

# Matting 2D Artwork

## Calculating Dimensions for Matting

Assumptions:

1. You intend to frame the work (eventually.)
2. You want the outside dimensions to be whole numbers, rather than fractional numbers, so you won't need a custom frame.
3. You intend to "mat over" the paper your work is on rather than "floating" the work in a shadow box frame.
4. You have a sharp utility and/or X-Acto knife, some gummed tape, a piece of matboard (archival 4-ply), and a piece of mountboard (archival foam board.)

**Step 1:** Measure the width of your work (the image area, or the papers' width.) Subtract  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from this number ( $\frac{1}{4}$ " from each side of the image that will be covered by the mat.) Write this number on a sheet of paper.

**Step 2:** Decide what nominal<sup>1</sup> mat size you want and multiply that number by "2." Write it down.

**Step 3:** Add the numbers you have written down (you will, at this point, probably NOT have a whole number. If you do have a whole number, skip to **Step 4**.) If you have a fractional number (such as  $16\frac{3}{4}$ ") round up, or down, to a whole number. Take what you added or subtracted (from rounding up or down) and divide that number by 2 (this sum is to be added to the "nominal" size of each mat side.)

**Step 4:** Repeat steps 1 through 3 for the height of the mat/image. If needed, always add any excess to the bottom of the mat. See Step 5 (on the right) for an example of how this is done.

## Matting example

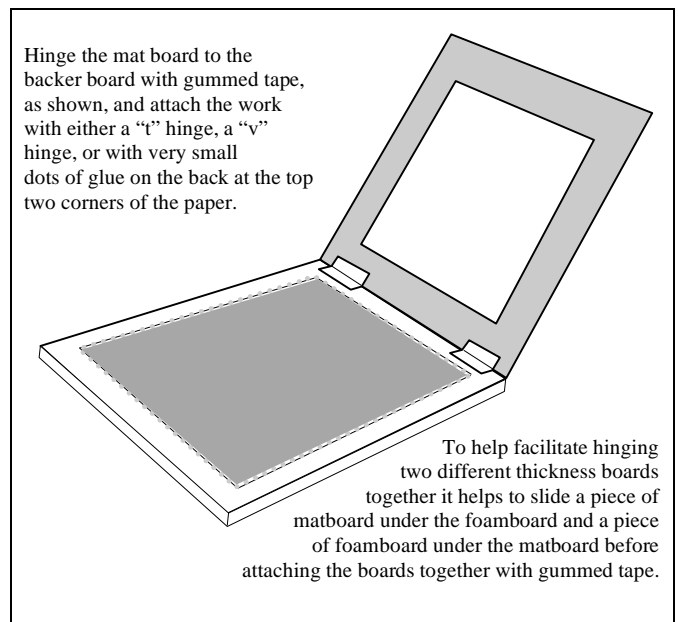


**Step 1:** this image is, for example only,  $8\frac{1}{4}$ " (h) x 5" (w)

**Step 2:** A nominal mat size of 2" has been chosen. 2 times 2" equals 4".

**Step 3:** Width of image that will show through the mat window is  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ", width of the mat (times 2) is 4". Total, for the width, is  $8\frac{1}{2}$ " (not a whole number!) Round up  $\frac{1}{2}$ " and add that to  $8\frac{1}{2}$ " leaving you with 9". The total mat size now is  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " (each side is  $2\frac{1}{4}$ " actual) and must be taken into account for **Step 4**.

**Step 4:** Height of the image, after subtracting  $\frac{1}{2}$ " for overlap, is  $7\frac{3}{4}$ ", and the mat size total is  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " (so far.) Total, for the height, is  $12\frac{1}{4}$ " (ouch! NOT a whole number!) Okay, it appears we have another fraction and we don't want to pay some frame maker an arm and leg just to custom make a frame, so we merely add  $\frac{3}{4}$ " to the bottom of the mat (making the mat 3" at the bottom only) and the mat height now totals 13" (a whole number!) This means, after we cut our mat and backer and mount the work in the hinged mat, we can now look for a much less expensive frame that is 13" (h) x 9" (w).



<sup>1</sup>**Nominal:** An approximate, rather than an actual, number that is more or less than the actual, final, number.