



Proposing & Executing a Mural

You've been asked to paint a mural! Now what?!

I'm sharing with you a brief overview of the process I've refined over my 30-year career. Follow these steps (and **download my free example contract at amycolburn.com**) to ensure you've covered all your bases. You're free to personalize the process to what works best for you.

1

Schedule a time to meet with your client, see the space, and take accurate measurements and photos. The success of the entire project relies on this critical step. Don't accept measurements your client sends you, other than as a "ballpark". Take note of things impacting the work environment such as accessibility of the space, available water source, on-site material storage, etc. I collect a \$300 consultation fee, which pays for the preliminary painting but also gets put towards the final cost of the mural. This ensures that a client isn't using my expertise to create a design that they plan to execute themselves or have another artist execute. This pays for the time I take to create the preliminary painting and to secure the mural project in my schedule.

Take note of your client's decorating style and artwork they have displayed. Use your observations to better understand their style



**HELPFUL
TIP**

Make a positive first impression! Dress professionally, have a printed copy of your references and FAQs, business cards, and bring a laptop or iPad to display a photo gallery of your completed work. Treat a consult with the same reverence as a job interview.



**HELPFUL
TIP**

I've been told many times that my professionalism "landed" me mural jobs. Early in my career, I may not have been the most experienced mural artist, but I was prepared, clean, prompt and professional. I developed a reputation for breaking the stereotype of what people expected when "an artist" arrived for the consult.

2

Bring your measurements, photos, and project notes collected from the consult back to your studio and create a full-color, to-scale preliminary painting of the proposed mural. Choose something sturdy such as cold press illustration board. Grid your painting using a 1:1 ratio, such that a 1" (or 1.5") square on your painting represents a 1' square on the wall. Leave window and door openings unpainted. Make sure you've decided whether baseboards and soffits will be painted. This method will allow you to calculate the exact square footage of your mural as well as provide an exact representation of the mural to your client.



3

Bring the preliminary painting, and two printed copies of your contract to your client and ask for feedback. If the client is happy with the mural and wants to proceed, you'll both sign both contracts, and you'll leave one with them. If they would like to make some changes, get them done as quickly as possible and reschedule a time to review. This process, though it can be tedious, saves both time and money. It's exponentially easier to make changes on an illustration board than on a wall.

Your contract will include the exact price quote based on the square footage. You will determine your own price per square foot based on your expertise, experience, cost of materials and travel. I charge \$25 - \$35 per square foot for most murals, although I did not start out at that rate. When your client accepts the preliminary painting, have them sign or initial the board. The preliminary painting will remain in your possession. You will need to refer to it for material acquisition, and for mural application.

4

After purchasing supplies and scheduling work hours with your client, you're ready to begin mural application. Upon arriving, take "before" photos. Make sure all switch plates and fixtures are removed or taped, unless they're being painted. Remove furnishings and protect surfaces. Grid the wall according to your preliminary painting using chalk or a light water-soluble colored pencil. Most graphite pencils will show through your paint, therefore their use is not advised. Sketch lightly, using your grid. The more experience you gain, the less sketching you will deem necessary. However, never, ever skip the grid process.

**HELPFUL
TIP**

Never draw freehand what you can draw using tools that will ensure accuracy and precision. Examples are: use a level to create a horizon line on a body of water; use the string method to draw an exact circle; and use tape for creating a straight edge. It's not "cheating" to use tools. Your mural will look sloppy and unprofessional if you don't.

5

Execute your finest work, with strict attention to detail, to create the mural based on your prelim painting. There will be considerably more detail on the wall than on your prelim painting, and color may vary slightly. However, your goal is to match the prelim painting as closely as possible, since that is what your client has signed off on.

6

When the client is happy, and you are happy, and the job is complete, leave the space cleaner than when you arrived (if possible). I even vacuum the floor and bring all garbage with me, so that absolutely none of the cleanup is left to the client.

7

Take “after” photos and post the project to your professional social media accounts (this should be addressed with your client at the consult). Follow payment schedule outlined in contract and be sure to offer a receipt.



Please email me at amy@amywheelerartist.com and let me know if these tips helped you. I'm interested in your stories about your mural projects. I'm also available to be hired as a consultant on your project.