Children's Illustration Portfolio Do's and Don'ts

- Limit your portfolio to your 10-12 best pieces
- The size should be no larger than 11" by 14"
- Your portfolio is a branding opportunity

Do:

- Only include your best work.
- Leave a piece out if you feel you must explain or apologize for it. When in doubt, leave it out!
- Make sure it is organized, professional and that images are well scanned.
- Show a distinctive style.
- Show true children's book art.
- Show animals and kids.
- Look at what kids are wearing and add this into your illustrations.
- Include different ages, races and both genders in your art.
- Vary your characters' body types.
- Show pieces that have a narrative sequence, show the same characters in various stages of activity, and ensure there is consistency in the character.
- Show movement and not just static poses.
- Make sure your illustrations evoke emotions.
- Include interesting and unusual perspectives (worms eye, bird's eye, forced perspectives).
- Be aware of negative and white space.
- Show both color and black & white art.
- Use cropping to strengthen your subject matter.
- Include a dog character.
- Continually create new work.
- Include style sheet of characters in different poses.
- Start with a bang and finish with a bang.

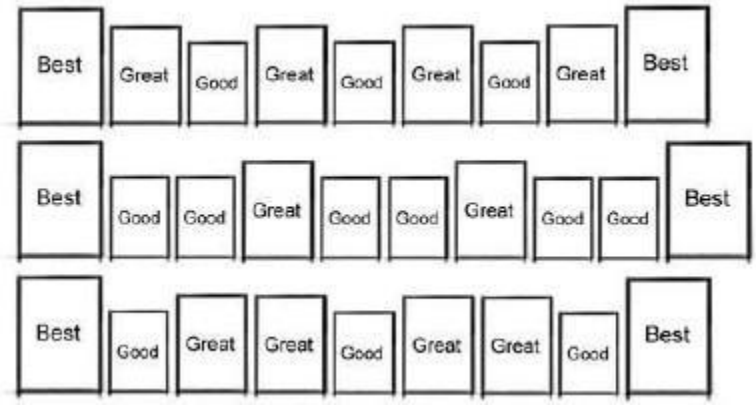


Image by Donald Wu

Don't:

- Include original art.
- Show stereotypes.
- Show licensed characters.
- Include inappropriate content.

- Include life drawings or portraits.
- Bore the viewer.
- Show a scene where all the characters are faceless.
- Show still lifes.
- Ask your close family or friends to help with portfolio piece selections.

Additional Ideas to Keep in Mind:

- Illustrations must have an emotional impact.
- The eyes are the window to the character's soul.
- Characters need to be likable, even if they are the bad guy.
- Detach yourself emotionally from the final art.
- Everything is a character.
- Include and highlight:
    - Varied compositions
    - Color balance
    - Different moods

Various Resources

The Book, The Essential Guide to Publishing for Children by SCBWI
It features a section titled "SCBWI Illustrator Guide" which provides detailed information on building your portfolio and includes a substantial resource list.

Portfolio Advice:

- Donald Wu
  http://donaldwuillustration.blogspot.com/2012/12/how-to-build-illustration-portfolio.html
- Will Terry http://willterry.blogspot.com/2013/08/what-to-put-in-my-illustration-portfolio.html
- Eliza Wheeler -
  http://wheelerstudio.com/category/portfolio-2/