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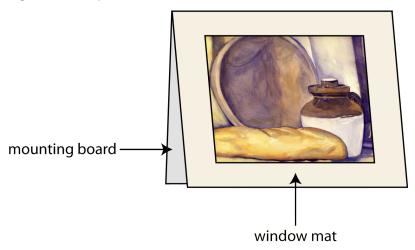
Chapter 1. Mounting and Matting Art Overview

Attaching fragile art between a mounting board and a window mat protects the art and enhances its appearance.

What Does Mounting Art Involve?

Mounting a piece of art means attaching the art to a sturdy piece of material that will rest behind the art. This material could be matboard, cardboard, or something similar. Acid-free mounting material is best to protect the art from fading over time. The art and its mounting board might then be placed inside a frame or inserted into a protective plastic sleeve.

Figure 1: Example of Mounted and Matted Art



The sturdy mounting board adds strength to keep fragile art upright, especially when it is hanging or held in a vertical position.

Mounting a piece of art minimizes damage from everyday handling. If an object accidentally hits the back of the art, the mounting board can help save the art from being ruined.

Why Add a Window Mat?

Certain types of art typically have a window mat in front of the art. The window mat is a piece of matboard with an area cut out to reveal the art behind it. This leaves a border around the visible art area.

The window mat serves as a spacer when the art is framed, to keep the glass from touching the art. Original watercolor paintings can be ruined if any moisture (such as condensation on the frame glass) touches the paint, causing the paint to run. Charcoal drawings can be smudged if the frame glass pushes against the drawing. The window mat provides the protection of extra space.

A window mat can improve the viewing experience by allowing visual space for the eyes to rest. It focuses the viewer to see the art in the middle of the window mat. Different window mat colors can bring out various colors in the art and affect the mood that the art suggests. There are many opinions about choosing window mat colors and the width of the border.



Note: Some art galleries require window mats to be white or off-white.

Getting the Art Mounted and Matted

Ideally, the artist should mount and mat the work of art soon after finishing it and before shipping, framing, or storing it. It is especially important to be very careful with art before it is mounted and matted, since it is more susceptible to damage from handling and accidents.

The window mat can be changed out at any time. A different color or style will bring out various features of the art and can match the displayed art to the decorating style of where it will be placed. Another time to change the window mat is when the size of its frame is changed.

To mount or mat a piece of art, you can buy precut mounting boards and window mats, or you can buy a larger piece of matboard and cut your own. Non-standard sizes and shapes will require custom cutting for the mounting board and window mat.

In the case that fragile art will remain unframed, the art should be placed in a protective plastic sleeve or shrink-wrapped. The art will still need mounting and matting to keep the plastic from touching the art.

Cutting Your Own Mounting Boards and Window Mats

If you are able to cut your own mounting boards and window mats, you will gain these advantages:

- Cutting your own mats saves money.
- You will be able to handle non-standard sizes.
- You will be ready to mount and mat art at any time, as long as you have the materials on hand. This also allows you to easily handle the possibility of a customer changing the size after you begin.

• You will have leftover matboard that you can use for other projects.

You should be aware of these impacts to your work when cutting your own mounting boards and window mats:

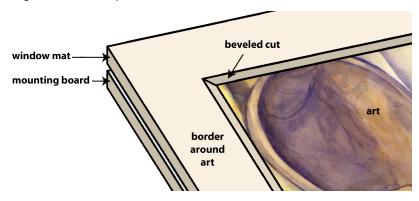
- Large pieces of matboard require a large storage space.
- It takes more time to cut your own mats than to use precut mats.
- You may need extra lead time to order and receive large pieces of matboard.
- You will need a large flat work surface on which to:
 - Place the large matboard to mark it with pencil for cutting.
 - Place your mat cutter equipment, which can take a lot of room when cutting matboard.
- You will need to have extra tools on hand.
- You will need to be extra careful around sharp tools.
- The process will require extra quality inspections.
- You may need to redo the task to produce a better quality outcome, which takes extra time and materials. You should add extra time when estimating a finish date. You should also make sure to have extra materials on hand.

Chapter 2. Mounting and Matting Procedures

You can cut your own mounting boards and window mats, or you can buy them already cut and then attach them to the art.

To mount and mat a piece of art, you will attach it between a window mat and a mounting board.





- 1. Decide on the outer dimensions of the mounting board and window mat, which will match the frame size. This decision affects the border width.
- 2. Make sure the art will look just right within the inner window mat area.
- 3. Make sure the entire piece of art, including its background media, will be less than the frame size so that you will have room to attach tape to secure it.
- 4. Confirm the frame size, window mat color, and the border width with the customer.
- 5. Either gather your precut mounting board and window mat or prepare to cut your own. If you are using precut mats, skip the rest of this step.
 - a. Gather a piece of matboard that is large enough to cut two mats. The areas to be cut should be defect-free. The color of the mounting board is usually not important, since it will be hidden from view.
 - b. On the back of the large piece of matboard, mark the outer cut lines in pencil for two mats at the desired frame size.
 - c. Set up your mat cutter equipment on a large flat sturdy surface with plenty of space for you to move around it. Keep all sharp items in a safe place while they are not being used.
 - d. Using the straight cutter, cut the outer edges of the window mat and the mounting board.

Use a fresh blade in the straight cutter to start this project, since that is a key element to a quality cut.

Note:

- · Sharp blades!
- Be extremely careful when handling blades. It is easy to seriously cut yourself. Keep emergency medical supplies on hand.
- Dispose of used blades in a safe manner so that no one handling the trash will be injured.
- e. On the back of the window mat, mark pencil lines from edge to edge where the borders will be.
- f. Set up the mat cutter equipment to cut a bevel cut. Use a fresh blade in the bevel cutter to start this project, since that is a key element to a quality cut. The quality of this cut is more important than the quality of the outer cut.
- g. Place the window mat face down into the mat cutter equipment so that you can see the pencil lines.
- h. Line up the pencil lines with the straight guide of the mat cutter equipment.
- i. Align the bevel cutter's guideline to the start of the border line.
- j. If your bevel cutter has a button to lock in the position, press it down.
- k. Holding the board securely in place, pull the bevel cutter in a firm, continuous motion to create the cut until the bevel cutter's guideline reachs the end of the border line.
- l. Remove the bevel cutter.
- m. Repeat to cut the remaining three border lines.
- n. Remove the window mat and inspect it carefully for quality.
- o. You will have a leftover piece of matboard where there is now a window. You can save the leftover piece to use in future projects.
- 6. On the back of the art, very lightly mark an up arrow close to the edge in pencil to remind you which side is the top of the art.
- 7. Position the art on the window mat as follows:

- a. Check to see whether the art is perfectly centered on its background media and that the window mat borders are symmetrical. If both conditions are met, you can follow these steps to attach the art to the back of the window mat. Otherwise, you will need to figure out how to hold the art in the desired position on the window mat while you attach the tape.
- b. On the back of the window mat, lightly mark the center of each side in pencil. Then draw vertical lines and horizontal lines from edge to edge to divide the window mat into equal sections.
- c. On the back of the art, lightly mark the center of each side in pencil at the very edge of the art background media.
- d. Place the art face down on the back of the window mat.
- e. Match the centered pencil marks on the art to the centered pencil lines on the window mat. Hold this position while you tape the art in the next step.
- 8. Attach the art to the back of the window mat in a way that minimizes contact with the art background media. This will reduce any damage to the art and make it easy to change out the mat at a later date. Attach the art in only a few places to allow opportunity for the background media to expand and contract without causing the background media to warp. To attach the art:
 - a. Place a small amount of acid-free linen hinge tape at the top edge of the art in a couple places to secure it to the window mat. For larger frame sizes, you may need to attach more tape in more spots along the top.
 - b. Place a small amount of acid-free linen hinge tape at the left and right sides of the art near the edge in order to secure it on the sides of the window mat.
 - c. Double-check to make sure the art is still positioned as desired.
 - d. Add a couple more small amounts of tape on the left and right sides.
 - e. Leave the bottom edge untaped.
 - f. Cut slightly larger pieces of acid-free linen hinge tape to cover each previously taped area. Attach these pieces in a way that adds security over the original tape without touching any of the art.
- 9. Connect the window mat to the mounting board:
 - a. Place the window mat face down.
 - b. Place the mounting board face down.
 - c. Position them to touch all along their top edges.
 - d. Place three or more pieces of acid-free linen hinge tape on the seam to connect the mat pieces at the top on their back sides.
- 10. Fold the mounting board back behind the window mat to form a type of "sandwich", with the art now positioned between the window mat and the mounting board.
- 11. Now you are ready to protect the art further by one of these methods:
 - Placing the "sandwich" in a frame.

- Placing the "sandwich" in a slightly larger plastic sleeve.
- Placing the "sandwich" into shrink wrap.
- 12. Enjoy your newly protected art, which is ready to be displayed, stored, or delivered!

Chapter 3. Reference for Mounting and Matting Art

Refer to this section for typical sizes and specifications of materials.

Mounting Board and Window Mat Outer Sizes

The outer dimensions of a mounting board and a window mat need to match the frame size that could be used to frame the art, regardless of whether the art will actually be framed. The frame size is not the physical size of the frame, but rather the size of the recessed area on the back of the frame where the contents will be placed. When matting art, the frame size will be significantly larger than the dimensions of the visible art area in order to allow room for a border around the art.

Here are some typical frame sizes. You can often buy precut mounting boards and window mats in these sizes. If you need a different size, you can cut it yourself from a larger piece of matboard.

Table 1. Common Frame Sizes

Short Side	Long Side
8"	10"
9"	12"
11"	14"
12"	16"
14"	18"
16"	20"
18"	24"
20"	24"
22"	28"
24"	30"
24"	36"
30"	40"

Inner Window Mat Dimensions and Border Widths

Here are some common sizes of precut window mats along with the calculated borders. The window and border dimensions are approximate. The actual window area is usually slightly smaller than is shown in this chart, and the actual border is usually slightly larger. This slight size difference provides

an overlap for art which happens to be the same size as the window area. The overlap keeps the art from falling out and hides any small areas of the art background media which should not be visible.

If you need a different size, you can cut the window mat yourself.

Note: In addition to rectangular window mats, you can often find precut window mats in other shapes such as ovals and circles.

Table 2. Common Precut Window Mat Sizes

Outer Measurement Short Side	Outer Measurement Long Side	Inner Window Measurement Short Side	Inner Window Measurement Long Side	Border Width of Each Short Side	Border Width of Each Long Side
8"	10"	~5"	~7"	~1.5"	~1.5"
11"	14"	~8"	~10"	~2"	~1.5"
12"	16"	~8"	~12"	~2"	~2"
16"	20"	~11"	~14"	~3"	~2.5"
18"	24"	~13"	~19"	~2.5"	~2.5"
20"	24"	~16"	~20"	~2"	~2"
22"	28"	~18"	~24"	~2"	~2"

Sources for Precut Mounting Boards and Window Mats

Precut mounting boards and window mats are widely available in common sizes. Some online sources are:

- Mounting Boards: https://framing4yourself.com/shop/products/pre-sized-mats-without-windows/ pre-sized-crescent-918-very-white-regular-mat-boar/
- Window Mats: https://framing4yourself.com/shop/products/pre-cut-window-mats/4-ply-pre-cut-white-window-mats-pkg-12/

Sources for Large Pieces of Matboard

Consider buying a large piece of matboard when you need a non-standard size, when you cannot locate the precut size you need, or when you simply prefer to make your own mats for a number of reasons. Then you will cut it to the size you need.

Acid-free matboard is recommended to reduce fading over time.

Many art supply stores and craft stores carry matboard. Here are some online sources for buying large sizes of matboard:

- Off-white color: Dick Blick, Crescent RagMat 32"x40" Palm Beach White, available online at: https://www.dickblick.com/items/13007-1396/
- Other colors: https://www.dickblick.com/products/crescent-ragmat-matboard/
- A different source for white and off-white colors: https://framing4yourself.com/shop/products/decorative-mat-board-whites-and-whites/palm-beach-white-987/