

Double Mats



Artwork framed and mat design by Nielsen & Bainbridge.

Top mat: Fabric Mat #4097, Camel. Bottom mat: Artcare Specialty #8009. Patina Gold Nielsen frame: Profile #97; Beaded Florentine Black/GH #800.

The double mat is the most common, most popular matting technique used in the picture framing business. Since it would be impossible to complete 70% of the custom framing jobs in this industry without knowledge of the double mat, it is important to know the proper way to create one.

It is vitally important to have a properly sized mat blank to start the

process. When the four corners of the blank are not true 90° corners, every cut will be skewed and the results will be noticeable. Check your wall cutter, paper cutter, or mat cutter for perfect square and you'll be ready to begin. You must also make certain that the beveled edges on each side of the mat are cut exactly parallel.

There are many ways to cut a

double mat. This article provides instructions for both cutting a mat using measuring stops on your cutter and by drawing lines on the reverse of the mats.

When using stops, the success of your task will depend largely on two elements: the accuracy of your mathematical calculations and the manner in which you use your equipment.

The first step is to do the math. For this example, cut a mat with a 10½" x 13½" opening and margins of 2½" on all four sides. The 2½" margin will include both the top and the fillet mat (inside mat). When the mat is finished, ¼" of the fillet mat should show.

First, calculate the outside dimensions of the mat. Add the margins to the length and the width of the opening.

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 10\frac{1}{2}" & \times & 13\frac{1}{2}" \quad (\text{size of opening}) \\
 + 2\frac{1}{2}" & \times & 2\frac{1}{2}" \quad (\text{horizontal margins}) \\
 + 2\frac{1}{2}" & + & 2\frac{1}{2}" \quad (\text{vertical margins}) \\
 = 15\frac{1}{2}" & \times & 18\frac{1}{2}" \quad (\text{outside dimension})
 \end{array}$$

You can now cut the top mat as accurately as possible to this outside dimension. Cut the fillet mat slightly smaller, approximately 15¼" x 18½". (The reasoning for this will become clear later.)

Now you can calculate how wide to cut the margins of the top mat. Since the fillet mat should show ¼", subtract that from the overall margin of 2½", which results in 2¼". That will be the margin of the top mat and that is the setting you will use for the mat guide and stops on the cutter. You are now ready to cut the top mat.

It is important to cut the top mat as accurately as possible since both the top mat and the fillet mat are cut from the edges of the top mat.

The beveled edges of the top mat and the fillet are cut exactly parallel and both mats are solidly taped together. They should not require further alignment and should be ready to go into the frame.

Now stand back and admire your perfectly squared and cut double mat. Most framers charge double for this mat since it is two mats in one. Always start with the idea of a double mat and show the customer its value to the artwork. Display examples in your shop to encourage their use. This will increase your selling price as well as your profit. ■

This material was previously published in articles written by Don Bowen, CPF (PFM, August 1992) and Kaye Evans, CPF (PFM, July 1995).

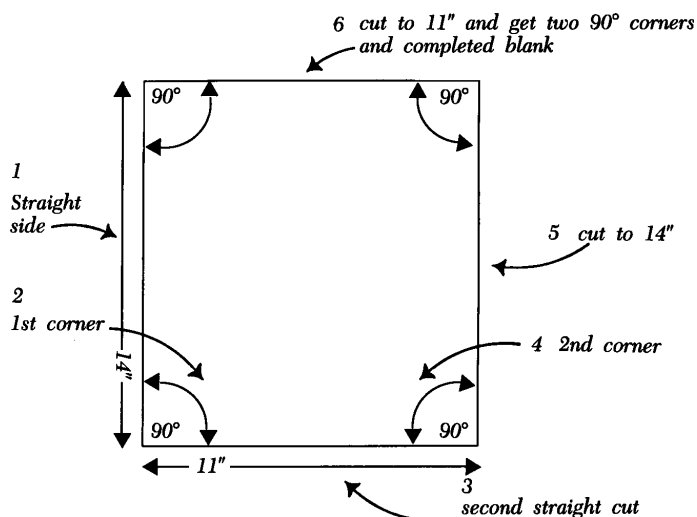


Figure 1. Square two pieces of matboard: one for the top mat, one for the bottom (fillet) mat. Remember to place a slip sheet under the mat you are cutting.

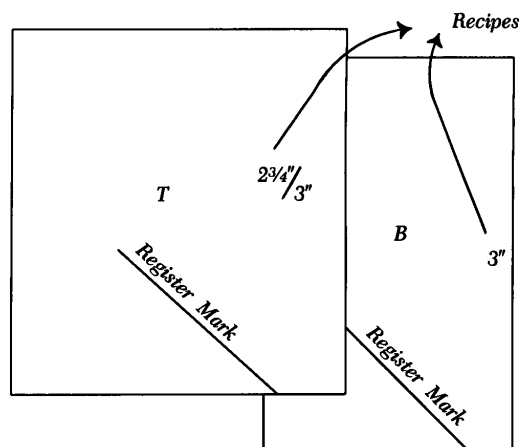
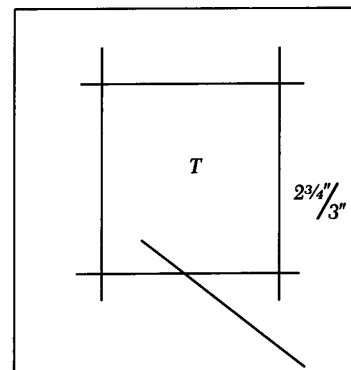


Figure 2. Knowing the correct size of the border and the exact placement of the fall-out is essential to cutting a good mat. Make a registration mark on the back of both mats and write the "recipe" of the cut (the measurements for borders and openings) on both mats.

Figure 3. Set the mat guide of the cutter at the measurement given in the recipe of the top mat. Lock down both the bottom and top locking knobs of the mat guide. Place the slip sheet under the clamp of the cutter (not touching the edge of the mat guide). Position the mat under the clamp with the longest side resting firm against the mat guide. Mark edge of the border with a pencil, extending the line ¾" beyond the corner of the cut. Turn the blank and mark the border of the short sides. Turn again and mark the next long side and a fourth time to mark the last side.



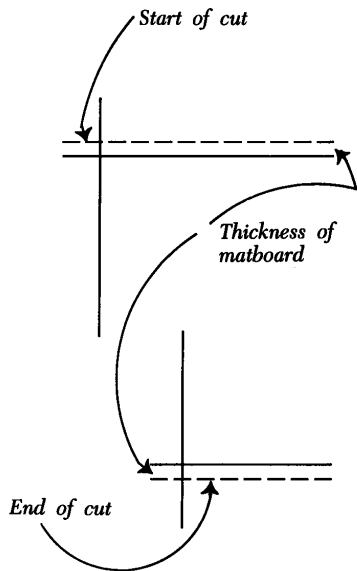


Figure 4. After checking the square of the mat cutter and inserting a new blade, complete this step by inserting the blade above the drawn intersection to start the cut. The proper spacing of the blade is shown above, on the dotted line. Pull the blade the entire length of the opening of the mat, making sure to keep the blade holder inserted fully into the cut. Stop the cut on the dotted line, as shown.

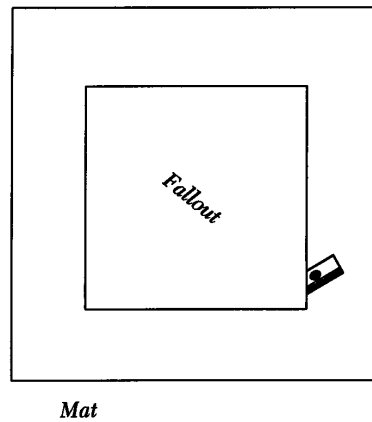


Figure 5. Turn the mat and repeat step 4 to complete each side. The fallout should drop out of the mat. If the fallout is trapped simply turn the mat to the front side. Hold the mat securely under the clamp to free up both hands for trimming. Insert a thin blade into the space created by the cut and carefully trim to the corner while pressing on the fallout.

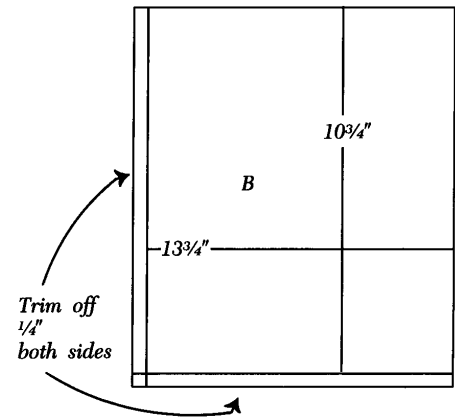


Figure 6. Remove the slip sheet and trim down the second mat by placing it face side up just under the edge of the clamp exposing $1/4$ " of the longest side of the mat. Trim off this side with the bevel blade of the cutter. Turn the blank to the shortest side and trim off $1/4$ " of this side. This will reduce the second mat to a smaller dimension than the top mat and will allow the borders of the second mat to be cut off the edges of the top mat. This will insure the parallel edge of the top to the second mat.

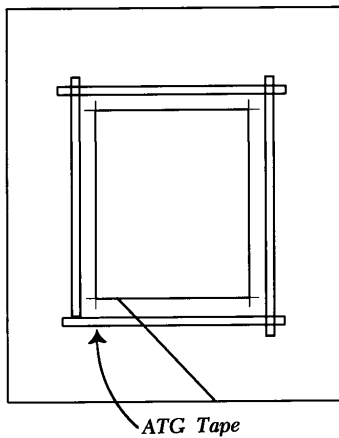


Figure 7. Place the top mat face down on the work surface. Place ATG tape close to the opening and along the full length of all four sides. Place the register marks of both mats on the same end and press the face of the second mat to the adhesive of the top mat. Turn the mat over to observe the border of the top mat and the center of the second mat. Apply a small amount of ATG to the fallout of the top mat and reposition it into the opening of the mat, aligning the register marks.

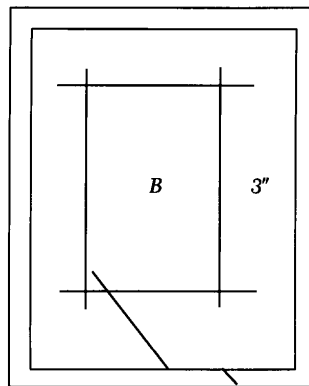


Figure 8. The recipe of this step will be visible on the second mat. Set the mat guide to this measurement and position the double mat firmly against the mat guide. Rotate the mat, marking each side as it is turned. Make sure to intersect the corners.

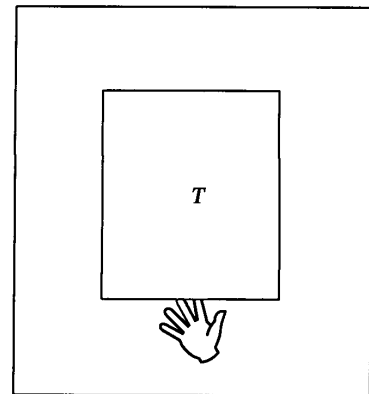


Figure 9. Start with the long side and cut as before. This should allow the fallout of both mats to drop out. If the fallout is trapped, carefully remove the top fallout by inserting your fingers between the two fallouts and remove the top fallout. This will expose the second mat fallout and it can now be trimmed.