

PERSONAL ARCHIVES: KEEP, DONATE, OR LET GO?



Step 1: Identify the item

Ask: *What is the item, and what story does it represent?*

Example: A box of letters, a quilt, a stack of yearbooks.

Step 2: Determine its meaning

Ask: *Why does this matter?*

Question: Does it tell a unique story about your family?

YES: Go to Step 3.

NO: Let it go or donate.

Question: Does it spark positive emotion?

YES: Go to Step 3.

NO: Let it go or donate.

Question: Would future generations understand or value it?

YES: Go to Step 3.

NO: Let it go or donate.

Step 3: Evaluate its uniqueness & condition

Ask: *Is it the best example of its kind?*

Question: Is it the only or best-preserved example of its type?

YES: Go to Step 4.

NO: Keep the one representative piece and get rid of any duplicates.

Question: Is it in a stable condition (not moldy or unsafe)?

YES: Go to Step 4.

NO: Photograph and/or document the original. Dispose of the original.

Step 4: Consider its storytelling value

Ask: *Does the object tell a story others can access and connect to?*

Question: Could this item be displayed, scanned or shared?

YES: Keep or digitize it.

NO: Go to Step 5.

Question: Would a museum or family member better appreciate it?

YES: Donate it.

NO: Go to Step 5.

Step 5: Assess space and stewardship

Ask: *Can you responsibly care for it?*

Question: Do you have physical or digital space to store it safely?

YES: Keep or digitize it.

NO: Go to Step 6.

Question: Are you willing to maintain it over time?

YES: Keep it.

NO: Find a better home. Share with family or donate it.

Step 6: Letting go with intention

Ask: *How can you honor it before releasing it?*

Take a photo, write a short memory, donate it to someone who will value it, say thank you, discard it respectfully (recycle, compost).