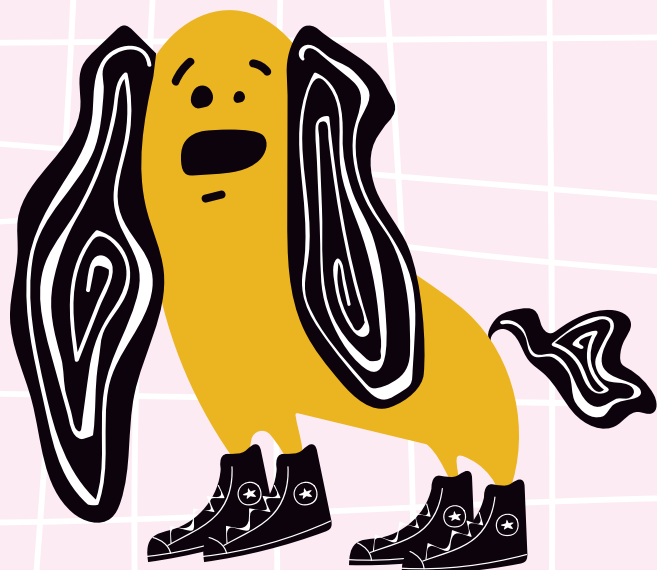# Illustrator

# Dedicated to everyone who's ever used the words animation and illustration interchangeably.

We wouldn't have made this without you.

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### The Illustration Process

# Create a better illustration process.

As a designer, my biggest pet peeve has always been when people tell you to make something look pretty-- completely negating the problem solving nature of what we do. But as an illustrator, my frustrations have been different.

Somewhere between a number of freelance clients and a project retro at TWG, I began to see gaping holes in the way we talk about illustration. It's become clear to me that what we do and how we work is even more mysterious-- as if we're just magical beings who zap visually pleasing compositions into existence. We're not quite artists and not quite designers, but rather fall on the spectrum somewhere inbetween. And because of that, the process through which our work is created is often misunderstood.

The goal of this book is to break those barriers. To help clients get work they're happy with, to help companies create a better, more transparent illustration process, and to help illustrators complete projects with less headaches and tension. This is How to Work with an Illustrator.

# A decoration, interpretation or visual explanation of a text, concept or process.

# Disecting a design project.

I like to analogize design projects by comparing them to human anatomy. With any human you have a collection or organs and muscles, which allow the body to function and move; the skeletal system, which provides the body with structure; and your physical elements like hair and clothing which act as key identifiers to your personality. Without one or the other, the body wouldn't function the same. You couldn't have a skeleton walk down the street without freaking a few people out anymore than you could have your organs move down the street without falling into a pile on the ground.
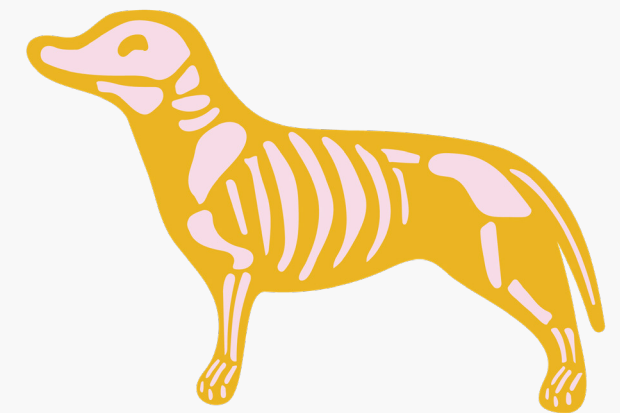
## Animators & Developers

Think of your animators and developers as the organs of your project. They make the work of designers and illustrators interactive.

## Designers

Think of designers as your skeletal system. They organize elements into engaging compositions to help users focus on specific ideas and tasks.

## Illustrators & Visual Designers

Think of these people as your more physical elements like your hair, skin and clothing, as their work often determines visual personality.

# Sisters, not twins.

A story of art, illustration and design.

Ok cool, so we're making progress. You now understand that even the most independent creatives rely on someone else to help elevate their work. At the bare minimum, someone at least has to hire them or purchase their work and even then they're hiring them for a reason-- even if it's just to create prints for the front entrance of their apartment (ok, maybe I'm projecting). But it can sometimes be tricky for people to understand who they need to hire. Understanding where illustration falls on the creative spectrum will help fill this knowledge gap. What's the difference between art and design? An illustrator and a visual designer? Below are some simple definitions to help you understand what type of creative you need-- - or maybe what type of creative you are. Just remember, when it comes to illustrators, artists and designers, they're sisters, not twins (a phrase not just intended to describe your eyebrows).

The goal of an **artist** is to **comment**.

The goal of a **designer** is to **problem solve**.

The goal of an **illustrator** is to **provide context**.

# Signs you need an illustrator.

Let's face it: we all know someone with a cousin who took art class when they were in grade nine. And that means you probably know someone who can make your work pop or draw you some sketches for that website you've been wanting to create. And while everyone starts somewhere, the truth is a professional illustrator has a toolkit that has been acquired after years of professional experience and training. And at the forefront of that toolkit? The use of a powerful metaphor.

 When you choose to engage with an illustrator, you aren't just hiring them for their ability to draw, or even for their unique style. You're hiring them for the way they think and are able to simplify complex concepts into beautiful, comprehensive visuals that will help set your company apart.

It can be difficult to recognize the signs that you will benefit from an illustrator before you're in a time crunched, stress inducing pickle and even more difficult to understand what kind of illustrations you'll need. This section will help break that down for you, so you can finally be ready to get your illustration project going.
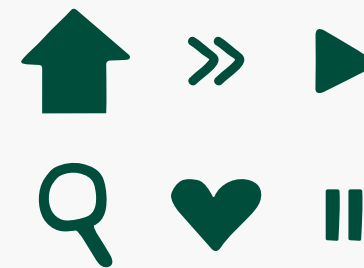
# Signs you need an illustrator

You're a maker or creative.

Imagery you can use is legally restricted.

You need a custom icon set.

You need to tell a story visually.

You want to stand out.

Your content is fantasy/imaginative.

Illustration is part of your brand.

A feature is being misunderstood.

# Illustration Terminology

For the purpose of this guide, there are five types of illustration you may need to create and two overall tones that they'll be created in.

## OI  Conceptual Illustrations

Conceptual illustrations are metaphorical depictions of a subject, idea or theory. They may contain elements of reality, but as a whole these elements are used to take on a new meaning.

## O2  Literal Illustrations

Literal illustrations represent pictorial truths. They are an accurate depiction of reality, which means that even if the content is fantasy, in a literal illustration it will seem credible.

# Iconography

Icons are symbols that represent a larger idea. They should be straight forward and intuitive so people can easily interact with them. Sets should be consistent in corner radius, line treatment, weight, colour application and silhouette.

PLACES YOU'LL FIND THEM:

Digital products, websites

# Spot Illustrations

These are not open for interpretation but rather call on personal backgrounds and stories. Spot Illustrations are typically small and can sometimes be confused with icons. A good way to differentiate the two is to determine what you're meant to do with the illustration. If the illustration is associated with an action, it's probably best to use an icon. If it's meant to be read, it's probably a spot illustration.

PLACES YOU'LL FIND THEM:

Websites

## Scene Illustrations

Scene illustrations take complicated or uninteresting ideas and explains them in a way that's easy to understand. They can be literal or figurative and include objects, actions, characters and context. They communicate a more nuanced idea.

PLACES YOU'LL FIND THEM:

Hero images on websites

## Decorative Illustrations

Decorative illustrations are made to compliment content and dress it up rather than augment it. These illustrations are meant to be visually pleasing rather than functional.

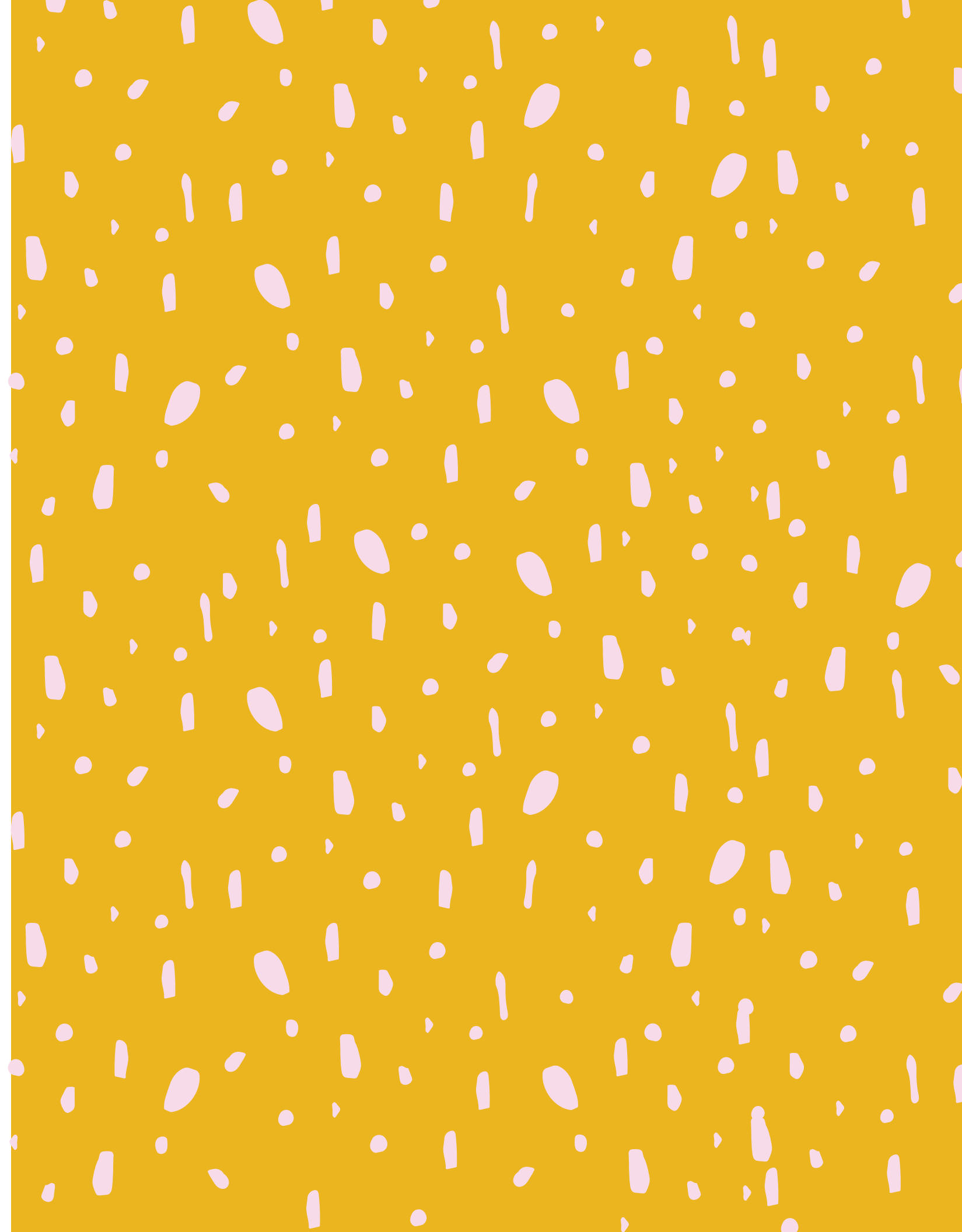PLACES YOU'LL FIND THEM:

Emails, websites, brand collateral

# Pattern Illustrations

Patterns use a number of repeated components. They may typically be used as background or in other areas to compliment content and provide decoration.

PLACES YOU'LL FIND THEM:

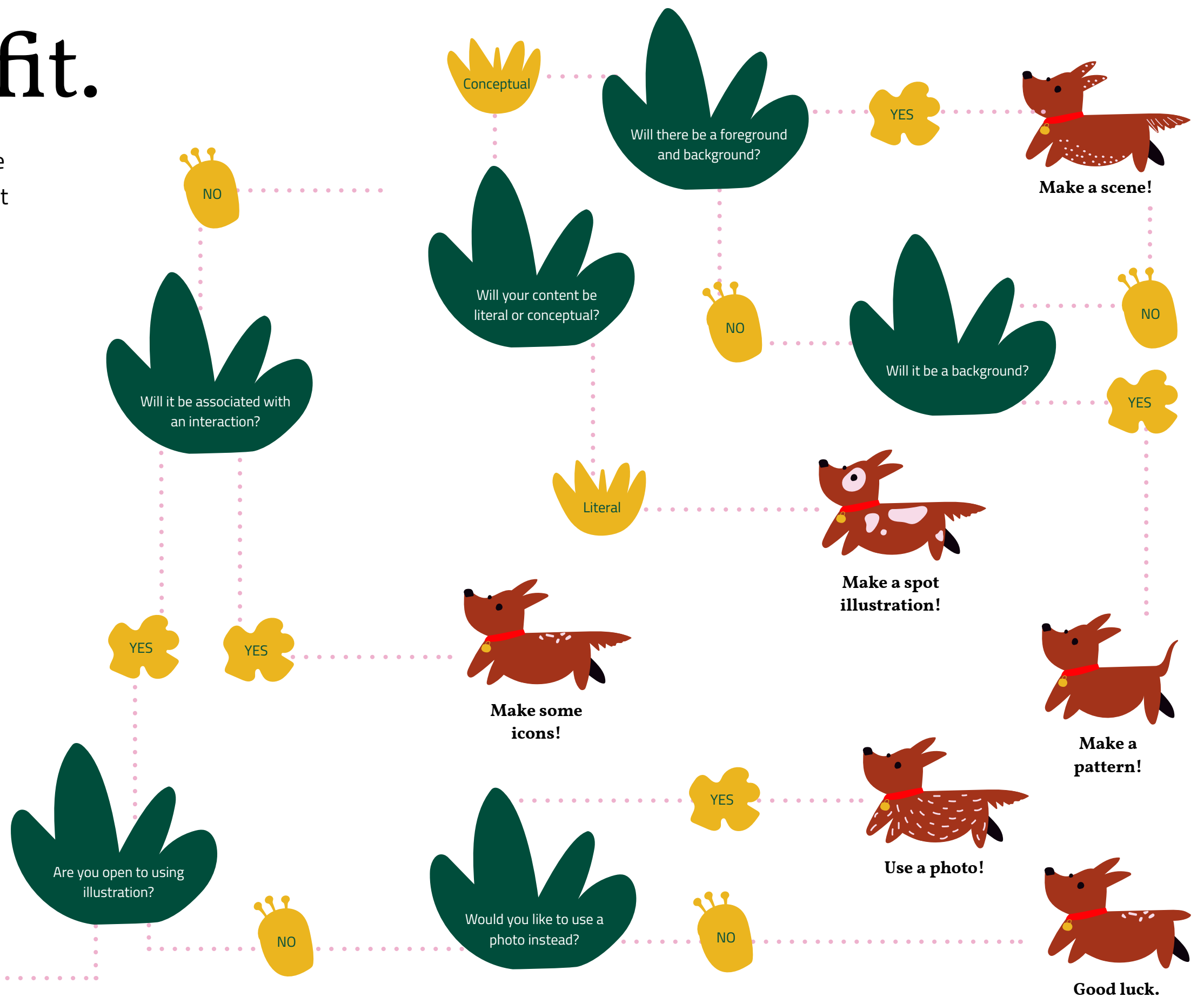Backgrounds, wallpaper, printed materials, inside covers of books

# Find your fit.

Choosing an illustration can be a walk in the park. Follow the chart below to find the best illustration for you.

**Start Here!**

Are you open to using illustration?

**YES** — Will it be associated with an interaction?

**NO** — Would you like to use a photo instead?

Will it be associated with an interaction?

**YES** — Make some icons!

**NO** — Will your content be literal or conceptual?

Will your content be literal or conceptual?

**Conceptual** — Will there be a foreground and background?

**Literal** — Make a spot illustration!

Will there be a foreground and background?

**YES** — Make a scene!

**NO** — Will it be a background?

Will it be a background?

**NO** — Make a pattern!

**YES** — Make a spot illustration!

Would you like to use a photo instead?

**YES** — Use a photo!

**NO** — Good luck.

# Teamwork makes the dream work.

Now that you're aware of the different types of illustrations and can differentiate between them, I'll outline the process I follow to create illustrations for clients. This section will outline the different steps that go into creating an illustration. It will highlight helpful types of feedback and will determine the amount of risk for the project going over budget should the client deciding to scrap the illustration once that phases work is complete.

RISK LEVEL SCALE:

- No risk involved, any changes here are expected.

- Changes put some pressure on the illustrator.

- Timelines may need to be revisited.

- The illustrator will likely rescope work and budget.

- You're basically restarting the project

## 01

### Meet & Greet

This is the chance for the client and illustrator to connect. The client should start telling the illustrator about their project and the illustrator should be prepared to listen and ask questions.

HELPFUL FEEDBACK:

None! Just share your ideas and be prepared to talk about who you are.

RISK LEVEL:

## 02

### Moodboarding

This stage helps the illustrator get a feel for the clients brand. The illustrator will curate a selection of moodboards representing different styles of illustration. Note things like colour, line thickness, emotional tone, etc. The illustrator and client should review these together.

HELPFUL FEEDBACK:

Select styles you do and don't like and explain why. Feel free to single out individual items as well as mix and match from different boards.

RISK LEVEL:

## 03

## Concept Brainstorming

The illustrator will take the information that's been collected and start brainstorming concepts. Once complete, they will share concepts will the client and may even do some brainstorming with the client.

HELPFUL FEEDBACK:

Tell us which concepts do and don't resonate with you. Focus on the ideas here. If ideas don't resonate, explain why and be prepared to contribute ideas and examples as well.

RISK LEVEL:

## 04

## Pencil Sketches

Create pencil sketches of the concepts that were previously agreed upon. Illustrators will likely iterate on concepts here and may create one version of a couple that they're prepared to share with clients.

HELPFUL FEEDBACK:

Focus on tweaks to the structures at this point. Do we want more or less detail in the background? Would you prefer the person sitting instead of standing?

RISK LEVEL:

## 05

### Digitize Sketches

The illustrator will take pencil sketches and start creating digital versions of them. The outputs from this stage will be detailed, full colour illustrations. There may be a couple of rounds of revisions at this stage, though the number of revisions will depend on the scope of work determined in contract negotiations.

HELPFUL FEEDBACK:

Focus on the style of outputs at this stage. Are they conveying their intended message clearly? Is the appropriate visual style captured?

RISK LEVEL:

## 06

### Sign Off

Illustrations will be complete at this stage. Once the client signs off on completed illustrations, the illustrator will provide their work in the agreed upon formats.

HELPFUL FEEDBACK:

The project will be completed at this point, so any helpful feedback should already be mentioned.

RISK LEVEL:

# Go forth, and illustrate.

Determining and agreeing upon the scope of a project and then setting and managing expectations is a pretty dang hard part of being an illustrator or a client. But, nonetheless, it's a crucial one. As a client, it's easy to get swept away in your ideas as the potential for them to come to life begins to feel more real. And, as an illustrator, it's easy to assume that everyone understands your process as well as you do. However, educating ourselves and our project partners can save your sanity down the road, and so my one hope is that this guide has helped fill in some gaps for anyone who touches an illustration project or has the hopes to. And if nothing else, I hope this guide at least helps get that conversation going. So go forth and conquer my friends. Or at the very least, go forth and illustrate.

Content & Illustrations by Kristiana Vellucci.