

PRINT HANDLING, STORAGE, AND FRAMING GUIDELINES

After hours of preparation, shooting, and post-production your image is perfected. You've chosen the perfect paper for the job. Thanks to meticulous color management and ICC profiles your printer is producing the image exactly the way you envisioned it. Your job is done – or is it?

Like every other art medium, digital papers have their own **DO'S** and **DON'TS** for handling, storage and framing. Based on the recommendations from some of the world's top paper mills, equipment manufacturers and print ateliers, we have formulated a set of guidelines specifically intended for the care of digital prints. Some papers tend to be more delicate than others, but they should all be handled with care.

HANDLING

DO keep the paper in its original packaging until required. This will ensure the product stays clean and is not exposed to excess moisture or other airborne contaminants.

DO handle the paper by the edges or underside to avoid damaging the coated surface.

DON'T touch the coated surface (printable side), as oils from the skin could be absorbed in the coating, which would have an adverse effect on the print quality.

DO allow prints to completely dry before handling.

DON'T stack a number of freshly printed sheets in a pile. Once dry, use an archival interleaving sheet between each print.

DO keep your work surface and substrates clean. Any surface which may come in contact with the media should be carefully cleaned and dust free. Also, when working with cotton papers, consider brushing the sheet before printing. Cotton papers are prone to dust which can accumulate from the cut edges of the sheet. Carefully brush each sheet with a drafting or other soft brush like horse hair to clear the surface of any debris. Compressed air can also be used for this purpose.

PRINT STORAGE

DO store prints in a clean, dry environment free of harmful environmental or airborne contaminants. As with any artwork it is important to be aware of your environment. High humidity, airborne dust, solvents, adhesives, smoke (including tobacco), and other similar contaminants can permanently damage your print.

DO use bags, tapes, dry mounting film and sleeves free of polyethylene and plasticizers. Coated inkjet papers can react to plasticizers by producing a transient yellow cast. This is a recorded phenomenon and can often times be reversed by exposure to UV. If yellowing is experienced, exposing the print to open air for a short period of time will usually reverse the problem. It is best, however, to store the print correctly in the first place.

DON'T expose prints to direct sunlight, heat or strong sources of UV for long periods of time. As with all art mediums, the colorants and brightening agents in inkjet prints are sensitive to UV exposure. Most museums and archives store prints in dark storage when not in use and carefully monitor light sources of prints on display.



FRAMING AND STORAGE

We asked Diane Day of the Professional Picture Framers Association for some simple guidelines. Resources like the PPFA are a great source for information when preparing work for display. Always consider using PPFA certified framers to ensure that archival materials and processes are utilized in the framing of your work.

DO allow the print to fully dry before mounting or framing. Some inks used on micro-porous papers can emit gases which will 'fog' the glass of a frame if not properly dried first. We recommend following the printer company's guidelines for this phenomenon.

DO use archival quality mounts and mat boards. We recommend using 100% cotton Rising Museum Board for mounting prints.

DON'T expose your printed image to heat as many inks are heat sensitive. We suggest that only low-heat or pressure sensitive dry mounting substrates be used. Never use a high-heat substrate, and always test a sample before mounting the actual artwork.

DON'T spray mount as many inks are sensitive to moisture.

DON'T use tape to adhere the picture to the mounting board as the adhesive in the tape can cause damage to the edges of the picture.

DO use edge strips or corner pockets to mount the print to the mounting board. Edge strips can be made of Japanese paper or, more commonly of polyester film. A number of companies manufacture commercial edge strips commonly known as Mylar D or Melinex. These strips adhere to the mounting board around the edge of the picture that will be framed. They have polyester film that extends downward over the edge of the picture securing it in place. The picture can be slipped in and out of these strips without damage.

Corner pockets are similar to ones may remember for older photo albums. Their adhesive keeps them in place on the mounting board at the four corners of your picture. Fit the corners of your picture in to each of the four pockets and you are set to go.

DO use UV filtered glass to protect the surface of the print. A good framer will stock this special glass.

DO seal the back of the frame. This prevents excess moisture and other airborne contaminants from reach the print.

Some of our staff recently visited the Louvres in Paris and observed the conditions that they used for displaying and storing their prints. It reminded us of the amount of care and effort that goes in to preserving images which otherwise if posted on the refrigerator with a magnet would quickly fade and disappear forever.

Each new technology or medium brings with it different challenges for caring for your media and your prints. Common sense will be your best asset when handling your valuable prints. Ultimately it is up to you the photographer to ensure that the print is cared for so that your grandchildren can enjoy it.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Professional Picture Framers Association (PPFA) <http://ppfa.pmai.org>

Image Permanence Institute
<http://www.imagepermanenceinstitute.org>

American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC)
<http://aic.stanford.edu/>

Wilhelm Imaging Research
<http://www.wilhelm-research.com/>

