

Commissions

- by Always Art Staff

Commissions are great opportunities to earn money for your work, gain visibility, and access audiences that may not be within your network. Whether for a private collector, a company, or an organization, commissions can challenge your skills and elevate your career. Before you start, you should ensure you have all your bases covered by setting up thorough and detailed pricing agreements and contracts. Commissions are professional partnerships, so it's important to treat it as a business exchange and act professionally in the process.

Pricing

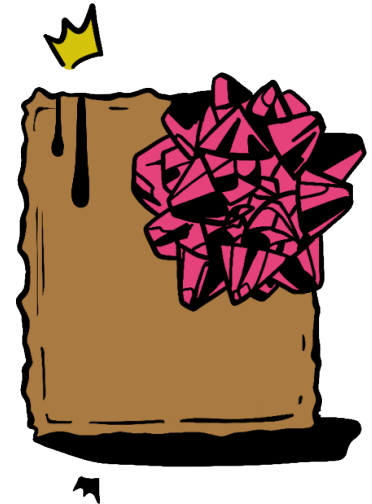
When you are quoting your client for the price of the commission, you will need to remember to consider factors such as:

- The **time** it will take you to complete the work. Don't undersell yourself. Make sure the time and cost are worth your effort.
- The **cost** of the materials you will use and buy. Ensure the price includes an exhaustive list, don't pay for anything out of pocket.
- The **skill** level and years of experience you bring to the project. The more experienced you get, the more you can charge.
- How much **market demand** is there? You can charge more if you are getting numerous inquiries at a time.

There are many ways to calculate pricing, and often, a combination of these three main categories is a good way to develop your quote:

1. Hourly rate: This means you decide what you want to earn per hour, estimate how long the project will take you, and multiply those numbers to develop a total cost. This can be a good option because it is straightforward, and you can budget extra time for all tasks related to the project, but it is sometimes difficult to estimate the time involved, and for some art practices, time isn't the primary factor.

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2. Flat fee: With this pricing structure, you determine a rate you charge for projects of a specific type or size and charge the same amount every time. This can be a straightforward option for both the artist and the client, but it also usually means you are missing out on the opportunity to charge more when appropriate.

3. Value-based pricing: This is the most conceptual option and requires you to set the price based on the consumer's perceived value of the item. The benefits of this method are the potential for high earnings; however, it can be hard to guess the correct cost since there is no baseline.

Common pricing mistakes to avoid:

- **Undercharge or overcharge:** Ask other people in your network who have the experience to help you develop your prices in the beginning.
- **Inconsistency:** Make sure your pricing follows the same logic so you know how to quote from project to project.
- **Forgetting to adjust prices over time:** As you gain more experience, you should increase your prices.

Contracts

It is essential to develop comprehensive contracts when you set up your commissions to ensure all parties have the same expectations and are on the same page. Contracts are legally binding and set the relationship between the artists and client, including details about pay, scope of work, timeline, etc.

Here are some essential elements of a commission contract:

- **Scope of work:** Clearly define the materials, size, and concept for the end product. This should also outline how any changes to the scope of work will be handled so that if the client makes a sudden request, you have terms to list to explain what you can offer.
- **Timeline:** Detail the final deadline and any progress deadlines along the way.
- **Payment:** What the price will be, how it will be paid, and when. Include fees for cancellations or late payments.
- **Intellectual property rights:** This should outline details about ownership, the use of the

artwork, and whether it is available for commercial purposes.

There are numerous resources online where you can download commission templates. There is no need to create one from scratch. Here are some options: PandaDoc, Wonder Legal, Salt Lake Public Art, and Archway Gallery. Some of these are blank templates; others are examples from specific organizations that you can use as a baseline.

General best practices

- **Keep everything in writing:** Communicate via email with your clients, so you have a paper trail of your agreements. If you have a phone call, follow up in an email summarizing your discussion. Keep a professional business tone throughout all communication.
- **Scope of work issues:** If a client begins to show expectations beyond what was agreed in the contract, always point them to the contract and outline what you can do to make their request possible. (i.e., creating an add-on project with a separate fee and deadline).
- **Be professional:** How you act and communicate with your clients will begin to establish your reputation. Build a strong reputation by having professionalism and boundaries with your interactions.
- **Protect your work:** Ensure you have stipulated the intellectual property rights within your contract so you don't get taken advantage of. Speak to a professional if your needs are unclear, and conduct extensive online research from reputable sources.



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