

DISPLAYING ARTWORKS

Arranging art is itself an art, and many a homeowner freezes at the prospect of hanging even one picture. When hanging multiple pictures and composing gallery-style arrangements, often trial and error results in walls resembling Swiss cheese. A few simple principles and strategies can make the process of displaying art less intimidating and more rewarding.

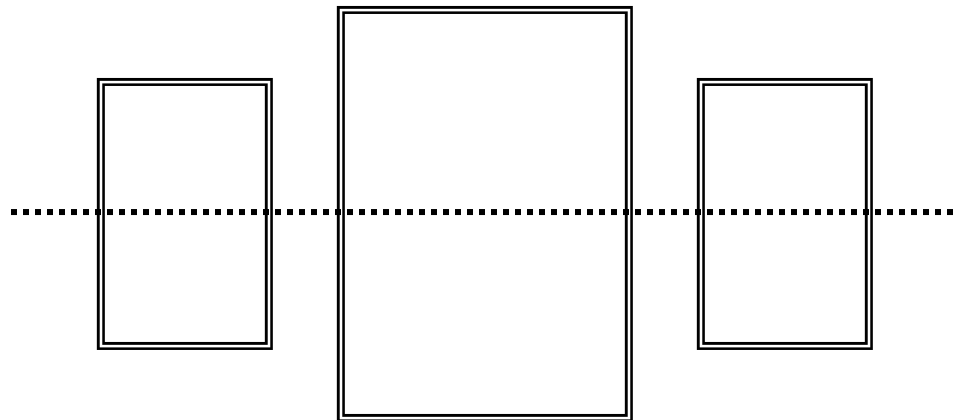
DISPLAY GUIDELINES. As with other accessories, apply the basic design knowledge you've acquired to arrange art, whether it's one painting over a sofa or a group of photos on a focal-point wall.

- Over a fireplace, hang one work or a group of several that take up roughly the same space as the opening below.
- A simple painting hung above a sofa (or full, queen, king-sized bed) should extend approximately two-thirds the sofa's (or bed's) width. If your artwork is narrower, add other smaller pieces to compose a larger unit.
- ***Position*** art at eye level. In a dining room, that means hanging it lower than usual because viewers will be seated; in an entry or hallway, art should be hung higher (approximately 60" from floor).
- For ***multiple artworks***, arrange pieces on the floor first, to get a feel for how they look as a unit. Or you can tape pieces of paper on the wall, cut to sizes of your art, to judge potential arrangements.
- ***Organize around a theme.*** Use a theme – family snaps, pet pictures, etchings, or landscapes for instance – for each artwork grouping. Color itself can be the tie that binds a collection of diverse objects – even a theme as simple as “blue paintings” – unifies an artwork grouping.
- The standard guideline for ***spacing multiple works*** is to leave one to three inches between frames. The smaller the works, generally the less space between. Very diverse subject matter calls for a little more space; related works, such as botanical prints, look best hung closer together. When the pieces are all the same size, a grid pattern of equal spacing unifies them.
- ***Evoke intimacy*** by hanging pictures low to visually link them with furniture. When you position art on top of, or close to furnishings (such as a chair, end table and lamp), it becomes an integral part of the overall design.

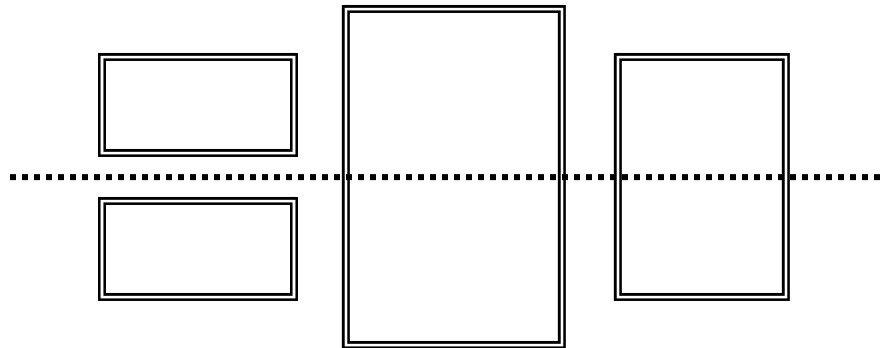
- **Frame for impact.** Presenting small works in large mats and gallery-style frames gives them presence and “wow power”. Minimal frames with or without mats enhance modern art; traditional artworks often call for decorative frames and multilayered mats or a mat with fillet; paintings may use a combination of stacked frames, liners and or fillets.
- **Tools necessary for the job** include hammer, hooks for wire, nails for sawtooth hangers, a level, a tape measure, paper and pencil. Rarely is it necessary to use a wall stud to safely hang artwork. Even very large and/or heavy pieces (such as a mirror) can be safely hung with the appropriate hanging hardware and without regard to wall stud locations. Heavy pieces should not be wired but instead hung from two “D” ring hangers attached to the side rails of the frame and directly hung on two appropriate hooks in the wall. *The importance of good hardware can not be understated.* See your professional picture framer for their recommendation on suitable hanging hardware.

LAYOUT PRINCIPLES. It’s generally easier to hang an odd number of pieces, such as three or five, but an even number can be just as successful. Following are five common blueprints for simple displays that start from an imaginary point of reference.

- **Establish a Horizontal Axis.** This plan works best for three pieces of art (or more). The horizontal axis runs from side to side through the center piece, at the midpoint. First hang the center piece where you want it; then hang the flanking pieces so that their midpoints line up along the horizontal axis.

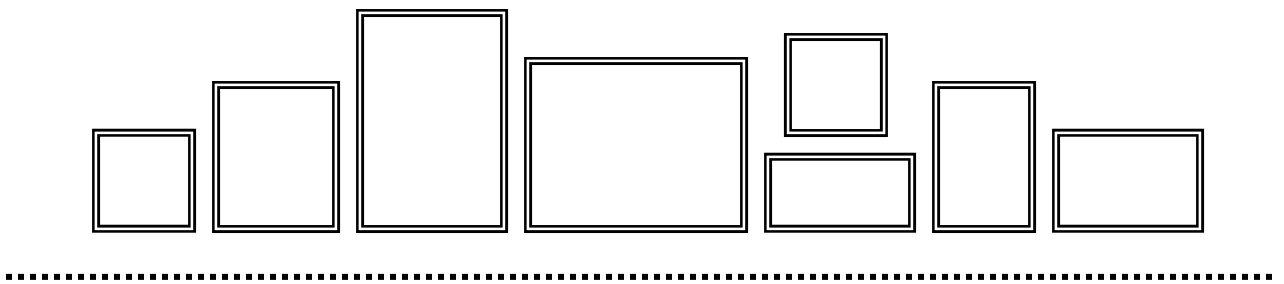


HORIZONTAL AXIS - EXAMPLE A



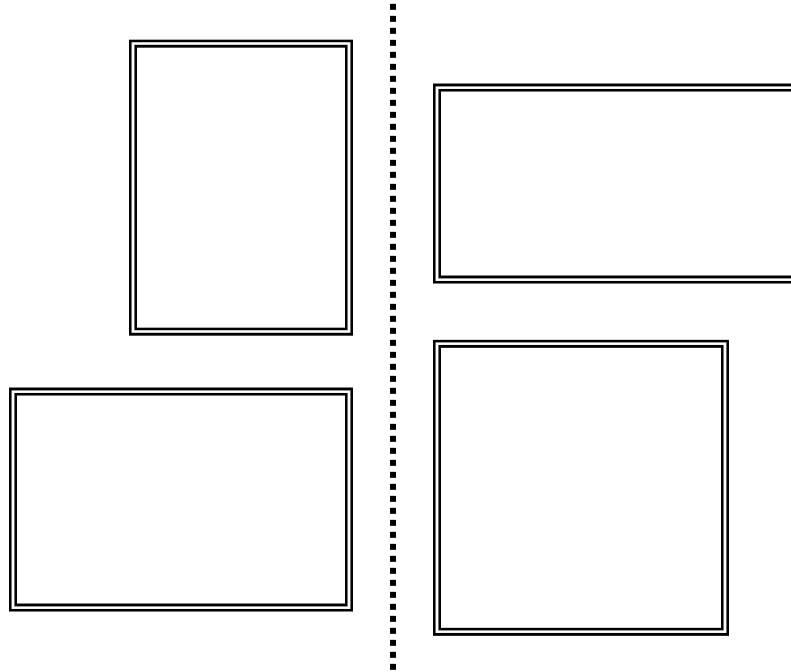
HORIZONTAL AXIS - EXAMPLE B

In the example below, the horizontal axis serves as a *baseline* rather than a midpoint. This layout works particularly well over wainscoting, over a long piece of furniture, or in a hallway.

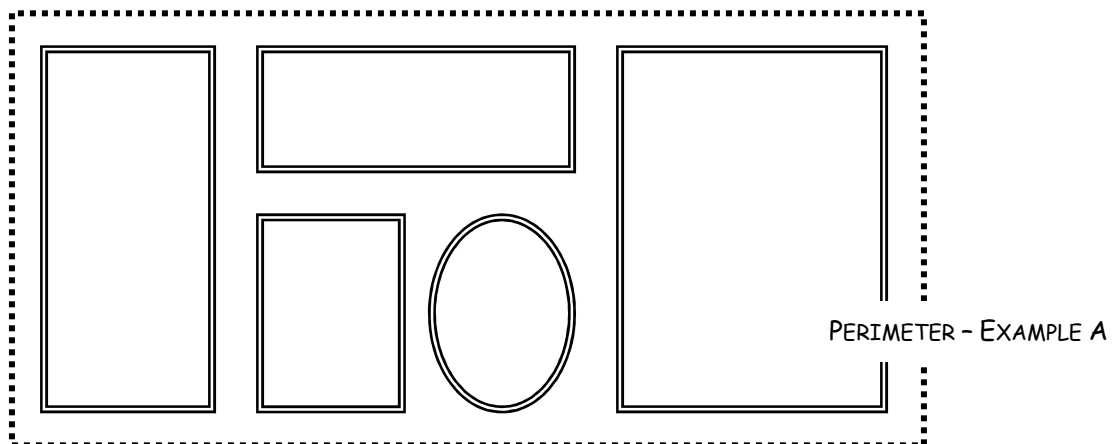


HORIZONTAL AXIS - EXAMPLE C

- **Establish a Vertical Axis.** This approach is ideal for four pieces of art. Hang two pieces on one side of the vertical axis and two on the other. But offset the horizontal spacing to avoid creating a “cross” of negative space, which tends to destroy the illusion that the pieces form one unit.

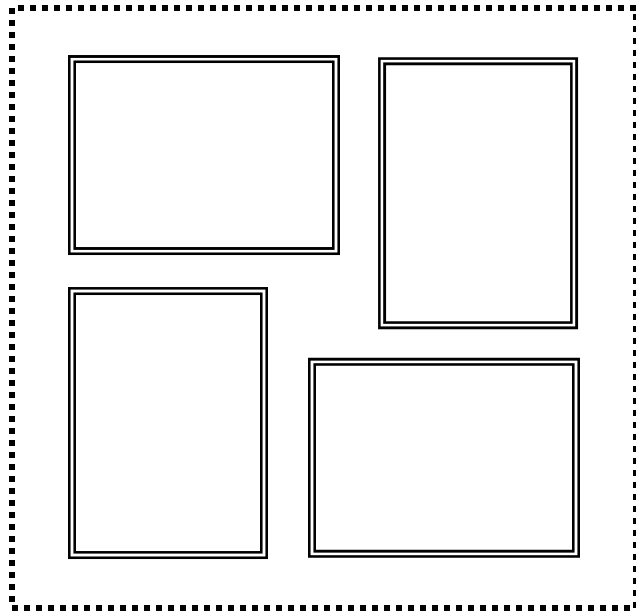


- **Establish a Perimeter.** If you have four pieces of roughly similar size, consider creating a visual “corral”. Ideally you would plan the matting and framing beforehand, to compensate for differences in the images (see example B on next page). Establish an imaginary perimeter for the space you want the grouping to occupy and hang the pieces so that their outer edges “touch” that perimeter. Again, avoid creating a “cross” of negative space in the center.

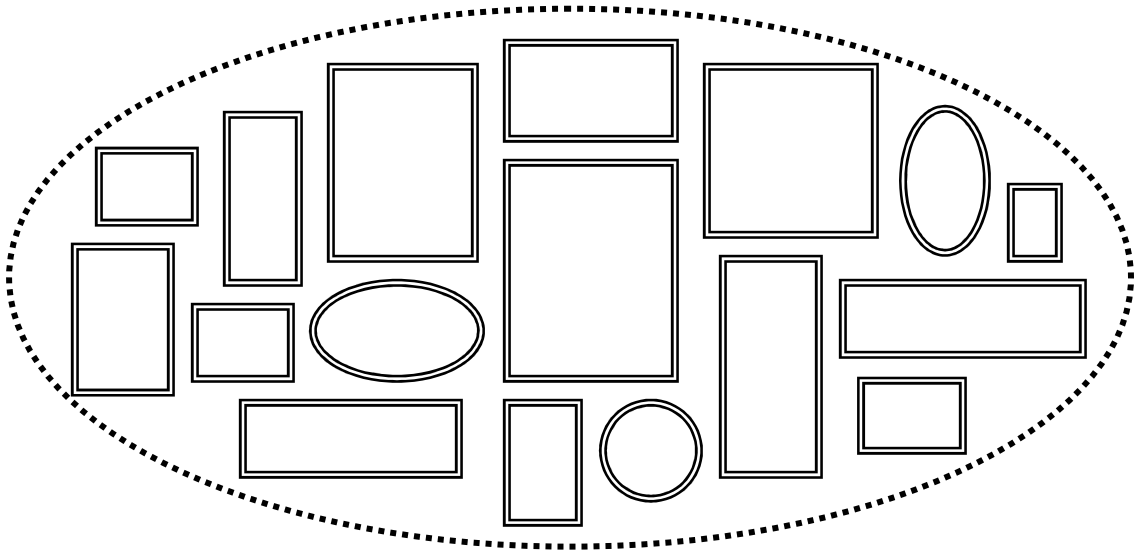


Perimeter - Example B

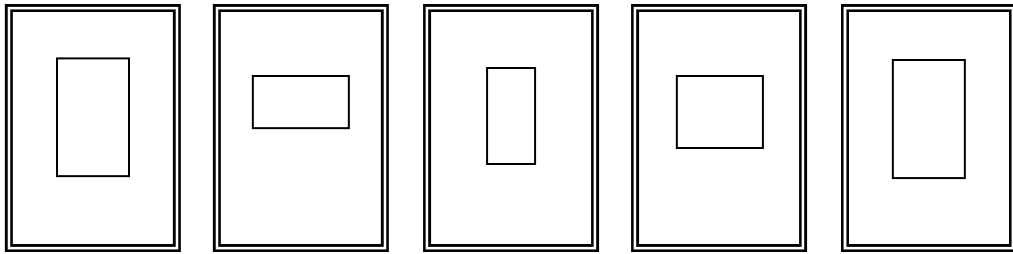
In this illustration four
identical sized frames
2 horizontal 10 x 8
2 vertical 8 x 10
are hung in a
perimeter
layout.



- Strive for **a loosely circular or oval perimeter** when grouping art of different size and shape; that is, if you draw a curved line around the pieces that touched their outer corners, you would see a circle or oval. (The oval shaped perimeter may be horizontal for wide spaces – as in the example below – or vertical for tall narrow spaces.) Avoid stair-stepped arrangements, which draw the eye sharply up, down and sideways rather than around.

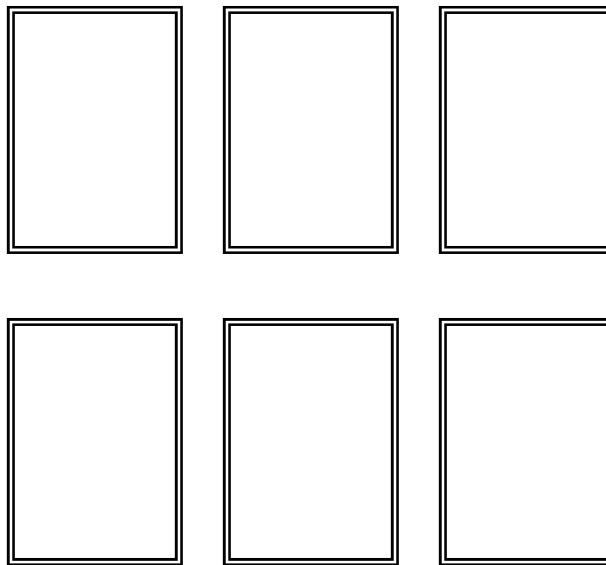


- **A Grid arrangement.** If your artworks are similar or the same in size, a grid-like arrangement – or even a single row (example A) – gives equal emphasis to each one and visually organizes the grouping. Identically matted and framed artworks become one unified work of art in a hallway gallery, over a couch, bed or long table. Close vertical spacing unites the pieces; a little more horizontal space between rows allows them to breathe and creates the impression of two orderly sets of three (example B).



GRID LAYOUT - SINGLE ROW - EXAMPLE A

By adjusting the mat opening sizes, a row of identical sized frames can accommodate artwork of different sizes and shapes and yet make an orderly presentation with impact and “wow power”.



GRID LAYOUT - EXAMPLE B