Illustrated Guide to Mounting A Photograph

UPDATES: September 2016. (1) Mounts now have to be 40cm x 50cm.
(2) Use double-sided adhesive tape rather than spray. (3) Paper Spectrum now an alternative supplier of board (by post). (4) I now place the photo on the mat to mark off dimensions and use a "T" square to draw cutting lines.
 All this can be seen in a video available on the DOWNLOADS page of the website.

This is all you need, but buy good quality tools. Shown are (left to right)

- the 1000micron or 1500 micron grey board for backing,
- the mounting board (already cut for you to 40cm x 50cm),
- a good mat cutter (Logan, or similar, £30ish, this makes the 45° mitred cut),
- a trimming knife for the edges, set square (or "T" square),
- fine pencil and, last but not least,
- a good straight edge. The Adapt-A-Rule by Logan has a groove in which the mat cutter rides, ensuring a slip free, straight cut.

 I leave just 5mm of border on a print.

The first step is to measure the actual image size.

Now do your calculations. Here I am making the borders equal on the width, but doing a 1:1.5 ratio top and bottom. I just round off, making the borders each about 1mm bigger than calculated (less on top and bottom here). This may not seem much but the cutter will run more than 1mm inside the ruler, so the borders will be another 1mm at least bigger than indicated. I find this quite sufficient.
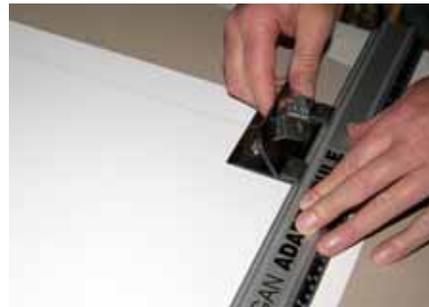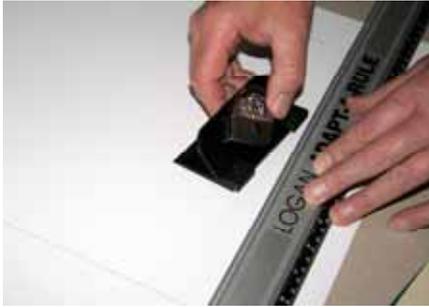

I mark off the "window" which has to be cut out with a second ruler held up against the Adapt-A-Rule which in turn is abutted to the edge of the mat. Note that you are marking the **BACK** of the mounting board.

Join up your dots!!

Just check that the marks are square. Also try your picture against the marked out frame, just in case your Maths is wrong!

With scrap board beneath, place the ruler exactly on the marked line and hold down firmly. Engage the mat cutter guides in the groove. Note again that you are cutting from the BACK of the board. The mat cutter blade should have been adjusted so that just 1/8in protrudes. It should only scratch the scrap card underneath.

Place the marker on the cutter on your base line and push the cutter blade gently but firmly down. The blade on the cutter needs to be adjusted so that it only scores the scrap card underneath the mount. This will prolong blade life and make for easier cutting.

Just go round each side pushing the cutter until the guide mark reaches the next border mark. If the cutter is set right the window should fall out cleanly when you have finished. If you have not quite got to the corners just insert a spare blade to carefully cut the last fraction.

(2016) I now do not use spray adhesive at all but double sided tape, which is safer and more secure.

Use ready cut "grey board" 1000um or 1500um.
Half sheets are ample and easy to use.

(2016) I now position the print on the mount lightly by using small pieces of masking tape.

Once the print is correctly placed I tape it down more firmly with masking tape - all on the back of the mount.
see VIDEO.

(2016) Position strips of double-sided tape all round the print (but not ON the print) on the back of the board.

Remove the protective layer from the tape and press the mount firmly on to the grey board. Trim off the excess board.

The print just needs labelling now and for a Club competition you just need the title, your membership number and whether colour or mono. Do not attach anything else to the back.

John Royle, August 2005 (2016)