

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Recommended Light Levels For Museum Collections

While on exhibition:

	Visible light	Ultraviolet (UV) light
Sensitive collections Including textiles, watercolors, photographs and other papers	Maximum: 50 lux (5 footcandles)	Ideal: 0-10 microwatts per lumen Maximum: 75 microwatts per lumen
Less sensitive collections Including oil paintings, wood and leather	Maximum: 150 lux (15 footcandles)	Ideal: 0-10 microwatts per lumen Maximum: 75 microwatts per lumen
Least sensitive collections Including most metal, ceramics, stones and glass	Maximum: 300 lux (30 footcandles)	Ideal: 0-10 microwatts per lumen Maximum: 75 microwatts per lumen

- When exhibiting mixed collections, choose the recommended light levels for the most sensitive artifacts on display.
- Turn off lights in the exhibit area when not in use.
- Sensitive artifacts should not be on permanent display. Exhibit sensitive materials for no more than three months at a time.
- Light damage is irreversible and cumulative. Exposure at low levels for several months can have the same effects as a few days of bright sunlight.

While in storage:

Museum collections should be exposed to no light at all while in storage. When it is necessary to introduce light levels into the storage area, limit the amount of exposure time as much as possible and filter all UV light.

Don't have a light meter?

Members of the Texas Association of Museums (TAM) can borrow an environmental monitoring kit, which includes a light meter, for free. For more information, visit TAM's web site at www.texasmuseums.org.

Additional Resource: Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts: [Light Exposure for Artifacts on Exhibition](#)