

Doll Storage and Care

Almost all collectors need to store part or all of their doll collection. Some collectors do not have enough room to display their entire collection, so they rotate dolls from display to storage regularly. Others simply lose interest in a type of doll for awhile, and they store those dolls until they decide what to do with them. In any event, it's a rare collector who does not have some need for doll storage.

If you've been following our series on organizing your collection, then first, you reviewed your collection to determine which dolls you wanted to display, and which dolls you wanted to store. Then, you arranged your doll display. Now it's time to store the dolls that you do not want in an active display in your home.

Where to Store Your Dolls

If you store your dolls incorrectly, you can degrade the condition of the dolls and their costumes, and you may potentially destroy much of the value of your dolls.

The FIRST thing to consider is WHERE to store your dolls. The usual "suspects" for long term storage, the attic, basement or garage, are all poor choices. The attic, basement and garage are all NOT climate controlled. That means that your dolls will be subjected to wide swings of both temperature and humidity. High temperatures can fade vinyl dolls, and can break down fibers in antique doll costumes. Humidity can cause mold on plastic dolls of all types and on costuming and can rapidly cause composition dolls to craze and crack (as can cold and heat). And, many attics and basements are out-of-the way and NOT well-traveled locations in your home, which tend to attract more vermin and insects (rats can chew on wood dolls or plastic dolls, moths will destroy wool in antique and vintage doll outfits).

Many of the mod-era Barbies, for instance, have faded faces due to improper storage of the mod dolls (TNT Barbie, Casey, Stacey, Francie, etc.) in attics and basements.

So, the best place to store your dolls is in an interior part of your house--a closet, in a trunk or chest of drawers. Some large cities have climate-controlled storage facilities available, and those are another choice (again, stay away from storage facilities that do not have climate control).

How To Store Your Dolls

The first thing to consider is the type of container that you will use to store the dolls. Do not, under any circumstance, store your dolls or doll clothing in closed plastic bags or plastic Tupperware type containers. Moisture can get trapped in these containers or bags, causing mold growth on dolls and clothing. Additionally, some Tupperware-type containers emit gases that are harmful to various plastics and vinyls, as well as paper goods.

MANY collectors like to store their middle 20th-century dolls in the original boxes. While this seems like a good idea, it can actually damage the dolls because of the acid in the boxes. If you do want to store your MIB dolls in their boxes, try to wrap the dolls in acid-free tissue paper first. Another option for wrapping dolls would be undyed and unbleached muslins or cottons.

Also, you should remove all metal items from any plastic dolls, such as Barbies--earrings, stands, jewelry, headbands and decorative metal items can discolor plastics, especially the vinyls used to make vintage Barbies.

If you have TRUE NRFB vintage Barbies (such as a mod TNT Barbie where the cello has not been removed) then you may have to leave box and doll together, and any jewelry still on the doll, risking eventual damage to the doll.

All your dolls and doll clothing should, ideally, be wrapped in acid-free tissue paper prior to storage. This will also prevent the dolls from touching wood in a trunk or drawer (the acids in woods can also be damaging) or prevent dolls and clothing from touching one another. There are several sources for acid-free tissue paper listed in the linkboy at the top of this article. Never wrap dolls or doll clothing in newspaper. which has damaging acids AND can leave newsprint marks.

If you have some wool doll clothing and you want to use moth crystals, do NOT let the crystals touch a doll. You can wrap the crystals in muslin and keep them nearby but separate, but be careful with moth crystals and any vinyl dolls, metal, or feathers (undesirable chemical reactions can occur).

When storing doll clothing, try to lay the clothing down so that it will not crease--sometimes balling up a bit of the acid-free tissue paper to keep sleeves and bodices in shape (placing the balls in the sleeves and bodice) is worthwhile and will keep crushing to a minimum. When storing dolls, first smooth hair and limbs.

Now, place your dolls carefully away in your chosen storage location. Hopefully you will have enough room. Remember to check your stored dolls at least once a year for any discoloration or vermin or insect infestations.

Source: <http://collectdolls.about.com/library/weekly/aa012201a.htm>