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This sheet will  
explain:

- How to care for your oral history recordings.
  - How to store and preserve tapes.
  - How to keep records about your recordings.
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# How to look after your material

Once you have your collection of oral history recordings what is the best way to keep them safe, maintain the playback quality and ensure easy access to the material they contain?

Here are some tips on how to store and handle recordings, to maximise their life, and some suggestions on keeping an account of the material you have, so you can find what you are looking for more easily and know what your collection holds.

## Useful tips for caring for your oral history recordings



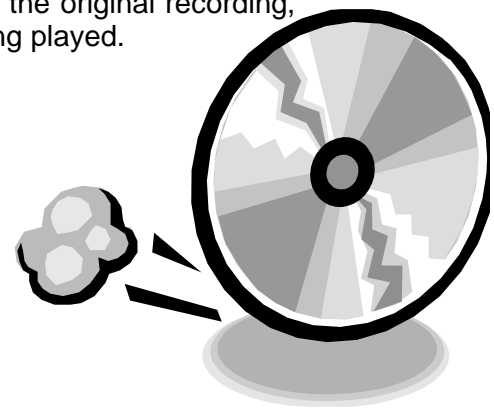
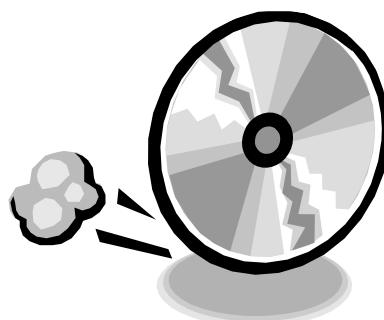
After you have recorded your oral history interview onto your chosen medium, there are a number of things you can do to ensure the preservation and care of the recording and enhance its lifespan.

Remember to push out the “lugs” (small squares found at the top corners of cassette tapes) after recordings have been made. This safeguards the interview material on the cassette by preventing the tape from being recorded over.

When handling tapes and discs, always make sure your hands are clean and free from oil, grease and sweat. Keep the area you are working in free from dust.

Keep recordings in their protective cases until the last minute they are required. Do not touch the playing surfaces of a disc or tape. Handle by the reel flange or centre hub on reels, outer casing on cassettes and outer edge and hole of compact discs.

If possible, make a copy of the master recording. This can be done on the same medium, e.g. cassette to cassette, mini disk to mini disk, or if you have the facilities, on to CD. This preserves the original recording, while the copy takes the wear and tear of being played.



## Storing cassette and reel to reel tapes

- Place cassette and reel to reel tapes in their boxes or plastic containers in an upright position when ever possible.
- Store away from direct sunlight and unguarded fluorescent light.
- Try to keep in a cool, dry and dust free place.
- Avoid moisture and damp.

### Hints for tapes

Reel to reel tapes which have not been played for a while benefit from being wound and rewound every two year or so.

Cassette tapes that have been played are better not being rewound until the next time they are used.

Playback equipment should be cleaned and adjusted regularly. Use a wet cleaning tape/ cassette rather than a dry one when cleaning playing heads.

These are basic hints to help care for and preserve your collection of oral history recordings. If you would like more information on the preservation of audio material here are two websites that offer more in depth information on the upkeep of all audio media and the new developments in preservation.

<http://www.screenound.gov.au/Expertise.nsf/Sub+Pages/Advice+Audio+Care/>

<http://lcweb.loc.gov/preserv/care/record.html>

Tapes are affected by electric fields and magnets. Avoid placing tapes near magnets to stop material being lost. Magnets, which can be found in the home, are found in headphones and loud speakers, as well as more obvious objects, like fridge magnets. CD's are not affected by electric or magnetic fields.

### Useful tips for keeping records of your material

Although you may only start with a few recordings of interviews, it is useful to keep a few simple records. Notes on who you have been interviewing and what they have been talking about helps tapes to be easily identified. Important documentation such as the interviewee's permission (see information sheet #5) also needs to be kept and linked to the correct recording. Identification markings on the recorded media and their housing is essential for you to know what is on a cassette, mini disk or CD. There are many different ways to keep these records, none of which are right or wrong, so it is important to create a system that is right for you and suits your needs. Here are a few suggestions that may be useful to incorporate in your system. Use a label to mark tapes and discs, preferably, using a permanent ink pen, not biro. CDs can also be marked with a special type of pen.

It may be useful to give each recording or interview a number to identify it. By numbering items you do not have to keep writing the same information.

Keep a numbered record in a book, of all the details of each recording that you think may be useful: name, address and other details of the interviewee, subject areas or topics discussed, date and place of the interview, length of the recording and what equipment you recorded the interview on. These may all be useful to see at a glance.

Use the same number to link the recording itself to any other information such as copyright permission, photographs or other ephemera connected to the interview.

Make sure you keep documentation giving the interviewee's permission to use the material or transferring the copyright. It may not be possible to obtain it again at a future date when you might need it, or they may have made some restriction that you cannot remember.