

Here are concise, practical tips to gather and organize photos and videos before digitizing:

Preparation

- Set a goal: Decide scope (albums, years, events) and final format (JPEG/PNG for photos, MP4 for video).
- Create a workspace: Clean, flat surface with good lighting and a box for sorted items.
- Tools ready: Gloves (optional), lint-free cloth, compressed-air blower, labels, sticky notes, a scanner/camera or service info.
- Hold film by the edge, never touch the image with your fingers

Gathering

- Collect from all places: Albums, boxes, frames, shoeboxes, phones, cloud accounts, old hard drives, USBs, DVDs, camcorder tapes.
- Consolidate digital files: Copy everything into one folder on your computer or external drive before sorting.

Sorting (use a simple hierarchy)

- Primary sort — by level: Keep in order of importance: Keep / Maybe / Discard.
- Secondary sort — by structure: Use Year → Event/Location → People (e.g., 1998 → Vacation_Florida → Smith_Family).
- Group fragile/valuable items: Set aside originals that need special handling or professional conservation.

Labeling & Metadata

- Label physical groups: Use numbered boxes or sticky notes matching folders on your computer.
- Create a manifest: Spreadsheet with folder name, item count, date range, notes (damage, duplicates).
- Capture metadata early: For each folder, note date, location, people, and camera (if known) in the spreadsheet or file-sidecar (TXT).

De-duplication & Curation

- Cull aggressively: Remove obvious duplicates, blurred shots, empty frames before digitizing.
- Keep variants selectively: Choose the best shot(s) per moment; keep one or two favorites.
- Mark special items: Flag historically or sentimentally important items to prioritize scanning.