

# AGENTS OF DETERIORATION

"Agents of deterioration" is a term used to identify the nine major active agents that threaten artifacts.



## DIRECT PHYSICAL FORCE

Shock, vibration, abrasion, and gravity can cause sudden or gradual damage. Handle objects carefully and ensure that they are properly packaged.



## TEMPERATURE

Too cool, and artifacts become brittle. Too high, and artifacts can disintegrate or become discolored. Keep artifacts in a stable temperature.



## HUMIDITY

High humidity can cause mold and swelling, while low humidity can cause shrinkage and fractures. Ideally, humidity should be stable at about 45%.



## THEFT AND VANDALISM

Theft and vandalism can result in the total loss of an artifact. Be sure to keep artifacts in a safe and secure location, and do not share the location of valuable objects.



## FIRE

Fire can cause the total destruction of an artifact, and smoke can cause significant damage. Install smoke detectors and keep artifacts away from kitchens or fireplaces.



## WATER

Water can significantly damage, and even destroy, artifacts. Store artifacts away from plumbing and keep boxes a few inches off the ground in case of flooding.



## CONTAMINANTS

Chemical agents can cause artifacts to disintegrate or become discolored. Protect artifacts from pollutants like grease, gas, liquids, and dust by wrapping or boxing them.



## RADIATION

Natural lighting and light bulbs can both cause light damage to artifacts. This will not cause complete destruction of an object, but the damage is irreversible. Cover artifacts in fabric or place them in a box.



## PESTS

Organic materials are most vulnerable to pest damage. Pests eat artifacts, build nests, and leave droppings behind. Check your artifacts regularly to check for pests, and set up pest traps if necessary.