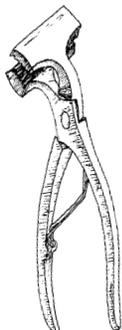


HOW TO STRETCH A CANVAS

The following information illustrates step-by-step how to stretch your own canvas using ready-made Opus Stretcher Bars.

MATERIALS

- Primed or unprimed canvas
- Opus Stretcher Bars
- Opus Wood & Paper Glue
- Staple gun or copper tacks
- Canvas stretching pliers
- T-square and hammer



THE PROCESS

First, consider how large your final stretched canvas will be to determine the weight of canvas to use. With a small to medium sized canvas, 8" x 10"

beveled face



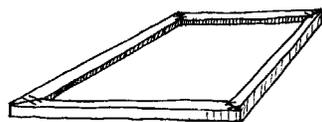
Cross section of a stretcher bar.

up to 30" x 30" for example, use a light to medium weight canvas such as 7 oz., 10 oz., or 10 oz. primed. For a larger stretched canvas consider a heavier weight canvas such as 13, 12 or 10 duck

(heaviest). The number of "ounces" refers to the thread count and the word "duck" refers to a tighter, and therefore, heavier weave. The type of media you use and your personal preference will also factor into which canvas you choose.

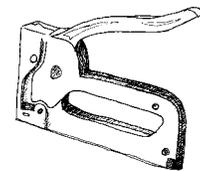
Primed canvas is a good choice for those who want to save time priming it themselves, however, pre-primed canvas is more difficult to stretch tightly. Canvas pliers are necessary as the fabric has little give. Consequently, pre-primed canvas is best for small size stretcher frames.

For large canvases we recommend using thicker stretcher bars or doubling-up on thinner bars using glue to keep them together. You can also reinforce your frame with bracing before you stretch the canvas so that it does not warp.

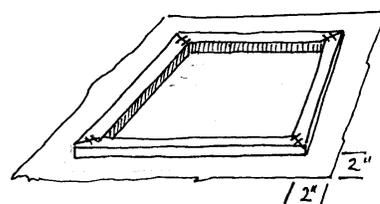


Step 1: Building the frame: The Opus Stretcher Bar is designed with mitred, tongue and groove style ends so that they may be easily joined to form a stretcher.

Using a small amount of glue, join all the corners and use a square or right angle in the inside of each corner to ensure that it is true. Staple the back side of the frame corners to fix them once they are square. This squaring process is important particularly if you plan on framing your finished canvas. When the glue has dried you can stretch your canvas.



Step 2: Tear (don't cut) a piece of canvas to size, and make it 4" longer than the dimensions of your stretcher bars. Lay the canvas "good-side" down on a



clean surface and place the stretcher frame "bevel- side" down, centering it on the canvas. There should be at least 2" of excess canvas all

the way around the stretcher. Try to place the stretcher frame parallel to the canvas weave.

Step 3: Drive the first couple of staples into the centre of one side of the stretcher. Angle the staples diagonally across the weave of the fabric as canvas tears easily along the weave. Using either your hands or canvas stretching pliers to pull the canvas tight to the other side, drive the next couple of staples into the side directly opposite the first side you stapled (Diagram A). The canvas will then have an elongated wrinkle in the centre.

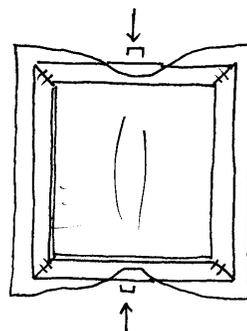


Diagram A

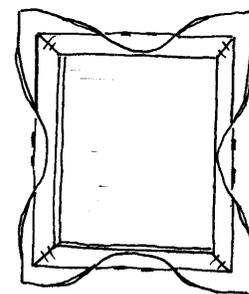


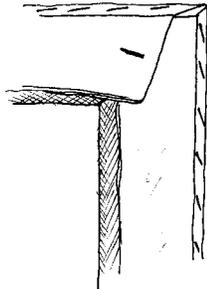
Diagram B

Step 4: Do the same as in step 3 on the remaining two sides (Diagram B). This will create a diamond shape wrinkle that is tight across the centre.

HOW TO STRETCH A CANVAS

Step 5: Drive in staples at regular intervals approximately 2 inches apart, moving outward from the centre alternately switching to opposite sides. Always work from the centre and never staple one side all at once. Use a hammer to ensure staples are firmly in the wood.

Step 6: As you near each corner, leave the corners unstapled. With the excess canvas at each corner fold it under to make a clean corner. Do not cut it if you plan to re-stretch it. Pull it taut around the back, then staple it on the back. This step is not unlike making a hospital corner when making a bed. Make sure the corners are trim as they will fit into a frame much better when you have finished your final piece.



In addition, instead of staples, you can use copper canvas tacks which are individually tapped into the canvas and stretcher bars. Copper tacks or stainless steel staples are recommended to prevent rusting (which can lead to rotting canvas).

Staff Tips:

- If the canvas is not taut enough, try moistening the back with a very hot rag in order to shrink the cotton fibres. Wooden wedges can also be driven into the corners with light taps from a hammer (this expands the actual frame). ~ Kirsten.
- If the canvas is too tight, this can result in warping the stretcher bars and the canvas will then refuse to "lay flat" against a wall. Keep in mind that priming your canvas will also cause it to contract somewhat. If it is too taut, re-stretch it. ~ Kirsten.

ALTERNATIVES:

The above method illustrates the process of stretching a canvas by driving staples into the side. You can also drive your staples into the back rather than the side. This alternative method allows the sides of your stretched canvas to be free and clean of staples. This may also prove to be more convenient if you ever have to remove the staples and canvas, for travelling, storage or future restoration. It makes it easier to re-stretch.

Priming Your Stretched Canvas for Painting:

Please ask a staff member for assistance in choosing the appropriate primer or gesso for your stretched canvas. In addition, you can pick-up a copy of our *Painting Grounds* handout which details the application and types of painting grounds available.



OPUS
FRAMING &
ART SUPPLIES

OPUS Vancouver
1360 Johnston St
604-736-7028

OPUS Kelowna
1357 Ellis St
250-763-3616

OPUS Langley
95 - 5501 204 St
604-533-0601

OPUS North Vancouver
120 Lonsdale Ave
604-904-0447

OPUS Victoria
512 Herald St
250-386-8133

OPUS National
Mail Order Service
1-800-663-6953

'where artists prefer to shop'

www.opusframing.com