

## Welcome!



Mary Coughlin

- Assistant Professor,  
Museum Studies, GWU
- Administrator of  
Distance Education  
graduate certificate  
program
- Objects Conservator

## Handling Guidelines

- **Only handle an object when it is necessary!**
- Before Handling:
  - Have a space ready
    - Where are you moving?
    - Is the space clean and clear?
    - Is the route clear?
  - Can the object safely be moved?
    - Will it fit?
    - Are there risks?
    - Do you need a cart?
    - Do you need help?

## Handling Guidelines

- Before Handling:
  - Remove or secure dangling jewelry and badges
  - Consider removing rings
    - Especially if object can crack or get scratched

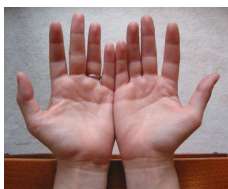
## Handling Guidelines

- Before Handling:
  - Look at the object carefully
  - Find weak points
  - Remove lids and loose elements
  - If fragments have fallen off, put them in a labeled bag
  - Secure loose elements, if possible

## Handling Guidelines: Gloves

### □ Before Handling:

- ▣ Decide if you need gloves
  - Oils, salts, dirt and moisture on skin
  - Object surface may be toxic



## Handling Guidelines: Gloves

### □ Before Handling:

- ▣ Clean, dry hands
  - If tactile sensitivity is needed
    - Paper, textiles
  - If wearing gloves could be a risk
  - Object very heavy or slippery
    - Large ceramics or glass
- ▣ If not sure, safest default is to wear gloves

## Handling Guidelines: Gloves

### □ Which gloves?

- ▣ Nitrile
  - Safest default
  - Good grip
  - Use powder-free
  - Variety of sizes
    - Choose the best fit for you!
  - Accelerant-free Nitrile
    - No sulfur
    - May be better for handling metals
    - Better for people who have sensitive skin



## Handling Guidelines: Gloves

### □ Why not Cotton?

- ▣ Often ill-fitting
- ▣ Can snag on objects
- ▣ Can leave lint
- ▣ Porous
  - Lack of protection for and from the wearer
- ▣ Not always washed as frequently as necessary
- ▣ Do NOT use Cotton gloves with friction dots
  - PVC can harm objects



## Handling Guidelines: Gloves

- Why not Latex?
  - ▣ Good barrier and fit but...
  - ▣ Risk of allergic reaction
    - Can build up latex sensitivity over time
  - ▣ Sulfur used in production can damage objects
    - Corrode metals



## Handling Guidelines: Gloves

- Why not Vinyl?
  - ▣ Good barrier but...
  - ▣ Chemically unstable material
    - Can transfer to and degrade objects
  - ▣ Some risk of allergic sensitivity



## Handling Guidelines: Gloves

- Why not always clean, dry hands?



Please Touch display at English Heritage



Fingerprints etched in brass

## Handling Guidelines

- When handling:
  - ▣ Use two hands
  - ▣ Support object by the body
  - ▣ Never lift by handles or straps
  - ▣ Never lift furniture by arms or backs
  - ▣ Never lift paintings by frames or hanging hardware
  - ▣ Never lift textiles by their edges
  - ▣ Never touch friable surfaces
    - Pastels, flaking paint, crizzled glass

## Handling Guidelines

- Only handle and move one object at a time
- When moving an object more than a few steps, always use a support board, container or cart
- If necessary, use padding to support
- Check that space is still clear BEFORE you move!
  - ▣ May need a spotter en route

## Handling Guidelines: Carts



## Handling Guidelines: Baskets & Trays



## Handling Guidelines

- If have to remove the object from an upper shelf, ask for help
  - ▣ hand the object down to someone rather than climbing down a ladder with an artifact.
- Avoid transferring an object directly to another person
  - ▣ Better to place object down on surface and let the other person pick it up
- If it is heavy, large or awkward find help
- Make sure people know their roles!

## Handling Guidelines



Moving large items may involve several people, padding and a lift.

Must have a plan!

## How to Handle?



Hot water urn

- What are the materials?
- Wear gloves?
  - ▣ If so, which gloves?
- Where to pick it up?
- Remove lid?
- How is it set in the mount?

## How to Handle?



Plains Indian War Shirt, NMAI

- What are the materials?
- What are the potential risks when handling?
- Wear gloves?
  - ▣ If so, which gloves?
- How to support?

## How to Handle?



Archaeological pewter plate fragment

- Wear gloves?
  - ▣ If so, which gloves?
- Potential health risks?
- Weak points?
- Where to handle?
- How to move?

## How to Handle?



Early 1980s boom box, belonged to Fab Five Freddy, NMAH

- Wear gloves?
  - If so, which gloves?
- How handle?
- Where to support?
- Does distance affect how you move it?

## How to Handle?



Ship model, NMAH

- Materials?
- Risks?
- How handle?
- Wear gloves?
- If so, which gloves?

## How to Handle?



Spock ears from Star Trek II The Wrath of Khan, NMAH

- Materials?
- Risks?
- Wear gloves?
  - If so, which gloves?
- How handle?

## Conclusion



- Look before touch? ✓
- Clear space? ✓
- Nitrile Gloves? ✓
- Use 2 hands? ✓
- Support body? ✓

Damage is from handling, but not from mishandling!

