Mounting Photos on Mats – Unframed
By Tom Mayhew

As an example, this article describes a procedure for mounting 8 x 10 inch photos onto 11 x 14 inch mats for presentation or for entering photo contests as matted photos where photo frames are not permitted. At a Craft Store like Michaels, A.C. Moore or Jo-Ann Fabric and Craft Store, you need to buy several items. Buy mats with outside dimension of 11'' x 14" and inside open dimension of a little less than 8x10 (the opening is about 7.5 inches by 9.5 inches or close to that). I prefer white mats. You need to buy some backing material to mount the photos and mats on. For backing material, I buy "Foam Board" poster board sheets from Michaels that have a thickness of 3/16 inch and are 20 x 30 inches in size. You can cut two 11x14 inch backing boards from each foam board sheet. I use a "X-ACTO" knife which has a sharp blade for cutting the foam board. I mark the foam board for a backing sheet slightly less (about 1/8 inch less on each side) than 11x14. I place the foam board on several 2 inch x 8 inch wood planks for cutting so that the X-ACTO knife blade can go into the wood when cutting. I use a metal T square (about 3 foot long) for an edge on top of the foam board, using the T Square to keep the edge cut square with the top edge. **Be very careful not to cut your fingers** with the sharp X-ACTO knife blade by keeping pressure on the T Square with you **left hand above where you are cutting** and use your right hand to hold and guide the X-ACTO knife. You have to make several passes with the X-ACTO knife before you cut all the way through the foam board. Don't rush this, or you may slip and cut your hand. You need to also buy from Michaels, a roll of 1 inch wide Masking Tape (3M) and many rolls of Scotch double-sided Removable Poster Tape 3/4 inch wide and about 150 inches in length. (These rolls are somewhat expensive, about $5 or $7 each, and sometimes hard to find). To mount your 8x10 photos, lay a 11x14 mat face down on a flat working space (I use some of the uncut 20 x 30 inch foam board as a working platform on a table). Use four short pieces of masking tape about 1 inch long, to tape the backside of four corners of the photo to the back of the mat to get your photo in place on the mat. You can do this step in other ways, like working with both the photo and mat face up when you tape the corners - the purpose here is to get the photo in the position you want it with respect to the mat inner edges (you have less than 1/2 inch to play with in positioning the photo on the mat). Once you are satisfied with the position of the photo on the mat, then with the photo and mat face down, run masking tape along the four edges of the photo-mat interface on the backside to secure the photo to the mat. Next, using the double-sided removable poster tape, on the backside of the mat (that now holds the photo) run the doubled sided tape near the outer edge of the four sides of the mat (about 1/2 - inch in from the outer edge.) Do this by first putting down the exposed sticky side of the double-sided tape onto the backside of the mat. Then remove the protected covering on the tape to expose the other sticky side face up. Do this on all four sides of the mat. Now carefully place the mat (that holds the photo) with the exposed sticky tape onto the 11x14 foam poster board. Check to see that the mat and foam board backing are properly lined up. If they are not, separate them and try again. When you are satisfied with the mat-to-backing placement, lay the mounted mat flat, press down along the edges above where the sticky tape is, to firmly adhere the mat to the foam board, being careful to not get the mat dirty. I use strips of the removed pieces from the double-sided tape between my fingers and the mat when I press down to secure the mounting process. You are now done!