



The Family Archivist Guide

For the person in the family who ended up with all the memories.



You're the one with the boxes

Somehow it came to you. The videotapes from the basement, the albums from the closet, the slide trays nobody has looked at since the projector gave out. Maybe a parent handed them over. Maybe you were the one who said, I'll take them.

And then they sat. A year, five years, longer. That's all right. Almost every family I meet tells me the same thing: I should have done this years ago.

You didn't do anything wrong. Life was busy, and a box of memories never makes a fuss. This little guide is here to make the next step feel smaller. Read it at the kitchen table, a page at a time. Nothing in here asks you to rush, and nothing asks you to sort a single thing.

Some of it won't have a label. Some of it will have a label that's wrong. That's fine. You don't need to know what's on any of it. Finding out is my part of the job. Every videotape plays through here, start to finish, and every photograph is digitized by hand.

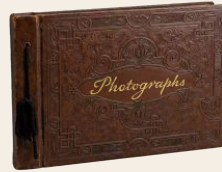
What's in there

Lift the lid and you'll likely find a mix. That's normal. Here's what each thing is.



Tapes

Big VHS videotapes, the small ones from a camcorder, and audio cassettes too.



Photographs

Loose in a shoebox, or in albums.



CDs and DVDs

The ones burned at home, on a computer.



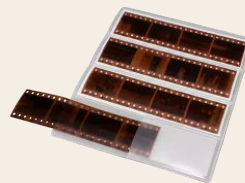
Film reels

Little reels of 8mm and Super 8 home movies, often in a yellow or grey box.



Slides

In trays, carousels or little boxes.



Negatives

The brown strips from the photo shop envelope.



What goes first, and what can wait

If you do one thing, start with the home-made discs, then the videotapes and the film.

Strangely, the discs go first. A CD or DVD burned at home lasts about twenty-five years, and the ones from the early 2000s are there now. I've seen discs that look perfect and still can't be read by any of my machines. Sadly, I've handed some back and said, I've done everything I can.

A videotape fades a little every year, and one from 1985 is over forty now. Home movie film dries out and its colour drifts.

The photographs are more patient. If the whole box feels like too much, start with the discs, the videotapes and the film, and let the albums follow when you're ready.

And if there's an old VCR in the basement, please don't pop a videotape in to see what's on it. A machine that has sat for years can chew up the only copy.



Keep them safe until then

Where the box sits matters more than most people think.

Keep it inside the house, somewhere you'd be comfortable yourself. A closet or a cupboard is good. A garage, an attic, a shed or a damp basement is hard on all of it. It's too hot in summer, too cold in winter and too damp all year.

Lift the box off a concrete floor. Keep it away from windows and heaters. Stand the videotapes on their edge, like books on a shelf.

And please, don't throw anything out yet. Not the videotape with no label, not the album that's falling apart, not the envelope of negatives. The thing that looks least important is sometimes the only picture of a face nobody else has.



What you get back

Here's what it looks like when it's done.

Every original comes home to you, nothing thrown away. With it comes a link. Open it on your phone, your computer or your television, and there they are: the birthday cake, the summer at the lake, your mother laughing at something just off camera.

Send that link to your brother. Send it to the cousin three provinces away. She can open it that same night and keep her own copy. A digital copy costs nothing to make. Everyone in your family can have all of it, and nobody has to decide who keeps the box.

If you'd like a drive as well, it's a line on your estimate, and I load it for you.



Choosing who you trust

Whoever you choose, you're handing over things that exist in one copy. It's fair to ask a few plain questions first.

Where will my originals be while the work is done? Some services send them away by courier, sometimes to another country. Ask for an address you could drive to.

Will I get a written estimate, with a price for each thing, before anything is touched? You should. If the price only shows up after they have your boxes, walk away.

Can I see a few of my own photographs scanned before I say yes? A small test tells you more than any brochure.

Ask me the same questions. I'll be glad to answer them.

When you're ready, I'll come to you.



I'm Dave Phillips. I know what's in that box can't be replaced. I've saved Victoria families' memories by hand since 1991.

My own family's collection is about 1,800 home videos, the earliest from 1957, so I know what it is to hand over something there's only one of. I work from my home workshop at 3420 Metchosin Road (in Colwood), and your originals never leave Victoria.

The pick-up is free, and you don't need to sort or count anything first. I go through it all here and send you a written estimate, with a few test scans from your own collection. Nothing starts until you say yes.



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Book a free
pick-up