

Inner Limits

Limits

Tips For Lining a Shadowbox

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Many framers will tell you that shadowboxes are a bit like snowflakes—no two are exactly alike. Their contents are almost always different. Different shapes, sizes, and themes. Different objects, with different weights... different everything! Well not exactly. The “guts,” or inside, of many shadowboxes share certain traits. And in this article, we looked at one of the basic constructions for a shadowbox—one in which the sides, the bottom, and the top inner walls of the frame are visibly lined with a matboard of some type. Focusing on that type of layout, following are several helpful hints for the average and not-so-average shadowbox.

Question #1: How do you measure the matboard and foamboard that will comprise the shadowbox lining? Do you cut it exactly to the size of the inside of the various sides of the shadowbox? Or, are there allowances to consider?

When lining a shadowbox, it is essential to first measure the width of the moulding rabbet. In order to prevent the lining from being visible from the front—through the glazing—the thickness of the lining materials should measure at least $\frac{1}{16}$ " less than the width of the rabbet. (An exception to this is if the design calls for the lining to show through from the front.)

After determining how wide the lining materials can be, measure to determine the dimensions of the lining panels. Do this by measuring from the underside of the glazing to the back rabbet (see Photo 2). Putting the glazing in place first will help to get a true measurement.



Photo 1: This shadowbox featuring baseball memorabilia is lined in two different colors. The sides, top, and bottom are beige, while the backdrop was lined with green.

Question #2: What method is used to attach the matboard and foamboard to each other?

Matboard and foamboard can be attached by spray mounting. It is helpful to attach the matboard and foamboard together as one large sheet that can be cut down to the various dimensions needed for each side within the shadowbox. That will keep the piece consistent and should prevent any variations among sheets.

Note: This process should be done before affixing the lining materials to the inside of the moulding.

Question #3: And what is a method for attaching the matboard and foamboard “package” to the inside of the moulding?

The lining “package” should be attached to the inside of the moulding using ATG tape and white glue (Corner Weld glue is a choice for this). The ATG tape will keep the sides in place while the glue dries. Many framers will use only tape, but that may dry out over time and the lining will begin to sag.

Question #4: Furthermore, in what order should you perform the above attachments?

As noted in Question #3, the lining components (matboard and foamboard) should be attached to each other

Mirror Tip

If your shadowbox design calls for the inclusion of a mirror anywhere within the piece, it’s a good idea to blacken the inside lip of the frame. Doing so will prevent the raw edge of the moulding from reflecting back at the viewer.

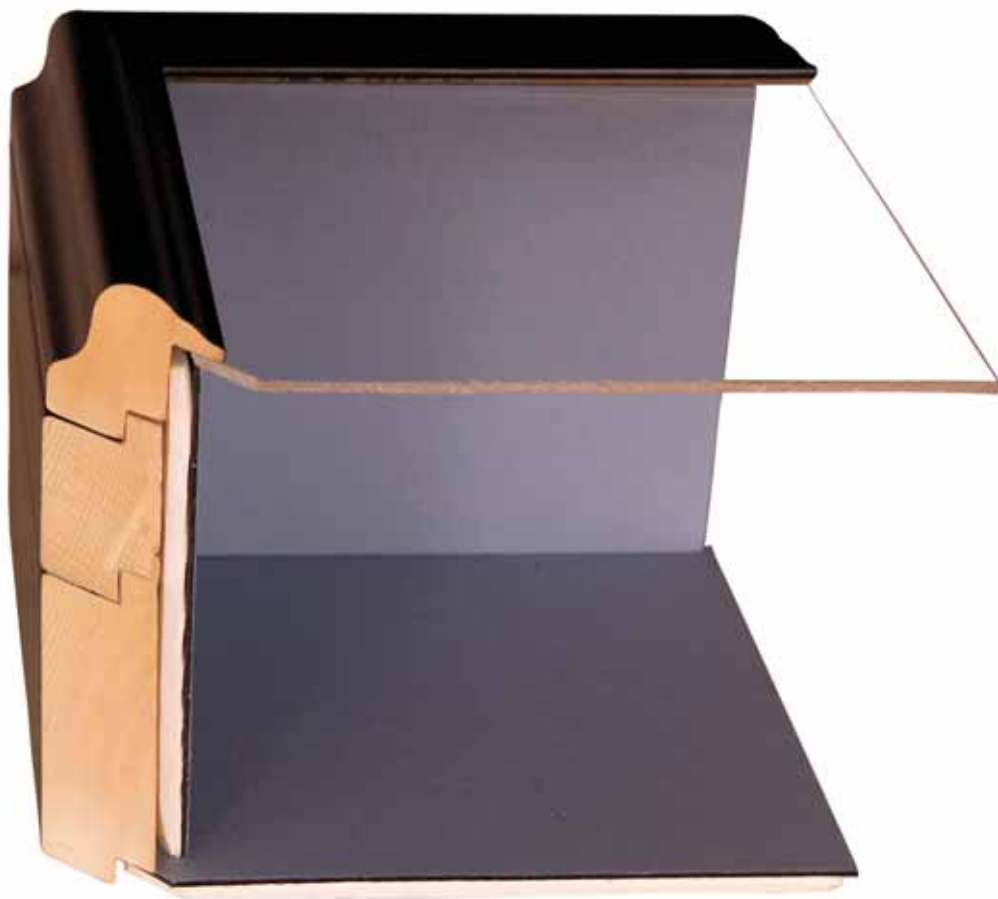


Photo 2: Shown here is the construction of a shadowbox lined with foamboard and matboard. While there are three mouldings stacked here, the measuring process remains the same if using one shadowbox moulding—measure from underside of glazing down to where the rabbet begins.

before being inserted into the moulding.

When you begin placing the lining in the shadowbox, insert the sides first. Always line the sides of the shadowbox first so the top lining will benefit from the extra support of the sides.

Question #5: Lastly, does it matter what thicknesses you use for either the matboard or the foamboard lining? For example, what would affect a framer’s decision between using a 4-ply or an 8-ply board?

Most importantly, you want to make sure not to exceed the depth or width of the rabbet (it should always be $\frac{1}{16}$ " less). Generally speaking, there is not a reason to use 8-ply board. It costs more and, except for if the design calls for it, the lining will be hidden so there is really no benefit. n

Tips on lining and photos courtesy of staff members at FramERICA.