

Aspect Ratio

...or why can't I print a full frame image on standard paper sizes

Aspect Ratio is the ratio of the short size of an image to the long side of the image. We talk about it all the time without realizing it. When you get a 4x6 inch print you are describing the aspect ratio of that print: 4x6 (or 2x3, or 1x1.5). The length long side of the image is 1.5 times the length of the short size. This happens to be the aspect ratio of most digital SLR cameras. Hence a 4x6 print can show the entire frame from a 35mm file.

So, what happens when you want to make an enlargement from an dSLR image? If you make an 8x12 enlargement you will get the full frame. Everything you originally saw in the image. But, you might be saying, most frames are available in 5x7 or 8x10 sizes. What happens when I make a 5x7 or 8x10 print? What happens is that you have to crop off parts of the original image to get the size that you want. The physical dimensions/aspect ratio of the image and the frame are not the same; something has to go.

Here is an illustration:



The **red line** indicates the full ratio of the dSLR original file. The other lines show the area of the image that will be included in various size prints. (4x6, 6x9, 8x12, 16x24, 20x30)

The **yellow line** shows the crop for an 8x10. Notice that a relatively large section of the original will be cropped out to make an 8x10 print. (4x5, 8x10, 16x20, 24x 30)

The **purple line** shows the crop area for a 5x7 print (almost the full frame).

The **teal line** shows the approximate crop area for an 8.5x11 or 11x14 print.

{ Yes we can crop in tighter to make the subject larger, but for the purpose of this article we are going to assume you want the largest area in your final print. }

Now If an image is cropped in camera (meaning the image is tight around the subject) additional cropping can sometimes pose a problem for framing. Custom framing, canvas prints are suggested for off sized portraits.



I always try to crop an image so it shows as much of the image as possible, and so it's aesthetically pleasing to the artist (a.k.a. ME). I understand that sometimes what I like and what you like may be apples and oranges, but your happiness is my ultimate goal.

Thanks!!

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