

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall...

People have used mirrors in their homes for years, and today they are more popular than ever. A mirror is rare because it has no inherent style or colour scheme of its own. We can take advantage of that freedom and create beautiful frame designs that we may not be able to use with art. Of all the things we frame a mirror is generally one of the easiest projects, too. Mirrors are timeless and can be used in every room of the house. What more could a framer ask for?

Design Possibilities

Sometimes framed mirrors are more about the frame than the mirror. A decorative frame can add interest on a blank wall and help balance with a piece of furniture on the other side of the room. Mirrors can also be used to reflect colour from the opposite side of the room, unifying the decor. When you talk to your customers about mirrors, be sure you understand their needs, but also help them understand the possibilities available to them. Here are some options:

- **On the Wall** - Even though your customers know mirrors can hang on the wall, show them that they don't all have to look alike. To differentiate your example, use one of your biggest and best mouldings or try a stacked moulding combination.
- **On the Floor** - It's now fashionable to set large framed mirrors on the floor. Even though the mirror is still filling the same wall space it would if it were to hang, it adds a bit more dimension to the room.



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- **Folding Screens** - Individual mirrors can be framed and hinged to create interesting reflections – Whether the screen is a full height room divider or a smaller tabletop conversation piece.
- **Serving Tray** - Frame a mirror in a moulding with a flat top or side so that you can attach handles at each end. Rather than a paper backing, you may want to use a suede mountboard with a black core.
- **A Base for a Centrepiece** - Framed mirrors look great under floral arrangements or candles on a dining table. Pay attention to the moulding profile you choose for this purpose: a reverse profile will curve down to blend into the tabletop whereas a tall cap profile with a straight back edge will project from the table. Fill the space behind the mirror with backing boards to help support the objects that will sit on it.
- **A Mirror Grouping** - Suggest a grouping of mirrors for a staircase wall, a hallway, or any living area. The group will look interesting in a variety of shapes and sizes, with all different frames, especially in a traditional setting. For a more contemporary look, a grid of identical frames will look stunning.
- **Bathrooms** - Many bathrooms have cabinets with a mirror on the door, and often these can be framed. (Keep in mind that the door has to open when choosing the moulding).
- **Creative Applications** - Think about how and where mirrors are used. Some people like to take one last look at themselves before they leave the house. A framed mirror can be hung near the door or, for a door leading to the garage, design a combination mirror/key holder by adding hooks on the frame. Another alternative is a combination mirror/bulletin board. You can frame each individually and then surround those two with one frame that unites the design.
- **In Shadowboxes** - When framing objects, a mirror background will allow both sides to show. While this may be great for a figurine, remember that images appear in reverse in the reflection so it may not be ideal for coins or other items with writing on them.

Handling Mirrors

Framing a mirror isn't too different to framing a picture, but there are some special considerations that you must make.

- **Wear Gloves** - Today most mirrors have a paint coating on the back to protect the silvering. On mirrors without this finish, the oil in your skin may eventually penetrate through and show up as a dark spot on the front of the mirror.

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- **The Frame Lip** - Since a mirror is a reflective surface, the underside of the lip of the frame will show—not very attractive, since this portion of the frame is often unfinished or just partially finished. Colour that part of the frame. Black is a universally good colour since it creates the appearance of a shadow, or you can custom match the finish of the frame. Use acrylic paint, permanent markers, or stains.
- **Reinforce the Frame** - Mirrors can be quite heavy; use a moulding that can support the stress. If the frame your customer wants is not as sturdy as you would like, here are two solutions. You can suggest a very narrow metal frame as a liner inside the desired frame. Metal frames support weight well and certain profiles won't even show. Another alternative is to screw metal corner plates on the back at each corner. It may be best to avoid deep, narrow mouldings since the weight of the mirror will be at the front, away from the reinforcements.
- **Hanging the Mirror** - Take precautions to hang mirrors properly. If your customers will be hanging it themselves, educate them.

Avoid using wire on anything that is heavy (let your customers know if you have intentionally left the wire off). Hang the frame from hangers positioned on both sides of the frame.

The hangers and the hooks must be of appropriate size to hold the weight. Wall anchors may be preferable to picture hooks.