Making Mounting Corners For Photographs And Paper Objects

Corners made of archival quality buffered paper or polyester film are useful for mounting photographs or papers already mounted to a backboard. The advantages of mounting corners (also called photo corners) are that they are simple to make and use and require no application of adhesive to the paper object. Corners can be used instead of a hinging system in window mats or photo albums, or for mounting objects to matboard for exhibit. However, if it appears that the paper object is not strong enough or there is any possibility that the corners of the object might be bent or damaged by the use of mounting corners, some other mounting system should be used. (See *Conserve O Gram* 13/4.)

Commercially made, archival quality mounting corners are available from conservation materials suppliers. They are usually made of Mylar® D polyester film with 3M® #415 double-sided tape as the adhesive and are acceptable for use on paper or photographic objects. However, it is useful to know how to make mounting corners if only a few are needed or if commercially made corners of the size required are not available or are too expensive.

Paper Mounting Corners

Paper mounting corners should be made from strips of unbuffered alpha-cellulose paper. Although buffered paper frequently is used with museum objects, certain photographic materials, especially certain color dyes, may be chemically unstable when they come in contact with highly alkaline paper, such as a buffered Permalife® paper. See NPS *Museum Handbook*, Part I

(Rev 9/90), Appendix J. Alpha-cellulose paper is manufactured acid-free and lignin-free and should have no harmful effect on photographs or paper objects with which it comes in contact. Unbuffered alpha-cellulose paper is available from suppliers of archival quality products.

Paper mounting corners may be adhered to the matboard or heavy paper mount in three ways: with double-sided tape (i.e., 3M #415), with cooked wheat starch paste, or with a white glue (polyvinyl acetate, or PVA, emulsion). The adhesive must only come in contact with the mounting corner and never with the object itself. Using a water-based adhesive that needs to dry requires the use of a drying procedure. (One such procedure is described in *Conserve O Gram* 13/1 in the section on hinging.) This *Conserve O Gram* will describe only the use of double-sided tape to construct and adhere corners.
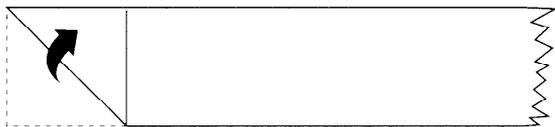
The width of the paper strip determines the size of the finished mounting corner. The corners should be large enough to provide adequate support, but not so large that they are visually intrusive.
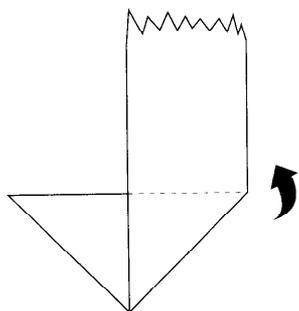
Procedure For Making Paper Corners

1. Cut a strip of paper ½" wide, or to the desired width, and as long as the sheet of paper.
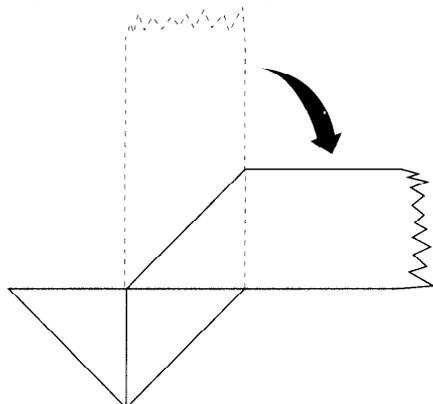
2. Fold the end of the strip into a triangle.

3. Fold the other side inward to meet this triangle. The long tail of paper will now extend upwards. One triangular-shaped mounting corner is now completed.


4. Fold the long tail of the paper strip downward and diagonally to the right, so that the left edge of the paper tail becomes the bottom edge of the next triangle.
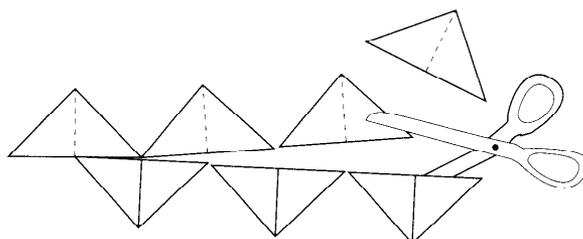

5. *Flip the paper over*, then fold the tail upward. Two triangular-shaped mounting corners are now completed, oriented opposite each other.
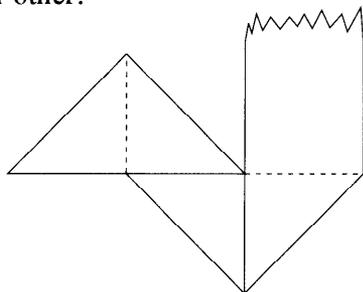

6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 turning the paper over each time until the length of the paper strip has been folded into triangles.
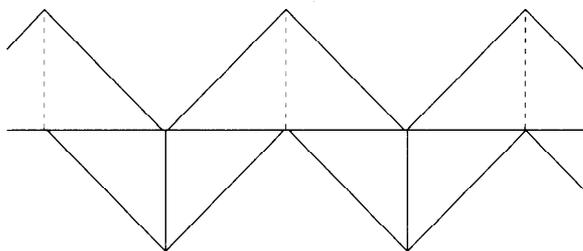

7. Separate the corners by cutting along the middle axis.

8. Apply a small piece of double-sided tape to the back of each mounting corner, across the split side. The paper backing will be removed from the tape when the corner is mounted on matboard or in a photo album.

Tape

Back   Front
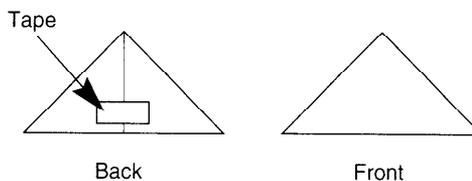
9. If needed, a 90° notch can be cut in the front of the mounting corner to prevent the corner from blocking part of the image.
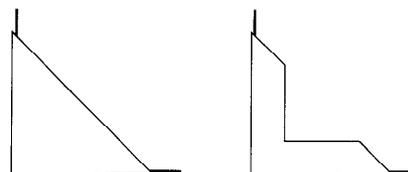
Polyester Film Corners

Mounting corners of polyester film can be made when extra strength is needed or when a clear corner is preferred in order to avoid obscuring the mounted image. Mylar D or Melinex® 516 are two brand names of polyester film which are archivally safe to use. Polyester film that is 3 or 4 mil thick is easiest to use. Five mil polyester film can be folded; however, it is fairly stiff.

## Procedure For Making Polyester Corners

1. To make a 1" corner, cut a 2" x 2" square of polyester film. A larger or smaller corner can be made by increasing or decreasing the size of the square.
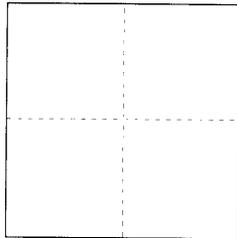
2. Fold the polyester film square in half horizontally, and unfold; fold the square in half vertically and unfold.
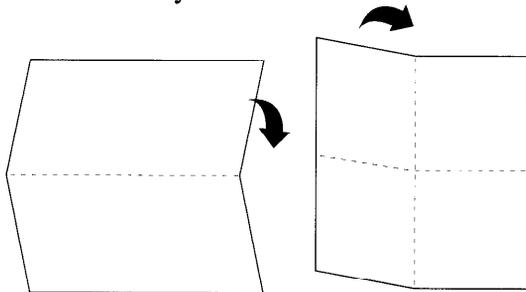
3. Cut out one quadrant *along* the folds, and cut the opposite quadrant *diagonally*. Discard the cut-off pieces.   Cut

    Cut
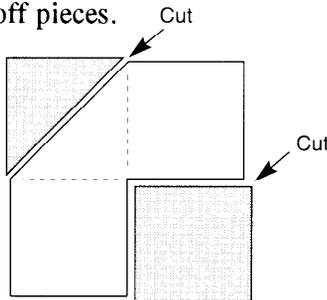
4. Fold one of the two square flaps under the triangle. Adhere a piece of double-sided tape to the back of the square flap. Remove the paper backing. Fold the second square flap over the first square flap so the two flaps are held securely by the tape. The corner is now completed. Apply a piece of double-sided tape to the back of the mounting corner, but do not remove the paper backing.

    Back   Front
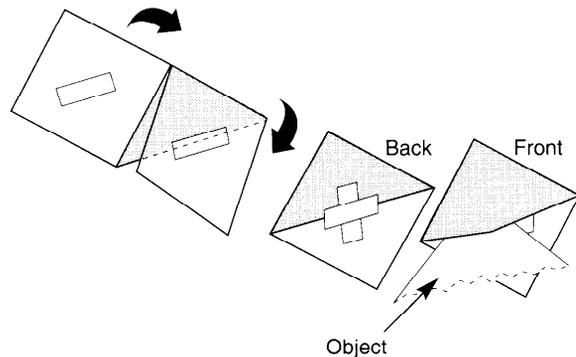
    Object

5. Position the paper object on the matboard or heavy paper mount. Hold it in position using a small weight of two to five pounds. Protect the surface of the object by placing a piece of clean blotter paper under the weight.

6. Remove the paper backing from the tape, slip the mounting corner onto the corner of the object. Press the corner down to adhere it to the matboard.
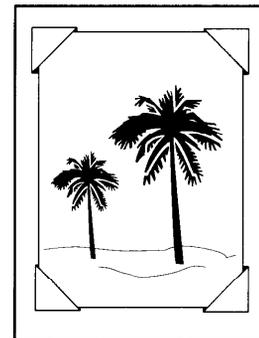
Sources

Materials needed for making mounting corners
are available from archival quality materials
suppliers, such as University Products,
P.O. Box 101, Holyoke, MA 01041-0101,
(800) 628-1912; Light Impressions,
P.O. Box 940, Rochester, NY 14603,
(800) 828-6216; and Conservation Resources,
8000-H Forbes Place, Springfield, VA 22151,
(800) 634-6932.

Reference

Reilly, James M. *Care and Identification of 19th
Century Photographic Prints*. Rochester, NY:
Eastman Kodak Company, 1986.

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