

# Methods For Hanging Framed Pictures, Part 1

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Nothing puts the finishing touch on a home or office like framed art. Whether you're creating a gallery, hanging a favorite painting, or finally getting your family photos on display, framed art can give the most humble space a professional gleam.

Hanging those pieces so they look professional, however, can be a challenge.

First you need to recognize that there are two parts to this process: mounting hardware on the frame itself, and mounting the frame on the wall. For the wall, you will either use a nail, which you will hammer right into the drywall or into a stud, a drywall anchor, or a picture hook.

There are more options for the frame hardware, and we will discuss the most popular methods here. The method you ultimately choose for both parts will ultimately depend upon several variables, including the size and weight of the picture, the material of the frame, and the surface you wish to hang the picture on. For our purposes, we are going to discuss only wood frame installation here. Metal frames require specifically designed brackets, though the principals behind the process are the same.

Some of the more popular methods to hang pictures on wooden frames are:

1. Screw eyes and picture wire;
2. D-rings with picture hooks and/or picture wire;
3. Sawtooth hangers;
4. Interlocking brackets.

Each method has something to offer, balancing between simplicity and security.

1. One of the oldest methods of picture hanging is the **screw eye and picture wire**. Screw eyes are installed on the back side rails of the frame, between one-quarter and one-third down from the top. Make sure you measure each side so the screw eyes are even. It's also easiest if you lightly punch start holes for the screw eyes. Then turn the screw eyes into the start holes slowly and evenly, careful not to splinter or distort the holes, until the eyes rest against the frame. String the picture wire through the eyes and secure it, leaving enough slack in the wire so that the apex is midway between the screw eyes and the top of the frame.

Picture wire is available braided, or more recently, in stainless steel. While the stainless steel is stronger, it is slightly less flexible. The choice will depend on the relative weight of your picture.

The wire can then be hung on a nail hammered into drywall or a stud, or a picture hook. Picture hooks are sold by weight class. When in doubt, always choose the hook rated for heaviest paintings. And hanging the picture on two hooks, spaced

evenly about a third the width of the frame, is the most secure, though you will need to make sure the picture hooks are level to each other.

The screw eye method is relatively simple, requires few tools, and hangs the picture securely. However, it is easy when screwing in the eyes to slightly splinter the frame, compromising the strength of the fastener. Unless you are a real expert, screw eyes are probably best suited for smaller frames.

2. For heavy duty pictures, **D-rings** are often used, either with anchored screws or picture hooks alone, or with wire and picture hooks. The installation differs depending on which hanging method you prefer.

To use D-rings without picture wire, install them at the back top corners of the frame, making sure they are perfectly even, and low enough that the picture hook you choose for the wall will not rise above the top of your frame. (You will also need to be sure the picture hooks are perfectly level on the wall so your picture hangs level.) Pre-drill the holes (D-rings may have one or two holes), careful not to puncture the frame, and use the included screws to secure the D-ring. Then hang the D-rings directly onto heavy duty picture hooks or screws anchored into the wall.

If you use D-rings with picture wire, you will install them, like screw eyes, about one-quarter to one-third down from the top on the side rails of the frame. If the frame allows, rotate the hangers in slightly, so they will be in line with picture wire when pulled taut. Pre-drill the holes, and fasten the D-rings with the included screws. String the picture wire through, allowing enough slack so that the apex of the wire is half-way between the D-rings and the top of the frame. Hang on either one or two heavy duty picture hooks.

This method takes a little more care with the drill, though it is effective and secure. It also requires a perfect measurement for both D-rings, and the picture hooks, as any miscalculation will make the picture crooked.

It is also worth noting that any installation using picture wire requires having to guess where the picture will actually hang, since the wire is hidden behind the frame. If you are doing the job solo, this can be frustrating. Also remember to use a wall anchor with D-rings as the weight of the picture may rip it out of the wall.

3. **Sawtooth hangers.** These familiar jagged-toothed hangers come in three types: nailed-on, screwed on and nailless. The nailless hangers are made of a tough composite which allows you to hammer tiny hooks on the ends of the hanger into the back of the frame without damaging the hanger.

Sawtooth hangers are installed in the center of the top back rail of the picture frame, either by nailing, screwing or hammering. The hanger should be low enough so it will not show above the top of the frame, and the teeth should face downward. Then hang the picture on a nail hammered into the wall, with about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch extending.

The obvious appeal of this method is its simplicity, especially with the nailless hanger. The nail, rather than a picture hook, can be a weak link in the process, however. And sawtooth hangers have a tendency to allow pictures to become crooked more easily or possibly fall off the wall. Additionally, there is an unfortunate tendency to break the frame or even the glass so be careful.

**4. Interlocking brackets** are a newer method for hanging pictures. These hangers do not use picture hooks or wire, but mount one bracket on the frame and one on the wall, with the frame bracket fitting onto the wall bracket.

To install the frame bracket, center it on the top back rail. The lip of the bracket will slide under the lip of the frame. Nail the bracket in place with nails provided.

Then install the wall bracket onto the wall with wall anchors, or screw into studs. Do not use nails. One example of this system is the Hangman System, which comes with a level embedded in the wall bracket. For the Hangman System, install one end first. Then pivot the bracket until the bubble is level. Mark the holes, then install the remaining wall anchors, then screws. Depending on the size and weight of the picture, the brackets may be between 5" and 30".

Remove the level, and hang the picture so that the brackets fit together. You can slide the picture from side to side if need be.

As with the D-rings, this system involves a little more handiness with a drill. And like the D-ring, it is secure for heavier pictures. The greatest advantage is the ability to hang the picture level the first time, and have it stay level.

Sheila Gallien is a noted screenplay consultant who also writes articles on picture hanging and home and workplace organizing systems in her spare time. For more information on framing please go to <http://www.hangmanstore.com> or <http://www.hangmanproducts.com>.