

Print Mounting Overview

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This document is primarily intended for **camera club display** purposes. It is not intended to be a comprehensive coverage of print mounting. Nor does it deal with framing.

The print mounting method and mount colour chosen are essentially personal choices, so at the end of the day feel free to go your own way. However, the following notes may provide some guidance.

Introduction

Mounting is done on card, either **surface-mounted** or **window-mounted**.

Surface Mounting

If surface-mounted, the print is attached to a single sheet of card, with the aim of hiding the attachment method. It is possible to use spray-mount, dry-mounting (with adhesive tissue) or double-sided tape, though the latter is more prone to losing its adhesive powers over time, leaving a residue that stains the print. It is best to regard surface-mounting as **permanent**.

An advantage of surface-mounting is that it is cheap and requires less time and effort, using only a single sheet of card. A second advantage is that it is easy to control the physical cropping of the print – you can cut the print precisely and neither more or less will be displayed. Compare this to a window mount, where some of the print is 'lost' behind the window. This has to be taken into account when composing and printing. If desired, a coloured border or keyline can be added to the image, printed and the print then cut to size to display this.

The disadvantage of surface-mounting is that it is subject to damage, mainly by abrasion, so it is best to keep in a large plastic sleeve.

Window Mounting

Window mounting can be done with just the window board alone. The print can be taped to the back of the board. This is a less expensive option than using two boards, and protects the print surface from abrasion during stacking, but is more fragile. Beware the use of tape that is easily-dislodged, as it can adhere to the print below if stacked.

Window-mounted prints TYPICALLY use two sheets of card at a minimum, namely a backboard and the window, sandwiching the print between them. This can be either removable or permanent. When using a backboard that is the same size as the window board, then for temporary mounting, hinges or photo corners can be used with a small amount of tape at 45% across the corner, for additional rigidity.

Alternatively, a smaller backing board can be used, that is slightly larger than the print. This can be comprised of cheaper material and fixed to the window board using masking tape. Beware the use of tape that is easily-dislodged, as it can adhere to the print below if stacked.

For permanent prints, either dry-mounting or spray-mounting can be used – I use the latter. As with surface-mounted prints, a border or keyline can be added to the image and printed. The window is then cut to display this.

The advantages of window-mounting are that it generally looks better; the white core of the board gives an automatic key-line; the print is better-protected from damage. The disadvantages are cost and effort.

I use spray-mount (specifically 3M and I would not recommend anything else), which is permanent. This means that you need to get the positioning right.

Note: it is possible to double-window mount, so that there is an intermediate board. This gives a 'stepped' look. The disadvantages are additional cost, effort and resulting weight and thickness.

Mount Size

In the 'old days' prints used to be mounted on 16x20 inch card as a maximum size. This changed to a

maximum of 40x50 cm, which is only marginally smaller.

However, many camera clubs are now moving to mounts of **exactly** 40x50 cm. This is because the national Camera Club body the PAGB (Photographic Alliance of Great Britain) adopted this as the standard, to simplify print handling at competitions and exhibitions. In turn, this was taken on by regional bodies such as the SPA (Surrey Photographic Association), then by Camera Clubs making up these bodies.

The benefit is that a standard 40x50 mounted print can be used for competitions and exhibitions at camera club, regional and national level, without the need for re-mounting.

The relationship between print and mount

Unless you are restricted to a maximum of A4 because of your printer, **in general** the larger the print the better – there is more impact. This applies especially to complex or detail-filled images, to display them properly.

Print up to **near-A3**, but stop short of a full A3 which is roughly 42 x 30 cm. In most cases, this will fit well on a 50 x 40 cm mount. Note that printing up to full A3 will only leave 4-5 cm borders, which is a little too narrow and will give a 'tight' feeling to the finished product. Aim for a minimum of 6 cm borders. As a general rule, landscape prints look better with a slightly wider lower border, to act as a 'base'.

A problem to be aware of is that if small digital files are printed too large, imperfections such as pixelation, noise (particularly in shadow areas) and sharpening artefacts can be made more obvious.

Having said all this, some images look good printed small. This applies in particular to 'simpler' images in terms of **compositional** complexity - images with less detail.

Mount Colour

The mount colour can be either neutral/monochrome or active/coloured. Neutral colours are black and various shades of grey, as well as white and off-white. They are regarded as essentially neutral and should not clash with the print itself.

In general:

** Use black where the image is predominantly dark, which can help to focus the eye of the viewer. A black mount can also add to the 'sombreness' of a print, or increase a sensation of claustrophobia with some images.

** Use white when the image is mainly light, to increase the impact of a well-saturated colour image, or to give an open 'non-oppressive' feel. In this case, be aware that there may be a minor conflict between the white of the card and that of the base paper. The paper may have an off-white colour, while the mount could be ice-white (which is very white).

Using other colours can lead to clashes with the print itself and can distract from the image. Even where a colour is chosen that is similar to a predominant colour in the image, (eg. green with a coloured landscape print where there is much vegetation), the colour is often **different enough** to be discordant. It can be seen as a 'near-miss'.

Print Borders and Keylines

** Borders can be particularly important with multiple images (ie. panels).

** Neutral colours as can be used with black or white mount. Other colours can be problematic, as either colour clashes or 'near-misses'.

** Be careful with thickness, or a keyline can be too dominant and distracting. A thick black border can be oppressive or funereal, when that is not the intent.

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