



# PICTURE THIS: AN ORGANIZED DISPLAY OF MEMORIES

eGIFT CARDS

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OCTOBER 31, 2014

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## 4 steps to preserving treasured photos



Courtesy of eFamily

**D**aria Brezinski, a mother of six, saves everything, from the sentimental (her grown kids' childhood drawings and toys) to the significant (marriage certificates and legal documents).

And, of course, photos. Thousands of them, chronicling birthdays, holidays, concerts, vacations and untold precious moments, fleeting and forgotten if not for her meticulous memory keeping.

"I'm one of those sentimental people who doesn't throw anything away," said Brezinski, 64, of Charlottesville, Va. "I have notebooks and notebooks and notebooks of old photographs, cataloged and organized by years."

Her home office seemed like the best place to keep them — until a 1,300-acre fire torched the woods behind her home. "My house didn't burn, but from that moment on I decided to digitize everything," recalled Brezinski, who spent the next year and a half creating a 3-terabyte archive of digital photos organized by date, subject matter and person. "Everything is safe. It's just so comforting."

And so convenient.

"I find it tragic to think about photos living in a desk or shoe box with nobody looking at them," said Thomas Robert Clarke, a Philadelphia-based professional photographer who switched from film to digital in 2009. "When you digitize your albums, you no longer have to wait for people to come by your house so you can show them a slideshow; you can share them instantly with friends and family. It's a fun little project that can help you rediscover memories you've forgotten you have."

Fun, but also easy thanks to a bevy of tools that make digital memory-keeping effortless and affordable.

If you've been meaning to organize all your photos, here's a four-step process to give offline albums and photos a new, online life:

### 1. Scan

Digitizing photos starts with scanning them. There are several options:

- Purchase your own flatbed scanner for less than \$100 online or at your local electronics retailer. Clarke likes Epson- or Canon-brand scanners.
- Ship your photos to a service provider who scans them for you. Cathi Nelson, founder and president of the Association of Personal Photo Organizers, suggested [FotoBridge](#) of West Berlin, N.J., or Massachusetts-based [Everpresent](#). Both offer volume pricing, ranging from 13 cents to 89 cents per photo. A similar service in California, [ScanMyPhotos.com](#), will scan approximately 1,800 photos for \$99, including shipping and handling.
- Hire a local photographer or photography student to do the job. They should already have the required skills and equipment, and are often grateful for the extra income.

### 2. Sort

Organization is the key to digital memory-keeping. Organize photos as you scan them by:

- Giving them descriptive file names. For example, "19991225-Mom-Dad-Christmas-Morning" or "20050601-Grandma-Vacation-Mexico." Using dates makes it easy to sort photos chronologically, Nelson said, while including people, places and events makes it easy to search photos later.
- Sorting them. Instead of keeping hundreds of photos on your computer desktop, store them in folders, such as "Birthdays." Although people take pictures chronologically, Nelson said, they live thematically; organizing them that way makes your photo library more functional.
- Tagging your photos with descriptive information called "metadata." Clarke said most photo software allows you to easily add information about who is in the photo and where the photo was taken. Some provide space for a description, enabling you to pass down not just family photos, but also family history.

Numerous software programs can assist with photo archiving and organization. If you have a Mac, for instance, your computer came preloaded with iPhoto.

Most scanners also come with software. Clarke likes ACDSee or Adobe Lightroom, both of which are available for Mac and Windows for approximately \$79. Another popular option is Picasa, which is owned by Google and available free of charge.

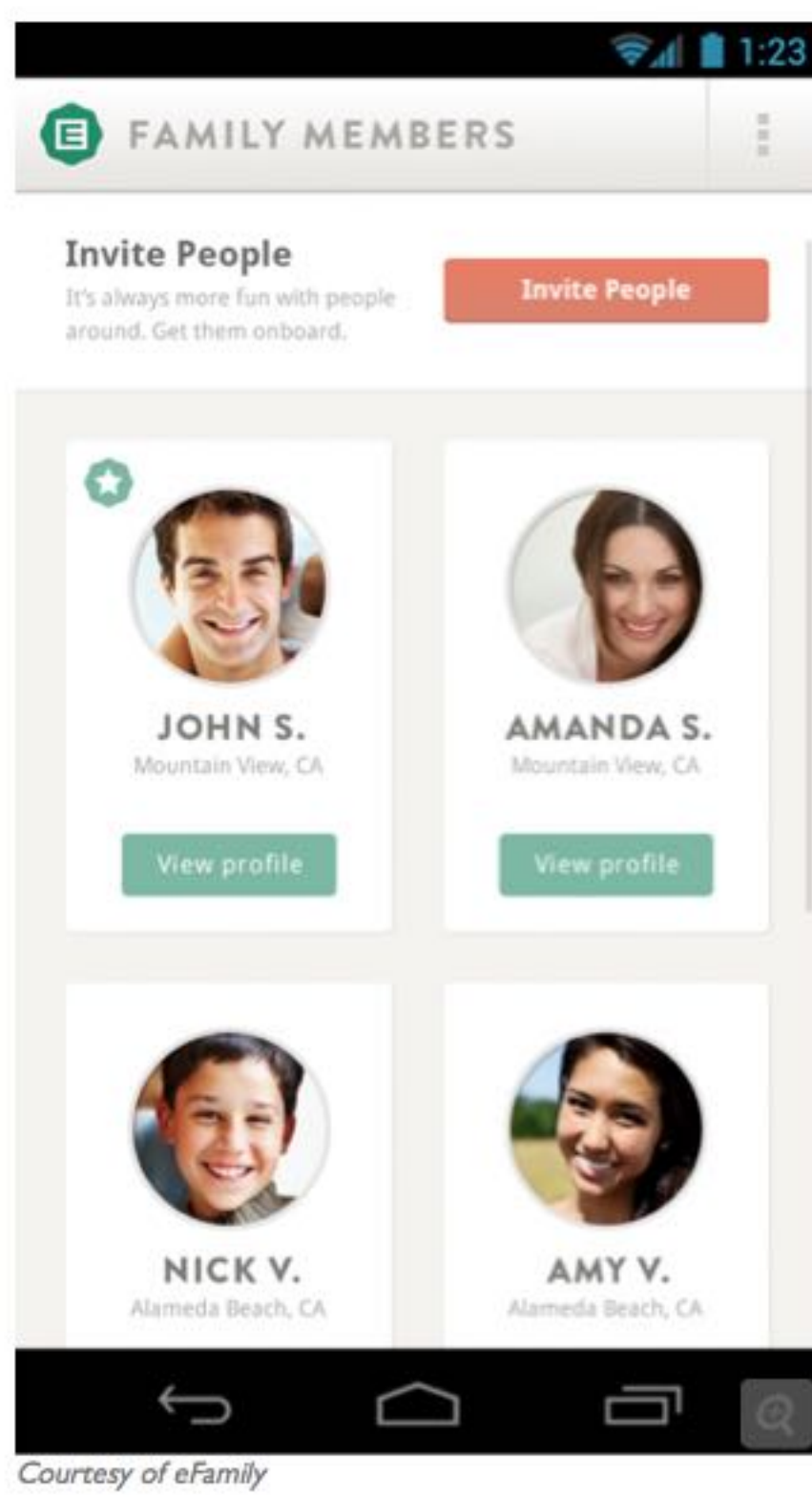
### 3. Store

Redundancy is important, said Clarke, who recommends keeping multiple copies of your digital photos in multiple locations. It's a good idea, for instance, to keep a copy of your photo library on an external hard drive (a 3- or 4-terabyte device costs less than \$100 and will provide a lifetime of storage for most consumers, according to Clarke) and another in the "cloud," which is networked storage that you can access from any Internet-connected device.

Brezinski has four copies of her library on external hard drives; she has one with her at all times, another stored in her home, a third with her attorney and the final copy with her eldest son.

### 4. Share

The best part about digitizing family photos is sharing them. Services include:



Courtesy of eFamily

Popular among professional photographers, but available to everyone, [SmugMug](#) allows you to create your own "photo website." Users select a design, upload their digital photos, then share them — publicly or privately — through a personal site. Photo galleries are linked to professional photo labs that can print individual pictures or whole albums with the click of a mouse. The service starts at \$5 per month or \$40 per year.

**23snaps:** Part social network, part photo album, [23snaps](#) caters to parents who want to share photos of their kids, but is suitable for anyone who wants to seamlessly share photos with loved ones. Using the company's website or mobile app, registered users upload digital photos, add descriptions and instantly share them in albums with a private network of family and friends. The service is free; users can order prints or a physical photobook for a fee from within the app.

**eFamily:** [eFamily](#) is a photo album/social network that allows families to privately share photos through its website or mobile app. Families can also share stories, videos and even address books, all of which are teased in a daily email newsletter summarizing families' activities. After a free trial, the service costs \$5 per month or \$50 per year.

**Forever:** [Forever](#) promises "permanent" online photo storage and sharing. For a one-time payment of between \$299 and \$799 — payable in monthly installments of \$4 to \$11 per month — members purchase their own storage that's accessible through their computer, smartphone or tablet.

Membership includes the ability to add, edit and organize photos; a unique website subdomain for sharing; and "future proofing," whereby the company ensures the longevity of photos by converting and migrating them over time as file formats change. It guarantees photos will be secure for your lifetime, plus at least 100 years.

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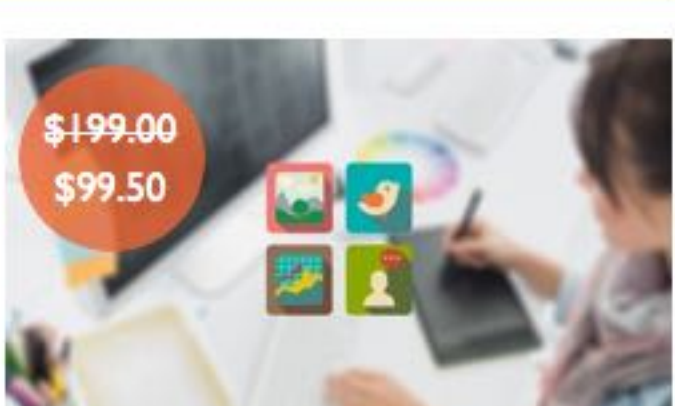
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