

Hints for mounting prints for competitions, exhibitions & shows

Most competitions, exhibitions and shows require prints to be mounted. Mounts are required to protect prints and keep them flat, to display prints in a pleasing and consistent manner, and to provide borders on which information such as entry number, title, author's name, etc., can be placed.

Different events will have different rules regarding mounts. The main specifications are:

- The mounting material, and its thickness and colour.
- How the print is to be attached to the mount
- The width of the mount border surrounding the print

Please make sure you read and observe the rules to ensure your mount is acceptable!

In the methods outlined below, the mount is made of a thin but stiff material, such as thick card or mat board, typically between 1 and 3 mm thick. Mat board is used by picture framers to make the border between a painting or photo and the frame. Both materials can be bought from art supply shops, and thick card can be purchased from office supply businesses (e.g. Office Works). Black mounts are recommended, as they complement most photographs, and lead the eye into the image, rather than distracting the eye from it.

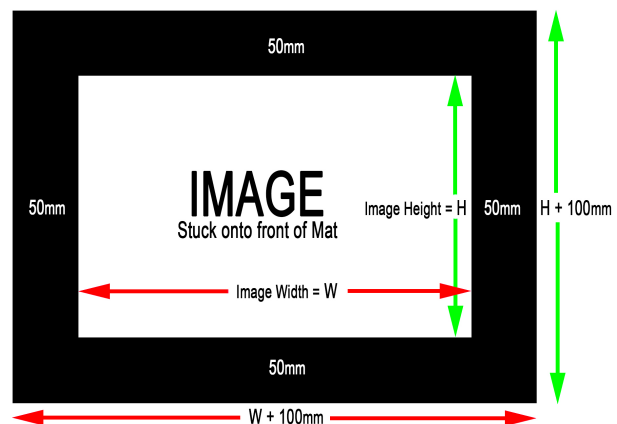
If you don't want to make your own mounts, pre-cut mounts ("mats") can be bought online and from some picture framing shops. These have a rectangular opening with bevelled edges. The mat sits on top of the photograph, and your photos must be cropped and/or printed to the correct size to fit the opening. Pre-cut mats can be purchased with openings to fit a number of standard print sizes, e.g. A4 or 25 x 20 cm.

Crazy Roy's on the eastern side of South Road at St. Marys is one place which sells pre-cut mats. They can also be purchased on-line. Crazy Roy's and some other framing shops will also cut custom sized mounts to your requirements, but these will be more expensive.

There are two methods for attaching the print to the mount.

A.) Simple Method: The print is attached to the front surface of the mount.

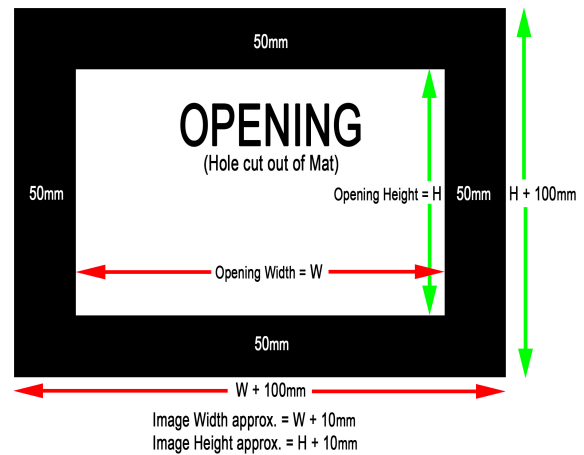
1. If your photo has been printed with a border, decide whether you will keep the border, or trim it off (carefully!) to make the print borderless. The latter will probably look better.
2. Measure the width and height of the print and use these with any requirements on mount border width to calculate the external size of the mount. For photos of A4 to A3 size, a common mount border width is 5 cm, so their mounts would be 10 cm longer and 10 cm wider than the print.
3. Draw a rectangle on the back of a sheet of mount material to show the edges of the mount, and using a sharp Stanley knife and steel ruler, carefully cut the new mount out of the sheet. Make sure that you have a cutting board or some other card under the one you are cutting, to protect the table, and that all cuts result in clean, straight edges!
4. On the front of the new mount, determine and lightly mark the positions of the four corners of your print. Ensure that you can erase marks on the mount material, so that they are not visible once the print is mounted.
5. Attach the print to the front of the mount, using the corner marks to accurately locate the print on the mount. You could use strips of double-sided tape (best) or photo glue to stick the print to the mount. Make sure the print is sitting flat on the mount, without bulges or gaps anywhere. There must be no tape or glue visible on the print or mount.
6. Erase any location points still visible on the front of the mount.



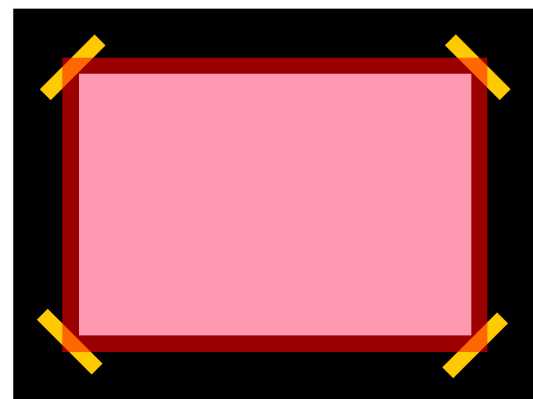
This method allows prints to be mounted at home with minimal equipment and effort. Its main drawback is that, depending how it is attached, if you later want to remove the print from the mount, it may be difficult or impossible to do so without damaging the print and/or the mount.

B.) Mat Method: The print is attached to the *rear* surface of a pre- or custom-cut mat, so that it is visible through the opening in the mat.

1. Your photo needs to be printed (or the mat cut, if it is being custom made) so that the image, excluding any border, is slightly larger than the opening in the mat. Most pre-cut mats have an opening one or two cm smaller in both width and height than the nominal size of the print they are designed for. This ensures that no gaps or print border will show between the image and the inside edge of the mat.
2. Place the photo, face downwards, on a clean, smooth, flat surface. Cut 4 small strips of magic or masking tape (about 5 cm long) tape and stick each one diagonally to the back of the print across a corner, leaving an overhang of one or two cm on either side of the print. Make sure the overhanging ends of each strip do not stick to the surface on which the print is resting.
3. Turn the photo face up. The overhanging ends of each strip of tape will now be sticky side up.
4. Take the mat and lower it down close to the photograph without touching the strips of tape.
5. Adjust the position of the mat as required. There should be no gaps or border showing in the opening in the mat. Also, make sure that horizons are level.
6. Once the mat is correctly positioned, lower it onto the print, and press down firmly on the corners, so that the tape on the print sticks to the back of the mat, attaching the photo to the mat.
7. With the tape strips now holding the print in position on the mat, it's a good idea to add more tape around the edges of the print to make it secure.
8. In this process, make sure the print remains flat, and that it does not bulge or curl within the opening in the mat.
9. To improve the protection of the print, you could also attach a piece of card to the back of the mount, but this optional



Back Side of Mat



LEGEND: ■ Mat ■ Print ■ Print-Mat Overlap ■ Tape

This method is more expensive in terms of material costs, but gives a more professional-looking mount, and is the preferred method. Also, if you put some smooth tape (magic or packing tape) on the mat and the print where the securing tape will go, then you will be able to remove the print from the mat later on without damaging either, and the mat can be reused.