

# Mastering Mounting

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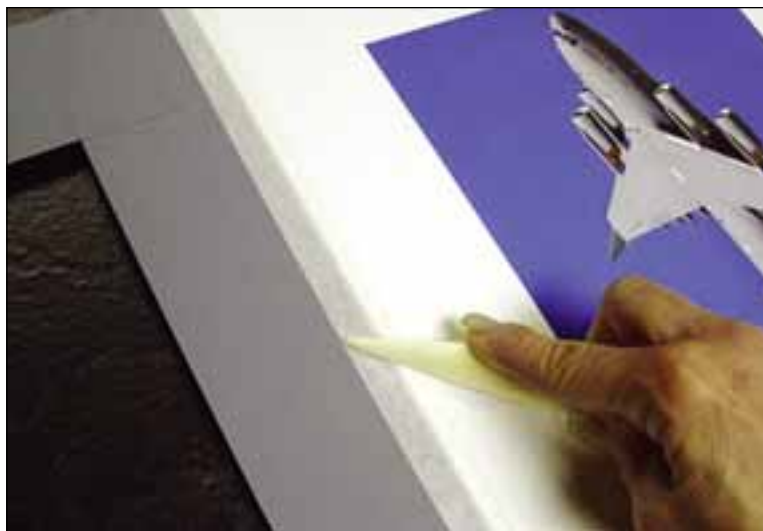
## *PSAs and Burnishing*

**P**ressure-sensitive adhesives are permanently tacky substances that bond to untreated surfaces at room temperature with only the application of pressure. They are meant to always retain their tack. This is why they have lower bonds than heat-set adhesives. They are dry, synthetic adhesives that are clean, easy to use, and odorless and require no heat or solvents. They often have release liners to protect them from bonding until required to do so. Since PSAs used in framing will always leave adhesive residue behind when removed, they must never be used for museum or preservation mounting of quality art.

Unlike adhesives that require heat or moisture to activate, pressure-sensitive adhesives and tapes bond by mechanical or manual activation

and mutual attraction. Manual applications are most common using the release liner as a coversheet with a squeegee, rubber brayer, or hand pressure as the initial pressure activator.

Regardless of whether manually rubbed, set in a cold vacuum frame, or run through a roller laminator, any PSA must be activated by pressure to properly begin its bond. The elements of time, temperature, pressure, and moisture apply to all



*Book hinges can be made from linen or neutral pH kozo tape.*

*To get the most out of pressure-sensitive adhesives, a bone burnisher can be very useful item*

PSAs, including rolled adhesive, ATG tape, and shipping tape. They all require some type of burnishing for proper activation. Anyone who has used a fingernail to rub down cellophane tape has burnished an adhesive to try to get it to stick better. This is where bone burnishers come in handy.

The most permanent method for bonding mats together is placing a bead of PVA white glue around the perimeter and weighting until dry, but when ATG tape is used for holding mats together—or applying dust covers—simply pressing or hand rubbing the surface of stacked mats only activates about 25 percent of the P-S bond. Even after full cure, the adhesive has not been used to its full capacity and will fail in time. To fully activate a P-S tape, it must be aggressively rubbed to initiate the first 80 percent grab. The final 20 percent of a PSA bond occurs once fully cured while under weight.

There are numerous applications that call for pressure-sensitive products regularly in framing,



*Spacer butt joints are reinforced with Lineco Abaca P-S tape and burnished.*



*Deep wrapped bevels may be made with 3/16" bevel cut foamboard, ATG tape, strips of decorative paper, and a burnisher.*



*Pinwheel joints of wrapped bevels are well fitted.*



*Reinforced joints are taped both vertically and diagonally with Abaca, and then burnished.*

such as book hinging window mats to backing, butt joints of spacers between mats, decorative paper deep bevel wraps, and angled and fitted pinwheel joints. These should always be burnished. In addition all fitted joints—reverse bevel against bevel—should be diagonally reinforced on the under corners to maintain their snug fit and proper alignment.

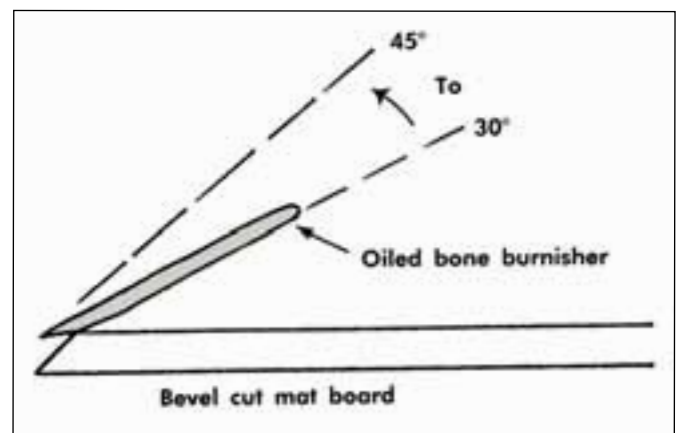
Bone burnishers are among the most indispensable tools in the frame shop, but they are often among the most overlooked in day-to-day use. Perhaps you bought one then put it away for when you needed it, but that time never came. Or worse yet, you never considered investing in a bone burnisher at all. It's a small, inexpensive addition that should be part of every framer's basic tool kit.

## Types of Burnishers

Burnishers—also called bone folders—are available as horn, bone, stone, metal, wood, and synthetic, but for framing purposes bone is usually the burnisher of choice. The length and shape of the bone really doesn't matter as far as tool efficiency; therefore, whatever is purchased will no doubt become a favorite. They come in a variety of

sizes, shapes, and materials used extensively in the making and restoring hand sewn books and bookbinding. I prefer a more pointed bone, but I also use the shorter, blunter tool and love the commercial OAS Bamboo Papercutter from Oriental Art Supply.

Bamboo knives/burnishers are a tool of choice for Asian arts, as they are strong yet nonabrasive. One end is a sharpened knife for separating mats, removing applied strips, and cutting folded paper, while the other is a tough



*Folding paper with a bone folder.*



*P-S linen tape makes a great book hinge, but it must be fully activated with a bone burnisher.*



*A homemade knife made from dried bamboo (top), and a commercial knife/burnisher (bottom)*



*Sharpen a knife to achieve a clean separation of stuck mats without bending.*



*A bamboo knife was used to remove foamboard from behind a mounted original for proper reframing.*

burnishing tool. The knife may be kept sharp by grinding on a coarse 100 grit 1"x7" sanding stick available at beauty supply stores. A bamboo tool was recently used to help separate a large 32"x40" original painting that had been dry mounted to a 3/16" foamboard that had badly warped.

The shape of a burnisher doesn't matter, but some materials—such as metal—have been known to transfer a discoloration to matboard bevels. Some materials may also resist sliding along a toothed surface, not allowing them to glide as smoothly as an aged or seasoned bone burnisher will. Most alternative burnishers have actually been developed for other technical uses—vinyl transfer designs, gilding—and should only be used as temporary substitutes for bevel smoothing.

### Seasoning a New Bone Burnisher

A new burnisher should be seasoned with oil prior to first use, much like you would a new gourmet sauté pan. Liberally apply vegetable or corn oil to all sides of the bone and remove the excess with a clean, absorbent cotton rag. Then let it sit overnight to completely absorb the

oil. Natural materials—not plastic or synthetic—will readily absorb the oil into the dried bone, altering the original white color of the polished bone to a softer yellow. The darkening of the bone is the direct result of oil absorption but will not leave the bone oily in any way.

A seasoned burnishing bone is extremely smooth and glides along the surface. If used to separate window mats or remove strips of art paper, it may become contaminated with adhesive residue, which will inhibit a smooth glide. A little solvent removes unwanted adhesives but also dries out the bone, so re-oiling may become necessary. It might be better practice to have a second bone for separating p-s layers, thus reserving one specifically for bonding PSAs.

Besides giving the burnisher a smoother surface, the reason for seasoning (oiling) is to seal the new bone from the dirt and oil found on human hands. This can make dirty bones sticky. Older, untreated burnishers will eventually take on a similar aged look but will also absorb other dirt and contaminants that may make the bone sticky.



*New, unoled bone (top) and an aged and oiled bone (bottom).*



*Rough edges on any window mat bevel need to be lightly burnished for a polished finish.*

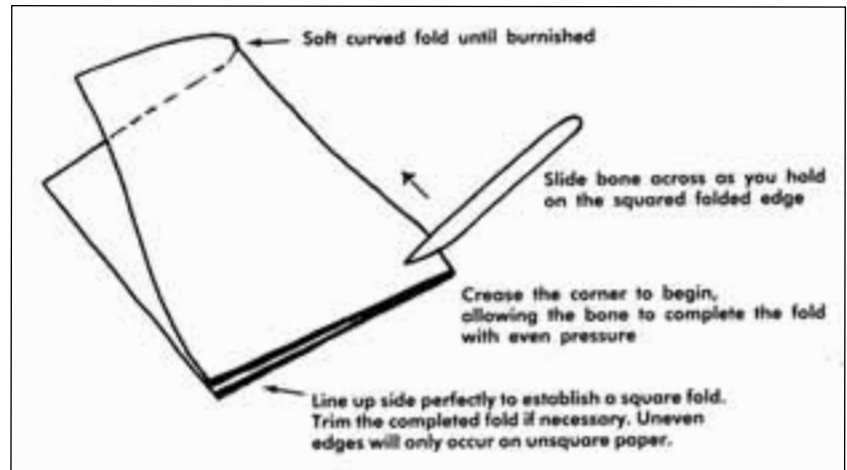
## Other Uses

Bone folders are favored for their accuracy of creasing a correctly squared sheet of paper. Simply align along one side and run the folder down the folded edge. When cutting most soft museum rag, 12-ply tiered mats, or when a blade is getting dull, a burnisher easily smoothes down newly cut raw or ragged edges and gives the mat a more polished and completed look. A ragged, unburnished bevel edge looks unprofessional, unfinished, and has been known to lose a point or two during competition judging. Slight imperfections in mat corners such as tiny overcuts may also be visually reduced—though never healed—by using a bone burnisher. Turned mat edges may not be the solution to a hooked corner, but they most definitely should be a professional framer's finishing touch.

When cutting very thick 8- to 15-ply pinstriped or bevel-banded, tiered mats, the planes at a window corner can shift. This is merely the result of a blade being inserted then removed from the very dense board. By burnishing the bottom edge of the bevel from the back of the mat, the shifted corner is flattened and the window is realigned. Since all burnishing is done from the back of the mat, any shiny spots resulting from a polishing of the board surface will not be visible.

## Less Is More

Very little pressure is required to smooth the cut edge of a mat. Do not press hard or aggressively burnish, as too much pressure may dent the board or remove the crisp edge between the mat face and the bevel itself. The idea is not to re-angle the bevel, just to clean it up.



*Turning a rough-cut bevel into a polished one.*

One quick, gentle slide down each side of the window will turn the rough edge into a clean-cut window.

Consider for a moment the impact this could have on your professional image. The viewer never quite realizes why the matted picture looks better; it just somehow does. So if that bone burnisher you bought last year is buried in the back of a drawer somewhere, maybe it's time to dig it up and put it to some good use. ■

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**Chris A. Paschke, CPF, GCF, CMG**, mounting editor, owns Designs Ink in Tehachapi, CA, featuring custom framing, fine art/graphic design, and consulting. Specializing in mounting, matting, design, and fine art, she teaches at The National Conference. She has written four books on mounting including *The Mounting and Laminating Handbook* (third edition) and *Creative Mounting, Wrapping, and Laminating*, available from PFM PubCo. She may be contacted through [www.designsinkart.com](http://www.designsinkart.com).