

A NOTICE TO OUR MEMBERS AND TO THOSE WHO HOPE TO ENGAGE OUR MEMBERS IN SPECULATIVE WORK:

GUILD OF
NATURAL
SCIENCE
ILLUSTRATORS

Speculative (spec) work is any kind of work that a creative professional renders and submits to a potential client in the hopes of securing work, but without guarantee of appropriate compensation and/or without a fair agreement concerning rights to the work. Promises of “exposure” or “publicity” simply are not adequate compensations.

The GNSI strongly discourages its members from engaging in spec work. The GNSI believes that professional illustrators should be compensated fairly for the valuable communication tools they provide to their clients. The GNSI encourages its members to educate the public and potential clients about alternatives to spec work and the value of artists’ time and skills.



On occasions when artists donate their time and skills to a cause they support, the GNSI does not consider this to be spec work as long as the artist does the work on his/her own terms in support of a cause rather than in an effort to secure work or win a competition. In these situations, artists should always retain all rights to their work and be credited for it.

The GNSI strongly discourages organizations from inviting artists to submit work on a speculative basis. Such a practice devalues the efforts of the artists and the illustration profession as a whole by not recognizing that illustration is a skilled, time-intensive, creative effort that merits compensation. Few people would consider asking a lawyer or plumber to perform services on a speculative basis. Asking an illustrator to produce work without expectation of payment is equally ill-considered.

Examples of spec work:

- Contests that seek submissions of new work (such as for a t-shirt, poster design, or logo) where only the winning artist receives compensation
- Potential clients who request more than one artist to submit work to the job specifications so the client may select the illustration they prefer without compensating the other submissions
- Volunteer work for nonprofits, charities, or other “public good” enterprises

For more information on the ethical way to run a contest or seek donations of creative work for a charitable cause, please see this GNSI Journal article: <http://tinyurl.com/y32pk75r>

Further Reading

aiga.org/position-spec-work

<http://www.rgd.ca/resources/no-spec>

<http://weenudge.com/specwork/>

http://www.creativelatitude.com/articles/articles_fisher_dcontest.html

http://www.thelogofactory.com/logo_blog/index.php/the-arrogance-of-crowdsourcing/

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/27/opinion/sunday/slaves-of-the-internet-unite.html?emc=eta1&r=2>

<http://www.artpractical.com/feature/dying-of-exposure/#>

<https://emilydamstra.wordpress.com/2012/03/10/why-hire-a-professional-illustrator/>