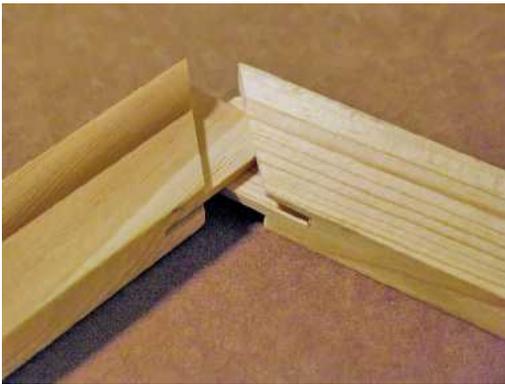




Studio Craft: Stretching Canvas On the Bias

Most artists learn to stretch canvas by pulling directly against warp and weft, starting in the center of each side and working toward the corners. An alternate method- stretching against the bias- involves diagonally displacing the weave rather than pulling directly against the yarns. Bias stretching shifts the entire weave so tension is spread more evenly across the whole stretcher, minimizing weave distortion and reducing puckers at tack points.



Assemble stretchers, making sure the lift (raised edge) is facing the same direction on all bars.



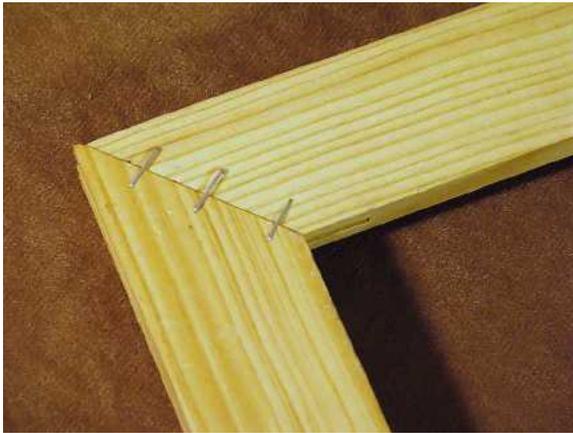
If necessary, use a rubber mallet to achieve a secure fit. Stretcher joints are designed to hold with friction alone- do not use glue.



Using a carpenter's square, check that all corners are at 90 degrees.



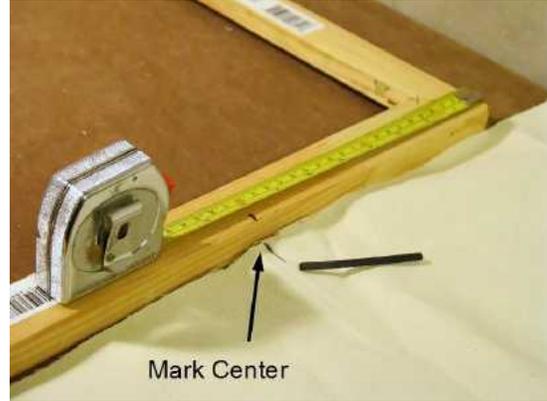
Inspect each corner to make sure the lift is consistent where the bars meet. Use a file to remove any irregularities.



Insert 3 staples across each joint to temporarily hold corners in place.



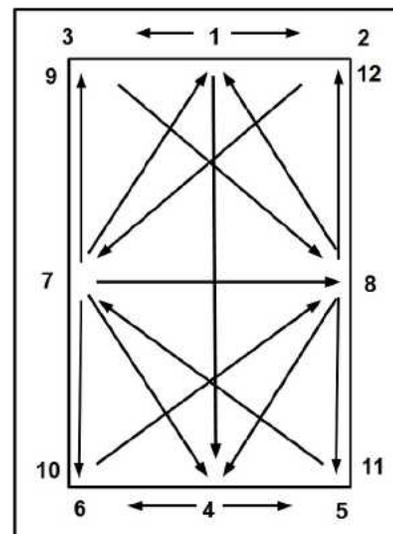
Cut a piece of canvas slightly larger than the stretcher frame, leaving enough excess to wrap around the back.



Use a tape measure to locate the center of one of the shorter bars; mark with charcoal. Mark the center of the corresponding side of the canvas.



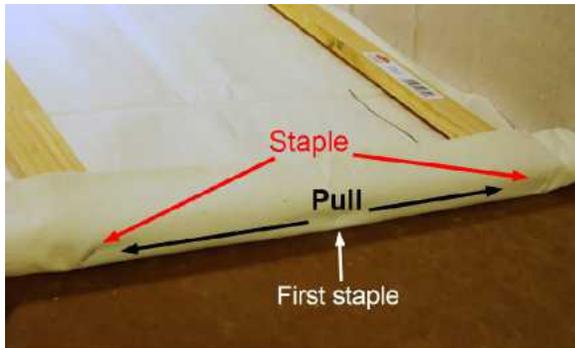
Position the stretcher frame lift side down on the canvas, making sure the frame is aligned with the weave of the canvas.



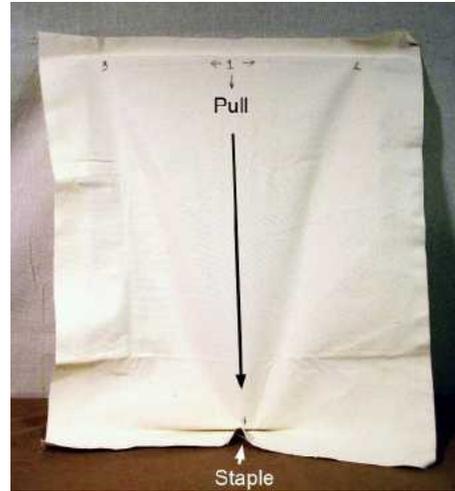
Sequence of stapling



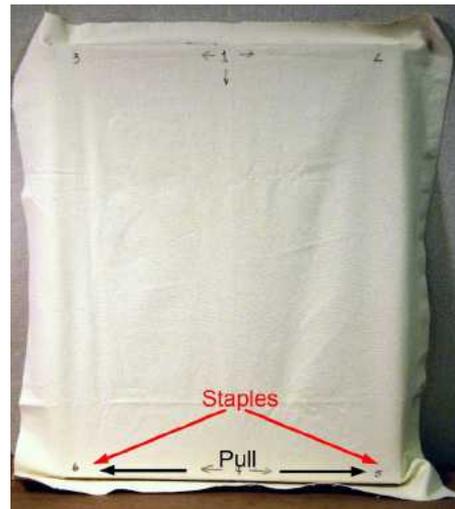
Insert a staple in the center of the marked short side. Place staples diagonally, parallel to one another.



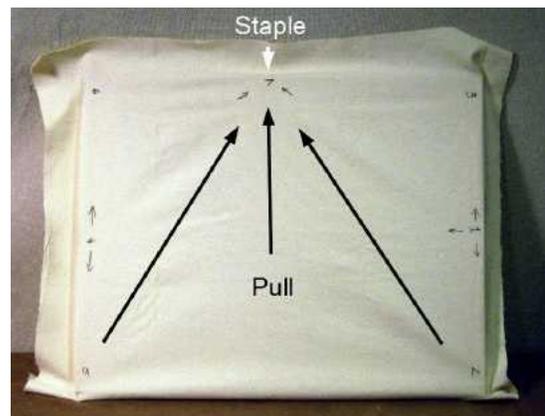
On the same side, pull toward each corner and insert staples.



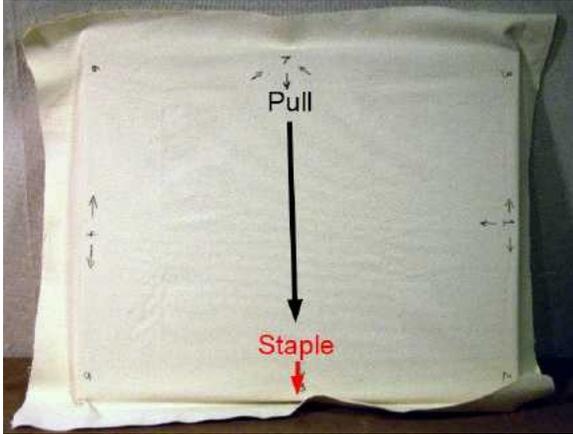
Pull toward the center of the opposite short side and insert a staple.



Pull toward the corners as on the first side and insert staples.



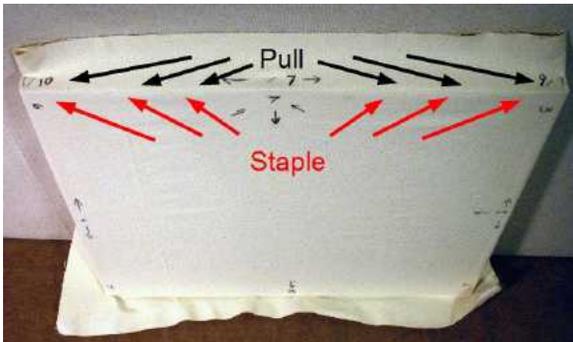
Pull toward the center of either of the long sides and staple.



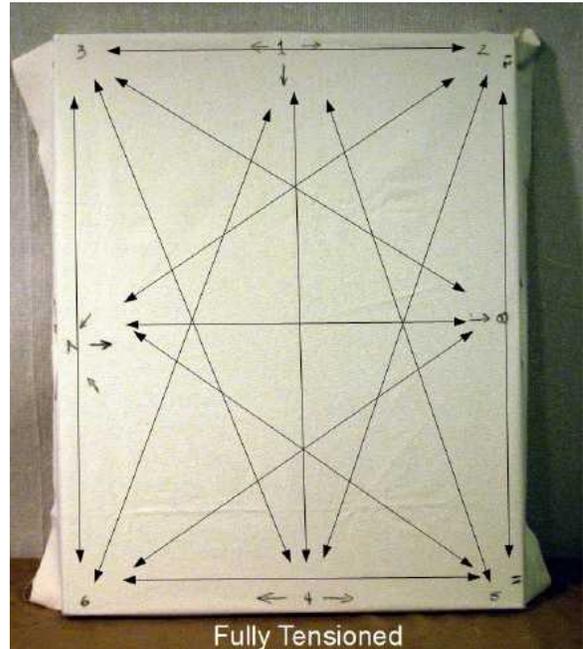
Pull directly across to the center of the opposite long side and staple.



Position folds neatly.

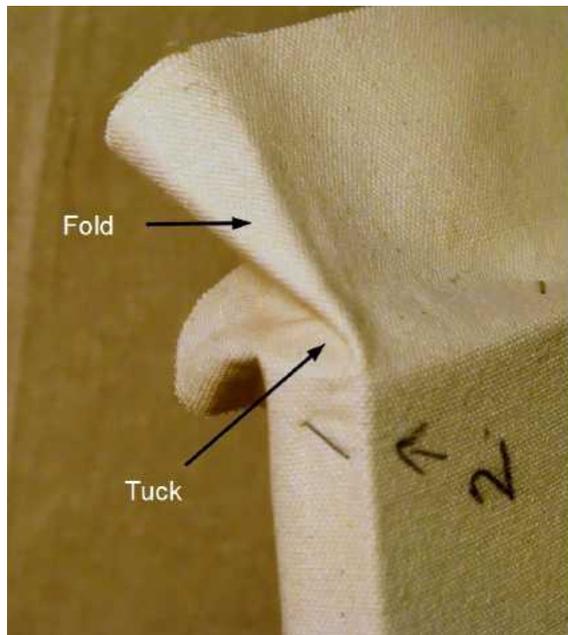


Working toward the corners on each long side, pull tight and insert staples.

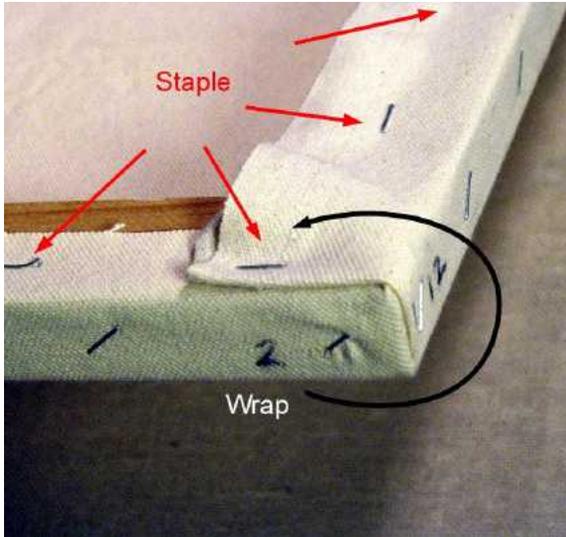


Full corner-to-corner tension should have been achieved with the first 12 tack points. Pull taut and staple in between original tack points until the canvas is sufficiently tight along all sides with no loose spots.

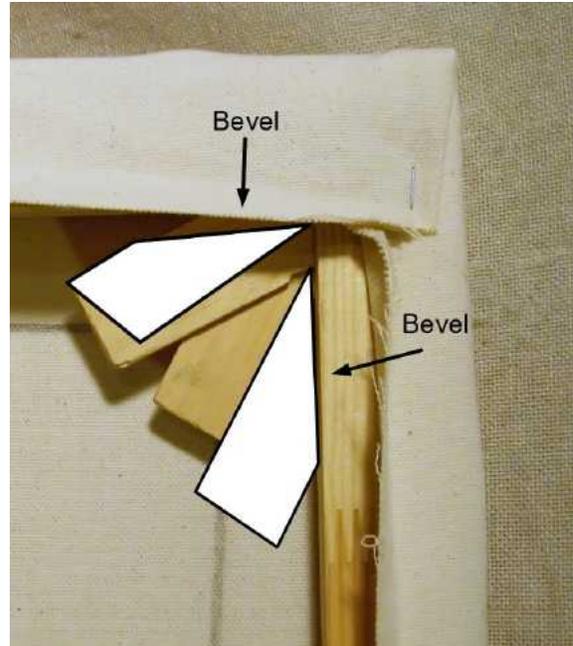
Inspect edges for puckers or scallop-shaped distortions in fabric. Where necessary, remove staples and re-tack to achieve a straight, consistent weave pattern.



Fold and staple corners



Remove staples spanning each joint. Wrap excess fabric around the back of the frame and staple.



Insert two stretcher keys at each corner as shown, with bevel against the inside of the frame; tack in place with a staple for future re-tensioning. Before keying out a canvas, if there is an existing frame, measure to make sure the rabbet will accommodate the slight increase in size- canvas may expand as much as 1/8".

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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