

# Compilation of Information Regarding Handling, Framing and Storing Artwork

The following information was garnered from many resources, all duly noted at the end or beginning of each section. The object of this pamphlet is to provide information on why art is framed (for protection and presentation) along with ideas of how to do it cost effectively. 3-D presentation basics included at end of pamphlet.

## Basics

### Handling

Always use great care in handling artwork. **Never touch the surface of the art with your bare fingers** as the natural oils, acids and salts on your skin can transfer to the artwork and cause permanent damage. If you must touch the art, wear cotton gloves.

### Storage

Artwork not displayed should be stored in a clean, dry, dark and well-ventilated area in moderate temperatures and humidity levels that do not fluctuate a great deal. Avoid storage in basements, attics or garages as extreme temperatures and moisture can damage the artwork.

Store unframed art flat with acid-free paper between each item, or store individual items in archival-quality envelopes.

**Avoid storing art between cardboard**, as it is highly acidic and can damage artwork over time.

Store **art created with charcoal, pastels, pencil or crayon** between glass to avoid rubbing and damaging the delicate artwork.

Preferably mat the item first with an acid-free mat and then cover it with glass to protect the artwork from any kind of contact with its surface. Never store framed art directly on the floor. Instead, rest the artwork on blocks or on shelves.

### Transporting

Never leave artwork in your car for extended periods of time. Carry framed artwork by the sides and avoid resting canvas against any items that may damage the surface.

### Matting

Have your artwork matted with an **acid-free mat board**. Poor quality mats may damage art over time due to the chemicals in the board that can transfer to the artwork. **Never use rubber cement or white glue** to adhere the art to a surface as it can cause damage to your precious artwork.

### Framing

Art created with ink, pencil, pastels or charcoal should be framed under glass. Pastel or charcoal artwork may be damaged by the build-up of electrostatic charge emitted from Plexiglas and similar plastics.

The frame you choose should be slightly larger than your artwork. Humidity may cause the paper to contract or expand and the extra space between the frame and artwork will allow for these changes without damaging the art.

Never frame artwork without also using a mat board between the art and frame. Wood may hold humidity that can transfer to the artwork. You can use acid-free frame spacing instead of matting, if you prefer. Also, if you have a glass insert to protect the artwork, make sure you add a mat to prevent the art from sticking to the glass over time.

### Display

Humidity, extreme fluctuating temperatures, direct sunlight, bright light, heating vents and fireplaces can damage your art. Avoid contact with fluorescent lighting that emits harmful high-energy rays that can deteriorate the artwork.

Hanging art on exterior walls may subject the art to temperature fluctuations and dampness in climates where temperatures vary greatly with the seasons. Avoid hanging artwork in kitchens or bathrooms for this same reason. Attach small cork pieces to the back of the frame to prevent mold from forming, by allowing air to circulate behind your framed art.

Never use clip-on lights on frames. The area of artwork exposed to this "hot spot" will cause drying and damage over time.

### *Special Care for different types of media*

#### **Acrylic Paintings**

Not to be framed under glass, acrylics are fairly sturdy and can survive in various lighting conditions. Dusting the surface lightly will prevent any build-up. Be careful when shipping acrylics in the winter as extremely cold temperatures may cause cracking. You'll have the same problem when storing your acrylics in unheated attics, basements or sheds if you live in areas that experience cold winters.

#### **Oil Paintings**

Also not for framing under glass as these have to "breathe". Direct sunlight will fade oils over time.

Make sure to dust frequently as build up may crack and peel the paint.

#### **Watercolors**

Frame watercolors behind glass. Colors may fade if fragile watercolors are exposed to strong lighting conditions.

#### **Oil Pastels and Chalk Pastels**

Pastels are very delicate and must be handled with extreme care. Framing under glass as soon as possible is a necessity to protect the easily damaged surface. Full sun can fade the colors but they can survive strong light or indirect sunlight. Never touch the surface of the art or place anything on its surface to avoid smearing.

### **Why frame your art?**

The main reasons to frame your art is (1) to enhance your work and compliment it and (2) to protect it from damage from elements like moisture and dust; and from physical damage from handling, touching and transporting. All works of art do not need to be framed. Often canvas paintings are gallery wrapped instead, which is where the canvas is wrapped around thick stretcher bars and secured to the back of the bars, leaving no visible attachment on the sides. While this may be good for some works art on canvas, works of art on paper and board will usually require framing for structure and protection.

### **How to Choose your art frame moulding.**

There are different schools of thought when choosing the style and color of moulding when framing your art. Most would agree though that a frame moulding should be selected that enhances and compliments the work of art. For example a traditional or classic style painting may best be suited by a wide gold leaf or wood tone moulding, whereas a contemporary or abstract piece may be better framed in a slim solid color moulding. A traditional or classic artwork and frame can also look very good in a modern decor and a modern artwork and frame can look good in a traditional decor.

Large works of art generally look better with wider mouldings, and smaller works of art generally look better with thinner mouldings, however this is not always the case. A large oversized frame can give a small size painting a look comparable to a diamond in a setting. Oil paintings often use an inner frame called a linen liner that is covered in a white or neutral fabric and a fillet (pronounced 'fill-it'), a decorative moulding that fits inside the frame or underneath the mat. A fillet can be used with or without a linen liner. A frame moulding and it's linen liner should never be the same width, the frame is usually wider than the liner.

Choosing the color of the moulding is pretty much common sense, you want to choose a color that compliments and enhances the colors in the artwork, not something that is going to clash. You also wouldn't want a busy looking frame to go with a busy image.

### **Framing Works of Art on Paper**

Special considerations must be made when framing works of art on paper due to the sensitivity to light, moisture, temperature, and restriction of movement. A practice called Conservation Mounting is used to protect the work not only from the elements, but also to avoid any damage to the work by the mounting method itself. You want to be able to remove the work from the framing without any visible indication that the artwork has ever been framed.

The artwork must be mounted on some type of support or mount board prior to being framed. The piece will be in direct contact with the mount board, so the choice of mount board is critical. It must be constructed of acid free material. Archival Foam Board is an excellent choice and will prevent moisture from entering through the back of the frame. All materials used when mounting the artwork should be acid free. Acid free adhesives and acid free corner pockets should be used to secure the artwork to the mount. Adhesives should be easy to remove, and should not stain or darken with age. An ideal adhesive is freshly made wheat or rice starch paste. Pressure sensitive tapes and masking tapes should never be used because they can permanently damage the picture and become difficult or even impossible to remove.

Framing works of art of paper usually requires framing under glass for protection. The glass or glazing as it called protects the picture from physical damage, moisture, pollutants, and damaging ultra-violet rays. There are several types of glazing used including regular glass, non-glare, museum, and acrylic (Plexiglas). Conservation glazing may be applied to glass which offers up to 97% UV protection. A mat board, (also called a mat, matte or matting) is a paper board or sheet with a cutout window that separates the artwork from the glass, and also serves as a border around the artwork. Matting also serves in the presentation of the artwork. A spacer may be used instead of a mat. The spacer is placed in the rabbet to keep the artwork from coming in contact with the frame or glass.

### **Fitting the Frame**

When measuring your artwork for the frame there is more to consider than just the height and width of the work itself. The rabbet or rebate as it is sometimes called, is where everything must fit. The frame moulding is routed slightly larger than the measurement of your art work so there is allowance for expansion and a little play. The rabbet depth should be deep enough to accommodate the artwork, mount board, matting, spacers, glass etc.

## **Framing Photographs - Tips For a Good Job** by Josh Austin as published on [www.EzineArticles.com/4167691](http://www.EzineArticles.com/4167691)

Here are some **top tips and common pitfalls**:

What are the main bits and pieces you'll need?

1. The mounting / backing board (rigid backing board, usually made from wood pulp or cotton fiber)
2. The matte (often bought separately, sits between the photo and the glass, with a window cut to the size of the image)
4. The glass
5. The frame (can be custom made or a stock size)
6. Double sided tape and/or self-adhesive 'mounting corners to attach the photo to the mounting board and/or the matte
7. Hanging materials (screws and wire attached to the back of the frame for hanging on the wall)

### **Aesthetic tips and mistakes to avoid:**

The matte should enhance, not distract from, the photograph. A good idea is to stick with neutral colors; white goes well with black and white shots whilst cream complements color images.

A fussy little border around a picture rarely adds impact. Go for a decent size of matte that creates empty space around the image (like in art galleries). Plus, leave a slightly larger border to the bottom than at the top - it's a bit of an optical illusion and just gives a more balanced appearance.

With black and white photos a plain black frame is almost always the most striking option.

**Practical tips and pit-falls:**

Don't sidestep the matte! The matte is essential for protecting your photograph in its frame. In time, condensation will always accumulate between the frame and the picture. Placing a matte between the two both prevents them from sticking together, and stops the condensation from causing mold.

When selecting the matte, mounting board and self-adhesive mounting corners, always choose those made from acid free, or archival, materials. All three of these items are at risk from the effects of UV light (the damage caused by which will eventually spread on to the photograph), if not acid free.

## Using Standard or Pre-Cut Mattes

If your work is on the small side, using pre-cut matte and back boards can be very economical. Standard sizes are most often: 5 x 7, 8 x 10, 11 x 14 or 16 x 20. They come in archival material, are beveled and offer many color choices. Pre-cut mattes fit into ready-made frames...another savings.

Keeping an eye out for sales at your favorite art supply store or online shop is another way to save on backing and mattes. Buying in bulk also saves money. If you don't need 25 mattes, maybe you know a friend or two that are in need of supplies. A joint purchase will save everyone money.

## Ready Made Frames

Another option for savings, ready made frames often come with a matte! Size will be a determining factor, but there are several options on the market that offer tremendous savings. Look for good quality and clean lines. It is best to avoid tabletop photo frames when creating a professional presentation of your work.

## Framing for Exhibition

The art should be the star. Exhibitions are not the time to frame for home décor. For the most part, avoid brightly colored mattes and gaudy frames. Ivory, antique white or medium white mattes present work cleanly and clearly. Dark frames create a boundary around your art without being distracting. BUT, for every rule there is an exception...some work just needs that touch of burnished gold or brushed pewter or brilliant blue to finish the mood. Not always, but occasionally.

Signatures are another factor. Try to sign the art with the medium you used to paint it. Sign before varnishing and avoid using permanent marking pens...art supply stores have archival pens. Date the work on the back or edge, but never the front, and make your signature legible but not the first thing to jump out at a viewer...subtle.

Hanging considerations - using eye hooks, one third down from the top edge of the piece, use picture wire not just any old wire, make it taut and carefully wrap along the cross-wire, covering the exposed ends with tape or plastic tubing. Cork or felt bumpers on the bottom, back corners help to stabilize the painting on the wall.

## Shopping Sources

Dick Blick - [www.dickblick.com](http://www.dickblick.com)

Jerry's Artarama - [www.jerrysartarama.com](http://www.jerrysartarama.com)

Cheap Joes - [www.cheapjoes.com](http://www.cheapjoes.com)

Michaels - [www.michaels.com](http://www.michaels.com)

Jo-Ann Fabrics - [www.joann.com](http://www.joann.com)

Dots n' Doodles - [www.dotsndoodles.com](http://www.dotsndoodles.com) 303 Marine Drive Astoria, OR 97103 PH: (503) 325-5081

Costco

For specially sized mattes and or framing

Campiche Studios - 101 Pacific Ave S Long Beach, WA 98631(360) 642-2264

The Picture Attic - Corner of North 8th and Pacific, Long Beach, (360)642-4770

Wiegardt Studio and Gallery - 2607 Bay Avenue, Ocean Park, WA 98640 (360) 665-5976

## 3-D Presentation Basics

When your art falls into the categories of sculpture, clay, wood, jewelry, collage or any other art form that is not two dimensional, extra care needs to be given regarding how the work is presented. Here are a few things to keep in mind...

**Balance** - If your work does not stand alone, make sure that your base or stand not only provides a solid "ground" but that it also works in a complimentary fashion with your piece. The base should be finished in a pleasing way and made of substantial material. Now is not the time for bits of cardboard or unfinished hunks of wood.

**Safety** - Are there sharp edges, eye-level projections or wires that may be dangerous to the viewer if they get too close? Believe it, viewers will get too close. Art of this nature needs to be exhibited in an area that can be protected. If the item is extra heavy, make sure it cannot topple.

**Protection** - Not all sculptures have smooth bottoms...some sculptures or glass pieces have very smooth bottoms. Either way, if your work is rough consider felt pads to protect the surface it will rest on. If it is very smooth maybe cork pads can help keep it from slipping and sliding. Whichever may be needed, make sure they do not extend past the edge of the piece.

### Jewelry

Many pieces of jewelry benefit from a solid color background or stand. There are several types of necklace, earring and bracelet stands available but make sure the stands are strong. Unbalanced tiers of earrings do nothing to promote the beauty of the work. Velvet necklace stands that are not strong enough for heavy glass or metal work can cause damage to your work. Stands with cardboard easel backs do not last very long once they have a bend...disaster awaits. Multi-colored displays make for an overwhelming background and do not showcase the work very well. Keep to dark, neutral colors made of strong material to display your work.

### Tags

Use jewelry sized price tags on your pieces whenever possible. You can use the thread that comes with the tags or substitute a gold or silver thread, but keep the size small and the lettering precise.

Check out eBay for display ideas and tags!