

HANGING YOUR WORK

A cheat-sheet for hanging hardware and display systems

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OVERVIEW + PURPOSE

This document serves as a guide for various types of hanging systems for displaying artwork, their pros and cons, and how to use them properly. One system may be more appropriate for your work depending on several variables, including weight, scale, material, and creative aesthetic. Choose the hardware that will show your work in the best light possible, with the reassurance that it can hang safely and effectively.

THE SAW-TOOTH HANGER VS. THE D-RING

The typical saw-tooth hanger comes in many sizes, but despite the availability of larger options, saw-tooth hangers are best used on small, lighter objects. If properly installed they can make for an easy solution for small photographs or even light canvases, but they come with lots of cons when it comes to displaying in a professional setting because of their stability and strength. Saw-tooth hangers are associated with cheap, store-bought framing options because they are typically made of thin, flexible metal and attached with thin nails.

D-Rings on the other hand are much stronger in construction, just as easy to install and can support loads of up to 20-30 lbs. each. D-Rings are attached with short screws, ensuring firm attachment to the artwork.

SAW-TOOTH PROS

- Cheap and easy to find
- Simple to attach to artwork (two nails)
- Simple to install (one nail)

SAW-TOOTH CONS

- Cannot be used on metal frames, only wood.
- Weak, should not be used on large artworks

D-RING PROS

- Secures with screws instead of nails
- Very stable and durable
- Can be used on both metal and wooden frames

D-RING CONS

- A few extra steps to ensure level hanging
- Slightly more difficult to install on artworks. Must be precise in placement
- Visible from the side

THE FRENCH CLEAT

The French cleat is an excellent solution to hanging artworks that are heavy and require substantial support on the wall. French cleats are best for rigid works, especially those that are large-format or need to be hung flush to the wall; they are commonly found on large-scale paintings or flush-mounted panels. Building and installing a french cleat is very simple, requiring only a ripped board and some screws. One of the benefits of a cleat system is that the wall cleat can be strategically attached to the studs in a wall, offering even more support.

1. Rip a board in half with a 30 or 45 degree angle.
2. Cut to length.
3. Attach one half to the back of the artwork near the top so that the angle faces the back of the artwork. The longer face of the top cleat should face the wall.
4. Attach the other half of the cleat to the wall so that the hooked angle faces upwards and towards the wall. The longer face of the wall cleat should face the artwork
5. Double check level of wall cleat. Drop the artwork downwards onto the cleat so that it is securely hooked in place.
6. You may consider adding another strip of the same cleat material to the bottom of the artwork to butt up against the wall. This helps provide support to the bottom of the artwork so that it hangs the same distance from the wall as the top.

CLIPS, PINS, NAILS + MAGNETS

There are many elegant and simple solutions to hanging artwork that is unframed or unstretched. You may choose to simply install your work on nails or pins if the artwork is lightweight and simply on raw paper or canvas. In these cases, it may be necessary to reinforce the back of your artwork with linen tape (or another type of archival tape) so that the hardware does not rip larger holes when holding the weight of the work.

If you prefer to avoid putting holes in your artwork, consider using rare earth magnets to pinch the artwork between the head of a nail and the magnet. Duplex nails are handy for keeping the artwork a uniform distance from the wall. Alternatively, you may also choose to use clips to pinch the tops of the artwork and hang the clips on a nail or screw.

These choices are about aesthetics as much as they are about safety of the work. Hanging on simple nails can have an elegant look as it can force the artwork off the wall and offer up a more material-based approach to the work. Keep in mind that these solutions can be delicate, so consider how high-traffic the space is before putting your work in a situation where it may be vulnerable.

STRUTS + STANDOFFS

Struts and standoff hardware is best used for artwork that is mounted on a thin panel or compressed between two sheets of glass or plexi, and needs to be suspended off of the wall. A strut is a simple, tube-like piece of hardware that comes in two pieces; one piece attaches directly to the wall usually by a single screw, the other piece caps the end, locking the artwork between it and the other portion of the hardware.

To prepare your artwork for struts, simply create a hole in the panel, glass or plexi to accommodate the size of the bolt on the strut. Keep in mind the thickness of the material so that you can acquire the appropriately sized hardware. If using double panels, consider using double-stick tape or another type of archival adhesive to secure the artwork to the rear piece of plexi so it doesn't slip down during installation.

1. Determine the placement of each strut on the wall. Double check level of each spot
2. Drive a screw through the base portion of each strut to attach them to the wall
3. Place the panels (with artwork compressed between) on the top two struts and lightly screw the top portion of the strut onto the standoff

4. Thread on the caps for the bottom two struts and secure entire artwork.
Hand-tighten all caps

WIRE + EYELETS

Some artists choose to use a more traditional approach to hanging by using eyelets (or staples) and wire. Installing eyelets inside the stretchers on the back of a canvas can hang a stretcher flush to the wall, hiding all hardware from all sides. Using wire can be a simple solution in cases where D-rings or cleats are not available, but the benefits of a wire can also be flaws depending on the application.

Using wire on works can offer a lot of flexibility when hanging in regard to leveling, which can be especially handy when the artwork is very wide. At the same time, this flexibility can also be a pain, as it can cause issues with keeping the artwork level and on-center over time. As the weight of the artwork settles on the hooks and the curve of the eyelets, the wire can stretch and cause the piece to hang crooked or below the intended height. This can be resolved by using two wall hooks instead of one, and lightly tugging the artwork downward upon installation to expedite the settling.

ANCHORS + REINFORCEMENTS

When preparing your work for installation, it is important to consider the type of situations where your work will be hung. There may not always be a preparator present in the gallery to inform you about the wall construction, so best practice is to prepare for all kinds of situations.

If your work is being installed on drywall and weighs more than a couple pounds, it is best to use drywall anchors to avoid damaging the drywall and ensure your work will be held up soundly. To install anchors, simply mark where your hardware should be placed, pre-drill the hole with the appropriately sized bit, hammer the anchor into place, and install the screw as intended.

There are also anchors available for hanging on masonry or concrete should you encounter a situation where your work hangs on such a wall. For more permanent masonry applications, you can use heavy-duty tapcons instead of regular screws.

HANGING ON CENTER

In the case where you might be in charge of installing your own artwork, there is a handy formula that you can use to hang your artwork at the same center point as the rest of the work in the show. Generally, galleries display their works between 57"-60" on center, though the curator or organizer of the show may choose this number for you. To determine the height at which to place your wall hardware, use the formula below.

Location of Wall Hardware = Total Height of Artwork *DIVIDED BY 2*,
PLUS Center Height, *MINUS* distance between Top of Artwork and Artwork Hardware.

EXAMPLE

The Installation height for the show is 60" on center. Your painting is 40" tall. The D-Rings on the back of your painting are 10" from the top.

1. Divide the total height of your painting by two. $40" / 2 = 20"$
2. Add to the center height. $60" + 20" = 80"$
3. Subtract the distance of the hardware from the top of your painting.
 $80" - 10" = 70"$
4. Place your hooks or screws in the wall at 70" from the floor. Now your painting will hang with the center at 60"

BEST PRACTICES

- Bring your work **READY TO HANG**. D-rings, wires, and cleats should be attached and ready to put on the wall before arriving at the gallery
- If you will not be present for installation and/or deinstallation, provide a document with a detailed description of how the work is to be hung. Add photos or drawings to demonstrate your vision and remove any guesswork for the preparator or curator
- Provide **ALL** appropriate hardware for hanging your work, including screws, nails, hooks, struts, anchors, etc. **DO NOT** assume the gallery will have the best hardware to present your work. You have control over how your work will be shown and choosing the right display system is up to you--the artist!
- Be sure to label all of your packing material, hardware bags and instructions with your name, and include contact information should questions or problems arise during install/deinstall

QUICK GUIDE

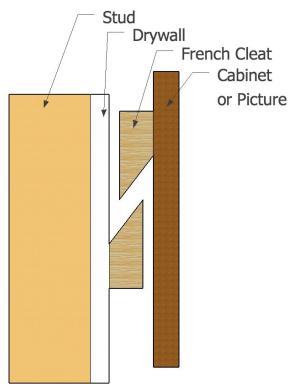
SAW-TOOTH HANGERS Best for lightweight, framed artworks. Cheap, easy to install.

D-RINGS Good for most hanging situations. Be sure to install at same distance from top. Can be used on both wood and metal frames/stretchers.

CLEATS Best for heavy artworks. Easy to make and install, extremely stable.

NAILS/PINS Best for unframed or unstretched work that is lightweight. Work should be reinforced to avoid tearing.

MAGNETS Best for lightweight, unstretched or framed artworks. Low impact, simple.



LARK'S HEAD KNOT

Also called...
Lark's foot, Cow
hitch, Girth hitch,
Ring hitch,
Lanyard hitch,
Bale Sling hitch,
Baggage Tag
Loop, Tag Knot,
Deadeye hitch,
Running eye

