

Matting Prints

Matting example

Calculating Dimensions for Matting a Print

Assumptions:

1. You intend to frame the print (eventually.)
2. You want the outside dimensions to be whole numbers, rather than fractional numbers, so you don't need a custom frame.
3. You intend to "mat over" the paper your print is on rather than "floating" the print in a shadow box frame.
4. You have titled, numbered, and signed/dated your print just below the bottom of the image (printed) area.
5. 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 print (the printed area, not the papers' width.) Write this number on a sheet of paper.

Step 2: Decide what size reveal¹ you want and multiply that number by "2." (For example: a 1/4" reveal times two equals 1/2" [one half inch].) Write it down.

Step 3: Decide what nominal² mat size you want and multiply that number by "2." Write it down.

Step 4: Add the three 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 5.) If you have a fractional number (such as 16 3/4") round up, or down, to a whole number. Take what you added or subtracted and divide that number by 2 (this sum is to be added to the "nominal" size of each mat side.)

Step 5: Repeat steps 1 through 4 for the height of the mat/image/reveal. 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.

¹ **Reveal:** The amount of paper, beyond the image, that will be revealed by your mat window.

² **Nominal:** An approximate, rather than an actual, number that is more or less than the actual final number.



Step 1: The printed area of this image is, for example, 7 3/4" (h) x 4 1/2" (w)

Step 2: The reveal is to be 1/4" left, top, and right side, and will be 3/4" (allowing for the title, edition number, and signature/date) at the bottom. The total reveal for the width is 1/2"

Step 3: A nominal mat size of 2" has been chosen. 2 times 2" equals 4".

Step 4: Width of image is 4 1/2", reveal is (1/4" per side) 1/2", width of the mat (times 2) is 4". Total, for the width, is 9" (a whole number!)

Step 5: Height of the image is 7 3/4", total reveal for the height is 1" (1/4" at top, 3/4" at bottom), and the nominal mat size total is 4" (so far.) Total, for the height, is 12 3/4" (ouch! NOT a whole number!) Okay, it appears we have a 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 1/4" to the bottom of the mat and it now totals 13" (a whole number!) This means, after we cut our mat and backer and mount the print in the hinged mat, we can now look for a frame that is 13" (h) x 9" (w).

