



Conserve O Gram

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Flag Rolling and Storage

Flags can be small or as large as the Star Spangled Banner. Rolling a flag on an archival tube stores it compactly. It also avoids the damaging creases often seen on folded flags. This technique can be used for all one-sided flags in fair to good condition. Do not use this method for silk flags in poor condition. For guidance with other flags consult a textile conservator.

Materials Needed

- **Archival unbuffered storage tubes.** A three inch diameter accommodates most flags. If the flag is extremely long, use a larger diameter tube of 4 - 6 inches.
- **Acid-free, unbuffered, tissue paper,** individual sheets or tissue available on a roll.
- **Cotton twill tape,** one inch wide undyed.
- **Cotton fabric (muslin),** pre-washed undyed.
- **Tyvek®** or polyethylene plastic.

Rolling Technique

Place the flag face up on a flat surface. If table space cannot accommodate the entire flag, pleat the flag starting at the hoist end and proceed toward the fly edge leaving several feet of the fly end flat.



Figure 1. Flag terminology.

The tube should be six inches longer than the widest vertical edge of the flag. Form a header of acid-free tissue on the tube by wrapping one edge of acid-free tissue paper around the tube $1\frac{1}{2}$ times. Center the tissue on the tube. The tissue is slightly wider than the flag, and must not extend past the ends of the tube.

Center the **fly end** of the flag on the tissue paper extending from the wrapped tube. Keep the flag parallel with the tube. Place an interleaving layer of unbuffered tissue over the flag during the rolling process. Smooth out creases or folds that may occur in the flag, as you roll.

As you reach the **hoist end**, place a final length of tissue on the flag surface and wrap the excess tissue paper one and half times around the entire the flag that is already rolled on the tube.



Figure 2. Tissue header on tube.

If the flag is stored on open shelving, cover the entire tube with an outer protective layer of soft wrap Tyvek®, prewashed cotton muslin, or polyethylene plastic. Tyvek® provides the best protective moisture barrier. Tie the rolled flag with 1 inch wide, undyed, cotton twill tape, using a bow or square knot. Place the ties 2 - 3 inches in from the ends of the tube, and evenly spaced across the length of the tube every 18 - 24 inches.

Storing the Flags

Store flags on shelves, in drawers, or a wall rack. Smaller flags, rolled on tubes, can be stored in large archival boxes and placed on storage shelving or in cabinets.

If flags are stored on open shelving or in a storage cabinet, use an ethafoam block or cradle to raise each end of the flag slightly above the shelf. This prevents the bottom of the rolled flag from being crushed by its own weight and that of the tube. The ethafoam block is about 2" thick, 3 - 4" high and 5 - 6" long. Trace the exterior curvature of the tube onto the ethafoam and cut along the line.



Figure 3. Ethafoam support for flag on shelving.

If wall space is available, make a stainless steel wall rack system to store the tubes. Metal poles or angle iron slip through the center of the storage tube and attach to brackets or hanging hooks on either end of the rack.



Figure 4. Flag storage on wall rack.



Figure 5. Wall storage with photo identification.

Labeling the Rolled Flags

Attach an identification tag to the outside of the flag as it is prepared for storage. The tag should contain the catalog number and object name where it is easily visible. Or write directly on the final edge of the Tyvek® using a permanent archival marker, before it is wrapped around the tube. Place an image of the flag in a Mylar sleeve and tie it around the tube with undyed cotton twill tape to facilitate easy identification.

Sources

Archivart
40 Eisenhower Dr.
Paramus, NJ 07652
800-804-4824
www.archivart.com

*Storage tubes, unbuffered, acid free, tissue, Tyvek®,
Unbuffered, corrugated blue board*
Gaylord Archival
PO Box 4901
Syracuse, NY 13221
800-448-6160
www.gaylord.com

*Unbuffered storage trays, Unbuffered, corrugated
blue board, unbuffered, acid free, tissue, Tyvek®*
Testfabrics, Inc.
415 Delaware Ave.
PO Box 26
West Pittison, PA 18643
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Cotton muslin, 1" twill tape
University Products
517 Main St.
PO Box 101
Holyoke, MA 01041-0101
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