

Room for Design

Few rules make framing simple

There are a number of basic rules for framing, matting and hanging pictures, but adventurous spirits can go in many directions with good results. Pictures need not be original works of art. As a matter of fact, anything that pleases you will do — reproductions of much-loved paintings, unusual embroidery, a flower or bird print from an old book, collections of various items or photographs.

The frame is meant to enhance the picture and should never call attention to itself. Actually it should be the liaison between picture and surroundings. It pays to study the rules before you start.

First of all, the frame should lead the eye to the focal point of the picture. Color and weight of the frame should be attuned to the subject of the picture. The frame should add perspective and importance to the composition.

Naturally, the style of the picture should dictate the type and style of the frame. Highly detailed paintings are best set off by frames done in soft, quiet colors. On the other hand, pictures with broad, restless surfaces can take highly ornamented, textured or carved frames.

THE FINISH AND COLOR of the frame should tie in with the colors in the picture. A safe guide is to choose a shade slightly lighter than the darkest tones in your picture.

Generally, the frame should be a neutral tone, then perhaps rubbed or glazed with either a color used in the picture or a harmonizing color.

A frame should always be wide enough to balance the picture. As a guide, you would need a frame at least one inch wide for an 8-by-10 picture. After a while you will be able to judge the correct size just by looking at it. Be sure to examine your picture carefully before deciding on the frame. There are three broad classifications of frames from which you can choose.

Under the traditional heading come period frames of elaborately carved wood or plaster. Usually those with overall decorations are finished in gold, silver, or metal leaf. The more formal types used to frame portraits, still lifes, or landscapes may be finished in deep mahogany or walnut.

Provincial frames of maple, oak, or chestnut are best suited to botanical prints, simple still lifes, and primitive art. The wood may be left natural or treated with wax, a light stain, or antique finish.

The simple, squared-off lines of modern frames make them most suitable for the large areas of bold color and

forceful shapes of contemporary art. Frames of wormy or weathered chestnut are often used for modern landscape paintings and still lifes.

MATS ARE IMPORTANT and they have two purposes — to give small, delicate pictures such as prints or etchings more importance by making them appear larger and to lead the eye from the frame into the picture.

As with frames, mats should never be too bold. In selecting them, there are three important points to consider — color, size, and texture. A good rule to follow is that mats should never be less than 2½ inches at top and sides, and three inches at the bottom. They may be larger but these proportions should be followed.

Since a mat that is the same width on all four sides seems to be narrower at the bottom, the bottom measurement is always increased.

Mats can be tinted either to pick up one of the colors in the picture, or to harmonize with the color scheme of the room. The latter is a sure way of having the picture fit into the room's decor. Mats may be textured or patterned, particularly if they are used with prints of clean, sharp lines and clean colors.

Velvets, the classical background for prints and oils, or silks, linens, burlaps, brocades or wallpapers create original, interesting effects.

Glass protects pictures from soil and atmosphere. Watercolors, gouaches, pastels, original prints and other objects that cannot be washed or cleaned should be framed under glass. Non-glare glass, although fairly expensive, is often used when it is important to eliminate glare that might distort the picture. Since oils can be cleaned, they don't need glass.

A good rule of thumb for a single picture is to hang it at the eye level of a person of average height standing in the center of the room. For a group over a sofa the pictures can come fairly low but not so low that a person sitting on the sofa can touch his head on the lower edge.

Choose a central picture as the key in an arrangement of large and small pictures. It is best to lay your pictures on the floor within an area as large as you wish to cover on the wall, and measure around each frame to plan your grouping.



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