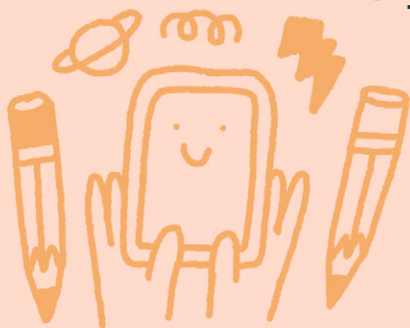




GETTING PAID TO DRAW

# INSTAGRAM FOR ILLUSTRATORS

a pocket guide



written & illustrated by

**MIKE LOWERY**

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Want to make a living  
with your drawings?

This book is part of the  
**GETTING PAID TO DRAW**  
series of classes that focus on  
the business of illustration.

check it out here.

**GETTINGPAIDTODRAW.COM**



# About this guide.



an introduction.

First, let me say that this guide is NOT about stats and how to figure out the algorithm. It's not focused on the hunt for likes and followers. That stuff changes all the time, plus it's really boring. I am an artist because I like to draw, not curate hashtags.

*Plus, let me tell you something significant.*

**It's more important to have a FOCUSED group of people looking at your art than an enormous number of followers.**

Instead, this little booklet will help you:

1

**Get the most out of Instagram as an Artist.** This means strengthening your art, finding support, growing your network, and all of the good stuff. *(this is possible!)*

2

**Protect your sanity on Instagram.** This means changing the way you think about social media in a way that protects your mental health. *(this is sort of possible)*

But before we can dive into some do's and don'ts, let's start with some quick basics.



# Why is Instagram so important for Artists?



Okay, this first bit seems pretty obvious, but it's essential to understand these before figuring out the best ways of taking advantage of the platform.

## Get Exposure.

Most of the Art Directors that I've spoken to over the past few years have said that Instagram is their number one way of finding new artists. Now, to be clear, this doesn't mean it's the only way you should promote your work. I'm a big believer in traditional promotion methods (like postcards), but since this is a book all about Instagram, let's just focus on that for now.

***So, if this is the most likely way an AD can find you, it's as important as having a portfolio website.***

## Challenge yourself.

Instagram is full of daily drawing prompts, tutorials, and other stuff to get you moving when you're stuck in your process. You can find people talking about agents, grad schools, and other topics that could help you push yourself to the next level of your career. Plus, seeing all of the fantastic projects that artists are working on can help you figure out the types of projects you'd like to get.

# FIND A COMMUNITY

Social media, in general, when used in the right way, can be more valuable than just getting exposure. It's also a place to find people as excited about illustration as you are. These strangers can help push you and keep you motivated or discover new things about yourself to explore in your art.





# Protecting your brain on Instagram.

Okay, so all of that stuff sounds great, BUT (and this is a BIG BUT,) **Instagram can really take a toll on your brain.**

Here are a few ways that Instagram can mess up your head.

## It can suck up your time.

I don't have to tell you this. We are all guilty of going to bed a little early to dig into a book and then deciding to take a quick peek at IG. And then it's 3:45 am, your eyes are all dried out, and the spine of that book is left uncracked. This is possibly the most typical but also most obvious way it keeps you from making art.

*But Instagram has this even **TRICKIER** side to it.*

## It can suck up your time in a way that makes you feel like you're being productive.

Let's say you're working on a project with some hand-drawn type. You start looking at hashtags on the topic, and then you just start scrolling.

**Here's what's actually happening.**

You're putting easy, time-wasting steps between your idea and making your idea.





## It can suck up your art-making time.

A LOT of the posts that I've read about Instagram for illustrators suggest posting 2-3 times A DAY. Yikes! Okay, listen. The more you post, the more people will see your posts. That means, yes, you could get more followers if you post a lot. However, if you're constantly posting, what will that do to the quality of your posts? What will it do to your brain? What will it do to your art?

I like to imagine a band in the studio working on an album. If they constantly posted pieces of the songs for feedback, that would undoubtedly change the recording process. And not for the better. They would be trying to follow the input. It would be a mess.

If you're going through a stage of creative explosion, by all means, post a lot. Show off your sketchbook! Show us your animated gifs! Show us your favorite pens, brushes, procreate tools, and watercolor techniques.

BUT, if you're trying to figure some stuff out, take your time.

**IT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO DEVELOP AS AN ARTIST THAN GROW YOUR FOLLOWING.**

(Feel free to embroider that onto a pillow)



## It can make you feel like you're not good enough.

It's impossible to scroll through Instagram and not begin to start thinking that you're not valuable. You see gorgeous art that you think you'll never be able to make. You see incredible projects that you'll never get. You see fancy cars that...well, honestly, you don't really care about the cars, but you know what I mean. Scroll long enough, and you'll find something that makes you jealous. That's the whole point of almost everybody's posts. Don't fall for it.



If you've got an idea for a project or a drawing, I have a mind-blowing, super-secret tip on how to get that project finished.

Ready?

**START  
MAKING  
IT.**

If Instagram ever starts to feel overwhelming,

# TAKE A BREAK.

This goes for the internet in general. You're allowed to not look at the news, Facebook, and other stuff for a while (or forever).

## What should you do during your break?

Start a garden.



Go for a walk.



Write a letter.



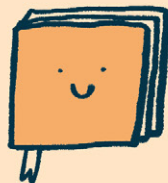
Draw in your sketchbook on actual paper with real art



Make music.



Read some books.



# KEEP A SKETCHBOOK.



Any time I can, I like to suggest that everyone should draw in their sketchbooks for at least 30 minutes a day. I even have a 30-day drawing challenge to help people get started with this incredibly useful habit.

Keeping a daily sketchbook helps you:

**UNCLUTTER  
YOUR BRAIN**



Whenever I post about this, I get loads of artists saying that there's no way they could set aside that much time to draw every day. I get that. It seems like a lot. Until you look at the stats on your phone and realize...oh, look! I spent 42 minutes playing a word game app. And what's this? I spent an hour reading about child stars from the 90s that look different today than they did back then. Wait, why was I reading that??

A jagged orange shape resembling a warning sign.

warning!

Two white bones, one horizontal and one vertical, positioned in the top right corner.

# BEWARE

# THE ZOMBIE SCROLL.

A simple orange outline of a zombie skull with a sad face.A simple orange outline of a zombie skull with 'X' marks for eyes.

The number one thing preventing many people from making art is wasting time mindlessly just scrolling through Instagram. I call it the Zombie Scroll because

**there's no joy to it. It's just endless flipping through content.**

The time spent picking up your phone to check this or that and quickly looking at an article or an app adds up. Find a way to set reminders on your phone to limit apps. I have a time set on Instagram on my phone for FIVE MINUTES A DAY. If it's a day that I make a post about a book or some new drawings, I'll give myself an extra 15 minutes or so, but I set that five-minute timer so that I won't accidentally fall into the ZOMBIE SCROLL.



# Finding your voice.

I get asked a lot about finding a “style.” Finding a way to make your art cohesive is one of the biggest tasks for an artist. It's so big; I decided to focus an entire class on just this one topic! It's called Getting Paid to Draw, and it breaks down how to create consistent work. (see the last page for more info!)

**The most important thing you can bring to your art is your voice. No one else has your unique view of the world, and if you can figure out how to show that off, you'll make original work.**

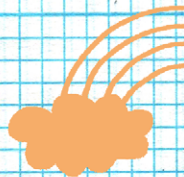
**How profound! Who said that?** Me, Mike Lowery. I made it up. It's pretty good, right?

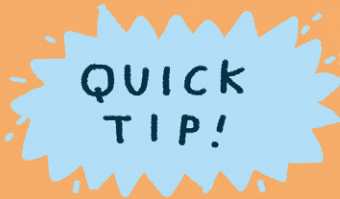
If you need help figuring out how to make a cohesive portfolio, take my portfolio class with me!

If you want people to follow along with what you're making, they need to understand it a little. If you're going to make a living as an illustrator, you need a portfolio that gives an Art Director an idea of what they'd be getting from you if they hired you for a job.

## Ways to find your voice:

- ① KEEP A DAILY SKETCHBOOK
- ② TRY DRAWING CHALLENGES
- ③ TRY NEW MATERIALS
- ④ DRAW STUFF YOU'VE NEVER DRAWN





QUICK  
TIP!

ABOUT TO POST A PHOTO?

FIRST, ASK YOURSELF

# COULD THIS BE A DRAWING?

CHECK ONE BOX


YES

DEFINITELY



# DIGITAL VS. ANALOG.

**Does your art need to be made digitally?**



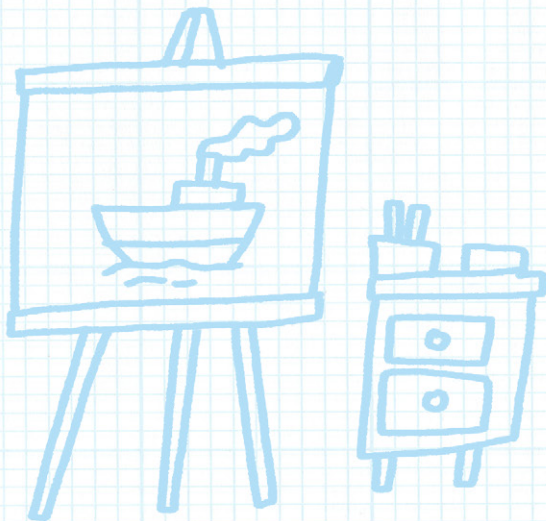
No, definitely not, but you need to present your work in the best way possible. This means learning the basics of scanning or digital photography. If you're hoping to make a living with your Illustration, you'll have to learn this stuff eventually, so now is a great time to dive in. You can't send a publisher your drawings on paper! They need ready-for-print files.

My favorite drawing tool is Procreate, a drawing tool for the iPad. I use it for many of my Instagram posts and ALL of my paid client work. Switching over to Procreate has allowed me to work from anywhere in the world. I can just pack up my iPad and get out of the house.



**QUICK  
TIP!**


**Show off a cool  
art technique.**



It's fun to watch someone in their element, so make a post explaining how you like to work. Maybe even do a demo video!

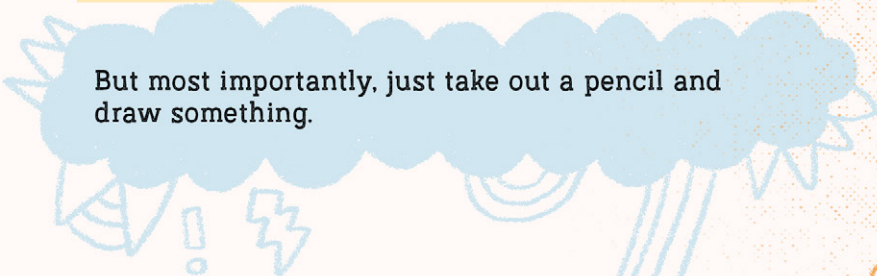


# NOW WHAT?



This is a lot of information to digest, so I've made this handy cheat sheet for what you should do right now.

1. Stop worrying about the algorithm and your number of followers.
2. Follow along with a drawing challenge to create a small series of work. (You can download mine for free)
3. If you're not comfortable with the Procreate app yet, try it out! It's a lot of fun and incredibly powerful. (see more info on the next page)
4. Make a drawing in your sketchbook that introduces you in some way. An example would be a full page of icons representing you, like your favorite coffee mug, a pencil, and the little french beret you wear while painting.
5. Post that drawing!



But most importantly, just take out a pencil and draw something.

a few more

# Instagram quick tips.



## **Make your Username clear.**

Your Instagram handle should be something that makes sense. Try a version of your name or the name of your studio.

## **Try making videos and try out new features.**

Videos are a great way to show off your process and let your followers get to know you a little more. Focus on your art and less on personal stuff.

## **Chronicle your journey.**

Show your progress from sketch to final art. If you're unsure how it will turn out, take pictures while working on something and post them all as a series when you've completed the piece.

## **Only post GOOD RESOLUTION images.**

That means that you're not allowed to post a photo of your computer screen. EVER. It takes 30 seconds to take a screenshot and edit it, so do that instead. You've worked hard on that new piece, don't waste it now by not showing it off in the best way.

## **Respond to comments.**

When someone asks a question (it's usually "what pen is that"), be sure to respond while building up a following. This shows that you're interested in comments and feedback.

## **Don't post everything all of the time.**

Self-curate a little. Make sure the images you post represent you in the best way possible.

## **Don't make your posts off-topic.**

Too many personal photos can get in the way when someone is there to look at your art. Make a separate, private account if you want friends and family to keep up with you.



# Daydreaming of making a living as a freelance illustrator?

## TAKE A CLASS WITH MIKE.



## Getting Paid to Draw.

The ULTIMATE guide to getting your Dream Client.

[GettingPaidtoDraw.com](http://GettingPaidtoDraw.com)

LIMITED ENROLLMENT STARTS SOON!

Learn how to make digital illustrations on an iPad.

## PROCREATE DRAWING PARTY!

[GettingPaidtoDraw.com](http://GettingPaidtoDraw.com)







# Thanks!

I hope you've enjoyed this book. It was a lot of fun to make. If you have any questions, be sure to shoot them over, and I'll try to include them in future versions.

*MIKE LOWERY.*



## About the Author.

Mike is a New York Times Bestselling Illustrator and author that has worked on more than EIGHTY books for kids and adults including the Everything Awesome series from Scholastic. He's also worked on greeting cards, food trucks, murals, and lots of other fun stuff.

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