How to Frame a Photograph for Gallery Exhibition

Instructions

1. Select a simple metal frame one size larger than the photograph you are trying frame. 5x7 photos should be framed in an 8x10 frame, 8x10 frame in an 11x14 frame, etc. Do not fall into the trap of making your artwork too large or by selecting a frame that takes attention away from the photograph. You can't go wrong with a basic black metal frame.

2. Attach (mount) your photograph to an archival quality "mat" board. Boards are available in a large variety of colors and textures. A simple off-white light cream color will compliment nearly any photograph without being too distracting. Use photo corners so that no adhesive comes in contact with the image. The photo may be centered or placed about 1/2 inch above center.

3. Lay on top a second piece of mat board that has a window opening on top of the photograph. The window should cover the image on all sides by about 1/8 of an inch. Take care to hide the mounting corners as well. Traditionally, mats are cut with a 45-degree bevel using a mat cutter or may be purchased pre-cut to a standard or custom size. A hinge of starch linen tape can be used to attach the top mat to the bottom mat.

4. Assemble the lower three sides of your metal frame together using supplied hardware. Clean and slip in a piece of glass. Glazing comes in a wide variety of styles, which may include UV protection and anti-glare, but will be far more expensive than ordinary glass. Slip behind the glass the mat board with your photograph. A piece of foam board can be added behind the mat to insure the image remains flat.

5. Stand the image up straight and use canned air to blow out any dust specs before securing the top edge of the frame. Some frame styles have leaf springs, which provide tension to keep the mat board flat and pressed against the front of the frame. Be sure to select a frame style, which can accommodate the glazing, mat board, and leaf springs. Attach hanging wire across the back about 1/4 way from the top edge. Protect the frame from scratches during transport attaching foam or cardboard corners.
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**Tips and Warnings**

- Use a high quality mat cutter. As a rule, the less expensive a cutter is the more difficult it is to use.

- Anti-glare glazing looks better on glass than on plastic.

- Special plastic glazing is available which is unbreakable and scratch resistant, but requires special tools to cut. Find plastic glazing pre-cut.

- Balance time vs. money. The more framing steps you do yourself the less money you will spend.

- Some mat boards have chemicals added to keep a neutral ph, but they can bleed the colors of your photograph. Use unbuffered mat board. Look for "rag" mat.

- Photographs should be able to be removed from the frame without damage and without coming into contact with adhesive or chemicals.

- The photograph must not be left in contact with the glazing else it the emulsion will adhere to it.

- Never use masking tape, Scotch tape, or materials not designed for the preservation of artwork.

- Never apply adhesive to any part of the photograph and never use "dry mount."

- Always provide a method for hanging the frame on the wall of the gallery such as a hanging wire on the back. Some galleries have special hanging systems.

- Always have a mobile photograph repair kit for gallery exhibitions that includes several spare pieces of glass, mat board, frames, and tools in the event it is dropped.