

Thank you for joining us!

We hope you enjoyed How to Talk About Your Work, and we hope it gave you some new keys to expressing what you do to the world.

You might want to revisit this process again in future – the way you talk about your work will evolve alongside your skills and interests, so your manifesto will need a bit of refinement now and then.

Here are all your class lessons in one handy place.

If you have questions about anything, don't hesitate to ask.

Tara + Diane

Welcome to Day 1! Today is All About Images

Let's start by relaxing and playing with pictures. For today, we want you to put all thoughts of business and products out of your head – that's not what we're focusing on in this lesson.

Instead, your assignment is to find images to answer the questions below. You can use as many image sources as you like (see below for some suggestions). The only hard rule here is that every image you pull should make you **happy or excited**.

Why we're doing this...

By and large, we creatives take (or get attracted to) pictures that reflect our happiest moments, or the things we want to surround ourselves with. So your favorite pictures can tell you something about what you want to create and present to the world.

Where to look for images

It's a good idea to start with **your own images** – the ones you've taken for your blog over time, the ones you've posted to Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Instagram, etc. Look at the ones you've saved on your phone or computer, too. The only caveat is this: for the moment, avoid pictures of your products! We want to stick with images that represent your life and enthusiasms.

If you need more sources, you can also use other people's images – those of your Flickr, Instagram, Facebook friends, or the ones on your Pinterest boards. Or, images from strangers, found through Google Image searches or searching on Flickr.

What to do with your images

We'll be using all your saved images to help us answer some deeper questions tomorrow. So today, as you find pictures you like, save them in some way. The easiest method is to right-click them and save them to a folder on your computer. Don't worry about organizing or categorizing them right now; just make a big pile (or file).

You might find it helpful to rename each image with the question it relates to. Or, you might not. If you have any problems saving or storing your images, please [email Diane](#) for help.

OK, now for the questions!

Answer each of these questions with an image. It's best to not overthink this too much; if your gut tells you the image is the right one, it is.

1. Find three images that represent what you love MOST about the creative work you do.
2. What colors show up again and again in your work?
3. What textures show up again and again?
4. What forms show up again and again?
5. What are three images that represent a perfect day for you?
6. Find your favorite image of your favorite beverage.
7. Find an image that represents your favorite outfit. (It can be an actual picture of you, or a picture that captures the mood of the outfit.)
8. Choose your very favorite image of the place where you do your creative work.
9. Who or what are your favorite companions when you're making things?
10. What's one thing you've made that you use or wear over and over again?
11. Find three images that represent your strengths. (Don't overthink this; choose any three strengths that come to mind first, and find images that represent them to you. They can be pictures of you, or not.)
12. Find three images that represent happiness to you.

Good work! Now, share your images with the class.

It's amazing how a fresh set of eyes can see things in them we can't. Please upload your image collection to your own album in our classroom space. ([Here's how](#) to do that.)

Want to share your experiences finding these images? Pop over to today's [class discussion questions](#) and talk it over with your classmates!

Then, take it easy and get ready for tomorrow.

Welcome to Day 2! Today is All About Words

Do you have about 20 or so images collected? (*If not, revisit Day 1 and be sure to collect your images before you move forward.*)

Now, we threw you right into the image-finding yesterday, because it's important that you don't overthink this process. Thinking uses...words. Words that you've already used and gotten stuck in. In order to generate some totally new ideas and shake loose your true style and voice, we want to avoid the words you've used in the past. (Or the words other people use.)

Another reason we want to keep you from overthinking is that analyzing kills inspiration. (*You've probably found this to be true in your studio!*) Finding the right words is just like finding the right color, or right stitch, or the right drape. You've got to get [in the flow](#) and [turn off the part of your brain](#) that makes judgements.

As a creative person, you might be much more comfortable working with visuals instead of words. So we're going to indulge the visual-loving part of your brain a little longer. Today we're going to start using words, but only those inspired by your images from yesterday.

Learning from your images

From the images you gathered yesterday, pull out 5-8 that really pop out as feeling very *you* or very compelling. Open them up in front of you now.

Write down the **first word that comes mind** for each image. Don't worry too much about the question you chose each image for; just listen to what it's telling you now.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Do these images have some things in common? What are they?
(*Subject matter, color, mood...*)

What qualities do your images represent to you?
(*Need help? Check out the last page for a list of qualities.*)

Which of these qualities are currently reflected in your work?

Are there any of these qualities you'd *like to have* reflected in your work, but aren't there now?

Imagine all these pictures hanging in a room. What does the room look like? What kind of environment would these images be at home in?

Now, let's turn our attention to your work.

We'll step away from your images for just a moment, but we'll be back to them soon!

What do you make? (Be as boring and as technical as you want here. Just describe what you make or do.)

List 5 words or phrases you often say when you talk about your work:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List 5 qualities you want in your work and your life

(Again, use the list of qualities on the last page if you need some help.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now compare your collection of images to your business.

Think of your "place" of business (*your shop, your site, etc*). Do the images you've collected look anything like your place of business feels?

What's different?

What's similar?

Bright spot

Go back through everything you've written so far and highlight or circle the words you like *best*. These can be words you just plain like, words that describe something you make, or words that inspire you to make something else. These words (or phrases) are the bright spots in what you've done so far.

List 'em all here:

Boil it down

We're going to take all of this thinking one step further, and boil down what you've learned in the last two days into a nice little manifesto, which will form the basis of your future talk about your work. We'll cover the first half of your manifesto today, and the second half tomorrow.

Using your bright spots (and adding more words if the mood strikes you), answer the following questions:

What do you make?

How does it make you feel?

How do you want it to feel?

Tomorrow, we're going to add in one more layer: who you're making your work for. When you sell your work, it's not just for you anymore, and you want to be able to describe who will use and want it. But for now, just think about what it means **to you, and for you.**

...So, based on the work you've done yesterday and today, **how would you describe your work to someone who asks, *What do you do?***

How about sharing this nugget with your classmates, or talking over how this whole "words" experience felt for you? Head over to today's [class discussion questions!](#)

Sample List of Qualities

You don't have to use these, but if you get stuck answering any of today's questions, these words might help you get unstuck.

Adventurous	Festive	Silly
Agile	Flexible	Simplicity
Anticipation	Flow	Soft
Beauty	Focus	Somber
Big	Frivolous	Spacious
Bold	Fun	Sparkly
Bright	Geeky	Structured
Caring	Girly	Support
Cheerful	Grace	Sustainable
Colorful	Graphic	Sweet
Comfort	Gratitude	Tiny
Compassionate	Harmony	Tranquility
Courageous	Ingenuity	Trusting
Creative	Innovative	Twee
Curiosity	Joyful	Warmth
Dark	Kind	Welcoming
Dedication	Light	Wonder
Delight	Loose	
Detail-Oriented	Loud	
Discovery	Loving	
Driven	Lustrous	
Eco-Friendly	Luxurious	
Effervescent	Masculine	
Enthusiasm	Ordered	
Elegant	Playful	
Exciting	Powerful	
Expansive	Quiet	
Experimentation	Quirky	
Exploratory	Radiance	
Familiar	Restful	
Fashionable	Rhythm	
Fearless	Sanctuary	
Feminine	Serious	

Welcome to Day 3! Today is All About People

We've spent the last two days finding images and words to describe the things you love and your feelings about them, while talking very little about anyone else.

Why?

We believe that your work is shaped by the lens through which you view your world. That lens affects what you make, what makes it special, and the parts of it that turn you on. We hope that the last two days have helped you start to see your lens, and find the words to describe it.

...And now it's time to apply what you've learned to the people you make your work for. It's time to think about the experience you want these people to have. Whether you're talking to the press, a wholesale buyer, or your Uncle Frank, identifying who you sell your work to makes your work more understandable, and more shareable.

For example, think about the difference in these three statements:

- **I make shirts.**
- **I make shirts for cat lovers.**
- **I make shirts for preteen boys.**

Which one makes you want to see the shirts most?

Don't let all this talk of customers intimidate you.

Here's the good news: you get to keep your lens! We're still talking about *your* work and what you want it to do in the world. Even though we're shifting from your own thoughts to someone else's, the images and words you came up with still apply. For example, if you want your business to full of joy, then you probably also want to bring joy to customers, or you want to work with joyful people. The qualities that infuse your business apply to you and your work AND the relationships you form.

(An aside: If you've ever watched Project Runway, you know they often ask the designer: "Who is the girl who this is for?" That's exactly what we're doing in today's lesson; we're just helping you come up with the words to describe That Girl.)

This might feel like it's harder than what we did in Day 1 and Day 2, but you can't make a mistake, and there is *no* right answer.

To get yourself in the right frame of mind, think about one past customer. Ideally, this is also someone one you've had a conversation with in person or by email already, but if not, don't worry too much about it. Just do your best to visualize this person.

If you have an actual picture of this person, pull it up now - it might be helpful.

This customer's name:

What she might buy from you:

Where she bought it:

What about *her* made her the kind of person who wanted to buy your product?

Now, for the next section, you may have to use your imagination and powers of deduction...

What need or desire did she have before she bought from you?

What about your product appealed to her?

How does your product make her feel? (Revisit your images, if you need to, to see how you'd *like* her to feel.)

Pick 2 or 3 of your bright spots from Day 2 that might also be used to describe this person.

Boiling it all down

Now, you can use this customer information exactly as it is! You can include your hopes for your customer in your product descriptions, or the qualities of your business in a press release or your About Page.

But to get even clearer (and less tongue-tied) when you next have to describe your work, let's finish up that manifesto we started yesterday.

A manifesto looks like this:

Your manifesto = What you make + Who it's for + What it does for them (benefit)

Let's break this down...

What you make = a description of the actual physical thing, and how it's special. You can use material from your Day 2 worksheet for this part.
(ex, happy yarn, geeky art, inquiry-filled classes)

Who it's for = the person who is going to buy your work and love what you make. The earlier part of this lesson should help you with this part.
(ex, colorful knitters, sci-fi fangirls, business explorers)

What it does for them = The way your work fills their needs or desires. Your collection of images might help you articulate their needs, and the earlier part of this lesson should help you say how your work fulfills them.
(ex, to create one-of-a-kind projects, to display their geek-cred, to grow sustainably)

Your turn! Let's make your manifesto:

What do you make?

Who is it for?

What does it do for them?

Put it all together in a sentence you could actually say, when someone asks, "*So, what do you do?*"

You did it! You created a message that conveys the specialness of what you do! Now, for the fun part: you can use this *everywhere* – in your sidebar, on your about page, in your newsletter. You can use the words you've gathered here in your descriptions, blog posts, and your everyday conversation!

What will you update with these new words?

Want to share your full manifesto with your classmates, or talk over today's work? Head over to today's [class discussion questions!](#)

Hey! It's a Bonus Lesson!

Now that you've tried word-finding via images, you can also find you-filled words everywhere. One of my (Tara) favorite things to do with clients is to look at the words they've already written: blog posts, newsletters, Twitter – anywhere you're talking in your real voice.

You can do this on your own, by looking back at your favorite bits of writing, even in a casual email to a friend, where you explained your vision.

Look for the words that light you up. Look for the word or phrase or moment when you were **not** thinking about what you were saying, but were saying something profound.

Being able to spot it in yourself is pretty tricky, but if you get in the habit of rereading what you wrote (even in an email), and then copying and pasting the best bits into a document on your computer for future use, then you'll soon collect some good stuff.

On a regular basis, go back through your collection of saved writing and think about where it fits. Is this phrase better than what you have on your About page? Is that word better than what you're using in your product descriptions? Is there something here to spark a blog post?

Use the words other people use

An effective way of being sure you're talking directly to your best buyers is by using... their words! This can include testimonials and case studies, but it can be even smaller. You can use the phrase or single word that your customers use when they talk about your work (*such as, do they call it a "design" or a "pattern"?*)

To get used to using their words, set up a little system for yourself (*and put it on the calendar*).

- **Spot their words.** In every email, feedback, comment or tweet where a customer refers to your work, spot the words they're using. Include questions people send you before they buy.

- **Save them.** If they use words that are different from the words you use, copy and paste their words into a document on your computer (I like to use an Evernote doc). Alongside their words, make note of who they are and what their relationship is to you. (In other words, you can give greater weight to what a happy customer says, and hardly any weight to what a non-buyer says...unless it's about why they didn't buy.)

- **Regularly visit** your list, and set aside some time to edit all of your descriptions – of your products, of yourself, of your collection - anywhere you talk about your work. Replace your words with your customers' words, or add any information that they told you was missing.

Remember to stay with your own voice, even when you're using other people's words.. So, even if several people call your work "kick-ass," if you'd never curse, don't use that phrase!