

Protecting Precious Memories

 YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST



Protecting Precious Memories

The Protecting Precious Memories Project aims to help you add to your household emergency plan so that precious objects that hold so many memories are protected. By following the advice in this tool kit, you will make a plan to keep irreplaceable memories protected at a time of crisis, such as a flood. You will also be able to react quickly if those objects are damaged and know how best to salvage them.

This digital toolkit has been created by The York Archaeological Trust to help you prepare for possible future flooding events and reduce the risk of losing your precious objects. The tool kit uses the knowledge we use in our Museums and Conservation Lab to care for precious objects from the past and ensure they survive into the future.

The production of this toolkit has been made possible by funding from Two Ridings Community Foundation as part of its long-term recovery project after the Boxing Day floods 2015 in York and North Yorkshire.

Please note: this document is intended for advisory purposes only. If in doubt about any of the processes or procedures described, you should seek professional help. York Archaeological Trust can accept no liability for exposure to floodwater or dangerous substances, or for damage caused to property in the processes of salvaging, packing or cleaning.

The toolkit is divided into two sections:

Getting Ready

- Making a plan for your precious objects now

After A Flood

- Salvaging objects after they have been damaged

Getting Ready

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STEP 1

Selecting Your Precious Objects

Imagine you had to tell the story of your life to a stranger.

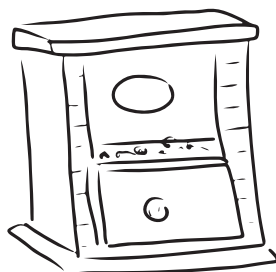
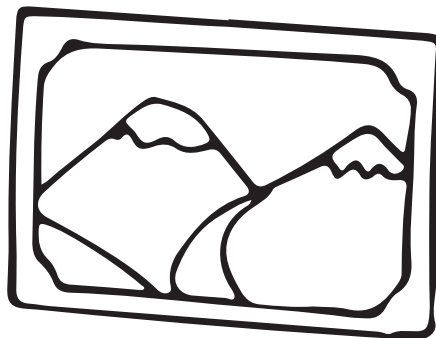
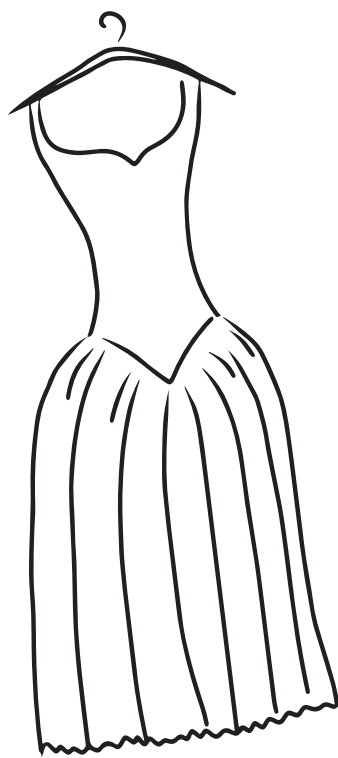
What would be the highlights?

- Family?
- School or University?
- Wedding?
- Birth of Children?

Which objects in your house would you choose to illustrate that story?

It could be:

Photos, letters, books, certificates, jewellery, a wedding dress, quilts, baby clothes, children's toys and artwork.



Answer the following questions:

Which five objects in your house would you save first?

Where are they right now?

How are they currently stored?

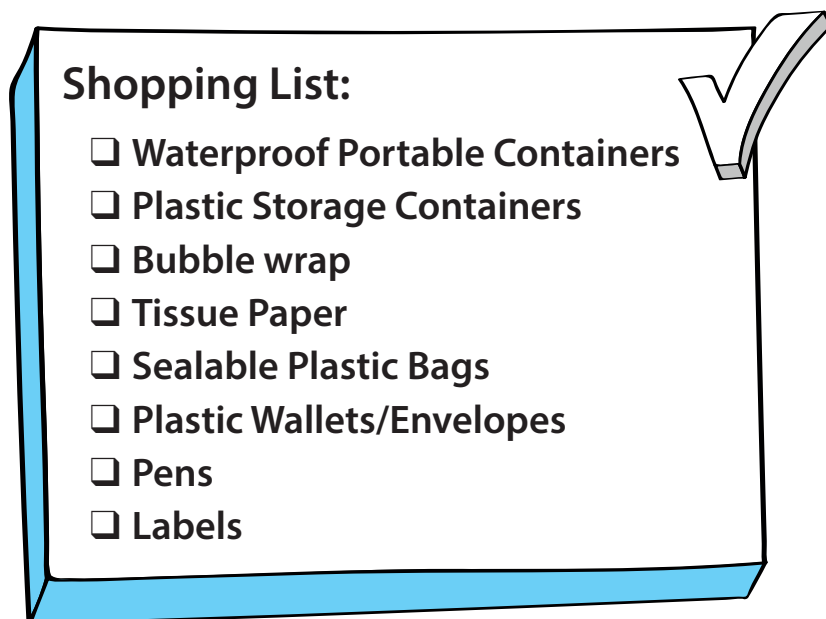
STEP 2

Protecting Memories Kit

Create and maintain a Packing Kit and a Salvage Kit to protect your memories.

Packing Kit

Make sure you have the items you will need to pack your precious objects securely.



Salvage Kit

Be prepared so you can react quickly if your precious objects are damaged.



STEP 3

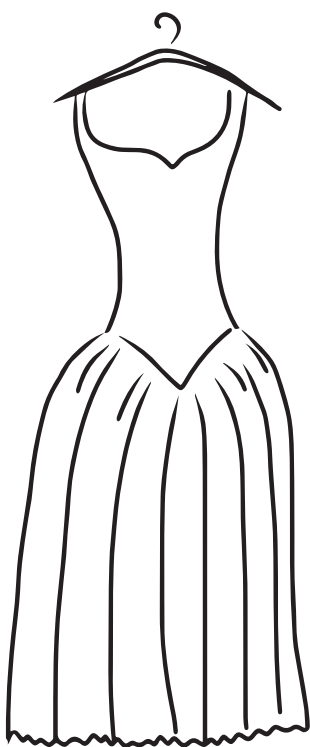
Packing Your Precious Objects

The following information provides guidance on how to package your objects for both temporary and long-term storage. Four examples are given for specific objects; however, the materials and techniques used can be adapted for a wide variety of objects.

Example 1:

Wedding Dress

Material Type – Textiles and Soft Furnishings

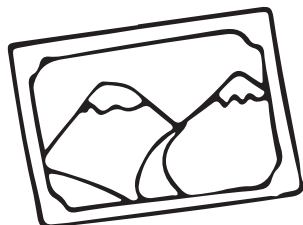


1. Carefully fold the dress without creasing it. Fold the dress neatly but not too tightly.
2. Place sections of tissue paper between the folds of the dress in particular around any delicate or decorative areas. For long-term storage acid-free tissue is best for the preservation of your dress.
3. Wrap the entirety of the dress in tissue paper or soft material (unbleached cotton). This can be a single sheet of material which is wrapped around the dress or alternatively a material bag can be made or purchased which the folded dress can be placed into. The bag must however cover the entirety of the dress and preferably fasten so no sections of the dress are exposed.
4. The dress can then be placed in a waterproof box for storage. Choose a good-sized box which will fit the packaged dress securely but will not crush or damage the dress.
5. Securely place the lid on the box and label the exterior detailing the contents.
6. Place the box in a secure place, preferably on a high shelf or in a cupboard. You do not want to expose the dress to high light levels during storage.

Example 2:

Framed Artwork (paintings, photographs etc)

Material Type – Paper, Paintings and Photographs, Wood, Plastics and Rubber and Ceramics and Glass



1. Remove your framed artwork from the wall/shelf and place flat with the artwork side up. In a time of crisis it is unlikely you will have time to remove the artwork from the frame so the object will have to be packaged as a whole.
2. Place strips of masking tape across the glass sections of the frame. If the glass cracks or is damaged during storage this will help to keep the object together and limit further damage.
3. Place a piece of bubble wrap, cardboard or fabric over the front of the frame. This should be correctly cut to size so it covers the entirety of the artwork and frame, but it should not be bigger and overhang.
4. Wrap the artwork and frame in bubble wrap or tissue paper ensuring the entirety of the frame is securely covered. Tape can be used to secure the wrapping in place.
5. The wrapped artwork can then be placed in a waterproof box. The box must be slightly bigger than the artwork so it can comfortably fit the artwork and its packaging. Place the artwork vertically in the box so there is nothing resting on the artwork or glass. More than one piece of artwork can be placed in the same box. Position sections of bubble wrap or tissue paper between each individual artwork. Finally place a section of bubble wrap over the top of the box.
6. Securely place the lid on the box and label the exterior detailing the contents.
7. Place the box in a secure place, preferably on a high shelf or in a cupboard. You do not want to expose the artwork to high light levels during storage.

Example 3:

Small Fragile Objects (ornaments, vase, tea sets etc)

Material Type – Glass and Ceramics, Wood and Metal.

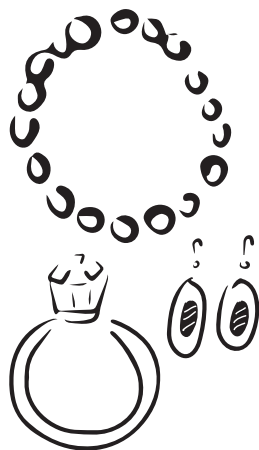


1. Select the appropriately sized waterproof box for packaging and storage. More than one object can be packaged in the box; however, do not put too many individual pieces in one box as it could damage your objects and make the box too heavy for transportation.
2. Individually wrap objects in bubble wrap or tissue paper ensuring the entire object is adequately covered and protected. More than one layer of wrapping may be required. Tape can be used to secure the wrapping.
3. If wrapping more than one piece together (e.g. teapot and lid) ensure that the two pieces are separated by packaging and do not come into contact with each other. Alternatively, wrap both pieces separately and securely tape the smaller wrapped section to the larger wrapped section.
4. Place sections of bubble wrap, tissue paper balls and foam peanuts in the bottom of the box.
5. Carefully begin to place your objects in the box adding padding and bubble wrap between each object so that the wrapped objects are not touching. Do not overload the box.
6. Once the box is adequately filled fill any gaps with sections of bubble wrap or foam peanuts ensuring the objects will not move or rub against each other. Finally place a section of bubble wrap over the top of the box.
7. Securely place the lid on the box and label the exterior detailing the contents.
8. Place the box in a secure place, preferably on a high shelf or in a cupboard.

Example 4:

Jewellery

Material Type – Metal and Plastic and Rubber



1. Select an appropriately sized waterproof box, a storage box with separate individual compartments would be ideal. The box needs to be strong on the outside however soft and padded on the inside. Extra padding can be added throughout the packaging process.
2. It is important to package each piece of jewellery individually so they do not get tangled and damaged. If packaging jewellery for long-term storage, take some time to prepare your jewellery. Ensure nothing is tangled or knotted and earrings are paired together. Earrings can be stored together on cardboard or fabric backing and chains can be threaded through tubes (e.g. straws, rolled up paper) to stop them from tangling and becoming damaged. Some jewellery (e.g. watches and bracelets) come with internal padded support for storage. Use this and wrap extra padding around the exterior.
3. Individually wrap items in acid-free tissue paper ensure the item is entirely covered and securing with tape if necessary. Small sections of bubble wrap may be required for the more fragile items. Alternatively, individual material (unbleached cotton) drawstring bags can be made or purchased. Some further wrapping and protection may be required for the more fragile items.
4. Carefully place the individually wrapped items in your storage box adding padding and support as necessary. If you do not have a box with separate individual compartments place sections of bubble wrap, tissue paper balls and foam peanuts in the bottom of the box before placing your objects in the box. Add padding and bubble wrap between each object so that the wrapped objects are not touching.
5. Once the box is adequately filled fill any gaps with sections of bubble wrap or foam peanuts ensuring the objects will not move or rub against each other. Finally place a section of bubble wrap over the top of the box.
6. Securely place the lid on the box and label the exterior detailing the contents.
7. Place the box in a secure place, preferably on a high shelf or in a cupboard.

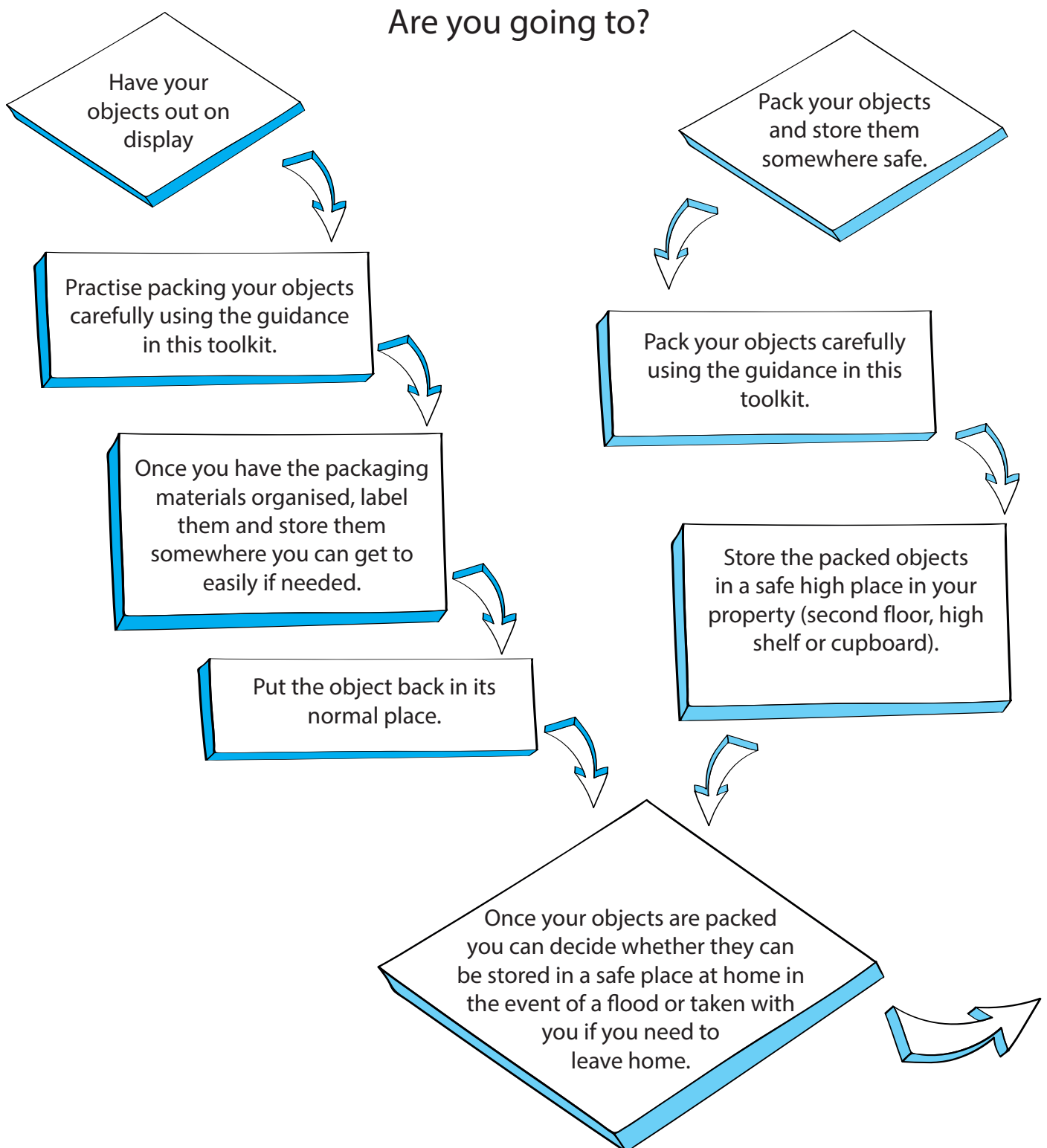
TOP TIPS:

- Think carefully about each of your Precious Objects, whether you use and display them on a daily basis or if they can be safely and securely packaged to go into long-term storage. Making decisions like this now will help you be more prepared in the event of a flood.
- The choice of packaging used should depend on the type of storage, long-term or short-term. For long-term storage acid-free tissue and boxes are best for the preservation of your objects.
- Be prepared and practise. Think about what objects you would need to package in the event of a flood. Practise this packaging ensuring you have the correct type and size of material already prepared and available should the event arise.

STEP 4

Make a Plan

This step is about thinking ahead and making some decisions about how you are going to protect your precious objects and the memories they contain. By doing this now you will be prepared if a flood does happen. Use the flow chart below to help you.





Fill out a Precious Objects Grab Sheet with the details of the plan you have made. Add this to your household emergency plan to be referred to if you are warned that a flood is likely to occur.



If the objects are staying at home in the event of a flood and there is time to do so, follow the instructions on the Grab Sheet to pack them safely.



If you can do so safely, move the box to a safe high place in your property (second floor, high shelf or cupboard) for retrieval after the flood.

Two grab sheet templates are included in the back of this tool kit for you to print off and complete. One is for your children's precious objects so they are not left behind.

STEP 5

Practise

Once you have a plan, practise it! How long does it take you to find the objects and pack them? Will you have time to move them if you are warned of a flood?

It is a good idea to review your plan once a year. Have you acquired any new precious objects that need to be added to the list?

After A Flood

No matter how much you plan, some objects are still likely to be damaged in the event of a flood. There are some simple steps you can take to salvage those objects at home.

Cleaning and Salvaging objects:

Depending on the type of object and the extent of the damage, you may be able to start the initial cleaning and salvaging process yourself. It is worth considering at this point whether this is something that you want to do, or if you would prefer to pay for professional help.

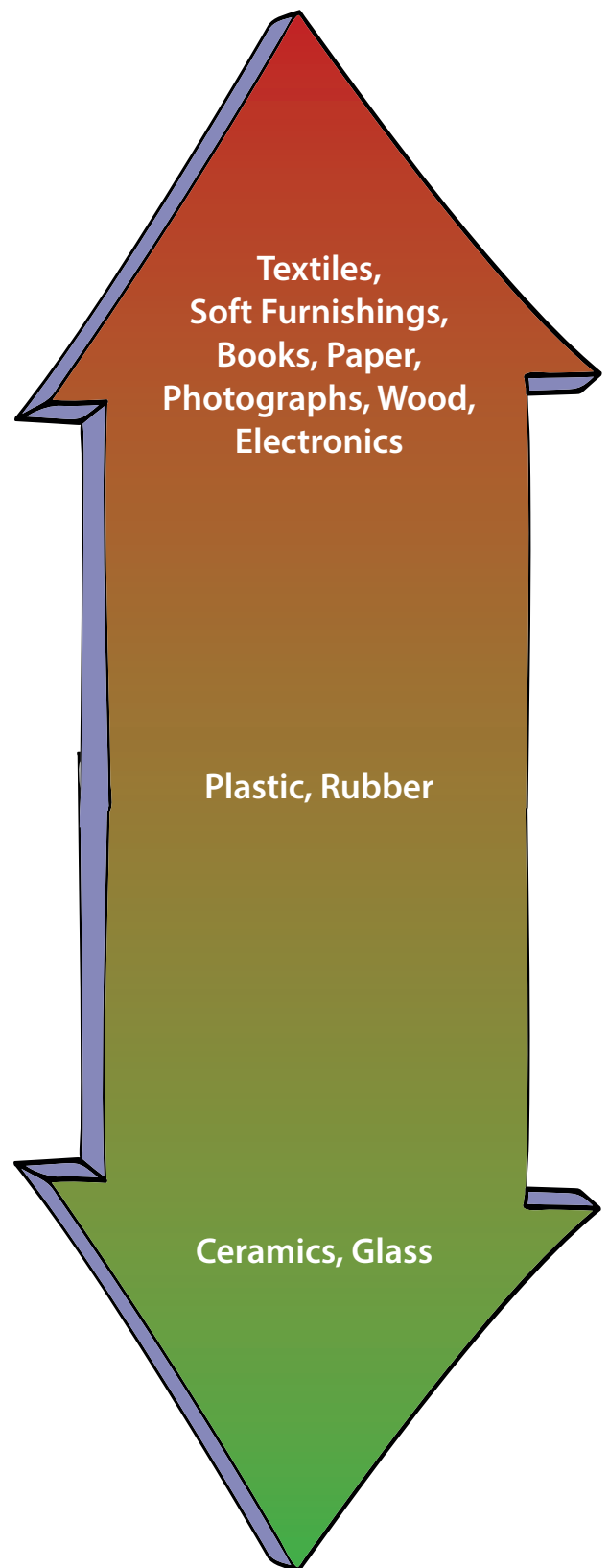
BEWARE! Flood water is not clean water and may be hazardous. Wear the appropriate protective clothing and wash your hands thoroughly if you come into direct contact with the water.

This scale shows the level of urgency of action that your objects will require if damaged by flood water. The objects are split into material type. What the object is made of will affect how damaged it is likely to be by water.

Those objects in red need to be dealt with first, those in green can wait a while.

Start by sorting the objects into material type then use the scale to decide which need to be dealt with first.

The actions you should take for each material type can be found in the tables below.



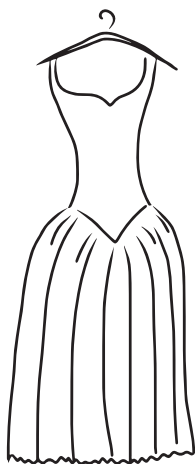
KEY

Short-term exposure to water:

- Urgent action/intervention required**
- Moderate action required
- Lowest priority, will suffer little damage

TEXTILES AND SOFT FURNISHINGS

Urgent action and intervention required.



Cleaning:

Rinse with clean water and soft cloth or sponge.

Drying:

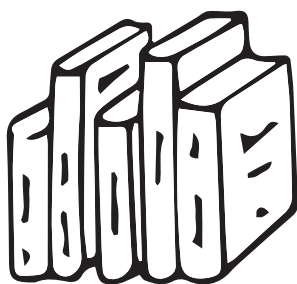
Absorb any excess water using clean towels and soft cloths. Dry shaped objects with padding for support, change the padding when wet. Objects can be air dried indoors with the air circulating.

Further Work:

Monitor for mould growth.

BOOKS

Urgent action and intervention required.



Cleaning:

Rinse with clean running water. Do not touch or rub the surfaces.

Drying:

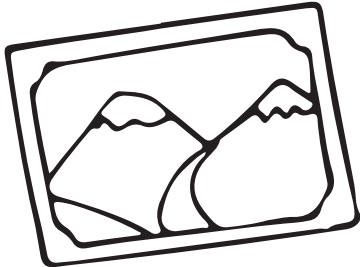
Damp books can be air dried indoors. Stand upright on absorbent material with covers open and paper towels between each 10-15 pages. Change the paper towels frequently once wet turning the book over each time. The book and pages can be flattened once dry.

Further Work:

Very fragile when wet, handle with care. More seriously water damaged books should be frozen until they can be sent to a conservator. Freezing will help to prevent mould and provide more time. Monitor for mould growth.

PAPER, PAINTINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Urgent action and intervention required.



Cleaning:

Remove from frame or album. Rinse with clean running water. Do not touch or rub surfaces.

Drying:

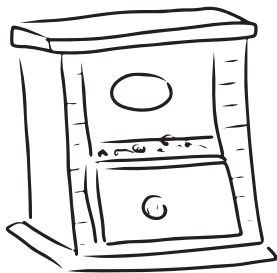
Air dry indoors away from direct sunlight. Lay on absorbent material with the image side facing up. Objects can be flattened once dry. Keep each object separate.

Further Work:

Very fragile when wet, handle with care. Monitor for mould growth.

WOOD

Urgent action and intervention required.



Cleaning:

Remove any contents from wet objects prior to drying. Rinse with clean water. A soft cloth or sponge can gently be used to remove any dirt or debris.

Drying:

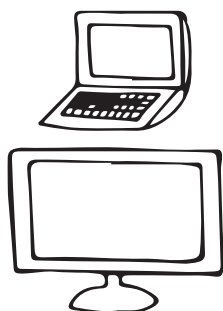
Absorb excess water using clean towels and soft cloths. Air dry indoors away from direct sunlight with the air circulating. If the object is an item of furniture open all the doors and drawers.

Further Work:

Remove any contexts from the wet object prior to drying. Monitor for mould growth.

ELECTRONICS

Urgent action and intervention required.



Cleaning:

Remove any dirt and debris gently with a soft cloth.

Drying:

Remove any loose components and packaging/storage. Absorb any excess water using clean towels and soft cloths. Place in a sealed bag with dried rice.

Further Work:

A specialist will need to be consulted with regards to saving data from discs.

PLASTICS AND RUBBER

Moderate action and intervention required.



Cleaning:

Rinse with clean water. A soft cloth or sponge can gently be used to remove any dirt or debris.

Drying:

Absorb any excess water using clean towels and soft cloths. Air dry objects indoors with the air circulating. Rest objects on absorbent material spacing them out to allow for air flow. Change absorbent material regularly when damp.

Further Work:

Remove any contexts from the wet object prior to drying. If the object has broken keep all the pieces together in labelled containers. Only attempt to repair the object once completely dry.

CERAMICS AND GLASS

Lowest priority, will suffer little damage.



Cleaning:

Rinse with clean water. A soft cloth or sponge can gently be used to remove any dirt or debris.

Drying:

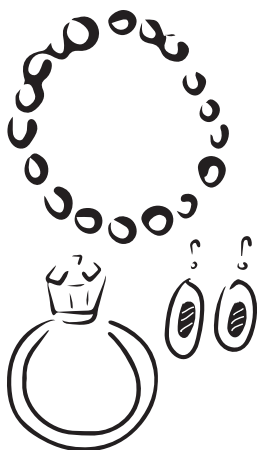
Absorb any excess water using clean towels and soft cloths. Air dry objects indoors with the air circulating. Rest objects on absorbent material spacing them out to allow for air flow. Change absorbent material regularly when damp.

Further Work:

If the object has broken keep all the pieces together in labelled containers. Only attempt to repair the object once completely dry.

METAL

Lowest priority, will suffer little damage.



Cleaning:

Remove any contents from wet objects prior to drying. Rinse with clean water and a soft cloth or sponge.

Drying:

Absorb any excess water using clean towels and soft cloths. Air dry objects indoors with the air circulating. Rest objects on absorbent material spacing them out to allow for air flow. Change absorbent material regularly when damp. Further dirt can be removed once dry.






Further Work:

If the object has broken keep all the pieces together in labelled containers. Only attempt to repair the object once completely dry. Metal objects can be dried with gentle heat (hairdryer).

TOP TIPS:

- Before starting any salvage work create a clear, safe and clean workspace.
- Remove contents from wet object prior to drying.
- If temporarily storing damp objects in plastic bags keep them open to prevent mould growth.
- Keep broken objects together. Only attempt to repair them once completely dry.
- Keep the air circulating to prevent mould growth.
- When drying, change any absorbent material regularly to speed up the drying process and prevent mould growth.
- If mould growth does occur commercial products can be purchased and used to kill the mould. Please follow the instructions on the packaging of these products. Dry mould can be gently brushed from the surface of the object and collected by a vacuum cleaner nozzle. Please ensure you wear the correct protective clothing when dealing with mould, including gloves and a dust mask.

Precious Object Grab Sheet

Precious Object	Location	Packed ✓	Requires Packing ✓	Where are packing materials stored	Objects to be moved to which safe place in the house	Object to come with me if I need to leave home
						
						
						
						
						

Precious Object Grab Sheet

_____ 's House



JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC