

How To...Avoid Damaging Covers

It's going to happen occasionally, but there are some precautions you can take to at least lessen the frequency. First, from my own experiences, let's get the obvious no-no's out of the way:

1. Do not spill wine on covers.
2. Do not drop covers in cat's litter box.
3. Do not let puppy use covers as chew sticks.
4. Do not bring covers anywhere near toilets.
5. Do not leave covers on patio table with approaching storm.
6. Children should not use covers as noise-makers on their bicycle tires.

Avoiding the above six situations will result in untold benefits. There are, however, other dangers you should be aware of...

As a general rule with all collectibles, the less you handle them, the better. That's why having your covers stored in pages is usually better than keeping them in boxes and trays. You won't have to keep handling them when checking for dupes, etc.

Covers, being paper products, should be kept away from...ummmm...fire and water. But, the water, here, includes high humidity. Covers can develop mold, and the high humidity can promote oxidation of the striker surface, at least on the older covers. (I'm not sure if that's true of the newer striker materials). So, for example, some basements and garages might now be good sites for storing covers, either loose or in albums.

Long term exposure to strong light will fade the colors of cover surfaces, so leaving them out on a shelf, say, or a table top right in the path of sunlight coming in through a window is a bad idea.

Using rubber bands to hold stacks of covers together is really easy and convenient, but, stretched too tight, they can score the sides of the top and bottom covers. Also, if left on for long periods, they can 'fuse' to the covers they touch.

Covers with brittle strikers should not be put in slotted pages. Otherwise, you're just asking for trouble. Even with undamaged, older covers, slotted pages often end up converting them to damaged covers. If you've ever noticed covers with 'nicks' on the corners, those nicks have been caused by putting the covers into slotted pages. Snug fits, especially with pre-1970s covers, which tend to be thicker, just increases the chances for such damage. Similarly, snug fits caused by covers that are slightly wider (such as the older Monarch and Superior issues) are more prone to such damage.

If you've noticed covers that were banged up and ragged on the side edges, hand-sewn pages were the culprits there. Sliding them in and out, underneath the thread holders, any imperfections on the edges (a tiny tear, a minute ripple, etc.), will catch on the thread, causing the thread to dig right into the cover. Not good. Fortunately, not many collectors use such pages any more, but they used to be very common decades ago.

Covers issued from the 1980s and on, being thinner and having slicker surfaces, normally don't have the slotted and hand-sewn page problems described above, but you should always be careful, nonetheless.