

## FRAMING TIPS

By Carolyn Ellingson, Artgroove.com  
(contains some San Francisco Bay Area references)

Whether you take your print to a framer or frame it yourself, there are some issues to consider. The following suggestions will help you discuss framing with a professional framer. If you are planning to frame your artwork yourself, it's kind of a checklist of what's involved.

### MAT

Use only 100% acid-free, museum quality, 4-ply mat board in a neutral color. A warm white looks best with the paper I usually use, which is Arches Cover. A bright white mat will probably be too white and cause the paper of the print to look yellowish. At any rate, hold the mat up to the print to get as close a match as possible. Neutral mats are used by most fine artists, rather than colored mats. Look around in galleries and museums to confirm this for yourself.

I sometimes prefer to float prints on top of a mat, leaving some of the mat showing around the print between the print and the frame (maybe about an inch or an inch and a half giving a total of 3 or more inches of white space around the image). This mounting style allows the deckle edge of the paper to show. If you do this, the print should be attached to the mat board with hinges made of linen tape at the top of the print only. The reason for attaching only at the top is that paper expands and contracts with changes in humidity, and if fastened this way will be free to expand and contract without permanent distortion.

If you are floating a print, you must use a spacer for "breathing space" between the glass and the print itself. This keeps the glass from resting directly on the print, which would eventually harm the print. (With a cut out mat on top of the print, the mat performs this function--keeping the glass from being in direct contact with the print.) Spacers needed when you're floating a print can be purchased through Daniel Smith Art Supplies Catalog (call 1-800-426-6740 for catalog). The spacers I use are called "Framespace" or "Econospace" and are acid-free plastic spacers which either fit over the edges of 1/8" glass or Plexiglass or have a removable strip that allows them to be affixed to the edges of the glass. These spacers can be cut to size with utility scissors.

Or, if your framer does the framing, he/she can cut spacers out of mat board which are inserted and glued in place alongside the sides of the inner frame, creating a very neat and shallow "shadow box" effect.

### FRAME

Keep it simple. Generally speaking, fancy colors and shapes and too bold a frame will overshadow the artwork and look inappropriate to the trained art viewer's eye (for a guide to fine art framing, check on the framing in fine art galleries and museums--for contemporary art, usually neutral matboard and simple frames are used).

Daniel Smith sells frame pieces cut to size. I buy my frames wholesale at Hankins-Koppel in South San Francisco. However, a business license and a resale license are required in order to purchase their products.

### GLASS OR PLEXIGLASS

For large pieces or pieces to be shipped, you should use Plexiglass. It is lightweight and does not break easily. **HOWEVER, PLEXIGLASS DOES SCRATCH EASILY**, so be careful. I use 1/8" thick "framing grade" Plexiglass. It should be cleaned with a special cleaner (Brilliance). *Do not* use glass cleaners, ammonia, etc. on Plexiglass. You can buy Plexiglass cut to size at Tap Plastics in San Francisco (check the phone book). Ask for framing grade 1/8" plexi with the blue plastic protective

cover which is easily stripped away. Abe Schuster in Oakland sells Plexiglass for less and has seconds as well, but watch out for flaws. Abe is at 2940 West Street in Oakland (653-3588). In San Francisco try Regal Plastics (used to be Plastic Sales) at 2250 McKinnon ( Bayshore), 550-1848 (M-F 8-5) if you have a resale license—however since the company was sold they are less accommodating to artists. Tap is your best all around bet—you will not need a resale or business license to shop there.

Specialty glass is available, such as with UV protection or non-glare. It's best just to hang fine art away from exposure to bright light. I think non-glare glass changes the image in that it cuts down on visibility to an undesirable degree.

#### BACKING BOARD (Behind the Mount Board)

The mount board (piece where the art is attached) should be acid free mat-board. Use foam core behind the mount board, acid-free being preferable.

#### DIMENSIONS

Allow a generous border of white space around the print image, especially on a large print. Three inches or more is standard. Slightly more space is traditionally left at the bottom margin, or the print may appear to be falling. Sometimes a very large amount of white space around a small print looks very good.

#### HANGING

Hang at eye level--not too high. *Most people hang artwork way too high on the wall*~~those who know~~ Two images hung together should relate to each other rather than face away from each other. Art work should preferably relate to the furnishings nearby, and often is placed in conjunction with some piece of furniture.

#### MY FRAMER:

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