



THE DISCOGS GUIDE TO RECORD COLLECTING



WHERE DO I START?

Starting a vinyl collection might seem daunting. After all, the market has become increasingly complex over the last decade, thanks to the vinyl resurgence.

With plenty of labels ready to capitalize on the different needs of the collectors, now it's easy to find the same album edited on 180 grams vinyl, different color variations, original issues and reissues... the list of variations is endless! There is a lot to decide while starting your collection, and it's perfectly fine to feel doubtful. We've all been there.

With this guide, our aim is to make it easy for you to understand the what, the where, the why, and the how of vinyl collecting. And luckily for us, we're not alone in this task. We have consulted with different experts on the field both inside and outside our platform.

Buckle up and get ready to walk the zen path of record collecting with us!

THE VINYL DICTIONARY

There are countless terms you need to know when buying, selling, and collecting records. The following list isn't comprehensive, but it will give you a big head start both as a collector and a Discogs user.

Size: Records come in different sizes. These sizes and formats serve different purposes, and they often need to be played at different speeds. The use of adapters for some of them is also mandatory.

LP: The LP (from "long playing" or "long play") is the most common vinyl record format. It normally plays at 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm, it measures 12 or sometimes 10 inches.

7" Single: The most common form of the vinyl single is the seven-inch, also referred to as a "45." The names are derived from its play speed, 45 rpm, and the standard diameter, seven inches. It usually contains one track per side.

EP: Originally referred to as an "extended play" single, the EP contains more songs than a traditional single but fewer songs than an LP. The length of an EP can vary greatly, but it is traditionally defined as a release that's less than 25 minutes long. Because of the variation, EPs can be found in all sizes and playback speeds.

12" Maxi-Single: Although seven-inches remained the standard size for vinyl singles throughout the years, the 12-inch single became popular in the 1970s among DJs. Due to its wider size, 12-inch records allowed for the inclusion of extended dance mixes for the singles in question. While the 12-inch maxi-single is still a popular format for dance music, the demand for new maxi-singles has declined in recent years.

Speed: The standard playback speeds are 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm for LPs, 45 rpm for singles and maxis, and 78 rpm for phonograph records. These can vary, so be sure to inspect the label or sleeve of your record for the correct speed.

Label: Any entity or brand associated with or responsible for releasing and marketing audio content. The term can be tricky to define, especially where multiple businesses, brands, or corporate structures are involved in a single release. Labels get their own page on Discogs, where their histories and discographies can be listed.

Compilation (Comp at Discogs): A compilation is a release with music from different artists, or a record that collects songs from different releases of the same artist.

Reissue (RE at Discogs): A reissue is a release that a label or artist decides to publish again. Reissues normally include unreleased material or new mastering, but this is not mandatory. Sometimes, an album hasn't been available for a long time in the market, and record companies decide to press new copies for sale.

Remaster: A process where previously released audio is put through the mastering process again, often to improve on previous efforts. This process is often influenced by new technology, changes in tastes among listeners, and varying format requirements (for example, the differences necessary to master digital releases or CDs).

Picture Disc: Instead of being plain black or other colored vinyl, picture discs show full images on the playing surface.

Promotional Release (Promo at Discogs): A promotional release is a music item that was created by a label or artist only for promoting new music, never being available on initial release.

Unofficial Release: Unofficial releases are published without the consent of an artist or label. Subsequently, these items violate copyright laws and are not available for sale in the Discogs Marketplace. Counterfeit items and bootlegs are included in this category.

White Label: White label records are vinyl records with plain white labels attached. White label records are popular within the dance music scene. Sometimes this can mean it's an unofficial release or a promotional release. Other times it's simply a release with a white label attached.

Misprint (M/Print at Discogs): A misprint is a release that was created with a mistake, whether that is an unintended variation in the vinyl pressing or an error in the label/sleeve/jacket printing. Misprints are often caught and removed from shelves by labels and distributors, which can make misprinted copies rare and worth more than properly produced copies.

Matrix Number: This is a number etched into the runout groove of a vinyl record. It's used during the manufacturing process to identify the acetates and stampers used in making the record. The matrix number is often – though not always – the label catalog number modified with an "A" and "B" or "1" and "2" afterwards to reflect each side of a record. The run out groove etching can also contain information that is not the matrix number.

Release: This is a broad term for any audio product created for general public consumption. It's the fundamental unit Discogs uses to build the bulk of our database, displayed as individual release pages.

Master Release: The Master Release is a display function that gathers two or more matching releases together. It can be thought of as a folder that holds two or more Discogs releases. For example the master release page for [Pink Floyd's Dark Side Of The Moon](#) gathers hundreds of pressings from different eras and regions of the world.

Inventory: On Discogs, your Inventory consists of all the items you are currently selling.

Collection: On Discogs, your Collection consists of all the music items you physically own. To clarify: Your Collection is not the same as your Inventory.

Wantlist: This is a feature within Discogs that allows you to keep track of items you would like to eventually own – but don't own yet. It's a very useful tool to track down records you want to purchase, since we'll keep you posted when those records become available through your Discogs inbox.

HOW TO GRADE: THE GOLDMINE STANDARD

Discogs uses the Goldmine Standard for grading the condition of items listed in the marketplace. As this guide is about collecting vinyl, we're only including an overview of vinyl grading. However, these standards also apply to labels, sleeves, and jackets. And they've been expanded by our community to include definitions for other physical formats. You can find expanded information on grading vinyl releases, as well as standards for other formats, in our ["How To Grade Items"](#) support article.



Mint: Absolutely perfect in every way. The record certainly has never been played. It is possibly even still sealed. M should be used sparingly as a grade for records, if it's used at all.



Near Mint: A nearly perfect record. A NM record has more than likely never been played. It should show no obvious signs of wear. The vinyl will play with no imperfections during playback. Many dealers won't give a grade higher than this implying (perhaps correctly) that no record is ever truly perfect.



Very Good Plus: Generally worth 50% of NM value. A VG+ record will show some signs that it was played and otherwise handled by a previous owner who took good care of it. Any defects should be of a cosmetic nature, not affecting actual playback.



Very Good: Generally worth 25% of NM value. Many of the defects found in a VG+ record will be more pronounced in a VG disc. Surface noise will be evident upon playing, especially in soft passages, but will not overpower the music. Groove wear will start to be noticeable, with light scratches that may affect the sound.



Good/Good Plus: Generally worth 10-15% of NM value. A record in G or G+ condition can be played through without skipping – but it will have significant surface noise, scratches, and visible groove wear.



Poor/Fair: Generally worth 0-5% of NM value. The record is cracked, badly warped, and won't play through without skipping or repeating.



START BUYING!

Everybody has their own personal preferences, but since we know beginnings can be a bit rocky, we've created several "beginner's guides" that can help you decide which records to get first:

[POP ROCK](#) | [CLASSIC ROCK](#) | [INDIE ROCK](#) | [ELECTRONIC](#) | [REGGAE](#) | [JAZZ](#)

Discogs is obviously an easy option to start buying records, since it's the biggest marketplace for music worldwide. But you can also visit record stores, record fairs, and garage sales around you. Don't be shy! Get out there and start collecting. And of course, make sure to add it to Discogs as you buy it so you don't accidentally buy two copies. Speaking of:

WHAT CAN THE COLLECTION FEATURE DO FOR YOU?

If you've reached this far, you might be thinking, "But wait a second, what are these guys actually trying to sell to me?" Nothing! We swear! Discogs is full of free features. You don't need to buy or sell at Discogs to become a Discogs user. The best example of this is the Collection feature.

Adding all your items to the Collection is the best way to keep track of what you own and, even better, to know how much your record collection is worth. The Discogs Database is not only the biggest one worldwide, but also the most accurate. To put it simply, when you add something with the Collection feature, you can always include the exact item you own. And if you can't find your specific version, you can always save that music forever by submitting it to the Discogs Database! Our community uses the Collection feature mostly to:

- Check what they already have when they go record shopping
- See the estimated value of their collections
- Create folders and notes to locate their records around their storage facilities (yes, collections can get that big!)

CURIOUS ABOUT HOW IT WORKS? IT'S PRETTY SIMPLE!

On the right-hand side of a release page, click the 'Add To Collection' button:



 A rectangular button with a light gray background. On the left side, there are three vertical bars of varying heights, resembling a vinyl record's grooves. To the right of these bars, the text "Add to Collection" is written in a dark gray font.


You'll see a green box appear, confirming that the release was added to your Collection:

In Collection Added just now		Remove
Media Condition	edit	
Sleeve Condition	edit	
Notes	edit	
Folder	edit	

You can edit the condition of the media and the sleeve, add notes specific to this release and add the release to a custom folder by using this green box. You can always return to the release page at a later time to edit the information in the green box. Alternatively, you can update condition and add custom notes directly from your collection page, as seen below.

To view your Collection, click the "[Collection](#)" tab on your dashboard or use the drop-down menu next to your profile picture at the top-right corner of the page. From there you can use the search box to search in your collection. The filter options also narrow down releases by decade, format, genre, style, or your custom folders.

And hey, are you wondering what music to put on the turntable next? Click the dice symbol  to see a randomly selected item in your collection.

Want to adjust your collection settings? Click the gear symbol  to manage custom fields or export a CSV spreadsheet of your collection.

You can also sort your collection by clicking on the headers (artist, title, label, catalog number, format, year, rating, or date added).

Regardless of which option you choose, you will see the estimated value of your collection, based on the last 10 sales through Discogs, which uses the [Discogs Marketplace sales history](#). Items for which no sales history is available are not included in the estimated value. Please keep in mind that the estimated value of your collection is only approximate. The exact value depends on many variables.

To remove a release from your Collection, just go to the release page and click "remove" in the green box. Alternatively, you can go to your [Collection](#) page and tick the box on the left-hand side of the release you want to remove, then go to the bottom of the page and click the "Delete" button.

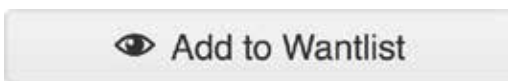
That's all there is to it! You're on your way to cataloging all the music you own!

GROWING YOUR COLLECTION WITH THE HELP OF THE WANTLIST

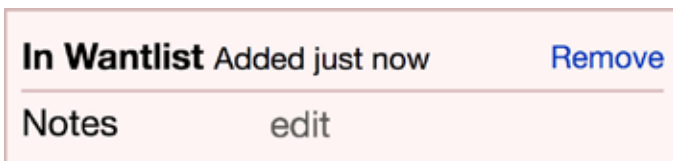
The Collection and Wantlist features serve different purposes, but they also feed into each other. The Wantlist feature allows you to keep track of the releases you don't have yet, but would like to own.

Adding releases to your Wantlist is similar to adding items to your Collection. First you need to find desired release page. You can do this either by searching directly for it or browsing an artist/label page to find the release.

Next, open the release page. On the right-hand side, click the "Add To Wantlist" button:



You'll see a red box appear, confirming that the release was added to your Wantlist:



To see your Wantlist, click the "[Wantlist](#)" tab on your dashboard or use the drop-down menu next to your profile picture at the top-right corner of the page.

To be notified when an item in your Wantlist comes up for sale, tick one or both of the boxes on your [notification preferences page](#) for "when an item in my wantlist is for sale."

You can also see items in your Wantlist that are currently being sold on Discogs by clicking "Buy Music," then "[Items I Want](#)". When you do this, you'll get a list of everything on your list that is available.

To remove an item from your Wantlist, click the "Remove" in the red box on the release page, or go to your Wantlist and tick the item you want to remove, then click "Remove Items" at the bottom of the page.

COLORED VINYL: WHAT'S THE DEAL?

Colored vinyl has a bad reputation. However, most of the prejudices against it are unfounded these days. Production processing has come a long way in the last 20 years, and most colored vinyl is on par with black pressings. Sure, there are exceptions to the rule. And yes, picture discs are still more likely to be problematic – at least regarding playback durability. But that shouldn't deter you from purchasing a new record simply because it is not black.

Other steps in the production process, such as mastering and a pressing plant's quality control standards, have a more substantial impact on playback. When in doubt about a release's quality, check out the reviews on Discogs. Chances are, other collectors have listened to the pressing and can provide a sneak peek into the quality.

HOW COLORED VINYL RECORDS ARE MADE

All vinyl records are made of PVC, which is naturally colorless. To turn this clear material into a solid color, titanium dioxide and other additives are mixed in. This process turns the vinyl white. To make the standard black vinyl color, black carbon is added to the white material. Black carbon adds some strength to the PVC. To make any other color, dyes are used instead of black carbon. These dyes do not strengthen the vinyl in the same way as black carbon, but the difference is negligible unless mistakes are made in the production process.

Two exceptions exist: clear vinyl and picture discs. Very few additives can be mixed into clear vinyl without jeopardizing the opacity, which means there is potential for less sound quality, albeit this drop is often imperceptible to the common listener.

Picture discs are a different story. They are made of layers. The first is a clear record with no music, the second is the picture layer, and the third is a clear plastic sheet that contains the grooves. This final thin – malleable plastic – layer is not as durable as regular records, often negatively affecting its playback and lifespan.

ARE COLORED RECORDS WORTH MORE MONEY?

The process of manually pressing a multi-colored record adds about a dollar to the production cost, which nearly triples the cost to produce a single vinyl disc. So from a material perspective, yes, vinyl records are worth more. But of course that's only part of the story. The real cost differences come from them often being pressed in limited batches. This drives down supply while increasing demand, leading to a higher market value.

Let's also mention the elephant in the room: For many collectors, vinyl records are collectible items, with more colorful pressings often increasing the aesthetic appeal. Clever minds have ingeniously paired colors with the vibe of the record.

MONO VS. STEREO

Between 1958 to 1970 or so, records were often released in both mono and stereo. This was because collectors needed a specialized stereo setup for stereo listening. If they didn't have this, they risked damaging both the equipment and the records. Modern systems don't have this problem, but it raises the age old question of whether a classic pressing is better in mono or stereo.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Casual listeners will notice one main difference in the output of mono and stereo records. Audio playback of mono records is considered "centered." A simplified way to picture this is to imagine a listening setup with two speakers - one to the left of you and the other to the right. Mono tracks will output the same audio from both speakers.

Stereo tracks will often pan the sound, driving different audio signals through the left and right speakers. This is a technique that can more accurately represent how live music is perceived by listeners. A good way to picture this is to imagine an orchestra being recorded with stereo microphones placed in different places in a performance hall. By mixing the audio picked up by these microphones, an engineer can create a more enveloping sound atmosphere on a record.

WHICH TO CHOOSE?

As for the qualitative auditory differences, mono releases typically sound more direct and pack more punch, with instruments often "competing" for attention and room in the mix, layering on top of each other. Stereo tracks can allow for more "space," giving room for vocals and other key components in the center of the soundstage. You can sometimes get a sense for what the artist wants to stand out in a stereo release by listening for what occupies the "phantom center" of the soundstage.

There is undeniably more nuance and complexity baked into the differences between mono and stereo records. When you get down to the nuts and bolts on the production side, the recording and mixing processes differ depending on the track, engineer, band input, and a collection of other factors. Though for the end consumer, it's often a matter of preference.

Many bands in this era recorded albums with either a stereo or mono mix in mind. The other mix was usually created out of necessity, as mentioned earlier. If you don't have a personal preference, it's generally recommended to stick with the band's decision. This signifies the creator's intent when making the album; it's the true representation of what they were trying to convey. This takes a little research, but the payoff is worth it.

For more information on the history of mono and stereo releases, as well as some technical gray areas and commentary from Tape Op Magazine founder and acclaimed recording engineer Larry Crane, [visit our in-depth article on the subject](#).



WHAT ABOUT GEAR?

Now that you have some guidance on buying vinyl and starting your collection, you're probably wondering how the heck to play it, right? You've read about how bad those suitcase turntables can be, but you don't know where to go from there.

Cartridges, styli, tonearms, belts – it all sounds so complicated! Don't fret, though. We'll help you navigate the daunting world of the turntable and turn you into a budding expert.



DIRECT-DRIVE OR BELT-DRIVE TURNTABLES?

Belt-drive and direct-drive refer to the motor that powers the platter of your turntable, spinning your records to pull the [stylus](#) through the grooves. Below are some differences between the two.

BELT-DRIVE TURNTABLES

- The motor is usually suspended somewhere off the side, separate from the platter, with a belt – generally rubber – acting as like a pulley beneath the platter
- Less noise interference from the motor, as it's not directly under the platter
- Lower torque than direct-drive turntables, which means it can take a few seconds to get up to full speed
- While the platter takes longer to get up to speed, the belt-drive turntables' heavier platter arguably keeps playback speed more consistent
- You can't really fine tune the speed, beyond switching between 33 and 45 rpm

DIRECT-DRIVE TURNTABLES

- Motor sits directly beneath the platter
- Generally preferred by DJs, as the platter can get up to speed almost instantly, and spins freely with no resistance
- The higher torque means the platter is less sensitive to outside forces like the stylus or your hand, and you can easily spin the record in either direction without the risk of damaging the motor
- While they get up to speed quickly, consistency can be an issue; direct-drive turntables usually have a circuitry that constantly makes adjustments to perfect the speed, however this can affect the pitch
- You have more freedom with speed control, allowing for easy transitions and tempo changes in order to blend from one song into another while using two turntables
- You don't have to consider belt degradation or upkeep

Certain functions like tempo control for the sake of mixing probably won't bring that much benefit to you unless you're DJing. Ultimately, the only way to tell which turntable is right for you is by testing and hearing them.

DIFFERENT TURNTABLE STYLUS TYPES

There are four main stylus shapes (excluding a stylus for 78 rpm records). The difference is in the shape of the tip of the diamond and how it sits in the grooves of your records.

STYLUS CONSTRUCTION

The stylus sits at the end of the cantilever within the turntable's cartridge, which is connected to the tonearm. The stylus is attached to the cantilever and will be either a nude diamond (whole diamond glued to the cantilever) or a tipped diamond (only the point is a diamond, the rest is metal).

Why does stylus shape matter? The shape and construction of the stylus determines the access it has to the surface area of the grooves, and therefore how well sound is replicated. Stylus shape will also affect the wear and tear of your vinyl records over time. Both have an effect on a stylus' price.

FOUR MAIN STYLUS TYPES



Conical: Conical, or spherical, is the most common and least expensive stylus type. It looks a bit like the tip of a ballpoint pen up close. Because of their relatively large radius, spherical styli trace less of the smaller groove modulations that represent higher frequencies.



Elliptical: The next most common stylus type is elliptical, or bi-radial. Elliptical makes contact across a larger area of the groove wall due to its dual radii. This allows for more precise tracking, improved frequency response (especially highs), improved phase response, and lower distortion.



Hyperelliptical: Hyperelliptical is also known as shibata, fine line, or stereohedron. When properly aligned, this stylus offers excellent high-frequency performance, longer tip life, improved tracking, and reduced record wear.



Microlinear: The microlinear or microridge stylus is the most advanced of the four types. The computer-designed tip comes close to the shape of a cutting stylus used to produce master discs.

For more about which stylus shape is best for you, consult our [review of the AT-VM95 cartridge line](#).

HOW TO CLEAN AND CARE FOR YOUR TURNTABLE STYLUS

Stylus wear is inevitable, but there are a few things you can do to help prolong the life of your stylus. This will also protect your records and maintain high quality quality sound from your setup.

The most important thing to prevent accelerated stylus wear is to [ensure your turntable is set up properly](#), especially the tracking force of your tonearm.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU CLEAN YOUR STYLUS?

It's recommended that you clean your stylus about once a week, depending on how often you're spinning records. Here are a few of the most reputable products for cleaning your stylus:

- **Stylus Brush:** A tried and true method and most often recommended by the cartridge manufacturer. Simply hold the tone arm steady and move the brush across the stylus a few times in the same direction that a record spins.
- **Mr. Clean Magic Eraser:** Several [hifi](#) and [audio](#) forums ([including the Discogs' forums](#)) are awash with rave reviews of the Mr .Clean Magic Eraser as a DIY stylus cleaner. Only use the Magic Eraser dry. If it comes with a blue side, avoid it – this is treated with cleaning agents.
- **Onzow Zerodust Stylus Cleaner:** Onzow claims this ultra soft plastic is softer, and boasts 15 times more elasticity, than baby's skin. All you have to do is lower the tonearm onto the Zerodust cleaner once or twice to remove dust from the stylus tip.

WHAT TO AVOID WHEN CLEANING YOUR STYLUS

- **Touching The Stylus With Fingers:** No matter how gentle, or how clean, you think your hands are, the oils on your fingers will attract even more dust and dirt.
- **Household Cleaning Solutions:** These can dissolve the glue securing your stylus to the cantilever.
- **Q-Tip And Isopropyl Alcohol:** This is recommended by some, and it *might* work, but Ortofon also advises against this.

WHEN DOES A STYLUS NEED TO BE REPLACED?

Most manufacturers recommend changing your stylus at around 1,000 hours of record playback time. So if you're using your turntable for an hour or so per day on average, ideally you should be changing the stylus every couple of years.

Check the manufacturer's recommended lifespan for your stylus when you get it. If you're not totally sure of your stylus' recommended lifespan or where you're at within that timeline, here are some things to look/listen out for:

- Listen out for a dip in sound quality. If stylus wear is to blame, the sound will likely be muffled or distorted. Listen for sibilance (the presence of a hiss or prolonged 's' sound) or static on a record where previously there was none.
- If the needle is skipping or jumping out of the grooves, remove it as soon as possible and don't use it again until you've changed your stylus.
- If you have access to a high powered magnifier, take a look at your needle up close for signs of wear, like jagged edges or bends in the needle head. If there's black residue on the needle it may be a sign of overuse and lack of proper care.
- Always replace the stylus on a second-hand turntable. There's no real way of knowing how old it is, how much use it's had, or how well it was treated.

Pay attention (even passing) to how many hours your clocking on your stylus, and don't leave it too long to replace. Negligence could result in more than just compromised playback; a worn needle can gouge micro-chips in your records, or bear heavily and unevenly against the grooves.





HOW DO I CARE FOR MY RECORDS?

You understand the basics of vinyl records, turntable selection, and stylus maintenance. But now you want to know what to do with all the records you're about to get your hands on – or maybe there are already hundreds of records stacked around your living room.

It's time to figure out how to care for your vinyl and make sure you'll get many years of enjoyment out of your collection. We'll also help you figure out how to plan for the unforeseen, because you'll want to replace those records if something happens!

HOW TO STORE YOUR COLLECTION

A question many record collectors ask is, “Where can I put all these records?!” You’re in luck, as we’ll do our best to cover storage options and tips. We’ll begin by outlining the proper, recommended, government-approved guidelines for how to store vinyl records.

WHAT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS SAYS

Let’s check in with the consummate professionals of media storage, the US Federal Government. Yes, you read that right. They just so happen to have [one of the largest collections of vinyl records in the world](#), safely nestled in the remarkably dust-free archives of the Library of Congress. We reached out to staff librarians through the [Recorded Sound Research Center](#) and utilized their [guide to storing audio visual materials](#) to learn how to store vinyl records properly.



The Library Of Congress, vinyl storage professionals

Luckily, collectors have an advantage when it comes to storing vinyl records. Vinyl records are the most stable physical sound recording format developed to date (a point for vinyl in the great format debate!). Unlike tapes and CDs, they can [last 100 years in a controlled environment](#). However, a wide range of variables, from dust and foreign matter to heat and pressure, can cause distortion and surface noise in playback. Remember: While vinyl records are relatively durable, record covers are not. Pay attention to the fragility of cardboard and paper sleeves as much as the vinyl itself.

CASUAL/HOUSEHOLD RECORD STORAGE TIPS

We'll start with the four core tenets of sound vinyl storage: heat, light, humidity, and pressure.

- **Heat:** For home collections, room temperature or below is preferable. Room temperature, for those accustomed to living in a sweat den without air conditioning, is generally considered to be between 59° to 77° F (15° to 25° C). Make sure you keep those records clear of radiators, vents, and your George Foreman Grill.
- **Light:** Minimize exposure to all kinds of light, and make sure there's no exposure to direct or intense light. Vinyl records are most susceptible to ultraviolet light; which can damage records in just a few minutes. For best results, don't store your records in a bright window, a grow room, or a tanning bed.
- **Humidity:** This is where vinyl record storage guidelines part ways from indoor plant care. Unlike your indoor greenery, vinyl records should be stored in a relatively dry environment (about 35% to 40% relative humidity). For those not in the know, hygrometers are cheap and efficient tools to measure humidity.
- **Pressure:** Don't stack things on your records. Don't stack records on other records. We know it saves space, but sometimes life ain't that easy. In addition, do not store your records too tightly together. As they used to say at school dances in the American South, leave a little room for Jesus. You should leave enough space to easily flip through your records.

Though less problematic than the rules above, there are a few other factors to consider when storing vinyl records:

Despite whatever #goodvibes your records give off, their structural integrity can be compromised by strong vibrations. Keep your records a reasonable distance from speakers, washers, dryers, and stampedes of wild stallions.

Make sure you store vinyl of a similar diameter together. In other words, don't snug your 12-inch records next to your 10-inch records. Separate records of a different diameter with a divider.

As a rule of thumb, attics and basements are typically not the best places to store vinyl records, though there are exceptions to this. You should also avoid non-climate controlled storage units. My parents made the mistake of storing their collection in a non-climate-controlled storage unit in Texas one summer. None of the discs made it out in a playable form. Try to find a place that is relatively clean, cool, and stable.

TO BAG OR NOT TO BAG?

Now that you know requirements for the location you should aim for while storing your records, let's talk a bit about what kind of sleeves vinyl records should be stored in.

Unlike grocery bags, paper is out and plastic is in. Commercial vinyl records may be stored in their original sleeve, but should also be placed in a static-free polyethylene liner to avoid print-through from the original sleeve.

In addition to storing records in a plastic sleeve, you should store record covers in a plastic sleeve. To recap: put the record in a plastic sleeve and the album cover in a plastic sleeve.



SHELVING TIPS

Ensure the shelving you choose is sturdy enough to support the weight of vinyl records, which average 35 pounds per shelf-foot. All formats concentrate weight on the centerline of a shelf, which can cause some shelving to collapse.

To reduce static, opt for wood vinyl record storage containers instead of metal.

Once they are on a shelf, vinyl records should be stored with sturdy, immovable dividers every 4-6 inches that support the entire face of the disc in its sleeve. Dividers have the added benefit of helping in the quest to [organize a vinyl record collection](#).

We have more advice for the advanced vinyl addict [in our guide to storing records](#), but this information should be enough for those of you starting a collection.

HOW TO CLEAN RECORDS

Despite being one of the most formidable formats known to mankind, vinyl records have a propensity for attracting dust and grime. Between late night sessions, Sunday morning exhibitions and the commute from work to home (and back again), once new and shiny vinyl records can start to show some serious wear quicker than expected. Not to mention those rare gems pulled from the flea market that haven't been properly cleaned...maybe ever? Fingerprints, dust, static, scratches; all create unwanted noise on what is supposed to be the audiophiles format of choice. The cracks and pops, once so endearing, can easily become audibly unbearable. Furthermore, oil from your hands can eat at the surface of vinyl, bringing the value of a record down. Luckily, a solution is easily had. Follow these guidelines on how to clean vinyl records and you won't have to fret about dust or fingerprints again.

STEPS TO CLEAN VINYL RECORDS

- Remove dust and static using a vinyl record brush
- Inspect the record for visible marks and blemishes
- Spray cleaning solution on problem areas
- Wipe clean using circular movements
- Rinse and dry the record
- Store vinyl records properly to prevent future problems

1. REMOVE DUST AND STATIC USING A VINYL RECORD BRUSH

Just like sweeping before mopping a floor, removing dust and static before using a liquid solution will make your life easier. Use long, gentle brush strokes with a designated tool to make sure you're removing detritus without harming the vinyl surface. There are plenty of brushes out there, but I can personally vouch for [Audioquest's Original Record Brush](#), which has served me well over the years.

2. INSPECT THE RECORD FOR VISIBLE MARKS AND BLEMISHES



Under a soft, bright light, view the surface for any discolorations, smudges and fingerprints. These problem areas will need some love and attention. Sometimes, especially when buying batches of used vinyl, the entire record may need a scrub.

3. SPRAY CLEANING SOLUTION ON PROBLEM AREAS

Once you have identified sections of record that require intensive cleaning, directly apply a cleaning solution. Be extremely careful to avoid touching the label with liquid of any kind, as this can cause the epoxy to loosen and potentially lead to discoloration of the label.

4. WIPE AWAY BLEMISHES AND FINGERPRINTS

Once the cleaning solution is on the surface of the record, apply pressure in a circular motion with a clean micro-fiber or cotton cloth. This will help rub away the blemishes.

5. RINSE AND DRY THE RECORD

Using a controlled spray bottle – or ninja precision and a sink – carefully wash away any remaining cleaning solution. Dry the record completely with a clean cloth, different from the one that was used to wipe away the blemishes, before getting ready to store it. Be careful not to leave any new fingerprints at this point in the process. Only handle the vinyl record by the edges or label.

6. STORE VINYL RECORDS PROPERLY TO PREVENT FUTURE ISSUES

In general, make sure records have a sleeve and are being properly handled each time they are removed. There are other guidelines that will help you maintain a record collection.

CLEANING SOLUTION RECOMMENDATIONS

Many are split on which vinyl cleaning solution works best and [which products to avoid](#). There are plenty of options to choose from: a dedicated solution such as [VPI record cleaning fluid](#), user-made concoctions (such as the soapy mixture of deionized water and .5% Tergitol 15-S-7 [used by the Library Of Congress](#)), or simply Dawn dish detergent (go with the blue kind over green) mixed with water. Figure out what works best for you, but no matter what you use remember to avoid contact with the label!

OVERWHELMED? DON'T BE!

Discogs has a [vinyl record cleaning starter kit](#) in the merch shop that will provide everything you need to get started cleaning your collection. If you have any other recommendations, feel free to share them with the community in the [Discogs forums](#).

Final Note: For those that need to clean a lot of records, consider buying a [record vacuum](#) or [vinyl record cleaning machine](#). They will significantly reduce the time needed to clean each record. Fair warning though: These are typically very expensive. That said, the return on raising the grade of a record might be worth it for those looking to sell a lot of records.

HOW TO INSURE YOUR COLLECTION

With this climate change thing crashing down around us, we need to have a talk. Typhoons in Asia, fires in Europe and Western America, massive hurricanes in the Atlantic – these and other catastrophes are all enemies of your beloved record collection. Let's chat now to make sure you're not kicking yourself later. If a disaster hits, the Discogs Collection feature can be invaluable. Nowhere else can you have the most complete repository, including release variant, of what's in your collection, in case you need to replace it.

You may be asking, "Why does information like the release variant matter?" Well, my friend, it matters because insurance companies will "use the information you provided, and give the lowest damn value we can possibly justify for your item," [according to a former insurance claims adjuster](#). Yes, that's a little disheartening. There's a catch though if you're diligent enough to take advantage of it. Here are some examples of how a claims adjuster might treat your notes on a destroyed record:

- "Pink Floyd - Dark Side of the Moon - \$10." They'd give you about \$8.
- "Pink Floyd - Dark Side of the Moon - \$100." They'd say NEED MORE INFO, because that seems incredibly high for a vinyl record (remember that the adjuster is trying to get as low a reimbursement as possible).
- "Pink Floyd - Dark Side of the Moon - used." They'd give you about \$10, because that's what it's frequently sold for in record shops.
- "Pink Floyd - Dark Side of the Moon." Same as above, since all your records are technically used now.
- "Pink Floyd - Dark Side of the Moon - [Harvest - SHVL 804](#). Original form of the release; solid light blue prism LP picture labels with silver lettering, later forms have an empty prism. It has a gatefold sleeve, and there are three known variations of the original blue-tinged sleeve. Originally delivered with two posters and two stickers." With all that information and provenance, they'd give you the median value of \$151.

If your Discogs Collection is up to date, you'll be covering the most accurate index of your collection. To make this process even easier, we have an export to CSV tool built in. If your insurance company needs a full list of the items in your collection, you can simply download the data and send it over.

Disclaimer: Always check with your insurance company to get the scoop on your policy details. Some policies require additional fees for collectible or rare collections. Some will require more than just the Discogs Collection data, such as time stamped pictures, though it is the best places to start when seeking reimbursement.

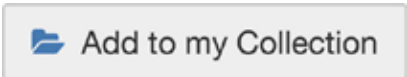
CATALOG MORE OF YOUR COLLECTIBLES WITH DISCOGS

If you're a music obsessive like us, your music collection extends well beyond what's on the record (or CD or cassette, for that matter). Your shelves probably boast a number of books, film, and posters by and about your favorite musicians and artists.

So now that your record collection is up to date in Discogs, why not catalog the rest of your music collectibles with us?

[Bookogs](#), [Filmogs](#), and [Posterogs](#) are extensions of Discogs, allowing you to track more of your music collectibles. Your Discogs account doubles as your login for all 'ogs sites.

Just like on Discogs, you can add an item to your collection by finding it in whichever database is relevant to the item and clicking "Add to my Collection" in the right-hand column:

A rectangular button with a light gray background and a thin border. On the left side, there is a small blue icon of a folder with a document inside. To the right of the icon, the text "Add to my Collection" is written in a dark gray, sans-serif font.

If you can't find the item you're looking for (these databases are still growing and aren't as comprehensive as Discogs just yet), please take a moment to add it to the database and contribute to our growing archive of physical media and music data!

Bookogs, Filmogs, and Posterogs are a lot newer, but growing quickly in terms of data depth and features. Get in early, catalog your items, and become an authority on music collectibles.