

Commissions 101

An in-depth tutorial surrounding all things commissions

By Naariel



What is a commission?

A commission is a service done by artists for a person or a company in exchange for money (or other services). It's a *contract*.

Artists who take on such work are called Freelancers. A freelancer wants to provide a good service and create a good experience for every part - but to do that, several things must be in place first.

I'm here to help you with that.

What I talk about in my Commission 101 lessons will concern artists who take get contacted by everyday people for personal use. If you get contacted by a business, there's a slightly different way of doing things, mainly concerning prices.

Lesson 1: Are you in a position to take on commissions?

Many artists who open commissions for the first time *aren't*.

Mindset

You need to be in the right mindset. Are you ready for the *commitment*? Do you have *time* to take on serious work? Do you *want* to draw for others? Will you be able to finish it? You will be expected to take a commission seriously and a good freelance artist need to be able to work *almost every day*.

I've seen artists take on work and then bail because they weren't ready to take on the work. This hurts the freelance community and the artist themselves, not only giving artists a bad name and the artist a feeling of shame and disappointment, (which is bad enough in itself) but also giving the client a reason to think twice before commissioning *any* artist again. Nobody wins!

Also ask yourself: **Do you value your own work?** Do you trust in your own skills?

Artists who aren't impressed with their own work will transfer these thoughts quickly to potential clients. **If you don't think your work is good, neither will they.** The first lesson is to believe in yourself and be proud of yourself. Have confidence in yourself and your work!

Audience

You need to have an audience/consumer base. People who would be interested in working with you - **clients**.

There's two ways to find clients - a strong *online* presence or a strong presence in your *local community*.

If only your mum, your cat and your 48 twitter followers know you are looking for work, it'll be near impossible to find work. People don't know you exist! Work on being a presence in your community. Do some *networking*. Make genuine friends. I'd estimate you need around 400 followers/watchers/likers online to be *guaranteed* at least one commission enquiry.

I'll talk more about growing a social media presence in Lesson X.

Quality

Look at your work and ask yourself... would you pay for this? Would you pay for someone to create what you just made? People prefer to pay for things they wouldn't be able to create themselves.

Your work doesn't need to be of the standards of Charlie Bowater - just better than someone who's only picked up a pen once in their life.

Being nervous before your first commission is normal. Being nervous is not a reason to not start.

In conclusion, you need to look deep within yourself, past the insecurities. Are you in a place to accept hired work? If the answer is yes, then stay tuned for Lesson 2! If the answer is no, then keep on creating for yourself!

***Do not work for free.** Work on your own personal projects. Work on things you are **passionate** about. Work on original concepts. There is no better way to grow.*

Lesson 2: Prices, Products? My o my!

You've read Lesson 1 and decided you want to open commissions! So now what?

There are many things we need to cover but let's start with your **commission info**. You need to have a place where you describe what you do and what you offer.

The easiest way to set up your commission info is to use a Google document (unless you already have a website). There are four things that are essential to include: **contact, prices, products and terms of service.**

Contact

Always have your email visible! If you want to be hired, make sure your email is only 2 clicks away whether they find you on twitter, deviantart or instagram. I recommend creating a **work/art-only email** that you use for work inquiries.

A good idea is to have your clients fill out a **form** so you have all the information that you need from them immediately. Whether that's a form on your website or a Google Form it's up to you. The most basic info you want is:

1. Their Name
2. Their Contact email
3. Their PayPal email
4. Character References (written or images) and a description of what they want.

You can make the form as complicated or basic as you like. Here's a Google Form [example](#). Make sure you write "By filling out this form you confirm you have both read and understood the terms of service."

Google Document

Google Docs are great because its always online and accessible for anyone with an internet connection. If you don't have a website, it's the perfect place to create a commission information page. You can access it from your Google Drive. Make sure you change the sharing settings to everyone can view, but only you can edit.

In your google document you must include: how to contact you, products, prices and terms of service. All which I explain in detail right here!

Pricing



Figuring out what your base prices is quite simple. The magical formula: **Hours Spent on Commission x Hourly Wage = Your Price!** If you are a traditional artist you should also add the costs of materials.

The hourly wage standard is \$15-\$20 an hour. If you're a beginner and this seems too high for you, I recommend charging *at least* the liveable wage in your country. **Art is a luxury!**

Online artists in countries with a weaker currency can charge even more to compete with the international prices. Lucky you!

Hours Spent on Commission should include the time you talked to the client, gathered references and every part of the creation process.

When you open commissions you won't have had any clients, so time yourself on personal projects (you'll need visual examples for your commission info anyway) and add 20 minutes of wages for client talking time. That should give you a good starting point.

If you're worried your prices are too high let me tell you right away - **no. The price is never the reason that artists don't get work. Don't be ashamed of charging what you are worth. You're worth it!**

It's in fact proven that charging anything under £15 lowers your chance of getting work, because people assume low cost = low quality.

Value Over Hours

As demand increase and you become experienced and more skilled, don't be afraid to raise your prices. You should go away from hourly wage, to the value of you, your brand and your work.

For example if you open your commissions for 24 hours and have enough enquiries to book you for 2 months, you know you can safely double (or quadruple) your prices.

Charge Extra

Charge extra for elements that'll add greatly to your time. Detailed horns, weapons, a companion, an intricate dress, lots and lots of armour, etc. I add anything between £5-30 depending on what it is and the complexity.

Commercial Work / Rights

If you are approached by a company or an individual that would like to use your work for anything other than personal use (as logo, cover, print) or would like to restrict what you can do with it (not create merchandise of it, not post it online) you can sell the rights. This can be a simple process and not as intimidating as it sounds! Let me redirect you to [Contract Template](#) and The [Pricing Handbook](#).

Products - A Visual Guide

Be smart about the way you present your products. **A visual guide is essential.** You **must** have image examples of different styles and formats you're offering.

If you don't have much previous work to show, then maybe it's a bit early for you to open commissions? Paint examples so you and the client know that you can do it.

My most valuable advice is: Limit your products - if you have 10 different styles and variations a client can easily feel overwhelmed. If you're offering different styles, be clear about what identifies those styles.



Increase the price depending how much detail and work go into it. I increase my prices between Portrait, Bust, Halfbody and Fullbody.

Your products need a clear price tag - you don't want there to be *any* confusion. You can easily lose customers because they don't see a price and they don't want to ask.

If you have a bad sense of graphic design, you should consider hiring a graphic designer to design your price and product layout – or the very least ask your friends for a 2nd opinion. You want to make it easy for possible clients to figure out what they want and buy a commission!

Canvas Size

Your clients might want to print out your commission to hang it on the wall and that's awesome! – and it's your job to make sure your product is optimised for that.

- Always draw in 300 DPI.

- Choose your canvas logically - a ratio and size that is easily printed. In my case, I print in the European Size ratios (A2, A3 etc), but Americans might want something else.
- When creating a new canvas in Photoshop you can choose from many options already in their system, making it a bit easier for you.

Credentials

Most clients want a safe experience. When you've had some commissions, add your commission history to your page! Let them see that you know what you are doing.

Look at other artists commission pages for inspiration and ideas on how to do your own! Here's a good example of a Google Docs Info by Mioree

Lesson 3: Terms of Service

As a freelancer you will at some point have clients that's also strangers. Having a fulfilling Terms of Service is important to protect yourself *and* the client. **All freelancers need a solid Terms of Service.** Seriously don't skip this!!! The last thing you want is a cheeky client taking advantage of you.

Same as with prices and products, you can look to other artists for their Terms and Service.

[Here's mine](#) - don't be afraid to copy and paste the parts that apply to you. I recommend you read it. Below I have written a "figure it out for yourself" terms of service. If you're not sure what to write, look at mine. You want to keep the Terms of Service readable and short but at the same time you'll want to cover any scenario possible. If your ToS is less than 7 sentences, you're doing it wrong.

The Essentials to include in your ToS:

Rights

By default all rights remain with the artist. Printing rights, commercial rights, usage rights, copyrights, all the rights. But people usually do not know this so it's best to mention it.

You should offer to sell these rights for an additional fee.

Payment

How and when do you accept payment? (UPFRONT!) Any taxes, fees? What about partial payments? How do you accept tips?

(I cover how to set up PayPal and PayPal invoices my next Lesson)

Refund

How can clients ask for a refund? The standard is to give a reduced refund after the commission process has started. How much you offer and when is up to you, but you should never refund after a commission has been completed, because a commission is a personalised item (which you are not obligated to refund).

Also include the refund policy for when you fail to complete the commission on your part for any reason. That should be a 100% refund.

What the client can expect of the artist

What does the client receive in the end? How long will it take? Do you stream the process? Do you keep them updated and included in the process? (the answer is yes, yes you do). Is there anything you won't create?

Choose your canvas wisely. I recommend 300 DPI and a format you can easily print out (f.ex. A4 or whatever nonsense sizes the US use)

PS: Give your clients 2 versions of the finished commission - one high res jpeg and one low res watermarked jpeg for posting online. There is no need to provide them with a .PSD/.SAI file. JPEG or PNG is fine.

Corrections/Revisions

After the commission is completed the client might ask for corrections. Be clear on how many corrections you offer, and for how long a time span you offer it.

Retention of Images and Files

This part explains how long you can guarantee to store work, in case the clients files get lost and they ask you for a new one.

Disclaimers

I recommend to just copy + paste this part. These are good to cover your butt.

All articles of this Terms of Service are applicable unless specifically outlined within the final written agreement between Client and Artist.

By contacting me for work you are hereby agreeing to the terms expressed above.

All PayPal transactions are subject to the PayPal Privacy Policy.

Include when you last updated your terms of service.

*Don't compromise - if you aren't comfortable working from written descriptions/painting landscapes, don't do it. You'll only hate yourself.
Practice this on your own time.*

And there you go! You should now have enough information to write a very good Terms of Service.

Lesson 4: PayPal

Basics

PayPal is the industry standard when dealing with online currency transfers, although Stripe is also worth looking into. I only have experience with PayPal so this lesson is everything you need to know to do business through them.

You need to be over 18 and willing to give them your address and legal name, at least if you live in the EU (*not sure about the rest of the world*). Once you've earned £1,900 (or €2,500) you'll need to supply them with photos of your identity card and address, due to EU anti-money laundering regulations.

If you plan on selling only commissions (not set up an online shop) you don't need to upgrade to a business account. You *can* upgrade, but a personal account works too.

When sending invoices from a personal account, the email will say: "Invoice received from [your name]". With a business account you can change the name to whatever you like.

You'll need to keep track of your income and your expenses. That's why I recommend having one account for personal transactions and one for commissions/business transactions.

PayPal has transaction fees, from 3.9%* and up. It varies depending on the client's country and the currency the invoice is in. If you send invoices in a currency other than your banks currency, there will be an extra conversion fee to transfer the money all the way home.

To see the exact fees, check your country PayPal website.

Getting Paid - Invoices

NB: Do not request gifts!

When doing commissions for people that arent friends and family, always send an **invoice**. If you receive the money as a "gift" you have no chance of disputing a potential chargeback and the money is gone along with your time and effort.


When sending invoices, you need only supply evidence that you delivered what was agreed upon if you ever get into a chargeback dispute. (And if they're still giving you trouble, give PayPal a phone call.)

The invoice system on PayPal is easy and straightforward. You should be able to find the "Create Invoice" button easily through "Request Money" or "Tools".

Create Invoice

Preview
Send 9
Save

My templates Digital Commissions (default)



1

2 Your Business Information

3 Bill to:

Cc:

4 Invoice number

Invoice date

Reference

Due date

5 Add/remove detail Quantity GBP - British Pounds

Description	Quantity	Price	Amount
Item name <input type="text" value="Enter detailed description (optional)"/>	1	0.00	£0.00

6

+ Add another line item

Subtotal		£0.00
Postage	<input type="text"/>	£0.00
Total		£0.00 GBP

7 Allow partial payment

Allow a customer to add a tip

Note to recipient

8 Terms and Conditions

By paying this you confirm you have read and agree to my terms of service: naarielart.co.uk/termsofservice

1: A logo or tiny image with your name on it brightens your invoice and makes the invoice feel more legitimate.

2: Your business information will be the contact info displayed under your logo on the invoice. Name, website, potential address, etc.

3: This is where you put the client's emails address. Once you've written their email, you'll see the option to edit their information, such as add a first name, last name and address and billing address. Hook off the option "No address needed" when it's only digital goods.

4: Invoice Number, Invoice Date, Reference and Due Date. PayPal automatically assigns an invoice number. Invoice date will be the date today. Reference is never needed for digital goods.

I like to add the due date 1-2 days before I plan to start on the commission to make sure there won't be any delays in my work schedule.

The client can still pay the invoice even if it's past due date - nothing really changes, unless you make a change personally.

5: Here you can add details to your invoice and change the currency the invoice will be in. This is all personal preference, but the **tax** and the detailed descriptions are almost essential.

6: Describe your item. An example of what to write:

Bust Commission

Name of character

Then add the individual price for that commission. Add another line item if the commission has any addons, like a companion.

7: Here you can customize partial payments and tips. I don't enable the partial payments unless the client requests it. Always enable tips!

8: Terms and Conditions. I already talked you through how to make a great Terms of Service - now all you need to do is link to it. "By paying this you confirm you have read and agree to my terms of service: [ToS URL]"

9: Take a thorough look through your invoice, make sure all the information you've added is accurate. Then send it off into the world!

PayPal deducts the fee 3.9% from your invoice total, not as an extra fee to the client. Keep this in mind when deciding your prices. It's against PayPal's policy to charge extra to cover this fee.*

Money Received!

Great!

Transfer the received funds to your bank account asap. This is only a precaution: PayPal has the right to lock your account and you don't want them to lock it with money inside.

Lesson 5: Keeping a budget

Keeping track of your income and expenses is vital for a business.

Freelance artists are no different. If you take commissions on the side it might seem superfluous - but it is really handy. Even if it's just a simple Excel sheet, you'll want to keep track.

In principle keeping a budget is very simple, which is why this lesson is so short.

You write down your income (net profit) and your expenses and calculate your total profits (gross profits). If we delve a bit deeper, you'll want to have a monthly, quarterly and an annual report. You'll want to set a monthly, quarterly and annual *goal* - I've set my goal as the liveable wage in the UK.

Additionally, you'll want to be able to calculate and anticipate **taxes** in your budget. Research your tax rates and rules and incorporate them into your excel sheet. Most

governments allow expenses to be tax deductible - find out what counts for you on your government website.

But if you don't like excel or live in the UK where taxes are an absolute nightmare, this can all feel overwhelming.

Luckily there are accounting services (both online and irl) that will help you. I don't use an accounting service myself but a quick Google search should yield results of you're interested. They are usually not free, but you can save a lot of time and anger that would be better spent on working on your commissions.

[Here is an example of my default excel budget, including monthly, quarterly and annual reports - you are welcome to use it.](#)

Lesson 6: When you open



You're all set - time to Open for Business! But of course, the work is not yet done.

What *did* you write?

Double check everything. Chances are you've written something you didn't mean to (or left out something important), and it'll create a misunderstanding between you and the

client. Once you've double checked, triple check! When you've triple checked, ask your family/friends to quadruple check.

Visuals

You know the importance of having images and examples in your commission info page - it's *just as important* to have a **promotion image**. It can be as simple as one of your previous works with "open for commissions" written on it. Or you can go wild!

Promote Yourself

Post it everywhere! Twitter, Tumblr, Deviantart, Patreon, wherever you have an account. Print it out and distribute it throughout the city. Shout it from the rooftops.

Okay, maybe not the last two. But talking about it once or twice daily is good to reach all the time zones. Shoving it in people's faces every 2 hours is a bit much however.

But keep talking about it. At least once a week as you go on. Regular reminders for people who might've considered commissioning you, but it wasn't a good time for them when they first saw you were open.

Shit, I'm not getting clients - what's wrong with me?

Well first of all, don't panic. When you first open for business, it can take days, weeks, months for someone to contact you. When I first opened for commissions, it took such a long time that I had forgotten all about it. Everyone has dry periods, **especially** when they first start out. People are wary when it comes to commissioning artists with no experience.

There's mainly two reasons why people don't get clients.

1. They don't have a large enough audience/following
2. Their art style is not desirable.

For people who are just starting out as a freelance artist it's usually a mix of the two.

It might feel like your art is not good enough, that you're unwanted, and it can be quite a downer and a kick in your motivation. My most valuable advice is: **just keep drawing!** Keep on creating art for yourself. Test yourself, draw different type of designs and characters, *practice, practice, practice*. Add more pieces to your gallery, show people what you can do! I painted my first Worgen for fun and a few weeks later I was commissioned to draw a Worgen *because of that painting*.

Be professional. When you choose to become an online freelance artist, you make yourself into a brand. **Your name is everything.** The things you say and do will stick with you. You don't see Walmart on twitter complaining they aren't making enough sales - and neither should you.

Be social! Do networking. Chat with art enthusiasts and other artists. Do it every day. Show genuine interest in people's work.

You can't expect people to be interested in your work, if you're not doing the same.

Some artists say being social is being fake and a sellout - they normally don't get many commissions. That speaks for itself.

People aren't just buying your art. They're buying you. They will choose you because they like who you are and what you say. They will choose you because you seem reliable, safe and approachable.

I find myself wanting to commission artists of different styles because *I like them* and their personality and I think they are talented in their field. And I am not the only one.

Lesson 7: Contacted for Commission

It's happened! Someone reached out to you for a commission! First of all, congratulations - many artists do not get this far.

Now, before we cover everything you need to know about the commission process, clients, and finishing up a commission, I want to give a word of warning.

Something's Not Quite Right

Unfortunately, there are bad clients in every business. Some clients are just a nightmare to work with - micromanaging every detail and requesting changes that doesn't make

sense or contradicts their first requests. Other times you run into people who doesn't like paying for art. I'll try to help you so you can avoid these guys.

First, being confident and professional in emails and social media, having a clean and professional looking Commission Page and Terms of Service, and requiring payment upfront is your first line of defence. **If it seems like you know what you're doing it'll "scare" them off.**



Yet, from time to time, you'll be contacted by clients that just gives you a bad feeling. Follow this instinct. Some clients are more aggro than they are worth, and you can usually tell from their first email. It's just something about the way they type, the details they request. Maybe they ignore your preferred way of contact. They don't fill out your form, or very obviously haven't read your terms of service.

I've accepted a few of these clients and it badly injured my productivity and love for painting. It takes weeks to recover from these. And while recovering it's also harming your other clients and projects because you're off your game.

Bottom line: if you are unsure about a client and you don't desperately need the money, politely decline the commission request.

The Grand Assholes

Some scum of the earth are the sneaky bastards who order a commission, you finish it, then they request a chargeback on PayPal. In our Terms of Service we've built good protection from this, yet there is another step we can take.

If you think someone will be doing a chargeback, just name a ridiculous price.

I once got contacted by someone that gave me a bad feeling, and I named a ridiculously high amount. I mean, several months of wages high. They agreed to it - at first I thought "Wow, what an opportunity! Even if they seem a bit shady, think of the money!"

But when the client is planning to screw you over, they don't care how much they must pay initially - they'll get it all back anyway, and some free art to boot. Be careful!

The Small Indie Guy

The third type of potentially difficult client is the "small indie author / publisher / streamer / youtuber".

They normally don't know much about commissioning artists, so they don't know much about rights either. As we wrote in the Terms of Service, the commission we offer is only for personal use. Since these people will be using your art to promote their book /

website / themselves, they *should* pay extra for the commercial rights and potentially a production licence.

Pricing rights can be hard and should be done on a case by case basis. If the individual is clearly a hobbyist and won't make any profit I tend to let it slide. A Youtube channel with 34 subscribers is not going to make any profit. If a small self-published author approached me and wanted some artwork for their website, I would charge a smaller fee. If they wanted it for a cover on a book, I'll charge more - fluctuating on how many books would be printed. If they wanted exclusive printing rights, I would charge for that too.

If you would like to know the industry standard prices for charging, purchase the Artists Guild Handbook!

When you sell rights and licences, you should write up a contract in addition to emails and invoices.

And Lastly, though less prominent, is the crowdfunding people. Don't let them "pay you when/if the project is funded." It's not your Kickstarter and not your responsibility to sponsor them with potentially free artwork with nothing in return. Get paid upfront!

So before anything else - do your research. **Google your client.** If they've commissioned a lot of artwork before, especially from the same artist, they're a pretty

safe bet. Even if nothing at all comes up it's still a relatively safe bet. Just have a look to see there aren't anything to set off red flags.

Prepare for the work.



So, no red flags going off? Great! Let's jump into the good stuff.

What you want is a complete description of what they want for the commission. Some people send pages upon pages of written description. Some people send 1 screenshot from a game. You *need* to read/look at this carefully. **Write down keywords** of specific details of the character in your file. Scars, jewellery, outfit, eyecolour. Charge accordingly. You'll want screenshots/pictures from several angles - only one is rarely enough.

Once you're sure of what the client wants, we write up the very first responding email.

Essential Before Invoicing:

1. Thank them for being interested! This makes the client feel welcome in your inbox and makes you seem humble. Remember you're not just creating a commission - you're creating an experience as well.
2. Write the quote/price of the commission. (Be confident!)
3. Clarify what date you will be starting on the commission and when you will send them a sketch.

4. At last say something like “let me know if this sounds good to you, and then I'll send you the invoice”.

Sign your email professionally (at least to strangers)

Kind regards,

Artist

Tip: I always put a NB! on the first email that says they need to reply to the email within 24 hours, or else I cannot guarantee the start date/quote is valid anymore. Sitting around waiting weeks for them to get back to you - if they do at all - harms your productivity and creates uncertainty that is better spent drawing.

The Actual Painting Part

Now let's skip to when they've paid the invoice and you've started the commission.

- Keep communication professional. Some clients might want to be your friend and talk about subjects not related to the commission – do not indulge this if it makes you feel uncomfortable. And likewise, don't initiate awkward personal rants to your client.
- Always send the client a rough sketch or two. Ask them if they approve of the pose/sketch, or if they had something different in mind. Let them be a part of the process!
- Many clients enjoy daily updates on your progress, and you should do your best to indulge that. But don't send them an update if there is none.

- When sending them an update, **ask for their opinion!** Ask if there's anything at all that looks off to them, anything they'd like you to change or just keep in mind as you keep working.
- Don't keep them in the dark. If you know you're going away for some days, let them know they won't get updates for a while. You should keep in contact with them at least once a week.
- Commissions are a commitment. Take it seriously. If you treat your clients like shit, you'll not just hurt your reputation, but also any future artists the client might've considered to hire but decided not to.
- If you have any questions about the design of the characters, just ask the client. They would much rather you ask and get it right, than do it wrong.
- Give yourself a mental deadline. You don't need to give the client a deadline if you aren't 100% sure you'll finish but keep yourself in check. Don't let them wait 6 months for a commission. That's outrageous.
- Finish the commission! Always always always finish a commission. Make it your top priority - do not let them wait months and months for the image. This is **awful** etiquette and you've had it coming when they write a "beware of this artist!" post.
- When you've finished the image, send them an email saying "Hey! Good news, I've finished your commission. Please take a close look and let me know if there's anything you want me to fix/change." And then, thank them again for commissioning you! It's just polite.

Now you're pretty much finished. Time to get posting all over social media!

People are more inclined to buy from a successful artist, so finishing commission work leads to even more commission work.

A lot of clients prefer to be credited when you post the art on social media. Keep this in mind and tag them where possible.

CLIENTS F.A.Q.

Someone reached out, interested in a commission - now there's only silence. What do I do?

This may happen from time to time. Somebody seemed interested – and now they are gone.

If they simply reached out and asked about your process, do not expect them to fill out your form and apply for a slot. Answer their questions and move on with your life. (**Do not chase them asking why they're not going further. Many will consider it rude and pushy.**)

If they've applied for a slot, make sure your system doesn't allow the client to not reply for ages yet still have a slot. This is easily done by writing “emails must be replied to within 24 hours. You are not secured a slot until a transaction has been completed” on the form or in your email signature. It's awkward when another potential client reaches out and you don't know whether you can fit them into your calendar or not because the previous guy has gone AWOL.

I've not drawn what the client asks for before... Should I do it?

If you need to ask, the answer is usually no. I've talked to artists who accepted something they had no experience with or wasn't comfortable doing, and they are

not enjoying it and eventually give up. Your self-esteem and motivation take a huge blow and you'll be filled with regret.

Practice doing varied people and objects for yourself!

The Client keeps asking for things to be changed after it's finished!

To prevent this, keep them involved in your process. Sketch, lineart, flat colours, rendering, the entire journey. Ask them for their opinion every step of the way.

If it's still happening, don't worry! This is where the Terms of Service is covering your butt. Refer to how many revisions are included in the quote – and if they want continued changes, charge them.

I was excited about this commission, but I don't want to do it anymore.

We all experience this at some point in our freelancing careers.

If you realise you don't want to do it *before* they pay you, let them know asap.

You don't need to explain in detail why. Just let them know you won't be able to do this after all. Whether it's because you don't have time, you aren't comfortable drawing outside your comfort zone, etc. Keep it short unless they ask for details.

Keep it professional – don't say it's because you think their idea sucks.

If you realise this *after* they've paid you, you only got 2 options: work through it, or refund them. Depending on your financial situation or how much you've worked on it, you might not want to refund – however, refunding is the easiest

and painless way to do it. Again, keep it professional. Do NOT pretend you “forgot” about it. Don’t forget about the client. Don’t ignore them.

If you’re still unsure about how to be professional around clients, [here is a thread](#) you’ll want to read.

Lesson 8: Social Media

There are many guides to gaining an online audience, so if you want something more in-depth, get Googling. But I will teach you the ABC of social media.

Being on social media means making friends. Genuine friendships.

Supporting your peers.

Don't worry about the numbers - worry about the quality of your interactions.

It’s a Part Time Job

There’s a reason “community manager” and “social media manager” is a job title.

Managing a presence online is one hell of a job. How much time and energy you want to put into it is up to you, but if you want to grow it requires A LOT of work. It’s a marathon that will never end.

Quality Profile

Put work into your profile, no matter what platform it is. You don't need to write tons about yourself – just the important stuff (aka I'm an artist, here's my website). Use a drawing as your avatar. Use draw/art in your @handle if you can. Use either your real name or a simple online name. Get xXShadowXBaby12Xx the fuck out of here.

You want it to be obvious you're an artist and you're open for commissions.

Quality Content

Find a niche. 90% of what I draw is World of Warcraft characters. Other popular niches are furies, games with character customization and just general fanart. But it's super important you enjoy it. Find something you love – and let it inspire you.

Now, by quality content I don't necessarily mean your drawings need to look amazing. If you only draw ¾ facing portraits that would certainly help, but I'm saying that your content must be enjoyable.

Some websites are better for posting only art and big announcements – like Deviantart. Other websites are very tailored to quick and random thoughts – like twitter. But on average, the golden ratio for posts is 75% drawings and 25% personality. You want the focus to be your drawings and let your personality be a side dish to compliment the art.

YOUR PERSONAL POSTS SHOULD EITHER BE

FUNNY ✓

RELEVANT ✓

INFORMATIVE ✓

If your post checks one or more of these, you got quality content. If not – it's probably best to refrain. Writing "I think maybe I'll draw after dinner" and nothing else for example - what's the point? Nobody gains anything from that. It's not funny, relevant or informative.

Being overly negative and/or insulting someone's character is the best way to get people to unfollow you. Be nice. Be friendly. Be professional.

Hashtags

Hashtags can be a funny one. They exist nearly everywhere, but you don't always want to use them.

Facebook: No need. Nobody uses them.

Twitter: Keep it minimal. If you use many it'll look cluttered and unattractive. Only use relevant hashtags – no need to use #drawing #doodle. Use #Warcraft or trending hashtags.

Instagram: Use as many as you can! At the moment of writing this the limit is 30 hashtags. Use every single one.

Post Everywhere

If you want to make sure you are seen, you need to post everywhere. Different people browse different sites – you will rarely meet overlapping people.

Places you can post art is Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Tumblr, DeviantArt, Artstation, reddit and imgur. In the beginning you want to check out all of these!

Dark Side of the Web (kinda)

You might've noticed I mentioned Reddit and Imgur. These two come with a warning!

On all the other platforms your job is to make genuine friends and relationships – however on reddit, 9gag and imgur, everyone will be a stranger. You can *potentially* go viral, but few people will be your friend. They can downvote your image – plainly telling you *they don't like it*. You will get some really harsh and outright mean comments. Do NOT post on these places if you're not sure you can take it. It can really hurt.

Think it through before you decide to post on these sites.

I have given you all my **Wisdom**. Use it
wisely. Treat your clients right. Have
fun. Go, and create amazing things.

Naariel

I am writing about these “client from hell” types, but I assure you - 99% of my clients have been wonderful and understanding and great to work with. The best kind of commissions is when the client and the artist inspire *each other*.