

Framing/Matting Your Artwork

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Taking the time to plan your mat/frame size before you start your painting will train you to work in standard sizes that are less costly to frame. And for those of you who display your work in exhibits (or may do so in the future), you will be able to "swap out" same size paintings and re-use the same mat & frame. An alternative to framing is to mount/glue paper paintings onto canvas (see the website www.robertburridge.com; he's got a whole section on how to do this.

You can even print this out and bring it to the framing shop!

How to calculate and plan your painting's dimensions:

Even before I start painting (or sometimes after the first wash of color is dry) I use a pencil and a yardstick (or an old working mat that is cut to the correct size) to lightly draw lines to indicate the inside borders of the mat. These dimensions are the OPENING size of your mat.

The goal here is to make sure the OUTER dimensions of your mat fit into a standard, ready made frame you can purchase at your local art store or frame shop (Blick, Frame Central, Michael's, etc.

Note: You will still need to get a custom cut mat for your painting as very few places have a standard for the INNER size of your mat's opening (visit www.matboardandmore.com for ordering mats in bulk; But at least the outer FRAME size is standard, and that allows you to buy a ready made frame.

Overview of General Sizes:

Quarter sheet piece of paper (outer dimensions 11 x 15")

-Recommended mat opening should be at least 10 x 14 inches; (most pre-cut store bought mats have skinnier borders with an 11 x 14" opening, which would be too wide for your paper).

- outer mat/frame dimensions will be 16 x 20 inches (although I often opt for a wider border on a quarter sheet painting so that the outside frame/mat/plexiglass dimensions are 20x 24"—a non-standard frame size). In that case, I order metal frames from American Frame (see link below).

Half sheet (outer dimensions of the paper are 15 x 22")

-Mat opening size is 14 x 20 inches; outer mat/frame dimensions will be 22 x 28 inches

-alternatively, the mat opening could be 13 x 19 inches, resulting in a wider border

Full Sheet (outer dimensions 22 x 30")

--this gets tricky, as there is no "standard" size frame for a full sheet painting. Your best bet is to figure out the inner size (painted area) and add a 4 inch border to all sides. So if my painted area was 20 x 28, for example, I'd add 8 inches to these two numbers and my outer mat/frame size would then be 28 x 36 inches. I'd either have to get a custom frame job done at a local frame shop (expensive!) or go online and order plexiglass and metal frames that I can put together myself (I use www.americanframe.com).

Yupo full sheet (20x26) cut in half (or other paper whose outer dimensions are approx. 13 x 19)

- Mat opening should be 12 x 18 inches; outer mat/frame dimensions will be 18 x 24"

Plexiglass vs. Glass: If you are using a mat, you will need to have plexiglass or glass to cover your mat/painting. My local source of plexiglass is Tap Plastics, but you can order plexiglass sheets from American Frame. I tend to not use glass except for the occasional local show (because most outside shows do not allow use of glass).