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Book Collecting Guide

Storing books - laying down or standing up?

When you start to build your book collection, one of the most important things to keep in the back of your mind is how you are going to store and display your collection.

The last thing you want is to spend the time and money finding the perfect book to add to your collection, only to find a year later they are damaged due to faulty storage strategies. There are lots of considerations to keep track of when storing your collection, but perhaps the most basic question you should first ask yourself is whether to store your books vertically in the upright position or horizontally on their sides.

When answering this question, the primary thing to keep in mind is how to best protect the spine of the book. Since the spine holds the book together, it is arguably the most important feature of the books' structure. Alas, it is also one of the most delicate features as well, and great care must be taken to avoid damaging it.

Since stacking books horizontally can place undue pressure on book spines, most books should be stored in the upright position, ideally shelved neatly in a metal bookcase supported against similarly sized books with bookends at either side. Be careful not to place too many books on one shelf, as pressure from the sides can damage the boards and spine. An envelope should fit easily between each book, but the books should not be allowed to lean on each other, as this can also cause damage.

However, not all books should be stored in the upright position. Large folio books, for example, are best stored horizontally on their side. Since folio books tend to be larger and the text blocks can be quite heavy, the weight of the text block can cause it to separate from the spine if they are stored in the upright position. If need be, you can stack the books horizontally on top of each other in a rough pyramid shape, but be sure to not stack them too high, as all of that weight could jeopardize the boards and spines of the books on the bottom of the stack.

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Of course, you may find that instead of storing a particular book, you instead wish to display it. If you are displaying a closed book, then a simple easel-type device would work well. But if you want to display your book open to a certain page or illustration, then a bit more thought is needed, since the angle and weight distribution could, once again, jeopardize the spine. Archival companies such as Gaylord Archival offer a wide range of display mounts, and displays like the Large Urethane Book Mount Set are particularly useful when displaying rare and delicate books.

RELATED RESOURCES

- [Storing a Book Collection](#)

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