

archy of mat board quality is as follows:

- I. **Museum Board** - The highest quality material available. It is constructed of 100% cotton fiber, is Archival and will protect and preserve the contents of a frame. While it is the most expensive material available, the difference in actual material costs relative to the cost of framing is minimal.
- II. **Museum Mat or Rag Mat** - Still a good quality choice for conservation, it is constructed of cotton linters (short cotton fibers) and cellulose (wood pulp) middles. The cellulose is a less expensive raw material but offers sufficient conservation properties for most works.
- III. **Conservation or Archival Mat Board** - Constructed of 100% pure high alpha cellulose (wood pulp) and treated to be inert for up to 300 years. This is the highest quality paper mat board available.
- IV. **Acid-Free<sup>[6]</sup> or Acid Free Lined** - This material is usually lined with a wood based liner on one or both sides that has been treated to prevent "short term" acid burn - atop a recycled fiber core. Eventually the acid in the core will leach out to the surface which can harm the artwork.



The basic acid-free mat is what you'll generally use on commercial frame jobs. For instance, non-archival quality mat boards may be suitable for a photographic print, laser print, etc. that is not meant to last long term. Additionally, prints made with traditional chemical processing



of photographic film (i.e. dark room development), as opposed to computer printing, are already slightly acidic by nature and therefore are much less likely to be damaged by non-archival mats.

However, if you're working on an expensive rare, fragile, aged or historical piece that is possibly a candidate for museums, then you'll want to use conservation mat board. These specialty mat boards are acid-free



and will best protect the work, while the basic mats are acid-neutralized, meaning the acids may not release or cause harm for many years to come. Mats prove to be useful and necessary in a number of different framing scenarios. From shadow boxes to support lining, mats are incredibly versatile and serve in a number of ways. Whatever the scenario may be, you'll also want to decide whether or not you want to use adhesives or non-adhesives. There are select adhesive options specifically for framing that prevent or lessen acid-damage. Non-adhesive options include photo corners and see-thru mounting strips.

While you might be overwhelmed when seeing all of the mat options available to you, you'll be sure to enjoy all these options once you learn how and when to use them. There are endless possibilities with the use of mats. Over time you can learn the tricks of the trade that will set you apart from the rest of the framing pack, and earn a reputable name in the business. Matting is a craft unto itself. ❖

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