

The Mat Doctors



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Three leading mat designers in the picture framing industry are here each month to answer some frequently (and not so frequently) asked questions about mat cutting or design techniques. With an average of 26 years of framing experience, they bring a wealth of knowledge to this column. If you've got a nagging problem with an aspect of cutting mats, or simply want to find out what the experts have to say about a certain technique, send in your question to pmeditor@hobbypub.com and The Mat Doctors will prescribe a remedy.

(Editor's Note: The following tip addresses one of the questions that Tim often receives while teaching matting classes. Last month, he discussed paper mats; this month, white core mats are covered.)

Q. In some of the workshops that I teach, students often ask about the differences in matboard types—how it's made, its properties, and when to use. The second type of matboard I will discuss in this column is what is described as "White Core."

Tim replies:

A. A white core board is a tri-laminated board consisting of a colored, sometimes textured facing paper; a white core; and a white backing paper.

The facing paper is usually a dyed paper having an acidic pH using non-disseminating virgin and/or recycled fibers. Lightfastness (fade) and colorfastness (bleed) is limited. Its exact composition is usually varied and known on a lot-to-lot basis.

The white core is alkaline and buffered. This means there is a paper additive present, such as calcium carbonate, that serves to counteract the deleterious effects of the paper's own natural degradation, acidic inks, and any other acidic components in the environment. Buffering agents are chemically added to regulate the pH. Bevel cleanliness and the absence of foreign matter is sometimes a concern. This is due to the materials in the recycled fibers in the manufacturing processing.

The backing paper is usually a white offset type paper. It usually has an alkaline pH and is also often buffered with calcium carbonate. The backing paper serves both aesthetically and in helping to maintain board flatness.

White core boards are generally used in decorative art where longevity is not of the

highest concern. White core is not a conservation product.

Listed here are several differences between a paper mat (discussed last month) and a white core mat.

- A white core mat provides a white core color, versus the cream-colored core in a regular paper mat.
- A white core mat contains properties to slow the yellowing or aging process; a paper mat core will yellow over a

quicker period of time under normal usage.

- Though white core matboard is not a conservation product, it provides a visual appeal that paper mats do not achieve.
- A white core matboard price point is sometimes higher than a paper matboard, but not as high as boards with conservation properties.

Q. How do I cut a double mat on my manual mat cutter?

Brian replies:

A. For this example, the face (top) mat will result in a 2½" border, while a ¼" of the inner (bottom) mat will "peek out" from underneath the face mat. We will begin by cutting a single mat from the face mat. Mark with pencil the back of the face mat with an orientation line (see Figure 1). You will utilize this line to guide you in aligning the mat later in this process.

Next, set the mat guide and measuring stops on your mat cutter at 2½". (If you are not using measuring stops, use the mat guide—set at 2½"—as the edge along which to draw four intersecting lines on the back of the top mat as seen in Figure 1.)

Cut out the window opening of your mat as per usual for a single mat. You will have a single mat with a 2½" border all around. Save the fallout from the window.

Next, on the back of the single mat, apply a strip of ATG tape along each of the four sides (see Figure 2). Keep clear of the edges of the window. Take the fallout that you saved and insert it back into the window opening of the face mat; use the orientation line on the back to make sure it is inserted correctly. With the fallout in position, run a strip of ATG tape on the back of the fallout as shown in Figure 2.

At this point, take the matboard for your inner mat and trim it ½" on two perpendicular sides. This will ensure it is smaller than the face mat. Center the inner matboard (face-down) on the back of the top mat and press down to adhere the two mats together.

As mentioned above, this inner mat will be cut so that ¼" of its color is visible in the mat window. To achieve this, set your mat guide and measuring stops to 2¾" (If you are not using measuring stops, then set only the mat guide to 2¾".) Place the two adhered boards in the mat cutter and cut a window opening. You will have a double mat. n

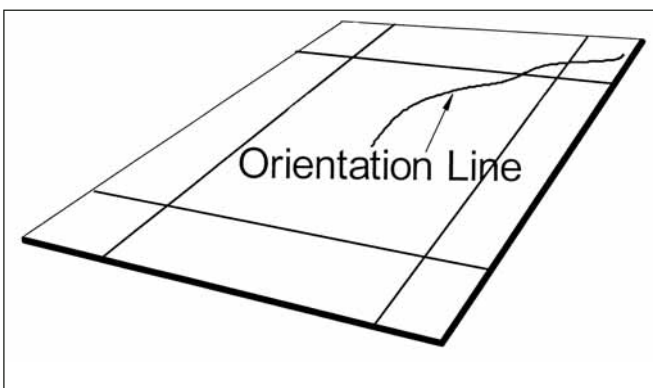


Figure 1: Draw in pencil an orientation line for a point of reference.

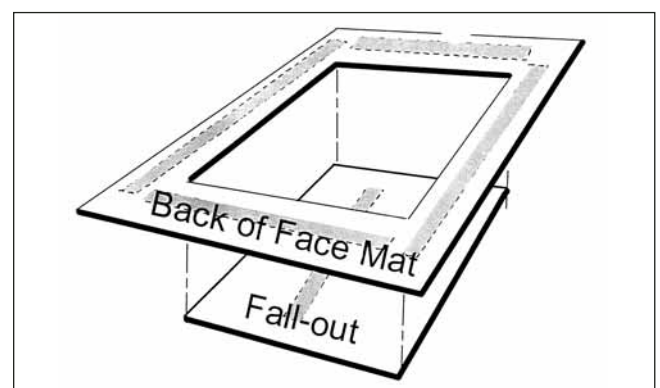


Figure 2: After cutting the single mat, the fallout will be inserted back into the window.

Brian Barnett, CPF, an industrial designer by profession, has spent 25 years in custom framing sales, product and graphic design, merchandising, operations, production control, and financial management. He appears in training videos, has authored numerous training manuals and magazine articles, and teaches at educational venues. He currently is Larson-Juhl's consultant to the retail framing industry, consults with The Fletcher-Terry Co., and contracts for special projects with large industry retailers.

For more than 30 years, Tim Franer, CPF, CMG, has framed artwork for heads of state, corporations, galleries, and fine homes across the globe. Known for his creative design and skilled craftsmanship, Tim consults with industry leaders to define color and design, and is a speaker and educator on art, design, and framing. Tim is an instructor of seminars and workshops throughout North America, Europe, South America, Australia, and New Zealand. Tim is currently development, design, and educational consultant to Nielsen Bainbridge, as well as consultant to The Fletcher-Terry Co. and Roma Moulding.

John E. Ranes II, CPF, GCF, is an instructor of workshops and seminars throughout North America, Europe, South America, Australia, and New Zealand. He and his wife, Sarah, own a frame shop and gallery in Appleton, WI, which has won more than 60 framing awards. John also consults for The Fletcher-Terry Company.