

PICTURE PANORAMA:
2. Framing

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Good pictures properly framed add much to the beauty of a home. It is important that the frame be selected to go with a particular picture; don't attempt to fit the picture to the frame.

A frame is used to enclose a picture, to give it emphasis, and to add to its beauty. It ties together the picture and the wall, and often serves to stop the movement of lines within the picture.

The frame and mat should be kept subordinate to the picture. Make the frame enhance the picture; elaborate moldings and important textures may overshadow it.

Select the frame and mat to harmonize with both the picture and the room in which it will be used. If it is a wood frame, it need not be identical to other woods in the room, but it should be in character. Colored frames and mats must be in harmony with the colors of the room. The mood of the room and style of its furnishings should be reflected in the style of the frame and mat.

Selecting Frames

Harmonize the frame with the picture. The color of the frame should be in harmony with both picture and wall. A guide is to select a frame that is not quite as dark as the darkest colors in the picture. However, it is all right to select a lighter shade. (Fig. 1) Usually the frame should be darker than the mat. Repeating a picture color in the frame places emphasis on the picture and ties the two together.

Figure 1. "Portrait of a Lady," Jean Baptiste Perroneau.



Figure 2.

The lines of the frame should emphasize those of the picture. If the dominant lines of the picture are simple, complex, straight, curved, etc., they should be repeated in the frame. (Figs. 1 and 2)

The subject of the picture influences choice of a frame. Simple frames are appropriate with pictures of distant scenes and with elaborate, colorful, or detailed pictures. (Fig. 3) Frames that look worm-eaten or weathered are suitable for nature subjects used in an informal room. Sporting pictures might have boldly colored or black frames of flat wood molding.



Figure 3.

Traditional portraits may have elaborate, carved frames, usually finished with dull gilt. (Fig. 1)

Subjects that suggest strength, such as buildings, peasants, men, or animals, require heavier frames (Fig. 2) than pictures with more delicate subjects, such as children or flowers (Fig. 3). Strong colors or diagonal lines in pictures call for heavier frames than do weak colors or placid, horizontal lines.

The frame should be of the same period in which the picture was painted. For example, if it is by a Dutch artist of the seventeenth or eighteenth century, the frame should be simple, with no carving, and painted black. Pictures from the French Impressionistic era call for

elaborately carved frames which are dull gilded. Most modern paintings look best with simple wood frames which harmonize well with contemporary furnishings. Flat abstracts are often hung unframed, with just a strip of wood tacked to the edges of the canvas. (Fig. 4) It is wise to visit a museum to see how pictures from the same period are framed. Note particularly the style of frame, the width, and the trim, if any.

Oil paintings require heavier frames than other pictures because the canvas and paint suggest weight. The deep molding may be plain or with bold carving. Dull gilt is the traditional finish, but painted or natural wood is often used today. (Fig. 5) Frames for all paper pictures (water colors, pencil sketches, etc.) are usually made from fairly narrow, simple moldings. They are usually smooth textured, shallow, with little grain or carving, and no deep carving. (Fig. 6)

The width of the frame may be determined by the size of the picture. Narrow frames are usually best on small pictures, while wider ones are used on large or heavy-looking pictures. Sometimes a narrow frame combined with a wide mat may be used on a fairly large picture.

Buying frames. Picture moldings come in a variety of shapes and sizes. They may be wide or narrow, deep or shallow, plain or carved, elaborate or simple. (Fig. 5) Be sure to try several different frames with your picture before making a final selection.

Ready-made commercial frames may be purchased at paint, art supply, department, hardware, and variety stores. They may be obtained either finished or unfinished. Used furniture stores sometimes have good buys. These frames come in standard sizes.

If the picture will not fit in a standard size frame, you can have one made to order or make it yourself. Picture molding, either finished or unfinished, is available at furniture and hardware stores, picture framing shops, and building supplies.

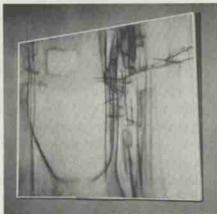


Figure 4. "Broken Trail," J. Bardin.

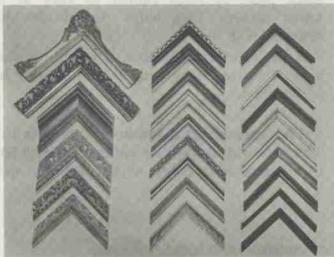


Figure 5.

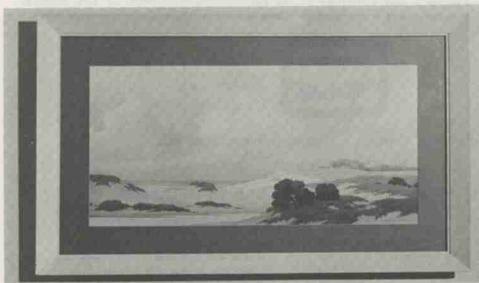


Figure 6.

Selecting Mats

A mat is a border around the picture, separating it from the frame. Sometimes a double mat is used—a narrow one outlining the picture with gilt or color, and then a wider plain one. Mats are used on water colors, woodcuts, etchings, and lithographs. Oils do not need mats. Prints of oils may be framed with or without mats.

There are several reasons for using a mat. It ties the picture and frame together. It may be used to enlarge a small or medium-sized picture, giving it more importance and character. (Fig. 6) A mat often gives a picture proper balance and proportion. Use a wide mat if the picture shows decided line movement, especially if the lines of the picture tend to carry the eye out of the frame. If the picture seems crowded with action or objects, leaving little background, a mat is needed. But if a drawing has a large expanse of white or paper around it, a mat may not be necessary. When a picture is hung against a patterned wallpaper a wide mat must be used to separate the picture from the wall.

Materials for mats are many. The ones most used are regular matboard or cardboard. They may be plain, colored, decorated, or textured. Cardboard is often covered with fabric, such as burlap, shantung, linen, raw silk, pongee, velvet, or theatrical gauze to get a desired texture. Grass-cloth wallpaper gives an interesting texture. Unusual materials such as marbelized wallpaper, metallic paper, wallboard, leatherette, thin wood, cork, mirror, or metal would make appropriate mats for certain pictures and certain rooms. Good judgment must be used in selecting the material for a mat.

Harmonize the mat with the picture. The color of the mat should harmonize with both the picture and the wall color. A guide is to choose a mat that is darker than the lightest colors in the picture. (Fig. 6) White or off-white is fine for most pictures, but it may improve the decorative scheme of the room to use a color. White mats accentuate the colors in the picture; a light gray or buff mat will give a subdued color effect. Black-and-white prints are usually matted in white, off-white, cream, or gray.

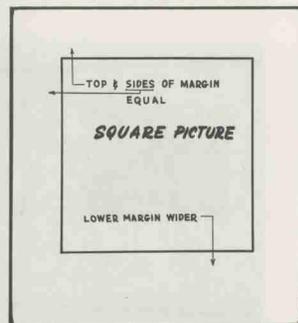
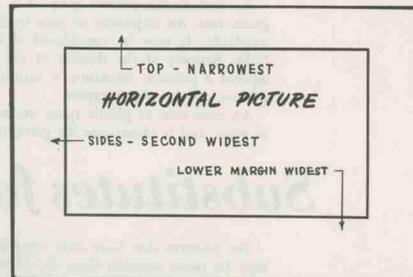
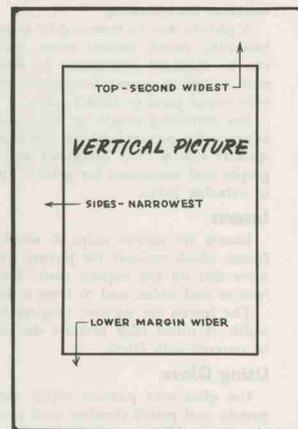
The size of the mat depends on the size and type of picture, the space where it is to be hung, and the scale of furnishings in the room. On an average size picture, a 2" to 4" top margin is reasonable. Woodcuts and etchings require wider mats than other types of pictures.

The texture of the mat should harmonize with the picture. Strong, large pictures can take coarse-textured mats of burlap or linen. Small, delicate pictures need fine-textured mats such as silk.

Delicate pictures are attractive with moderately wide, fine-textured mats in light tones. A mat that is wide, rough-textured, bold, heavy, glossy, or very dull in color adds apparent weight to a picture.

The Law of Margins determines the widths of the side, top, and bottom margins of a mat. Figure 7 shows the relationship of top, side, and bottom margins for vertical, horizontal, and square pictures. For a vertical rectangle the bottom margin should be the widest, the top next, and the sides the narrowest. For a horizontal rectangle the bottom should be the widest, the sides next, and the top the narrowest. A square has top and side margins equal, and the bottom margin widest. On all pictures, the bottom margin is always the widest; if it isn't, the picture will seem to be falling. This extra width gives a feeling of balance and stability.

Figure 7.



Mounting Pictures

Mounting is the placement of a picture upon a backing. Water colors, sketches, reproductions, maps, and other paper pictures are usually mounted to prevent buckling after framing.

A picture may be mounted by taping it at the top with masking tape to regular mounting board, pressed wood, good cardboard, or beaverboard. A watercolor can be mounted successfully by laying a cardboard backing under the mat. It must fit tightly against the picture. Another method uses rice-paper hinges attached with wheat paste or library paste.

Dry mounting should be done professionally. A thin, gummed paper is placed between the picture and the cardboard; then heat and pressure are applied. This method results in a non-glossy and very smooth surface. It is used for photographs and sometimes for prints. The method is not recommended for originals or valuable prints.

Inserts

Inserts are narrow strips of wood or paper placed on the inner edge of the frame, which separate the picture from the frame. They are often used with pictures that do not require mats. Their purpose is to make the molding appear heavier and wider, and to form a decorative border next to the picture.

The inserts are narrow, ranging from $\frac{1}{4}$ " to 2" wide. All sides are the same width. A rolled edge protects the painting more than a plain edge. Inserts can be covered with fabric.

Using Glass

Use glass over pictures which cannot be easily cleaned. Prints, water colors, pastels, and pencil sketches need protection. Oils do not need glass because they clean well. All types of pictures done on paper are usually framed with glass to keep the paper from warping or discoloring. If glass is not used, these pictures should be mounted.

Be sure to use picture glass; it is thin, durable, free from defects, and has no green tint. An objection to glass is glare from light reflection. A non-glare glass is available. It may be considered if the picture will hang where there is much light. Because of the density of the non-glare glass it has to be placed directly against a picture; therefore, it cannot be used with a mat. Also, it will make the picture appear photographic.

An even coat of plastic spray or lacquer will protect many prints almost as well as glass, and it eliminates the glare and danger of breaking.

Substitutes for Frames

For pictures that have only temporary interest, other means of displaying them may be more suitable than the conventional method of framing. In these cases they are usually mounted, as described above.

Two strips of molding can be attached to the wall to serve as top and bottom frames for a group of pictures. (Fig. 8)



Figure 8.

Adjustable clamps are available in plastic and metal. With these at top and bottom, the picture can be hung with or without glass.

An interesting arrangement can be made by covering a wall or section of a wall with cellulose fiberboard or cork, which may be left plain or covered with a textured fabric like burlap. Mounted pictures are thumbtacked to it.

How To Assemble a Picture

Assembling a picture includes attaching the picture to the mat if one is used, fitting the picture into the frame, and attaching the backing and hanging devices.

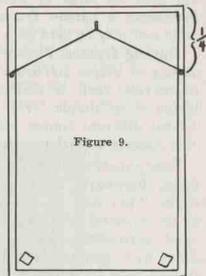
With the frame wrong side up, lay the clean cover glass in place (if glass is used). Tape the top of the picture to the back of the mat. Lay picture and mat face down on cover glass. Place a backing of heavy cardboard or corrugated paper, cut to fit, on top of mat.

Brads or very fine nails are used to hold the glass, mat, and backing securely in place. Drive one into the edge of the frame in the middle of each side. After checking to see that the margins are correct, continue with the brads or nails, using enough to keep the picture tight.

Apply a dust cover of wrapping paper to seal against moisture and dust. Apply glue to back of frame along edge; then lay it against slightly dampened paper. Turn frame over; smooth the paper from center out to make it dry taut. When dry, cut away excess paper. Another method of applying the dust cover is to use double-faced adhesive tape.

Place the screw eyes within the upper one-fourth of the frame edge so the picture will hang flat. Stretch picture wire through the screw eyes and fasten it securely. Place a thumb tack or a small piece of foam rubber or cork at each lower corner. This helps the picture hang straight. (Fig. 9)

If the picture is valuable, it would be wise to have it matted, mounted, and/or framed by a professional.



The purpose of a frame and mat is to add to the beauty of the picture. They should always be subordinate to the picture. Select frames and mats to harmonize in color, style, and size with the picture and with the room.

References

Other publications in this series:

Picture Panorama: 1. Selection, Home Economics 37

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Figures 3 and 5 courtesy of Clark Art Shop, Raleigh.



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