

FOLLOW UP ALREADY

Stop letting good opportunities go cold

COMPANION GUIDE

Follow-up is not about selling harder or networking more.

It is about completing what you started, honoring relationships, and giving good opportunities a real chance. It's about being in integrity with what you have always said you wanted.

Follow up will lead to so many more sales and opportunities than any social media post you can write or video you can make. This I promise.

Why we don't follow up

- Fear of seeming pushy, desperate, or annoying :: We didn't follow up because we didn't want to bother anyone. We didn't want them to feel pressured. This is a mindset problem that you must overcome if you're trying to run a profitable art business and build a career. The reframe: following up is a professional courtesy, not a sales tactic. Most people are glad to hear from you. They know you're just doing your job.
- Not knowing what to say. The text templates later in this guide will help. What's most important is that it comes from the heart, not from AI.
- Embarrassed that so much time has passed :: This is a problem, which is why I don't want you to get to this point. It's much more comfortable to stay in touch and follow up in a shorter timeframe. After time has passed, you kind of have to reintroduce yourself to someone. It can certainly be done, but it feels like a much more delicate operation.
- Overwhelm :: so much has piled up that procrastinating is easier than facing it.
- No system :: There's nothing in place to trigger the follow-up. Things pile up, which leads to overwhelm, inaction, and, eventually, embarrassment. It can become a vicious cycle. Let's get you that system!

Your 6-step follow-up system

Your system does not need to be complicated. It needs to be simple enough that you will actually use it. There are 6 parts.

1. Choose where your follow-up actions live.

Your follow-up actions need one reliable home.

This might be a task manager, a digital calendar, a paper planner, a CRM, or spreadsheet (see the Opportunities Tracker).

The test is simple: Will you see it again when it is time to act? If the answer is no, it is not your follow-up home.

A place to store names is not the same as a place to complete follow-up. You may keep contact details, purchase history, or relationship notes somewhere else, such as Artwork Archive. That is fine. But the action itself has to live where you manage your work.

Don't try to find the perfect tool. Start with something you already have or are comfortable with. You can always upgrade later. When there is a home for your follow-up tasks, you can begin to fill it in with the next steps.

2. Capture open loops.

Record the relationships and opportunities that need your attention instead of relying on memory.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR OPEN LOOPS

- Inbox: unanswered, flagged, starred, or lingering messages
- Sent folder: promises made, information offered, and conversations without a next step
- Papers, business cards, notes, and stacks on the desk
- Recent applications, proposals, submissions, pitches, and inquiries
- Calendar: past exhibitions, studio visits, meetings, events, and collaborations
- Task list, planner, project notes, CRM, Artwork Archive, or contact database
- Recent sales and commissions: missing thank-yous, updates, or aftercare
- Direct messages, texts, referrals, introductions, and recommendations

Capture enough information that your future self will understand what happened: contact names, context, concrete action, date or trigger, and any additional notes.

Continue adding to your list whenever:

- someone expresses interest
- you promise to send something
- you submit a proposal or application
- someone introduces or refers you
- a conversation ends with a future next step
- you decide to reconnect at a later date
- an event, sale, studio visit, or collaboration needs follow-through

3. Decide on the status.

Once an open loop is captured, decide what it needs from you. There are three options:

PURSUE :: The relationship or opportunity is still active and worth moving forward. Or there is a meaningful next step you can take.

COMPLETE :: The loop does not need to continue, but it does need one final action before it can be considered finished.

RELEASE :: You have consciously decided not to continue. Or the opportunity is no longer relevant, wanted, or worth your attention. Release it deliberately rather than continuing to carry it as unfinished business.

You mustn't rely on one form of communication—especially when met with silence. And you certainly can't rely on email to reach inboxes.

4. Identify the next concrete action.

Look at the items you marked **Pursue** or **Complete**. Each one needs a specific next action.

A next action should begin with a verb (action!) and be clear enough that you know exactly what to do when you see it again.

"Follow up with gallery" is too vague. Instead, write "Email the gallery director to ask about the proposal timeline."

"Contact collector" is also too vague. Better: "Write the commission client with a progress update."

Improve your follow-up by adding a reason for contact:

- a useful update
- a clear question or date
- new information
- a deadline
- a specific invitation
- an easy next step

5. Add a date or trigger.

Every next action also needs a date or a reason to resurface.

- August 19 (date)
- When the new work is photographed
- After the exhibition closes (on this date)
- When the proposal deadline passes (on this date)
- After the collector returns from vacation (on this date)

Without a date or trigger, the item is likely to disappear again. Use these follow-up timing guidelines to choose a date or trigger.

- **After a studio visit, event, sale, referral, or introduction**, set a follow-up date within a few days to one week. These interactions are still fresh, and the next action is usually a thank-you, promised information, or acknowledgment.
- **After sending an inquiry and receiving no response**, set a date to check in again, often one to three weeks later. Do not leave the timing open-ended.
- **After submitting a proposal, application, or pitch**: Use the organization's stated decision date as the trigger. If no timeline was provided, choose a reasonable follow-up date when you submit it.
- **After promising information, images, prices, or another resource—or when someone expresses interest but doesn't make a decision**: Give yourself a specific due date. This is usually a commitment to complete, not something to revisit someday.

These are guidelines, not rigid rules. The appropriate timing depends on the relationship and the opportunity. You need to be tuned in and learn to read the relationship.

The goal is to prevent an active item from sitting in your system or, worse, your inbox, without a clear reason or moment to reappear.

Now you have the main components of your system. It's time to work it.

6. Conduct your Follow-up Session.

A Follow-up Session is a standing appointment with yourself to tend to open loops before they go cold. It might happen weekly, every other week, or monthly.

THIS IS WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS! If you don't keep this appointment with yourself, the system doesn't work.

Choose a rhythm based on how many relationships, inquiries, applications, and opportunities you are managing. (See worksheet or write down your commitment in your calendar.)

During your Follow-up Session:

1. Review the active list or, if using, the Opportunities Tracker.
2. Look for new open loops that have not yet been captured. (see list for where to look)
3. Decide whether each item should be pursued, completed, or released.
4. Take concrete actions needed and record future ones.
5. Assign a date or trigger to anything that remains open.
6. Record the outcome and remove finished items from the list. Add dates!
7. Schedule your next Follow-up Session.

The cycle of your Follow-up System

Then the ongoing system becomes a cycle, where information and actions are stored in a reliable system.

- **Capture** opportunities and commitments as they arise, capturing as many details as possible.
- **Review, act, and record outcomes** during the recurring Follow-up Session.
- **Schedule** your next Follow-up Session.
- **Repeat.**

Remember: Systems don't work on their own. You have to work your system.

GET YOUR FOLLOW-UP TEXT TEMPLATES ——➤

Follow-up text templates

For a little bit of accountability to yourself and for setting expectations in the recipient, add this text at anytime:

If I don't hear from you by <date> I'll check back in.

That date, then, becomes your trigger.

Exploring possibilities

A man saw your work in a private home told the owner he'd like to explore the possibility of a commission with you. If you're interested ...

Dear Mr. McGarry,

Mary Montgomery said you had admired my work in her home. I am honored. I get a great deal of pleasure from those who appreciate my work. She also said you might be interested in a commissioned piece for your new office. I would love to talk with you about that when the time is right.

You can catch me at this email address or text me at <phone number>.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Your Name

<website URL>

<Instagram profile>

Not interested?

Dear Mr. McGarry,

Mary Montgomery said you had admired my work in her home. I am honored. I get a great deal of pleasure from those who appreciate my work. She also said you might be interested in a commissioned painting for your new office.

While I am currently unavailable for commissions, I invite you to view my available paintings online at <website url>. If you need further recommendations, please contact me at any time. I can think of a handful of artists who might welcome the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Your Name

<website URL>

<Instagram profile>

And when that loop is closed, send a personal note to the collector who passed along the information. Here are a couple of examples to inspire you.

1. Dear Mary,

Thank you, again, for sharing Mr. McGarry's interest in my work. He's coming to the studio next week, and I'll keep you posted.

*With gratitude,
Your Name*

2. Dear Mary,

Thank you, again, for sharing Mr. McGarry's interest in my work. While nothing has yet come of it, he has started following me on Instagram and has signed up for my monthly newsletter. Who knows what can happen in the future.

It means a lot to me to have you in my corner.

*With gratitude,
Your Name*

Thank you for the recommendation

I suggest a handwritten note to the head of the arts agency wrote a nice recommendation for your grant application.

Dear <name>,

Thank you for your sincere recommendation for my grant application. I know how busy you are, so I am particularly grateful for your attention. Please let me know if there is ever anything I can do to repay the favor.

*Appreciatively,
Your Name*

I am still around

A patron purchased a piece of your art two years ago and they haven't heard from you since your thank-you note. Good on you for sending that note, but now it's time to remind her that you're still around.

Dear Candace,

Shame on me for being so out of touch. You're not the only person I've been ignoring. No excuses! Just setting an intention of doing better from hereon out.

I thought you might be interested to know that I'm selling very well in the metro area now—grateful that my work is resonating with more people. The piece in your collection, <title>, is still one of my favorites and I see it as <how it relates to what you're doing now>.

<Mention any recent accolades, solo shows, etc.>

If you're ever in the area, please let me know. I'd love to have you as a guest in my studio.

*Kind regards,
Your Name
<website URL>
<Instagram profile>*

It was nice to meet you

You met a curator at an opening and briefly discussed the state of contemporary art. Send an "It was nice to meet you" note immediately while the memory of meeting you is fresh. You can do with a quick email ...

*Dear Mr. Varma,
It was nice to meet you at the opening last Friday night. I am so glad to finally see the work in person and appreciate your putting together the show.*

I look forward to bumping into you around town.

*Sincerely,
Your Name
<website URL>
<Instagram profile>*

Or, if you have a postcard, jot a quick note on the back. If the postcard is for something coming up, add the second line ...

It was nice to meet you at the opening last Friday night. I'd love to see you at my open studio in two weeks.

Set up that studio visit you discussed

*Dear Mr. Varma,
It was nice to meet you at the opening last Friday night. I am so glad to finally see the work in person and appreciate your putting together the show.*

As we discussed, I would love to have you visit my studio. Would the last week of the month work for you? I'll follow up in a few days if I don't hear from you.

*Sincerely,
Your Name
<website URL>
<Instagram profile>*