

Canvas: Stretching the canvas. This task will teach you how to Stretch Canvas to Stretcher

EQUIPMENT: What you will need



Stretching tongs



Stretcher



Staple gun



Sharp scissors



Roll or piece of canvas.
Clear flat table or floor
space



Ruler

SAFETY: How to stay safe

Never point a staple gun and fire at anything except the wooden stretcher, or the wall.

Read Staple Gun Task first.

GLOSSARY: Word you need to understand

Stretching tongs These tongs will hold the canvas tightly for you so you can pull it across the wooden stretcher. Use tongs to hold canvas while you staple it in place.

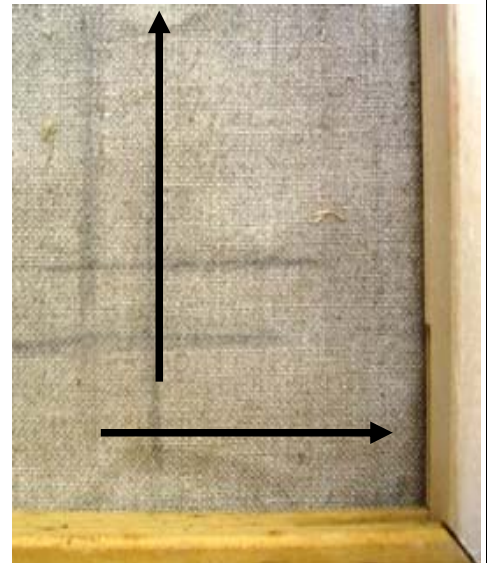
Stretching a canvas

Lay out canvas and stretcher

Put the canvas with the painting surface on the table.

Put the stretcher down with the round edge on the canvas.

Sit the frame in straight lines with the fabric threads.



Measure canvas

Measure your canvas. Make sure it is 5cm bigger than the stretcher all the way around.

- Mark this out with a pencil and ruler.

You will need this extra edge to wrap over the stretcher.



Cut

Cut out your piece of canvas.



Set up canvas for stretching

Make sure you put:

- The side of the canvas for painting against the table.
- The curved lip side of the stretcher on the back of the canvas.
- The stretcher evenly in the middle of the canvas.



Staple canvas to stretcher

Fold the canvas up on one side facing you.



Staple canvas to stretcher

Put ONE staple into the middle on the back of the stretcher. This will attach the canvas to the stretcher on one side.



Across the stretcher, use the stretching tongs to pull the canvas around and onto the back of the stretcher.



Put in a staple on that side, straight across from the first staple. This makes the canvas stretch tight and straight across the stretcher.



Pull tight with tongs

Do the same thing for the two ends.

First pull one end up tight, then go over to the other end and pull it over tightly, and staple.



Go to the other end and pull really tight with the tongs. Now you have a tightly stretched centre.



Staple sides

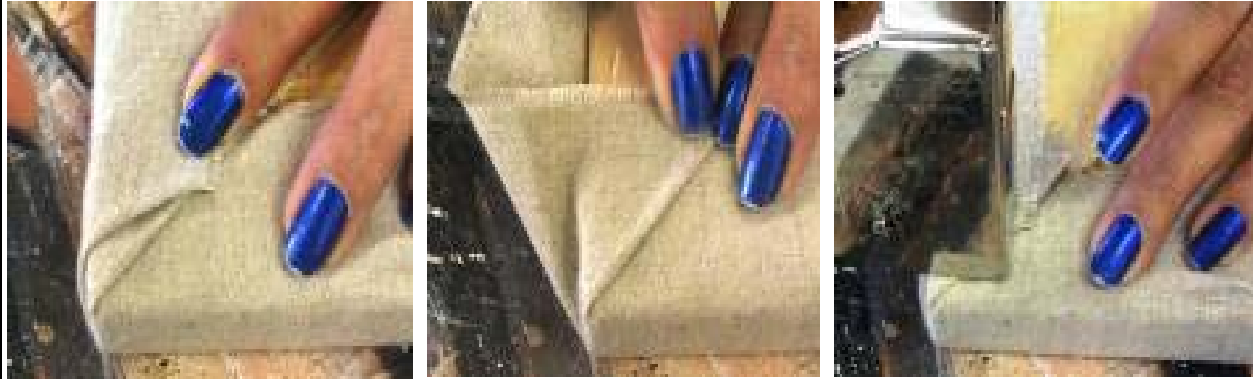
Go around each side this way. Staple one side and then straight across to the other side.

- Put one in at a time, from the centre towards the edges.
- Keep the canvas pulled tight and even



Corners

At the corner fold the canvas into a flat fold and staple.



Tips: Tightening the canvas

Even when the canvas has been stretched tight on the stretcher, it might still get a bit loose and baggy. This can happen when it is first stretched or anytime after that. You can make it tight again by spraying a little bit of water onto the back of the canvas.

- Spray water gently from a spray bottle all over the back of the canvas and let it dry.

Staple Guns

Keep your staple gun away from children and people who do not know how to use it.

You can buy short staples which will not drive into the stretcher too far or too hard. These ones are easy to get out if you need to take paintings off the stretcher after they are finished.

- You can get the same effect from regular staples by tilting the gun a little above the stretcher bar when you are stapling the canvas on. This way the staples will still be sticking out from the wood a little.

Canvas on a roll

When you are stretching a canvas always cut across your roll of canvas from one side to the other. Do not keep cutting up into the roll or you will get a lot of left over pieces in funny shapes.

If you have some left over from the strip:

- Save it for making colour or paint tests on
- Keep it handy for children or others to practice on
- Make small paintings.

Stretching Large Canvas

A large size canvas will need a stretcher that has extra supports to keep the right shape. It will have **bracing** – which is the name for the extra wood pieces that make the stretcher a good strong one.

Most bracing will be made of two pieces crossed in the centre at the back. This supports the sidebars to stop long sides from bending inwards. It keeps the stretcher flat too.

Sometimes only one piece is used running from the middle of the long sidebar across the centre to the middle of the other sidebar.

Selecting the correct kind of stretcher

Stretchers are mostly made of Australian Hardwood, or Plantation Pine. They vary greatly in the thickness and depth of the bars. Get advice from the stretcher maker about the best kind for your size canvas and weight of linen.

Tiny canvases are put onto a mini stretcher called a **strainer**, which is made as a solid frame in light and thin timber. It is used the same way as a stretcher with the linen rolled over the side and onto the back. The strainer needs very short staples or tacks to attach the canvas onto.

Selecting the correct kind of canvas to use

Most art centres use **Belgian Linen** for their artists' work. This is because the linen has the best properties for lasting a long, long time. The linen is also more adaptable to creating different surface qualities to paint onto.

Cotton Duc is the white canvas that is also common to artists. Both cotton duc and linen come in a range of weights (or GSM). It is important to discuss the combination of uses you need in your art centre, and to match both your canvas and your stretchers to each other.