

GUIDELINES FOR THE PROTECTION OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

The treatment of the Tablets should be such that they remain preserved in their original immaculacy. When being read they should be placed within a second sheet, and thereafter deposited in some special place for safe keeping.

These Words revealed by Bahá'u'lláh provide a standard for the handling and care of His original Tablets, and may be applied equally to the treatment of all sacred or historical Bahá'í documents and manuscripts. The following guidelines have been prepared by the Archives Office as a means of providing some assistance to both Spiritual Assemblies and individuals who have original Writings or valuable historical materials in their possession.

1. Wash the hands before handling any archival materials, and do not use any hand cream.
2. Avoid touching documents with the hands. A variety of implements can be used for turning pages without using the fingers. A bookbinder's "bone folder", a porcupine quill, or an unused wooden or bamboo chopstick with its end filed to a point, are examples of implements that can be used as page turners.
3. Place documents or books on a clean table while reading them, and do not hold them in the hands. Place a large sheet of clean paper on the table for added protection.
4. For Tablets and other very valuable documents, store each item in a separate folder or clean paper. "Acid-free" paper can be purchased from high-quality stationers or from art shops. Several paper folders and their contents can then be stored in an envelope or a stiff folder.
5. If the documents are torn to *not* attempt to mend them with sticky tape. Place each one in a paper folder, and handle it as little possible. If an item has already been mended with sticky tape do not attempt to remove it. This process requires use of chemicals, and must be performed by a qualified and experienced paper conservator.
6. Do *not* put Tablets or documents into albums, especially not the type with sticky pages. If documents have already been stuck into albums not *not* attempt to remove them. The process of detaching documents from the adhesive pages requires use of chemicals, and must be performed by a qualified and experienced paper conservator.
7. Write identifications for the documents on the outside of their folders, not on the items themselves. Write on the folder *before* inserting the item, not after placing it inside. If an identification has been written on a document do not attempt to erase it, as this process may cause damage.
8. The above points can be applied to the handling and protection of all archival documents and not only to Tablets and other valuable items. However, it may not always be necessary to place each document in an individual paper folder—several documents could be placed together in one folder.

9. Simple covers of clean white paper may be used to protect bound manuscripts. Use “acid-free” paper if available.
10. Folders containing documents should be stored flat (not on edge) in a box. Make sure the box is large enough to avoid crushing the documents or folders.
11. Suitable boxes and folders (“acid-free” are best) may be available from high-quality stationers, art or office supply stores, or from suppliers of equipment for museums.
12. For large numbers of documents several shallow boxes are better than one deep box, as the weight of the documents on top may damage the ones underneath.
13. Store bound manuscripts flat. Place them in separate boxes from other documents, as documents will be damaged by the weight of books on top of them.
14. Store boxes containing Tablets, other papers, or bound manuscripts in a cool, dry place, in the dark. Do not place boxes on the floor.