

Framed!

Art Talk – Linda Kay – Visual Arts Instructor – Hanover Township Aging Services

Framing can be a challenge! Knowing a little bit about basic framing techniques can help you to get your artwork and photos framed and looking professional. Framing doesn't have to be difficult. There are reasons behind framing techniques and procedures to protect your artwork that also add longevity to them. Taking shortcuts and being too cheap will only bring you problems over time. It is really important to take steps to protect your beautiful work that will pay off in the long run.

First, let's look at the proper way to put together frames. There are several layers that serve specific purposes. I like to call it a frame sandwich.

The Frame – A structural item that surrounds the artwork, usually made of wood, metal or plastics. The frame should enhance the artwork, not take away from the focus of your piece. It should be in good, clean condition and be appropriate in size and in relationship to the art. It should also serve to assist in hanging the artwork onto the wall, so having room for hardware to be attached to the back side of it is essential.

Glass – Seals and protects the artwork from the environment, improves the appearance of your work and keeps little fingers off of the surface. Glass comes in many forms and using the correct type can add longevity to your piece. Museum quality glass is the best choice, there are also non-glare coatings, and UV protective coatings. Plexiglass is a lightweight alternative but does scratch easily. Standard clear glass is good for every day use where artwork is not exposed to bright or direct sunlight. Remember, oil paintings are not framed with glass as they need air to vent any off gassing.

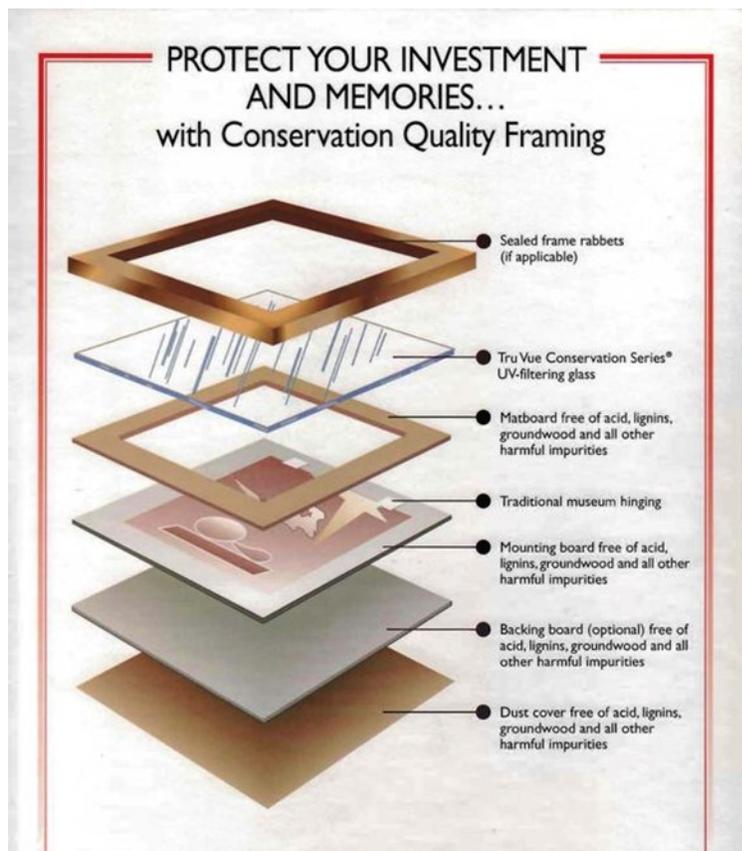
Mat – Mat boards are decorative as well as protective. The right color that enhances or co-ordinates with your artwork really adds a lot of interest and value to your piece. Mat boards keep your artwork spaced away from the glass so that it doesn't rub against it, keeps any moisture away from your artwork and adds stability to your piece. They must be acid and lignin free. Only flat 2-D artwork such as watercolors or drawings are matted. If a mat is not used, a spacer is recommended between the glass and the artwork.

Artwork – Well, it IS the whole point of framing. Find the framing set-up that works best for your piece to showcase it to its best advantage.

Mounting Board – These boards support the back of your flat 2-D artwork, give you a surface to mount the artwork on to and can add to the beauty of your artwork for items that are mounted in a floating technique. These should also be acid and lignin free.

Backer Board – (Optional) Support for the artwork sandwich, helps with added protection from the environment and help keep everything in the frame itself.

Dust Cover – A thin paper cover, typically brown craft paper, that is taped to the back of the frame to



Source: <https://www.customframestore.com/category/147/Art-Framing-Education.html>

Always use Archival, Acid Free and Lignin Free materials to protect your artwork from damage. There are 3 main things that can damage your artwork: Acid, Moisture and Sunlight.

Acid – Can discolor and turn papers yellow, makes them brittle.

Moisture - Causes colors to bleed, warps the artwork and boards and can mold.



Acid Damage



Water Damage



Light Damage

To help you select the proper sized frame you first need to know the size of your artwork. To help eliminate any problems with finding the right sized frame for your work or having to have a frame custom made for odd sized pieces, following a standard chart of sizes can help you a lot. If you create artwork in a standard size your chances of finding framing is so much easier. The chart below is very helpful and you should keep this in mind. A lot of the ready-made frames are in standard sizes for photographs and currently popular sized canvases. These trends change from time to time, so keeping current is a good idea.

Image Size	Frame Size	Mat Opening*
5" x 7"	8" x 10"	4.5" x 6.5"
8" x 10"	11" x 14"	7.5" x 9.5"
11" x 14"	16" x 20"	10.5" x 13.5"
16" x 20"	20" x 24"	15.5" x 19.5"
20" x 30"	24" x 36"	19.5" x 29.5"
22" x 32"	30" x 40"	21.5" x 31.5"

Once you choose your perfect frame, next comes the work of putting it all together. There are a lot of hardware options available to help you achieve a perfect fit. These are some of my favorites.

The Off-Set Bracket – a bent piece of metal with a screw hole on each end of it that allows you to connect two different heights together on the back side of the frame with screws. If you have a deep canvas, this bracket will allow you to put the two pieces together easily.

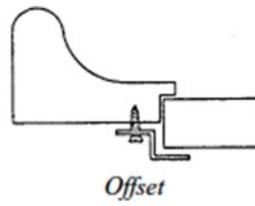
The Spring Bracket – a curved pieces of springy metal with a screw hole on one end and the other end holds the canvas in place with tension.

L Shaped Angle Bracket – a flat “L” shaped piece of metal used at each corner of the frame for support and to help keep the frame square. Very good for older wobbly frames that need a bit of added TLC.

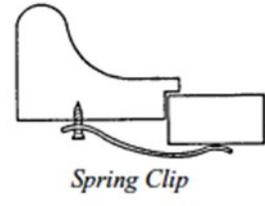
Straight Flat Bracket – a flat straight piece of metal, often with multiple screw holes for securing a canvas into place along the corners of the frame.

D-Rings – a “D” shaped wire attached to a flat piece of metal with a screw hole (or two) for mounting onto the back side of the frame and used for attaching hanging wire.

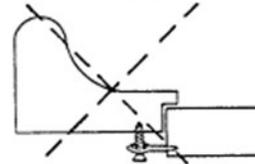
Coated Hanging Wire – a twisted wire that is coated with a thin coat of plastic. These come in various sizes to accommodate different weights of your framed artwork sandwich.



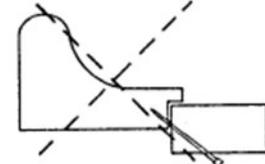
Offset



Spring Clip



Screw Eyes



Toe Nail



How to neatly finish the back of your canvas and add hardware

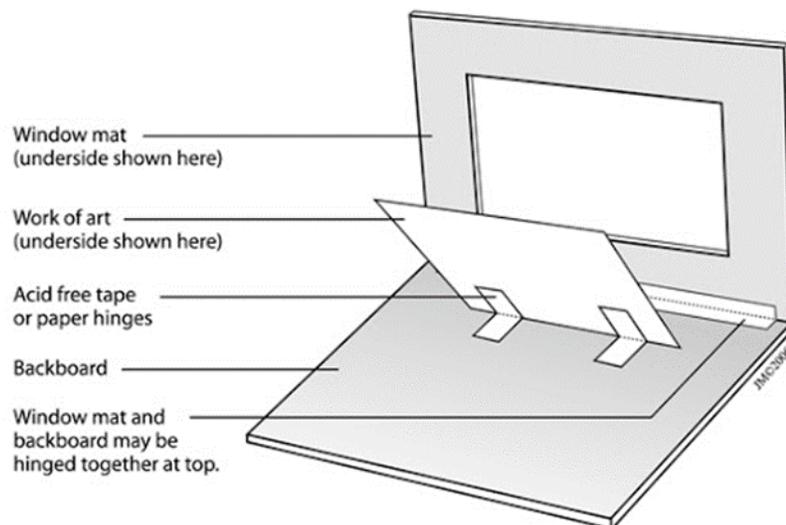


Using the diagram on the second page as your guide, assemble your pieces together and do a dry fit, that is, put the sandwich together without any adhesives, or sealing it up completely. You may need to trim away excess paper, readjust where you place your artwork on the mounting board or play around with positioning to get the best fit. When you are pleased with the placements of everything, carefully take it apart and set everything aside on a clean dry surface.

Make sure that your frame is very clean inside and out, free of scratches and do any repairs or painting needed to get it ready for use. If you do paint or varnish, give it a day or two to thoroughly dry. You don't want it to be wet and adhere to your glass or mat, vent off gasses that may get trapped inside the frame sandwich or need further refinement after its dried a few days. Better to take extra time and care beforehand than have to redo it later.

Make sure your glass is very clean and dry. Be careful of sharp edges and handle it with TLC. It is so easy to tap the edge and break off a piece along the corners and make it unusable. I use a good soft cloth and window cleaner to get my glass super clean. I use an extra cloth in my hand to keep my finger prints off of the glass. I also take extra care when laying it on a table surface and make sure that the table is clean also.

The mat, artwork and mounting board are put together before they are placed into the frame. If you are using artwork that is on paper, you will need to make a hinge tape affair. This is achieved by using an archival, acid free art tape and folding it in half and placing it on the back side of your artwork to create a hinge that will secure it to the mounting board. Be sure to center the artwork with the mat so that everything lines up properly. Another hinge is created with this same tape with the mat and the mounting board. The illustration below demonstrates this process. The mounting board can be a piece of foam core board or illustration board.



The backer board is an optional piece but before you dismiss it, consider these things:

Is there room for it to fit into the back of the sandwich? If there is, then by all means use it.

Are the items in front of it sliding and rattling around and not staying in place? Then it is a must to use the backer board.

If there is no room left, can a thinner board be added instead?

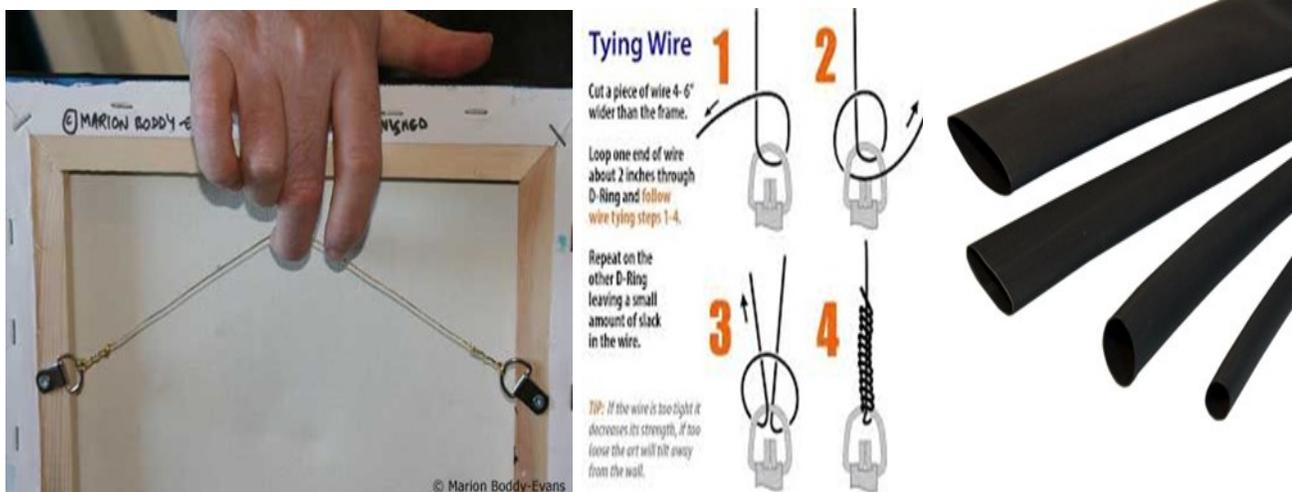
The reasons for having this extra protective board are good ones – this board is a good protector for all your artwork and your investment in your framing. It will help to stabilize all the pieces, will take the brunt of any shaking or bumping it may sustain and it is a protection from the environment. It does need to be acid free so choosing an illustration board for this purpose is a good. Some will use foam core board, but I prefer the illustration board due to its strength.

Before you fasten the backer board into place with staples, glazing points or the fold down metal strips many frames now come with, Do A Double Check to be sure all is in its proper place! It is NO Fun having to undo all that hard work when you find a stray hair on the inside glass or that the artwork has slipped a bit. After all is in proper place, fasten it all together.

The back of the frame sandwich is then sealed with a brown craft paper backing taped on with double sided tape. Cut the craft paper to size, add the double-sided tape to the back edge of the frame and place the paper on and press down to seal well. If the paper is a bit slack, a very light misting of water and hair dryer set on low heat and low fan will tighten it up.

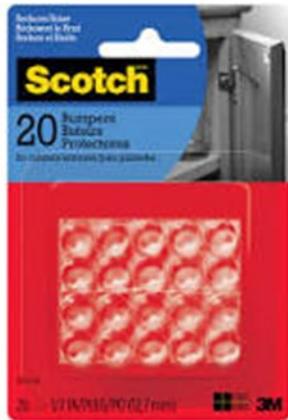
The final step is adding hanging hardware. My preferred method is to use D-Rings and Coated Hanging Wire. Measure your frame vertically and mark $1/3^{\text{rd}}$ down from the top of the frame. This is where you will screw in the D-rings with the loop side facing the center at a slight angle upwards. Using an awl to start a hole is a good idea and then to screw on the fastener. The coated hanging wire is measured to $1 \frac{1}{2}$ times the width of the frame. A Cow Hitch Knot is used to attach the wire to the D-Ring. Do one side first then adjust the hanging wire so that it falls half way between the D-Ring hardware and the top of the frame so that it doesn't hit the edges of the frame or canvas. Tie the second side also with a Cow Hitch Knot. Wrap the left over ends around the wire as show and trim off any excess. A wrap of tape over this wire wrap will help to keep it in place and avoid any sharp end.

One thing I like to do is instead of using tape, I add some Electrical Shrink Tubing on my wire ends. I cut them about an inch long, thread them onto the wire before I tie the knots, then trim the wire ends to about an inch long and shrink the tubing over these ends with a heat gun. This eliminates the need for twisting the wire and taping the ends. It gives it a nice professional finish.



One more touch that is optional but very nice is to add two small Rubber Bumper Dots to the bottom edge of the back of the frame. These little dots will help keep the frame from bumping and rubbing on the wall when it is hung, will stop most rattling and will keep the frame in place. Another alternative is to use Felt Dots which

come in a lot of different shapes and sizes. Both of these items come with self-adhesive tape on the back of them so its super easy to adhere. My personal preference are the rubber dots.



Now your artwork is ready to hang! This technique is acceptable for submissions to art galleries and exhibits. Be sure to double check with the standards required for each individual gallery as some have different requirements, but this is the way most places need.

My Pet Peeves on Framing, Hardware and Why

There are a lot of options out there for Quick and Easy Framing Hardware. I say BEWARE!!! I have seen many quick, cheap and not very well-made hardware failures that end up ruining the frame, the artwork and injuring bystanders. You need to be sure your artwork is safe, otherwise all that work will be wasted with something that does not do what it is intended to do.

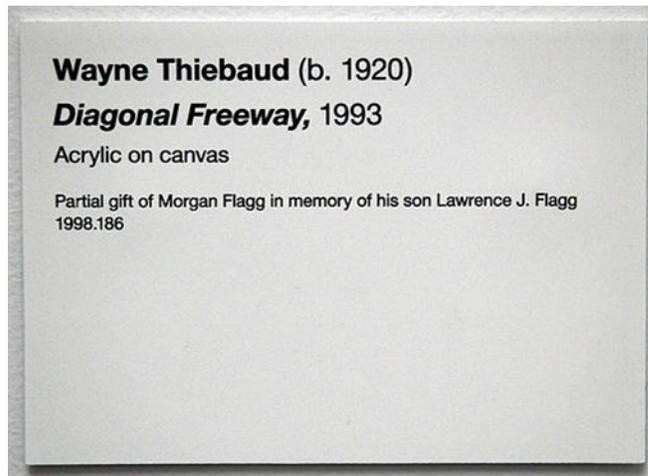
Pet Peeve #1 – Ladder Back Hangers – These may be adequate for very small and light weight pieces, say a 5" x 7" or an 8" x 10" frame if they are not too heavy, but they are not good for anything bigger and certainly will not be acceptable in a gallery or exhibit. Think about it... Will that tiny little nail really hold up? Would you trust it to keep your artwork safe? Hummmmm....



Pet Peeve #2 – Eye Screws – I used to place these on the back inside of wrapped canvases and wire them for hanging unframed. What a disaster this became! When hung on the wall, the weight of the canvas would pull the eye screws out of the wood frame and fail. Also, when they are placed on the back side of the frame like illustrated above, they push out the top end of the frame from the wall and can never get level or squared with the wall, and they scratch the walls with every little adjustment. My advice – Don't Use Them!

Pet Peeve #3 – Hanging wire too long / too short – There just is no reason for improper hanging wire length. It only takes a moment to get that measurement correct. Take the time and measure it out.

Pet Peeve #4 – No Identification – When you have a piece of artwork, make a label with the title of the artwork, the medium(s) used, Your Name and contact information. If you don't make a label, use a marker and write it on the back of the canvas frame or the back of the frame itself. Be sure it will not show through the artwork and ruin it. I also like to tuck one of my business cards on the back of the artwork as well. This way the buyer or receiver of the artwork can contact me easily. The sample below is a good way to label your artwork.



Pet Peeve #5 – Sloppy presentation – Careful and thoughtful care taken when putting together your artwork presentation is professional. Even if you are not doing art for a professional endeavor, making your artwork as good as you can is a sign of respect for yourself and all of your hard work. Don't cut corners or be sloppy. You are all good artist and deserve to have your artwork seen and admired.

Sources for Frames

There are a lot of ways to find good frames. Professional framing shops are excellent ways to let someone else do the hard work especially if it is a valuable piece or an heirloom. Well worth the expense if you want a top job done. Framing services are also available from Arts and Crafts Store and sometimes Art Supply Stores. They often offer coupons or discounts to help lower the costs of full priced services. Their staff are excellent help when you need assistance for choosing frames, mats, boards and framing hardware. Take advantage of their knowledge.

If you want to do it yourself, that is a great way to cut costs and get unique and pleasing framing. After you choose your framing items, follow these guidelines and see what you can achieve.

If you buy frames from an arts and crafts store, be sure to see what the frame is made out of. Many are now made with inexpensive plastics or resins. These can be a challenge to get hardware in properly and securely. You will want to add some epoxy glue when placing hardware in and let it completely cure before hanging your work on the walls. Predrilling holes is also advisable to keep it from chipping or breaking. Be careful with these frames.

An ecological choice for finding frames is a second-hand shop like Goodwill or an antique shop. You can find nice quality frames, many times made of wood and for very little cost compared to a similar item that is brand new. They may need a bit more cleaning, repairs and/or repainting, but these can be a wonderful choice for your artwork.

When shopping for your framing needs, be sure to measure out your artwork first to determine what sizes you will need. Take the artwork along with you if you can do that safely to match up colors and textures. Bring along a tape measure to be sure things will fit correctly. Don't buy something just because it is on sale and then find out it won't fit properly. Take your time and choose carefully.

Happy Framing!