



Buffered vs. Unbuffered Tissue

This question is commonly asked, and we feel it is important to outline the differences, and thus the preferred uses of each.

Buffered Tissue has an alkaline, or basic, composition (ie pH above neutral; pH 7), which usually is achieved by adding calcium carbonate to these tissues.

Instances when a buffered surface would be preferable are when storing natural fiber based materials (like cotton, papers or textiles), as well as many synthetic materials. The alkaline properties of the tissue work to neutralize any acidity that come in contact with the material, and thus increase its longevity.

But, beware when using buffered tissue that the paper has not be treated with various other chemicals or processes (like some photographs), as the buffered surface may have long-term negative consequences. For example, if a material is meant to have a slightly acidic composition, it should not be stored with buffered tissue as the neutralization of the material may be detrimental over time.

Unbuffered Tissue is pH neutral, and is preferred when storing materials that by nature have a more acidic composition. These materials are predominately animal (protein) derived ones (like wool, silk, leather, fur...) but also includes some color photographs. Using buffered tissue may neutralize these materials to their own detriment.

If you are still concerned about the objects you are storing & their composition, we usually advise people to go with the Unbuffered Tissue as it is typically a safer bet.

*So, in answer to the time old question:
"How should I preserve my mother's wedding gown & heirloom textiles?"*

The answer lies in the material:
*Natural plant derived fibers & some synthetics --> Buffered Tissue
Animal derived fibers & some color photographs --> Unbuffered Tissue*

And of course, always store these items with the appropriate tissue in Acid-Free boxes!