

Illustration portfolio tips:

Ease of use is the most-mentioned recommendation for an illustration portfolio. Keep the focus on your work, not on your site design. Don't make people click more than once to view a larger image. Instead, have thumbnails they can choose from. Navigation should be clear and simple, don't let the design overwhelm the content – it is your illustration work that will get you the client so make sure it is professionally presented and easy to find.

Make sure your site loads **fast**; don't have anything that will slow it down such as music that auto plays (soon becomes annoying after the first few visits) or animations that load automatically – if animation is part of your portfolio give the viewer the option to click through to it via a thumbnail rather than 'forcing it' on them.

Separate your work into galleries on your site, such as animals, people, business, holiday, etc. or whatever is relevant to your work.

Post the type of work you want to get. If you're no longer interested in working in a certain genre or style, don't include it.

Remember **it's all subjective**, what one creative director sees as great art is another one's nightmare. So don't get discouraged, and be ready for lots of conflicting opinions. Rejection is a part of the creative industries and it is never personal so don't take it to heart.

Keep in touch, but not too much. Send postcards or promotional items several times a year. Holidays are a good time to send. Postcards might be kept up on a wall. Include these in your physical portfolio as takeaways. It is easy in this digital age to forget about traditional mail and the favourable impression it may make with a potential/existing clientele.

With a paper portfolio, **check each page to be sure it's clean** before you show it. A scruffy and badly presented portfolio is a sure way to never get a good-news call from an art director. It's good to put art in **clear plastic pages** in your physical portfolio and remove any that become worn over time.

Don't drop off original art. Things can get lost or damaged, nothing is 100% guaranteed. Save your fancy handmade portfolio for in-person visits.

Keep images all in one format. That doesn't mean you have to make all the images vertical, just the way they're shown. Don't make people flip the physical portfolio (or iPad!) around.

Art directors and clients like to see blogs, to get to know you. It can keep them engaged with you and your work.

They're watching you. One rep says she keeps tabs on artists she's interested in. She wants to see an artist who produces consistently, not one who does things in spurts and then fades. So show them you're still out there, keep your site updated (even if it's just moving things around), and connect with industry people on social media to subtly help them watch you.

Be versatile. If you're open to doing more than one type of work, by casting your net wider, keeping quality and style consistent, variety gives you more chances of work.

Diversity is strength. Show characters of differing backgrounds, ages, and abilities. Also have diversity of format–include a multi-image narrative if you want narrative work. Show a variety of visual angles as well.

Got more than one style? Art directors disagree on this. Some say to include a bunch of samples of each style and separate them in a portfolio. But others only want to see one style. Some illustrators actually use different names for their different styles. Their reps may present them that way, being aware that it's all one multifaceted person. Basically, as long as you show you have mastered each style, it's probably OK, but you need to make it absolutely clear so that clients don't get a shock when seeing the final piece.

Don't have published work? Everyone starts somewhere. You can take things such as magazine articles, fairy tales, or stories and create pieces. You're being evaluated on how you express ideas, so the concept should be clear. Also look for 'gaps' in your portfolio and think of ways to fix them with self initiated work.

Put your **best images as the first and last** images in a physical portfolio or online gallery. That gives a positive impression and last impression.

Have your own site as well as being on larger ones. It is absolutely vital that you have your own, dedicated website but it is also OK to host your work on bigger portfolio sites. But beware of sites asking for paid subscription, they are usually a waste of money.

Make searching for work easy. Use accurate tags, categories, and hashtags. If an agent wants to see humorous animals dancing, you should make that possible using tags such as humorous, animals, and dancing. Sites such as [Behance](#) (free with an Adobe account) offer many options such as galleries, projects, and hashtags.

Keep updating and removing images that no longer reflect who you are. Pare it down and stay in the present, you want to keep your website/portfolio fresh and relevant.

Having an **unusual style of "book"** to show in person, such as a handmade one, or an distinctively designed Web site can **make you memorable**, as long as it creative and is consistent with your brand and style.

As illustrators we don't have control over everything. **What we do have control over is presentation.** Image arrangement, easy navigation, and consistent branding are all tweaks that can go a long way to getting you noticed.