How to Window Mount Prints

Equipment

A good mount mat cutter is essential. There are a vast number of makes and models available, ranging from expensive professional equipment to cheap and nasty. A good basic piece of kit for the amateur photographer is the Logan Team System 424, consisting simply of a special metal ruler and a cutter which slides in a groove on the ruler. At around £45, it won’t break the bank either.

1. Mount Mat Cutter
2. Stanley Knife
3. Scissors
4. Sharp Pencil
5. Cutting Mat (A1 size) is advisable

Materials

1. 50X40cm Mount Board. (pre-cut 50X40cm sheets available from online outlets such as Paper Spectrum).
2. Masking/Framing Tape. (It is best to get good quality 25mm and 50mm framing tape)
3. Double Sided Tape (25mm)
Measuring

1. **Place your 500x400mm Mount Board on a Cutting Mat** (if you value your table)

2. **Measure your Image Accurately**
   Let’s assume your image is printed on A3 paper (which is 420mm wide X 297mm high) and that you size your image to 380mm wide X 257mm high in Photoshop. This will leave a 20mm margin on the paper all round your image, which will allow sufficient overlap to fix the paper to the back of the mount.
   **NB:** Whatever your original image size and aspect ratio, you should ensure that it is resized so as not to exceed 380mm wide or 257mm high on A3 paper or the overlap behind the mount aperture will be too small to attach the paper to the mount.

3. **Measure the Size of the Mount Window Aperture**
   **NB:** Measure and draw both vertical and horizontal centre lines on the rear of your mount board and make/mark all further vertical and horizontal measurements from the centre point outward (see diagram below). This will eradicate errors caused by (common) inaccuracies in the mount board size.
   
   A. **The Width:**
      Subtract the print image width from the mount board width and divide by two:
      500mm – 380mm/2 = 190mm each side of the horizontal centre point (=60mm margin left & right).
   
   B. **The Height:**
      Subtract the print image height from the mount board height and divide by two:
      400mm – 257mm/2 = 128.5mm each side of vertical centre point (=71.5mm margin top & bottom).
      Your mount will now have an aperture in the centre with equal margins top, bottom and either side.
      However, you may prefer offset margins. If so, follow the instructions below.
   
   C. **Offsetting the Top and Bottom Margins:**
      It is common to offset the bottom margin a little wider than the top margin as this is usually more pleasing to the eye. Hence the top & bottom margins could be changed from 71.5mm to 60mm top margin and 83mm bottom margin (this is just an example – you could choose different margins).
      In this example, offset the bottom margin by adding 11.5mm to the top part of the vertical aperture from the centre point (128.5+11.5=140mm) and subtracting 11.5mm from the bottom part of the vertical aperture from the centre point (128.5-11.5=117mm) as shown in the diagram below. Check that only the top & bottom margins change and that your total vertical aperture remains 257mm.

4. **Mark the Mount for Cutting**
   
   A. Turn the mount board face down on the cutting mat.
   
   B. Mark the aperture cut lines using a sharp pencil (see Note 1). Continue the lines right to the edge of the mount (see Note 2).
Cutting

Make the First Cut

IMPORTANT: Put an off cut of board under the line you are going to cut. If you cut straight through the mounting board onto the cutting mat you may not get a true cut as the stiffness of the mat may cause the blade of the cutter to waver. This can ruin both the mount and the cutting mat (especially with angled cuts).

1. If your equipment has the option, adjust the cutter blade depth to be just longer than the depth of the mount board you are cutting (eg: 1.5mm for 1.4mm board).

2. Place the ruler on the mount so that the grooved edge faces the centre of the mount and line it up accurately with your first pencil line.

3. Hold the ruler firmly in position, place the cutter so that its lugs fit over the edge of the groove in the ruler and (with blade retracted) check that the cutter will run smoothly in the groove.

4. NB: When aligning the cutter, make sure that your eye is directly above the guide mark. Set the cutter blade so that the start guide mark is aligned 1mm just before the first horizontal pencil line and then press the blade firmly into the mount (using the thumb knob). Whilst holding the ruler firmly in position, press and hold the blade down and slide the cutter away from you until the guide mark is aligned 1mm just past the other horizontal pencil line. Pull the blade out of the mount and lift off the cutter. (Tip: It helps to make an initial, light cut to break the card surface and follow up with a firm cut).

Make the Second and Subsequent Cuts

5. Turn the mount board 90 degrees anti-clockwise so that the cut you have just made is nearest to you and check that the grooved side of the ruler faces towards the centre of the mount board. Do this with every cut to ensure that all bevelled cuts are made with the same orientation. Remember to also move the off-cut board piece under the new cut line.

6. Make the second, third and fourth cuts in the same way as the first. The centre of the window should now drop cleanly out. If not, use the Stanley blade to carefully trim out the corner joins (see Note 3).
Fixing

Fixing the Print to the Back of the Window Mount

You now have your printed image on A3 paper with an appropriately sized border all round and cut your window mount to fit your image as described above.

1. Put your print face up on the cutting mat. Cut two x 2 inch lengths of masking/framing tape and insert them sticky side up beneath the corners of the print.

2. Now lower the window mount over the print and check/adjust its alignment. When satisfied that the print is correctly placed, press the mount firmly against the masking tape. This will hold the print in place while you turn over the mount to fix the print to a backing board with double-sided tape (at this point, some people like to add another strip of tape along the top edge for extra security). Do not use brown parcel tape as it will in time ooze brown gum at its edges and ruin any mount or print it is stored against.

3. Place your window mounted print face down on the cutting mat and place your backing board beside it so that the top edges of each are aligned together exactly.

4. Hinge the top edges of the backing board and window mount together by sticking a long, narrow overlapping length of masking/framing tape to both pieces.

5. Stick a length of double sided tape to the outermost top, bottom and side edges of the rear of the backing board and peel off the tape protector.

6. Carefully fold the tape hinged, window mounted print over on top of the backing board, taking care to align them accurately before pressing them firmly together. Use a clean cloth/tissue to press it down.

Some people like to add a little spray mount to the back of the window mounted photo for additional security but this is not recommended as it can cause the photo to distort in response to temperature and humidity changes. It is better to let the print hang cleanly in the mount frame. This also facilitates easy removal if required.

Note 1. Some people prefer to cut their vertical and horizontal window mount apertures 2mm smaller as this ensures the print is fully enclosed in the aperture window (and compensates for any measurement errors).

Note 2. Continuing the pencil lines to the edges of the mount is useful if you intend to make a double window (outwith the scope of this tutorial).

Note 3. If your cuts do not quite meet at the corners, cut very carefully with the Stanley knife to avoid tearing the mount.