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## How to Cut a Mat and Frame Your Artwork with Hilary Williams

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### Chapter 1 - Introduction

#### Overview

(spirited instrumental music) - Hi, my name is Hilary Williams and I'm a screen printing artist. I've been showing my prints for about 10 years now. And what I realized at the beginning is as an artist who works on paper, in order to show your work most often it has to be framed. Now custom framing can be quite expensive, so I learned how to do it myself. Now I have a few materials here to show you how to do some really basic matting and framing on your own through materials that you can buy at a craft store or at Michaels. I'll show you how to cut your own mats using a mat cutter. I'll show you an archival way to mount your prints. Using a store bought frame, I'll show you how to add a dust cover and hardware. Knowing how to frame your piece well can add an extra layer of professionalism to any art work.

### Chapter 2 - Materials

#### Materials

- To frame your prints, you'll need, first of all, a piece of art. I have a screen print that I've done. It measures eight and a half by 11. I selected this piece before I went to the store to pick out the frame that I wanted so that I could correlate the colors of the frame and the mats. I've selected a tan mat and a white backing mat. The color of the backing mat does not matter at all. The tan mat, it's a mat board, and you can find those at many craft stores in the framing section. They often come in large sheets which you can cut down with a straight edge, an X-ACTO knife, or a cutting board, to your desired frame size. The frame I selected is also 11 by 14, so I have cut the mats down on the outer side to 11 by 14 so that they'll fit inside the frame I've selected. To cut the opening where the artwork is gonna show through the mat, we're gonna need a mat cutter. The mat cutter has a beveled edge to frame your piece in a more professional way. We have this Logan Compact Mat Cutter here. These mat cutters are great if you're framing a lot of artwork in all different sizes and shapes. If you're just framing standard-size pieces, such as eight by 10, 11 by 14, 12 by 16, there are a lot of options for pre-cut mats that you can buy at a framing store. This particular one is a 16 by 20 size mat on the outside where the opening is a 12 by 16. So a 12 by 16 artwork can fit inside there nicely. A lot of the tips in the rest of the class will be great for you if you want to buy a pre-cut mat and frame your artwork professionally. For mounting and framing, you'll also need a ruler. We have some acid-free photo squares to secure your piece to the mat. We have some hardware here for the backing, and framing wire, X-ACTO blade, pencil, screwdriver, double-sided tape, and paper towels and Windex to clean off any smudges on the frame, a can of compressed air, and, finally, a roll of craft paper, which I'll show you how to use to make a dust cover.

### Chapter 3 - How to Mat and Frame

#### Cutting a mat

- [Instructor] First I'm gonna show you how to cut a mat, using our Logan Mat Cutter for any size artwork. We have to measure the artwork and then mark the back, before we cut. I have 8 1/2 by 11 size piece of art, which, as you might not believe, is not a standard size for framing. So, you wanna leave about a quarter inch around the edges of your piece of art, so that it fits nicely inside the opening of the mat we're gonna cut. So, for this one, the eight inches looks about right to me. Then,

on this side, same thing. It's 11 inches. We'll go for about  $10 \frac{1}{2}$ , so that each side has that same quarter inch. That way, there won't be any gaps between the artwork and the opening of your mat, where something you don't want shows through. We don't need these. Or that anymore, at the moment. And you flip this over, so we're doing all our marks on the back. We know our mat is 14 inches tall. The height of our artwork is 10.5 inches tall. So, we minus that from 14 and we get 3.5. And then we divide that by two and we get 1.75. So, we know we now need to make a mark of 1.75 inch from the top and the bottom. And we're gonna make two marks, so that we can draw between the two a straight line to follow. So, there's our top marks. And same down at the bottom. Now, we're gonna connect the two lines. Now, for the sides, we know we have an 11-inch width. And the width of our opening needs to be eight inches. So, that's three inches left, divide by two, is 1.5. So, we're gonna make marks  $1 \frac{1}{2}$  inch in on both sides. Again we're making those two marks, so we can connect them to a straight line at  $1 \frac{1}{2}$ . And then we'll connect those, like so. So, these are the lines that we're gonna use the mat cutter to cut the mat opening. First thing we need to do is mount our blade inside of the housing that comes with it. This is for creating a beveled edge. As you can see, we're gonna be cutting at a 45-degree angle, rather than a straight up and down, 90-degree angle. And the blade also has a beveled edge. It's just gonna fit right into this little slot here. Let me line up where the screw goes back in there. And screw it on in. These are specialty blades that come with the mat cutter. If you need to buy replacements, it's just like an X-Acto blade. It comes with a number that corresponds with the type of blade you're supposed to buy. Now, we're gonna set the guide for our measurements. So, our first measurement, maybe we'll do this sides first. Is it  $1 \frac{3}{4}$  inch. Which is right there. Set scale on this end, not this side. Oops, so there we go,  $1 \frac{3}{4}$  inch. You'll also need a simple piece of mat board underneath your blade. One comes with a mat cutter, but if you tear that up or that's not good anymore, you can just cut a piece of your extra mat to use. You need that so that the beveled edge doesn't grate into the wood, as it goes through your mat. Put the  $1 \frac{3}{4}$  edge up against our setting bar there. The blade is not in the mat yet. We're just getting it ready to cut. And, to do that, we need to use this line. Now, I've tested this mat cutter and, if you line up the line right on the line you wanna cut, it actually does a little over-cut, which you can see right here. So, to adjust for this, we're actually gonna move the line on the cutter slightly above your line that you've drawn on the mat. Just slightly, like, maybe a sixteenth of an inch, perhaps. So, now we're ready to make our cuts. We're gonna start just inside the line. I'm gonna use my thumb to push the blade into the mat. You're gonna have to keep the pressure all the way through, until you get just inside our other line. Now, we're gonna stop just inside this other line, again, to adjust for that over-cut. So, push in like that. And hold the mats down with your left hand on this bar, so that they don't move while you're cutting. And, stop right there. And you're gonna pop the blade out. So, now you can cut the other side in the same way. And flip it around. Okay! Now we're just gonna readjust the guide to the  $1 \frac{1}{2}$  inch setting and cut the other sides of the mat. So, again, we're measuring by this edge to  $1 \frac{1}{2}$  inches. Tighten those screws. So it doesn't move. Now, flip the mat to the edges that you wanna cut, which is this side. Readjust that. Close it. And gonna start just inside this other line that we just cut here. And push. Keep the pressure. Hold the others down with your left hand. And stop there. Release the blade and flip it around. Sink it in. Hold it down. Okay. Let's see. And, just pops right out on this one. If it doesn't pop out and it's hanging by a thread, rather than tearing it away from the mat and risk damaging your corner, what you'll do is you'll pick up another beveled edge blade and just slide it along, where it's hanging. Just so you don't tear the mat. This mat cutter gives you a lot of flexibility for many different size artworks. You can cut mats in all different types of colors and sizes and styles.

## Mounting and framing

- Now I'm gonna show you how to place and mount your artwork using basic materials of photo mounting squares, which you can buy at any craft store. These little squares are very handy. They're double sided. They're acid free. We're gonna place three of them on top of our artwork in order to secure it to the back mat. Now, we're just placing three on the top and not all around the sides because artwork on paper has a natural wave to it and it will change very subtly, but naturally, over time, and you don't want to stress it by stretching out all four corners. You want to let it do that and just attach it at the top. Now we're gonna remove the backing on these little squares so that they are double stick, and this is our back. So the piece will be actually mounted to this mat. It has a white and a black side, I'm just gonna do it on the black side. This color does not matter. But, before I press those into place, how am I gonna know how it's gonna fit inside the opening? We're gonna take the mat that we cut with the beveled edge and maneuver my piece inside that, so that it's not sticking out with any gaps, like that. We've got plenty of room with that quarter inch. And I'm gonna carefully line up with my hand, keeping the print in place with the top mat. I'm gonna carefully line up the corners so that they are squared off, and then I'm gonna release both. Remove the top mat and press these in. Now, these may not be completely straight, but that doesn't matter. It fits inside your opening how you want it and when you put the top on, it looks lovely. Next, we're gonna remove this again and place three more tabs at the top of the mat to seal the two brown and black mats together. And remove those tabs that are on there. And seal the two mats together. Set your print aside, and we're gonna prepare the frame. You want to make sure that there aren't any smudges, so first we'll do the front. Just one spritz is more than enough, of Windex and a paper towel. Now we're gonna flip it and open it up, do the other side. So, a lot of store bought frames come with tabs that you can either turn up and then press back in, or these slide from side to side. Slide these out, and we'll remove the backing. We also want to clean the inside, just in case there's any shmutz from the manufacturer. All these marks underneath are from the tablecloth, we don't need to worry about those. It's optional, but you can use compressed air to clean out any excess dust that might still be left in there. Looks good. Take the artwork and mat together and slide it carefully, without adding extra dust in there, inside your frame. Now we can take the backing and set that in there. You don't want to seal it quite yet. What we're gonna do is we're gonna take a look at the frame while holding the backing in, and make sure that I haven't lost any hairs inside there or there's a big piece of something that I missed. While I'm looking at it right now it looks totally fine, so we're we're gonna go ahead and seal up the back. And these little things that go side to side fit right back into their slots, like so. This frame actually comes with two pieces on the back so you can hang it on the wall. It is ready to go right now. However, if you want a more professional look, adding a dust cover and your own hardware will give you that. To create the dust cover, I'm first gonna use some double sided tape. We're gonna stick it around the edges of our frame. We don't want to go over the edge. If it goes a little bit over the edge you can trim it with scissors or just fold it over. Do that on each side of the frame. Using paper cut from the roll of craft paper we have, we're gonna place it on the back, over the double sided tape. I'm gonna line up one of the straight edges with one of our framed edges, just so it leaves me one less edge to cut. If it doesn't line up perfectly, you can easily just trim it later. And then press this in and stretch it out so it does not have any wrinkles along the edges, before I press all the edges down. Seal it with your palms. Okay, now I'm gonna push down on the edges so that I can see where the edge of the frame stops. Once you have them all pressed in and creased, we use our ruler and an exacto blade to clean off these edges. You want to press your ruler not all the way to the edge, but about 1/16th or so inside of the frame

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so when you're cutting you don't cut the actual edge of the frame, you're cutting on the back. So, I think we have that lined up and now we're gonna use the blade to trim it. Keeping a lot of pressure on the ruler so that it doesn't slide out of place. We'll just repeat that on the other two sides. The last step for the dust cover is just peeling off the excess paper. Adding a dust cover gives such a clean look to the back of your piece.

#### Adding hardware

- To finish, we're going to put our framing hardware on the back of the piece. We're going to stretch a wire between two framing hooks. And we're going to put the hooks one third of the way down on your piece. That gives you enough space so the wire won't show at the top and it also keeps your piece as secure to the wall as possible. Our frame measures 16 and a half. Now it doesn't have to be exactly one third. What I'm going to do is do five and a half. On one side and mark the other side as well. That's five and a half from there. Now we've got our little framing hardware here. These will often come in a pack with screws already. If they come separately, you can buy short screws separately as well. Going to side that right over the mark. And screw it in there. And we'll do the same on the other side. Now we're going to attach the wire. This is a special wire just for framing. It's many, many wires woven together. To create a secure wire on here, we're going to thread through towards the outside about yay long, three to four inches. We're going to come back, loop around towards the middle of the frame and then behind the longer wire. And then again, through the loop. And pull tight, as tight as you can. So it's like that and then we're going to wrap tightly in coils around the main wire. All right, stretch it along. Then we're going to mark that and measure about that long and we'll cut there. When you are stretching it, you're going to want to make it tight. This way if there's an earthquake or a loud bus that rocks your house, your frame is less likely to fall off the wall if it's secured tightly. And same as this other side. There, we are ready to hang it. I also have other examples of how I've mated and framed some of my pieces. This one includes a double mat, which is easy to do. You just accent your first mat off by a quarter inch and cut a second color. It just adds a level of detail to your final piece. Even just a simple white mat around a white piece can add a layer of professionalism as well as protects your valuable artwork from touching the glass. Framing your artwork should be just as important of a consideration for the presentation of your artwork as the beautiful piece itself.