

Take A Bite...Of A Laminate

By Chris A Paschke, CPF

One of my regular clients is a guidance counselor at middle school. Every year she glues the tiny file folder photographs of the current class into an interesting layout for her office wall. After years of kids picking off bad pictures of themselves, drawing on the faces of kids they didn't like, and the fluorescent lighting doing a real fade job on them, I suggested we laminate her annual foam board project.

Last month I went into great detail explaining the do's and don'ts of basic mounting "in bites". This month I'll begin from that base and add to it the mounting of non-breathable photographs and a surface laminate to protect them...using the concept of the two-bite process.

UNDERSTANDING ADJUSTMENTS

There is nothing complex about this project once there is a basic understanding of the steps. Generally, if we understand why something needs be done, we are more likely to remember it.

The 20"x 30" foam board substrate requires two bites when using a 18 1/2" x 23" mechanical press. Remember that a mechanical press can only handle a project slightly less than twice its width. A two-bite mount will comfortably fit into this press.

When all the laminating materials are placed in the closed press, the handle is

much greater than 45 degrees, making it too tight for this project. The press needs to be slightly readjusted from the standard 3/16" mounting to the added thickness of the overlay foam for laminating (photo 1).



Be sure to bounce lightly on the handle to settle it when making adjustments because of the soft, spongy nature of the overlay foam. Often the platen weight will compress the foam more as the locking rings are tightened down, making the once properly adjusted press handle lower than 45 degrees, or too light for adequate press pressure.

RELEASE MATERIALS

The laminating package, from bottom to top, consists of release paper, substrate, artwork (photos glued in place by the client), laminate, overlay foam, release paper, and release board. The use of both release paper and release board is advised in this case. Remember from last month's article that, along with handle readjustment, a release board helps dissipate the pressure at the bite point.

The top release paper allows for easier handling when placing the package into and removing it from the press. If there is no paper covering the overlay foam, it does not slip smoothly into place and when bit-

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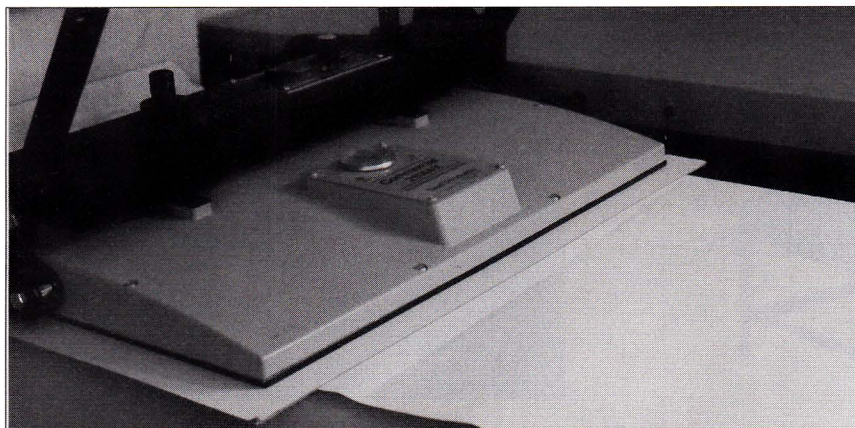


Photo 1
Readjust press pressure to accommodate the extra thickness of the overlay foam and selected release materials.

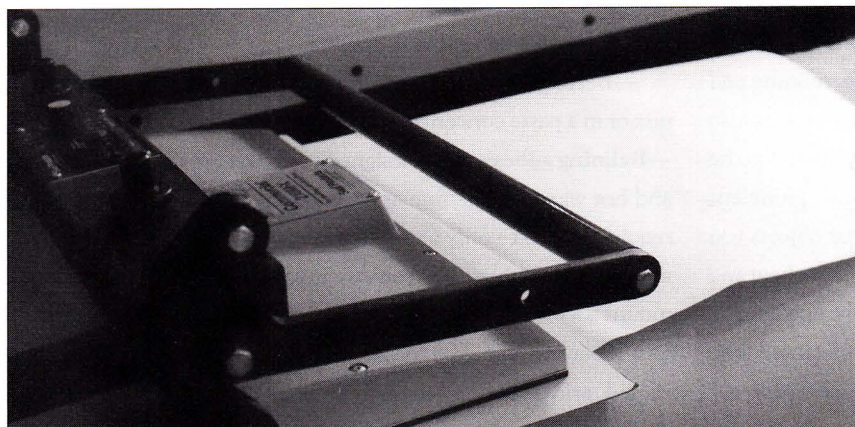


Photo 2
Materials can be of any size, as the oversized foam in the photo, as long as the project is totally covered and there are no seams or wrinkles.

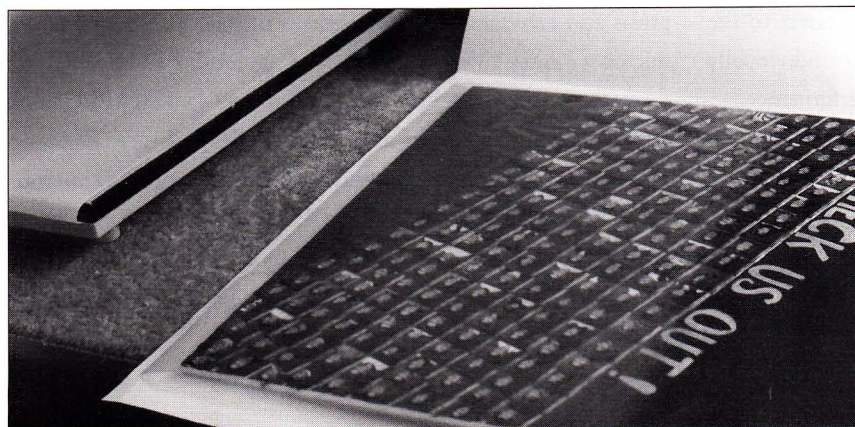


Photo 3
The release envelope, rather than single sheets, allows for better control of corners when assembling foam, laminate, and substrate for bites.

ing a project this can be just asking for trouble. Wrinkles in foam can translate into the projects as well as alter the overall pressure within the press.

SIZE OF MATERIALS

The size of the selected overlay foam and top release paper doesn't matter much as long as the project is adequately covered and no seams or lines are pressed into the image. Hence an oversized piece of overlay foam as shown in photo 2 is perfectly acceptable, though might be more difficult to handle. This is a piece I also use in my large vacuum press, so I elected not to trim it for this project.

The release paper has also been folded into an envelope, rather than used as two separate sheets. Once the laminating package is assembled with substrate, laminate and overlay foam, into can then be folded closed and there will be fewer loose corners to contend with when placing into "biting" position in the press (photo 3).

NON-BREATHABLE LAMINATES

The next consideration is the nature of laminating with a non-breathable vinyl over a mass of small non-breathable photographs. The photos were all previously hand glued by the client, so no press mounting will be required.

When laminating any non-breathable item, perforated laminates must be used. This process utilizes tiny air holes to allow potentially trapped air to be compressed from between the laminate and the photos prior to the laminate bonding in the press. Laminates may be purchased as preperforated rolls and pre-cut sheets, or perforation may be done manually on regular non-perforated rolls after the sheet has been sized for the project (see "Laminating Photos and Other Non-Breathables", PFM October 1994).

Manual perforation should be executed on the face of the film to prevent backing paper fuzz from being punched into the film (photo 4). Manual perforation

mastering mounting



Photo 4
Manual perforation is executed with the film face up to prevent tufts of the paper backing from remaining stuck in the holes.

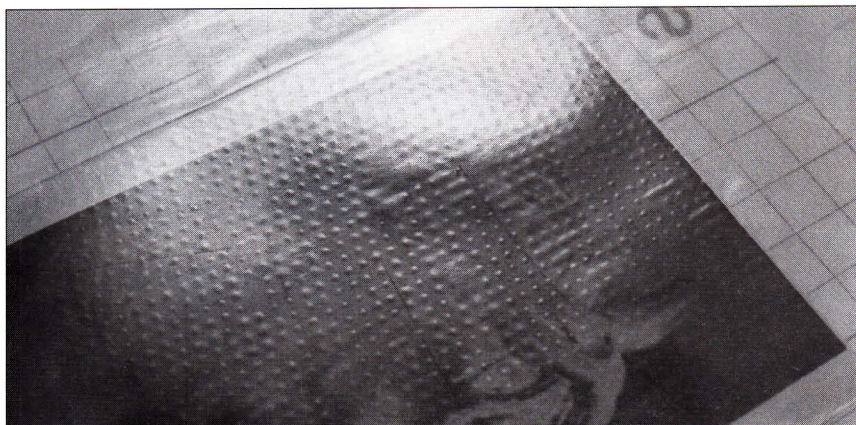


Photo 5
Manually punched holes should be about 1/4" apart as shown on this manufacturer's preperforated sheet.

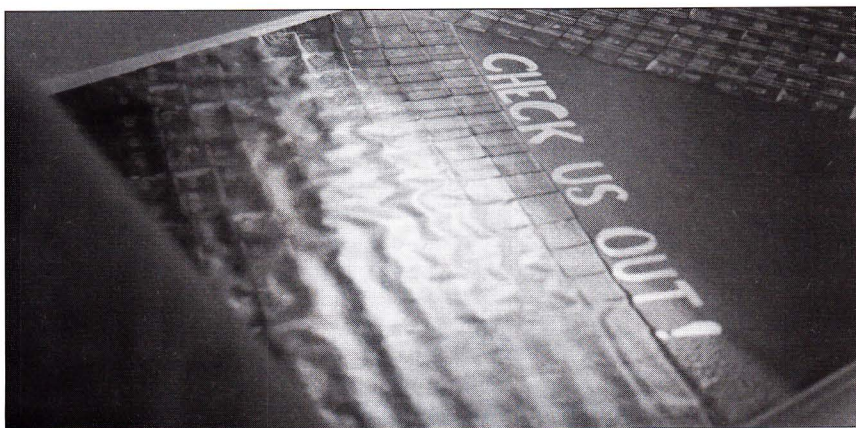


Photo 6
Though the perforations don't show in the unmounted half of the laminate, they are there. The puckers in the left half of the film will press out during the second bite as indicated by the right half "first bite".

holes should be approximately 1/4" apart as found when selecting preperforated films (photo 5), and the weight alone of the perforator tool is adequate pressure to make large enough holes for any air to escape.

Temperature settings of 185F to 225F and suggested press times of 5 to 10 minutes will vary with manufacturers, so it's best to refer to individual mounting specifications based upon your press to make appropriate modifications when laminating with perforated films.

THE BITING PROCESS

Once the film is sized, perforated, and positioned, it is ready to mount. This is a two-bite project to be mounted, turned, and then mounted from the opposite end. Though the perforations don't really show in photos 5 or 6 they are indeed there.

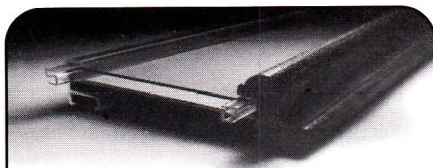
Laminates, being made of vinyl, react by bubbling when they come in close contact to a heat source. Photo 6 illustrates the bubbling nature of the film after completion of the first bite. Since films shrink when mounted, these bubbles will all smooth out nicely during the second bite, as witnessed by the completed upper (right hand) half of the poster in the same photo.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE TIME RULES

The same rules apply when biting laminates as when mounting. Overlap each bite as much as possible and when biting six or more times, begin at the center and work to the outer ends.

Though laminating times are often suggested at 5 to 7 minutes, the most common error is not leaving a bite project in the press long enough. Regardless of manufacturers suggestions, if a film has not been under heat and pressure long enough it will appear slightly cloudy or show signs of silvering when removed. Successive bites will then show clearer bands of mounted laminate where the overlapping of bites has occurred.

Spacers..?

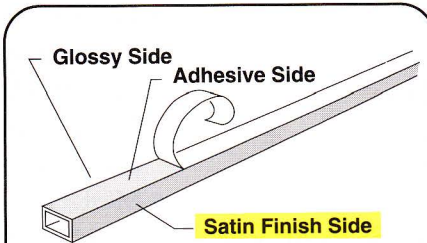


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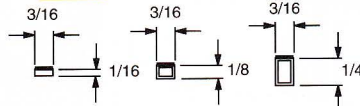


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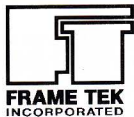


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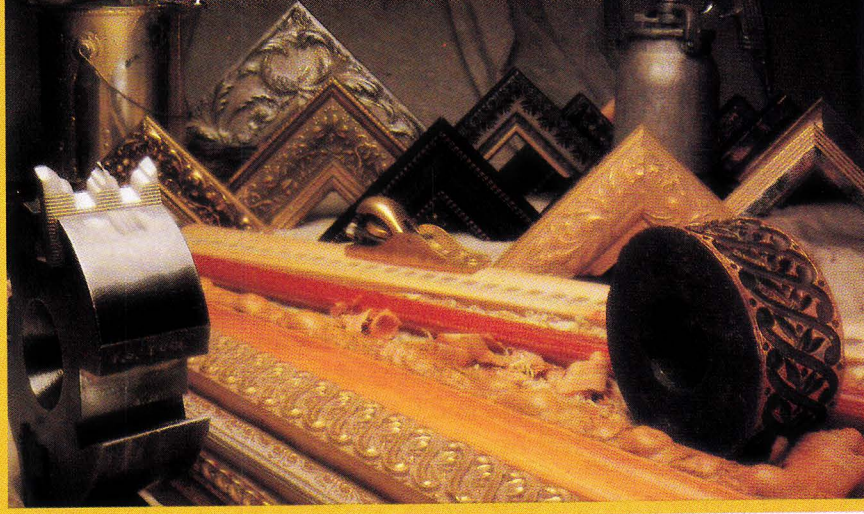
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It is also important that each bite be left in the press the same amount of time or the finish of the film can show the bites as above. Generally, I find more consistent success when using an average laminating time of 10 minutes per bite with a mechanical press.

As with any mounting, you can always place a rushed job back into the press for additional laminating time if any of the above results occur. If you must place it in for a few more minutes it must be placed in for the initial time plus the added minutes (first 5 minutes + 3 minutes = 8 total minutes for the second mount). Since most of these projects will eventually turn out beautiful even if placed into the press three times to get the time right, it will ultimately reinforce leaving it in the press long enough the first time!

WRAP-UP

Laminating in bites is really no different from laminating all in one step. The general guidelines of TTPM are always there to guide you, and be consistent...with every bite of the process. If it can be mounted or laminated at all, it can also be done in bites. They are merely nibbles of a cookie or pieces of pie...eventually they are entirely consumed -- or mounted, as the case may be. In any event don't hesitate to "take a bite"! □

Chris A. Paschke, CPF, owns Designs Ink, Oxford, Connecticut, featuring commercial and custom framing, product consultation, design and education. Specializing in mounting, matting and design creativity she works with numerous industry leaders including Bienfang, Crescent Cardboard, Fletcher-Terry, Larson-Juhl, PFM, PPFA, and Seal Products.