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Simple Ways to Stretch Your Canvas by David Weaver

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Every student of art will have to know how to stretch a canvas across a frame. There are however a few others who may take to art at a later point in life and will need to know the basics. Here is how you can go about it. The first step is to have a frame built for your artwork. This will have to be made as per the size of your final painting. Your canvas will be stretched over this to just the right tension.

The best way to go about this is to cut out your piece of canvas at least around eight inches bigger than the dimensions of your stretcher bars. This extra canvas is necessary so that you have a good grip on the edges and are able to pull and stretch it as you need. Place your frame on top of the canvas that you have cut out. Work along the grain and make sure that the canvas is in a straight line with the stretcher bars.

Use pliers to pull the canvas tightly and begin with the longest side of the canvas. Fold it over the frame and pin it down with three staples from with a commercial grade stapler. These pins should be close to the center of the stretcher bar. Once done, turn the canvas over and do the same thing on the opposite side. Pull the canvas tightly on the frame and hold it in place with three more staples at the center of the stretcher bar.

Now go on to the sides that have not been done and pull each side tightly and staple it down. Each time make sure that you yank it hard over the frame, fold it over and use the staples to hold it in place. Now go over the edges of the canvas slowly. Smooth it down from the center of the canvas to the edges and then staple it in place. Ideally work from the opposite end of the canvas and frame to give you better grip.

Continue this way till you have around 4 inches of unstapled canvas on each of the edges. Then fold down the edges at each corner neatly and place a staple on either side of the corners, as close to the edge as possible. You have to make sure that you pull the corners as tightly as possible so that they donâ€™t come undone.

Once you are done, you need to turn the canvas over and tap the surface. It should have the surface tension of a drum and be rather taut. Any creasing and folds can easily be seen from this point. If you need to rework the staples a bit, pull them out and redo that area. Pound the staples in place to finish.

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