

Basic Finishing & Fitting Techniques

Terms:

Finishing: the act of matting or dry mounting

Fitting: the act of putting something in a frame

Acid Free: means it is made of cotton rag or paper that has been buffered to have a neutral pH. A neutral pH ensures that the paper your image is printed on will not turn yellow over time, as well as the colors will not fade in the image or on the board.

Regular Paper: means it is made out of paper that has an acidic pH. This type of material will cause anything coming in direct contact with it to turn yellow, as well as cause inks to fade over time, both in the matboard and in your image.

Metal Sectional Frame: Pieces go together with hardware

Wood Frame: one big old piece of wood, or pressed wood coated with plaster

Standard Sizes: 4x6, 5x7, 8x10, 9x12, 11x14, 10x13, 12x16, 14x18, 18x22, 22x28, 24x36. Size refers to the opening as measured from the inside of the back of the frame.

Fillet: a little decorative metal or wood piece that acts as a bevel in a mat

Stacked Molding: putting one frame inside another

Matboard: a type of cotton rag or paperboard that creates a border around your image as well as helps preserve it by keeping your piece from coming in contact with the glass if framed or in contact with dirty and/or oily fingerprints if in a portfolio box

Bevel: the angled interior edge of a matboard. NEVER handle a mat by the inside bevel; it is VERY FRAGILE.

Linen Tape: Acid free cotton tape used to attach your image to the matboard

Dry Mounting: when you attach the whole of your image to a piece of matboard or foamboard. Some art connoisseurs say that it decreases the value of your work because in most cases it cannot be removed.

Back(ing): the part that goes in behind your mat and picture (foamboard)

Foamboard (foamcore): hardish foam with paper adhered to both sides; comes in 1/8 inch and 1/4 inch thicknesses; acid free is a creamy white and regular paper is bright white. Used in drymounting and also as backing board in framing.

Points: the little tabs that fold the glass, mat, picture and backing in the frame

Glass: Non-glare reduces glare but also makes vibrant colors slightly duller and can affect the crispness of your image. Also comes in UV Protection for particularly delicate pieces.

Points: Little metal tabs that hold glass, mat, image, and back in a frame

Offset clips: Metal pieces used to put a stretched canvas in a frame

Paper: usually brown butchers' paper attached over the back to hide framer's magic and make normal people think they can't do it themselves. Also keeps bugs and dust from getting in.

Sawtooth: okay to use on pieces smaller than 9x12.

Single, double, and Triple strap hangers: the things the wire attaches to; number refers to the number of holes in the hanger for screws; single has one, triple has three. Single strap okay for pieces up to twenty pounds, double strap pieces up to forty, and triple strap for pieces up to sixty.

Wire: Different gauges for different weights.

CUTTING THE MAT:

Never use the end of a ruler – always use 1 as the beginning point since rulers are susceptible of being worn down at the ends.

Measure the image size and subtract a quarter of an inch from the height and a quarter inch from the width. This will leave an eighth of an inch of image to be hidden under the mat and ensures that no white will show.

To show white around the edges of your print, add half an inch to the height and half an inch to the width. This will ensure that you have a quarter of an inch of white showing around all four edges.

To show a signature at the bottom, measure the height of your image to include the signature, then add a half inch to the width and 3/8 inch to the height. This ensures that you will show a quarter of an inch of white around the top and sides and only an eighth of an inch under the signature (it looks funny if you show more than that under the writing, and besides, the bottom will already have more white showing as it is.)

Once you know how big your opening is going to be, you can determine your frame size. Three inches of matting on every side is the standard smallest size to show with a piece of art being shown in a gallery or museum, while two inches is standard in homes. More matting is necessary for larger pieces. For images 11x14 and under, add 6 inches to the height of your opening, and 6 inches to the width of your opening. This is your ideal frame size.

If it is close to a standard size, you can put it in the next size up and just have more matting. Bottom weighting is when more mat is shown at the bottom than at the top, and is acceptable. The sides should be even. Never squeeze an image into a frame that is smaller than the ideal size; it will look cramped.

Matting serves the function of setting your piece away from the wall, and gives it a field of view in which the image is the star. You DO NOT want matting that is distracting from the image. In serious art gallery and museum world, you always use white or cream, and black only in rare cases. Real world galleries and museums WILL NOT show work in colored mats.

To figure out the measurements of how to center your opening, take the width of the frame and from it subtract the width of your opening, then divide it by two. This is how far you must measure in from each side of the matboard. Next, take the height of the frame and subtract the height of your opening, then divide by two. This is how far you need to measure in from the top and the bottom of the matboard. This method puts your image in the center of the board. To bottom weight, take away some from the top and add it to the bottom measurement.

Measure in at least three places, and connect the marks to draw the box in. Make sure to mark on the BACK of the matboard.

Place a scrap board face up on the matcutter, then put your good piece in face down. MAKE SURE YOU PUT A NEW BLADE IN THE MATCUTTER. You can get two mats cut out of one blade by flipping the blade over in between mats. A dull blade will ruin your mat and there's nothing you can do to fix it.

Make sure the cutting tool is running on the track to your right, and align the line you drew to mark where the hole is to the track. Align the mark on the tool to the line you drew to mark the side of the hole that is closest to you. Push the blade down gently, then pushing down and moving steadily and gently, cut the matboard until the little mark is aligned with the line you drew marking the side of the hole that is farthest from you. Stopping in the middle or jerking the cutter will screw up the bevel or make the line not straight. Repeat for all four sides.

DO NOT PUSH THE PIECE IN THE OPENING OUT IF THE CORNERS ARE STUCK. Using an old blade, gently cut any stuck corners.

Either use corners made from acid free paper, or a hinge method to attach the image to the mat.

If you are just going to be matting your photo and not framing it, you must put a scrap of matboard the same size as the front piece on the back to protect your print and sandwich it in the mat. A taped hinge at the top allows you to open the mat and remove the photo later while gluing it closed or taping all four sides means that you will not be able to reuse the mat after removing the image.

FRAMING

Pick a frame that is not distracting and ensures that your image is the star; many times ornate frames end up taking away from the pictures inside them so be careful! I recommend plain, narrow black moldings for black and white photographs. In my own work, I use metal sectionals since they are virtually invisible (I want my work to function as windows into reality and a big frame would emphasize the opposite.)

A point gun is what you use to stick the little black bendy tabs (movable points) or the silver non-bendable tabs (permanent points) in a frame, but these are a specialty tools and only needed if you do a lot of framing. Glazier points are little metal points meant to be pushed in by hand, but these are not nearly as effective.

Non glare glass has a coating that distorts your image sharpness and, particularly in color images, reduces saturation (it makes your blacks look gray in black and whites, or your blues look less blue, for example, in color.) Regular clear glass not only is cheaper but better since it causes no distortions. NEVER use glass if you are mailing your piece since it WILL break no matter how much bubble wrap you use. Plexiglass sucks since you can never clean it (never use anything other than water & antistatic cloth or you will destroy it; Windex and other ammoniated glass cleaners will cause it to melt, and paper towels, terry cloth, and sponges will cause it to scratch) but this is what you must use if mailing or the gallery doesn't trust their art handling skills enough to allow real glass. They do make UV glass that protects your images from the sun, but it is relatively expensive and I recommend using it only for VERY valuable pieces. In your own homes, use plain clear glass. It will make your life a lot easier. Don't forget to clean both sides of the glass.

Most frames come with cardboard or Masonite to be used as backing. Cardboard is TERRIBLE since over time it bows out and leaks acid into your art, causing the paper it is printed on to turn yellow over time. Masonite won't bow out, but it still leaks acid. Foam board on the other hand, won't bow out and even the regular stuff doesn't leak enough acid to worry about (they make acid free foam board that's creamy in color, but it's only 2% more acid free than the cheap stuff.) You have to buy this separately, but will help preserve your piece. Just throw out the cardboard or Masonite and use foam board.

The only thing that paper covering the back does is make people think it is harder to frame something than it really is. And make it look neater, too.

Sawtooths will help a picture in a frame 8x10 and smaller hang flat on a wall, but most galleries will not hang a piece with saw teeth since they are virtually impossible to get straight. Wires go on the back, attached to the molding, not the backing board. Knot wire by coming up through the bottom, crossing under the wire then going back through the strap hanger from the top to the bottom, then twist the end around tightly.

MAT CUTTING WORKSHEET

When you know what size frame it is going in:

Image size: _____ x _____ Frame size: _____ x _____

Frame length: _____ Frame width: _____

Image length: _____ Image width: _____

divide this by 2

divide this by 2

This is how far you need to measure in from the outside edges of the mat

For example:

Image size: 8 x 6 Frame size: 11 x 14

Frame length: 14 Frame width: 11

Image length: 8 Image width: 6

6

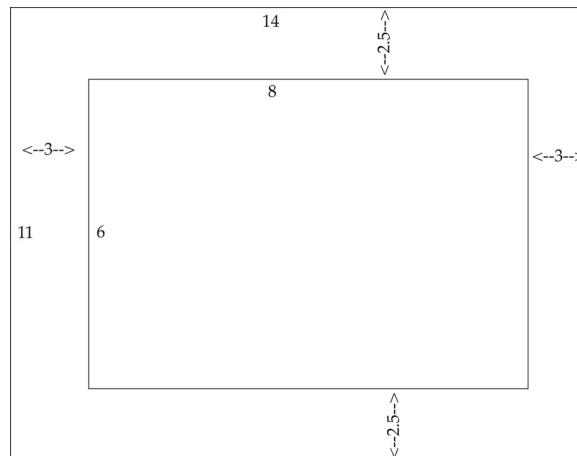
divide this by 2

5

divide this by 2

 3

 2.5



When you want to figure out how to have perfectly even matting all the way around:

Image size: _____ x _____

3" matting all around + 6 + 6

this is your outside dimensions: _____ x _____

cut a piece of mat board this size, then measure in 3" from each side

for example:

Image size: 8 x 6

3" matting all around + 6 + 6

this is your outside dimensions: 14 x 12

