

ART CAREER: Comic Book Artist / Illustrator

What is a comic book artist? What is an illustrator?

A comic book creator is any one of a number of people working to create a comic book or graphic novel. The production of a comic book by one of the major comic book companies in the U.S. can involve a writer, a penciller, an inker, a colorist, and a letterer, typically overseen by an editor.

In most alternative and small press comics, the same person will write and illustrate, although it is still common for a separate person to produce the color separations, and sometimes the lettering. Within the major US comic book publishing companies, (for example, DC Comics and Marvel Comics), a different person is generally assigned to each task, although exceptions - particularly in writing/pencilling or pencilling/inking - do occur. In Japan, a mangaka usually writes and pencils his/her own work, and lets his/her assistants ink and editor letter.

Illustrators create pictures for books, magazines, and other publications. They also create pictures for products such as wrapping paper, stationery, greeting cards, and calendars. Increasingly, illustrators are working in digital format, preparing work directly on a computer. This has created new opportunities for illustrators to work with animators and in broadcast media.

Medical and scientific illustrators combine drawing skills with knowledge of biology or other sciences. Medical illustrators work digitally or traditionally to create images of human anatomy and surgical procedures as well as 3-dimensional models and animations. Scientific illustrators draw animal and plant life, atomic and molecular structures, and geologic and planetary formations. These illustrations are used in medical and scientific publications and in audiovisual presentations for teaching purposes. Illustrators also work for lawyers, producing exhibits for court cases.

What skills does a comic book artist or an illustrator have to have?

A comic book artist or illustrator needs to have strong graphic design and art skills. They must be excellent at drawing and/or painting.

Salary:

The average salary for comic book artist jobs is \$20,000 a year. Average comic book artist salaries can vary greatly due to company, location, industry, experience and benefits.

The average salary for illustrator jobs is \$46,000 a year. Again, average illustrator salaries can vary greatly due to company, location, industry, experience and benefits.

How can you become a comic book artist? How can you become an illustrator?

Though formal training is not strictly necessary for artists, it is good to take art courses in high school. It is hard to be successful without some training. Many colleges and universities offer bachelor's or master's degree programs in fine arts. Independent schools of art and design offer associate and bachelor's degree programs in art. These educational programs include training in computer techniques. Knowing how to use a computer is very important.

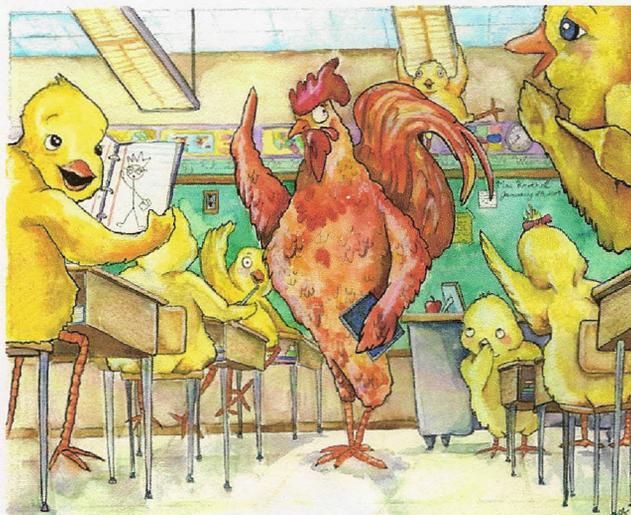
Medical illustrators need a bachelor's degree combining art and premedical courses. A master's degree in medical illustration is recommended, but only five schools in the United States offer this degree.

Artists usually prepare a "portfolio"—a collection of samples of their work. This collection shows their talent and skill, and it helps them sell their art and get jobs.

As for comic book artists, there are several ways to have your comic book artwork printed and distributed, but you'll need to map out a plan of action to make your dream come to life. You can apply for a job at a comic book publishing house or self-publish your own books through a number of resources.

If you've always dreamed of drawing your childhood favorites (characters like Batman, Spawn or the X-Men), then your goal is to get hired by one of the major companies (the "Big Two" are Marvel and DC). Other large independent companies include Image and Dark Horse. In order to make it to the promised land of mainstream comics, you'll have to contact editors at the major companies and introduce them to your work. This is a trying process that requires iron resolve, stubborn determination and incessant phone calls.

Conventions are the perfect place for artists to peddle their work to editors. Comic book conventions are large annual events that attract comic book dealers, publishers and thousands of fans from all over the world. More importantly, they attract editors from all the major companies. Editors often hold portfolio review sessions during the course of the convention, giving humble up-and-comers the chance to receive constructive criticism directly from their idols.



Comic Book Artist / Illustrator Activity

Step One:

Supplies Needed:

- White Drawing papers
- Comic Books or Children's Books
- Pencil
- Colored Pencils or Crayons

Instructions:

Choose one of the following:

1. Create a short comic book.
2. Create a short children's book.

For the comic book, you can use existing comic book characters or create your own. You need to create a story and draw the characters. You also need to add color to your book. You can create a cover for your book if you wish. The book has to be a **minimum of one page** in length. Look at the examples of comic books to help you.

For the children's book, you will need to write a short story and create the illustrations for the pages. Look at the examples of children's books to help you. The book must be a **minimum of three pages** in length. You can create a cover for your book if you wish. Each page should have words and drawings that tell a story.

Step Two:

Supplies Needed:

- Cover Letter Paper
- Resume Paper
- Pencil

Instructions:

A cover letter is what you send with your resume to businesses describing yourself and why you want to work for that particular company. On the Cover Letter Paper, write one paragraph about why you are pursuing a career in comic book art or illustration. Then write one paragraph about why you'd want to work for the company you're writing to. Then write one paragraph about your experience in comic book art or illustration. Make up a company's name or use an existing one if you wish. Make sure to sign your Cover Letter and write your contact information so the company can reach you.

A resume is a paper showing businesses your experience. It should be easy to read. It should list your education, previous jobs, and references (people the company can call to get a second opinion of you).

Fill out the resume paper with your education and previous work experience. Make it a resume that will get you hired! Make yourself sound like the best comic book artist or illustrator around.

Step Three:

Supplies Needed:

- Business Card Paper
- Pencil
- Colored Pencils

Instructions:

Design your own business cards for your new career. Make sure your card has the following:

- Your Name
- Your Company's Name (if you work for one)
- Your Job Title
- A Phone Number so your customers can reach you (either home or work or both)
- An Eye-Catching Image that will get your customers' attention

Cover Letter

Date: _____

To Whom It May Concern,

I am interested in pursuing a career in _____ for the following reasons.

I would love to start my career at _____ for the following reasons.

I would make a great addition to your company because of my education and experience, as listed in the next sentences.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope to have the opportunity to discuss the opening with you in person.

Sincerely,

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Resume

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Education

College(s) and Degree(s):

High School:

Intermediate School:

Professional Experience

(Write about Activity – Step One):

(List any previous art jobs you've had):

Awards and Scholarships

(Write about any awards you've ever won for your art)

Exhibit Record

(List galleries, museums, etc. where you've shown your art work)

References

(List 3 other people in the class and their professions)