



Ely Photographic Club

How to prepare a print for a Competition or Exhibition

(Phil's method!)

- 📁 First take an image that you want to have printed and increase the midrange tones. You can do this in Photoshop by adding a Levels Adjustment Layer, and moving the centre slider to about plus 0.12, which will allow for the darkening of the print when the ink dries after printing. In Lightroom, you will need to go to the Curves panel and drag the middle of the line upwards slightly. The point is that you can expect your prints to come back from the printer slightly darker than expected, so err on the side of sending them a slightly bright image.
- 📁 Find an online printer company that has good reviews or which has been recommended. I personally use DS Colour Labs Ltd who have an easy-to-use ordering process, and very reasonable prices.
- 📁 For DS Colour Labs, select the "Standard Prints" option and decide on the following:
 1. Do I want Gloss, Lustre, or another type of finish?
 2. Do I need a 3mm white border?
 3. What size print should I go for?

(I usually go for Lustre, with a border, in an A3 size - cost £1.19 per print)
- 📁 Select your images for printing. To minimise p&p costs, I recommend having several images printed at once.
- 📁 When you have all of your images selected, click on the 'Upload' button and wait for them to upload to their website server.
- 📁 DS Colour Labs say that an A3 print "requires trimming", but don't worry about that if you are having a white border. This just means that one border will be a few mm wider, but you won't see that when the print is mounted.
- 📁 Complete your print order by following the instructions to pay. Your prints should arrive within 2-3 working days.

- 📦 You will also need a mount, and a backing board. These can be found online at a number of places, but I have recently been using a firm called Kadinsky Art, whose web address is <https://www.kadinsky.co.uk>. They do a package of twenty 20" x 16" mounts, full size backing board, and a cellophane sleeve to suit A3 prints for £48. I had a custom size aperture of 405mm x 282mm cut instead of their standard A3 size (to give more overlap and make mounting easier) and they charge an extra £6 for doing that. Total cost per mount pack is therefore £2.70 for me. I recommend the Iced White textured mount colour from this firm – other online firms offer a wider range of colour choices.
- 📦 These mounts are 20" x 16" in size, but for competitions the maximum permitted size should strictly only be 500mm x 400mm. (20" x 16" is 508mm x 406mm...). For club competitions this tiny difference should not cause a concern.
- 📦 I personally cut the backing boards down to approx. 450mm x 350mm to allow for taping.
- 📦 For mounting prints, you will also need some good quality masking tape, and some proper framing tape, both available from Tindalls stationers in Ely. DO NOT use parcel tape for framing as it is very sticky and will catch on other people's prints when stored in a print box.
- 📦 When you have got all of the items listed above and are ready to put your prints together, find a suitable cleared space! Have everything to hand.
- 📦 I normally start by laying the print face down and attaching a single strip of masking tape lightly to the top back edge of the print, making sure it doesn't stick to anything else.
- 📦 Turn the print over, ensuring you don't catch the masking tape on anything.
- 📦 Lay the cut down size backing board on a level surface, and lay the print roughly central face up on top of it.
- 📦 Position the mount so that the aperture lines up with the print and there are no white edges showing, then press down firmly where the masking tape is.
- 📦 Turn everything over and carefully lift the backing board away. Press the masking tape firmly down, ensuring a good grip.
- 📦 Put the backing board back, positioned centrally over the print area, and then fix framing tape around the backing board. (This is why I cut the board down in size, as you can't do this with a full-size board - you would have to use double-sided adhesive tape which is less strong)

- 📦 Your mounted print is now ready to be entered in a club competition, assuming that you entered a pdi copy of it into PhotoEntry a week prior to the print exhibition.
- 📦 To frame the print for an exhibition, choose the correct size frame (The Range at Bury St Edmunds do excellent quality ones at really good prices in a 20" x 16" size – Amazon sell 500mm x 400mm ones)
- 📦 Unpack the frame, disassemble it, and clean everything thoroughly, paying special attention to the inside of the glass – be careful, it is very thin!)
- 📦 Place the mounted print carefully in the rebate. Check thoroughly for dust specks before fixing the back board of the frame securely with the tags or clips.
- 📦 Attach picture cord to hang the picture from, (you may need to fit D-rings lower down the back of the frame) and for exhibitions please label your work with your name and the print title.