

Matting and Framing Animation Cels

A specialty adjunct to "Matting and Framing 101"

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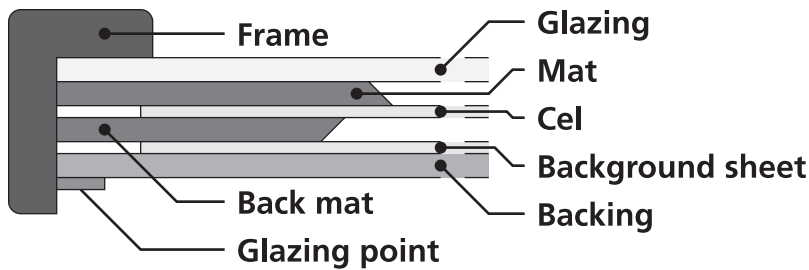


Figure 1. Cross-section of basic elements

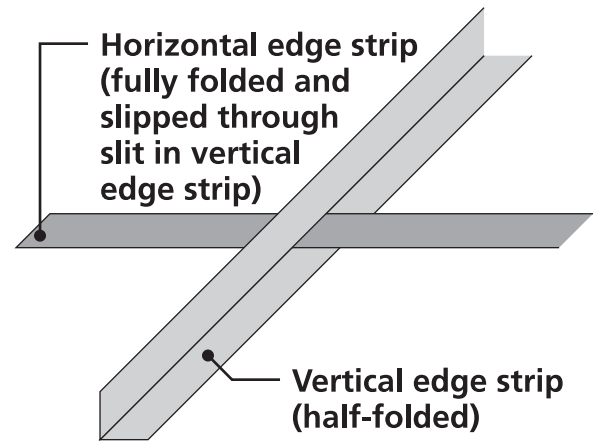


Figure 2.

Corner construction of edge-strip system

Animation cels demand unusual precautions in matting and framing. Unlike most artwork, there is media on both sides of the substrate (ink on the front, paint on the back), and of all major media, cels are the most fugitive. An improperly stored or displayed cel may have a lifespan of less than ten years!

To prevent transfer of media, the cel must not touch either the glazing or the backing. A reverse-bevel *back mat* should be placed behind the cel to separate it from the backing. (The back mat and the "front" matting together are called a *recto-verso mat*.) The back mat may be a double (or greater) mat, if desired.

If a background sheet is provided with the cel, that sheet should be mounted to the back of the back mat with a conventional tape hinge, just as a normal piece of artwork would be mounted. Keep in mind that most matboard is acid-free on the side that is expected to touch artwork, but may not be acid-free on the other side. To protect the background sheet, choose a matboard for the back-mat that is acid-free on both the front and the back. The best available is four-ply museum board.

Mounting the cel requires a more elaborate procedure than simple hinging. The best method is the *edge-strip system*. Fold in half, lengthwise, four long, half-inch wide strips of heavy paper and, with folds toward the outside, assemble them around the cel to form a stiffening framework. The cel should fit into this framework with a small amount of play—no more than an eighth of an inch.

Make each strip an inch or two longer than the cel's side, and cut slits in the vertical strips at the fold to allow the horizontal strips to be slipped through. Mount this framework to the front of the back mat using strips of tape placed across each strip about one-eighth to one-fourth of an inch outside each corner. The framework should be hidden behind the matting and should not be visible.

Normal framer's tape isn't strong enough; linen tape or acid-free artist's tape are better. The former, however, requires moistening and can be tricky to use. The latter seems to use different formulations of adhesive for different widths—one-inch-wide tape seems to work best.

If folding the strips proves difficult, use a burnisher or "bone" to achieve a smoother fold or use an Xacto knife to score (lightly!) the outside of the fold line. The best material for these strips is an acid-free or pH-neutral paper of card-stock weight—100- to 140-pound—such as two-ply Bristol board, Lenox paper, or Conventry rag.

A popular alternative is to use "photograph corners" to mount the cel. While this is faster and requires less effort, it provides no stiffness; the cel may begin to sag, warp, or buckle in short order. Since the difference in price for the materials is trivial, there is no reason not to take the time and trouble to make edge strips. After all, an animation cel often represents a significant investment, one well worth the effort to preserve properly.

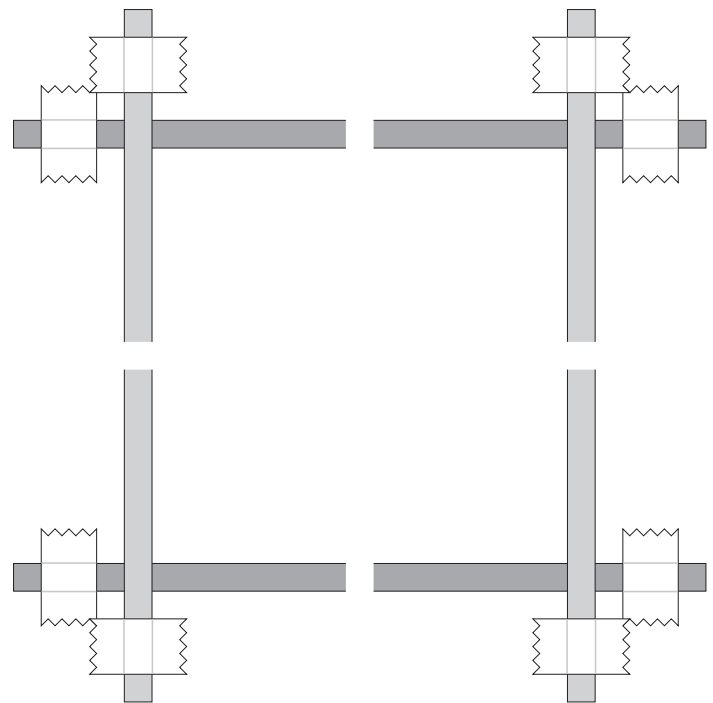


Figure 3. Corners of edge-strip system, with mountings