How to Prepare Prints for a Competition

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While producing good prints is an important part of photography, a good mount helps to show them off to the judge. So, here are some tips about mounting your prints for best effect:

1.   The bigger the print the better, however, judges will not mark down a smaller print if it is nicely presented on a decent sized piece of card. Indeed, sometimes a tiny print on a huge mount can be quite effective but a tip is to think about how you would want it to look if hung on your own wall. Note that the competition rules allow for several pictures to be mounted on one card but this is deemed as one entry.

2.   Prints need to be mounted so they are self supporting and can stand up on the print box while the judge makes his comments. Ideally you should use 3mm thick mount board available from art shops. (Pre-cut mount board is available from local art shops in Oswestry). Note that mounts must not be bigger than 20"x 16"/400mm x 500mm so they fit into the Society's print box for transport although smaller mounts are fine. Framed prints are not accepted.

3.   You can use any colour mounting board but beware, judges generally don't like highly coloured mounts. So, stick to white, neutral grey, cream, beige or black. If you have a high key image use a dark mount, or a white or cream mount for a low key image, but try the card next to the print first to see the effect.

4.   There are several methods of mounting. The recommended method is to 'window mount by bevel cutting a window in mount board then sticking the print behind the window. The mounting method is explained at Paragraphs 7 to 10 below.

5.   Alternatively, you can stick the print centrally onto board using 'spray mount or double sided tape but be sure to measure your borders so they are even (use the measurement technique in Paragraph 8). For effect, you can first mount your print onto slightly larger white card to create a white border before sticking it onto the main board.

6.   Another method is to 'flush mount' the print by sticking it directly onto mount board, card, or foam board with 'spray mount' or double sided tape. Then cut the backing material so that its edge is flush with the edge of the print.

7.   To make window mounts, it is recommended that you use brown framing tape (available from artists material shops for about £3.50 a roll): other types of tape can peel and adhere to other prints in the stack causing damage. Also, you can easily peel off framing tape to re-use your mount. You will also need: a bevel cutter (available for about £10 from art shops); a decent sized cutting board; a Stanley or craft knife; and a metal rule. Or, you can buy a cutting system (such as the Logan), where the cutter slots into the ruler keeping things stable: these are about £80-90.

8.   First, measure your print or the portion of it you want to show in the window. On the cutting board cut the mount board to the desired external size with your craft knife. Subtract the length of the print from the length of the mount and divide that figure by 2 to get the border width for the long side then repeat the calculation for the short side. Draw the appropriate border widths on the back of the mount then offer it up to the print to check for mistakes before you start cutting –I know, I've done it!!! Then, lay your metal rule on the outside edge of the left hand line, hold it steady with your left hand and, with the right hand, put the blade of your bevel cutter against the rule at the bottom where the vertical line meets the horizontal line. Push the blade in then push the

cutter down and away from you. One cut is enough if your blade is sharp but repeat the manoeuvre if it hasn't cut through. Next, rotate the board 90ºleft and cut the remaining lines. Note that left-handed people might prefer to switch hands for this process! When done, the centre part should drop out but you may need to finish off the corners with the craft knife.

9.   Attach a couple of pieces of sticky tape to the back of the print at the top leaving some tape protruding beyond the edge of the print. Lay the print face up so that the sticky side of the tape is uppermost. Align the window mount over the print and press down onto the sticky tape. If you make a mistake at this stage you can easily separate them and realign. Once you are happy, secure the print with more tape, or, much better, tape a piece of thin card, that is larger than the print but smaller than the mount, over the back of the print

REMEMBER TO PUT YOUR NAME AND THE TITLE OF THE PRINT IN PENCIL AT THE TOP CORNER ON THE **BACK OF THE PRINT**