

How to make money from your creativity

You've just arrived at university and are ready to hone your craft be it art, design, communication or media. Have you thought about making money from your talents while you're here? This handout covers the basics - from self-promotion so that your clients can find you - through to how to make sure you get paid!

Build a portfolio

When someone is interested in using your creative talents, they will want to see examples of your work. Start building a portfolio that keeps example of your work all in one place, so that you can easily show it to potential clients. This can be anything from a folder, to a CD to an online showcase or website. Make sure that you clearly reflect your **personal style** and the **individual skills** that you have, and highlight **why your work is unique** – why should they choose your work over someone else? Your portfolio can be a mixture of self-initiated projects, course work, projects you have done on work placements, and real-life commissions.

Getting clients

To get clients, you first need to know who they are. **Think about the type of people or companies that would like your work**, and how it fits into their style or brand. If you can start to **define their characteristics** it will help you to find them and attract their attention in the right way. Then you need to start to think about **self-promotion**. You might want to get **business cards** printed – make sure they have your name, what you do, phone number and e-mail address (a professional-sounding one!). You might even think about getting a **website**, or there are many **online galleries and social networking sites** where you can showcase your work for free. Don't forget the power of **word-of-mouth**. If people like you and your work, and have received a good service, they will pass your details onto their contacts.

Submitting work

When a potential client wants some creative work done, they will often send you a **creative brief** outlining their requirements. You might need to send them some initial ideas or examples of your work. Before you do that, make sure you do two important things:

1. **Understand the brief clearly** – how much work is required, make sure you can meet deadlines, research the client and the type of work they might like.
2. **Protect your intellectual property** – to ensure others do not copy your work without your permission, make sure you understand how you can protect it. Whenever you produce a piece of work you automatically own the **copyright** (as long as you have not copied anyone else). You can show that you are aware of this by adding the © symbol, with your name and the year, to all work you produce. E.g. © ECCA, 2007.

Pricing your work

Remember that as well as the finished piece of work; clients are also paying for *your* individual creativity and talents. So when thinking about how much to price your work, remember to factor in **the time it takes you to produce it**, as well as the **cost of producing it** (e.g. equipment hire, materials etc). For example, more intricate, time-consuming work may be priced higher than work that is simpler to complete. But also look around at **what others are charging**. This helps you to ensure you are being realistic about your prices. And lastly, **how much do you want to make** from your piece of work? Don't forget this is about **making money from your creativity!**

Time management

Congratulations, you've got the job! But it doesn't finish there – you still need to keep your client happy and deliver the work on time. Before you start, you might find it useful to **work backwards from the deadline**, and **mind-map all the tasks** you need to get done. Mark all of these mini-deadlines in a calendar or diary in the relevant order. If you need to work with other people (e.g. a printer or a website designer), **get them involved as early as possible**. It will also take them time to do their work and you need to factor this in. And finally, make sure you **keep communicating with your client**, and be realistic about what you can take on. If you run into difficulties, **be honest** with them as soon as possible. They are likely to be more annoyed if you get to the deadline date without a piece of creative work.

Contracts

Where possible, you are advised to get some kind of contract with your client, **outlining the work you are doing, when they expect it, and how much you are being paid for it**. This is just a way of ensuring both parties understand and agree on the relationship. You should also outline the **ownership of intellectual property** in the contract – e.g. once you have submitted the work, how can the client use it? Do they need to come back to you for permission each time they want to use it in a different way, or are you happy for them to own the copyright (be careful with this one as it means that you will not be able to use your own work once its signed over)? For more information on contracts, visit www.own-it.org.

Getting paid

Make sure you are **organised and professional** when it comes to payments, so that you get paid on time. You might find it helpful to give each different **job a reference or a number**, and quote this on invoices and any relating paperwork or correspondence. You should also provide a **formal quote** for the job, and keep a record so that you have evidence of the agreed price. Once the price is agreed, give your client an invoice which outlines: you and your contact details (this could be on headed paper), your client's details, the work you will complete and how much it costs and the payment terms (when you expect to be paid by). Find a template invoice at www.ecca-london.org/resources.

Once you start making money from your creative work, keep an excel spreadsheet which shows the work you have done and when, and how much money it was. Also keep a record of the money you spend on your creative work, and keep your receipts from any expenses incurred.

Legal stuff and tax

The easiest way to get going is to set up as a **sole-trader**. It takes minutes, by phoning the HMRC on 08459 15 45 15 or fill in the form online at www.hmrc.gov.uk/startup. This means that each year, you will be responsible for telling the HMRC, on your **Self-Assessment Tax Return**, how much money you have earned from your creative work and how much you have spent. They will work out how much tax you owe (you pay this annually instead of monthly as you have a regular paid job). This is why it is important to keep **records and receipts** of all your finances as it makes it easier to fill in your form. You must make sure you **register for self-employment within 3 months** of making any money from your creative work, or you may get fined.

There are also other ways that you can form your business such as a limited company or partnership. For more information on these, download the fact sheets at www.ecca-london.org/resources/legal/.

If you would like further help and advice on making money from your creativity book a free one-to-one appointment at www.ecca-london.org/advice.