

Introduction to print mounting

Having put a lot of time, energy and money into producing the definitive print, we now come to the final stage in the process – mounting.

So what is all the fuss about? Why not just glue the print on a piece of card and have done with it? There has been more than one judge who has said they don't look at the mount but nevertheless they cannot avoid seeing it and being influenced at some level in their judgment of what is presented to them.

Having prepared a mount, just looking at a print sitting on a table on its own, then, resting it on the mount or under its mat [mounting card with a rectangular hole and just framing the picture] should convince you it is worth the effort. The mount should complement the picture and enhance the pleasure of looking at it without attracting attention to itself. In other words “look at the image – not me!”

Mounting card comes in a [confusing!] range of colours so to start with I suggest you limit yourself to, say, two colours.

White

Pure white produces a bright reflection under competition lighting and can be a bit of a loud statement, unless carefully controlled and used with a strong print to balance it. I suggest initially you use a ‘softened’ white; for example – antique white – but there is a range to choose from depending on your type of photography.

Black

Have just a few sheets for occasional use. Black, too, can be quite a strong statement but sometimes useful if used carefully.

Now these are personal preferences that suit me but look at the mounting displayed in internal competitions. Ask the authors what card was used and where it was bought. I have always found members of the club very willing to advise.

Be very careful about using coloured mounting card. It can draw the eye away from the image.

With time you will, of course, find your own preferences but this is a suggestion to help simplify the process in these initial stages.

Mounting prints come in two methods. Firstly, by glueing the print onto the surface of the mount, usually using a spray mount and roller to press the print firmly onto it. Always put a sheet of paper on the surface of the print when you use the roller. Never use the roller directly on the print surface.

I suggest when using this method [the simplest and cheapest] you need perhaps to put an edge to the picture using photoshop which will 'contain' the image if it is similar in tone to the mounting board. Prints of differing tone to the mounting board may not need this but it can still sometime enhance the mounting. Look at the prints displayed during competitions!

The other method of mounting is to cut a mat with a rectangular aperture with a bevelled edge then placing the print underneath it. You can buy these already cut in different sizes and in different colours. It is worth asking around in the club where these can be bought [usually on the internet].

The print should first be mounted on cheaper, lighter card manufactured for this purpose. By the way, the smell from spray mount makes me feel sick so I use a self adhesive board. The problem with buying ready cut mounts is that you are usually limited in mount colour and print size although you can specify these variables and if purchasing in bulk it can work out cheaper than individually cut mats.

In the longer term, if you are thinking of producing mounted prints more regularly it would work out cheaper to cut your own mats. I have often used the same mat several times by carefully detaching the print from the back of the mat. This means standardizing print size and mount colour but it is useful for trying out a print you may not be sure about and 95% of my prints are mounted in antique white anyhow!

Mount size

I often look at prints submitted on minimal mounts – what a shame! Look at the way prints are mounted in particular in the advanced group. It is a good idea to standardise on a mount size of 40x50mm. These days many competitions and exhibitions demand this size, anyhow.

With regard to print size there is a saying that “a good big ‘un will always beat a good little ‘un!” I really don’t believe this. I can honestly say that I have never heard a judge criticise a print for being too small. Printing full size on an A4 printer is absolutely fine! In fact, we have members who have gained full marks at all levels using A4 prints. This includes prints used by our club in inter-club competitions!

So, now to **mat cutters** and we come to another bewildering choice. These range in price from about £30 for a bevel cutter to several £1000’s for an all singing, all dancing job. Basically, you get what you pay for!

Prices for mat cutters start at about £70 for a Maped which will do the job but requires some skill, time and a lot of practice. Going up into the £100-£200 bracket there are models produced by manufacturers such as from Logan and Rotatrim. Then you go on to cutters such as Mat Master and the more advanced Rotatrimms at about £1000+. These are super machines to use and excellent for large quantities but need setting up. [They are a dream to use for cutting double mats – but that is a different story!].

So, if you are still reading you must be interested!

Final points, the club runs workshops on print mounting where a range of cutters and how to use them is demonstrated. You will find we all have our own methods! It may be an idea to go to one before buying a cutter.

Incidentally, you will also need a **cutting mat** [those green mats] if you want to keep the table unmarked, but use a piece of mounting card on the green mat to cut on as the mat itself blunts cutting blades rapidly.

So, talk to people who have been on one of the workshops (or those who are involved in running them). Don’t be shy! Ask around at the club!

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