

Get Started!

Perhaps you have been thinking about getting a vacuum press or a mechanical press for a long time, but have been getting along using spray adhesives, pressure-sensitive boards or sending out the few dry mounting jobs you have. However, more dry mounting opportunities have been coming to your shop, and you are wishing you could increase your profits by doing them yourself and having this capability to offer your customers.

Trade shows are an excellent way to find out about presses and how to use them. Asking your distributor about what programs he has in place to help you buy one and get the technical support you need. Whatever you do, ask the questions—because it's not as difficult as you may think.

Help is available for learning the basics to the most advanced techniques through monthly articles in PFM, workshops at trade shows provided by PPFAs, distributors and manufacturers, Regional PFFA chapter workshops, and the purchase of books such as The Mounting and Laminating Handbook by Chris Paschke, CPF, GCF

Part of operating a press is knowing what basic materials and accessories you need to get started and to offer several options to your customers. Listed in this article are the most commonly used adhesives, laminates, substrates and accessories that you will want to have to start getting profits from your press.

Heat Activated Adhesives

There are four adhesive characteristics which are important to distinguish depending on the application. Depending on the characteristics of an adhesive, it may be useful for several applications or for more limited use. An understanding of the four general characteristics — permanence, porosity, physical nature and acidity level—will give you a sound foundation for using dry mounting adhesives.

The Four Characteristics:

- **Permanence**—once bonded, an adhesive is either permanent (bonds when heat is applied and cannot be removed), or removable (bonds during cooling and can be reheated to be removed). Although artwork mounted

with removable adhesives can be removed from the mounting board, the process is not completely reversible. Some of the adhesive soaks into the pores of the material and can never be removed.

- **Porosity**—the ability to let air pass through. An adhesive is either porous (breathable) or nonporous (not breathable). This characteristic should be considered in relation to the nature of the material being mounting as well as the substrate it will be mounted to.

- **Physical Nature**—dry mounting adhesives, available in either sheets or rolls, are either tissue-core or film. A tissue-core adhesive consists of a tissue carrier with adhesive on either side. Films are pure adhesive. Each type has its

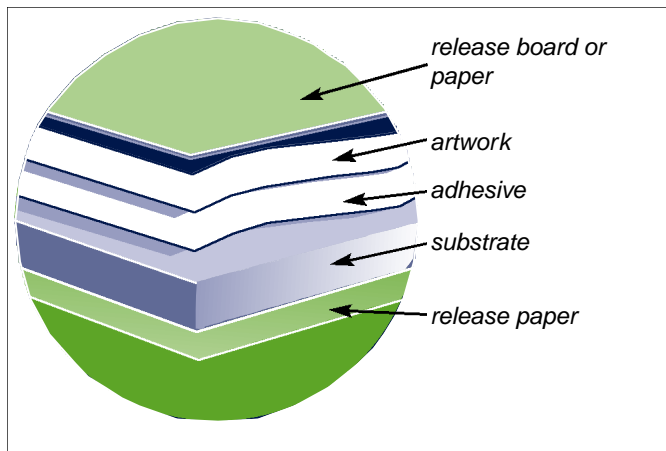


Figure 1: It's important to create a mounting package with your materials to ensure the best mounting results.

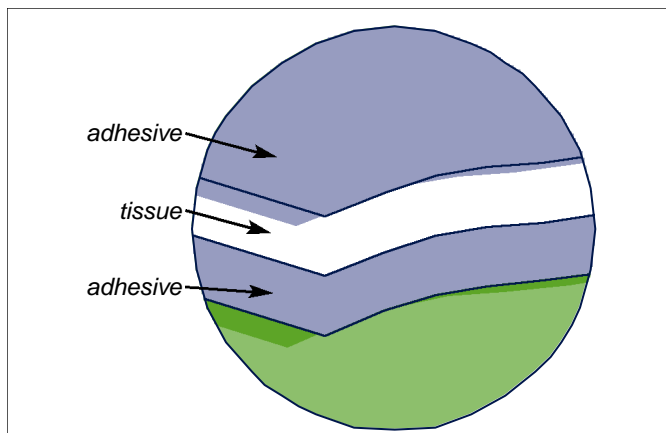


Figure 2: A tissue core adhesive is one sheet that has three layers: a tissue carrier with adhesive on both sides.

Basic Materials and Accessories for Successful Dry Mounting

advantages. Tissue-core adhesives are nontacky, clean and dry. They are easy and efficient to use and adapt well to oversize mounting, float mounting, and other techniques. Film adhesives are translucent when unmounted and clear when mounted; they have no carrier. (See Fig. 2.)

- *Acidity Level*—buffered or non-buffered. Although dry mounting cannot be considered conservation/preservation framing, the quality of the adhesive you use and its pH should be considered when you discuss your customer's expectations for the framed piece.

A versatile dry mounting adhesive is porous, has a tissue-core and permanently bonds together almost any smooth surfaced paper or photograph at a low temperature of approximately 185°F. Once mounted, the bond is unaffected by extremes in either temperature or humidity and requires a solvent to remove. This type of adhesive is versatile because it is ideal for both nonporous and high moisture content materials including resin-coated photos and glossy papers as well as regular papers, along with a wide range of mounting boards.

A more delicate adhesive is removable and features an alkaline buffered paper core, an inert adhesive and has a low bonding temperature of approximately 170°F. This adhesive is designed for use with high quality poster art and pho-

tographs. It will help retain their original appearance for years to come and can handle even the thinnest materials (rice papers, tissues, silks) without any chance of bleed through, yet it has great holding power. This kind of adhesive can be removed by reheating it at 200°F and then peeling the work off of the mounting board. For additional protection of dry mounted work, use acid-free or 100% rag foam boards as your substrate.

An ultra-clear pure adhesive film has no paper core, is nonporous, removable and melts when heated to 190°F. It flows evenly and easily to bond even the most difficult pieces. It is recommended for textured surfaces and fabrics. To remove, reheat to 200°F and peel the work off the mounting board while still warm prior to cooling under a weight.

Laminates

A vinyl-based heat activated laminating film can be used to protect both photographs and other paper artwork. The surface is extremely durable and eliminates the need for glass. These laminating films usually feature ultra-violet protection, low bonding temperature and are available in various finishes to create different effects. For example, a shiny finish creates a sparkling sheen that highlights the artwork without the glaring reflection and weight of picture glass. A matte finish gives a completely nonglare finish for a softer look on art prints. Textured lami-

nates are also available and can be used to create pre-embossed textures and semi-matte finishes.

In addition to vinyl-based laminates, clear polyester laminating films are available. While these polyester films were not designed for use in the framing industry, framers should be aware that they are available, even if only to avoid confusion with vinyl-based laminates.

Polyester laminating films protect the surface of porous paper artwork and can be written on and wiped off. They are designed for use on paper prints, blueprints, maps, charts, menus and other porous materials and should not be used on nonporous materials such as photographs, coated papers, etc.

When using polyester films, mounting and laminating can be done at one time, using a roller laminator. Even though one-sided polyester laminates can be mounted in a vacuum press, full encapsulation requires a roller-laminator.

Canvas media for use with a perforated laminating film for the professional canvas transfer of photographic emulsions or art posters is also available. This canvas media may or may not feature a repositionable adhesive coating, a range of colors to choose from, and a variety of woven weights and textures.

Substrates

Although various types of board may be used for mounting, foamboard is one of the most widely used sub-

strates. It is preferred because it is lightweight, smooth, easy to cut, has the right degree of rigidity, and is easy to sew through for shadowboxes and to use for spacers. It is available in several forms and thicknesses.

There is regular white foam board, acid-free foam board, 100% cotton rag foam board, black on black foam board (excellent for newspaper to prevent "ghosting") and a foam board with a pre-applied heat activated adhesive for one step mounting. The most common thicknesses are $\frac{1}{8}$ ", $\frac{3}{16}$ " and $\frac{1}{2}$ "; others are available in a variety of sizes.

Many substrates and other materials for mounting need to be pre-dried to removed excess moisture. This is necessary when working with a mechanical press, but not when using a vacuum press.

Your substrate, adhesive, and other materials must also be put together in a "mounting package" to insure successful results. (See Fig. 1.)

Accessories

- *Release Paper*—To prevent any residue of adhesive or laminating films from sticking to the platen of a press, a release paper provides a protective sheet.

- *Release Board*—Release boards may be used in place of a release paper with the added advantages of increased durability and easier handling. They are durable and coated with silicone on both sides. It is recommended to never use a release board on the bottom of a vacuum press, as it will prevent the diaphragm from conforming around the substrate.

- *Tacking Iron*—a tacking iron is a necessary accessory to a vacuum

press. It can be used to tack materials into position to prevent shifting before processing. Tacking irons with pre-set, self regulating temperature controls are available for easy use.

- *Releasing solvent*—A releasing solvent is essential for the preventive maintenance of your press. It can be used to remove artwork from various mounting adhesives as well as to clean adhesive residue off artwork or press parts.

- *Sponge Foam Overlay*—When applying laminates in a vacuum or mechanical press, this foam material is essential for laying on top of the laminate to ensure a smooth, even finish.

- *Perforator*—A perforator is an essential tool in applying laminates to photo papers and other non-porous media prior to application in a vacuum or mechanical press. (Of course, pre-perforated films are also available to save time and effort.)

In Conclusion

Dry mounting adds capabilities and profits to your shop. As you advance in your dry mounting expertise you will find many creative opportunities for dry mounting, from wrapping boards with fabric or paper to embossing and more. Whether you are a "beginner" or a "veteran", it pays to keep current with new materials and new opportunities. ■

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