



## BASIC MATERIAL IDENTIFICATION OF LEGACY TAPES IN AN ARCHIVE

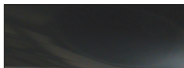
For preservation and inventory purposes it is essential to accurately and uniformly identify the materials in your collection. While different metadata schemes use a wide variety of variables, the following are the very basic questions you have to answer to describe your tape materials:

### 1. Is the object *tape* or *film*?

If you can see images on it or it has sprockets along the edge, it is film.

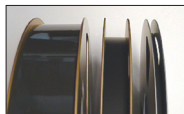


If you cannot see through the material, it is tape.



### 2. Is the tape *open reel* or *cassette*?

Open reels are single reels with the tape somewhat exposed. Open reels are always described by their width (e.g.: 2", 1", 1/4").



Cassette tapes are enclosed in plastic “shells.” Cassettes are described by a “trade” name (e.g.: VHS, Beta-SP.)



**Note:** Some cassettes are described by tape width (e.g.: 3/4" or 8mm), but since the tape is hidden by the shell, it cannot be easily measured and the width is essentially used as a “trade” name.

### 3. Is the tape an *audio* or *video* recording?

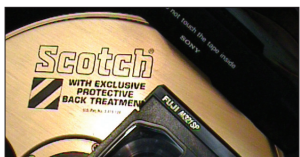
Many tapes are used to record either audio or video. To distinguish the type of recording on a tape, you may have to examine the label or content information.

This cassette may look like a VHS but is a digital audio ADAT.



#### 4. Who manufactured it? What is the size?

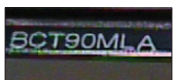
Experts can often identify potential problems associated with specific manufacturers, and tape size can have an impact on processing costs.



The manufacturer's name or logo will usually appear somewhere on the reel or cassette.



The size of a reel is defined by the diameter of the reel, or the length of the tape marked in feet.



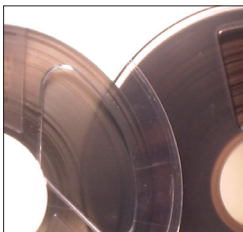
The size of a cassette is defined by the length of the tape in minutes, printed on the shell.

#### 5. Is the tape acetate or polyester?

Acetate and polyester perform and age differently. Common treatments for polyester tapes will *destroy* acetate tapes. Only open reel audio tapes may be made of acetate. No video tapes or cassettes are acetate.

With audio tape, if light can be seen through the side of the reel, it is acetate (left).

If light cannot be seen through the side of the reel, it is polyester (right).



#### 6. Can you identify the content?

At a minimum, you should have the title, record date, and program running time.



Check the label on the reel or cassette. The label on the storage container may not match the tape.

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