

Before the day.

Ideas.

Start thinking of ideas now and write them down (or draw them). Keep ideas in your notebook and sketchbook and bring them with you so that you can refer to them on the day. You never know what might get you out of a rough spot.

Materials.

Start deciding on your materials now and gather them. Make sure you practice with them ahead of time especially if it is a new tool or product you haven't used before. The more comfortable you are with the tools you are using the faster and better you will be able to use them.

Pick a style.

It is great to know what style you are using before the day so that you can have the confidence and knowledge that you will be able to make it through to the end. The more simplistic the style the easier it will be to do consistently and will give you the best chance of completing the challenge.

Remember: 24 Hour Comics Day is not a contest, it's a challenge. There is no winning and nobody will judge you if your comic doesn't look amazing, completing the challenge is what's important. Don't be a perfectionist, accept your flaws, mistakes, and artistic limits so that you can finish the comic. It doesn't have to be pretty.

Make a comic.

I really believe that making a small comic before the day will help you more than anything else. Make a one page comic with a beginning, middle and end. You will learn a lot from this and you can even use it to gauge how long a page will take you in the style you are working in. Keep in mind that you will really slow down by the end of the event so you want your average page to be less than the one hour per page you will need to do on the day.

Read, read, read.

We learn a lot from the stories we read. We all know how to tell a story because we grow up hearing and reading them and the more we do the better we get. Read comics and analyze them as much as possible, how does this person you like use panels, dialogue, and design to tell the story?

What makes you like this book or this page, can you do the same thing? Did you hate something, was something poorly done? How can you avoid doing the same thing.

Start making friends.

24 Hour Comics Day isn't easy task and even a lot of professionals have given up half way through. One of your best resources are the other people here and the ones that will be with us for the event. Someone else may have a strength where you have a weakness, you might be really good at something someone else struggles with. Make friends and be supportive, even before the event starts. One of the best things about making comics is being able to have other people who can give you advice and feedback and the good friends you make. If you are here, you all have something in common to make you want to come, help each other so that we all have a better chance of accomplishing the 24 Hour Comic Challenge.

Decide on a format.

Find a size for your comic that you can print if you plan on doing so when it is finished. Make sure your materials are the correct size or shape to make make your comic in that format. We can talk about printing later.

The Day of

Writing/plotting.

Writing comics doesn't have to mean writing out a script to follow, (if you feel that you need to take that step then we can surely help you with comic scripting) but writing can happen right on the page with no script at all. One way to plot your comic quickly with a lot of detail is the thumbnail Sometimes I don't know where a story is going till I get there. You can plot your comic out completely before you start drawing it, or draw it as you go, but you will want to make sure you have some basic things in your story such as: Beginning, Middle, End, suspense, drama/conflict, resolution.

Pencils

Pencils lay the frame for the final art on your page. You might be tempted to skip this step to speed up the process by going straight to inks, but pencils are the safest place to make your mistakes. Whether you plan on penciling all 24 pages then inking them, or penciling and inking them one at a time, you will definitely want the chance to fix any mistakes before you make the page permanent. Penciling the whole comic first will give you the chance to go back and change things to make your comic make more sense and will give you a chance to leave your pages alone for a short time which will help you catch more mistakes when you come back to them later. If you choose to go one page at a time you will have more time to think your plot forward as you work on the page you are on and construct a more intricate plot and a more detailed story. Whether you choose to do one or the other, or even a combination of the two you will be glad you did the penciling stage.

Inks.

Typically inks come after pencils, but since we are working in a limited time frame and primarily on traditional media we are going to jump ahead to lettering and come back to inks later.

Lettering.

Lettering is usually the last step in the process with the exception of formatting for print. However if you are doing your comic on paper and are not doing your lettering digitally, which would be impractical for most of us, you will want to do your lettering BEFORE you ink. Now hopefully you have left room for your lettering in the layout at the penciling stage and have some idea of the dialog you are going to put on the page. The biggest challenge with lettering is lining up the dialog so that it can be read in the correct order without covering up any important art. Keeping the words on the page as short as possible will help and there are plenty of tools to help keep your letters straight and a consistent size if you chose to do so. Keep in mind that the way you letter changes the way people read and your font gives a unique feel to the characters and to your comic. This part of the comic making process might use a lot of erasing.

Great resource for lettering tips: http://blamobot.com/articles_tips.shtml

Inking (again)

Like we already talked about, Inking gives your pages the final shape. Inks also do a lot for the overall feel of your book, is it a dark story with heavy inks, or a light-hearted fun story with minimal shading, or are you like me and doing simple line art? All of these things give off a different feel and will influence the way the reader looks at the story, keep that in mind while developing your style. As you know, ink is permanent so this is the step in the process where you will want to spend the most time.

Color.

Some of you might want to color your comic after the event. If that is your plan then keep that in mind during the inking process. If you are planning on coloring it at the event, first of all good luck, and second, wait till all of your pages are completely done and inked. You do not need to color your comic to complete the challenge, it is extra work and you may soon regret if you start with color. If you are planning to print and show your comic at the 24 Hour Comics table at UnCon, keep in mind that printing in color is a more costly. You do not need to color your comic.

What's Next?

Printing.

Scan all of your pages, or find a place that can scan them for you and organize them in the correct order and orientation for printing. If you are just printing to show them to friends you can get them printed and stapled for fairly cheap at any print shop (It is much more if you do color.) and they can orient them into opposite pages for the book. If you want to print each page separately and staple them yourself to save money you will have to do the work to orient the pages yourself. Keep in mind you will want to sell them for no less than twice the cost if you are trying to sell them, obviously the more profit margin the better and lowering your cost is better than raising your price although it isn't unreasonable to get between \$3 and \$5 for your comic, there are pros and cons to each and adjusting your cost is the first step.

Share and network.

Now that you have made and printed your comic it's time to share it. Sometimes you might feel like giving it away for free to grow your audience or build a network, that's great, do it. Putting your comic in the hands of the right person can definitely help you get a lot farther in the comic book industry. Sharing with your peers that are also working to break in is even better. You never know when someone you befriend will get a break and help you out. Trading your comic for one you like is a great way to get something new and move you forward. When you trade something the person you give your comic to will have given it a value equal to their own and is much more likely to keep it and take care of it. If you are giving it to an editor or a professional you probably won't be able to trade, so the value of the book is based on your interaction so be kind and very polite. If you are using your book to network or grow your audience make sure you have contact info and social media listed in your book somewhere.

Tips For Making A 24 Hour Comic

So now that we have gone over the comic making process let's talk about what we can do to help prepare ourselves for the actual 24 Hour Comics Day event.

Before the event.

Start trying to make a complete page in an hour. Put on an hour long show and see if you can get to the end before the episode does. Yes, the TV will be distracting, but you are going to be in a room full of other people so get used to working around those distractions.

Give yourself extra time. Sure you can beat the TV one page at a time, but will you be able to keep that pace when you have been doing it for hours already? The more on a buffer you can give yourself the more you will be glad you did by the end of the 24 Hour Comics Day event.

Cut the fat. Details are great and they can really spice up your comic, but are all of them necessary? Does your Main character having a lot of texture in their hair really contribute to the story? If not don't waste your time on it. If you have a hard time doing that, leave it blank and fill it in at the end if you have extra time (or energy).

Warm up before you come in. Doodle into your sketchpad an hour or so before you start the 24 Hour challenge. This way you will be warmed up and can jump right into drawing your comic without hesitating or making as many small mistakes.

Don't hold onto your ideas too tightly, be willing to let some things go. It's great to have an idea of where your story will go or how it will end, but be ready for surprises. Something better might present itself or you might back yourself into a corner trying to get to the ending you planned. Things change, be ready to accept those changes to make the best possible story.

Talk to other people around you, ask questions. You may have thought you had a really clever plot twist, or the perfect piece of dialog, a cool layout idea, but someone next to you might be find something you missed. If you are stuck on a scene, ask your neighbor for advice, you don't have to take it but it might lead to the breakthrough you need.

Put your title and credit yourself on page one. You don't have to do this but remember that printing your comic your pages will need to be divisible by 4 so if you do a separate cover in addition to your 24 pages you now have three more pages to fill when you go to print.

Please put your title at the top of the page. Your title should always be at the top so that it is easy to see when displayed. It might look cool to move the title around, but you will be very sad when it is displayed with something staggered in front of it covering the title.

Don't forget your creative credits. You made something, be proud of it and put your name on it. If you are printing it to network make sure you also add contact information.

You don't have to draw it in order. In fact, knowing your ending before you get there can give you a good advantage and help keep your story on the right track. Pencil backwards from page 24 then go back to page 6 and figure out how to get there.

Leave room in your story for a big page in case you need to catch up. If you have some room in your story for a couple pages with less panels, or a full page spread you will be able to use those to catch up when you get behind. If every page has to be six panels to tell your story then once you are behind the clock you will have to struggle to catch back up. Don't be afraid to change your plans so that you can get to the end also, you can abandon some ideas and use them another time.

Say it without words. Lettering is hard and not a lot of us can do it very well, it also takes a lot of time. How can you tell your story using half as many word balloons? Cutting down on one step of the process means less

time you have to spend on each page. Use the art to tell the story and the dialog only when you can't.

Most importantly, build friendships for after the event. Everyone else who is there is doing what you are doing and nobody is crazy enough to do this without some kind of passion for it. Network, make friends, and help each other. These are the people that can help you out the most in making comics so start building those relationships and keep in touch after the event is over.