

HOW TO MOUNT CANVAS ONTO A STRETCHER FRAME

Materials Needed

- Primed or Unprimed Cotton or Linen Canvas
- Canvas Pliers and Ruler
- Heavy Duty Staple Gun or Magnetic-Head Tack Hammer
- $\frac{3}{8}$ " Stainless Steel Heavy Duty Staples or Copper Tacks
- Fredrix® Stretcher Strips: 2 equal horizontal & 2 equal vertical sizes.

1. Assemble frame by fitting together tongue and groove ends of stretcher strips. Check the squareness of the frame by measuring across the diagonal corners so that both are equal. Attach cross bracing if needed.
2. Cut canvas 4" longer on all four sides than assembled stretcher frame. Center the canvas face down, on a clean flat surface. Align stretcher frame with the vertical and horizontal weave of the canvas.
3. Fold one side of canvas over longer stretcher strip and drive a staple into the center of the back of the stretcher strip (for clean edge), flush with wood.
4. Go to opposite side. Grip canvas with canvas pliers (with left hand for right handed person) and stretch tight, until a straight crease is formed running across the canvas. Maintain tension and drive staple (with right hand for right handed person) into the center of back of stretcher strip, flush with wood. If staples are not flush with wood, maintain tension with pliers and hammer staple until flush with wood. Do not overstretch. (Unprimed canvas may go out of alignment or damage stretcher frame when canvas shrinks during priming.)
5. Stretch and attach canvas to the centers of adjacent stretcher strips in the same manner. Canvas will now have a diamond shaped wrinkle.
6. Drive in staples every $1\frac{1}{2}$ " - 2", moving outward from the center, alternately switching to opposite sides. Drive in one staple to the left and right of center, then go to opposite side and repeat. Then go to adjacent sides and repeat. Work from the center toward the corners. Pull tightly, using canvas pliers, but not so much that it will wrinkle canvas between staples. First pull tightly towards you, then with other hand pull at right angle, towards corner, for an even stretch in both directions, then staple.
7. Stop 3" from corners. For rectangular stretcher frames, adjust stapling so that you arrive 3" from each corner at the same time. Double fold canvas at corners, so that final fold lines up with edge and staple through folded canvas into back of frame while exerting finger tension.
- 8-9. Fold the excess canvas to the back of the frame and staple or tack to allow for remounting in the future. If the canvas is trimmed flush with the frame, remounting to same size is more difficult.

HELPFUL HINTS

- Staples are easier to mount canvas with than tacks.
- Staples adhered to back of stretcher strips result in the most evenly mounted canvas and a clean edge. Inexperienced use of tacks may cause puckers and ripples.
- Photographs Step 8 shows using staples into back of stretcher strip. Step 9 shows using tacks into edge of stretcher strip.
- It is easier to stretch unprimed canvas than primed canvas.
- If wrinkles and ripples occur in stretched unprimed canvas, remove staples or tacks in affected area and re-stretch affected area. Avoid using pegs (keys) to take out wrinkles of unprimed stretched canvas. It may throw frame out of square or damage the canvas. Pegs are used to tighten slightly sagging canvas after being sized, primed or painted.
- Small indentations and small ripples in stretched unprimed canvas may even out during priming, when the canvas shrinks.
- Indentations and ripples occur due to uneven tension between staples or tacks. Pull canvas horizontally toward corners during stretching: Step 6.
- Larger stretcher frames require heavier duty stretcher strips. If the stretcher frame is not strong enough it can break or warp during sizing or priming of canvas.
- Fredrix® Standard Stretcher Strip frames 24" x 36" and larger may require cross bracing. Fredrix® Gallerywrap™ or Heavy Duty Stretcher Strip frames 36" x 36" or larger may require cross bracing.

