

Help Us Protect the Records



Orientation for Researchers
at the National Archives and
Records Administration (NARA)



You must complete this orientation in order to perform research at any National Archives facility.

After you view this orientation on site, you will:

1. Sign the Researcher Application, agreeing to follow all of our Research Room Rules and Procedures.
2. Receive your Research Card.

Please Note:

The National Archives has made this available online for your convenience.

- You will be required to review this presentation in person and sign the Researcher Application prior to receiving your Research Card.

Welcome to the National Archives

After reviewing this orientation, you will . . .

- Better understand your role in the safeguarding and preservation of our records.
- Know our reference rules, procedures, and practices.



Research Complex at the National Archives at College Park, MD



Jimmy Carter Presidential Library
Atlanta, GA

Researcher Responsibilities

Researchers share an obligation to protect the records that are made available to the public.

Your obligation includes:

- **protecting** the records from damage or mishandling as well as from accidental or intentional removal and
- **immediately reporting** any violation of policy or suspicious behavior to a staff member or security representative

Federal Law and Penalties

Federal law, under Title 18 U.S.C., provides **penalties of up to 10 years in Federal prison** for:

- removal or attempted removal of records
- embezzlement
- knowingly receiving stolen records
- willfully damaging NARA assets

The National Archives is duty bound to protect the records of the United States.

- **Violators will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.**

Please be advised

You are **required to follow all NARA policies and any direction given by staff** when you conduct research at the National Archives.

While performing research, you are subject to:

- CCTV monitoring in all public areas
- Exit searches of personal property
- Quality control auditing of documents to ensure all documents or media are present and in their proper order

Additionally – any items brought into the Research Room are subject to inspection. Prohibited items must be removed or will be confiscated.

If you do not follow the Research Room rules, are disruptive to other researchers, or are abusive to the staff, *your research privileges can be temporarily or permanently revoked.*

Research Room Rules

- All researchers must present a valid government issued, English-language photo ID.
- No one under the age of 14 will be permitted in the Research Room.
- No food or drink of any kind (this includes candy, gum, mints, etc.) is permitted in the Research Room.
- Secure outer garments and other personal items in the lockers provided outside the Research Room.
- Set cell phones to silent. Step to the lobby to receive or make calls.
- For complete Research Room rules, see [36 CFR Part 1254](#)



National Personnel Records Center
National Archives at St Louis, MO

Prohibited items

Items not permitted in the Research Rooms:

- Food or drink
- Coats, overcoats, jackets, or other types of outerwear*
- Hats, caps, or scarves (religious head coverings are permitted)
- Large purses, fanny packs, briefcases, suitcases, handbags, backpacks, bags, equipment bags, computer cases, etc.
- Envelopes, notebooks, pads, binders, folders**
- Pens, markers, or “Post-it” notes**
- Auto-fed scanners
- Flash photography or artificial light source
- Personal copiers – self-service copiers are available (for a fee)
- Multiple CDs or DVDs

* NARA staff will determine if sweaters or other garments are considered outerwear. We rely on the judgment of our staff to determine if any garment could damage or conceal records.

** NARA provides pencils, notepaper, and other supplies in the Research Rooms.

Permitted items

Items that are permitted in the Research Room:

- Computers, cameras, laptops, tablet computers
- Religious head coverings
- Small kerchiefs or handkerchiefs
- Coin purses or pocket-size wallet
- Cell phones or smart phones
- Sweaters and sweatshirts with or without hoods (only indoor wear)
- Clear plastic bag no larger than 10"x10" for holding items

More information about what is and is not permitted is available at

<http://www.archives.gov/research/start/whats-allowed.html>

Before you enter the Research Room:



Research Room
National Archives at Washington, DC

- Have a valid Research Card.
- Store your personal property in a locker.
- Have any papers you need for your research inspected and approved by Research Room staff.

Lockers are provided for temporary use and must be emptied by the end of the day. Any property stored in the lockers is subject to random inspection.

Using the records

- The records you are using are irreplaceable original documents.
- All researchers are subject to electronic surveillance while on the premises.
- **While you are using the records, YOU are responsible for their safety and security.**

Remember, **you** help us protect the records:

- Please report any activities that may endanger NARA's holdings.



National Archives at Kansas City, MO

Using the records

Each Research Room has a slightly different procedures for requesting records. Please check with the Research Room staff before filling out the request form.

- Staff will intervene if they see you are not following NARA procedures or document handling guidelines (This is normal and part of our job).
- Whenever archival records are handled, they are at risk. It is important that you handle materials carefully to prevent damage.
- Place only ONE box at a time on your workspace. All other boxes must remain on the cart.
- Don't stack boxes along your work area that would prevent viewing of desk top by research and security staff.
- When removing a folder from a box, insert a place card so that you can easily return it to its original spot. (Place cards are provided when you receive the records.)
- **NEVER PLACE A BOX ON THE FLOOR.**



Ronald Reagan Presidential Library
Simi Valley, CA

Keep the records as they are

Use ONE box at a time and ONE folder at a time!

You must follow this rule to make sure that records are kept in order.

- Disarranged records lose their usefulness for future researchers.
- If you believe the records are out of order, you must let the Research Room staff know.

DO NOT REARRANGE THE RECORDS!

- Don't try to fix a problem by yourself.

When you are finished using the records, make sure the records charged out to you are:

- Complete *AND*
- In the order you received them.

When handling records

DO!

- Leave a clear space on the table for records.
- Support records fully** on the table.
- Lay the **folder flat**, and review the documents **one at a time**.
- Consult **one folder** at a time, and turn **one page** at a time.
- Hold records **lightly but securely** when turning pages.

DO NOT!

- Do not lean on, write on, fold anew, trace, or handle the records in any way likely to cause damage.
- Do not let documents overhang on table edges - documents can accidentally break off or tear.
- Do not flip or fan through records.

Researchers must exercise all possible care to prevent damage to the records.

Basic preservation

- Handle records carefully to avoid causing tears and breaks.
- Never remove staples or other fasteners. If the fastener is interfering with your use of the records, consult a staff member.

- Work with clean hands and gloves as required by staff.
- Do not use lotions or hand sanitizers immediately before handling records since these can leave stains or cause inks to smear.
- Never moisten fingers before turning pages.



Pennsylvania Ave Entrance at the National Archives at Washington, DC

Special preservation issues

Handle documents and folders one at a time.

- Consult **one** folder at a time and turn **one** page at a time
- Do not flip or fan through records.

Do not remove records from their clear plastic sleeves.

- Records are in clear plastic sleeves to protect weak or damaged items.
- Consult staff if sleeves contain more than one document.

If you receive an oversized document that is larger than your table, do not open it.

- Consult with Research Room staff.
- Use two hands when handling oversized documents.

Cotton gloves

“Shouldn’t I use cotton gloves when handling historic records?”

Not necessarily.

- Cotton gloves can hinder dexterity and snag *textual* documents and therefore are not required when handling these records.
- When handling *photographs or magnetic media*, check with the Research Room staff – you may be required to use white cotton gloves, which we provide.

Taking notes

NO pens...ever!

- If you need to take notes, use pencils (which we provide along with paper and note cards) or your laptop computer.
- Keep your notes separate from the records.

Always be careful not to damage the materials you are using.

- Do not lean on, take notes on top of, or place any items on records.

Making copies

Notify Research Room staff if you plan to make copies:

- **Never** use a copier, including your personal scanner or camera, without checking with the staff **first**.
- The staff will inspect the records, determine if they may be copied and how, and provide you with further instructions.

If the records can be copied:

- Use **colored paper** in self-service copiers and printers to differentiate your copies from originals.
- Remove the originals when finished.
- Make sure that you have not accidentally combined originals with your copies.



This completes your orientation to performing research at the National Archives

- By signing the Researcher Application, you agree to follow all of our Research Room Rules and Procedures.
- The Researcher Application is governed by the Privacy Act on the next page.

Thank you for helping to protect the records!

Researcher Application Privacy Act Notice

How Your Information is Used

In compliance with the Privacy Act of 1974, the following information is provided:

- Solicitation of the information is authorized by 44 U.S.C. 2104. Disclosure of the information is voluntary; however, the effect of not providing the information is that a researcher identification card will not be issued to the individual. A researcher identification card is required for research (other than microfilm records).
- The information provided will be used to identify and record individuals who use records in the National Archives, regional records services facilities, and Presidential libraries, to determine records that the individual should use, to enable later contact with the individual if additional information is found or if problems with the records are discovered, and to mail notices of events and programs of interest to users of the records and invitations to participate in customer satisfaction surveys.
- The information may be transferred to appropriate Federal, State, local, or foreign agencies when relevant to civil, criminal, or regulatory investigations or prosecutions; the information may be disclosed by NARA to an expert, consultant, or a contractor of NARA to the extent necessary for them to assist NARA in the performance of its duties; the information may be disclosed to the U.S. Department of Justice or to a court or adjudicative body in cases involving the mutilation or unlawful removal of the records.



Thank you...

The orientation is finished.

If you have not already done so, please take your photo ID to the Research Room staff and complete your Researcher Application.

We wish you success in your research!

Please Note:

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