

French envelope framing is an old method which has the glazing come into contact with the artwork. It is not an archival method of framing, because when glazing comes into contact with the artwork, over time, there is the potential for the art's image to "ghost" into the glazing. Without having a space above the artwork, usually created by lifting the glass with a mat, there is nowhere for the chemicals to off-gas. However, French envelope framing still has its good points. It is a very good method of framing pastels if you intend to ship them. Since the glass is taped into place, there is absolutely no movement between the surface of your pastel and the glazing. Further, low tack painter's tape (hardware store) can be laid completely or in overlaps on the surface of the glazing, so, if there is breakage during shipping, you can simply lift the glazing out of the frame with the tape and not worry about damaging your pastel.

As in any case, you should not have your pastel where it can be hit by the sun and create humidity. You can decrease nonarchival properties by avoiding plastics such as gatorboard and regular foamcore, and instead use archival foamcore or mats as a supportive backing, with a paper barrier on the backside of the moulding.

If your framer does not want to do a French envelope frame, it may be because she/he does not know how and is worried about damaging your artwork. It is simple enough to do yourself. You will need a cut piece of nonglare glass, a roll of clear $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide Framers Tape II, an X-acto knife with a sharp blade, a cutting board to put under your artwork, double sided tape, supportive backing, and barrier paper. Your framer should be able to sell you these products. If you have a business registration number, you may also be able to pick them up wholesale from a framing supply company.

Here is a step by step method for French envelope framing.

Step 1: Before painting your pastel, the support should be adhered to a larger-in-dimension acid free sheet of foamcore. *Very* carefully measure and indicate where you will score and cut the backing. Remember, measure twice, cut once. There is no margin for error!



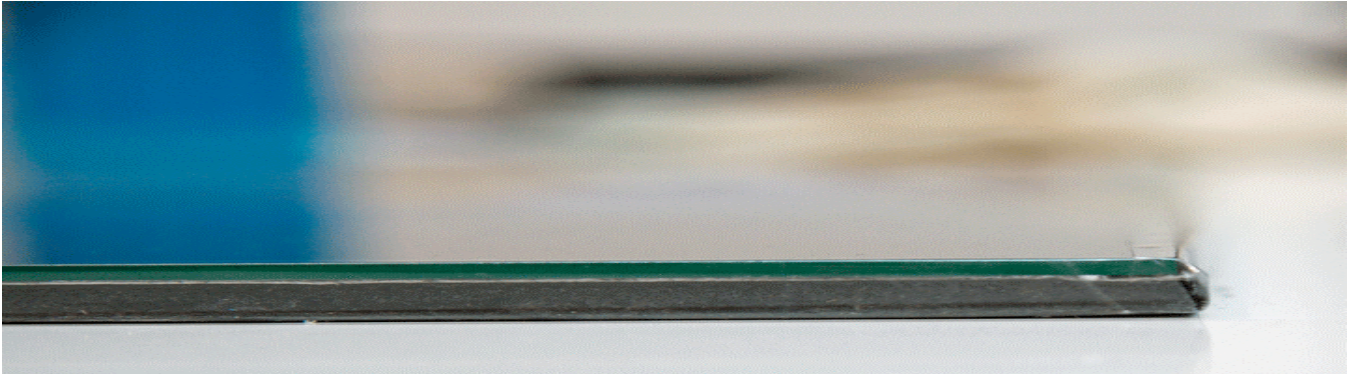
Step 2: If you do not have access to a mat cutting machine, place a suitable cutting board behind your mounted pastel. Using a metal ruler, score the first cut and continue to lightly go over the score line until you have cut through. Proceed to do the same with the other 3 sides. Periodically check your measurements. A square is an asset to have on hand. Be sure to thoroughly clean your tools and hands before proceeding.



Step 3: Take your nonglare glass and clean the shiny side surface. I use glass cleaner in a spray bottle and lintless blue shop towels from Canadian Tire. Wipe once to spread the glass cleaner and soak up the fluid. Use a second dry towel to polish the surface. Let it dry thoroughly. Flip it over and carefully lay it on top of your artwork so that all edges are square. Clean the top of the nonglare glass (it will be opaque, not shiny).



Step 4: Take a roll of clear 3/4" Framers Tape II. You will lay approximately 1/8" of an overlap onto the edge of the glass, and carefully tuck the rest of the tape onto the side and back of your support material. Be wary of sharp edges and burrs on the glass. It is helpful to wear white cotton framer's gloves. Make sure the tape is secure on the first side. Turn your artwork to work on the opposite side (bottom to top, left to right). Continue on the other 3 sides. Check for movement. The package should be tight and secure.



Step 5: Carefully place the enveloped package into the rabbet (lip) of the frame you are using. Check the front to spot pieces of dust before you seal the back with gun-shot brads or hammered brads. The frame is usually cut 1/8" larger than the glazing and materials size to accommodate expansion of the frame due to humidity. Check the front again before you attach a dust cover. Line the exterior of the back edge of the frame with double sided tape, lay brown barrier paper on the back, cut off excess paper. Attach your hanging hardware and wire.



Step 6

The finished product under nonglare glass, with nicely presented edges.

