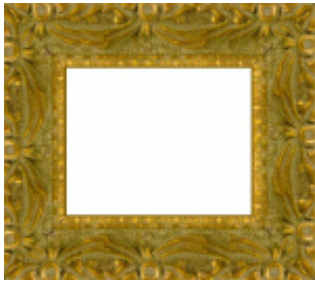


## Painting to Standard Sizes

Sharon Himes



There are benefits to painting, or creating prints to fit standard sized frames. Buyers know

that a work purchased matted in a standard size will be easier and often less expensive to frame since ready-made frames come in those sizes and it isn't necessary to take the piece to a custom framer.

The artist who works primarily to standard sizes finds there are advantages to having a set of familiar sizes to work with. Pre-cut mats can be purchased in standard sizes but when cutting one's own mats, the standard sizes can help use mat board efficiently. Glass comes in those same standard sizes and the artist may find that painting to standard sizes makes framing for a show less complicated. It is possible to find good prices on standard sized ready-made frames especially when buying in quantity.

The main disadvantage to working in standard-size restrictions is the set proportions which sometimes seem uninteresting and may not fit the composition. It is often a more interesting challenge to design art in a long narrow format or a square or circle. For those works you need a custom framer or the equipment and expertise to cut glass and build your own frames.

### Figuring Mat Sizes

Presuming you intend working to a standard size, it is not difficult to figure

the image size from the mat width. Currently matting styles are wider than they were a few years ago. It is not unusual to see 4 or even 6 inch mats on some works, but most are 2-3 inches for smaller sizes. The style of cutting mats wider on the bottom was popular in Victorian times or when the art is to be hung above eye-level. In that case the wider bottom helps the illusion that all four sides are the same. Today, the four sides are usually cut the same width.



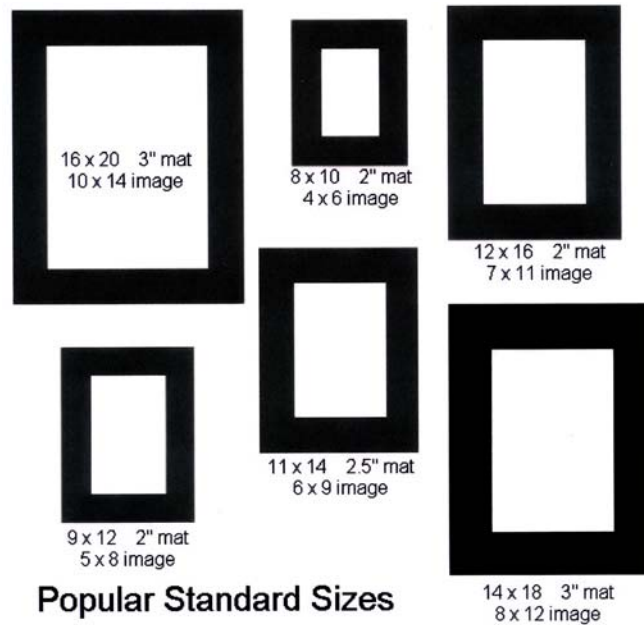
To figure the size of your image (inside mat opening) take the mat width (2 inches for instance) and double it (4 inches) then subtract that number from each of the standard size numbers. So an 8 x 10 standard size with a 2 inch mat would have an image that is 4 x 6 because 4 is subtracted from both the 8 and the 10.

A 12 x 16 standard size with a 3 inch mat would have an opening that is 6 x 10 because 6 (3 inches times two) is subtracted from both the 12 and the 16.

If you intend to work in standard sizes it is often helpful to have a set of scrap mats cut to the sizes you will be using. Then it is simply a matter of laying a mat on your paper and drawing lightly with pencil around the inside opening to mark your painting or drawing space. Artists who have prints or who work in a series often find it useful to pre-cut matting in favorite sizes and store them so that assembly is faster. It is cost-effective to do this too as the mat and backing boards can be cut efficiently and there is little waste. The drop-outs (inner piece of a cut mat) can be used to cut a smaller mat and little has to be thrown away. If you work to standard sizes very long you will see that there is a method

to the sizing. A 16 x 20 mat or backing size is a favorite because 4 can be cut from a standard 32 x 40 sheet of mat board and four 8 x 10's can be cut from a 16 x 20 piece.

It should be noted that standard sizes sometimes vary a little depending on the use or country of origin. Some sizes vary by use; A 18 x 24 is considered a landscape size while a 20 x 24 is considered for portraits for instance. A 24 x 36 is often called 'sofa size' since that is the size often used to hang over the livingroom sofa.



**Popular Standard Sizes**

4 x 5	11 x 14	20 x 24
5 x 7	12 x 16	22 x 28
6 x 8	14 x 18	24 x 30
8 x 10	16 x 20	24 x 36
9 x 12	18 x 24	36 x 48