

AIGA Standards of professional practice

A professional designer adheres to principles of integrity that demonstrate respect for the profession, for colleagues, for clients, for audiences or consumers, and for society as a whole.

These standards define the expectations of a professional designer and represent the distinction of an AIGA member in the practice of design. AIGA members at the Supporter level and above who have agreed to adhere to these standards are denoted in the [Designer Directory](#) by an AIGA logo.

The designer's responsibility to clients

1.1 A professional designer shall acquaint himself or herself with a client's business and design standards and shall act in the client's best interest within the limits of professional responsibility.

1.2 A professional designer shall not work simultaneously on assignments that create a conflict of interest without agreement of the clients or employers concerned, except in specific cases where it is the convention of a particular trade for a designer to work at the same time for various competitors.

1.3 A professional designer shall treat all work in progress prior to the completion of a project and all knowledge of a client's intentions, production methods and business organization as confidential and shall not divulge such information in any manner whatsoever without the consent of the client. It is the designer's responsibility to ensure that all staff members act accordingly.

1.4 A professional designer who accepts instructions from a client or employer that involve violation of the designer's ethical standards should be corrected by the designer, or the designer should refuse the assignment.

The designer's responsibility to other designers

2.1 Designers in pursuit of business opportunities should support fair and open competition.

2.2 A professional designer shall not knowingly accept any professional assignment on which another designer has been or is working without notifying the other designer or until he or she is satisfied that any previous appointments have been properly terminated and that all materials relevant to the continuation of the project are the clear property of the client.

2.3 A professional designer must not attempt, directly or indirectly, to supplant or compete with another designer by means of unethical inducements.

2.4 A professional designer shall be objective and balanced in criticizing another designer's work and shall not denigrate the work or reputation of a fellow designer.

2.5 A professional designer shall not accept instructions from a client that involve infringement of another person's property rights without permission, or consciously act in any manner involving any such infringement.

2.6 A professional designer working in a country other than his or her own shall observe the relevant Code of Conduct of the national society concerned.

Fees

3.1 A professional designer shall work only for a fee, a royalty, salary or other agreed-upon form of compensation. A professional designer shall not retain any kickbacks, hidden discounts, commission, allowances or payment in kind from contractors or suppliers. Clients should be made aware of mark-ups.

3.2 A reasonable handling and administration charge may be added, with the knowledge and understanding of the client, as a percentage to all reimbursable items, billable to a client, that pass through the designer's account.

3.3 A professional designer who has a financial interest in any suppliers who may benefit from a recommendation made by the designer in the course of a project will inform the client or employer of this fact in advance of the recommendation.

3.4 A professional designer who is asked to advise on the selection of designers or the consultants shall not base such advice in the receipt of payment from the designer or consultants recommended.

Publicity

4.1 Any self-promotion, advertising or publicity must not contain deliberate misstatements of competence, experience or professional capabilities. It must be fair both to clients and other designers.

4.2 A professional designer may allow a client to use his or her name for the promotion of work designed or services provided in a manner that is appropriate to the status of the profession.

Authorship

5.1 A professional designer shall not claim sole credit for a design on which other designers have collaborated.

5.2 When not the sole author of a design, it is incumbent upon a professional designer to clearly identify his or her specific responsibilities or involvement with the design. Examples of such work may not be used for publicity, display or portfolio samples without clear identification of precise areas of authorship.

The designer's responsibility to the public

6.1 A professional designer shall avoid projects that will result in harm to the public.

6.2 A professional designer shall communicate the truth in all situations and at all times; his or her work shall not make false claims nor knowingly misinform. A professional designer shall represent messages in a clear manner in all forms of communication design and avoid false, misleading and deceptive promotion.

6.3 A professional designer shall respect the dignity of all audiences and shall value individual differences even as they avoid depicting or stereotyping people or groups of people in a negative or dehumanizing way. A professional designer shall strive to be sensitive to cultural values and beliefs and engages in fair and balanced communication design that fosters and encourages mutual understanding.

The designer's responsibility to society and the environment

7.1 A professional designer, while engaged in the practice or instruction of design, shall not knowingly do or fail to do anything that constitutes a deliberate or reckless disregard for the health and safety of the communities in which he or she lives and practices or the privacy of the individuals and businesses therein. A professional designer shall take a responsible role in the visual portrayal of people, the consumption of natural resources, and the protection of animals and the environment.

7.2 A professional designer is encouraged to contribute five percent of his or her time to projects in the public good-projects that serve society and improve the human experience.

7.3 A professional designer shall consider environmental, economic, social and cultural implications of his or her work and minimize the adverse impacts.

7.4 A professional designer shall not knowingly accept instructions from a client or employer that involve infringement of another person's or group's human rights or property rights without permission of such other person or group, or consciously act in any manner involving any such infringement.

7.5 A professional designer shall not knowingly make use of goods or services offered by manufacturers, suppliers or contractors that are accompanied by an obligation that is substantively detrimental to the best interests of his or her client, society or the environment.

7.6 A professional designer shall refuse to engage in or countenance discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability.

7.7 A professional designer shall strive to understand and support the principles of free speech, freedom of assembly, and access to an open marketplace of ideas and shall act accordingly.

Adopted by the board of directors of AIGA, the professional association for design, in 1994; amended November 2010 to include items 7.2 and 7.3.