

A Guide to Commissioning Illustrators

As the main professional body of illustrators in Ireland, and with the assistance of the Association of Illustrators, the Illustrators Guild of Ireland has drawn up the following guidelines for commissioning illustrations and artwork. Although it is understood that the art-buying practice may vary from business to business it is hoped that the outlining of the major issues will be of benefit to both commissioner and illustrator. Good communication and a high level of professionalism between the illustrator and client is encouraged at all times.

1 Contact and book the Illustrator –

- Check the availability of the illustrator you have chosen. A busy illustrator might need to work your project into their schedule.
- Have your start date and deadlines to hand, and remain flexible.
- Have your basic specifications ready to discuss.
- Have an idea of the budget available for this commission. See “**Asking for a Quote**” below.
- The illustrator will probably want to discuss uses and fees before making a commitment. Give them time (within reason) to 'get back to you'.
- Let the illustrator know what you like about their work as it will give them a better understanding of what it is you're looking for.

2 Describing the illustration required

- Specific information (SPECS) will all be required such as:
 - size / shape
 - colour/mono
 - space for typography,
 - accompanying text,
 - additional uses
 - and any technical / mechanical constraints
- If a specific visual is required, this should be communicated to the illustrator so there can be no room for mis-interpretation. Any visual material you can supply will also help.
- Bear in mind - it is unethical to ask an illustrator to imitate, mimic, or copy the style of another illustrator.
- Is the brief open to the illustrator's interpretation? Illustrators prefer an open brief as it enables them to work more creatively.
- Be sure to outline all restrictions at the outset. If a sketch is rejected, tell the illustrator the reasons for the rejection and give suggestions for a remedy. The illustrator will expect additional payment for extra rounds of sketches beyond what was originally briefed.
- Clearly state the deadline for delivery of roughs, approval of roughs, and the deadline for finished art. Time spent waiting for approval on a rough drawing can eat into the time set aside for execution of finished artwork.

3 Spec work

- Please, do not request spec work. Illustrators have abundant work online, and are happy to send samples of their existing work digitally. Equally artists are happy to send hi-res files for presentation purposes. If you're not happy with the illustrator's existing work, not much will change with a spec project.
- Give an outline of the job which has generated interest in this illustrator's work. The illustrator may well want to 'slant' what they send you to suit the job concerned.

4 Asking for a Quote

- Illustration is costed according to its usage, so the illustrator will need details of how and where the finished piece is to be used, and over what period of time that work is to be used, in order to arrive at a price. Uses can vary depending on which area of the market the work is commissioned for. This can be quite straightforward for an editorial job where a typical use could be described as 'a quarter page magazine illustration, one-time editorial use, Ireland only.'
- In other areas, particularly in advertising and design group work, it becomes complicated. Where multiple uses are envisioned, and perhaps spanning different territories, the illustrator will need to know the following:
 - 1 a list of anticipated uses - i.e. mailer, press ad., point-of-sale etc.
 - 2 area of use - i.e. Asia, USA, world or list of single countries.
 - 3 period of use – typically 1-2 years for ad/design work.
- **If you have a specified budget please state this upfront.** For editorial and publishing jobs this is usually a given. The illustrator can then decide whether or not they can work for the specified fee. **Please do not offer the illustrator less than your budget allows.** The very real deterioration in fees is making illustration an increasingly difficult profession to sustain.
- Do not expect an immediate quote. Commissions can be complex and the artist needs time to consider the various aspects.
- We advise our members to avoid giving 'ballpark' figures over the telephone.
- An illustrator may quote extra for any expenses beyond the norm i.e. travel to a specified location.
- A 'premium' or 'rush fee' may be quoted for work which is required in an unusually short time frame e.g. a job which requires working through the night.
- Everything is negotiable. If a quote exceeds your budget, see what flexibility exists in the licencing arrangements. For example, if a quote for blanket all-rights has been requested, a more specific licence, tailored to the exact usage requirements may be more cost effective.

5 Requesting a Meeting

- Consider the usefulness of meeting with an illustrator bearing in mind that it could take a day out of the artist's working week. Briefs, portfolio samples, and visual material can be efficiently communicated digitally.
- In arranging a meeting, ensure the illustrator is briefed as to what will be expected of their presence i.e. presenting portfolio, talking about ideas etc.
- If more than one meeting is required, these may reasonably be charged by the illustrator as added expenses.

6 Documentation

- Both client and illustrator need to keep proper records /contracts /documentation for commissioned works.
- We advise all our members to begin work only when a contract is secured.
- Copyright is very valuable. It affords the owner the exclusive right to reproduce an image (or allow others to reproduce it) in any way throughout the world for the period of copyright i.e. 70 years. Clearly a client commissioning a brochure cover does not require such wide-ranging rights and would not want to pay the appropriate usage fee.
- Please avoid asking illustrators to sign a contract which assigns copyright or 'all rights' to the client without first agreeing a fair price for such uses.

- A licence is the most appropriate way for the illustrator to give the client the rights it needs. The illustrator keeps the copyright and grants the client a licence appropriate to the commission. The licence would state the use, territory and time period and be exclusive to the client for the specified time.

7 The Job is Rejected/Cancelled

- Any problems over the style or content of the illustration be discussed as soon as possible.
- If you are unhappy with the quality of artwork (i.e. it falls far short of the quality seen in samples by the artists) and have to reject it, the following rejection fees are industry standard.

25% of the fee if rejected at rough stage.

50% of the fee if rejected on delivery.

- If a commission is cancelled through no fault of the illustrator, the following cancellation fees are industry standard (kill fees).

25% of the fee if the commission is cancelled before delivery of roughs.

33% of the fee if the commission is cancelled at rough stage.

50% of the fee if the preparatory work is coloured or past the rough stage

100% of the fee if the commission is cancelled on the delivery of artwork.

8 The Finished Artwork

- Be sure to request your preferred method of delivery for finished artwork to the illustrator and confirm receipt with email or a phone call.
- If alterations are required, the illustrator may charge a reasonable fee for significant changes which were not in the brief, however, the illustrator may not charge extra fees for alterations which are the fault of the artist.
- Unless otherwise agreed, the original artwork belongs to the artist. While not relevant for digital pieces, if this is a traditional artwork, please ensure you return it safely.