

The Technology behind photos on CD

Q. Do I need to archive on a CD if I already have photos on my computer and an external hard drive?

A. Internal and external hard drives are vulnerable to hardware failure, power surges, computer viruses and accidental overwriting. Optical media that can't be overwritten makes the best long-term plan.

Q. Can I use the Photo Center as my backup?

A. Relying solely on online sites for photo storage isn't a good idea either. Your photos may be lost through disasters or other unforeseen situations at these sites.

Q. Can't I just burn discs at home?

A. We test our production system to make sure the discs you will receive are high quality. These tests help us avoid problems that you might encounter if you created the disc on your computer. Discs with those problems don't meet our standards. They will have shorter lifetimes and may not be readable on all computers.

Q. Why CDs instead of DVDs?

A. High-quality CD's are compatible with more computer systems than DVDs. Plus, at this time, there are no DVDs available with the expected longevity of gold CDs.

Q. What's the difference between gold and standard CDs?

A. Experts throughout the world recommend gold phthalocyanine CDs for long-term preservation of digital photos. These CDs use real gold, rather than silver (which is vulnerable to oxidation). It's like comparing gold jewelry, which remains brilliant, to sterling silver, which readily tarnishes.

Q. How long will my CD last?

A. Accelerated aging tests in the lab show that both standard and gold discs may last 100 year or more, if stored under optimal conditions. These same tests show that you will have a better chance of reading your photos from gold discs at any given time in the future.

Q. How should I store my CDs?

A. Like photographs, CDs should be stored where you live, not in an attic or basement. If you store your CDs at 77 degrees Fahrenheit (25 degrees Celsius) or less with 20 percent to 50 percent relative humidity, they will last their longest. We recommend removing your CDs from the shipping envelope and storing them in a case made of an unreactive material, such as translucent polypropylene. These cases are readily available at compute and office supply stores.

Q. How will I read my CDs in the future?

A. Consumers have purchased billions of albums and movies on CDs and DVDs, so drives to read these will be around for a long time. Having those consumer applications makes optical technology different from computer storage options that didn't have them. Music is the reason you can still find a record player without too much trouble. Try finding a floppy disk drive though!