

Things to Remember when Handling Textiles

Before you arrive

- Clothing with prominent front-facing zippers (eg. a zip-up sweatshirt), baggy items, and jewelry should all be avoided. It may not seem to matter but with fragile fabrics things can get caught very easily
- Wash your hands! Hands should be washed at the beginning of every day and after any breaks (especially after eating), as well as if you've touched your hair or face
- No drinks, food, pens or felt-tips should be brought into textile rooms
 - No candy, gum, or lozenges should be chewed while working. Even a glass of water is dangerous: a water stain can disfigure a textile
 - Any personal items or snacks can be kept outside of the textile sorting area

When holding garments

- Always presume that the textile is unique, irreplaceable, and fragile:
Handle with appropriate care
- Large pieces especially require support. Whenever possible, support the garment at its midpoint and give extra support to heavier elements (bustles, trains, etc.)
 - Support: you and not the garment itself are bearing the weight

Maintaining a clean and organized workspace

- The museum will cover all folding tables with cloth, but it is your responsibility to minimize contact between your garment and uncovered surfaces as well as with other garments
- We must always remember that the end goal of our efforts is to not only to keep pieces safe but also to make them easy to find. As such, please take care to follow the category guidelines and place each piece in the appropriate box

If you're uncertain about how to proceed or have any questions at all, please ask a staff member.

Thank you so much for all your hard work, and here's to a fantastic process!

How to Fill Out an Accession Worksheet

Every item needs an accession worksheet filled out in erasable pencil. Accession is “a new item added to an existing collection of books, paintings, or artifacts,” so for our purposes it is essentially a record of what the object is, who has owned it before, and where it is now. At first glance this sheet may look daunting, but by breaking down each question you will be able to find clear answers and complete the worksheet quickly and accurately.

- Determine what the object is
 - a. Refer to the list of categories and choose the most specific option applying to the object (for example “short skirt” is more specific than “women’s clothing”)
- Most items already have an accession number. This number will be only a few digits long and may include either letters, numbers or both
 - a. Examples of possible accession numbers: UKH, BT1, 1987
 - i. Occasionally an accession number is unusually long, such as 91-33-1371a. In short, if you find a number attached to a garment, it is probably the accession number
 - b. Places to look for an accession number:
 - i. A tag on the garment
 - ii. Sewn into garment
 - iii. The box the garment was originally in
 - iv. A piece of paper in the box with the garment
 - c. If the number is not physically attached to the garment, make a tag with the number and sew it into the garment
- Once you have located the accession number, you will have to go into the binders and/or card boxes to locate the original accession sheet or card for the garment and use it to determine provenance
 - a. **Provenance:** who has owned this item before and how it came to be in the hands of the museum
 - i. Source is name of previous owner, association is any club or organization that sponsored the donation (this spot will often be left blank)
 - ii. Date acquired should be on the sheet/card
 - iii. Method of acquisition: if NK write “found in collection,” otherwise write “donation”
 - b. If donor unknown, write “unknown” in the source/provenance section
- For storage location list the box code for the box in which this item belongs
 - a. Check the categories chart and see which box within that category could comfortably fit the garment
- Options for condition are excellent, good, fair and poor
 - a. This is not a scientific analysis, so use your best judgement
- Description should generally cover what the garment looks like and any damage
- The last few questions on material and manufacturer information can be answered by checking the original tag on the garment
 - a. If the garment doesn’t have a tag or the tag does not provide the required information, put a post-it note on the accession worksheet with the note “for further research”
- Finally, you are the compiler, so write your name and today’s date!

Types of Fabric Found in Historic Garments (for accession worksheet)

- Cotton/Linen: Soft, thin, little to no pilling/fuzz
 - Wool: Dense, thick, rough, often with fuzz
 - Silk: Smooth, shiny, thin
 - Synthetic: Smooth, stretchy, no fuzz, only found on artifacts made after 1920
 - Leather/Fur
 - Other
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Instructions for Making a Textile Accession Tag

(Adapted from pg 27 of *Care and Display of Historic Clothing*)

1. Take cotton tape and write the number in micron pen
 2. Cut the tape, leaving about .5" after the number blank
 3. Place tag on area indicated by instructions at top of page
 - a. Within this area, attempt to locate a seam where multiple pieces of fabric are brought together: this will be the strongest point
 4. Thread the needle with a single piece of thread and **do not knot the end**. In case the tag ever becomes caught, a knot could rip a hole in the garment
 - a. Leave a slightly longer than usual tail at both ends of the seam and place a few extra stitches at the end to prevent detachment
 5. Securely stitch both ends of the ribbon to the garment's seam
 6. Box as usual
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Attaching Accession Numbers

Upper-Body Garments: Inside collar

Lower-Body Garments: Middle-back inside waistband

Soft shoes/socks: Inside of top seam

Flags/handkerchiefs/similar: Top-right corner on back side of item, if applicable

Hard surfaces (including shoes): On bottom of shoe or inconspicuous area of object

1. Paint w/ small coat of nail polish (approximately .5" x 2")
 - a. If shoe is dark use white polish, if shoe is light use clear polish
 - b. While wet, lay shoe sideways on table
2. Put post it note in front of shoes w/time of application
3. Let dry minimum 3 hours
4. Write accession number in micron pen over nail polish
5. Lay shoe sideways, let dry 30 minutes before boxing

How to Box a Garment

Once all necessary information has been gathered from a garment, it is ready to be boxed. This is one of the most important steps of the process, as it ensures the longevity of the garment, but with a little thought and guidance it is easy to do quickly and well.

Choosing the box

- Refer to the category on the item's accession worksheet and find the group of boxes assigned to that category
- Identify which box could best accommodate the item
 - Heavy items should go in the bottoms of boxes, so if your garment is heavy either start a new box or find a box with only other heavy garments
 - No one box should be very difficult to lift. If a box is already somewhat heavy, do not add garments even if they would fit
 - Assuming the garment is in stable condition and easily folded, choose the smallest box which can comfortably fit the item
 - If a garment has a section which appears it should not be folded (dainty lacework, worn fabric, etc.) you should choose a box large enough to lay that section flat

Boxing the item:

(taken from chapter 2 of *The Care and Display of Historic Clothing*)

- Line the bottom of the box in tissue, leaving enough hanging over the edges to cover the top of the contents once they are packed inside
 - For an average textile box this can easily require four pieces of tissue [feel free to be generous if cutting from a roll]
- If it appears the garment will be folded in any way...create a small stack of tissue "logs"...to create a gentle curve in the fabric rather than a strong crease
 - Simply take a piece of tissue and loosely scrunch it up into a long, puffy tissue log
 - If a garment involves puffed sleeves, stuff the sleeves with tissue to help them retain their shape
- Place the garment in the box in a manner creating the least amount of folds and keeping the most delicate part of the garment at the top
 - For dresses this often means placing the skirt down first and lining the hem up with the edge of the box, carefully folding the garment back and forth with the bodice ending on the very top
- Cover the top of the garment with a final piece of tissue. [If the box is now full, wrap] the extra tissue from the bottom over the top of the garment and place the lid on the box
 - [If the box still has space for more garments, simply place a sheet of tissue paper over the newly boxed item]