

HOW TO LIVE FOREVER: HEIRLOOMS TIPS & RESOURCES

Family Heirlooms and Storytelling

Excerpted from: Passing on Family Heirlooms and Stories to the Next Generation

<https://www.johnson.k-state.edu/home-family/agents-articles/passing-family-heirlooms-and-stories-to-the-next-generation.html>

Sharing stories about special objects helps family members to understand the past and learn to appreciate another side of their family. These stories are part of your family legacy. So how can you share this story in a simple way that can easily be shared, preserved and passed on to others?

Create a note card, video or recording that answers the following questions.

- What is the name of the item?
- When did you acquire it?
- How did you acquire it?
- When and how have you used it?
- Who else has owned it before you?
- Who do you want to give it to when you no longer need it?
- Why do you want this person to receive it?
- What other memories do you have of this item?
- What memories do you have of the people who owned this before you?

If you are lucky to have the time to share these stories in person, that is great. My preference is to have it written down. If you are using note cards to capture all of this information, then find a way to attach that card to the item so it becomes a part of the item. When you attach it be sure you do so in a way that will not harm the item. For example, I would not want to staple or tape this to my baby dress, attaching the card to the hanger or hang tag may be a better option.

Family members are not going to understand or even value the importance of a family heirloom if the story is missing. That is why it is critical to make sure you have a method to tell the story so family members can understand and appreciate the significance of the item.

Common Family Heirlooms

1. Jewelry
2. Timepieces
3. Furniture
4. Recipes
5. Letters, diaries, scrapbooks
6. Bibles and other books
7. Military memorabilia
8. Quilts

9. Collections
10. Family home or land
11. Wedding gowns and other vintage clothing
12. Cedar chests, hope chests, steamer trunks
13. Musical instruments
14. Photos, photo albums, wedding albums, yearbooks
15. Weapons
16. Kitchenware
17. Embroidered linens
18. Art
19. Stories
20. Absolutely anything else

Junk is anything that your family won't value. According to Denise Levenick, the ten least wanted heirlooms are currently

- 1) Brown furniture,
- 2) China,
- 3) Crystal,
- 4) Silver-plate server ware,
- 5) Table Linens,
- 6) Collectible figurines,
- 7) Collectible tea sets,
- 8) Chafing dishes and large serving ware
- 9) Pianos
- 10) Grandfather Clocks.

Your family may not adhere to these current trends—be sure to talk with them about what they consider an heirloom. Lifestyles and homes are changing in this generation

Preservation

Passing on Your Family's Legacy

<https://grogenealogylocalhistory.wordpress.com/2018/12/06/passing-on-your-familys-legacy/>

Preserving History: Excellent series of videos

[Preserving History \(churchofjesuschrist.org\)](http://churchofjesuschrist.org)

Storage Location

Avoid areas such as attics, basements, and out buildings. Temperature fluctuations and moisture will ruin your files, photographs, and artifacts. They will cause curling, discoloration, deterioration, and possibly mold.

Consider keeping your most precious heirlooms in a fireproof safe or box.

Preserving Textiles...

1. Sun and unprotected fluorescent light is the enemy of textiles. Keep them out of both as much as possible.
2. Store textiles where temperature and humidity is relatively constant.
3. If you must wear antique textiles be very careful of spills, and don't use makeup or antiperspirants.
4. Store folded textiles in acid-free boxes with unbuffered tissue or white sheeting between layers.
5. Inspect stored textiles regularly; do not store with pesticides or mothballs.
6. If textiles are hung, use well-padded plastic, not wooden, hangers that are as wide as the garment's shoulders.
7. Sturdy fabrics may be cleaned by vacuuming on low suction with the brush attachment covered with cotton cheesecloth.

Family Recipe Book How To

1. Gather recipes (Use hand written recipes when possible.)
2. Make your book uniquely yours. Include: pictures, quotes, notes, memories (tell the story behind each recipe, and who was know for the recipe.
3. Use clip art and quotes on almost every page.
4. Write a Memorable Introduction (something relevant to your family)
5. Include a small list of hints at the end
6. Produce on your computer, duplicate, bind, and distribute.
(or make a photo book or use a cookbook company)

Articles, Publications & Resources (Just a few)

<https://www.johnson.k-state.edu/home-family/agents-articles/passing-family-heirlooms-and-stories-to-the-next-generation.html>

Passing on Family Heirlooms and Stories to the Next Generation

Great questions to use when describing memorabilia

<https://www.familyeducation.com/family-life/the-ultimate-list-of-family-heirlooms-to-pass-down-to-your-kids-one-day>

The Ultimate List of Family Heirlooms to Pass Down to Your Kids One Day

25 categories of items

<https://www.legacy.com/advice/21-most-common-family-heirlooms/>

21-most-common-family-heirlooms

National Archives has a wonderful website with LOTS of information including preservation. www.archives.gov

[Timely Tips for Preserving Your Family Heirlooms \(familysearch.org\)](http://familysearch.org)

Daddy's Ties, a book by Shirley Botswold with lots of ideas to help create new treasures from old ties.

[Ask Your Preservation Question | Association for Library Collections & Technical Services \(ALCTS\) \(ala.org\)](#)

Answers to specific questions about preservation

<https://lifestyle.howstuffworks.com/family/heirlooms>

A very informative group of 18 articles on family heirlooms from How Stuff Works.

<https://deviislakendlibrary.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Heirloom-Documentation-or-Junk-What-to-Keep-or-Toss.pdf>

Heirloom, Documentation or Junk: What to Keep or Toss
Excellent article including information on Digital Wills

[10 Ideas for Repurposing Family Heirlooms - Family Heirloom Display Ideas \(countryliving.com\)](#)

Good pictures of repurposed heirlooms

These articles and resources may be helpful when deciding what to do with what you don't want:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/home/5-clever-things-to-do-with-granny-s-old-china/2019/10/01/bfd8975e-dbeb-11e9-a688-303693fb4b0b_story.html

Five Fresh Ideas for the China Nobody Wants

<https://thetakeout.com/what-should-young-people-do-with-grandmas-china-1820834429>

What should young people do with grandma's china?

Turn buttons and vintage jewelry into today's fashion, contact artist: Tommy Conch (info@tommyconch.com, 888-411-0490)

Possible places to sell or purchase china, silver, and crystal (from Sherry Lynn Rubin):
Replacements, Ltd.:

<https://www.replacements.com/sell-to-us>

Silver Queen Jewelry:

<https://www.silverqueen.com/store/Silver-Queen-Home-Page>

Articles on what to do with silverware: (There are lots more on the internet)

<https://sammydvintage.com/vintage-style/repurpose-vintage-silverware/>

7 Ways to Repurpose Vintage Silverware

<https://www.themamasgirls.com/how-to-make-silverware-jewelry/>

How to Make Silverware Jewelry

For more information and to ask questions and share your progress contact:
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