



# CONFIDENCE with COMMISSIONS

P D F   G U I D E B O O K

P A R T   O N E

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# WELCOME TO THE JOURNEY

Welcome! I'm so glad you're here.

In this two-part crash course you'll learn to become a total MASTER when it comes to commissioned work.

This is Part One of our journey together. In this first session we'll cover the ways you can actively bring in the commissioned work you want and the important aspects of initial (potential) client communication.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

I recommend having this guide with you when you attend the live class. You can follow along on your computer and write in a separate notebook, or print it out and write directly in it. It's also a great place to take notes while you follow along in class!

Also, while this guide has tons of good info and prompts within it, it's not meant to stand alone. I recommend using it in addition to parts 1 + 2 of the crash course to make sure you're taking in all of the juicy info that goes along with the writing exercises and key points mentioned in the guide.



# BRINGING IN COMMISSIONS

When it comes to bringing in commissions, there are four important areas to hit:

1. The Vision
2. Knowing Yourself + Your Art
3. Setting Up Shop
4. Marketing

So, let's dive in!



## 1. THE VISION

This is about knowing what your ideal commissions would look like. Having a clear vision gives you a proper focus + sense of direction and information about how you're going to market yourself.

## EXCERCISE:

Take a few minutes to brainstorm about what your ideal commission projects might look like. Who are your clients? What are the projects? How much are you charging and bringing in? How do they FEEL to work on? Do you want more distant client relationships or personal ones? (this is about your own style of doing things!) Let yourself really GO THERE with the best case scenario and be descriptive.

## 2. KNOWING YOURSELF + YOUR ART

### EXERCISE:

If you've done commissions before, what did you love? What didn't you love?

As a artist/creative, what are your strengths? What is something interesting or unique you bring to the table with your work? (it might help to think of what others have said about your work in the past!)

Make a list of the types of pieces or things you could do CUSTOM for someone that fits with your style and your art. What advantage might someone get when they commission something for you? A personalized portrait or color scheme? Size? Special meaning? This should be specific to you and your art. Get creative and try and come up with as many things as you can. You don't have to act on all (or any) of the ideas you come up with, but there's lots of possibility here and you might hit on something golden.

(...continued)

### 3. SETTING UP SHOP

You want to have a place where someone can go and see that you offer custom work and get a small taste of what you can do for them.

This could be....

- A page on your website
- A PDF you create and send to those who are interested
- An email template you send to those who are interested
- A social post
- An info section on your Etsy if you have one

Where do you people go to purchase your work? Or where do you plan on directing them to? This is where your commission information should be.

Things you might consider having on this page:

- ✔ Info about your process
- ✔ Your availability
- ✔ The timeline for custom pieces
- ✔ Photos of examples, your process or past commissioned pieces
- ✔ Your speciality and/or what you love to do \*\*  
(this is a great way to give people ideas and attract the types of projects you want to work on)
- ✔ Testimonials (don't worry if you don't have any yet!)
- ✔ FAQ's

You don't have to include it all! Just a handful of elements to give someone an idea of what it's like to work with you and to show that you know what you're doing (----> this is a great way/place to gain trust).

\*The number one concern that potential clients tend to have is a fear that they won't receive what they originally had in mind. We'll talk more about how to ensure this doesn't happen later on, but for now, think of this as the first place where you get to help ease that concern.

A bonus to being upfront about the way you work and showing that you're a professional: you'll only get inquiries that are serious and people who vibe with your process!

Below is an example from my own website just to give you an idea...but keep in mind that you want this page to be representative of YOU and what you do.

I take a limited number of commissions on a rolling basis. When I have the availability, I love creating custom art with a specific person, space or intention in mind. I welcome large scale work (I love to push boundaries) and medium sized pieces, too. Custom pieces typically take 5-7 weeks from their start date to complete.

## HOW IT WORKS

1. I'll have you answer a few questions about the vibe, size and color scheme you're looking for. Most importantly, I'll have you show me which of my past pieces resonate with you. I don't replicate past work, but this helps me get a good sense of the direction you'd like your piece to go in. I'm also happy to look at photos of your space or fabric swatches. I'll quote you a price based on what you're looking for, send you an agreement to be signed and collect a non-refundable 50% before we officially begin.
2. I'll dive into the pre-work. During this phase I'll draw up color samples based on what we talked about. We'll go back and forth until we land on a sample that you love. My process is intuitive and I don't completely plan out any of my pieces (spontaneity and intuition is where much of the magic in my work comes from) but I put a lot of emphasis on the pre-work to make sure your piece is headed in the right direction.
3. I'll start in on your piece! I'll send you anywhere from 3-6 photos throughout the process to open the door for feedback if you'd like to give it. Things like: "I'd love even more blue!" or "Let's tone down the colors a bit," or "Loving all the white space...let's keep that until the end if we can," are all helpful.
4. Once your piece is complete, I'll send you the official photo and collect the remaining 50% of the payment before shipping out your new piece!

To inquire about a custom piece, please fill out the following:

Name \*

Email \*

Subject

Give me a general idea of what you have in mind:

[Send](#)

*"Devon was a sweetheart to work with. I had requested a personalized piece for my friend who's a huge admirer of hers, and Devon was so thoughtful and patient throughout the process. She was able to incorporate special meaning and colors that I wanted to convey in the artwork, and the end result was beautiful. She also included a detailed handwritten note to my friend explaining her process. I can't wait to present her with this gift, made with so much love and*

*"Devon was super easy to work with, perfectly communicative, and made me a piece that I love."*

*--Sahand Nayebaziz*

## 4. MARKETING

This is where you spread the word and let people know what you can do for them! You want to raise an awareness that you're open for this kind of business. If you've never done a commission, this is a great way to get the ball rolling. I find the more you do, the more requests you bring in...so in the beginning, the idea is to get the word out so you can do them!

The main places I recommend focusing on for marketing are email and social media.

### »»→ EMAIL

Just starting out? Start with who you know: friends, family, past buyers, or anyone interested in your art. Create a BCC'ed email and let them know!

If you have an email list of any kind, send an announcement email to those people. This is a great place to offer some kind of limited time offer or discount to get the ball rolling (the key being limited time, so that people have incentive to act on it).

Highlight what you can uniquely offer them and why commissioning something from you has its benefits (drawn on what you came up with in the previous exercises). Present them with options, ideas, etc. People often don't know this is something they're even interested in until you present them with the idea. And don't forget to send them a link to the page you created with your commission info!

See below for a template of an email you might send out to friends and family to get you started. Make sure to add your own flare and your own voice!

If you'll be sending an email to your newsletter list, simply tweak the voice to be a little less personal and more to the way you would typically write to your tribe...but the key elements (which we'll discuss in class) should be the same.

Hi there!

As you may know, I've been busy in the studio and my art has been moving right along. I've been...[Insert a few details about what you've been up to art-wise...what you've been working on, or what you've been recently inspired by, even a creative struggle you've been navigating etc...]

I wanted to let you know I'm now offering custom made pieces of my work! This means if you'd love to have a piece of my art for your home or office, you can now have something made special for your size and color needs [Insert details about anything special you offer here...maybe it's not size and color-- maybe it's a gift, a theme or a portrait!].

This is something I'm really excited about offering as I find the pieces made with a specific intention in mind come out really beautiful and unique. And I'd love to create something special just for you.

If you'd like to learn more about what it's like to receive a custom piece from me, I invite you to visit the page here [link to website or attach PDF] where you'll find more about my process for commissions.

Feel free to reach out with questions you might have or even just to brainstorm about what might be the ideal piece of art for your space.

The support I receive from friends and family means the world to me and contributes immensely to my ability to keep creating and to put my work out into the world.

I'd love it if you could pass this message along to any other art lovers you may know...or someone who needs to brighten up their space!

Thank you so much for your continued support and I look forward to keeping you updated on all things happening in my creative world!

Warmly,  
[Your name]

## »»→ SOCIAL MEDIA

If you're just starting with commissions I recommend making one or two "official" announcements and then periodically reminding people when you have commission spots available.

Again, you really want to SHOW what you can do. Whether that's with photos of past commissions or other work you've done, share it in the context of how it translates as a custom piece. Could someone get it extra large or small? With certain meaning or colors? Keep returning to the writing you did in the beginning to highlight your unique offering and your strengths.

Some ideas of ways to share:

- ✔ Show photos of the pre-work and process (which we'll cover later) and discuss a bit about what it's like to receive a custom piece for you
- ✔ Show photos of past commissions and talk about why they were rewarding to work on
- ✔ Show photos of your art and talk about how someone might customize it
- ✔ If you're interested in doing more unique projects (albums, murals, etc.) put it out there! Share that you'd love to do this and how you think your art would be perfect for these kind of projects.

\*\*Don't forget to always direct people to your information page :)

You want to engage, intrigue and take some of the mystery out of what a commission with you is like. Again, this helps build trust and comfortability. People won't feel as much like they're entering into a commission with you blindly.

The idea is also to keep somewhat of a buzz around this exciting service that you offer...overtime, people WILL think of you when they're ready for a custom piece of art!



# INITIAL COMMUNICATION WITH POTENTIAL CLIENTS

The most common scenario for the initial communication is being reached out to by email with a request. Step by step, we'll go through things to cover with potential clients in this initial exchange (as well as what to be on the look out for!).

In the initial exchange you should....

1. Get CLEAR on what this person wants so you can...
  - a) determine if this person and project is a good fit
  - b) quote them a price (more on pricing in Part Two)

\*If they don't know exactly what they want this is a good time to open a conversation with them, which we'll cover in class.

2. Build trust, answer questions and help them to feel comfortable investing in a commissioned piece with you.

Let's look at these more in-depth individually.

## 1. GETTING CLEAR ON THE PROJECT

I've found that the BEST way to get clear on what a potential client is wanting is to have them fill out a Commission Assessment Form. You can easily make one in the form of a survey in Google Docs. See the screen shot below of the one I use as an example.

# Commission Assessment Form

Hi there! I'm so happy you're interested in commissioning a piece with me. Filling out this form helps me to get a great sense of what you're wanting and where to start the process. My process is very intuitive and I don't plan my pieces from start to finish, but having a really good idea of what you're looking for and desiring will create the best results for your piece.

I've listed specific questions here in case you have a specific vision that you'd like me to bring to life. But if you are wanting me to create something more open ended and simply with you in mind-- no problem! Feel free to only answer the questions that feel applicable to you (except the one that says "please don't skip" :)).

**Name:**

Short answer text

**What are three colors that you'd love to have in this piece?**

Long answer text

**Are there any colors you absolutely DO NOT want in this piece?**

Long answer text

**Is there a specific mood or feeling you'd like captured?**

Long answer text

**Of the work you've seen on my website and/or Instagram, what photos or pieces speak to you the most? Please show me 1-4 images by uploading the photo's here (you can screen shot) or list the titles from my website below. Please don't skip this one :)**

ADD FILE

**Titles:**

Short answer text

**Of the pieces you listed, what do you love about them?**

Long answer text

(...continued)

...

Check any of the following that describe how you'd like the piece to feel in your home

- Light + Bright
- Bold
- Colorful
- Neutral
- Minimal
- Heavy + Moody
- Luscious
- Spacious
- Feminine
- Masculine
- Calm
- Exciting
- Other...

Are there any other images you would like me to see that will be helpful in creating this piece? This is a good place to add photos of your space or fabrics if you'd like me to see them.

ADD FILE

If there's anything you'd like me to know about the above images, you can let me know here:

Long answer text

...

Tell me a bit about the space that this piece will be for for...

Long answer text

Is there anything else you'd like me to know, or do you have any other requests before we dive into the pre-work together?

Long answer text

Still unsure about what they want? Ask questions! If they are unclear on what they want in the first place, set up a call for more of a consultation type of conversation. Which leads us to...

## 2. MAKING THEM FEEL COMFORTABLE

This initial communication is where you build trust with this person. I like to pay special attention to making sure I'm explaining everything, providing them with options (when applicable) etc.

When appropriate I like to remind them that my process is one with multiple phases where they approve and are involved in each step. This ensures that the piece is always going in a direction they like. This also warms them up as to what to expect!

## »»» DISCERNING WHICH CLIENTS AND PROJECTS ARE NOT IDEAL

There are two main factors to consider when deciding if a client and/or project is a good fit for you...

1. Did this person come to me because they are familiar with me and like my work?
2. In looking over the assessment, does their request align with my style and what I do?

On that note, let's talk about two types of clients/potential clients you might encounter....

1. The Anxious Client: The client who is very nervous is the piece will turn out the way they want, might be very particular, might be nervous about spending the money, might want to be overly involved, etc.

2. The "Can't Be Bothered" Client: A client who is fine spending money, but is very busy. Their email communication might be slow and their answers might be short and not detailed.

You don't have to turn away these kind of clients (everyone's got their quirks!) but your job is to start setting the proper container for the project in the initial exchange. That might mean getting clear about what you do and don't do with the nervous client, or not being afraid to ask for more information from the "Can't Be Bothered" client.

Remember: this initial exchange is just as much about you as it is them.

It's your job to make sure you're setting yourself up for success from the VERY beginning. You want to make sure you have what you need before you quote prices, commit to a project and/or officially begin.

Doing this is really a SERVICE to your client, because it's a contributing factor in creating the best results possible for THEM.

That concludes the PDF Guide  
for PART ONE.



I'll see you soon for PART  
TWO!