



# Conserve O Gram

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## Attachments for Multi-Page Historic Documents

*Conserve O Gram* 19/5 describes methods for removing original fasteners from archival documents. It is important, however, to maintain the order and relationship of the documents once the fasteners have been removed. Unattached documents in files can become disordered by researchers. In small collections of valuable documents, such as manuscript collections, each single-sheet or multi-page document can be stored without fasteners in its own acid-free folder. When this is not feasible, archivists and archival conservators have devised several methods for maintaining the arrangement of previously attached groups of sheets. Different methods will be found appropriate in different situations.

The following options are listed and discussed in the order of preference. The first two are preferred. The last three are not recommended.

### ***Legal-sized Paper Folder or Interleaving Paper***

***Procedure:*** Fold a legal size sheet of archival bond paper (e.g., Xerox® XXV) widthwise around the related sheets to form an internal folder. Or, place a letter size sheet of archival bond before and after each multi-page document. Any information to be retained about the relationship of the documents may be written in pencil on this sheet.

***Advantages:*** The gentlest way to group related sheets; no danger of breaking or bending documents in handling.

***Disadvantages:*** Adds considerable bulk to large files; can increase risk of losing original relationships in heavily used files.

***Recommended*** when increased folder size can be accommodated. Particularly good for fragile or brittle documents and with paginated sheets in which order can readily be maintained.

### ***Stainless-steel Paper Clips***

***Procedure:*** Cut a strip of archival bond paper about 1½" x 4½". Fold crosswise over the top of the pages and attach the clip. The paper strip helps to distribute pressure and provides a barrier between the historic document and metal clip.

***Advantages:*** Rust free, reliable hold; easy to remove for photocopying.

***Disadvantages:*** Can crease sheets or crack brittle papers; in large files, numerous attachments can form a large lump, distorting the shape of the file.

***Acceptable*** only for strong papers in files containing few multi-page items; particularly useful in heavily used files in which sheets could be disordered. The placement of clips can be varied within the folders to minimize bulk.

***Never use on photographs.***

### ***Plastic Paper Clips***

***Advantages:*** Will not rust; some plastic clips are chemically inert (e.g., polypropylene), and so are chemically safe for paper materials.

***Disadvantages:*** Tend to pop off or break in handling; are less flexible than metallic clips and tend to bend pages if firmly attached; some clips are chemically reactive (e.g., polyvinyl-chloride) and therefore harmful to paper

materials. *Not recommended.*

### **Brass Staples**

Sometimes proposed for recent archival materials.

*Advantages:* Rust free; reliable hold.

*Disadvantages:* Can cut or crack brittle paper; creates holes, causing irreversible damage; must be removed to allow for safe photocopying.

*Not recommended.*

### **"Archival" Tape**

Some manufacturers advertise their tapes as being of *archival* quality. Such tapes have been used to repair historic records or to join small enclosures such as notes or clippings to larger documents.

*Advantages:* Very quick to apply; requires minimum of expertise.

*Disadvantages:* Any tape permanently modifies the document or artifact to which it is applied. Even the best quality tapes are not safe for all papers. It is difficult for non-specialists to monitor and evaluate the safety of ingredients in such proprietary products. *Not recommended.*

### **Reference**

Ritzenthaler, Mary Lynn. *Archives and Manuscripts: Conservation*, Basic Manual Series. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1983.

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