

ILLUSTRATION COMMISSION ORDERING GUIDE v1.0

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Introduction:

"I have a character and I want a nice illustration of him/her for __insert reason here__!"

That's probably where we all start off when we think when ordering a commission from an artist we admire. At least it still is for me. However describing your character is a complex process which for some can be a daunting task. When we want an illustration done of our online passenger or for a friend, we tend to forget how to convey important information about him or her; especially if the character has never been drawn before. Thus resulting in dry artwork leaving both the client and artist confused as to what went wrong. Chances are you didn't provide enough information to the artist and the artist didn't know what questions to ask.

This guide is to help you to describe your character and narrow down some key aspects to consider when commissioning artwork. Feel free to use it whenever you commission anyone for work! ☺

Appearance Essentials

Below is a list of common appearance qualities that needs to be established by the artist. This should always be sent off to the artist so that they can get a good understanding of what you are imagining the final work to look like. If some of the fields are not applicable you can make a note saying N/A or leave the field blank.

Character name:

Gender:

Race / Species:

Age:

Size / Height / Weight:

Primary skin/Fur color:

Secondary skin/Fur color:

Paw pad color:

Eye color:

Hair color:

Hair style:

Clothing:

Jewelry:

Scars / Tattoos / Markings:

Any additional character specific details:

Some things to consider about describing appearance:

- **DESIGNS AND MARKINGS:** It is important to note for things like jewelry scars, tattoos and special markings (etc.) needs to be clearly described where they are located on the body. For tattoos you should provide the artist an image of something you are going after. Or you could have the artist design a custom tattoo for you. Though remember any extra design work may cost extra.
- **AGE:** For age it's better to say child, young adult, or old senior rather than putting an actual age. Artists determine age by appearance and because someone can be 35 but look 20, the age number becomes irrelevant. Some of these may not be applicable depending on your character however, it's important to consider this when describing your character to the artist.
- **COLOR:** Color greatly varies from person to person so you can't just say green and leave it at that. So what do you do? How do you describe the color you want? Well in the end you can only come close but you will never really be able to fully describe your color. I recommend finding examples of the color and providing that information to the artist. I use <http://kuler.adobe.com/> a lot to choose my color schemes. Plus then the artist doesn't need to decipher long paragraphs of text to understand what color you want.
- **SCALE:** The size of your character in the environment is also just as important. But just like color size varies from person to person. You could give a size like 6 ft tall... but really what helps is giving specifics like the tail is the same length as the body, ears about the size of their paws etc. Also you'll want to establish weight, is your character more on the lean side or more over weight?

Describing the environment

For illustrations that require an environment /background , obviously you are going to have to elaborate further. Keep in mind though; the environment is just as important as the character if not more. The environment sets the mood and setting of the work itself! Having a happy character jumping freely through a dark jungle can send conflicting messages to the viewer. This to me says that the character is more carefree than happy. Something in that jungle might come out to eat him! Unless that's what you're going for you might want to think for a moment what that environment actually says. The world can tell a lot about what that character is experiencing.

Below are some lists to consider where your character is taking place.

What does your world look like?

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tundra | <input type="checkbox"/> Desert | <input type="checkbox"/> Rainforest | <input type="checkbox"/> Cave | <input type="checkbox"/> City/town |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mountains | <input type="checkbox"/> Tropical | <input type="checkbox"/> Savanna | <input type="checkbox"/> Ocean | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Space | <input type="checkbox"/> Prairie | <input type="checkbox"/> Beach | <input type="checkbox"/> Island | <input type="checkbox"/> Swamp |

What kind of things is in your world?

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waterfalls | <input type="checkbox"/> Trees | <input type="checkbox"/> Rocks | <input type="checkbox"/> Volcanoes | <input type="checkbox"/> Buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stars | <input type="checkbox"/> Rivers | <input type="checkbox"/> Plant life | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicles | <input type="checkbox"/> Signs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weapons | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice | <input type="checkbox"/> Metals | <input type="checkbox"/> Creatures | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemicals |

Once you have an idea of where and what your character is going to be at, try searching for images on google to provide the artist what you're looking for. Artists can typically piece together your ideas for a successful composition.

Lighting in the environment can sometime dramatically change your character colors also. For example for night time, a tint of blue is usually layered over the original colors to fit more in the scene. Pink or orange for dusk or dawn and vivid hues are brought out for daylight where as saturation is applied for a cloudy day or in a foggy swamp. Always keep in mind that your character colors may change if you choose to add a background.

Additional Information

Sometimes additional information on the character personality can help the artist understand more about who they are drawing. While some artists could care less about these things, others tend to draw better with more information which has been provided by the client. You are not required to answer every single one of these questions (if any), but a few of the important ones relating to your character wouldn't hurt.

- What is your characters best skill? (Example: jumping, running, hiding etc.)
- What are your characters weaknesses?
- Is your character scared of anything?
- Dose he or she have any bad habits?
- Dose he or she have any family or friends? If so who?
- Is he or she in a relationship? Explain that relationship?
- Is there anything your character absolutely will not do?
- Has your character experienced any tragedies?
- What are your characters biggest accomplishments?
- What are your characters worst enemies?
- What does your character like to eat?
- How does your character relax?
- What does your character like to do?

Additional Tips for commissioning someone for an illustration:

- **DRAW?:** First try to draw your idea! Even if you are a terrible artist, or even if you are horrible at digital programs like Photoshop. You'll be amazed how a crummy drawing can help! This gives the artist enough of an idea of what you're looking for. Artists use quick thumb nail sketches to convey messages to one another all the time.
- **PHOTOS FTW:** I know I've mentioned this before but... I need to bring it up again. Find photo references! Use the mightily power of the internet and find photo references for your commissioned piece. For example use google image search to find a particular scene or clothing style you want your character to ware. This even helps if you are trying to achieve a certain pose you want your character in. This helps greatly!
- **BACK STORY:** Provide the artist with a little bit of the characters history. This could be anything from how you created this character to actually telling the artist who this character actually is. A lot of artists like to get into the mind of who they are creating. A little back story goes a long way. It doesn't need to be long, just summary is good enough to give the artists a glimpse into their world.
- **SIZE MATTERS:** Many times I'll spend hours on a sketch meant for a vertical layout when the client wanted a horizontal layout instead. Normally I can adjust the sketch and make it work but sometimes it requires a whole new sketch. Let the artist know if you had in mind a vertical or horizontal layout in mind. Then go the extra step and say you wanted a 8.5x11 so you can print or if you want a wallpaper for your computer. Most often the artist will cater to your needs. But this has to be established early on in the process and is difficult to change later on.
- **BEST INTENTIONS:** Let the artist know what you intend on using the commission work for! A lot of the times this gives artists an idea in mind of what you want without going into a lot of extra detail. Con-badge, avatar, banners etc. we can adjust to fit those needs because they are special.

In conclusion

Remember this is just a guide to help you explain what you want in your commission and not a guaranteed thing. Also every commission order is different, which in some cases require special treatment. But at least this should help you convey your ideas better.

This document is a work in progress and I plan on adding to it as I learn new things. I really hoped it helped in some way.