

Framing Your Artwork

Frames and Supplies

RW Chang & Co.

<http://www.rwchang.com>

Located in Arlington (972) 647-0757

American Frame

<http://www.americanframe.com>

JFM

<http://www.jfm.net>

Framing Supplies - Shop

<http://www.framingsupplies-shop.com>

Framing 4 Yourself

<http://www.framing4yourself.com>

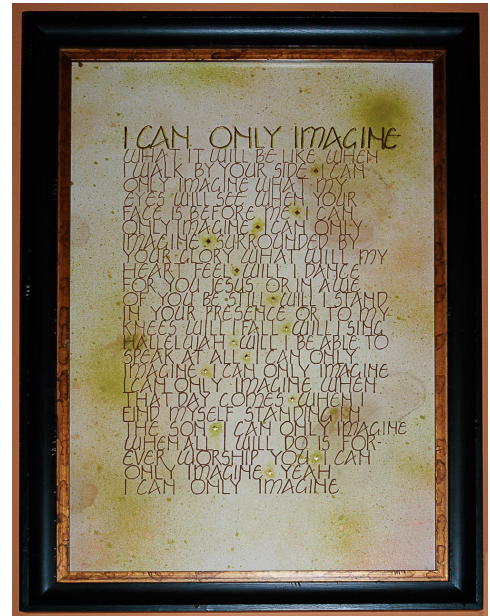
Jerry's Artarama

<http://www.jerrysartarama.com>

Dick Blick

<http://www.dickblick.com>

and many more.



Artworks on paper need to be protected from acid, airborne pollutants, UV radiation, moisture, mold, and fungi. The materials and techniques used to frame the art is part of the conservation process. The value of the artwork may be personal and have little to do with the actual cost of an item.

The most important item to attend to is to make certain that all of the items in the frame package are ph neutral. This includes the mat, the backing board, and any adhesives used to attach the artwork to the backing board.

Precut mats are convenient, but tend to not be ph neutral. The backing board included with precut mats is often chipboard, which is not ph neutral. Look for the label that indicates it is “archaically safe”

Notes from: Ask Mrs Biddington

One piece of advice: Don't frame the art to match a room in your house. Choose picture frames and mats that will enhance the work of art itself, so that if you move, redecorate, or decide to hang the piece in another location, it will always look appropriate. Avoid framing that overwhelms the artwork. Remember: the artwork is the star--the matting & framing are supporting players.

The paper should be "hinged" to its support with Japanese rice paper and a wheat or rice starch paste. Hinging is like taping, but the acid-free materials used in the process ensure no damage will be caused to the artwork. (Masking tape and "Scotch" tape are harmful and should be avoided completely.) Any original work on paper or limited edition print should be hinged to guarantee the value of the work of art, and prevent it from being ruined. Never paste the sides or the entire back to a support--a process known as dry mounting. This technique is almost always irreversible and should only be considered when framing posters with no value.

The mat provides a rigid support for the work of art, to prevent bending and folding and other damages that might occur to paper when being handled and touched. It separates the work of art from the glazed surface, creating a "breathing space." In addition, mats are used for their aesthetic properties, often strengthening features already present in the piece of art. Either way you decide to mat your piece, the bottom margin is generally slightly wider than the top to give the entire image a visual weight. The sides should equal the dimensions of the top margin. Standard margin sizes are 3" to 4" inches on the bottom and 3" at the top and sides; these dimensions, however, will increase or decrease proportionally according to the size of the work of art.

Acrylic surfaces, often known as Plexiglas, are often suitable for framing because they are better thermal insulators, as well as shatterproof, and can be treated with an ultraviolet filter to protect the work of art. Large pieces of art should usually be placed behind Plexiglas because it is a lighter substance than glass, and therefore there is less chance of the piece falling off the wall. Yet, acrylic surfaces have a propensity for attracting dust and cannot be cleaned with regular glass cleaners. In addition, due to their inherent properties of static electricity, acrylic surfaces should NEVER be used in framing pastels, charcoals, or any other powdery pigment surface.

The whole array of art works on paper—calligraphy, drawings, watercolors, gouaches, pastels, etchings, engravings, woodblocks, lithographs, silkscreens & photographs--are almost always put behind a glazed surface for preservation. However, the work should NEVER be placed directly against the glazed surface.

If you are framing an oil or acrylic canvas in a wooden frame, you may apply frame sealing tape into the rabbet to protect the art from acid in the wood seeping onto the art.

Steps to frame artwork with a mat (Starting with artwork)

1. Measure the artwork
2. Determine the amount of overlap, if any for the mat to cover the edge of the art. 1/8" on all four edges is a good amount.
3. Determine the amount of mat to be included around the top, bottom, and sides. Often the bottom has a larger dimension to give an optical balance.
4. Add the mat dimensions to the artwork dimensions to determine the frame size.
5. Cut or order your mat, glass and frame.

Artwork sandwich

1. Lay the backing board on the table.
2. Place the artwork on the backing board, centered where the mat opening is.
3. Place the mat on top of the artwork and adjust the placement.
4. Place a weight on the artwork and remove the mat.
5. Attach the artwork with paper or linen hinges or photo corners.
6. Check the placement of the mat/ art. If accurate, attach the mat to the backing board with double stick tape or ATG tape.

Assemble the frame/art

1. Place the frame front side down on the table.
2. Pr-drill or use an awl to start a screw hole for the D-bracket approximately 1/3 of the height of the frame from the top.
3. Insert and clean the glass.
4. Place the art sandwich into the frame. Check for any lint or dust.
5. Use framing points to fix the art sandwich into the frame.
6. Cut a sheet of paper (butcher paper is fine) to cover the back of the frame. Use double stick tape or ATG tape on the frame to attach the dust cover. Cut or sand off the excess paper.
7. Attach the D-rings in the holes that were pre-drilled.
8. Cut a picture wire the width of the frame plus about 8-10 ". Fasten the wire to one D-ring with a knot and wrap the excess around the wire.
9. Pull the wire into the opposite D-ring and fasten it with **NO SLACK!** Wrap the excess wire around the wire.
10. With both ends attached, pull in the middle. There should be about 1-1 1/2 " of slack. This is just enough to hold the frame against the wall and not sag forward.
11. Hang your frame using two hooks spaced approximately 1/3 of the width of your frame. This helps prevent shifting of the frame and keeps the art level on the wall.



D Ring

Steps to frame artwork with a mat (Starting with a frame)

Often we have a frame that we want to reuse. We simply reverse the math to determine the dimensions of the mat.

1. Measure the frame's inner dimension. (Inside the rabbet)
2. Measure the artwork. Determine the overlap of mat over the art. (1/8" or so)
3. Subtract the artwork width from the frame width. Divide this number in half. This is the mat width for the sides.
4. Subtract the artwork height from the frame height. Divide this number in half. This is the top / bottom mat width.
5. If possible, adjust the top measurement to match the sides and put the excess mat at the bottom.
6. Follow the directions above to assemble the art sandwich and frame.

If you want to create a piece of art specifically for a particular frame, Determine the mat size and measure the opening to be left and create the art in that dimension – plus margin for attaching to the backing board. See Example:

	width	height
Existing frame	10.000	14.000
Art size	-6.000	-8.000
minus 1/8" all around for overlap	-0.250	-0.250
Mat/art difference	3.750	5.750
divide by 2	1.875	2.875
This is the width of the mat, top and sides.	1.875	

Since the height difference is significant, make the top equal to the sides and place the additional inch at the bottom.

Bottom Dimension		3.875
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Steps to framing art on a panel or canvas.

1. Measure the art.
2. Order the frame to fit. If the canvas is deep, be sure to look for frames with a rabbet to accommodate it.
3. Fasten in place with clips. If the canvas is deeper than the rabbet, one alternative is to use offset clips to hold the canvas in place. Order clips in a size to make up the difference between rabbet depth and canvas depth.



Steps to frame an artwork without a mat or with a floating mat

1. Determine the amount of margin that you want around the art. Measure width and height of the art. If using a floating mat style, determine the finished dimension to include the mat board.
2. Order the frame, glass, and backing board to size. Order spacers. They come in various sizes and styles. The larger the artwork, the deeper the spacer to allow for bowing in the center. Basically, they are a square or rectangle of plastic with double stick tape on one side. Lengths of balsa wood can also be used. Paint them black or whatever color the frame is to make them disappear. Spacers keep the art from touching the glass and being damaged by friction, moisture, etc.
3. Place frame face down on the table.
4. Insert glass and clean.
5. Attach spacers to the edge of the glass. The frame will hide them.
6. Hinge or dry mount the art on either a mat board for a floating mat, or onto a backing board. Dry mounting is not reversible and should not be used with very valuable pieces of artwork.
7. Insert the art into the frame. Check for lint /dust.
8. Fix into place using pushers or points.

Supplies Needed (the minimum)

Frame
Mat board or spacers
Backing board
2 D-rings
Picture wire

Drill or awl to start the hole for the D-rings
Points to secure the art to the frame or spring clips or offset clips
Point setting gun or hand set points with pusher
Screwdriver

CARING FOR YOUR TREASURES



Documents, manuscripts, and works of art on paper such as prints, drawings, and watercolors are inherently fragile but can be easily and effectively protected from damage.

PROPER CARE AND HANDLING

Handle paper objects as little and as gently as possible. When doing so, be sure that your hands are freshly washed. Window mats provide maximum protection for works of art on paper because they allow items to be viewed and transported without direct handling. Unmatted artwork and documents are more vulnerable. Transport them in folders and remove individual items with both hands.

When consulting documents, place them flat and at least three inches away from the edge of the table on a clean blotter or sheet of paper. Fragile or frequently used documents may be placed in polyester sleeves for added protection; surrogate copies may be substituted for the originals for display or use.

Do not undertake repairs on your own and never apply pressure-sensitive (self-adhering) tapes to valuable documents or artwork. Use folders to organize documents rather than attaching paper clips, staples, or rubber bands—all of which can cause damage.

STORAGE

Because paper is damaged by prolonged contact with chemically unstable materials, the choice of materials for storage and exhibition is critical. Mats, folders, and storage boxes should be made of cotton rag or 100 percent chemically purified woodpulp with an alkali reserve equivalent to two percent calcium carbonate and buffered to a pH of 7.5 to 10. Matboard and folders should be rigid enough to provide adequate support. Store artwork in mats or within individual enclosures that are larger than the items. Documents in good condition may be stored in groups within folders; the number of items per folder depends upon their size, thickness, condition, and the depth of the folder. Isolate newsprint and other highly acidic materials by storing them separately. Individual enclosures offer the best protection for damaged and fragile items.

Store matted works or foldered items in flat files or in appropriately sized boxes specifically designed for storing

works of art or documents. Oversized objects should be stored flat whenever possible, not rolled or folded. They are best kept in the drawers of flat files (map cases), made of anodized aluminum or powder-coated steel.

If done properly with sound materials, matting and framing provides the best protection for art on paper. A brown cut edge at the window opening is a common sign of poor quality mat board. It is essential to choose a framer who uses proper materials and techniques. Adhesives used to attach the artwork to the mat must be chemically stable, non-staining, and readily removable. The essentials of proper matting and framing are described in a companion AIC guide, *Matting and Framing Works of Art and Artifacts on Paper*.

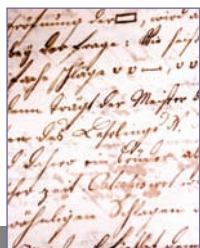
LIMITING LIGHT EXPOSURE

Exposure to light can cause fading of media, such as watercolor and writing inks. Such exposure can also yellow, darken, and weaken paper. Light damage is determined by the wavelength of the light, the length of the exposure, and the intensity of the illumination. Damage is cumulative and irreversible. Because all light causes damage, display works on paper for finite periods of time. Keep light levels low and eliminate daylight whenever possible. Block windows with shades, blinds, or curtains.

Light sources containing ultraviolet (UV) rays are especially harmful. UV is found in all daylight, most abundantly in sunlight, and in many fluorescent and metal halogen lamps. Incandescent or tungsten lights are preferred, but because they emit heat, place these light sources a distance from the artwork. UV filters to screen out UV radiation may be purchased for fluorescent tubes, windows, or cases.

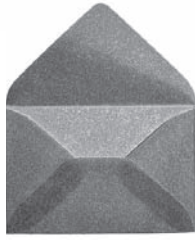
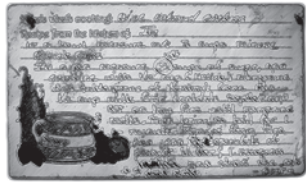
CONTROLLING TEMPERATURE AND RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Keep objects in a cool, dry environment. Maintain a temperature below 72 degrees Fahrenheit with relative humidity (RH) between 30 percent and 50 percent. Warm or moist conditions accelerate deterioration, and encourage mold growth and insect activity. Keep temperature and RH within a narrow, constant range. Climatic fluctuations cause papers to expand and contract. This movement, although



A GUIDE FOR CLEANING, STORING, DISPLAYING, HANDLING, AND PROTECTING YOUR PERSONAL HERITAGE

DOCUMENTS AND ART ON PAPER



“DUST, SOOT, AND SOIL ARE DIFFICULT TO REMOVE SAFELY FROM DELICATE, POUROUS PAPER”

slight, can lead to structural weakening of paper, undermine the attachment of media, and cause distortions such as buckling of paper.

Frames and storage enclosures provide some degree of protection against daily fluctuations but will not protect paper from long-term or seasonal changes. Portable dehumidifiers can help control high levels of RH and fans that help circulate air can discourage mold growth. Humidifiers may be used in areas where extremely low RH occurs during the winter. Do not store works of art in basements or attics, or hang them in bathrooms or over heat sources.

LIMITING EXPOSURE TO GASEOUS POLLUTION AND AIRBORNE PARTICULATES

Pollutants from industrial gases, auto emissions, and heating sources are readily absorbed into paper and media and may form compounds detrimental to their stability. Dust, soot, and soil are difficult to remove safely from delicate, porous paper surfaces. Sources of indoor air pollution, such as ozone from copying machines and fumes from new construction materials, paint, new carpets, janitorial supplies, and wooden cabinets, can also degrade paper and media. One way to protect paper is to fully enclose each object in housing made with appropriate materials. Frames must be glazed and well sealed. Documents and unframed artwork should be protected by storage in folders within containers made of permanent durable material.

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

Most natural or man-made disasters, such as floods or fire, involve water. Even a small amount of water from a leaky roof or pipe can do significant damage to a paper collection. When such a disaster occurs, contact a paper conservator, regional agency, or cultural institution for assistance. Immediate response within the first 48 hours is crucial to the successful salvage of materials and the prevention of mold growth.

WHEN TO CALL A CONSERVATOR

Some conditions require immediate attention. Wet or moldy materials or those with actively flaking media have high priority. If you notice pressure sensitive tapes and labels, brittle matboard, or changes in condition such as tears, detached hinges, or disfiguring stains, contact a conservator trained to address the special needs of works of art and artifacts on paper. Visit AIC's Find a conservator at www.conservation-us.org to find a qualified conservator in your area.

ABOUT AIC

The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) exists to support the conservation professionals who preserve our cultural heritage. AIC plays a crucial role in establishing and upholding professional standards, promoting research and publications, providing educational opportunities, and fostering the exchange of knowledge among conservators, allied professionals, and the public. AIC's 3,500 members all share the same goal: to preserve the material evidence of our past so we can learn from it today and appreciate it in the future.

To learn more about AIC or to become a member, please visit www.conservation-us.org.

The recommendations in this document are intended for guidance only. The AIC does not assume responsibility or liability.

American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC)

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