

Cadette *Comic Artist*

Artist

Newspaper cartoons, comic books, graphic novels . . . comic art is a broad, exciting, and growing field. Comics are sometimes described as “sequential art,” though some are only one panel. So, what is a comic, exactly? It’s a visual story told however you would like to tell it. Go for it!

Steps

1. Delve into the world of comics
2. Choose a story to tell
3. Draw it out
4. Frame it in four panels
5. Add the words

Purpose

When I’ve earned this badge, I’ll know how to create my own comic.

“A cartoonist is a writer, an actor, a director, and an artist. We write, act, and direct every scene. The drawing is the final stage of the productions, when I can touch the imaginary images, feel them, bring them to life!”

-Lynn Johnston, creator of the comic strip *For Better or For Worse*

Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more.

Fun FACT

Comic books, which came about in 1934, have become more popular as of late. In fact, the modern graphic novel, which made its debut in 1978, is the fastest-growing literary medium in the country!

Step 1 Delve into the world of comics

Get to know the art form in one of these fun ways.

CHOOSE ONE:

Collect comic strips from the paper for one week. Read them each day, paying attention to how all the elements work together. Keep track of what you like and don't like, how artists show feelings and actions, and how they work timing to make punch lines great.

FOR MORE FUN: At the end of the week, take your favorites, cut the panels into squares, jumble them up, and rearrange them to make new panels and a new story.

OR

Visit with a comic artist. If you can, visit one artist in person. Or, read autobiographical information about three artists in books, magazine articles, and online. How do their styles differ? Which is your favorite and why?

More to **EXPLORE**

Read all about it. For an in-depth look at the comic art form, read Scott McCloud's famous book, *Understanding Comics*.

OR

Make stick-note comics. Get the hang of comic stories by drawing one of these on a stick note (rough, rough sketching, remember!):

- A dog floating on a raft
- A hawk diving
- A girl at bat

Take another stick note and add:

- The cat that's swimming past the dog
- The prey for which the hawk is diving
- The ball the girl is trying to hit

Now, take a third stick note and add another element to each panel:

- Another cat chasing the first cat that's swimming past the dog
- A larger hawk after the prey for which the first hawk is diving
- The catcher waiting for the ball the girl is trying to hit

Now, imagine how these could be turned into a comic story. Then, make up a story with friends.

FOR MORE FUN: Draw all nine scenarios and make them tell one story!

IDEAS FOR YOUR COMIC ARTIST TOOL KIT

A small toolbox, a sewing kit box, or fishing tackle box is a great place to keep supplies.

BARE BONES:

- Sketchbook or other practice paper
- Finish paper, drawing paper, or board (such as:
 - lined delete paper for manga art,
 - vellum surface paper for charcoal art, or
 - plate surface paper for inking)
- Tracing paper
- 2h pencils
- White vinyl erasers

EXTRAS:

- Ruler
- Right angle
- Metal scissors
- Glue stick
- Narrow watercolor brushes for inking final artwork
- Black drawing or black magic ink
- Find-point black felt-tip pens
- Liquid Paper (correction fluid) pen
- Charcoals
- Watercolors
- Colored pencils
- Old toothbrush and/or straw for inking effects

Step 2 Choose a story to tell

At heart, comics are another method of storytelling. If you've got comic characters in mind already (people or animals you doodle in notebooks, perhaps?), let those inspire your story. If not, the story you come up with will lead you to your characters. Keep your story simple - it might even be one quick moment! In the next steps, you'll turn this story into a four-panel comic.

CHOOSE ONE:

Think of a story from your life. Choose something that happened to you, a friend, or a family member. It could be a funny moment or a dramatic one, a favorite memory or an activity from Girl Scouts you want to share.

OR

Think of a story from a book or movie. Have you seen a movie or read a book recently that had a part in it that you could turn into a comic strip?

OR

Make up something. Think about the comic books, comic strips, or graphic novels you've liked. Now think of your own made-up story that would make a good comic tale.

MORE to EXPLORE

Try One-Panel Punch Lines!

Choose characters and situation, and create the comic gag.

Example: A family is walking up to the house with a new puppy, while through the window you see a cat packing a suitcase.

The one-liner: "this house isn't big enough for the both of us."

Character(s)

Talking dog and cat
Mom and child
Sisters
Penguins
Teacher and student
Boyfriend and girl friend
Employer and employee
Singing star hopeful
Taxi driver and passenger
Girl Scouts

Situation

Odd food on dinner table
New pet
On a rope swing over a river
On a melting ice floe
Lost homework
A rained-out picnic
Jammed paper machine
Too-short microphone
Street parade
Roasting marshmallows

Step 3 Draw it out

Take the characters in your story and start some rough sketching. (You may have only one character, depending on your story.) Stick figures are great! Bring them to life in one of these ways.

CHOOSE ONE:

Use tracing paper. Find a comic strip with a style you love. Trace 10 to 12 panels, paying attention to the forms beneath the drawings, the simple shapes with which the artist likely started. Now, see if you can draw each character in your story in a similar fashion.

OR

Do a "free draw." Get a big stack of scrap paper and just keep drawing. And drawing. And drawing! Move quickly at first. Refine any details as you go until you feel you have characters worked out.

OR

Use a how-to book, video, or software. Are your characters people, animals, or both? Find one of the many manuals, such as the Marvel comics software, that give step-by-step instructions on drawing humans and particular animals.

Careers to EXPLORE

- Comic book writer and/or artist
- Graphic novel writer and/or artist
- Comic art colorist, inker, or letterer
- Political cartoonist
- Syndicated comic strip or panel artist
- Freelance cartoonist
- Video game artist
- Advertising designer
- Portrait artist
- Caricature artist
- Police sketch artist
- Graphic artist
- Muralist
- Greeting card designer
- Special effects artist
- Storyboard animator
- Animated character artist
- Background animation artist
- Costume designer
- Fashion designer
- Children's book illustrator

Step 4 Frame it in four panels

It's time to put your characters into action, and that means framing them – drawing them in little boxes called panels. So imagine your story as characters in a series of actions. Create panels with sticky notes or by using a ruler to draw them on paper. Tell your story from step 2 by placing your characters into four panels in one of these ways.

Fun FACT

Emanata are scribbles that emanate from a drawing, like drops of sweat or lines to illustrate movement.

CHOOSE ONE:

Use facial expressions. Some comics use only faces to illustrate their stories, simply changing the expressions to show emotion and move the story along.

OR

Use body postures. For some comic artists – and for some stories – it's more about action than emotion. You can leave the faces pretty much the same and move the story along by showing small movements, such as shrugs, and big actions, such as running and leaping.

OR

Use both facial expressions and body posture. Illustrate movement and emotion using both techniques. Many artists will switch from one style to the other: One panel might show a ball falling on a girl's head, and the next panel might show a close-up of her face as she reacts.

Tip: To fill in your comics – a process called inking – try enlarging a small sketch on a copier. Ink in the details, and, then, reduce it again.

Types of Panel-to-Panel Transitions

Moment to Moment:

Like flip books or animated film

Scene to Scene:

From one place to another

Action to Action:

Slightly more is done per panel – it's completed action to completed action

Aspect to Aspect:

Shows a different part of same scene or thing or person

Subject to Subject:

One person or thing moves to a different person or thing in the next panel, like showing a conversation.

And the non sequitur:

A transition that purposely makes no sense!

-from Scott McCloud's
Understanding Comics

Step 5 Add the words

Yes, there are comics out there with no words, but for the most part the art is a melding of words and pictures meant to be experience together. Add words to your four-panel comic strip in one of these ways.

CHOOSE ONE:

Add some dialogue. If you have more than one character, a classic way to tell your story is through dialogue. If both characters speak in a panel, the one on the left should speak first. Write your character's words in oval conversation bubbles connected to the character with a fine line.

OR

Add thought bubbles. If your story revolves around one character, have her "speak" in though bubbles, putting her words in ovals connected to her with tiny bubble circles.

OR

Run a narrative in separate boxes below the panels. Instead of telling your story through dialogue or inner thoughts, you can write a running third-person narrative at the bottom of each panel.

MORE to **EXPLORE**: Tell the whole story! Turn your four-panel comic into a full-fledged comic book!

FUN FACT: Comic creators agree that drawing ability has little to do with comic art success – many cartoonists use simple line drawings, even stick figures, to make their points.

FUN ADDITIONS: You could add some or all of these elements to your comic either by hand or by scanning your work and then using computer programs:

- Color
- Shading
- Shadows
- Backgrounds

Add the Badge to Your Journey

Your Leadership Journeys invite you to Take Action and make a difference. Try using cartoons to tell a story about an issue about which you care, an adventure in Taking Action, or to share a message that inspires others to get involved in changing the world.

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Creating an inspirational comic that shows Juniors what they'll love about being Cadettes
- Making comic posters when a friend runs for student office
- Drawing a comic about a school or community issue and sharing it with others

I'm inspired to: