



FRAMING ARTWORK INEXPENSIVELY

You will need:

- a frame
- glazing (glass or plastic if the work is on paper)
- a backing board
- a mat
- glazier points or brads to hold the work in the frame
- picture wire (screweyes for open back frame)

Tools:

- screwdriver
- tape
- utility knife
- Plexi-glas cleaner (anti-static kind) or glass cleaner
- paper towels
- wire cutter, or heavy scissors
- gimlet, drill or nail for starting screw eyes
- ruler, pencils and adding calculator

1. THE FRAME

Works on paper need to be framed under glass or plastic (referred to as "glazing"). Works on canvas mounted on stretcher bars or canvas panels are generally put in frames that are referred to as "open backed" frames, and are designed to fit the depth of the stretcher bar, usually 5/8". This depth is called the "rabbet" and holds the artwork into the frame. Gallery wrapped canvas also can be framed but the depth is an issue if it is very deep. Gallery wraps are often painted on the edges, with the artwork continuing around the edges.

Neilsen type frames are metal (sometimes wood) strips that are available at Michaels Arts & Crafts Stores, AOE or online from various sources. They are sold by the inch and come in gold, silver or black. Wood strip frames are also available. These are cut to the inch and are easily assembled with hardware that comes with the frame.

Wooden, open back frames in many styles may be found in the art stores, sometimes at Wal-mart and Target, and at yard sales. They come in standard sizes, 8 x 10, 9 x 12, 11 x 14, 16 x 20, etc. Most of these are suitable to use for our artwork but often we have to have the mat custom cut to order to fill the space to fit our work.

2. GLAZING

I use Lowes to get my plastic for the glazing. I prefer plastic over glass, as it is lighter, easier and resists breaking, although it is easily scratched. It is sold in several standard sizes, costs about \$7.00 for an 18 x 24 panel, and is located in the door section of the store. To prevent scratches I usually wrap my paintings in cut up blankets that I buy from discount stores and secure them with large rubber bands I get from Staples Office Supply. Lowes will cut plastic to size for you. Make sure they don't cut it slightly larger...it won't fit into the Neilsen frame properly. If necessary you may have to tell them to cut it slightly smaller than the frame size. Sometimes their rulers are not calibrated properly. It is a real pain to cut tiny pieces off the edges of plastic glazing! Normally frames are 1/8 inch longer on each side so a 12 inch piece of plastic should easily fit into a 12 inch Neilsen frame because the 12" frame section has been cut slightly longer. This is standard throughout the framing industry.

Gainor Roberts 34730 Sturgeon Loop, Zephyrhills, FL 33541
gainor@tampabay.rr.com

813 469-1641
www.gainor.biz

Make sure the glazing is thin, especially if you plan to use a double matte. The frame depth is important and many cheap frames are not deep enough for a double matte, foam core board and glazing.

3. BACKING BOARD

I use foam core board for my backing. It is not archival, and so if that is a consideration make sure you get Museum Quality Foam Board, which is available from some art stores and online. It is easily cut with a matte or utility knife. When you cut it use sharp blades to prevent the edges from shredding. Foam Core boards may be found at all art stores, office supply stores, and Wal-Mart.

4. MATTES

The matte will be the hardest part of the package to obtain, if your artwork is not a standard size. Standard size mattes may be bought at the art stores, photo and craft stores, and even at Wal-Mart. Occasionally you can find double mattes, but they do not come in interesting color combinations.

Michaels, and other framing stores, will custom cut mattes for you. It will be fairly expensive for a moderate size matte, and also will take quite a long time. Michaels said they have to order them and it takes 10 days. You can pick the colors from their corner selections. Your local frame shop might be a better deal.

Alternatively you can order mattes from places like Graphik Dimensions. They have a catalog, a large website, (www.pictureframes.com) and a phone number to call your order in. They can cut you any size, any color, and can do elaborate shapes and doubles or triples. There are many similar places online. Even places like Jerry's Artarama sells mattes, but I don't know if they custom cut to size.

If you do a lot of artwork it may pay you to buy a low-end matte cutter and cut your own mattes. Sheets of matte board are available from most art stores and you can buy mattes online from most art and framing websites.

To order a matte you need to know how big you want it. Determine the dimensions of your artwork. Then decide on how wide you want the matte border to be. Small mattes are often 2 inches, while larger mattes are 3 inches wide. If you are doing a double matte you can make the top matte about 1/4 inch smaller, to expose the under matte. When calculating the size of the matte make sure you add 2 + 2 or 3 + 3 for both sides of the matte. For example if your artwork is 8 inches wide you would add 4 inches or 6 inches to that for the final width of the matte, and the outside dimension would be either a 12 or 14 inches.

5. FINISHING

You can get picture wire nearly anywhere that hardware is sold. The same for screw eyes. It is very handy to have a gimlet, which is a screw starter so you don't need to drill anything. If you are assembling a Neilsen metal frame the screw eyes are not necessary, as the hardware for the wire comes with the package. The last time I tried to find a gimlet in the stores no one had heard of it, and I had lots of blank stares. It is not a drink! If you order from a place like www.pictureframes.com you can also order the hardware. Glazier points are great to use to hold everything into a frame if you are using an open back type of frame.

6. STEPS IN THE PROCESS

I determine the size of the artwork. Then I figure out how wide I want the matte border to be, if it is going to be double or single, and what colors would look good. Then I decide on the color of the frame, usually the metal Neilsen types that are Gold, Silver or Black. I then acquire the pieces I will need, ordering mattes, getting the glazing, frames, and other bits and pieces. And finally I assemble the pieces with the artwork.

7. A great alternative to this process is to go online to www.pictureframes.com and use their "frame shop". You can upload a jpg of your artwork to their website, and then pick mattes and frames that look good from their catalog. As you go along the price is shown at the bottom. In the end you can order the package which includes everything to need to assemble the frame package. It is shipped to your door in a few days, and you have an easy to assemble frame kit.