

Welwyn Garden City Photographic Club

Print mounting – Information sheet for Club Members

Some starting points

- A well-mounted print will enhance the impact of the image, and also protect the print during handling and display. Poor mounting will detract from the image, and can spoil it completely.
- There are many different options for mount selection, mount preparation and print fixing. Most will give an equally acceptable result – there is a degree of personal preference and technique that is down to the individual photographer.
- This information sheet concentrates on prints displayed in a window mount that has a bevelled window cut-out. An alternative approach, where prints are mounted directly on mount boards (using adhesive or dry mounting tissue) has been used in times past – and this is still an acceptable, although rarely used, option that is not considered further here.
- Coloured mount boards: You are strongly advised to use only white, cream or ivory mount boards until you are more experienced. The use of coloured mount boards can be effective – but there is a strong dependency on matching the mount colour to the print. Get it wrong and it can look awful! (It is also sensible to stick with a rectangular or square window – depending on the picture – and avoid a circular or oval presentation. The latter are almost never used in Club work.) Acid free mount boards and materials are available to avoid any longer term material deterioration issues.
- Mount board size: The standard board size used in the Club is now 400 x 500mm. (This is a maximum size – smaller mounts can be used in Club competitions.) This 400x500 sizing aligns with East Anglian Federation (EAF) requirements. Imperial (20 x 16 inch) mounts should not be used.
- The information provided below covers:
 - Commercially available, pre-cut, standard mounts
 - Commercially available, custom-made mounts
 - Use of a mount cutter to make your own mount
 - Use of backing boards
 - Fixing the print in the mount
 - Frames
 - Resources – material and equipment suppliers

Pre-cut, standard mounts

A number of suppliers can provide pre-cut window mounts in a 400 x 500mm size (eg. John Lewis, Welwyn and on-line suppliers – see Resources section, below).

Advantages:

- Relatively cheap and available

- You can have mount board stock available for when you need it
- You don't need to invest in a mount cutter and get involved in cutting your own mounts

Disadvantages:

- There is a fixed window size
- The window is centred in the mount (see below)
- There may be limited options for board weight and colour, depending on supplier

The fixed window size is a big disadvantage – it is essential that you make your print to fit the window, rather than the other way round - which is really the way it ought to be done. In particular, you must avoid having an unprinted edge down two sides because the aspect ratio of the print differs from that of the window – that would look dreadful! Also, to make a print that fits the window, you may be restricted in how you crop your print, and that can detract from the impact of your image.

Pre-cut, custom-made mounts

A number of suppliers can make you 400 x 500mm mounts with a window cut to your own size specification – see Resources below.

Advantages:

- You get the window size to match your print requirement
- Board options (weight, colour) can be wider
- Window positioning in mount may not have to be centred, depending on supplier
- You don't need to invest in a mount cutter and get involved in cutting your own mounts

Disadvantages:

- Can be more expensive – need to shop around
- Takes time – you need to be organised and not “last minute”
- You will probably pay delivery charges, there may be a minimum order value, and someone will need to take in the delivery, if not a local supply

This can be a good option for members starting out with mounting their own prints, particularly if you can find a supplier that meets your needs, and you are well organised so you can leave enough time for doing the mounting.

Use your own mount cutter

There is usually a demonstration on print mounting and the use of a mount cutter at a Club meeting near the start of each season. There is a wide range of mount cutter options commercially available from the lower cost, more limited capability through to the more advanced higher-priced options.

Advantages:

- Flexible choice of mount size
- You get the window size to match your print requirement
- Board options (weight, colour) can be as wide as the range of materials you want to keep in stock
- Can be the lowest material cost option
- Window positioning in the mount is under your control. The option where the top and side mount edges are of the same, or similar sizes, and the bottom edge is somewhat larger can look particularly effective. Also, for a panel of prints (eg. "Five of a Kind" competition) try to make all the bottom edges of the mounts the same size such that the bottom edges of the prints align at the same height when displayed as a panel.
- Very flexible – you make your mounts how and when it suits you

Disadvantages:

- You need to invest in a mount cutter – there is a range available, see Resources
- There is a "learning curve" for mount cutting, but the job is a lot more straightforward than might appear at first. Whilst the principles are similar, different cutters are operated slightly differently. Some come with their own instructional DVDs which can be helpful.
- It still takes time, particularly if you need to set-up the kit each time you use it
- You need some storage space to keep everything when not in use
- Don't cut yourself! (But do have a supply of new blades to ensure sharpness)

This is the best option for members who are serious about print work and want to mount a lot of prints (and the numbers add up over the years). The Club has a mount cutter for members' use, but access to the kit cannot be guaranteed. (Two or three members could also get together in a private arrangement to buy and share their own equipment.)

Backing boards

Use of a 400 x 500mm (or slightly smaller) backing board:

- Avoids any possible damage from adhesive tape to a print stacked underneath (this is an important consideration, see below)
- Allows the print to be "hung" in the mount (see below)
- Gives greater rigidity to the finished, mounted print
- Avoids any translucency issues through the print which can be a problem sometimes

The use of a backing board is a requirement for anything submitted externally via the EAF because of possible damage to other prints.

Use of a backing board is not a requirement for Club work, and quite a lot of members do not use one, and just tape their prints around the edge to the

back of the mount. There is a danger that the print may not sit properly in the mount, and that the mounted print may be insufficiently rigid. Also, if the tape is not stuck properly then the adhesive can damage other prints. Use of a backing board is the preferred option.

Fixing the print

This is far better demonstrated than described – the following notes are intended to give you an idea of what is involved. (See also Figs. 1 to 6 at the end of this Note.)

Acid free, self adhesive tape (both single and double sided) is available (eg. the “PH 7-70” brand).

The print is first positioned and fixed in the window by “hanging” it from the top edge, orientation depending on whether it is landscape or portrait format. Two or three ca. 50mm lengths of tape are fixed down from the back of the mount on to the back of the print. (Figs.1, 2 & 3) Further ca. 50mm pieces of tape are stuck on the mount, parallel to the print edge, over the top of each piece of fixing tape used. The end result is tape forming 2 or 3 “T” shapes. (Fig.4) (There is an alternative option where the print is hung from the backing board.)

The mount and the backing board are positioned face down next to each other with the long edges aligned. (Fig.5) (For a landscape format, align the top of the mount to the backing board.) Tape is used down the length of the long edge to stick the two parts together. The mount can then be folded back over the backing board and the stuck edge pressed down to secure it firmly.

The above package is then secured using double sided tape. Use three or four ca.50mm pieces of tape close to the unstuck long edge, and another piece part way up each unsecured side. Remove the backing from the pieces of double sided tape and close the package carefully to secure the finished mounted print. (Fig. 6)

Framing

Prints for the September Howard Centre exhibition are hung unframed. (Velcro stickers are used on the back of the print mount.)

The Club’s annual exhibition is held in December in the New Maynard Gallery. Framed prints are displayed (using mirror plates for fixing) and a standardised gold frame is used. Members have to get their own frames – many already have them having exhibited in earlier years – and arrangements are made to supply frames to newer members who need them. Whilst the frame choice may be a matter of debate among some members, there is a stock of frames already among the membership and the unified framing of the display adds greatly to the overall appearance of the exhibition. (The frames, being older, are sized for the former 16 x 20 inch mounts. 400 x 500 mm mounts can be

fitted in the frames with the use of some fillets cut from mount board and positioned at the edges of the mount.)

There are a number of sources of frames for members who want them for their own use. The framing stall on St Albans market makes customised frames at competitive prices and offers a weekly service. (Weds & Sats; AC Framing has been used by the author. There is also another supplier stall there, but their service is untested)

Resources – suppliers

This can't be an exhaustive list, and is based on member experience. (If you know of other useful options, then please provide input for updates of this sheet.)

David Foster, who is a club member, offers supply of board material to members; he does this in a personal capacity. He is available on meeting nights during the interval. (And has agreed that his contact details can be included here: e-mail – dave.fozzie@gmail.com , mobile 07778 568768.)

John Lewis in WGC sells 400 x 500mm pre-cut mount boards with a fixed window (the window is somewhat smaller than A3).

Hobbycraft (eg. at Roaring Meg, Stevenage) also sells pre-cut mounts but only in Imperial sizes. They also sell one of the less expensive mount cutter options and other board materials.

Tim's Art Supplies in Hitchin <http://www.timsartsupplies.co.uk/> have been reported by some members as being very helpful. They have a range of board material.

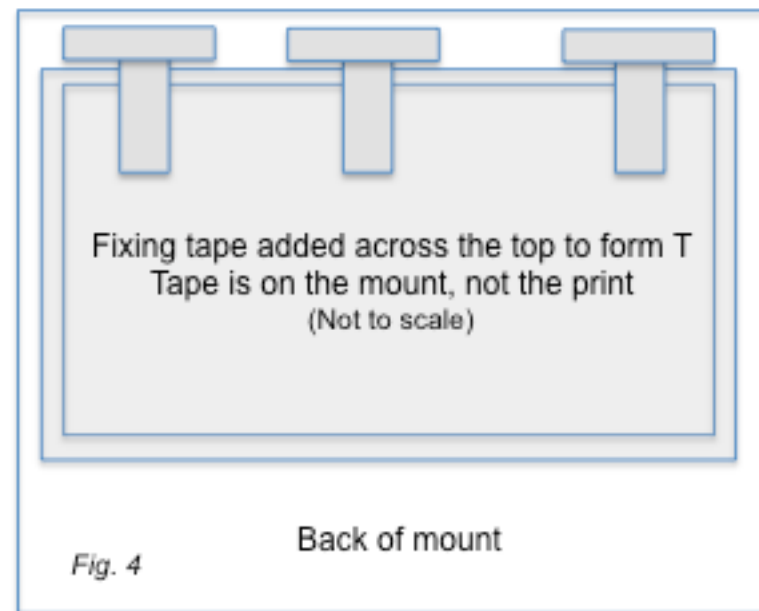
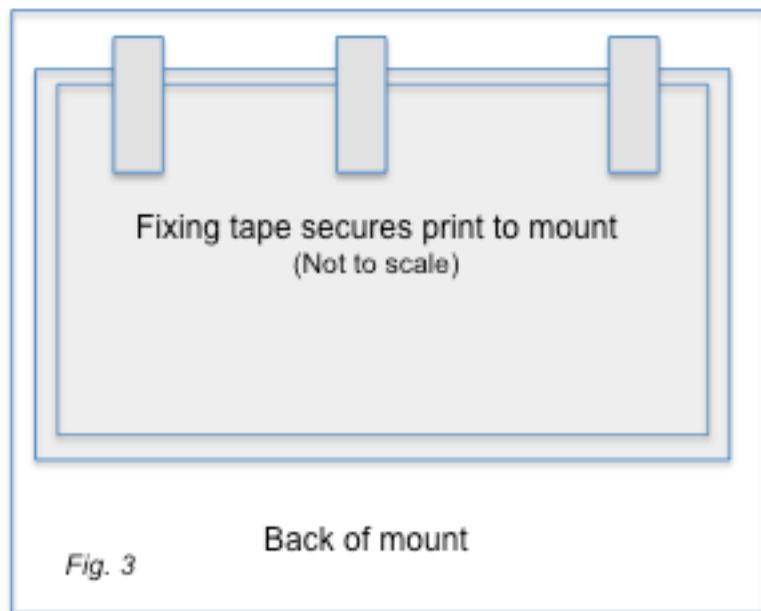
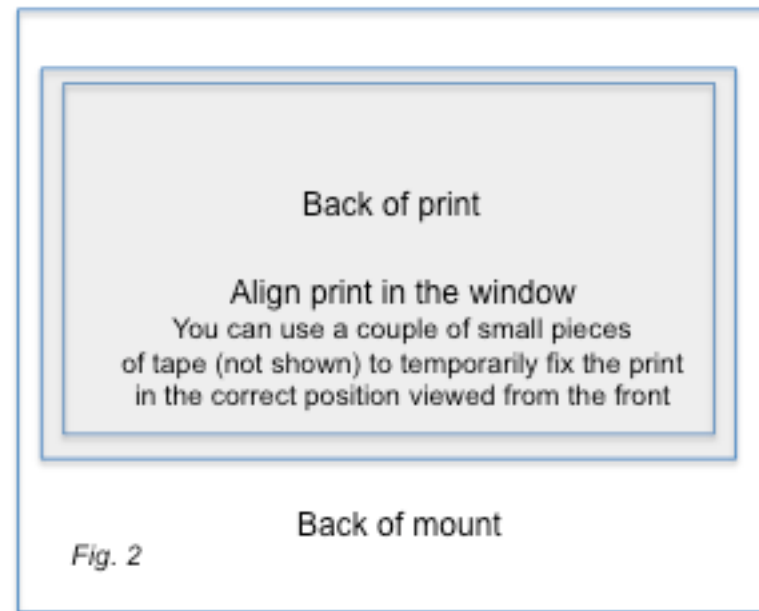
Moonshine Framing <http://www.frames.uk.com/> sell both pre-cut and customized window mounts and other materials.

DIY framing <http://www.diyframing.com/> based in High Wycombe sell mount board, a range of mount cutters (a good range that they can probably demonstrate) and other materials. They are only open normal weekday hours plus Saturday morning for visitors, but do mail order. They also offer framing equipment and materials and training courses. (Their website also has a range of useful information about mount preparation and assembly.)

Paper Spectrum <http://www.paperspectrum.co.uk/> sell a range of mount board at competitive prices.

This note isn't really about printing, and a lot of members have their own inkjet prints. A few members use an external printmaker – ProAm Imaging - <http://www.proamimaging.com/>

Martin Burrage
publicity@welwynphotoclub.org.uk



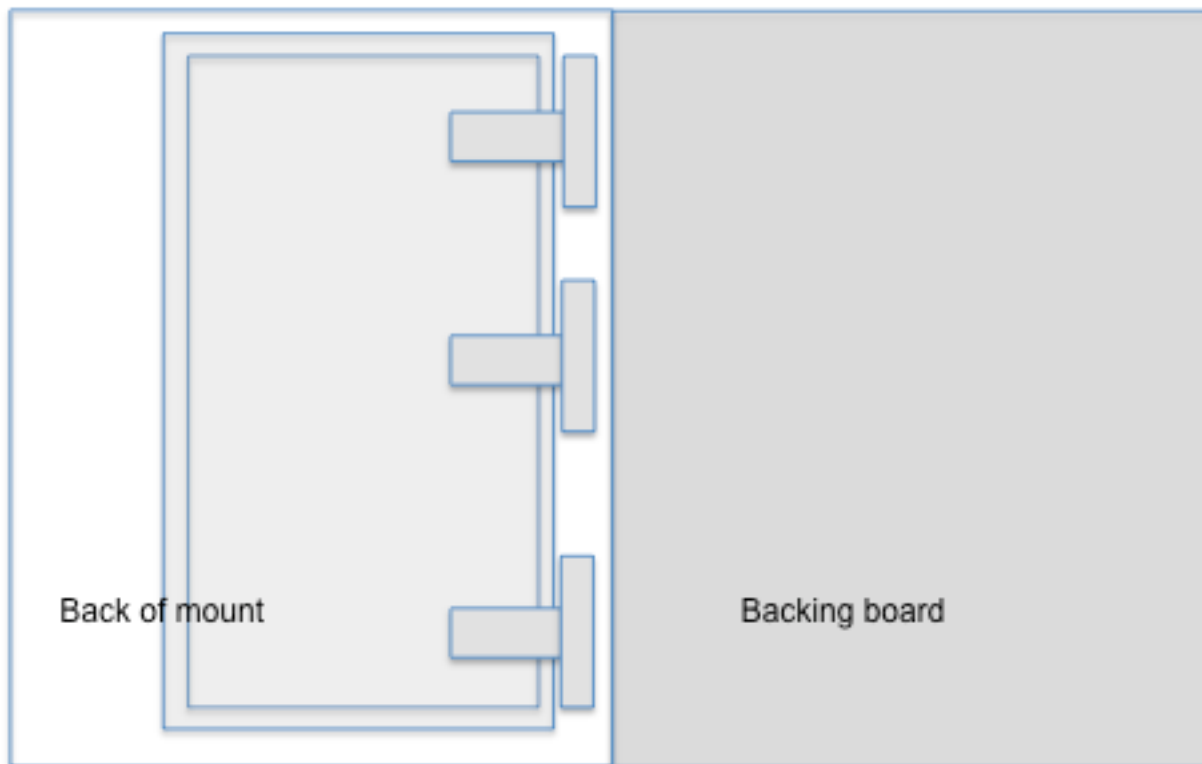


Fig. 5 **Backing board aligned with mount**
(Leave a very small gap between the two boards)

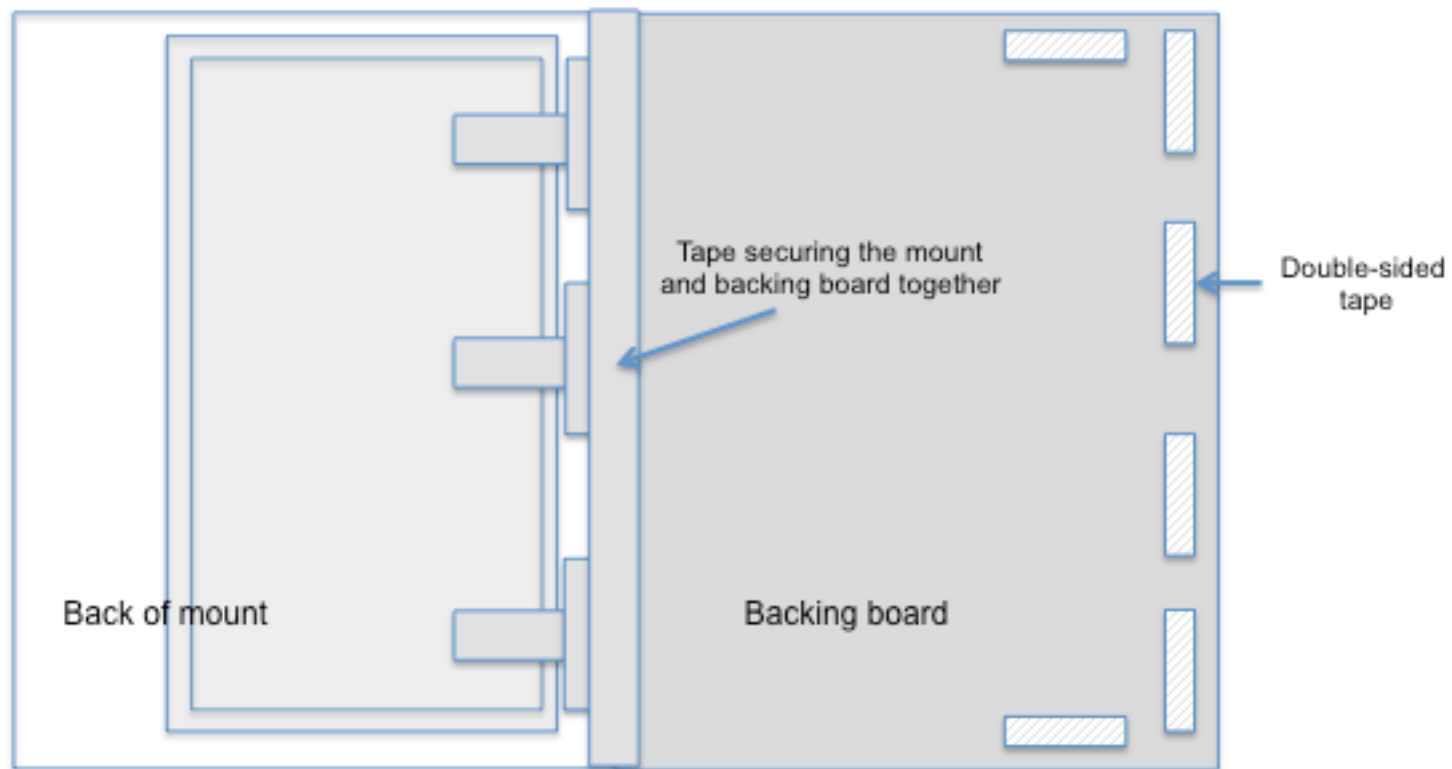


Fig. 6

Tape is fixed down the long edge
(Not to scale)

The package can now be closed and secured with double-sided tape (shown on the backing board)
The print then hangs in the window mount