items need careful handling Possibility of loose (friable) media such as pastel, chalk or charcoal
All formats	May have old repairs, mis-aligned tears, adhesive tapes, gummed labels, paper patches, creases and folds, surface dirt, mould residues (possible health risk), and other surface accretions or (in bound items) margin debris (including potentially significant evidence such as quill clippings). These can result in information being covered or obscured. They can also be failing or deteriorating and discolouring, cockling and distorting, creating stresses and the risk of further damage. Pages and documents may also be stuck together or to their enclosures. Never attempt to pull apart as this can result in damage. For all the above seek the advice of a conservator.

Adapted from Table 5.4 Preparing Collections for Digitization, Anna E Bulow and Jess Ahmon, The National Archives