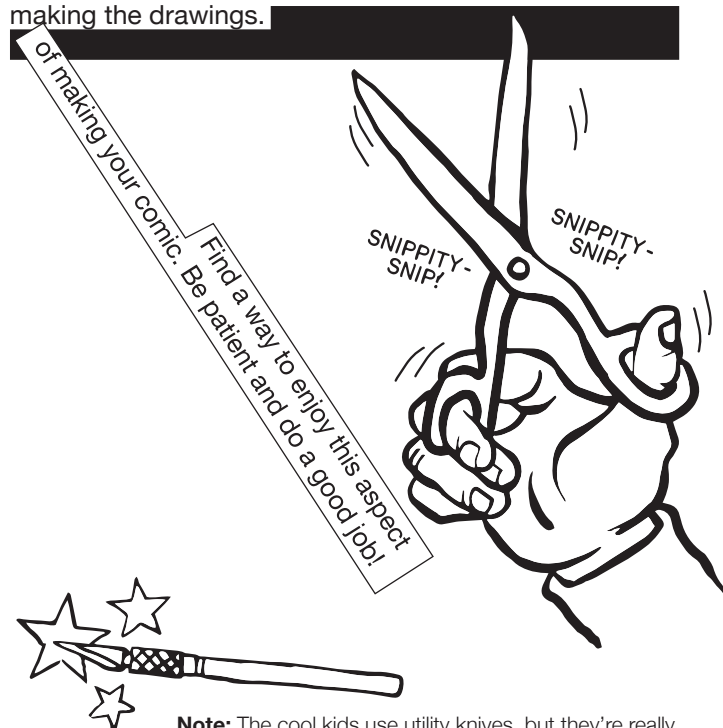Founded in 2015 by artist Christopher Sperandio, the Comic Art Teaching and Study Workshop at Rice University (or CATS) is dedicated to comics research and education. This mini-comic was developed from personal experience as well as from previously distributed materials. If you come into possession of a copy of this book, please feel free to use it, rip it apart and remix it -- as long as you give away the results!

Visit CATS online for a free PDF download of this book:
arts.rice.edu/cats or vada.rice.edu/cats

CUTTING AND BINDING

Depending on where you print your comics, there may be tools and materials for cutting and binding your mini-comic. What's available will determine how you finish your production. Maybe there's a fancy cutting tool that you can use, or maybe you'll have to cut everything with scissors. Cutting and binding your comic is as much a part of the process as having the idea and making the drawings.

of making your comic. Be patient and do a good job!

Find a way to enjoy this aspect

SNIPPITY-SNIP!

SNIPPITY-SNIP!

Note: The cool kids use utility knives, but they're really sharp, and you need a surface to cut on. Use sharp knives with **caution**, or better yet, stick with scissors!
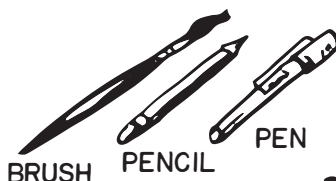
THE MINI-COMIC
MINI-COMIC

WATER JARS

TAPE

WHITE PAINT

KNIFE

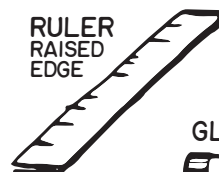BRUSH PENCIL PEN

ERASERS

PUSH PINS

COMPASS

TRIANGLE

T-SQUARE

INK

RULER RAISED EDGE

GLUE STICK

DRAWING COMICS

This mini-comic is mostly about the practicalities of book production. How to draw comics is a much bigger issue than can be covered in these pages. Drawing is a skill, like carpentry, and takes lots of time and practice.

Having said that, don't let any lack of drawing experience stop you! There are great mini-comics that just use stick figures! If what you have to say is interesting, people will respond. Can't draw a stick? Copy, cut and glue images and text into a collage for your book! As long as you're making changes, you'll be making something new!

> *LETTERING MUST BE SHARP, CLEAN AND EASY TO READ!*

More so than your drawing style, messy lettering will be a barrier to your audience. Draw horizontal guides that you can erase when finished.

BONUS IDEA: MAKE A PHOTO-COMIC!

Espero que hayas leído ya la Cartillita de Periodismo que sacamos en Palacio...

In many countries, there's a tradition of **Fotonovelas!** Have your friends act out your story for the camera. Print the photos on a laser printer and cut and paste them onto your comic template. Make word balloons and glue them in! For best results, photos should have a *halftone pattern* (little black dots), which you can apply in a program like *GIMP*, a free program for macs and windows. Like everything, experiment first to see if you like it. **Warning**: a photo comic can be a lot more work than a regular comic!

A MINI-HISTORY OF MINI-COMICS

Before the 1970s, the production of comics was out of reach for most artists. Printing was just too expensive. With the arrival of the copy machine, and starting with the DIY and Punk scenes, the self-production of publications exploded! Mini-comics and 'Zines (short for magazines) seem to be everywhere now! In fact, most cities in the world now host festivals celebrating these little, homemade books.

It all began with the Punks!

WHY MAKE A MINI?

Making a mini-comic is fun -- and it's easier than jumping into trying to make a full-sized, full-color comic book. Mini-comics are an inexpensive way to get your stories out of your head and onto paper. Making a mini-comic is a great group activity and a way to make new friends! Whether you sell, trade or give away your mini-comic, you'll be spreading your ideas. Who knows? Maybe you'll even develop an audience for your work!

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Before you make your first min-comic, read this book in its entirety! Be sure you understand all the steps involved. Make a paper dummy of your book and plan out what you're doing so you have the best experience. Once you've mastered the contents of this book, give it to a friend!
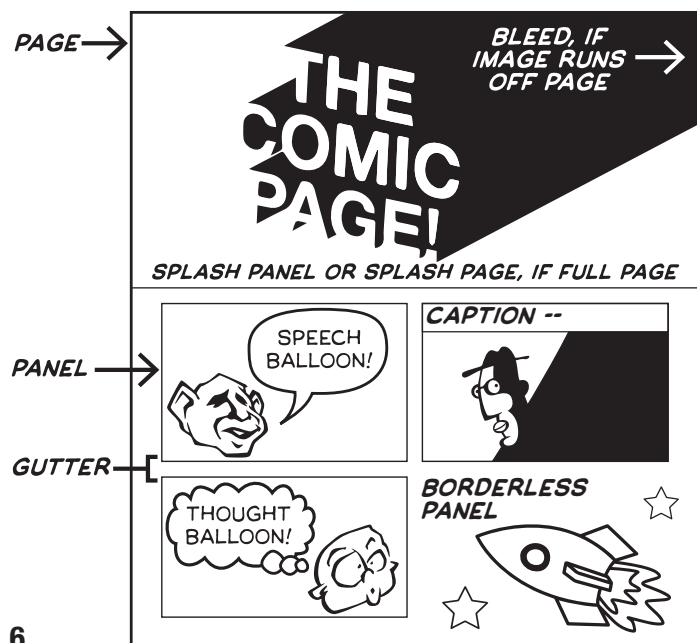
Finally -- have fun & enjoy yourself!

PLAN YOUR DRAWINGS

Comic artists start with pencil and then work over that with black ink so their works will reproduce well. Make a template that suits the final form of your mini. **For example:** If you plan on making a book like this one, you'll want each drawn page to be 4.25" x 5.5"

HOWEVER... copiers don't copy to the edge. Leave **AT LEAST** a quarter-inch margin around all four edges of your art, just to be safe - especially after cutting and binding your book by hand! If you want your artwork to bleed off the edges, you can trim your book down *after* you bind it. For this book, the *live art area* is 3.75" x 5", or the page size minus a quarter-inch for each margin.

PAGE →

THE COMIC PAGE!

BLEED, IF IMAGE RUNS OFF PAGE →

SPLASH PANEL OR SPLASH PAGE, IF FULL PAGE

PANEL →

SPEECH BALLOON!

CAPTION --

GUTTER →

THOUGHT BALLOON!

BORDERLESS PANEL

ONCE YOUR MINI-COMIC IS FINISHED...

Some mini-comics are made to give away! You could get with other mini-comic makers and organize a mini-comic festival or start a workshop of your own! There are distribution sources online, including mini-comic exchanges. Take a look around for more information on the world of mini-comics - but use common sense when communicating with strangers! Some comic or book stores have a section devoted to locally produced mini-books. Talk to your bookseller and see if they will take your book on commission. If they don't have a section for mini-comics, you could make a creative display out of cardboard and start one, although it may take some extra convincing on your part! There are lots of ways to display mini-comics!

MAKE A DISPLAY WITH CLOTHES PINS AND STRING!

YOUR COMIC HERE

... AND HERE!

... AND HERE!

Finally, if you want more info about the history of mini-comics, Fantagraphics Books has published several books on the subject. Check out the **Treasury Of Mini Comics** by Michael Dowers.

MAKING COPIES

Features, functions and quirks vary from machine to machine. It's **always** going to take more time and effort than you think. Allow yourself plenty of time at this stage.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR COPIES:

– Make sure the scanning bed is clean to minimize streaks and spots on your comic.

– Figure out the brightness settings so that you can get your prints looking their best -- and make test prints!

– Learn how to feed the pages so that your copies are printing on two sides and in the right orientation.

PRO TIP: Make **ONE COMPLETE COPY** of your book *before* heading into full production. Any mistakes or problems will present themselves, allowing you to avoid making multiple copies of something that you'll end up discarding.

As you copy, keep an eye on the how your prints are printing. You want nice, rich blacks! If you minimize the amounts of large black areas in your comics to get more mileage out of the toner.

THE COPIER IS YOUR FRIEND!

Treat your friend with patience and respect!

The same goes for the workers at the copy shop...

HI!

STAPLE, FOLD, FINISH

Once all your copies are made, you'll need to do the **folding, stapling** and any **trimming**. It's easier to staple pages **before** you fold. Depending on the size of your mini, you may need a special stapler with a **longer** arm. **Folding** is easier done with a binder's bone, a specialized tool used to crease paper. Your finger will work, in a pinch, but if you have a lot to do you, can use a plastic ruler or the edge of your scissors. Improvise!

STAPLER TIP: *Instead of slamming, try a firm press.*
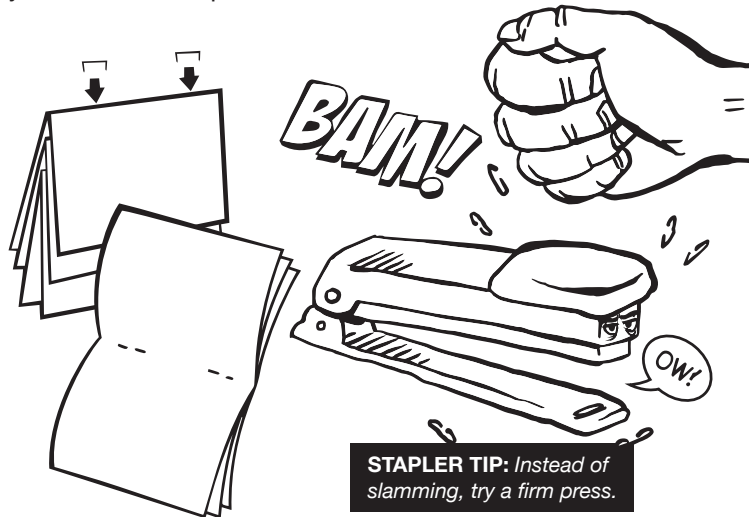
Once your book is copied, cut, collated, stapled and folded...
CONGRATULATIONS! YOU JUST MADE A MINI-COMIC!

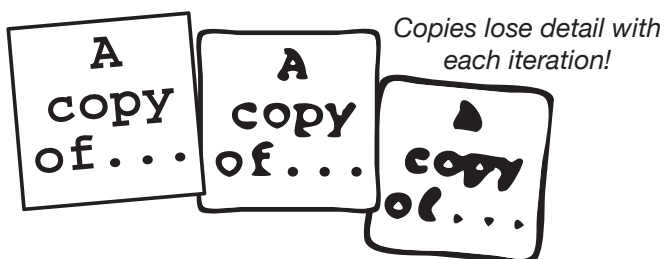You *could* add personal touches like hand-coloring, stickers or glitter -- or not. ***It's your book.***

WHAT'S YOUR BIG IDEA? *Big or little, maybe you already have a story to tell, but if you don't, here are some approaches you could take...*

The Listicle: Turn your list of favorite songs, movies, books, etc. into a mini-comic.

Write a "How To" in mini-comic form: Do you know how to do something unusual? Write a guide for others and share your specialized knowledge (like, for instance, this very mini) ! Or maybe you know an expert? Get them to share their experience.

Hidden Gems! Do you know something that nobody else knows? Some secrets are hidden in plain sight. Share your unique understanding!

An Unofficial History or a Visitor's Guide! Or.. have a favorite restaurant? Review it in mini-comic form!

OPTIONAL PAGE IDEAS FOR YOUR MINI:
– The inside front cover could be a table of contents or...
– You could use that space to dedicate your work to someone
– The back cover is the perfect place for your bio
– Short on material? You could do a page of trivia or a puzzle...
– Glossary of terms: if you use fancy words, maybe define them
– Further reading: more information is always better

MAKE A COVER THAT GRABS THE EYE!

TIME TO CLEAN UP! *WHITE OUT* IS YOUR FRIEND :-)

Once you get your pages drawn and finished, you ***might want to*** copy them and clean up ***those copies*** before printing your book. This way, you can touch up any blobs or lines that you may not want in your book.

This is especially true if you've taken a collage approach, or if you've made your drawings oversized and reduced and glued them onto your template. The edges of glued artwork will ***probably*** show up when you print copies. Copying those pages and then covering up any problem areas with ***WHITE OUT[1],*** will produce a better result. If you have a computer and scanner, you could scan your artwork and clean it up digitally, but the old fashioned way is perfectly fine!

NOTE: For each generation copied, the artwork will lose resolution. A copy of a copy of a copy gets muddier and muddier and muddier. The fewer times you have to make copies between your original artwork and the final publication, the better!

A copy of... A copy of... copy of...

Copies lose detail with each iteration!

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[1]*White Out* goes by different names in different places. You might know it as *Tipp-Ex*, or *Correction Fluid.*


MAKE A ONE-SHEET MINI

Make an **8-page** or **16-page** mini-comic using only a **SINGLE** sheet of paper! For the 8-page version, you don't even need to bind your book!

Fold an A4 page in half once lengthwise, and in half and half again sidewise and make a short cut as per the instructions below. If you want to make a 16-page book, staple the spine, and trim the outer edges. Another option is to make an 8-page comic with a full page image hidden on the inside. Play around until you figure it out! It's just one sheet of paper, after all!

Fold your 8-pager, then unfold and **CUT** from **A** to **B**, as indicated...

A   B

FRONT COVER

BACK COVER
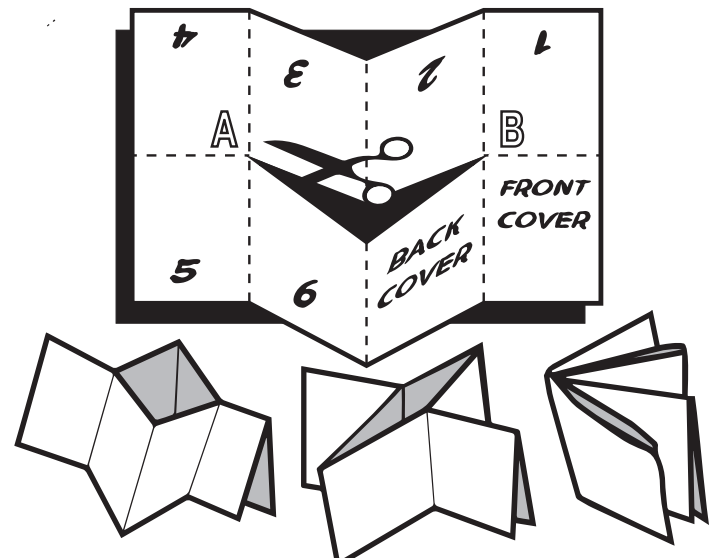
...then re-fold and push/pull the center pages outwards, and fold back!

RECOMMENDED TOOLS

Pencils and paper, black ink markers (fine point, heavy point), erasers, whiteout, scissors, rubber cement or tape, a stapler, and access to a copier (when you're ready to print).

START OFF RIGHT!

Assuming you have your great idea ready, you should start with a clear idea of how you'll print and bind your comic, and then work backwards from there!

The easiest thing to do is to draw your comics at the same size that you will reproduce them. Pro artists make their drawings one and a half, or even two times larger than the final comic they will produce. Working larger and shrinking your drawings yields a sharper result. However, when just starting out, keep things simple.
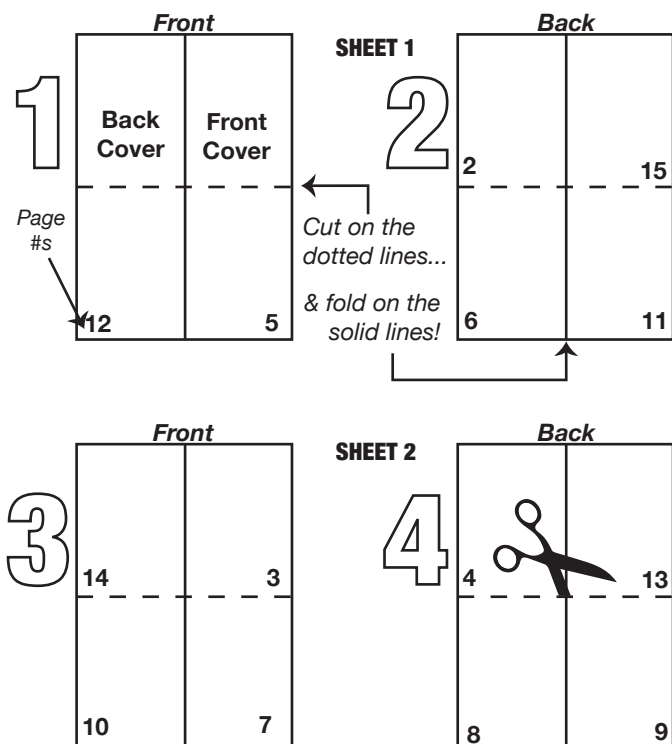
...AND MAKE A TEMPLATE!

Make a template according to how you will produce your book. Are you making a 1-page mini? That layout and aspect ratio (the proportional relationship between width and height) for your art will be different than that of a 16-page comic like this one. Using a template will help you make your drawings at the right dimensions, in the right order and orientation.

GO EASY!

PRO TIP: Number your pages so you can keep track! If you write your numbers *lightly* in pencil, you can erase them later!

## MAKE A 16-PAGE MINI-COMIC (JUST LIKE THIS ONE!)

Create a blank template for your book like this one. The template will consist of 4 pieces of A4 paper. Two for the front and back of **SHEET 1**, and likewise for **SHEET 2**. Measure carefully, and draw perpendicular center lines where you will cut and fold each sheet of your copies. Draw the "cut" lines dashed for clarity! Lightly number the pages in pencil as per the diagram.

Front — SHEET 1 — *Back*

1 | Back Cover | Front Cover
2 ... 15

Page #s

12 | 5

Cut on the dotted lines...

& fold on the solid lines!

6 | 11

Front — SHEET 2 — *Back*

3 | 14 | 3
4 | 13

10 | 7
8 | 9

COLLATING:

If you're making more than just a few comics, you want to get your pages organized. Put the pages of your booklet in the correct order (this is called "collating").

If you're making a mini like this one, you'll want to cut all your pages. Then make stacks of each page and set the stacks in the right order. To assemble your books, simply take one page from each stack in turn and repeat (and repeat) until there are no pages left!
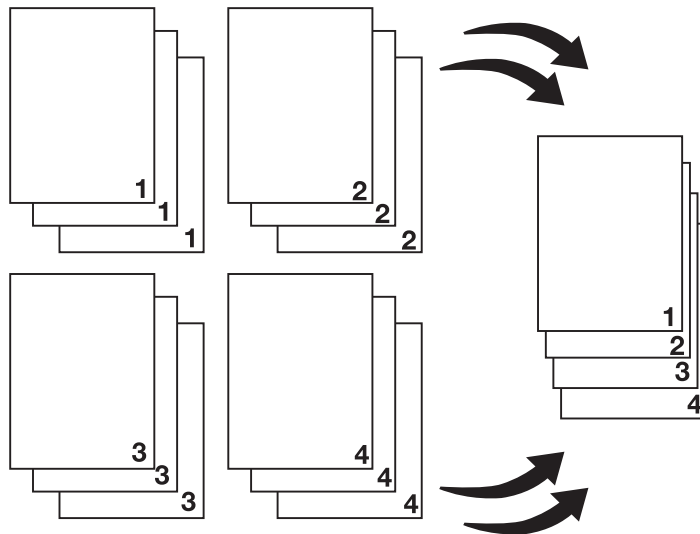
Organizing your pages is important, but it can be tedious. If you're making a lot of books, invite your friends over for a collating party! Reward them with a copy of your comic!

MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONCE

Mini-comics are complicated. Double check your work. Once you think you're finished, check for mistakes BEFORE you start printing and binding! Have a friend check your work! Check again yourself!

Making one mistake is bad, but making a mistake that you copy a hundred times and bind into a book is PAINFUL!

THIMK TWICE!

amd

PLAN AHEad