

# A Closer Look at Framing: Why Is a Mat Important?

*The mat is one of the most important parts of a frame design—it not only unifies the design between artwork and frame but also protects the artwork from a number of hazards.*

*We know the first job of a frame is to present the artwork it holds at its best. We also know that sometimes a print, photograph, or similar type of paper-borne artwork can look “lost” in a frame without a mat. That’s because it’s not easy for the eye to move from the delicate paper-borne art to the solid, sturdy frame. A mat provides a transition between these two worlds.*

*That’s also why matboard color and shape are an important part of the frame design. Everything from how light or dark the mat-*



*board color is, or if there is a double mat, or a mat with a specially-cut opening, affects how you and other see and react to the art inside it.*

*The other functions a mat can perform are much more practical. Paper-borne artwork, like many other objects, reacts to changes in the environment. Changes in temperature and humidity can cause paper to expand and contract, buckle or cockle, making it seem “wavy.” A mat can help a piece of art from becoming deformed because of such changes. When paper expands it may also come in contact with the glass or acrylic in the front of the frame. This can sometimes cause severe, non-reversible, damage to the artwork. A mat helps to distance the artwork away from the glass or acrylic, preventing such a possibility.*

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