

ESSENTIAL TIPS for a first timer at an Art Fair

I asked the “[Art Fair Buddies](#)” Facebook Group to tell me one important tip for those who have never ever done an art fair before. (*Katherine Tyrrell* | [Art Business Info. For Artists](#))

Logistics, Preparation and Set-Up

Design of your stand

- Plan your stand; make a scale model out of cardboard and print to scale images of your work so that you know what goes where, it saves hours. (*Sarah Wimperis*)
- Set your stall out at home before hand! (*Al Wilson*)
- Design your space so that you have cunning units that act as storage AND display. The space is tiny, and not even room for your coat. Have somewhere you can hide your bag, packaging, sandwiches etc. And perhaps even to sit on. (*Jess Vidyadasi*)
- Less is more, always. Keep your stand looking clean and sharp, so people can see exactly what you have to offer. (*Jackie Ross*)
- Don't overcrowd your stand and have proper price labels. (*Sarah Villeneuve*)

Making/painting on your stand

- If possible I set up a small easel and paint, then people will watch and actually get that I'm a painter and actually paint the things I sell! (*Sue Prince*)
- I like to have a piece of work on the go (luckily I work in pen & ink). People can't resist having a peek and I can take the opportunity to engage them. My easel has a sign inviting people to disturb me. (*Deborah Waters*)

Location issues

- On a practical note: Art Fairs are often held in charming but old buildings with lots of winding stairs, and you can't always rely on there being a lift available. So make sure your stand equipment is as light and portable as possible. And pack your work so that it is manageable to carry. If possible - take a friend to help you set up and break down! (*Christine Sarah Pike*)
- So you're in the UK so this might not be a problem, but wear a hat, bring water and hopefully have a full tent rented for your show because being outside all day in the heat sucks balls. (*Cynthia Geria Ganga*)

Keeping track of everything

- Lists, lists and more lists. I tend to instantly forget what is packed in which box and waste time looking for things (*Samantha Roberts*)
- I have an event list with checkboxes (*Angelique Hartigan*)
- Pack little kit of important setting up stuff in one rucksack. A bit like teabag kettle milk advice when you move house. Directions, passes, organiser contact details (in case you're going to be late) then practical stuff: blue tak, pliers, hangers, labels ... Stuff you need to hit the ground running once you're in. You'd be amazed how many other people will end up borrowing this useful stuff! (*Amanda Glanville*)
- Have a show 'kit' work out all your fixtures/fittings scissors, screwdrivers, hammers etc etc that you need. And NEVER unpack it, so whenever you are off to a show you can pop it in the car/van knowing everything you need is in there (*Emily Thatcher*)
- Gaffer tape, clamps, hooks and safety pins. You can fix nearly everything with them (*Nettie Birch*)

Comfort Factors

- Take drinks/flask and foody treats - fruit or chocolate... (*Sue Prince*)
- Take a mug - tea always tastes better in your own favourite (*Helen Walker*)

The Do's and Don'ts of how to present yourself and behave!

- Talk to everyone! Customers, other stall holders, event organiser, do not spend the day with your head in your phone! Enjoy the experience (*Lucy Goodman*)
- Look approachable and ready to engage. Smile. (*Jo Turner*)
- Smile - your cheeks should hurt by the end of the day (*Nicky Chubb*)
- Stand rather than sit at least some of the time. It looks more positive (*Jane Booth*)
- Try not to eat at your stand, don't be engrossed with your smart phone, smile even when things are a bit s**t! (*Ann Povey*)
- Don't sit down and at least feign interest in your customers. (*Bear Clyff*)
- Be positive and stay upbeat. Don't complain! (*Sarah Villeneuve*)
- Get chatty! Talk to everyone, fellow artists, visitors, event organisers. We are passionate about our work and if you can engage someone with that passion they will buy into you and your work. (*Stewart Morton-Collings*)
- Just be warm and friendly to people. And talk about your work, how it's made, what inspired you. When you're passionate about what you do it is infectious and customers can feel that passion too. People are more likely to buy from someone that they connect with. (*Helen Shere*)
- Don't pounce...say hello, but don't go straight into talking about your work unless they look really interested. Give it at least 30 seconds. You don't have to talk about your art to engage and this can be disarming. (*Angelique Hartigan*)
- I remember when I used to go to the fairs before my exhibiting days. However good their artwork, if an artist was sat there with arms folded, looking grumpy, bored or resentful, (and a surprising number of artists were) I'd immediately veer off. In contrast a friendly, approachable but not over pushy artist who would just chat easily and was really enthusiastic about his/her work would often communicate that energy to me and make me more enthusiastic about their work. (*Joanna Loftus*)
- I'd say the advice to look friendly & engaged at all times is the best. Don't be overbearing but do smile & say hello to everyone that looks at your stuff. Tune in to conversations & offer information if people seem receptive but don't scare them off by being too eager. I think there's quite a skill to being a sensitive sales person. (*Hester Stolly Cox*)
- Community over competition; everyone there is trying to do their thing and all the visitors will have different tastes. Support other artists, don't trample over them! (*Kirstin Wood*)

Your art business

- Sometimes a measure of success of a fair is not what you sell on the day but what happens afterwards.... (*Claire Howard*)

Learn how to sell

- Learn how to sell. Ice breaker, smooze, pitch, answer questions with features, benefits and usp, identify the decision maker and close the sale. (*Chris Hindley*)
- Beware the lovely people who you have great talks with - but who have no intention of buying. They're lovely connecting human moments - but not sales (*Jess Vidayasi*)
- Treat an event as a marketing opportunity as much as a sales opportunity (*Kirstin Wood*)

Pricing

- Put obvious, clear prices on everything - people hate to ask. (*Janis Goodman*)
- If you can, make sure you have a range of differently priced items - i.e. £10-£200+. Some people may love your work but not have enough to buy your expensive items. It means they leave with something of yours and a sale is a sale, no matter how small. We all have stand fees to pay and 10 x £10 sales is a whole lot better than 0 x £200 sales! (*Jackie Ross*)

Contacts

- Staple collected business cards one page each in a small notebook and write down what you talked about and a small description of something memorable i.e. 'irish' or 'bright patterned bag' etc to help you when you get home and do follow ups (*Jessica Langford*)
- Don't forget to ask if people would like to get news and emails from you, tickets to future events. Keep a record of how and where they gave consent for that. (*Alice Sheridan*)