

Rolling Textiles

- Always wash your hands before handling historic textiles.
- Find a clean work surface large enough to accommodate your textile when it is laid flat, such as a bed, a large table, or a sheet on the floor. If no such space exists fold the textile so that the top edge is accessible.
- You will need both a header and a footer. These are strips of unbleached muslin or acid-free tissue that are as wide as the width of the textile and about 24 inches long. The header assists you in rolling the textile onto the tube. The footer is an outer layer of covering for the textile.
- The best choice for a tube is one made of acid-free cardboard. Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) or standard cardboard tubes can also be used if there is a barrier between the tube and the textile. Mylar, Tyvek, and Marvelseal are all suitable barriers. Several layers of unbleached muslin or acid-free tissue can also be used.
- Textiles should be rolled face down. This is especially important for pile carpets and large embroideries, which need to be rolled face, or pile, down to allow their bulkier sides more room.
- To begin rolling, place your header on the work surface and roll the tube up in it leaving about a foot of header unrolled. Lay the top edge of the textile onto the unrolled portion of the header. When you eventually roll the textile, having the header under the top edge will allow it to roll smoothly onto the tube.
- At this point it is very important to note whether the top edge of the textile is perpendicular to its sides. Most textiles have uneven top edges. You want to roll the textile with the tube perfectly perpendicular to the sides, which may mean that top edge of the textile is irregular as you begin to roll.
- To find out whether the tube is perpendicular to the sides of the textile, pick up the tube and place it on the laid-out textile approximately one foot in from the top. Adjust it so that it looks perpendicular to the sides of the textile. Roll the tube straight back towards you until it is no longer resting on the textile, making sure the edge of the header is accessible. Flip the top edge of the textile back, tuck the edge of the header underneath, and flip the top of the textile back onto the header. If you have not shifted the angle of the tube, it should still be perpendicular to the edges of the textile.
- Proceed to roll the textile onto the tube. Make sure the textile is nice and snug with no bagging or wrinkling. When you have only about a foot of textile left to roll, lay the footer over the remaining textile and finish rolling until the textile is rolled in the footer. Secure with twill-tape ties and label.
- If you notice that the textile is rolling off toward one side, it means that the tube was not perpendicular to the sides. Unroll the textile to the beginning and slide the textile a bit away from you on the side it was rolling toward. You can also make minor adjustments while you are rolling by pulling the textile more snugly against the tube on the opposite end of the direction in which the textile is moving.
- Once the textile is rolled it should be kept flat in a clean, dry place that is out of the light and traffic, such as a closet shelf or under a bed. Check all stored textiles regularly for soiling, insect activity, and damage.

