



# Paintertainment



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## GETTING INTO FAIRS by Gretchen Fleener

If you've never done a big fair or festival before, the process of trying to get into one can be daunting. However, it doesn't have to be if you plan ahead, do your homework, and give it your all. I've been painting at fairs for over two decades and would love to share some of my experiences with you!

### Do Your Research.

Never try to get into a fair, especially one you have to pay to be in, without first having visited it as a consumer yourself. If a fair contacts you first, don't be lured in by attendee numbers. If it's an outdoor festival, the total number of expected attendees can be cut dramatically if it rains. You also want to make sure the attendees are the type who are expecting to come to spend money on their kids. Big numbers mean nothing to you if most of those are attending to buy crafts, or look at hot rods!

Your time is valuable, so use some of it to ensure that you'll be spending it well. If you're considering getting into a fair in 2020, plan on doing your research in 2020 and applying for 2021. Look up the fairs you are interested in, and mark your calendar in 2020 to remind you to visit. Bring your kids and have fun! Pay attention to the crowd, the variety of activities, how many families are there, prices of entertainment, and whether they already have any face painting or not. *(If they do, this is where I step aside...or think about getting in with some other offering. I work hard NOT to poach gigs from others in my area!)* If it looks promising, wait a month or two after the fair is over and it's organizers have had a chance to recoup from the current year, and then start the application process. This is the time to start the application process for next summer's fairs!

There are many factors to weigh when deciding if a fair will be worth your while. If you're set up solely outdoors, consider the weather. A 1 or 2 day festival can potentially be completely rained out. A 5-7 day festival leaves room for customers to come on the nicer day, rather than skip the entire event.

Then there are fees. Some may take a percentage, some a flat fee. You may not know whether it's worthwhile until you've tried it for a year or two, but make sure you won't be losing tons of money if it gets rained out. I've gotten festival to agree to me paying nothing, unless I reach a certain threshold first that ensures I make a profit, then I pay them a percentage after that. There are many ways to work this, but make sure the fees make sense to you.

If you find that the festival draws plenty of the type of crowd you need, and is lacking something that you offer, it may be worth your while to apply for. Make sure to prepare and plan ahead for your booth fees, insurance if you don't have it, compliance deposits, entrance fees and parking if needed. On the flip side, while you should never take on a gig solely for exposure, consider the future parties you may get out of the event. A festival closer to home may be more valuable to you as it will get you more desirable gigs that you'd actually be willing to travel to work at!

### Apply Yourself.

Once you've determined the event may be worth your while, it's time to apply. Most festivals will have some information online to start this process, whether it's an online form or something you mail in. If they have an office that is staffed year round, an in-person visit can never hurt! Make sure to fill everything out and get it in on time, and make a note of the date you're supposed to hear back.

Some fairs receive so many applications, they may keep you on file until a space opens up or they feel it's an appropriate time. In this case, make yourself a note once or twice a year to check in with them and send them information on some of your latest work or new offerings, to keep your proposal top of mind.

### You're In...Now What?

If you find out you're in, congratulations!

You will now be required to fill out more paperwork, sign contracts and fork over some money! You'll have a lot of things to figure out, like what your booth will look like, who will help you run it if anyone, what you'll offer and what you're going to charge. You'll get more paperwork with rules & requirements that affect all of these things, so read it carefully to make sure you don't accidentally give them a reason not to invite you back next year!

I could write a whole book on how to design and run a fair booth, but my best advice is to do it right. After considering important things like accessibility, functionality, and safety of course, whatever your parameters, create a space that you would want to work 12 hour days in, and an environment that welcomes customers and makes them want to stay longer. Our business is just as much about the experience, if not more than, our paint skills! We work hard as professionals to convey to our clients that we are more than just an artistic person who bought a set of face paints. Let your space reflect your passion for your craft, your dedication to your business, your investment in your skill. Anyone can put up a pop-up canopy and un-fold a table and two chairs. Make it memorable, make it unique, and make it YOURS! Design your space in such a way that you can't be confused with your competitors, and can't be forgotten by your guests.

### Reflect. Learn. Improve. Repeat.

Pay attention and take notes! Your first year is a year of research and learning. Always be striving to learn more about your customers and community, to improve your booth, and get better every year! Reflect on your festival and decide if it'll be worth investing another year in. Most big fairs take 3 years to become really profitable, so if possible, unless it's a huge flop, give it a few years before making the call. Address issues, learn from your mistakes, make changes, and do it again, and you'll only get better! 🎨



# What's News?



# ZOMBIE



**We Survived the State Fair!**  
Check out the blog this month and read about our experience running the "Glitter Glamper" at the MN State Fair!



**NEW in the Shop**  
We have a new round gem Step-it-Up stencil design, new Fusion makeup, new Glitter Cremes & more! Check it out today!



**Wet Paint Magazine**  
The fall issue of Wet Paint is now available and full of great inspiration for boy designs! Check out [WetPaintMagazine.com](http://WetPaintMagazine.com) & click on "Subscribe" to get your issue!

**October Coupon Code!**

**10% off**

Enter code **FAIR** at checkout. Shopping cart must total \$25 or more before shipping and taxes. Offer expires 11/1/19.