How to Organize and Safeguard
Your Entire Photograph Collection
…in as little as 10 days,
without losing your mind!

by: Christine Sutton and Tracey DuBois
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"Save Your Photos and Your Sanity:

How to Organize and Safeguard Your Entire Photo Collection...in as little as 10 days, without losing your mind!"

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This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered, which includes general guidelines on organizing and safeguarding photographs and memorabilia. Should the purchaser of these materials require assistance with photo restoration or with any topic not covered in this material, he or she should seek the services of a competent professional person who specializes in that particular field of study.
SAVE YOUR PHOTOS AND YOUR SANITY

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O.k., if you’re going to know anything about us, then we might as well get this out in the open right up front. We have a confession to make. Up until very recently, we did not have completely organized photo collections! (Did we just say that out loud?) It’s true! ... So if you have visions of our longstanding, meticulously arranged and painstakingly documented photo libraries in your head, then we feel compelled to inform you that your perception is slightly askew.

Has the vision been shattered? Are you feeling disillusioned?

If so, then do accept our apologies. But at least this way we can sleep at night. If you’re going to put your trust in us, then we need to be worthy of that trust. And how can we foster a relationship of trust if your perception of us is based somewhere other than reality?

We often refer to ourselves as self-confessed organizing fanatics. What we mean by that is not that we’re fanaticaly organized but that we’re fanatic about trying to get organized. We are constantly searching for ways to improve and to gain control over some small pocket of our lives. We were SO out of control with our own pictures, and feeling in desperate need for help that we went on a somewhat frantic search for solutions. When we didn’t find what we needed, we were driven to create our own solution. (That’s where the fanatical part comes in.) So we created a very simple line of products that solves the problem of organizing photographs and negatives.
Because life can get hectic, we knew we needed to create something that was super easy to use and covered all the bases at once. (Translation: the solution had to be safe for our photographs so that we’d be organizing and preserving at the same time AND it had to allow us to record our memories right then and there because we knew we’d never “get back to it”.)

It seems that as soon as we solved that problem, we discovered another. You can have the most amazing solution, and still not take action! Sometimes you need a strong dose of motivation, or even just a little bit of support. That’s why we created Save Your Photos and Your Sanity. We knew there were so many people out there like us that were overwhelmed with the “seemingly monumental” (o.k. make that “monumental”!) task of organizing their photographs. It’s just too big of a job to go it alone. We all need support, encouragement, and even just the sense that we’re not alone in our struggle. So getting back to that confession thing . . . We needed Save Your Photos and Your Sanity as much as you do!

We poured ourselves into creating the most comprehensive and fun book possible, and just like you, we set out to follow that advice!

We tell you this not so that you’ll wonder whether or not we’re really qualified to help you, but so that you’ll realize that in our imperfection, we are perfectly qualified to help you. What could we truly offer you if organizing photographs came easily to us? How could we possibly relate to your needs if we could organize photographs as easily as we could breathe? We understand you, because we are “you”. We’re real people who, until very recently, felt overwhelmed by the task of organizing our massive photo collections.

We found some answers because we needed answers. We dedicated two years to uncovering every tip, every secret, every possible method for simplifying the process of organizing and preserving our precious photographs and memories.

Now that our book is complete, we are happy to report that our not-so-perfect photo collections are finally organized! Not perfectly organized, but very reasonably organized, and we were able to accomplish this, once and for all, by following the guidelines that we laid out in this book.

Our photo collections may not be “perfect” but they are safely organized in a way that makes sense to us. Finally, we are enjoying the peace of mind that comes from knowing that we’ve protected our family’s most prized possessions.

We’re thrilled to share what we’ve learned so that you too can get your photos organized once and for all, and so that you enjoy this same peace of mind.

Warmly,

Chris & Tracey
SAV E Y O U R  P H O T O S  A N D  Y O U R  S A N I T Y

P.S. For those of you that were looking for the more conventional “about the authors” information, here goes:

In 1998, we started our business by teaching other people to scrapbook. We hosted workshops and scrapbooking events, but soon found out that just about everyone is overwhelmed by their piles of photographs!

We created a professional video, Treasure Your Memories™, to help people discover the joy of scrapbooking.

We developed Photo Pockets™, Negative Pockets™ and Page Planners™ to simplify the process of organizing and preserving photographs, while recording memories at the same time.

We held scrapbooking marathons to raise money for Camp Sunshine, (www.campsunshine.org) a retreat program for children with life-threatening illnesses and their families. Over four years, our event raised nearly $15,000 for Camp Sunshine.

In the past 13 years, we have raised over $20,000 for Camp Sunshine.

We launched www.organizedphotos.com to help scrapbookers and non-scrapbookers alike to easily organize, preserve, and enjoy their photographs. Every month, thousands of subscribers enjoy our Photo Tips Newsletter.

Of course, our list wouldn’t be complete without our most important item: our families. We’re each blessed with happy marriages and healthy children.

And just like you, we spend each day trying to find that balance of giving to others without neglecting ourselves.
The top 5 reasons why people put off organizing their photographs and what you can do to overcome them:

1. **Feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the task.** This probably comes as no surprise to you, but this is probably the most common reason why people put off organizing their photographs. It’s hard to get motivated to do anything when it feels like you can’t even begin to make a dent. This is the most dangerous stumbling block because people get an “all or nothing” mentality. They figure, “I’ll never get all my photos organized, so why bother?”

   **How to overcome it:** Take a deep breath and don’t look too far ahead. Think small! Learn to take very small steps and celebrate them along the way. Pat yourself on the back for doing something and then just keep moving. As you begin to see some progress, you’ll be motivated to do even more.

2. **Confusion.** Once people bypass the first obstacle of feeling overwhelmed, they’re soon met by the second major stumbling block: They just don’t know where to begin! We hear from website visitors all the time, who all say the same thing, “I’ve got 30+ years of photographs – Where do I begin?” It’s a bit like parenting. You know the old joke; our kids didn’t come with an owner’s manual. Nearly every person has a large photo collection that is priceless to them, but there’s never been an “owner’s manual” to teach us how to care for and protect this valuable asset (until now, of course ;)

   **How to overcome it:** Fortunately, you’re well on your way to having this problem licked! You have all the information you need right here inside this e-book. Simply keep reading and take it step-by-step as we guide you through the process.

3. **Emotions.** This is an interesting one. It’s not as obvious as the other obstacles. This is the one that we may not even be aware of consciously, but it impacts us
just the same. Memories . . . Sometimes the trip down memory lane isn’t a peaceful stroll. A painful divorce, a less-than-perfect childhood, even friendships that have ended too soon. Any number of emotional situations may stare you in the face as you look through old photographs. Even the best of memories can be painful to recall if you’re mourning the loss of a loved one.

How to overcome it: Be gentle with yourself. Understand why you’ve been putting this off. Do take action but tread lightly at first and give yourself time to cope with your emotions. Try to reframe the situation and look at it as a healthy opportunity for you to heal. If you’d rather not face this alone, then call on a friend to help you.

4. Boredom. Let’s face it. The idea of sorting through piles and piles of photographs and trying to get them into some reasonable order doesn’t sound like a whole lot of fun. We can easily think of a dozen other things that would be way more fun. (And we usually do – that’s why the majority of people have photo collections that are out of control.)

How to overcome it: O.K., this may sound oversimplified, but make it fun. What would make the process more enjoyable? What could you do to have the absolute best time you could have while organizing your photographs? Could you set yourself up in a sunny location? (No, we’re not suggesting that you hop on a plane and drag your whole mess to Tahiti . . . we were thinking more along the lines of a sunny window in your home.) Could you crank some fun music? How about having a photo-organizing party and working alongside of your friends? You get the idea.

5. Perfectionism. Basically this is a fear of doing it wrong. Photographs are so important to us, and most of us consider our photographs to be our greatest treasure. It can be pretty intimidating to face the task of caring for your greatest physical treasure. It is such a big deal, that we may have unspoken visions of how we imagine that we’d handle this task. Whether we’re aware of it or not, most of us would hope to pull off something of Martha Stewart’s caliber when it comes to how OUR photographs would be arranged and displayed. (We should note that we’re referring to Martha’s artistic creativity, not her creative expression in finance). Perhaps we have lofty visions of beautifully designed scrapbook albums, or handsome stacks of leather photo boxes neatly lining the
shelves of our mahogany bookcase. (Who cares if we don’t even own a mahogany bookcase – it goes better with our vision, so we throw it in there.)

Some of us are so afraid of not living up to these unspoken expectations, that we’d rather not even attempt it. (Maybe we hear our mother’s voice echoing in our heads, “If you can’t do it the right way, then don’t do it at all!”) So we continue along telling ourselves that we will do it someday and when we do, it will be perfect.

**How to overcome it:** Recognize it and then get over it! Another oversimplification, right? Look at it this way. Don’t you have lots of areas in your life where you consciously decided to lighten up your standards? Perhaps you don’t make your bed as carefully (or at all!) or your house isn’t impeccably maintained the way that your mother did it. But so what? You have a real life and you need to get on with it, right? It’s the same with your pictures. Make the decision to get on with it! Don’t worry about making a mistake and doing it the “wrong way.” There is no wrong way -- unless of course you use unsafe materials or keep your photographs in unsafe environments. And you’ve got a much greater risk of doing that when you don’t do anything at all! Take action and don’t be afraid to make course corrections along the way. **Anything** you do to capture your memories and preserve photographs will be a gift – to your loved ones and to yourself!
GET UP TO SPEED ON PHOTO SAFETY

You must know that your procrastination--and even your attempts at organizing--may be destroying your precious photographs!

It goes without saying that your inaction may be destroying your precious photographs, but would you believe that your attempts at organizing might actually be accelerating the deterioration of your photographs? It seems unfair, doesn’t it? You finally get yourself motivated to do something with your photographs, and your reward for taking action is the faster deterioration of your precious photos!

Are You Unknowingly Damaging Your Precious Photographs?

Do you store your photographs and memorabilia in manila envelopes, shoeboxes or dresser drawers? Regular manila envelopes, corrugated cardboard and shoeboxes are manufactured inexpensively and are made to be disposable. This means that the acid and lignin were not removed during manufacturing, as is the case in higher quality papers and cardstock.

Do you display your photographs and memorabilia in magnetic albums? Magnetic albums are extremely hazardous to your photos' health! The cardboard pages contain acid and lignin - both of which will destroy your photos over time. The plastic page protectors contain PVC and the sticky adhesive on both the page and the page protector also contains acid. Placing any photographs or memorabilia onto these pages will only accelerate the deterioration of these precious memories you are trying to protect.

Do you store your photographs and albums in the basement, attic or garage? You should keep your photographs away from excessive heat, light, or humidity, which is damaging to photographs. Drier environments permit less chemical activity.

Do you often place your favorite photos into frames to be displayed around your home? You should also keep your photographs away from sunlight, which can quickly
cause photos to fade.

**Do you write on the backs of your photographs with a ballpoint pen or permanent marker?** Perhaps you’ve written on the back of a photograph in the hopes of detailing memories for future generations. Doing so with a standard pen will accelerate deterioration of the photograph! The acid in a ballpoint pen can actually eat through your photographs! Eventually, you will see the words from the back coming through on the front of the picture.

**Do you record the details of your photographs on self-stick notes and place them on your photographs?** Self-stick notes utilize an adhesive, which may contain harmful chemicals. Although the adhesive is temporary, it is never wise to put an adhesive directly on top of your photographs. And, the paper used on the self-stick notes may not be acid-free.

**Do you use rubber cement or common tape to adhere photographs to albums or frames?** Rubber cement, tape and most glues are destructive to your photographs. The adhesives are not acid-free and most are irreversible and may damage your photos if you ever try to remove them from an album.

**Do you laminate special pieces of memorabilia to preserve them?** Laminating with common heat-sealing laminating machines permanently traps dust and contaminants in a closed environment. Laminating machines that use heat subject your memorabilia to high heat and strong pressure that can cause it to age more quickly. And, laminating with a heat-sealing laminating machine means that the lamination is irreversible.

**Do you display your photographs alongside your newspaper articles and other pieces of memorabilia?** Newspaper is probably one of the most destructive things to your photographs. It is an unrefined paper that contains both acid and lignin. Have you ever noticed how quickly a newspaper yellows especially if it exposed to sunlight? The yellowing effect is the result of lignin. Storing photographs with newspaper creates a damaging environment for your keepsakes as the acid will migrate from the newspaper to your photos.

**Do you store your photographs in their original photo developing envelopes?**
believe this one? It seems like the ultimate in unfairness, but it’s true! Standard film developing envelopes contain acid and can eventually cause your photographs to discolor, fade and become brittle! Look at the picture below:

Now, if you’re “guilty” of making some of these mistakes, don’t feel badly. You are definitely not alone. (Actually, where do you think our examples come from? That’s right – the examples of damage come straight from our own photo collections!) The fact is, the majority of people are unknowingly causing damage to those precious items that they consider most valuable. Even many well-meaning “organizing experts” don’t have an understanding of the science behind photo safety. That’s why we’re committed to educating you on the easiest and safest ways to preserve your family legacy.

The Very Abbreviated Version of the Boring, Technical Stuff

Let’s cut through all the scientific mumbo jumbo so you can learn what you need to know to keep your precious photos safe…without falling asleep.

When it comes to your photographs, the single-most important thing you need to do is protect them from the “Big 3” hazards: acid, lignin and PVC.
Acids have a pH of less than 7.0 and are produced during the paper making process. It is a chemical substance that will weaken paper and cloth by breaking down the fibers, causing them to brown and become brittle. Placing items with acid near your photographs will cause your photographs to change color over time. The acid will migrate from its source towards your photographs; a term called **acid migration**.

Most papers, unless they are printed on high quality paper, probably do contain acid. Don’t fret, if you are unsure than you can test them with a pH Testing Pen found in your local craft stores. If the test proves there is acid present, don’t use it anywhere near your photographs and when in doubt, leave it out. If you plan on using items containing acid in a photo album, you should keep them separate from your photographs by using page protectors or if it is practical, consider color photocopying them onto acid-free paper.

Lignin

**Lignin** is an organic substance that is present in wood pulp. As the wood begins to deteriorate it becomes more and more acidic. Inexpensive papers such as newsprint contain high amounts of lignin and this is what contributes to the yellowing effect when newsprint is left in bright light. Lignin is probably the most destructive to your photographs. For tips on how to handle newsprint, see the section entitled: *How to Handle Memorabilia: Newsprint*.

PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride)

**PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride)** is a plastic that is very unstable and when it is combined with moisture in the air, it emits hydrochloric acid. Now that doesn’t sound good does it? Have you ever noticed where the print from a paper has adhered to the inside pocket of a plastic 3-ring binder or a page protector? Well, this is an example of PVC at work. Another tell-tale sign of PVC is the distinct plastic smell. Be absolutely sure if you are using albums with page protectors, that they are PVC-free.

Sounds complicated, doesn’t it? Don’t worry about remembering the details; just
remember that acid, lignin and PVC will damage photographs. Be absolutely sure that you are using products that are acid-free, lignin-free and PVC-free. And, don’t take chances with products that state: Archival Safe. Though they may indeed be safe, this term is used rather loosely in the industry; and can’t be relied upon.
10 Don’ts to Practice If You’re Serious about Saving Your Photos and Your Sanity

1. Don't keep your photos in magnetic albums, even if they claim to be archival safe! (Not sure whether you've got a magnetic album? Read our "5 Tell-tale signs" in the section on magnetic albums and find out.)

2. Don’t write on the back of your photos with a ballpoint pen or marker! (Unless of course, you’d like to see your writing emboss itself onto the front of your picture).

3. Don’t store your photographs in the attic, garage or the basement!

4. Don’t relegate your precious photographs to an acid-filled shoebox (where they will die a slow, agonizing death)!

5. Don’t keep every picture! (Surprised you with that one, didn’t we?) Your photo collection will be much more meaningful if you keep only those photos that truly stir your emotions. And besides, if you learn to purge, then your process of organizing will be SO MUCH easier!

6. Don’t leave your future descendents wondering who you were and what was important to you. (I mean come on, they’re going to need some explanation of that hairstyle you wore in the 80’s!)

7. Don’t leave your one-of-a-kind photos in a frame where they may fade from the sun. (O.k. confession time....we learned this one the hard way.)

8. Don't do something crazy in your attempts to organize your photos...You know, like spreading your entire photo collection out on the kitchen table. The only thing more depressing than an out-of-control photo collection is an out-of-control photo collection that is spread out all over your kitchen table when it's time to eat dinner.

9. Don’t forget to get yourself into the family photo album! As the self-appointed family historian, we tend to be the "family photographer". Demand that someone take your picture occasionally! After all you deserve to be in the family album, don't you think?
10. Don't beat yourself up about the state of your photo collection. When you start to feel guilty about what you haven't done, just remember the significance of what you already do each and every day - create joyful memories for your loved ones to cherish.
Discover Your Own Unique Organizing Profile

Your organizing system and your methods for arranging and displaying your photographs should match your unique needs and desires. Think and analyze before you attack! Set yourself up for success by looking at the big picture, and you’ll be able to create an organizing system that appeals to your personality and style.

Overview of Steps to Success:

• **Analyze your current situation.** What is the state of your photograph collection? How does that make you feel? What is important to you? What do you hope to accomplish? How do you best work?

• **Create a plan of action.** Decide on the organizing method that will work for you (ie: timeframe for organizing project, methods for displaying and arranging your photographs.)

• Act on your plan and get results that match your needs and goals.

**Analyze Your Current Situation:**

Grab a pen, sit in a quiet spot, and take the time to answer these questions, so that you can set yourself up for success.

What’s the current state of your photo collection?

How does this make you feel?
When it comes to your family’s photo collection, what’s most important to you?

Why do you want to get your photos organized?

Here are some possible reasons:

· I’m tired of rummaging through my piles trying to find certain photos.
· I want to create an album for my kids.
· I want to preserve our family history.
· I want to strengthen my relationship with my family.
· I want peace of mind!

**Tip:**
When you’re lacking motivation, then pull out your list and remember your own reasons for wanting to organize your photographs.

What is your number one goal for managing your photographs? (ie. If you could accomplish just one thing from your organizing sessions, what would you want that to be?)

What bothers you most about your current photo-organizing system (or lack of it)?

What are you doing right? Is there a part of the process that you’ve already got down? Great! Don’t reinvent the wheel. If that method works for you AND it’s safe for your precious items, then keep it.

What are you doing partially right? You may just need to fine-tune some of your methods. Perhaps you’ve been meticulous about immediately documenting your details on the back of your photographs. If you enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that each and every photograph has been detailed, then continue on with this method, but
fine-tune it so that you’re doing it safely. Replace that ball-point pen with a photographic marker or photo-safe wax pencil and write gently on the outer edges of the back of the photograph.

Do you thrive on face-to-face interaction? Does the thought of organizing your photos sound dreadfully boring and isolating? (If so, then you’ll be more successful by teaming up with a friend and turning it into a social situation. You can schedule regular mini organizing sessions together or block off an entire day for an all-out organizing marathon.)

When you’ve got a big project to do, do you like to “go for it” and attack it till it’s done or do you like to work in small intervals of time? (ie. What sounds more appealing to you... ½ hour per day over 12 days or a one-shot deal of 6 hours? Or do you prefer a happy medium of perhaps 2 to 3 hours per day for a few days.)

Do you need silence while you work or are you motivated by music or other background noise?

Do you have an established idea in your head about what you see as “the right way” to organize your photographs? If so, then honor it.

Would you like to keep all related photographs together (ie. All Christmas photos together and all vacation photos together) or do you think that the only logical way to arrange your photographs is by date?

Do you love displaying photographs so that you can enjoy them each day?
SAVE YOUR PHOTOS AND YOUR SANITY

Do you love the cozy look of frames scattered around your home, or do you prefer the hidden but easy access of photo albums?

Do you want to be able to flip through photo albums or do you envision neat stacks of photo boxes?

Do you like the idea of being able to scroll through thumbnail images of all of your photos on the computer?

While you’re organizing, will you want to distribute some of your pictures to anyone? If so, who?

Do you regularly share photos with certain people? If so, who?

When it comes time to hand down photos to your kids, which sounds best to you:

• You ceremoniously present them with a beautiful scrapbook album that chronicles their entire childhood – complete with photos, keepsakes and well-documented memories.

• You hand over a photo box full of assorted photos and let them decide what they want to do with them.

• Hand over, are you kidding? I’m keeping the entire library of family albums in one place. The photos are all in chronological order and they offer a sweeping view of our family’s history – I can’t break that up!
We realize that you’re anxious for results, and you may be tempted to skip this step and just jump into the organizing. Don’t do it! You must know your vision before you start. You have to have a clear understanding of your situation, your natural tendencies, and your desired results so that you can set yourself up for success. Without it, you’ll be going in circles or you’ll plow through the process and wind up with something that just doesn’t mesh with your needs and style.

Create a personalized plan of action.

*Decide on the organizing method that will work for you – timeframe for organizing project, methods for displaying and arranging your photographs.*

O.k., so if you’re being a good student, then you’ve taken the time to actually write down the answers to the questions listed above. If not, then stop reading this, and go answer the questions!

If you’re reading *this* paragraph, then we’re sure that you’ve taken the time to complete the exercise above. After our insistent urging, we’re certain that you wouldn’t try to skip over that step, especially now that you understand that doing so would be a form of self-sabotage, and would no doubt stand in your way of getting your photos organized once and for all.

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*Reader Feedback….*

The e-book is very helpful. I printed mine up and put it in a binder and started focusing on the information beginning on page 19. Excellent way to help someone analyze their own personal situation. I answered all the questions. This is exactly the same kind of process I used when helping clients figure out their personal organizing needs.

... Thanks so very much,

Alicia
Great! Now that we understand each other, let’s continue.

As you review your responses, a personalized plan will begin to naturally emerge. (o.k., we know what you’re thinking, “naturally emerge”, are you kidding me? Bear with us though. Despite what you may be thinking, we’re not oversimplifying, and we’re not trying to pass the buck.)

We can and will give you ideas and plans of action to choose from. However, when it comes to both organizing and displaying your photographs, only you can decide what will work best for you.

Your responses to the questions will guide you naturally through the process though, so that you’ll be able to choose the methods that will be compatible with your personal style and your goals.

For example, if you wrote down that the only “right” way in your mind is to arrange photos chronologically, then you know that you’ll be most successful grouping them in that manner. And, if you’ve discovered that music motivates you, you enjoy working alone, and you like the neat, organized look of photo boxes, then you know what you need to do.

So, once you’ve taken the time to really evaluate your current situation, your personal work style and your goals for your family’s photographs, then you’ll be able to create a personalized plan of action that will bring you success!

We’ll offer you three separate “plans” of how you can go about getting the job done. You can choose the option that most appeals to you, or you can use the ideas as a springboard to create your own customized work plan.

Here’s a quick rundown of the three options, which are covered in full detail in the upcoming pages:

1. **The “10 Day Plan.”** This is a very doable, step-by-step, plan of how you can get your entire photo collection organized within 10 days.

2. **The “Organizing Marathon.”** There are two primary reasons why this may appeal to you. First, is if you’re just plain fed up with yourself for putting this off for so long and the second, is if you can’t be bothered with trying to schedule in a bunch of separate sessions. Either way, you’re willing to take one day out of
your life and attack your out-of-control photo collection. You might not be able to complete everything in one day, but it will give you a tremendous jump-start.

3. **15-Minute Therapy Sessions.** Maybe you need to take baby steps to get yourself warmed up. We’ll give you a list of things you can do in 15 minutes so that you can get on your way and begin to “Save Your Photos and Your Sanity”.

Whichever method you choose, it’s critical that you establish a work schedule! Reviewing the answers you established in your unique organizing profile, block off work time in increments that match your style, and mark the dates in your calendar. Map it out, and stick to the dates!
BASICS STEPS TO ORGANIZING PHOTOS

Whichever game plan you choose for “getting the job done”, you’ll benefit from the following basic steps.

Assign a “home” for your photographs, negatives, and keepsakes and resolve yourself to keeping them in that one space.

When you’re deciding on where you’ll keep your photograph collection, choose a space that’s large enough to handle the entire collection so that you can keep everything together. The space must be safe for your photographs – away from heat, light, and humidity. The best bet is usually a windowless closet away from any water pipes.

Take a moment now to list three places that might work:

1. 
2. 
3. 

Now decide which location will be the best for safety, convenience and capacity.

All of your photo-related organizing supplies should be in this same place (or a separate but consistent “home” of its own – ie. Where do you organize? If you’d like to sit in your favorite chair and organize your photos as soon as you get them printed, then keep everything you’ll need in that one location or else keep them in a portable container that you can carry back and forth from your main photo collection to your cozy chair).

Create a simple, logical system for organizing your photos – one that makes perfect sense to you and won’t require a lot of thought when it comes time to put away or retrieve certain photographs.

When creating your organizing system, make sure that it:

✓ is safe for your photos, which means that it must be acid, lignin and PVC free.
Save Your Photos and Your Sanity

- is simple to use, so that you use it every time!
- allows you to journal and record the memories that go along with your photographs.
- allows you to organize your negatives while you’re sorting your photographs, and allows you to cross-reference your photographs with your negatives, so that you can find your negative when you need it. (Obviously this pertains to pre-digital photos.)
- allows for easy retrieval. It’s one thing to nicely file your photographs and negatives. It’s another thing entirely to be able to find the photograph or negative you need, when you need it!

Choose a system that will spark your interest so that you’ll want to keep up with it. For example, if you’re going to use photo boxes, don’t pick out any old photo box. Choose the ones that will sing to you, whether that’s a rainbow colored collection of archival plastic boxes or a matching set of handsome black leather photo boxes.

Decide whether you’ll arrange your photos in photo boxes or photo albums.

This is truly a personal decision, but we can give you a few ideas to think about. Most likely, you’ll end up with a combination of both photo boxes and photo albums. Unless you have a limited number of pictures, photo albums may not be realistic for a complete photo collection. (Let’s face it, no one’s going to want to pore through 30+ albums! In fact, your family members might run the other way at the mere mention of the words.)

As you’re deciding which photos should be in photo boxes vs. albums, it may help to prioritize your photos by importance.

**A’s**

Very important – These are the best quality photos; the ones that really tell a story. These are the photographs that you’ll absolutely want to look back at, and you want your loved ones to experience.

**B’s**

Important – These photographs are good. They do hold meaning, and you’d like to do something with them at some point – after you’ve taken care of all the A’s. Although
you’d like to save these photos for your loved ones, they’re not crucial to your family’s history.

**C’s**
Not Important – Surprisingly, a fair number of your photos will fall into this category. Be willing to release these photos so that you can take the time to manage and enjoy the photos that really matter.

You may want to put all of your “A” photos into albums and your “B” photos into photo boxes. (Of course, “C” photos should be released: given away, used in creative projects or discarded).

As we said, these are just ideas. You can decide what will work best for you. Some people really enjoy knowing that all of their photos are perfectly arranged in photo boxes. Others want all of their photos in albums for easy viewing.

You may find that photo boxes are your best first bet for quickly getting your photos organized, and then you can create albums as time permits (and motivation increases).

We ourselves have found this to be a big help! It gives us such peace of mind to have our photos safely organized until we have time to scrapbook them. (And if we never get around to scrapbooking, we’re still guilt-free because we know our photos are in order!)

**Tip:**
There can be two potential downsides to using photo boxes. First, if the photo box isn’t full, then your photos may begin to curl or get bent. Secondly, your photos may slide around in the photo box and get mixed out of order. You can avoid both of these major headaches with one quick fix. Simply place your photos into acid-free photo envelopes before storing them into photo boxes.

Decide whether you’ll arrange your photos chronologically or by some other system, such as a theme.

If you’re not sure which method to choose, then ask yourself how you go about looking for photos. If you look for things by when they occurred, then you’ll probably want to file chronologically. If you look for photos by the person featured or by certain events, then you should file by theme. (Some possible themes are Holidays, Vacations, Heritage, or even by person.)
Another option would be to have a combination of both chronological and thematic. You may be wondering if you should separate your photos by each family member or if you should keep them all together in one place. Again, this goes back to personal preference. When you completed the Organizing Profile, you probably had a gut reaction to the question about how (or if) you’ll distribute the family photos at some point. If you do plan to distribute photos to each family member, then it may be easiest to separate them by person. If you’ve got your heart set on one complete set of photos that remain in order, then honor that desire and keep the photos together.

A quick note:

Let’s stop and address the challenge that inevitably crops up for people as soon as they consider the option of separating photos by family members. Their mind is suddenly barraged with a string of questions such as, "How do I divvy up the family pictures? What do I do if more than one child is in the photo? Who should get that photo? How do I know it will be fair?" As the list of questions grows, so does the fear and anxiety. Let’s recognize this for what it is; perfectionism once again rearing its ugly head.

So how do we overcome it? Again, we need to recognize it and then choose to move beyond it.

Need some convincing? First off, consider this: you have swarms and swarms of pictures, right? So it’s safe to say that there are more than enough to go around. Secondly, why worry about fairness? It’s very generous and very giving of you to undertake the task of organizing and preserving your family's photo collection. "Fairness" isn't even a consideration, because every bit of it is a gift!

**Reader Feedback…**

*Your book was very inspiring. I created a system, and overhauled my whole photo closet which was getting to be very unorganized. I think the best part of the book was for you to encourage me to create a system and get materials first. That has made all of the difference.*

Set yourself up for success by getting all the necessary supplies in advance.
This step is probably the most crucial in terms of how easily and how enjoyably you complete your organizing project. Nothing will kill your motivation faster than having to keep going off in search of supplies you need, or worse, making lots of little piles of things that you’re going to "get back to" once you do have what you need.

Gather *everything* into one location.

A simple way to do this is to get a large plastic container and place it in a convenient location in your home. Then go through those shoeboxes, dresser drawers and desks until you uncover every photograph, every document, and every piece of memorabilia that you own. Gathering everything in one place will bring an immediate sense of peace.

Once you’ve decided on how you'll arrange your photos, then set up a separate photo box for each major category or album you want to create. (This way, your photos will practically organize themselves! O.k., that is quite an exaggeration, but you will be amazed at how this one step will eliminate much of your time spent agonizing over decisions or having organizing sessions that accomplish little more than just moving your piles around.)

Remove photos and keepsakes from unsafe environments.

Once you have everything gathered together, you should separate the items so that newsprint and other papers are not touching your photographs.

The goal is to remove photos and keepsakes from unsafe environments, such as magnetic albums, shoeboxes etc. You should also take all of your photos out of the developer’s envelopes, as these contain acid and will damage your photographs.

Of course, we’re not trying to create havoc for you. What we don’t want is for you to end up with an even larger pile of photographs that need to be sorted and organized. Before you start pulling photographs out of albums and developing envelopes, make sure that you have your system in place, and only take out what you can reasonably work on at a time.
Sort Your Photos into Three Main Groups:

1. Purge
2. Keep
3. Share

1. Purge:

Photographs hold so much meaning and significance for us, and most of us consider our photographs to be among our most prized possessions. Because of this, many of us would never dream of throwing away a photograph. It sounds dreadful doesn't it?

But guess what?

You don't have to keep every picture!

When you think about our ancestors -- even just a few generations back -- if you had a dozen photographs you'd be lucky and you'd treasure them! Now it's SO easy to take pictures that we have loads and loads of them, and unfortunately, a lot of them don’t hold much meaning at all.

Don’t be afraid to sift through your collection and free yourself of those photographs that don't stir your emotions.

Maybe you have photos from a relationship that has ended long ago. Do you really need the reminder? Or perhaps you have photos that you don’t recognize. After exhausting all of your fact-finding options, go ahead and release them. How about those photos that are just plain bad. . . . you know the photos that are dark, blurry or unflattering.

If you insist upon keeping every photograph, then your truly special photographs will be lost in the mass of other photographs.
Reader Feedback…
Your point about keeping so many photos actually diminishing the value of the really good ones, hit home with me. That is so true! 15 or 20 so/so pictures of one event lessens the impact of the one or two excellent photos that can tell the whole story by themselves. …That made it so much easier to purge the redundant, unimportant, blurry, meaningless photos; like the one from 1972 of my second cousin's grandchild, ole what's her name. I pulled all my photos into one place and started purging. I filled two trash bags!

Sue

Keep those photos that inspire you, and release the rest.

Remember that obvious but commonly overlooked secret that will drastically reduce the time you need to spend managing your photos? You guessed it, it's purging. But, don't be fooled by the simplicity of this idea. Without a doubt, effective purging will cut your work time in half!

If you have a really hard time with this concept, and you feel like you need permission to purge, here it is:
2. Keep:

These are photos that you plan to keep for your own photo collection, whether you decide to put them in albums or organize them into photo boxes.

Remember, you’re keeping only the photos that truly stir your emotions and help you achieve the goals you identified in your Organizing Profile.

If you’ve decided to arrange your photos chronologically, then you’ll have one large keep pile. If you’ve decided to organize your photos by theme, then at this point you should quickly separate the “keep” photos further into piles for each theme. You can then take the next steps to get these photos into albums or photo boxes.
3. Share:

You may have photographs that don’t stir your emotions, but would be meaningful to another friend or relative. Or perhaps you’ve got duplicate photos that you really don’t need. Sharing offers a guiltless way of “releasing” photos that you don’t need.

Tip:
Simplify the process of sharing photos. Keep a separate acid-free envelope labeled with the name of each person that you typically share photos with. When it’s full, simply distribute the envelope and start another.
Make sure that you’ll always have the memories that give your photos their meaning.

Your photographs will hold more meaning, for you and your loved ones, if you’ve captured the memories that go along with the photographs. (Believe us, we know from experience after Tracey inherited a box of photographs with absolutely no documentation. Sadly, the photos are practically meaningless.)

The best way to ensure that your photographs will hold meaning is through journaling. If you’re like most people, then you may find yourself cringing at the mention of the word.

Here are just a few of the reasons why some people dread the thought of journaling:

1. Many people are intimidated by journaling because they see it as a responsibility and they’re afraid to get it wrong. Often they’re afraid to even try, because they think that it won’t be “good enough”.

   You can overcome the intimidation of journaling by getting a healthier perspective on the task. Think of it as a gift rather than a responsibility. Understand that there is no wrong way to journal (as long as you’re doing it safely). Truly, anything you do will be so much better than nothing!

2. Many people don’t like their own handwriting. They think it’s too messy and they hate the thought of forever being identified as “the one with the messy handwriting.” Get over it! Again, messy writing is so much better than no handwriting at all. No one’s going to come to absolute cut & dry conclusions about you based on your handwriting skills! (Which is a good thing, because my handwriting is awful!) Besides, think of your handwriting in all its messy glory as the factor that adds the charm and personal touch to your albums!

3. They don’t know what to include in their journaling, so they come to the conclusion that they don’t know “how” to journal.
The easiest way to journal is to quickly cover the 5 W’s.

Make a note of who, what, where, when and why of the photographs. But it doesn’t have to read like a boring newspaper article. Have some fun with it, and your “audience” will too, for many years to come.

Add the extra details that will really bring you back and help you relive those moments. For instance, on a page full of photos of my daughter at two and a half, I included the typical details and then I added another small paragraph:

**Personal Story from Chris….

Shannon is very bright. She has a great vocabulary and she speaks clearly. That’s why we love her rare mispronunciations. Our favorites: “rack-rack-a-roni” (pepperoni), “Old MixDonalds” (McDonald’s), and “evil be-evil” as in “I won’t evil be-evil to go”.

Every time I come across this page, I laugh! I feel like I’ve found a treasure, and truly it is. It’s so much fun to relive those precious moments that would otherwise be forgotten.

Believe it or not, you can be great at journaling! Just write the way that you would talk if you were describing your photos to someone. By the way, this is also the no-fail test to determine if you’ve done a good job of recording your family memories. When you sit down beside someone as they view your album, see how many times you need to jump in and explain the photos. If it happens a lot, then you’ll know that you should include more journaling.

Remember, journaling is not just for people that create scrapbook albums! No matter how you store or display your photographs, you should record the details that will give them meaning.

**Tip:**

Take advantage of the simple journaling cards that we’ve included in your “Super Bonus Pack.” Just print them out, record your journaling and insert them into a photo sleeve, just as you would a photograph. Be sure to use acid-free paper and an acid-free journaling pen.
By the way, don’t forget to take time to journal those magical moments in life. You know, those times in life when something wonderful happens and everything seems right with the world . . . or you’re amazed by your child’s words of wisdom. Capture those special moments as they happen. Keep a journal close by – even a simple notebook will do.
How to Handle Your Negatives

Do you even need to keep them, and if so, how should you organize them?

With the advent of digital cameras and scanners, many people wonder whether or not they even need to keep their negatives. After all, if they want a reprint, all they need to do is scan their original photograph.

That may be true, but there are a couple of other things to consider. First, the quality of the reprinted image will not be as good as one that is printed from an original negative. Second, if something happens to your original photograph, then, obviously, you won’t be able to get a reprint. For these reasons, we do recommend that you keep your negatives, and that you store them separately from your photographs. If the unthinkable fire or flood happens, then only one set would be damaged. If it is possible, store your negatives in another location, such as a relative’s home or a bank safe-deposit box.

When you’ve got oodles of photographs to organize, you’re probably cringing at the thought of having to spend time organizing your negatives too. Don’t worry; this doesn’t have to be a big chore. You can insert all your negatives into negative sleeves, or you can use acid-free envelopes for storing your negatives. We like to use Negative Pockets™ envelopes, because we can quickly store an entire roll of film in one envelope, and we simply make notations on the outside of the envelope about the contents and any reprints that we’d like to get. We don’t have to spend a lot of time organizing, and when it comes time to make a reprint, we don’t have to spend time rummaging through the negatives.
There are two schools of thought when it comes to storing and organizing negatives. First, you can purge your negatives just as you purge your photographs, and keep only those negatives that you’ll want to reprint. In our minds, this requires a rather large time commitment. Which is why we opt for the second school of thought, and that is to just get all the negatives together in a safe manner and quickly make notations of those negatives that are worth reprinting.

Of course, if you’ve got index prints, or you’re lucky enough to have the negative number printed on the back of the photograph, then it will be easy to quickly identify which negatives you’ll want to keep. In that case, then by all means, purge the obvious. But don’t spend a lot of time agonizing over this. Just get all your negatives together in reasonable order and make sure they’re safe.

**Personal Story from Tracey**

One day, I ran into my daughter’s teacher from two years prior. She asked me if I had a specific negative to a picture I had taken the year she had my daughter. I told her I’d look but deep down I was thinking...two years ago?? Did I keep the negative? Did I use Negative Pockets™ to sort my negatives for that particular picture or were they lost among the many others I’d neglected to organize? I went home, checked the box where I keep my negatives and lo and behold...there it was; nicely documented in a Negative Pockets™ envelope. The system worked! (I must say I was quite proud of myself.)
HOW TO HANDLE MEMORABILIA

Your photographs tell only part of the story. What about all of those precious keepsakes, like certificates, diplomas, baby hair, hospital tags, report cards, and artwork? The list goes on and on —and so does the confusion about how to care for these precious items!

Here are some guidelines on how to handle all the extras you may encounter while organizing.

Old scrapbooks

We mention these first, because these are the ones you should pay attention to first. Unfortunately and unknowingly, our ancestors, although well intentioned, subjected their precious photos to an extremely hazardous environment. If you have any of the old black paged “scrapbooks”, then you probably will notice that the photos have faded and cracked around the edges. More than likely, they used tape to adhere the photos to the pages. The tape is probably now brown and has turned the photo underneath brown as well. You may also find that it is difficult to get the photographs out of the album without causing them more damage.

Your best bet for salvaging these photographs and ensuring that no further deterioration will take place, would be to color photocopy these pages/photographs onto acid-free, lignin-free paper. Your local office supply store will be able to help you with this.

On the topic of old scrapbooks, here are some tips on handling old family photos and albums you may have inherited.
Personal Story from Tracey

After my grandparents passed away, we had the awful task of sorting through the heaps of things they had collected over the years. Among the many boxes of "treasures" I discovered, were countless boxes of photographs. Old, yellowing photographs, neglected in the attic, deprived of a safe environment, yet so meaningful to my grandparents. I decided then and there that I would create an album to preserve my family's heritage. But, as I began to sort the photos, I realized that though there were many photos of my immediate family, there were double the amount of photographs where I didn't recognize a soul.
What started out as an endearing project was now becoming more daunting by the minute. I put everything back in the boxes and I walked away from the mess. The boxes remained safe in my closet for months, even years (I confess). Yet, every time I would go into my closet, I would feel the pang of guilt: I am contributing to the slow death those photos.

For anyone who has been in my shoes, receiving heritage photos can be a double-edged sword. While inheriting these treasures can stir many sentimental emotions, at the same time, you may feel like you are burdened by the task of doing something with them. It has taken me a long time to realize that whatever I do, no matter how small, will be an improvement over what has been done to these precious photographs over the years. Even if all I do is transfer them to a safe environment, one that is acid-free, lignin-free, PVC-free, their longevity will increase tremendously.

I will share with you a few tips that I discovered while beginning my sorting process:

“Don't Know 'Em, Toss Them…” First of all, I got rid of any photographs where I couldn't recognize a person, place or thing of importance to me. I knew there was no one around who could help me identify these photos so I chose to release them. That alone, decreased my pile tremendously. (As a side note: If you can't bear the thought of throwing these old photos away, how about creating some beautiful, one-of-a-kind cards? That way you'll be releasing the photographs into the hands of a deserving friend through a kind note. For how-to's: check out the Super Bonus #How to Turn Unwanted Photographs into One-of-a-Kind Greeting Cards)

The next thing I did was to purge any photos that had visible and irreparable damage. Over the years, many of the photos had become so dark or brittle that they weren't worth keeping. It is a shame to see this but feel good in knowing that if you are reading this, you are taking the steps to prevent further damage to the photos that have survived. Some photos that may be brittle but still recognizable could be colored copied onto acid-free paper.

As I sorted the photos, their story began to unfold. Here was their legacy and my heritage. I knew I had to save it. As I separated the photographs into categories, I took some time to jot down notes and stories that I remembered my grandparents sharing with me. It feels great to have them all sorted and stored in a safe environment.

I have begun to scrapbook these photographs chronologically. I haven't completed the book yet but I know that the photos and memorabilia are now in a safe environment while I am undertaking this project. I am guilt-free and even if they never make it into a scrapbook, they will still survive the test of time.
Magnetic Albums -

Magnetic albums are extremely hazardous to your photos’ health! The cardboard pages contain acid and lignin - both of which will destroy your photos over time. The plastic pages protectors contain PVC and the sticky adhesive on both the page and the page protector also contains acid. Placing any photographs or memorabilia onto these pages will only accelerate the deterioration of these precious memories you are trying to protect.

Not sure whether or not you’ve got a magnetic album? Check out these 5 Tell-tale Signs:

5 Tell-tale Signs That You’ve Got a Magnetic Album:

1. Your photos are falling out of the album, and you need to keep reinserting them.
2. Your photos are absolutely stuck to the page, and all attempts to remove them fail.
3. Your photos are undecided as to whether they want to fall out of the album or permanently attach themselves to your page, so they’ve decided to split themselves into two groups and do both.
4. Your pages are starting to look like some kind of science project, magically changing colors -- from their original ivory to a putrid yellowish-brown.
5. Your photos have visibly faded and are beginning to take on a brownish color, or they just don't look as crisp as they once did. Either way, your photos are in serious risk, and they need you to make a rescue!

Unfortunately, removing photos from a magnetic album is not a simple task, and there is a possibility that some of your photos could be destroyed in the process.

If you do not have the negatives for the photos, then you should make a high quality color photocopy of the important pages before trying to remove the photos. If you accidentally damage a photograph, then you can fall back on the color copy that you
made. And if you find that removing the photos is too much work, then you can use the photographs from your color copies in your new album -- and skip the step of removing the old photos altogether.

As you remove the photos from old albums, keep the photos in order and save the pages if there is any information written on them. (Be sure to store the pages separately from the photos.) If you’ve spent time doing a creative layout in a magnetic album and you’d like to duplicate that layout in your new album, then you can make a standard photocopy of the page before you disassemble it.

Tip:

Slide dental floss underneath the photograph. This should loosen the photograph without bending or folding it. If the photos still remain stuck, there is a product called Un-Du® Adhesive Remover that may be more successful. It temporarily neutralizes adhesives and then evaporates, allowing the removed item to be used again.

Newsprint

In our opinion, the easiest way to preserve your newscuttings is to color copy them onto acid-free, lignin-free paper. Your local office supply-copy center can provide this service. With this approach, you can still get the look of the original clipping, but it will last much longer and it will be safe for your photographs.

Of course, if you are really intent on using the original newspaper clippings, then another option would be to use Preservation Technologies’ Archival Mist de-acidification spray. Spraying Archival Mist on both sides of your clippings will remove most of the acid content from the newspaper. Keep in mind, however, that even though the deacidification spray will reduce the rate at which the item decays, it still will not last as long as a copy. Also, the deacidification spray will not make the newsprint safe to be next to your photos because the remaining lignin can still damage and perhaps stain your photographs. If you are determined to have original newsprint in your album, then we suggest that you put it on a separate page away from photos and memorabilia, even after you've treated it with de-acidification spray.
Children’s Schoolwork/Documents/Pamphlets Etc.

O.k., you certainly may have noticed a consistent theme running through our book, and here it is again. The single-most important advice we can give you on organizing your children’s schoolwork and artwork is to purge, purge, purge!

Go through the piles relentlessly and pull out as much as you can. Keep just a few important pieces to capture your child's stage of development and life experiences for each year.

After you've purged, the simplest way to organize everything is to create a file box for each child by lining hang file folders with acid-free paper and labeling them for each year or school grade. (Legal size boxes and legal size hang file folders will accommodate some of the larger pieces.) If you're bold with your purging, then you can limit yourself to just one folder for each year and you'll be able to fit everything into one file box.

An option for storing the oversized pieces is to choose only the favorites and then store them in covered, polypropylene storage containers or Craft Keepers.

Keep in mind that over time, many of these items will fade due to the nature of the composition of construction paper. If there are some items that are just too dear to see fade, consider spraying them with Archival Mist or color copy them onto acid-free paper.

Take pictures of those super-sized, unmanageable pieces of artwork. This way you can get rid of the bulk while you keep the image. Having a photograph will make it easier for you to release those masterpieces without the guilt!

Now that we've given you some ideas on how to control the piles, let's go a step further and talk about how you can do something truly wonderful for your kids. How about making a simple album with their school portraits, sports photos and a few candids? We're not talking about a big elaborate project. You could just create two pages per school year. Your kids would have a wonderful album to chronicle their childhood and you’d feel like an A+ parent knowing that you did something so significant for your child.

Of course, if you decide to include some of your kids’ report cards, certificates and other memorabilia in a keepsake album, then be sure to follow photo safe practices. You certainly don't want to make the mistake of subjecting your precious photos to damaging acid, lignin or PVC.
Memorabilia: Treasured Keepsake or Clutter?

Handwritten notes, children’s artwork, report cards, ticket stubs... little tidbits of our lives. What’s worth keeping? What should be released? Only you can decide which items hold most meaning and importance for you.

As you decide which items to keep, we do offer a word of advice. Keep those items that truly stir your heart or capture important events, and allow yourself to release the rest. In her book, The Gift of the Sea, Anne Morrow Lindbergh compares our lives to the process of collecting seashells. Imagine that you are exploring the beach, gathering shells along the way. Each time you uncover a shell, you carefully consider its beauty and uniqueness. You decide whether or not it is worth keeping. By carefully choosing which shells to keep, you end up with a small collection of beautiful shells that bring you joy. If you had insisted on keeping every shell, then your beautiful shells would be lost in the mass of other shells.

The same can be said for your memorabilia. If you insist on keeping every item that is attached to a memory of an event or special person in your life, then you will soon be overwhelmed, and your truly precious keepsakes will be lost among the masses.

If you need more convincing, then just remember the major side benefit of purging. Your task of organizing your memorabilia will be so much easier!

Once you decide which items to keep, you can make the secondary decision on how to store or display the items. Whichever method you choose, you should be sure to protect your keepsakes from acid, lignin and PVC.

The quality of the materials used in your memorabilia will impact the longevity of the item. If you have keepsakes that are extremely meaningful you might want to test the item for acidity. A pH-testing pen will allow you to determine the level of acidity in your item. It just might be acid-free. pH pens are very simple to use; most have a color and pH chart on the outside of the pen. You simply mark your item in an inconspicuous place and check the color against the chart. If you discover that the item contains acid, you might consider color photocopying your memorabilia on to acid-free paper to insure that it will stand the test of time as well as not damage any other items.

If you’ve been feeling guilty because you haven’t organized and protected your family’s keepsakes, then take heart. This accomplishment pales in comparison to the significance of the journey you embark on each day -- creating joyful memories with the people you cherish most in your life.
What You Must Know About Digital Photography

When digital photography first entered the scene, countless people began touting its convenience. “It’s so easy”, they said, “There are no piles of photographs to deal with.”

While it’s true that the mess may not be as visible, there’s no doubt that managing digital photos can be an organizing nightmare.

Technology has made it so easy for us to take pictures that most of us are drowning in photographs. If you think about the small handful of photographs that you inherited from previous generations, you were grateful to have them and you most likely treasured them. Compare that to today, where snippets of everyday life are captured instantly on digital cameras and cell phones.

Ask yourself this...how many of those digital photos have you actually printed?

- Are they sitting on your hard drive waiting until you "have time" to print them, "have time" to get them into albums?

- When’s the last time you did anything more with your photos then posting them to Facebook or e-mailing to a friend? While it’s true that technology has made it incredibly easy to share more pictures with more people more often, there’s a monumental difference between passing images around and having a treasured photo collection to pass down.

- And what if your hard drive were to crash today? What would become of your family's most prized possessions? Would all be lost in just a matter of minutes?

- Okay, so maybe you have taken the time to download them onto a CD. Well did you realize that if that if a traditional CD gets scratched, you have lost the entire...
contents of the CD? And did you realize that writable CDs have a significantly shorter life span than you may have imagined, and that depending on the type you use, can be susceptible to breaking down after just a few short years?

- Have you also considered that with the fast pace of technology, it is likely that the CD’s you’ve burned today may be obsolete in 10 or 15 years? Who remembers 8-track tapes? Cassette tapes? And more recently the floppy disk? Now, computers don’t even have a floppy disk drive -- rendering all of those important back-up files completely useless. And many computers don’t have a regular disk drive anymore. So, don’t take digital photography for granted and don’t assume that those precious images that you have downloaded onto CD’s will be easily viewed by future generations.

We don't mean to sound gloomy, we just want you to be well aware of the risks to your precious photographs. The reality is hard drives can crash, viruses can take over computers and storage devices and disks can fail.

Obviously, digital photography is here to stay and that’s a great thing. However, we do recommend that you set realistic expectations for the technology, and perhaps shift your perception of the concept. Think of it as a means of taking photographs and processing images. It is a means to an end . . . it is not the end! And the only way you can really count on your images is to print them and then keep them in a safe environment.
Personal Story from Chris:

I’ve learned a lot more than I ever wanted to know about computers recently, so when I was standing at the technician’s counter in Best Buy, I couldn’t help but keep up with the conversation of the people standing next to me. They were anxiously waiting on news of their computer, and the technician informed them that they needed a new power supply. “Simple fix,” he said, “we’ll put it in and you should be off and running again.” I could almost hear them exhale their sighs of relief, and the technician immediately installed the new power supply. And then, in a flat voice, much too calm for the situation, the technician simply said, “No. That’s not going to work. Your hard drive is gone.”

Just like that, it was done. There’s was nothing more to do. I met up with the couple in the parking lot and we swapped computer stories for a few minutes. I confess that we were griping about the computer industry in general, and how it seems to be “standard practice” to pay a thousand dollars for a computer that will last only 3 or 4 years. The couple had actually paid $2,000 for their computer just three years ago. And in an instant, it was gone! They lost everything . . . including three years’ worth of pictures!

Of course, they realize that they should have made back-ups, and that they should have printed their pictures, but they never got around to it. You can bet that they’re kicking themselves now. But it doesn’t do any bit of good. They’ve lost three years of their family’s history, and there’s nothing they can do to get those precious photographs back.
TIPS FOR MANAGING DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Regardless of whether your photographs are physical, digital or (most likely) a mix of both, there are common components of a successful photo strategy. For instance, our first advice is to gather everything in one location. In the physical, this would mean rounding up all those miscellaneous prints stored in dresser drawers, boxes, half-finished albums, etc. and getting them together in one place. With digital photos, this would mean to copy the great pictures off Facebook, get all those photos off your phone and round up images from multiple computers, cameras, etc.

We’re not going to attempt to address every single aspect of digital photography. There are simply too many variables. Instead, we suggest that you think back to those common components and be sure that you’re covering all the bases. (You can even refer back to the steps for organizing traditional photographs as outlined previously in the e-book.)

With that being said, we do offer some general tips for managing your digital photos:

- Do continue to back up your images to a disk, but understand that they can eventually breakdown over time. Check your files periodically for signs of deterioration.

- Although DVD’s hold roughly six times more than a CD, they are not recommended for storing digital images, as extreme changes in environment can cause the layers to peel apart. Even slight damage can cause the disc to be unreadable. The best bet is to use CD-R discs. (Be sure to use CD-R instead of CD-RW so that you don’t accidentally rewrite over your disks filled with digital pictures.) Archival Gold CD’s on the market now, have a much longer life than regular CD’s. They are significantly more expensive but last about 10 times longer than traditional CD’s.

- Remember though, you still need to consider future technology, so relying solely on one solution, such as CD’s may be dangerous.
• As an additional precaution, you can use an external hard drive to back up your images. If you store your images in "My Documents/My Pictures", then you can back up "My Documents" and have a complete back up of most of your data, including pictures. For ultimate protection, you may even consider rotating between two external hard drives. You can keep one at an outside location (ie. a relative’s home) and occasionally swap them out.

• If the worst happens and your computer does crash, there is still a small chance your photos can be saved. You may be able to hire a data recovery specialist that could get your hard-drive up long enough to retrieve your photographs. (Geek Squad at Best Buy is an example of one provider.) Keep in mind this can cost quite a bit, even if you aren't able to recover the data, but then again, photographs are priceless. Begin to salvage whatever images you can from wherever you can. Scope out photos that you may have uploaded to Facebook, Flickr, Photo Bucket, Snapfish, Shutterfly, etc. Additionally, put the word out to friends and family so that they can provide you with any images that they have. (Even in the case of a physical loss of photographs, family members can sort through their photo collections and give you any that relate to you or your family members.)

• Ensure the safety of your digital photo collection by having more than one storage method to rely on. An automatic on-line back-up service will provide tremendous peace of mind for very little cost and no hassle on your part. We suggest www.mozy.com. Even uploading your photos to an on-line developer, such as Shutterfly or Snapfish, will provide a secondary storage option, but of course, this will only work if you effectively fight off the human tendency of procrastination.

• As you are determining which resources or combination of resources will best meet your needs, we do want to encourage you to read the fine print. Some of the photo storage companies may be free to use. However, they may also require you to occasionally purchase prints or other products in order to maintain an active account. Some companies may even delete your photographs or close your account if you don't buy enough prints per month or per year! It's also possible that the site may charge you to retrace your files in the future even though they store them for free. In the instance of digital scrapbooking, you should be sure to understand how long your project will remain available to you.

• We don’t want to scare you, but you shouldn’t overlook the fact that some companies may go out of business, taking your photographs with them. (This happened with American Greetings Company. In March of 2011, they announced that they were shutting down their Photoworks division. Customers
were given two months notice to remove their projects and/or transfer them to Shutterfly. After the two months, all projects would be deleted. ) Keeping your e-mail addresses up-to-date and regularly logging into any photo-related websites will help you stay informed of any changes. Of course, you can best protect yourself by maintaining control of some of your images and not relying solely on a third party.

- Take the time to understand the devices you are using (camera, phone, computer etc.) and understand the features each offer. If you are an Apple user, go to your local Apple store. They have a dedicated team that can help you understand your computer, your software and give you tips on the best way to handle the virtual technology. Likewise, if you are a PC user, your local PC distributor likely has a similar service. (ie: Staples, Best Buy etc...)

- Remember, staying on top of your digital images takes the same diligence as managing your physical photographs. Procrastinating only magnifies the mess, and the “out of sight, out of mind” dynamic of digital photography can cause the problem to grow to epic proportions. Regularly take the time to organize and manage your images, so that you can enjoy the convenience instead of having to cope with the nightmare.

Finally, we would like to remind you that while the method of taking photographs has changed drastically, the best methods for preserving photographs have not. While many resources exist to help you capture and store countless digital images, these resources should be viewed as additional "conveniences" and "tools." For those very special images, the ultimate way of ensuring their safety is to be sure that you have the physical photographs in hand AND you store them properly.
SUPPLIES YOU’LL WANT BEFORE YOU BEGIN ORGANIZING

O.K., we feel the need to expound on our title for this section. Yes, you will want these supplies before you begin organizing, and no, you shouldn’t use this as an excuse to procrastinate indefinitely because you still need to gather your supplies. So as you read this section, don’t get hung up on the word “before”. Focus on the word “begin” and use the information in this section to quickly gather the supplies you need so that you can get on with the process.

With that said, we can move on. ;)

As the Boy Scout motto goes, "Be Prepared". Nothing can zap your motivation more than not having the necessary supplies to complete the job.

By reading Save Your Photos & Your Sanity, you’re taking the big first step toward getting your photos organized. You’ll learn a lot of invaluable tips from this book, and you’ll be able to choose the organizing methods that fit your personal style and needs.

But no matter which method you choose, you’ll soon realize that you need certain supplies in order to be effective. You’ve probably figured this out for yourself in past organizing attempts. It goes something like this:

You decide to get organized, so you pull out all of your photographs onto your kitchen table and you begin to sort. Pretty soon you realize that you don't really have a place to put your sorted photographs, so you start making piles. Next thing you know your “sorted” photographs are nothing more than nice, neat piles with no indication of time or place. Before you know it, you’ve got stuff spread out all over the place and you feel like you are in a worse mess than when you began.

We want to help you avoid this frustration! There’s no doubt about it, if you want to succeed in your organizing, there are certain tools and supplies that will help make the task much easier.

Some of the supplies are optional and some, we consider necessary. The list below will help you to decide.
Label maker (optional)

This is by far an “organizer’s best friend”. They range in price but you can get a decent label maker for under $20.00. Oh and once you have one, beware, your photo boxes and files aren’t the only thing that will have clean, organized labels...your whole house is subject to being labeled. Warning, this can cause your significant other and children to actually put things away in their proper places!

Scissors

You may need these to trim negatives, memorabilia, or newspaper clippings.

Trash Can

Purging will be part of your organizing exercise. But, don’t be scared, we’ll ease you into it and give you some guidelines.

Acid free labeling pen

Unfortunately, not all pens are created equal and the common ballpoint pens and Sharpie® markers are lethal to your photographs. You will need to use a pen/marker that is clearly marked “acid-free”. A stabilo wax pencil will also work well for marking on the backs of photos if you can’t break that habit.

Decorative file box (optional)

You may find this helpful if you plan to organize your memorabilia and keepsakes as well as your photographs. By the way, did you notice we specified “decorative” file boxes? We are convinced that your organizing will be that much more successful if your containers are fun to look at. Trust us on this. We have a fetish for frosted plastic containers and sophisticated baskets.

File folders and Hang file folders

You can purchase acid-free, lignin-free file folders and hang file folders from many
scrapbooking stores. If you choose to use standard manila folders that you purchase from an office supply store, just be sure to line them with acid-free paper. You may want to consider purchasing the colorful ones. You will be able to create different categories by color (and, besides they are more fun to look at).

**Acid-free, lignin-free, white paper**

You will need to check the label on the paper you purchase at your local supply store. Paper that is free from acid and lignin is a nicer quality paper, and most importantly, it’s safe for your photos and keepsakes. It should be clearly stated on the label or it isn’t to be trusted. A sure bet is to peruse your scrapbooking aisle at your local craft store. They are sure to have what you are looking for.

**Decorative photo boxes**

Photo boxes come in all shapes and sizes and it will be up to your own personal preference. Find something that appeals to you and your décor...just be sure that it is clearly labeled acid-free and lignin-free to insure your contents’ safety.

**Photo Journaling Envelopes**

Acid-free, lignin-free journaling envelopes are designed to hold 12-15 photographs so you can sort your photographs by theme. And, best of all, they provide space for you to journal your memories. It is one thing to have the photographs organized in a photo box but another thing to have them organized and journaled. What a blessing for your future generations!
Personal story from Tracey…..

Before we invented Photo Pockets™ journaling envelopes, I had painstakingly organized all of my eldest child’s photographs in a photo box. My two year old needed a box for something and just dumped all of my organized photos out of their photo box. The organized pictures became a jumbled mess of photos again, instantly! In retrospect, if Photo Pockets™ had been invented and I had had them stored in Photo Pockets™, I would have been able to just pick them up and put them back in the photo box.

Negative Storage

One option for storing negatives is to simply slip them into negative sleeves in chronological order. Another option is acid-free negative storage envelopes, which allow you to safely store and organize your negatives and, at the same time, record details that will simplify the process of ordering reprints.

* * *

We realize that this list may seem overwhelming to you. As we said, if you're not careful, then you could stall out right here.

We really want to help you succeed! It's not enough for us to have you learn about how to organize your photos. Our true joy comes from knowing that we've helped you actually get your precious photographs organized.

That's why we've tried to simplify the process for you. We've created a kit, which we call the JUMP START photo organizing kit, because it includes everything you'll need to easily and safely organize your photographs, once and for all! No more confusion, no more wasted hours spent moving piles around. With the right tools, you'll be amazed at how is easy it can be to safeguard and organize your photographs.

* * *
Photo Albums

There are so many different options on displaying your family's photographs, so how do you begin to find the choice that's right for you? Start by reading our special segment below.

How to Choose a Photo Album that's Right for You

Choosing how you will display your family's photographs is a very important decision, and in order to make an effective decision, you need to do more than evaluate pros and cons of album styles. You need to consider your own personal style and how you choose to express your feelings and record your precious memories.

You need to decide how much time you're willing to spend on arranging your photographs, and how much detail you'd like to include along with your photographs. If you just want to get your photos into an album, then the most basic, pocket style album will do the trick. But be forewarned -- all albums are not created equally! You must be absolutely certain that the photo album you choose is free of acid, lignin, and PVC. Remember, these hazardous materials will wreak havoc with your photographs! One more word of caution, AVOID magnetic albums altogether. Even if you find magnetic albums that claim to be archivally safe, they are not a good option for storing your photographs. Think about the mechanics of magnetic albums...you are pulling a page protector away from an adhesive lined cardboard page. After placing your photos on the page, you are then covering them with the protector that now has sticky residue. Additionally, environmental contaminants which may have adhered to the protector are now trapped on top of your photographs.

If you plan to include journaling details or decorative accents, then you will want to choose a "scrapbook" album. These types of albums fall into four categories: 3-ring binders/d-rings, spiral self-contained albums, strap-hinge expandable albums and post bound expandable albums.

3-ring binder and the d-ring albums

With the 3-ring binder and the d-ring albums, the pages slip inside a plastic sheet protector that is held in place by the rings. The pages are easy to move around and it is generally easy to add and remove pages. On the downside, the rings always show when viewing the album and the page protectors often tear at the rings.
The spiral self-contained albums

The spiral self-contained albums have heavy card covers and a metal spiral binding. These are usually quite economical but there are no page protectors for them, and as a result, your photographs are exposed to dust, fingerprints and other damaging elements. Additionally, you must plan carefully as you cannot move the pages around.

Strap hinge expandable albums

Strap hinge expandable albums bind pages or page protectors into an expandable album with flexible straps. If the pages are bound in, the page protectors slip over the pages from the side. For the albums with page protectors bound in with straps, the pages slip into the top of the protector. The pages lie flat with no space between them when the album is open. With the page bound albums, pages are designed for placing photos on both sides. This makes it impossible to add a page in between those two pages. There is a definite left and right side to the page where it is bound; so again, it is important to plan your pages. When working on your page, you must remove the page from your album, which can be tedious.

Post-bound expandable album

With the post-bound expandable album, the pages slip inside a plastic sheet protector and the protectors are held in place with posts. With the post bound, the pages are easy to move around. For ultimate flexibility, you can use two sheets of cardstock. There is no gap between the pages when the album is open. Some stress can be put on the posts depending upon the number of pages in the album. For top loading page protectors, extra dust protection may be required.
We hope these descriptions don't sound too much like vegetable soup! We had hoped to enlighten you, not confuse you. Of course, it's always easier to grasp a concept when you've got examples in front of you. We suggest that you take a stroll down the scrapbooking aisle in the Arts & Crafts section of your local department store, so that you can see for yourself which album is right for you. Our favorite is the Pioneer Family Treasures E-Z Load album which is the post-bound expandable album. 😊
Getting Down to Business: Game Plans for Organizing Your Photos

As promised, we’re offering you three separate “game plans” for how to accomplish the task of organizing and preserving your photos. You can choose the option that most appeals to you, or you can use these ideas as a springboard to create your own customized work plan.

Before jumping in on one of the plans, please be sure you’ve taken the time to complete your “Organizing Profile.” It will save you so much time in the long run, and you’ll be happier with your results because they’ll match your personal style and needs.

One last piece of advice, before you undertake any of these plans, REMEMBER it doesn’t have to be drudgery. You CAN get this done and you can even enjoy the process.

Before you dig in, enjoy this humorous yet helpful e-course and release "the organizing genius" within.
OPTION 1: 10-DAY PLAN

If you’re planning to wait a bit and follow the ten day plan “once things settle down,” then let us assure you that before you know it, years will go by and you’ll find yourself in the same exact situation that you’re in now. (You know . . . up to your eyeballs in photos and plenty of guilt to match.)

If you’re thinking that you’ll be most effective once you’ve got that perfect 10-day opening on your calendar, then you’re kidding yourself. Can you remember the last time that you had a perfect 10-day opening on your calendar? Take the advice that we had to give ourselves. Pick a day and jump in! Expect to continue on and be successful each day for 10 days, but don’t worry about whether or not you’ll be able to do it 10 days in a row. You’ll probably need to adjust the plan for your own situation. You may find that two days’ worth of activities can be combined into one or you may have to skip a couple of days in the middle of your plan. That’s perfectly o.k., because the goal is not to have a perfect attendance record . . . the goal is to make real progress in organizing and preserving your photographs.

With that said, here’s the suggested ten day plan:

Day 1: Set Up a Temporary Organizing Workspace & Gather Necessary Supplies

How’s this for easing into it? You’re not even going to do any organizing today, but don’t let that fool you into thinking that today’s task isn’t that important. We’ve actually learned from experience that this step is probably the most crucial in terms of how easily and how enjoyably you complete the entire task. Nothing will kill your motivation faster than having to keep going off in search of supplies you need, or worse, making lots of little piles of things that you’re going to "get back to" once you do have what you need.

You’ll be amazed at how today’s activities will get you excited about organizing your photographs. (Did we just put the word “excited” in the same sentence as “organizing your photos?”) We realize that it sounds absurd, but follow the plan and you’ll see it for yourself. Having your things in order ahead of time will help you feel in control and yes, actually excited about getting your photos organized.
Speaking of excited, here’s a checklist so that you can get that euphoric feeling of crossing things off the list:

- Set up a table in a low traffic area of your home
- Put a trashcan next to the table – you’ll need it for all of your purging!
- Get scissors for trimming newspaper clippings, negatives, etc.
- Get several photo boxes. If you’re sorting photos by theme, you’ll need one for every major category or album that you’d eventually like to create. (ie. Vacations, Holidays, Family, Friends, Child 1, Child 2, etc.) Don’t skimp on the photo boxes!
- Get an acid-free pen for any journaling you plan to do during your sorting session.
- If you’re going to write directly on photographs, then get an acid-free journaling marker or a wax pencil (such as Stabilo)
- Don’t forget a photo box for double prints
- Get folders for storing memorabilia (acid free folders, or regular folders lined with acid-free paper)
- Set up containers for people that you want to give photos to (ie. Grandma, Aunt, friends, etc.) If you’re using photo envelopes, then you can simply write their name on the top of the envelope, and insert photos as you find them.
Day 2: Label Your Photo Boxes, Files and File Boxes

As you can see, we’re still easing into this process. We’re continuing on with what we did yesterday, but today you’ll take it a step further and actually label your photo boxes and file boxes by the categories that you established when you identified your goals. If this isn’t sounding familiar, or if you’re feeling a sudden sense of panic, then chances are that you quickly “brushed over” the Organizing Profile. If that’s the case, then you’ll really need to re-visit that section and take the time to journal the answers. This is the only way that you’ll be sure to set up a system that works for you.

Here’s a quick list to help you stay on track:

- Label one photo box for each major category that you’ve established
- Label a photo box for storing your duplicates
- Label a photo box for storing negatives.
- Establish a place to sort and store the photographs that you plan to share with friends and relatives.
- Label a folder (or folders) for storing memorabilia. You can create a separate folder for those items that you’d like to eventually include in your albums, so that you’ll have them ready for copying onto acid free paper.
- If you’re lucky enough to have a label maker, then keep it handy for unexpected categories that may arise when you begin to organize.
- Resist the urge to organize. Today is about setting yourself up for successful organizing.

Notice we said “near” your organizing workspace. We can’t make this point strongly enough! Consider yourself warned: The absolute worst thing that you could do now is to gather all of your photographs and memorabilia on top of your new organizing workspace. That will instantaneously kill any motivation that you may have!

If you’ve got a bench or chairs on the side of the table, then you can stack your photos and memorabilia there. Otherwise, place a bin underneath the table and put all of your photos and memorabilia inside the bin. If you’ve already got your photos loosely organized into separate containers, then by all means, arrange the separate containers near the table.
Day 4: Do a Broad Sort of Your Photographs; Purging Only the Obvious

This one’s going to require extreme self-control. Resist the urge to travel down memory lane. Resist the urge to get down and dirty organizing. Think speed and agility. Think massive productivity.

You know the old saying; your first thought is your best thought. Don’t spend a lot of time “thinking” today, go with your first impulse, and very quickly sort your photos into the category that seems most obvious. Do not worry about chronological order within categories. (If you are sorting your photos chronologically, then broadly sort them into the same eras of time, otherwise, don’t worry about the date yet.)

As you quickly sort them into categories, you’ll come across some obviously bad photographs. If you can instantly identify photographs that you don’t want to keep, then get rid of them right away. Again, this isn’t the time for carefully weighing decisions. If it needs a decision, then wait till later. If it’s blatantly obvious, then purge it now.

(Need some examples of blatantly obvious? Blurry, dark, extra thumbs, missing heads, people you’ve forgotten or people you’d rather forget. 😊)
Day 5: Safeguarding Your Photos

Today is the day to remove your photographs from unsafe environments, such as magnetic albums, shoeboxes, wooden boxes, etc. You should also separate potentially harmful items apart from your photographs, such as newspaper clippings and assorted keepsakes and memorabilia.

Your workload will vary today, depending upon your unique collection. You may find yourself with a very short day of work, or quite the opposite. Here’s a list of things you may need to do today in order to protect your precious photographs:

- Remove photos from shoeboxes, antique dressers or other acidic containers.
- Remove photos from magnetic albums (for how-to’s & tips, see How To Handle Memorabilia: Magnetic Albums)
- Separate newsprint and other memorabilia away from your photographs
- Remember to purge your memorabilia as you go, keeping only those items that truly stir your emotions.
- Store remaining memorabilia neatly in the files that you created in Day 2.
- Remove old photos from frames that you no longer want to display.
Days 6 and 7: Sort and Journal Your Photos

The fact that we’re devoting two back-to-back days to this task should give an indication of the magnitude of what it is that you’re about to encounter. This may sound overly dramatic, and even a bit scary, and we’d like to offer you reassurance, but unfortunately, we can’t.

We’re just kidding. It’s not *that* bad, and we have full confidence that you can do it! You’ll just need to tap into your inner resources so that you can find the energy and the staying power to complete this task.

In Day 4 you did a broad sort of your photographs, so most of your photographs should be separated by the categories that you established in your Organizing Profile. (If they’re not, don’t panic. Just keep moving.)

Now you’ll begin to go through the photos in each category, and make a quick decision about what you’ll do with them. Follow your first instinct when deciding which of the following three groups the pictures will fall into:

**Purge** – These are the photos that are unattractive or simply do not hold meaning for you. Keep the trash can handy and release these photos immediately.

**Keep** – These are the photos that you’ll want to organize in photo boxes or display in albums or frames.

**Share** – These are photos that you’d like to pass along to a friend or family member.

As you’re going through your piles, you should take all of your photos out of the developer’s envelopes. Remember, these contain acid and will damage your photographs!

You don’t want to create chaos for yourself, so be sure that you can organize the photos as soon as you remove them from the developing envelopes. This will be pretty simple if you’re using acid free, lignin-free photo envelopes. You can quickly record the memories on the outside of the envelope and place the related photos inside. (If you want to record memories directly on your photograph, then do so very gently on the back outer edge with a wax pencil or photographic marker.)
As you’re removing photos from developing envelopes, make sure that you handle the negatives right now, when you can easily identify the contents. Either insert them into negative sleeves or negative storage envelopes.
Day 8: Find a Home for Your Organized Photo Collection

Have you taken the time to decide where you’ll keep your photo collection? If not, then today’s the day. Remember, you’ll need to choose a space that’s large enough to handle the entire collection so that you can keep everything together. And, of course, the space must be safe for your photographs – away from heat, light, and humidity. The best bet is usually a windowless closet away from any water pipes.

So once you’ve identified that space, then you need to go empty it, because you are going to need it very soon for your organized photo collection. (Doesn’t that sound great?!)

Day 9: Sort and Journal Your Photos

Unless you’ve got a very small photo collection or the photo organizing fairies stopped by to pay you a visit, then you’ve probably got more photographs to organize. You know the drill. It is a challenge, but you’re almost there! Take breaks if you need to, but keep on going so that you can enjoy the victory of success! You’re going to love the feeling. And as you’re nearing the home stretch, don’t forget to reward yourself for all your hard work.
Day 10: Take Down Your Temporary Space

Sound the trumpets, you made it to Day 10!

If you find yourself on your 10th day of organizing and yet you’re still not finished, don’t worry. This is not a race, and it’s not a test. Just pace yourself, and continue taking action. You will get the job done, and it will be worth it!

If you have completed your organizing, then you are ready to take down your temporary work space. As you’re taking it down though, be sure to create a portable organizing kit so that you’ll be able to keep up with your photo organizing from here on out.

As you’re creating your kit, think about all the things that were helpful to you in your organizing sessions. You know how great it felt to have everything at your fingertips. You’ll feel the same way with your customized organizing kit. Just fill a basket or plastic container with those items that you’ll need, such as photo envelopes, negative envelopes, scissors (for trimming negatives) and an acid-free journaling pen. And don’t forget all the great tools in the Super Sanity Savers Bonus Pack! You’ll want to print those and include them in your organizing kit.

Don’t skip this step. It’s crucial to your future success! You’ll soon discover that with your supplies handy, you’ll be able to organize your photos the minute that you get them developed. This way you'll stay organized, and you’ll never have to tackle a massive pile of photographs again!
Personal Story:

Chris’ account of following the 10 day plan.

**Day 1:** I spent 30 minutes emptying the craft table down in our rec room. I had to move the kids’ drawing supplies, remnants from my son’s science fair project, and although I’m quite embarrassed to admit it, even Christmas projects. (Guess it had been awhile since I’d really cleared that table). Once the table was empty, I wiped it down and then moved one of the chairs out of the way. It may not “look good” but it’s functional for my trips back and forth and all the short organizing sessions that I plan to do while standing.

After that, I spent an hour and a half following the checklist and getting all of my supplies together.

**Day 2:** Instead of creating one folder for memorabilia, I decided to create separate folders (actually Craft Keepers 12 x 12 polypropylene storage envelopes) for each separate album that I plan to create. Then, since I was having so much fun with my label maker, and I was feeling inspired, I decided to create separate holders for large photos, portraits and even album pages that are in progress.

I had to resist the urge to start organizing. I knew that I needed to stay focused on creating the system. As I was creating the labels, I decided not to abbreviate. I want to make it as simple as possible for me to get organized and stay organized, and with it being completely spelled out, I won’t have any confusion (or excuses ;) when I’m filing or retrieving things.

**Day 3:** This one was easy for me. I already had everything in one place where I store it, so I just had to move my various piles, containers, and albums downstairs to my organizing workspace. Since this was so quick, I decided to keep going and work on Day 4.

**Day 4:** The “broad sort”. Tough job! I found it tricky because you still need to handle so many pictures. I found that I definitely needed my label maker to create categories & boxes that I hadn’t anticipated. Since I had the supplies handy, it was very easy to add these extra categories as I went along. I also needed my scissors to trim negatives so that they’d fit in the negative envelopes. I put some loose photos right into certain photo boxes, without putting them in chronological order. I just wanted to quickly get them into the general categories. It’s freeing to see the piles dwindling!
Day 5: I sorted, trimmed, and organized newspaper clippings. As I came across some real treasures, I berated myself for neglecting something so important. (My son has been featured in the local newspaper a few times for winning art awards. Even though I had kept all the papers together in one place, I couldn’t believe that I hadn’t been more careful in clipping and neatly storing them.)

Just as I found some real treasures, I found some things that I couldn’t believe I had bothered to save. I came across a notebook that I had made when I was planning our wedding several years ago. I thought I’d pull out a few special items and discard the rest. I was amazed to discover that there wasn’t one thing worth saving from that entire notebook!

Day 6: There’s no real shortcut for this stage – just pure labor! I find myself wondering why I took certain pictures in the first place. (Do we really need to remember how much snow we got . . . every winter?) Still I admit that purging is hard for me. What if I need it? I mean, who knows what else I have to choose from in the rest of my collection. This is slow going, and I really need to keep myself focused on the joy I’ll feel at having all my photos in order at the end.

Day 7: Did I mention this was a slow process? It requires great fortitude, which apparently I don’t possess, because I stalled out right smack in the middle of day 7. Actually, I guess I stalled out after day 7, because I did in fact spend a total of 3 ½ hours organizing today.

Day 8: (Completed after some delay -- I told you I stalled out). I already had an established location for storing my organized photo collection, I just had to reclaim it a bit. I do have an entire closet, which I’ve dedicated to storing photos boxes, albums, negatives, memorabilia and even scrapbooking supplies. But I need to use a small portion of that closet for storing in-use seasonal items (towels & beach bags in the summer and cold-weather gear in the winter). My small portion had crept far past its boundaries, and I needed to reclaim the space. Mission accomplished!

Day 9: I still had what seemed like an enormous amount of photos to organize, and I put in quite a full day. I kept taking breaks – a couple of hours organizing and then an hour off. As I continued sorting, I realized that I needed to add one more category. I actually had a life before children, and I’ve got a whole lot of photos to prove it!

Because it was such a full day, I needed to break up the monotony and find ways to keep going. I did this by varying my tasks. Most of the time, I was sorting photographs, but I kept things interesting by switching over to the negatives. (This provided quite an
interesting diversion, because it felt like a true adventure trying to identify some of those images!)

**Day 10**: It’s finally here! I’m so excited that I made it to Day 10, and I finally, once and for all, have my entire photo collection organized! I can’t believe how great it feels. It’s such a weight lifted off of me (especially since I’m in the business of helping people organize their photos 😊) The 10 Day Plan really worked for me, and I feel great about sharing it with other people. (ok. So I didn’t exactly do it within 10 consecutive days, but I did do it over the course of 10 days, and I got the job done – that’s what really matters!)
**Option 2: Plan an Organizing Marathon and Get Results.**

If your organizing profile indicated that you’d just like to go for it and get the job done once and for all, then an "All-Out Organizing Marathon" may be the answer for you.

If you commit a full day to organizing your photographs, then you will absolutely see visible results. Of course, there's a big difference between spending a full day organizing your photos and spending a full day effectively organizing your photos. To ensure that you are most effective, follow these helpful tips:

Pick a Date. O.k. this may seem obvious, but the only way that you’re really going to do this, is if you make a commitment and you stick to it. Pull out your calendar; pick a day that looks good to you and write the appointment in your calendar. So if you’ve effectively followed this step, then you should have the words, "Organizing Marathon" written on a specific, timely date in your calendar. (Just to clarify, six months from now does not qualify as "timely")

Block out 6 - 8 hours for your organizing marathon, and more if you can manage it. If you actually have the stamina to organize your photos for more than 10 hours, then you should contact the Guinness Book of World Records - they’d probably like to speak with you. Our purpose for having you block out additional time is so that you can enjoy some well-deserved relaxation and pampering after your organizing session.

Make arrangements in advance to remove all distractions on the date of your organizing marathon. If you have children, then make some arrangements for them to be cared for away from your organizing location. If you have a needy spouse, then by all means make arrangements for them too.

Prepare ahead so that you have all of the proper supplies on hand. To be most effective during your organizing session, you will need acid-free, lignin-free photo envelopes, photo boxes and journaling pens. If you want to organize your negatives at the same time, then you'll also need negative envelopes or sleeves. To learn more about the supplies you’ll need, check out the section: **Supplies You’ll Want Before Organizing.**

Plan ahead for dinner with a casserole or crock pot meal. Better yet, plan to treat yourself to take-out. You deserve it! (Or shall we say, you will deserve it if you follow through and remain productive during your organizing marathon.)
Designate and clear a space to work comfortably throughout the day. Typically, the kitchen table is great for this. It's a good height for you, and you'll be able to spread out reasonably. You may be tempted to work on the living room floor or cuddle up on the couch, thinking that this will make the process more fun. We can assure you that it won't! Within 20 minutes flat, you're body will begin to cramp up and you'll find yourself surrounded by a large, disheartening mess.

Decide if your photos will be arranged chronologically or by some other system, such as a theme. If you're not sure which method to choose, then ask yourself how you go about looking for photos. If you look for things by when they occurred, then you'll probably want to file chronologically. If you look for photos by the person featured or by certain events, then you should file by theme (such as holidays, vacations, childhood, etc.) It’s perfectly acceptable to use a combination of both; for instance, Holidays and Vacations sorted by theme and the rest chronologically.

Once you decide on how you'll arrange your photos, then set up a separate photo box for each major category or photo album you want to create. (This way, your photos will practically organize themselves!)

As you're organizing your photographs, control yourself! Don't get lost on Memory Lane. You can reminisce later. During your marathon, you should be relentlessly focused on organizing your photos.

Don't get lost on Memory Lane, but do take the time to jot down any quick memories that come to you as you're organizing. The easiest and safest way to do this is to briefly record your thoughts on acid-free photo journaling envelopes as you're sorting. Another option would be to use acid-free index cards to separate groups of photographs and add journaling notes to the index cards. (Keep in mind though, that your photographs can get mixed out of order very easily with this method.)

If you'd rather record memories directly on your photograph, then do so very gently on the back outer edge with a wax pencil or photographic marker.

Even though you’re working all day, you still should plan to work in small increments. Only pull out what you can handle in 15 –30 minutes. This way, every time you finish a small pile, you'll feel a sense of accomplishment and you'll be inspired to keep going.

Take frequent but mini breaks to stretch and move around. As you’re moving, be sure to walk quickly past the living room so that you don’t suddenly find yourself sprawled out in the recliner watching back-to-back "Seinfeld" reruns.
As you're organizing, be sure to get rid of any photos that are dark, blurry or otherwise unattractive. Also, if you've got several photos of the same topic, then choose one or two of the best and purge the rest. Your photo collection will hold much more meaning if you keep only those photos that truly stir your emotions. (As a side benefit, your job of organizing will be much easier.)
Option 3: 15 Minute Therapy Sessions

Perhaps our 10-day plan isn’t realistic for you right now and the Organizing Marathon gives you heart palpitations and an upset stomach. If that’s the case, then you can get started with baby steps and begin working in 15-minute intervals.

We know what you’re thinking. "Fifteen minutes? Fifteen minutes! What on earth can I do in fifteen minutes? How can that possibly make a difference?"

Believe it or not, there are lots of things you can do in fifteen minutes that can have a significant impact on your life. You could sit and read a magazine, you could take a walk, you could pick some flowers and yes, you CAN organize your photographs.

Organize your photographs in fifteen minutes??? It sounds absurd, doesn’t it? We’re obviously not suggesting that you can organize ALL of your photos in just fifteen minutes, but we’re not talking about all of your photos right now. You see, when it comes to managing photographs, too many people get hung up on the big picture. They see years and years’ worth of photographs and think they'll never get them all organized, so why bother. We want to help you get rid of that "all or nothing" mentality. With our "15 Minute Therapy Sessions", you can take small but consistent action toward organizing, preserving and enjoying your precious photographs.

One fifteen-minute session may not make a big difference up front, but if you commit to adding a few fifteen-minute intervals into your weekly routine then you will "Save Your Photos and Your Sanity". Before you begin, take a moment to actually set a timer. Don't ask us why, but there's some kind of magical power in a simple kitchen timer. Somehow it gets your head in gear and even makes you move a little faster.

To get you started, here are a few examples of things you CAN do in fifteen minutes....

1. Spend some time preparing your organizing space. Find a small table such as a banquet table or a card table and set it up in a corner of your home. Find a good lamp, either a floor lamp or a desk lamp and set that up. This will be the future home of your organizing workspace.

2. Carry a container (preferably with handles) around your home and start collecting those stray photographs. Go through your junk drawers, your filing piles or any place that you may "temporarily" place such items. Though it may be tempting to start sorting everything in that junk drawer or filing pile, REFRAIN!
You are only concerned at this point with your photographs. After fifteen minutes, carry your container to where you may keep the majority of your photos. This could be as large as an office or as small as a closet. If you don't have such a place, begin today, to think of where a likely spot may be. You should keep all your photographs and memorabilia in one spot.

3. Set up a filing system for your photos and memorabilia. Think about the categories that pertain to your family. You should create photo boxes and/or files for each category: Christmas, Vacations, Children, Heritage. Setting this up ahead of time will make your sorting process that much easier. Remember, it can be more inspiring to use containers that are pleasant to look at.

4. Spend 15 minutes purging some of your photos. If you can manage to stay focused, then you will be able to make a dent in your piles. Of course, your best efforts will disintegrate in no time flat if you allow yourself the luxury of reminiscing. Save the trip down memory lane as a reward for AFTER you've finished your 15 minutes of productivity.

Now, grab a small stack of photos and flip through them quickly. As you flip through the photos, pull out any obvious mistakes. You know . . . the picture's too dark, a giant thumb is in the way, someone's head is cut off, etc.

Each time you get to the bottom of your stack, start again. At the end of the fifteen minutes, take all of the "duds" and throw them away!! Don't give them another thought.

If you feel inspired to keep going, then by all means, continue. Just do it in the same format. Set the timer, grab a small stack, and go. Doing it in 15 minute intervals will ensure that you don't end up exhausted with a huge mess around you.

5. This is one of those times when you'll be amazed at what you can accomplish in just fifteen minutes. Managing digital images seems like such an enormous, time consuming task; it's no wonder that most people procrastinate for months or even years! Once again, we encourage you to avoid looking at the size of the task overall. Instead, break it down into something doable. Spend just 15 minutes sifting through the images on your computer. Don't even worry about organizing them yet. For now, just purge all of those photos that probably shouldn't have made it on to your computer in the first place (you know, the ones that are fuzzy, dark, or just not great). This is also the time to just narrow
down the photos. If you've got several pictures of the same thing, then pick one or two of the best and delete the others. As you get better at this, you'll learn to purge immediately on your camera, so that only the best photos will ever make it to your computer.

6. Feel the success of accomplishment! Forget about your piles and spend fifteen minutes sorting JUST your newly printed photos. Remember, the most important part of sorting is to PURGE! Sort your photos by category and quickly record the memories that go with them. You should do this immediately so that you don't forget those special moments during the event.

7. Do a fifteen-minute sort of your photographs. If you set up your photo boxes and files ahead of time then you will get more accomplished in fifteen minutes. Just stand over your piles of photos and start sorting. Put all of your Christmas photos in one pile; all of your vacation photos in one pile etc... Of course, while you are doing this, you may recall a special moment or funny story that goes along with the photos. Be sure to record these now. (Photo Pockets™ make it easy to sort your photos and record the memories that go with them.) Make an appointment to do these fifteen-minute sorts on a regular basis and you will be amazed at the shrinking pile of unorganized photos.

8. Spend 15 minutes taking care of your negatives. Are there photos that you want reprinted? Enlarged? Or duplicated? A little bit of planning upfront will save you major headaches in the future. (Negative Pockets™ make it easy to safely store and retrieve your negatives. No more rummaging through piles of negatives trying to find that special image!)

9. Do you have magnetic albums? Nothing could be more hazardous to your photographs than magnetic albums. You need to get them out immediately. Spend fifteen minutes removing your photos from these death traps. For more information on how to remove photos from magnetic albums, read the section How To Handle Memorabilia: Magnetic Albums. It will shed light on the dangers of magnetic albums.

10. Curl up on your couch and grab a good book; a book on photography that is. Spend some uninterrupted time brushing up on your photography skills so that you can take better photos. You'll have fewer "mistakes" you'll need to purge, you'll save money on developing, and you'll end up with a more meaningful photo collection.
11. This one relates more to creating new memories rather than capturing old memories, but it’s equally significant. In the spirit of family time, we’ve got a very simple, yet very worthwhile activity. We invite you to spend 15 minutes connecting with someone you love. A child would absolutely delight in a short walk spent in quiet exploration or noisy chatter. A spouse, friend or family member would certainly cherish some uninterrupted time spent with you. No matter whom you choose to spend your time with, your task is the same: simply be present and listen.

**Tip:**
Consider taking photographs of your child’s artwork. Much of your child’s artwork is three dimensional or created with materials that will fade over time. By taking photographs, you can keep the reminder and get rid of the bulk. Using an online digital scrapbooking service such as Picaboo, you can create your very own coffee table book filled with some fine young artists’ originals 😊
Displaying Your Photos

Framing Your Photographs

Personal Story from Tracey

I am one of those people who thrive in sunlight. I need to have the warmth shining in my home. I have very few window treatments around my house because I like it to be as bright as it can be.

But, let me share a hard lesson learned several years ago, before I had gained knowledge about photo preservation. I had decided to do a little spring redecorating, and after adding some bright colors to my décor, I decided to replace the dark wooden frames containing my "special" photographs. I carefully removed all of my precious photos from their frames before painting. And then I made a horrifying discovery! My "special" photographs had faded significantly! The portion of the photo that was hidden under the frame was several shades brighter than the rest of the photograph!

I'm quite selective, and I have very few framed photographs. Typically, I only frame my favorites . . . the ones I consider my most prized photographs. I'm sure you can imagine how distraught I was at realizing that the sunlight I loved so much was actually destroying the precious photographs I loved so much!

And to make matters worse, many of these were special one-of-a-kind photographs!

We decided to start off this section with Tracey’s personal story, because it highlights the most common mistake that people make when framing photographs.

The obvious lesson from this story is that sunlight fades photos....fast!

To safeguard against this, you should use duplicate photos when framing. If you don't have a duplicate photograph, then you should take your photos to a copy center and get a high quality color copy. Be sure to frame the color copy instead of the original.
Of course, you will not be able to copy professional portraits, so if you’re not willing to pay full price for extra prints, you might consider keeping them in a frame for just a year or so, until the next portrait gets taken. At that time, replace the old one with the new, and consider making an album for just your portraits. Use acid-free, lignin-free materials and you can enjoy your portraits for many years without risking damage from sunlight, dust and other environmental hazards. (Get step-by-step guidelines on creating a portrait album in Bonus #1)

Aside from sunlight, there are other hazards to be aware of when framing photographs. First off, you must know that many of the cardboard backings are simply that – cardboard! This means that the backing is highly acidic and is very damaging to your precious photographs. If you don’t want to take the extra time to locate acid-free backing, then you should provide a buffer for your photograph by inserting acid-free, lignin-free paper between the photograph and the backing.

Another common mistake of framing is to place the photograph directly on the glass. This can lead to serious damage. When there is no breathing space provided between the glass and the picture, it may allow moisture to build up, which can cause mold and mildew. This will result in the photograph getting stuck to the glass. (You may have discovered this problem for yourself if you have any old heritage photos.)

When this happens, it may be impossible to remove the photo from the glass without damaging the photographs. (Un-Du® offers a line of products that may help in the removal process.)

Our usual advice of copying the photograph before trying to remove it doesn’t work in this situation. Scanning the picture will be impossible because the scanner will not be able to “read” the photo through the shiny glass surface.

It may be too late for the photographs that you already have in this situation (unless you try hiring a professional restorer.) What you can do, though, is make sure that you eliminate this problem in the future. Fortunately, you can do this very easily, by including a mat with your photographs when framing.
How to Create a Photo Gallery Wall

Do you love the look of a photo gallery wall, but have no idea how to create one? In this section, we’ll share some simple tips that will help make this intimidating process easier.

A family picture gallery can bring you years of enjoyment. Not only does it add interest to an ordinary room, but it sparks joyful memories and enriches your family life.

Of course, there’s a fine balance between artistic expression and clutter. Because family pictures tend to be small, you should place them close together to form a cohesive grouping. Also, keep in mind that less is more. If you go overboard by trying to include too many pictures, you will very quickly cross that line past “artful design” and straight into “haphazardly arranged clutter.”

The goal is to have the viewer’s eyes travel easily across the arrangement without getting “hung up” on any one item. You do want people to stop and take in the memories in individual pictures, but you don’t want any one item to attract too much attention and visually overpower the rest.

To accomplish this, stick with a consistent theme. For example, if you’re planning to use black and white photos, then don’t mix in any color photos. If you want to make an arrangement of color photographs, then try to choose pictures that have similar color tones. This goes for the frames too. You don’t have to have exactly matching frames, but you’ll be happier with your results if you choose frames that are similar in color and design.

Experiment with your layout by arranging it down on the floor. Move the pieces around until you get something that feels right to you. (If you’ve got the space, then do this right in front of the wall that you’re working with.)

Use your largest photo as a starting point to anchor the design and then build out from there. Look at the overall measurement of your design, and place your largest photo in the center or just off the center of that space. You can then place the remaining photos symmetrically or asymmetrically around the anchor piece. (We should point out that
asymmetrical designs have the added bonus of being more forgiving, which can be quite a help.)

If the frames have easels on the back, then remove them so that the photos will rest smoothly on the wall. To safely secure your pictures so that they don’t fall off, use a small piece of double stick foam tape in the bottom center of each frame. This will also help you avoid that unsightly problem of having your photos hang lopsided. (It’s certainly difficult to achieve a unified look when your photographs are hanging in every which direction.)

If you’d like to create the look of a photo gallery wall without all the effort (and all the holes), then try using shelves or “crown molding ledges”.

Simply mount two or three of these shelves in varying sizes onto your wall and then prop your photographs on top. (Another option is to use a “ladder display shelf” to create a multi-level gallery.) With shelves, you’ll be able to rearrange to your heart’s delight.

These tips should get you well on your way to being able to create your own photo gallery wall.
As you begin to get your photographs in order, you may be interested in discovering the joy of scrapbooking! With the art of scrapbooking, you can safely showcase your precious photos and memorabilia in albums that will last for generations. You can choose your own level of involvement, and if you like, you can embellish your album with stickers, artwork, and journaling.

Scrapbooking is taking America and the world by storm, and with good reason. Scrapbooking has become a regular pastime in nearly 26 million households throughout the U.S.

Why has this “reborn” hobby seen such explosive growth in just a few short years?

The main reason is the improvement in the quality of materials. Knowledgeable consumers choose archival quality supplies to create albums that will last for generations, possibly even centuries! It’s easy to get excited about creating something that will be around for your great-great-grandchildren to enjoy.

Another exciting feature of scrapbooking is the ability to include keepsakes and memorabilia. Using the proper materials, people can safely include baby’s hair, hospital tags, report cards, trip maps and other important keepsakes.
Today’s scrapbooks offer so much more than a traditional photo album. People can tell their family stories through the photographs, memorabilia and journaling.

And we can’t overlook the fun! People are drawn to this hobby because it gives us a chance to play! Not only are we doing something worthwhile and extremely productive, we’re having a great time playing with fun scissors, markers and stickers!

Once you fall in love with scrapbooking, you will discover how much fun it is to do it with a group of friends. Host a scrapbooking party! Serve yummy food and drink and enjoy casual conversation as you make progress on your scrapbooks.

**Digital Scrapbooking….**

Do you love the idea of having keepsake albums for your family to treasure but dread the thought of scrapbooking?

With so many singing the praises of scrapbooking in recent years, some people are left feeling a bit guilty if they just don’t care to spend countless hours creating elaborate albums.

Now, please understand, we're not knocking the hobby. (We ourselves used to be somewhat addicted.)

But the fact is that even though a large number of people find great pleasure in scrapbooking, there are at least as many others who have absolutely no desire to scrapbook.

(I can't tell you how many times we've been asked if we have any suggestions for creatively displaying photographs WITHOUT having to scrapbook!)
We're happy to say that we finally have a good answer for that question.

We've discovered a nifty website that allows you to create a scrapbook album, using your digital photographs, without even leaving your home for supplies (or having to deal with a mess of paper scraps and all the tools required to scrapbook.)

The program is easy to use and it's fast! (Tracey completed an entire 8 x 11 album in just one hour.)

One thing we really love about it is that there's no cost to try it out. You can actually create an entire book on-line and even share it on-line for free! (If and when you're ready, you can order a hard copy of the book).

Have fun and if you'd like, send us a link to your albums . . . we'd love to see them!

Create a DVD Slideshow

Using your digital photographs, you can create a DVD slideshow. These make wonderful keepsakes and gifts! Most computers now come equipped with some version of software that will easily walk you through the steps to creating a slideshow.
Create a Life History Video

Here’s a very creative and meaningful way to capture the memories and life stories of the people you love. Pictures and journaling may only tell part of the story. Capture the personalities, the mannerisms and the stories through the eyes of the storyteller themselves. What a wonderful way to share with your family for generations to come!

For ideas on how to start, check out How To Create Life History Videos!

(Take a few minutes to watch the short video . . . it will leave you feeling very inspired!)
Do you ever watch those organizing shows on t.v. where they completely revamp a room? The new rooms look fabulous, don’t they? Have you ever wondered how long those people could possibly keep up with their newly organized life style?

And, how about you? Even as you’re enjoying the success of conquering your out-of-control photo collection, are you secretly wondering whether you’ll actually be able to stay organized?

Set yourself up for continued success! Just follow the helpful tips in this “brush-up” section, and you’ll have no doubts about your ability to maintain your newly organized system:
PHOTO ORGANIZING IDEAS  
(a.k.a. Sanity Savers)

Taking photographs:

1. Be prepared. The Boy Scout motto applies well to family photography. Planning ahead will help you avoid that unthinkable and guilt-ridden experience of finding yourself in the middle of a significant moment -- without a functioning camera!

2. Be more selective when you're taking photos. Don't take 10 pictures of the same event when two or three snapshots can just as effectively capture the moment. (Of course, we are by no means implying that only 2 or 3 snapshots would be sufficient for those BIG events like a wedding or a new baby. In those special cases, snap away.)

3. Brush up on your photography skills so that you can take better photos to begin with. You'll have fewer mistakes, you'll save money on developing, and you'll end up with a more meaningful photo collection. Visit www.organizedphotos.com/digitalphotosecrets.html

4. Keep a disposable camera in your purse so that you'll be ready whenever that perfect photo opportunity arises. (Of course, you've already got this covered if you've got a cell phone that can take pictures.)

5. Know what you want for sizes and quantities of portraits before you go to the portrait studio, and set a budget for yourself ahead of time. This will save you from getting swept away by emotions and "overspending" during the sales pitch.

6. Be selective when ordering school photos. You are no less of a parent if you opt for the smaller packages. Be realistic about what you'll do with the photos. If
you have no intention of sending all the relatives a school picture, then opt for the package that includes only the sizes and quantities that you'll really use.

Organizing Your Photos:

7. Make it a priority! Like most rewarding activities, managing your family photographs is important but it's not urgent. (It doesn't demand our attention like a ringing telephone, a crying child or a messy kitchen). If we wait for a spare moment, you can be sure those spare moments won't come. Make an appointment with yourself and stick with it!

8. Practice photo safety. This may seem like extra work, but let us caution you: it is the most important step in your organizing! The best organizing systems in the world are useless if your precious photographs are destroyed in the process.

9. Get your photographs out of their original film developing envelopes. Unfortunately, they aren’t safe for long-term storage. To see firsthand, visit: www.organizedphotos.com/damage.html

10. Define your goals. Take some time to think about what you hope to accomplish with your photograph collection. Do you just want to get your photos organized or do you plan on putting them into albums?

11. Set reasonable expectations. Start small and don't expect to get everything done at once.

12. Store all of your photos in one place. It's hard to organize your photos if you don't know where they are. Gathering them all in one place will bring an immediate sense of peace.
13. Try prioritizing your photos as you organize. This can be done pretty quickly if you're using acid-free envelopes. Just mark the top corner with an A, B, or C. For instance, "A" photos would be most valuable and significant to you, such as your child's first day of kindergarten or your sister's wedding. "B" could be "keepers" but not as crucial, and "C" could be good extras -- either for sending to friends and family members or for kid's school or craft projects, etc.

14. Set up a system for handling newly printed pictures and get in the habit of organizing your photos immediately. It may take you awhile to organize your entire photo collection, but at least you'll be organized going forward. Even if it takes you awhile to organize your entire photo collection, at least you'll be organized going forward.

15. Don't forget to prepare logistically as well. Your organizing sessions will be much more productive and enjoyable if you have everything you need ahead of time. Gather the photo boxes, storage envelopes, archival pens, etc. that you'll need BEFORE you pull out all your photos.

16. Make the most out of your organizing sessions by preparing your environment for optimum productivity. Put on some music, light a candle, get some yummy snacks and your favorite beverage. (It goes without saying that you should keep your refreshments at a safe distance from your photographs!)

17. Decide if your photos will be arranged chronologically or by some other system, such as a theme. If you're not sure which method to choose, then ask yourself how you go about looking for photos. If you look for things by when they occurred, then you'll probably want to file chronologically. If you look for photos by the person featured or by certain events, then you should file by theme. (Some possible themes are Holidays, Vacations, Childhood, or Heritage.)

18. Once you decide on how you'll arrange your photos, then set up a separate photo box for each major category or album you want to create. (This way, your photos will practically organize themselves!)
19. Set up a photo organizing kit so that you'll have everything at your fingertips. Fill a basket or pretty plastic container with some acid free photo journaling envelopes, an archival journaling pen and a journal to capture those memorable moments. This way you can sort your photos quickly and record your journaling while the memories are fresh.

20. Purge your photos. Your photo collection will hold much more meaning if you keep only those photos that truly stir your emotion. Be willing to release any photos that are dark, blurry or otherwise unattractive. By the same token, if you've got several photos of the same topic, then choose one or two of the best and purge the rest.

21. Simplify the process of sharing photos. Keep a separate acid-free envelope labeled with the name of each person that you typically share photos with. When it's full, simply distribute the envelope and start another.

22. Don't pull everything out at once. Doing so only reminds you of how much you really need to do, which certainly won't help your level of motivation. Set a time limit for yourself and pull out only what you can reasonably accomplish in that timeframe.

23. Figure out your organizing style. Do you work better by breaking the task down into bite size pieces and then taking small steps each day, or are you the kind of person that needs an all-out organizing marathon to really get the job done?

24. Bribe yourself! Don't think of it as bribery, think of it as a form of creative motivation. Set a goal for yourself with the promise of a reward. How about allowing yourself an hour of fun but admittedly junky television after you've completed your hour of organizing. Of course, it goes without saying that bigger accomplishments deserve bigger rewards.

25. Turn idle time into productive time. Take advantage of those times that you find yourself waiting, either in the doctor's office or at your child's lessons.
26. Use mini blocks of time. You would be amazed at what you can accomplish in just 15 minutes. O.K., you can stop laughing now. It's true. Just set the timer and watch how those piles disappear.

27. Choose a manageable project so that you can enjoy some success. That success will inspire you to do more. Perhaps you can get all of your holiday photos into one album, or you can create a vacation album. Feeling a sense of success will give you the inspiration to do more.

28. Toss the perfectionism. Anything you do to capture your memories and preserve photographs will be a gift - to your loved ones and to yourself!

29. Release the guilt. Don’t beat yourself up about the state of your photo collection, just remember the significance of what you already do each and every day - create joyful memories for your loved ones to cherish.

**Organizing Your Negatives:**

30. Don't neglect your negatives. One option is to simply slip them into negative sleeves in chronological order. Another option is acid-free negative storage envelopes, which allow you to safely store and organize your negatives and, at the same time, record details that will simplify the process of ordering reprints.

31. Find a place away from your photographs to store your negatives. In case the unthinkable happens and you lose your photographs to fire or flood, you will have the negatives to replace them. Two good options are a safety deposit box or a relative’s home.

**Capture The Memories:**
32. Don't rely on your memory. If something amazing or something funny happens, write it down immediately because you will forget. Keep a journal close by for this purpose.

33. Set regular times for journaling. If once a week isn't realistic, then how about establishing one evening a month to sit down and capture those interesting observations and special memories before they slip away.

34. Make sure that you're in the family album! As the self-appointed family historian, we tend to be the "family photographer." Demand that someone take your photo occasionally! After all, you deserve to be in the family album, don't you think?

35. Pick up a few disposable cameras and let your kids get involved in capturing the memories. Let each child have their own camera and give them free reigns to photograph what they view as important. They'll love the feeling of responsibility and you'll love the break from your designated role as the family historian.

36. Take the time to record the memories that go along with your photographs. Don't neglect this task! After all, what's the point of a photograph if you can't recall the details surrounding it? Of course, you need to do this safely so that you don't damage your photographs. The safest and easiest way to do this is to use acid-free photo journaling envelopes.

**Displaying Your Photos:**

37. Put some of your "favorite" photos in frames, especially those that truly capture the personality of your loved ones, and display them around your home where you can enjoy them. Remember: sunlight fades photos, so you should only frame duplicates.

38. Put your most cherished snapshots into an album so that they'll be easier to share with family and friends. This doesn't have to be elaborate, just be sure
that the albums you choose are acid-free, lignin-free and PVC-free. Do NOT use magnetic albums.

39. Gather all of your portraits together into one keepsake album. This is really a simple project, and you can create a great heirloom with minimal time. Again, just be sure to do it safely with archival quality materials.

40. Consider learning to scrapbook. This fun and rewarding hobby allows you to tell your family story with photos, journaling and memorabilia. Consider digital scrapbooking if the traditional hobby of scrapbooking doesn’t appeal to you.

41. Sometimes general disorganization can stand in the way of your photo organizing. If this is the case for you, then we suggest that you take a look at Finally Organized, Finally Free!

42. Don't go it alone. Be sure to take advantage of all of the support, inspiration and product solutions from Organized Photos!
SANITY SAVERS FOR DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

1. When using a digital camera, be sure to keep a spare memory card with you and extra batteries. At the very least, make sure that your current memory card has plenty of room before you set out to photograph a special event. (When contemplating the amount of memory you'll need, be aware of videos, which can quickly eat up memory. I (Chris) learned this one the hard way. I had set out with what I thought was plenty of memory, but during the event, unbeknownst to me, my son was taking videos. As a result, I missed an absolutely picture perfect moment!)

2. Purge your digital photos immediately and only save the best. This will save you endless hours later because you won't waste time downloading, filing, and searching through hundreds of mediocre images. (In some cases you may need to see the image on your computer to determine the quality.)

3. Schedule regular times to download your photographs and immediately put them into folders with specific names. You can name the individual photos as well but if you don't have time, at least they are in a place that you will recognize later.

4. Don't rely solely on technology to preserve your past. Hard drives can crash and CD's can break down. The best way to protect your precious images is to print them so that you have the actual photographs. Think of digital photography as a means to an end. It is not the end; it is simply another form of photo processing. Establish a routine and take the time to regularly print your photographs.

5. When organizing digital images, think of your computer like a file cabinet and create folders on your hard drive for each major category of your photos (just as you would set up separate photo boxes for each category.)

6. Be specific when you're naming your digital images. For starters, be sure to include the year in each file name. Then include the name of the subjects and
anything else that will help jog your memory as you're searching through images. For example, a photo of Abby playing soccer in September of 2002 might have the following file name: Abby_soccer_Sep02

7. If you don’t want to print your own photographs, consider using online developing. Two online options are Kodak and Snapfish.

8. If you have a cd burner and a slideshow software, then you can create a slideshow with your digital images. It is a fun way to share your special events. It is really quite simple using Windows Movie Maker (it generally comes free with Windows XP users or you can download it from Microsoft). You can really get creative with music and captions using Microsoft Plus! Photo Story.

9. Another way to share your photos instead of e-mail is by creating a website. Upload your photographs to create your very own photo gallery then just e-mail a link to your website to your family and friends. Two options are Flikr and Photobucket. Of course, you always upload them to your facebook page as well!

10. Back up your images to a CD-R disc and store them in a jewel case to protect them from scratches and environmental contamination. Store your jewel cases vertically like books to avoid warping. Consider using Archival Gold CD’s that have a much longer longevity.
Congratulations!

You made it! You’ve reached the end of this book, and hopefully, the end of your piles of photographs. (If by chance, you’re reading this before you’ve actually finished your organizing, then take heart, you’ll get there. That is, if you stop reading and get back to work.)

If you have taken the steps outlined in this e-book, then you should feel great knowing that your precious photographs are safe and well-documented, so that you and your loved ones can enjoy them for years and years to come.

The peace of mind that you’ll enjoy is a great reward for your efforts! Aside from this though, we think you deserve to reward yourself even more. This has been an enormous undertaking, which has required intense motivation, stamina, and sheer determination to succeed.

So take the time to reward yourself with some well-deserved pampering.

Here are a few ideas:

- Buy some fresh flowers and arrange them in a bouquet.
- Go see a movie.
- Why just a movie? How about dinner AND a movie.
- Get a massage or a manicure or...BOTH!
- How about Girl’s Night Out – Get dolled up, grab some friends and go enjoy an evening out! Oh, and don’t forget to take pictures!

The ideas are endless. The point is to do something that feels like a reward to you. Make sure you take the time to stop and celebrate this HUGE success. You deserve it!
Now, before we leave you, we’d like to offer you something to come back to whenever you need a gentle reminder on why you want to care for your photos.
A Saturday morning expedition with the kids brought me an unexpected surprise. Certainly I had some expectations of our outing to the "Healthy Kids Day" at the local YMCA. Mildly entertained children, yes. Gentle reminders to make healthier choices, yes. But newfound inspiration to help others (and ourselves) preserve precious photographs? That I wasn't expecting!

It happened during a conversation with a firefighter. I was impressed by this humble man from the start. Not by his appearance or by his communication skills, but by his simple willingness to serve. In his role as a firefighter, he has missed out on many family gatherings and holiday celebrations. He is just one of many caring individuals who generously volunteer their time to protect our small towns.

Then he said something that really amazed me. He recalled a recent fire, and he described how he went into the lower portion of the house and began taking all of the family photos off of the walls. He carefully stacked them all on a bed and wrapped them up in a blanket to protect them from smoke and water. It goes without saying that the family was extremely grateful and also surprised by the man's compassionate actions. In explaining his actions, the firefighter went on to say the words that we have all heard countless times, "Those things can't be replaced." He said that he's been through the pain of losing a father and losing a son, and aside from the people in his life, nothing is more valuable than the photographs!

I'm sure we'd all agree that our photographs truly are our most prized possessions. And while I hope that we may we never be in a position to rely on a selfless firefighter; I have to wonder: Are we doing all that we can to protect our precious photographs? Are we treating our precious photographs with the significance that we say they hold in our lives?

A fire or a flood is an unthinkable tragedy; one that I hope none of us ever need to face. But what about the other hazards that we subject our photos to every day? Many people relegate these most precious possessions to an acid-filled shoe box, where they will suffer great damage, slowly and silently.
Strangers in a Box

Come, look with me inside this drawer,
   In this box I've often seen,
At the pictures, black and white,
   Faces proud, still, and serene.
   I wish I knew the people,
These strangers in the box,
Their names and all their memories,
   Are lost among my socks.
I wonder what their lives were like,
   How did they spend their days?
What about their special times?
   I'll never know their ways.
If only someone had taken time,
To tell, who, what, where, and when,
   These faces of my heritage,
Would come to life again.
Could this become the fate,
Of the pictures we take today?
The faces and the memories,
   Someday to be passed away?
Take time to save your stories,
Seize the opportunity when it knocks,
   Or someday you and yours,
Could be strangers in the box.

By: Pam Harazim, East Hampton, CT
SUPER BONUS #1 – “HOW TO TURN THOSE NEGLECTED FAMILY PORTRAITS INTO A TREASURED FAMILY ALBUM – IN JUST ONE AFTERNOON!

We’ve all got them – those family portraits that we invested so much time and energy into. (Remember how hard it was to get each and every family member neatly dressed and happily smiling at the exact right time?) As parents, most of us get caught up in the moment, spend way too much money, and then spend a short amount of time admiring the results before we stick the photos in a closet somewhere, soon to be forgotten. We’ll show you how you can gather up all of those miscellaneous portraits and put them together in one beautiful album that your family can treasure for generations to come. Don’t worry -- You won’t need an art degree in order to pull this off. In fact, you don’t need any “experience” at all. We’ll walk you step by step through the entire process, and we’ll show you some deceivingly simple tricks to create a “showcase” album in just a couple of hours.

Creating A Portrait Album

Creating an album full of just your portraits provides a great snapshot of how everyone changes throughout the years…and it isn’t that hard. In fact, you’ll be amazed at how simple it is, and you’ll feel so proud knowing you’ve created a beautiful album for your family to treasure!

Deciding on your goals

Gather your portraits and think about what you might include on your pages. For instance do you want to include journaling? At the very least, you will want to include the names of the subjects in the photograph and the year it was taken.
Choosing Your Album

Before you choose your album, review the list of pros and cons that we offer in the section, Choosing the Album That is Right for You. Whatever type you choose, we can’t emphasize enough about the importance of choosing one that is acid-free, lignin-free and PVC-free.

Albums come in a variety of sizes as well. Simply choose the size that will accommodate the portraits you’d like to include. If you plan on using the 8 x 10 portrait size, you may want to consider a 12 x 12 album. That way you will have plenty of room for your embellishments and journaling.

Shopping For Supplies

Go on a shopping excursion to your local craft/scrapbooking store for scrapbooking paper and, if you choose, stickers and embellishments.

Acid-free, Lignin-free Paper

Think about a color scheme. Look at the background of your portraits; look at the clothes the subjects are wearing. Most albums come with either black or white pages but that can be boring. Find a paper to use as the page of the album. There are so many different printed papers that are perfect for portraits but you wouldn’t want to choose a printed paper if the background of your portrait is scenery (unless of course, the print is very simple). It is important to bring your portraits with you when you go on your shopping trip. The range of colors of paper is phenomenal. Look for colors that work well together and think about a layering of colors.

Stickers and embellishments

This is absolutely optional! You can create a fabulous portrait album, simply with assorted paper and your own handwriting. If you’d like though, you can take a look at the stickers and embellishments to see if there is anything you’d like to include that relates with your portrait. WARNING: Don’t get caught up in the assortment! You want your portraits to remain center stage, not the embellishments. Personally, the only stickers that I use are letter stickers to spell out my child’s name and the date of the photograph. Also, stay away from the 3-D embellishments. Yes, they are cute but they can dent your page protectors and ultimately your photographs. (Besides, you won’t want a bulky, behemoth of an album sitting on your coffee table.)
Adhesives

Usually your portraits are one-of-a-kind items that can’t easily be reproduced (legally 😊). So you may decide to adhere them in a way that it would be easy to remove if you ever needed to. Consider using a corner slot punch. Your local craft supply store should have them. With the corner slot punch, you have the ability to create slots in your scrapbooking paper so that you can slide the corner of your photograph inside. Another, very simple, option is acid-free photo corners. (You simply place one on each corner of the photograph and then mount it on to the paper.) If you feel like you would be okay with adhering your photograph directly into the album, just make sure that any adhesive you choose is acid-free.

Here’s a Simple Layout

Choose one of your portraits and all the coordinating papers. You are going to create a mat for your portrait. Adhere the portrait to a solid colored background, and trim the background paper, leaving a border of ¼” on all four sides. Consider creating a double mat by laying your matted portrait onto another coordinating scrapbooking paper. You can add interest by using a variety of coordinating papers and varying the sizes of your borders.

1. Now you can lay your matted portrait onto your scrapbook page. Remember to leave space for the names and dates.

2. Cut out rectangles of the same paper you used to mat your photograph and document the names of the subjects and the year the photograph was taken.

3. Feel free to include any journaling on another block of solid paper.

4. Sit back and enjoy!

This project is quick and easy and you’ll be amazed at how much more fun it is to look at your portraits!
For thousands of scrapbooking supplies, visit Scrapbook.com!
Super Bonus #2 – “How to Take Better Pictures”

Let’s face it; your photo collection will have so much more meaning if you’ve got good-looking pictures. It’s hard to get excited about looking through a photo album that’s filled with pictures that are fuzzy, dark or have trees growing out of someone’s head. This special report will teach you the little-known tips that will help you take better pictures so that you can have a more meaningful photo collection.

General

For crisp pictures, make sure you’re starting with a clean camera lens! (Carefully blow away the dust, then breathe on the lens to create a mist and wipe with a soft, clean cloth.)

Keep your camera steady! The most common cause of un-sharp pictures is camera movement. (To minimize movement, stand with your feet shoulder width apart, keep your arms close to your body, and grasp the camera firmly with two hands.)

Composition

• Keep your backgrounds clean and watch for objects “protruding” from your subject’s head.
• Move in close and shoot some shots at your subject’s eye level.
• Do not cut people off at the joints. Crop at mid-thigh or the waist rather than at the knees or the hips.
• Frame your subject with objects, such as tree branches, in the foreground.
• Explore different viewpoints; shoot from high, low, and off to the side.
• Remember to shift the rectangle; take vertical and horizontal shots.
• Tell the story by taking a sequence of shots.
• For action shots anticipate the peak of action and be ready to shoot at precisely that moment.
• Use the rule of thirds. If your subject is placed on one of the lines in the illustration, the photo composition will be most pleasing.
• Be patient, practice, and take several shots for best results.

Babies and Children

• You can take beautiful photos of infants while they’re asleep. (Avoid the flash.)
• Use a faster speed of film and natural light, especially for babies.
• Keep the camera handy to catch that special, unexpected moment.
• Use a zoom lens to get in close and crop out distractions.
• Take monthly shots of babies, and annual shots of older children, in the same place with the same props.
• Blend in to the background or shot while children are involved in an activity to get good candid shots.
• Include backgrounds, pets, and favorite objects that tell your child’s story.
• Show relationships between siblings by catching their interactions on film.

Groups and Portraits

• Ask your subjects to pose close together.
• Make sure that all the people are about the same distance from the camera.
• Use a tripod and a camera with a timer so you can include yourself in the photo.
• Shade, later afternoon light, and early morning light is most flattering.
• Use a fill flash (flash turned on manually) for outdoor portraits in harsh light.
• Fill the frame with your subject.
• Use the red-eye reduction feature or brighten the room to reduce red-eye.
• Angle the camera slightly down or come in from the side to limit red-eye.
SUPER BONUS #3 – “HOW TO USE YOUR KID’S ARTWORK TO CREATE A MINI ART GALLERY – AND WATCH THEM BEAM WITH PRIDE!”

Doesn’t it seem like the kids come though the door with stuff faster than you can possibly keep up with it? As parents, we need to maintain that fine balance between nurturing our children’s self esteem and keeping our own sanity!  We’ll show you a way that you can eliminate the majority of the kids’ artwork without guilt and still watch their self-esteem soar! In this special bonus report, you’ll learn how to choose a few select pieces of your children’s artwork to create a mini-art gallery. Not only will you brighten up an area of your home with this simple project, but you’ll brighten your children’s faces as they beam with pride.

Materials required:

- Inexpensive plastic frames. I used ones I found on clearance at my local office supply store. I made sure to purchase ones larger than the pictures (11 x 14).
- Your child’s artwork

Have you ever noticed how bright and cheery the colors are in your children's artwork from school? It's almost like the art teachers go to great lengths to have the student's use the most vibrant colors from all aspects of the color spectrum. Take advantage of these! Brighten up a hallway or mudroom with these spectacular, one-of-a-kind pieces and watch your children beam with pride at their masterpieces prominently displayed.
TIP: A black background makes the colors in the pictures just pop!
TIP: Arrange some pictures horizontally and some vertically to make the arrangement interesting.
As you begin the task of organizing your photographs, you may find that you have photos that aren't worthy of keeping but that you just can't bring yourself to throw away. In this special bonus report, we’ll walk you through a simple project that will help you release those photos without tossing them. With our help, you'll learn how to use those unwanted double prints or old heritage photos to create one-of-a-kind cards that are sure to put a smile on the face of the recipient.

1. Take an 8 1/2 x 11 piece of light colored cardstock and cut it down the middle lengthwise. Fold each piece in half. This will be the body of your card.

2. Find the spare photos you wish to use and choose colored cardstock that will enhance those photos.

3. Mount your photo on a piece of colored cardstock and trim so that about 1/4” of the cardstock shows on all sides.

4. Mount this onto your light colored card and voila...you've got a one-of-a-kind card!

By the way, you can find envelopes to fit these cards at your local office supply store. You need to look for 4 3/8” x 5 3/4” Invitation Envelopes. They can also be referred to as
A2 envelopes.

**TIP:** Try double mounting your photos using two different colors to add some interest.  
**TIP:** Try punching a hole in the upper corner and adding ribbon for a fancier note.  
**TIP:** Use stickers or rubber stamps to embellish your card.  
**TIP:** Use as "Thank You" notes from a birthday party.

Have fun with this project and get creative!
WHY WE LOVE SMILEBOX!

Personalized Recipe Cards

If you want to give out some holiday goodies this year, why not take it a step further and print off a personalized recipe card to go with it?

This would be a great way to create a lot of meaningful, clutter free gifts in a very short period of time.

Our absolute favorite way to do this is through Smilebox, a website that allows you to create personalized photo gifts and print them right from your computer.

Here’s a look at a recipe card we created in minutes using the Smilebox “Festive Recipe” template:

If you’d rather skip the food production, you can make a fabulous gift by printing off some heirloom recipe cards for family members.

The “Kitchen Recipe” design template allows you to choose your background and include up to three photos along with your special recipe. What a priceless gift to have treasured family recipes honored and preserved in this way. You could even take a photograph of a recipe in the cook’s handwriting and include that on the card along with their picture and the printed recipe.
Here’s a keepsake recipe card I made in memory of my mother and her traditional date nut bread for the holidays.

You don’t have to limit yourself to recipe cards though. The “Family Recipe” template allows you to include multiple photographs and 20 recipes to create your own cookbook!

One of the things we really love about Smilebox is that you’re in charge of your creations. You can print them from home yourself AND you can e-mail your creations as well. This way you can easily share your family recipe cards or cookbook with the ENTIRE extended family . . . for no additional cost!
Create a collage, print it and frame

The title says it all. This is a super simple, super meaningful gift.

Here’s a sample:
Create a Memorable Slideshow

By opting for a slide show instead of a traditional photo book, you can make your memories come alive. Smilebox offers hundreds of slideshow designs which allow you to add photos, music and even videos to make the slideshows uniquely your own.

In the past, we would have had to pay a professional hundreds of dollars to create something like this. Now, we can create a family heirloom easily – right from our own computer.

Once we’re done, we can burn it to a DVD to present as a very special gift . . . or we can e-mail it to dozens of family members.

Here’s a slideshow Tracey put together to showcase her family’s Thanksgiving celebrations.

You can take advantage of all of these ideas in one central location – your own home! And it doesn’t have to take long.

We created the recipe cards, slideshow and collage all within the span of one morning.

We opted for the free trial of Club Smilebox so that we’d have full access to thousands of designs and most importantly so that we could save, print and share our creations ad-free. (The free version of Smilebox includes advertising with your creations and doesn’t allow you to print or save.)

Actually we enjoyed Club Smilebox so much that we continued on with the paid subscription of $39.95 per year.

When you think of the unlimited gifts you can create for that one price, it’s an unbelievable bargain.

Whether or not you decide to opt for the full subscription, we suggest that you at least sign up for the free trial and use those two weeks to be super productive and create your holiday gifts.

(Tip: when you sign up for the free trial, opt for the monthly payment option, this way you’ll only be charged $5.95 after the trial ends and you’ve have more time to decide whether or not it’s right for you.)
Instead of fighting the crowds this year, we suggest that you get cozy and have fun creating gifts that will be treasured for years to come.

The Gift of Creative Play

If you don’t have the time (or the desire) to create a memorable gift yourself, consider giving that creative opportunity as your gift.

You can leave it open-ended and simply give a gift card to Smilebox or perhaps Snapfish or you can round up some photos to inspire projects.

This would be a fabulous solution for a mother or grandmother who would like to pass down some photographs to a tween, teen, or adult. Putting the photographs in a cute photo box and attaching a gift card would make for a charming presentation.

Visit Smilebox and start playing! We LOVE it!
SUPER BONUS #5 -- SANITY SAVING SUPER PACK.

We could really list these as bonuses 5, 6, 7, and 8 because every item in this super pack is valuable in its own right! Basically, we're handing over our entire collection of helpful tools and timesaving shortcuts. We've personally created this collection through trial and error to help manage all the "extras" like:

1. Easily figure out what sizes and quantities you need when ordering portraits
2. Having documentation to go along with your CD of digital pictures.
3. Being able to include journaling in even the simplest "slide-in" style photo albums.
4. Capturing details and memories of your child's life -- without a lot of effort.

It's taken us years to come up with all these tools. And they're yours free! We've done all the work for you. All you need to do is print and enjoy!
Portrait Planning

Easily figure out the sizes and quantities of the portraits that you need to avoid overspending at the photo studio. Keep this record safe for the following year.

Download instructions for film labels:

1. Click on link for portrait planning sheet below. (Note: you will need Adobe Acrobat 6.0 or higher)
2. Once the PDF file opens, click on “Save a copy” in the upper left hand corner
3. Place it in your file
4. You can open this document anytime and print your film labels whenever you need them.

CD Memorable Moments Cards

Download instructions for CD Memorable Moments Cards:

1. Click on link for CD Memorable Moments Cards below. (Note: you will need Adobe Acrobat 6.0 or higher).
2. Once the PDF file opens, click on “Save a copy” in the upper left hand corner.
3. Place it in your file.
4. You can open this document anytime and print your CD Memorable Moments Cards whenever you need them.
5. For best results, use acid-free, lignin-free index stock or cardstock from your local office supply store.

Journaling cards for slide-in albums

Download instructions for journaling cards:

1. Click on link for journaling cards below. (Note: you will need Adobe Acrobat 6.0 or higher)
2. Once the PDF file opens, click on “Save a copy” in the upper left hand corner
3. Place it in your file
4. You can open this file anytime and print your journaling cards whenever you need them. This file will print four journaling cards to a page so you will need to cut them into equal sizes. It is easy if you use a personal desktop trimmer.
5. For best results, use acid-free, lignin-free index stock or cardstock from your local office supply store.
6. You can decorate these cards with stickers or rubber stamps for a unique look in your albums. Also, try mounting cards to colored cardstock that matches your photos.

Cover Page: Memorable Childhood Years

Easily documents the details of your child’s school years. Use these 8 ½ x 11 pages in your child’s scrapbook to document the particulars of each year or simply keep them with your child’s memorabilia in a file box as mentioned in “How To Handle Memorabilia” included earlier in this e-book.

Download instructions for childhood cover pages:

1. Click on link for childhood cover page below. (Note: you will need Adobe Acrobat 6.0 or higher).
2. Once the PDF file opens, click on “Save a copy” in the upper left hand corner.
3. Place it in your file.
4. You can open this file anytime and print your journaling cards whenever you need them.
5. For best results, use acid-free, lignin-free index stock or cardstock from your local office supply store.
