

A stylized illustration of a young girl with long dark hair and bangs, smiling as she pulls a heavy orange curtain. She is wearing a dark blue dress with white dashed lines and a yellow flower on the waist, over a yellow short-sleeved shirt. She has yellow and white striped socks and dark blue shoes with white laces. The background is split into a textured yellowish-gold on the left and a textured teal on the right. In the bottom left corner, there are simple red line drawings of a sun, clouds, a stick figure, a cat, and a tree.

how to
ILLUSTRATE
a picture book

Mireille van Yperen

COLOFON

How to illustrate a picture book
Mireille van Yperen

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About the book

After writing *'How to publish a picture book'*, I noticed that there are still many questions about making a picture book about the design as well as about the illustrations. That's why I decided to write a second ebook about making illustrations. This is not an official illustration course as there are plenty of them already. This is an ebook with tips that you should pay attention to when you want to illustrate a book yourself.

If you've read *'How to Publish a Picture Book'*, you're probably done with the story now. Like many new authors, you were probably shocked by the price of illustrations too.

I get it. But don't forget that creating a good illustration takes time. Starting with a character design, so that the character in the book always looks the same, followed by a mock-up to see whether text and illustrations work together and are alternated per page. The last step is to make the final illustration per page.

Apart from the fact that this takes a lot of hours, an illustrator also has the knowledge and skills to create professional illustrations that are ready for print.

After reading this e-book you are not a professional illustrator, but you do know what mistakes not to make when you want to illustrate your own books.



Analog or digital

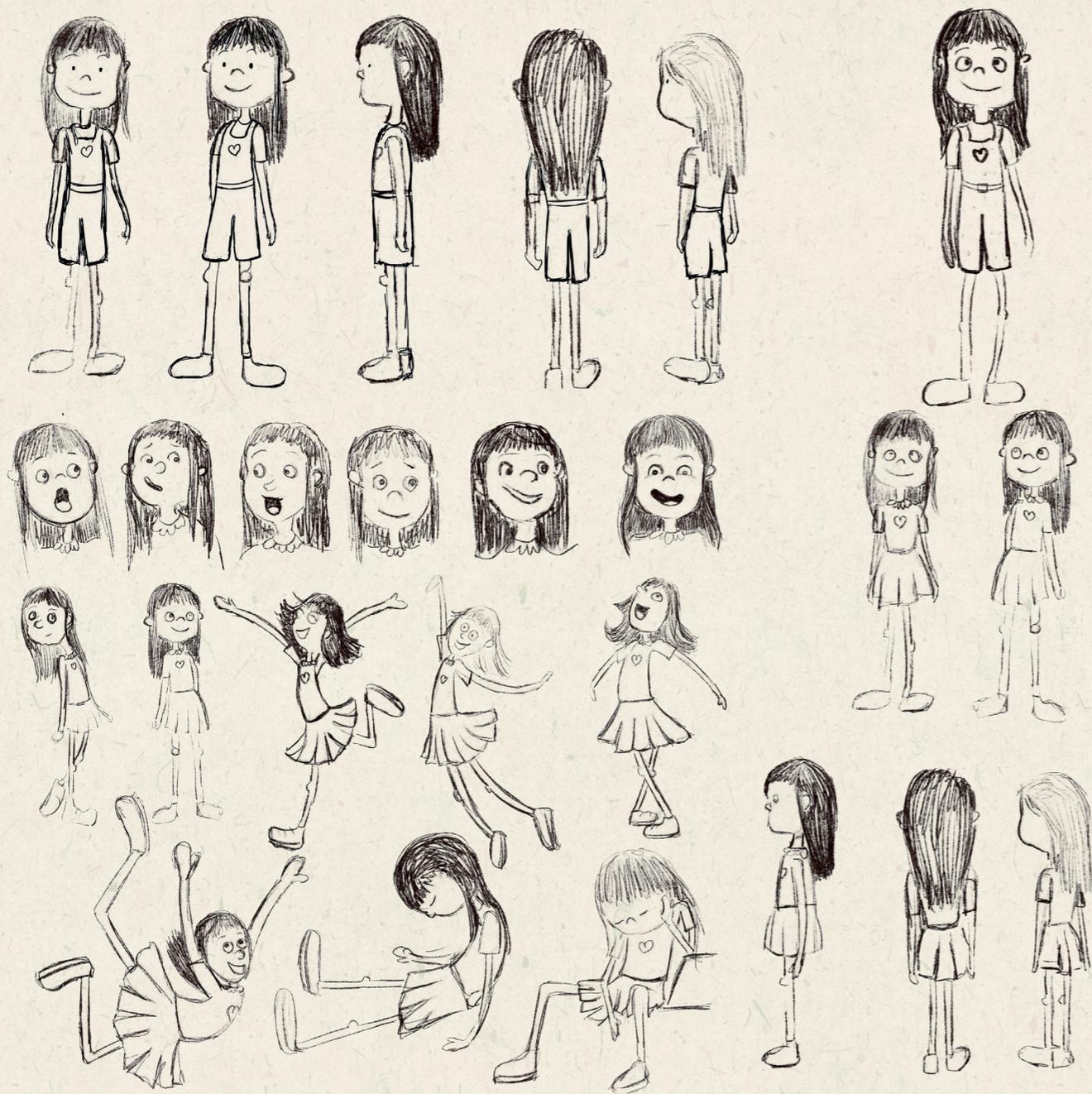
Now that the story for your children's book is ready, you are faced with the choice of hiring an illustrator or creating the illustrations yourself. You probably downloaded this book because you don't have the budget for hiring a professional illustrator and that's okay. That's why I wrote this book for you with tips on how to start illustrating a children's book.

Now that you are sure that you want to illustrate yourself, choose which medium you want to use for the illustrations. Do you prefer to work analog or digital? If you want to make the illustrations digitally, you can choose from various programs such as Procreate, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Fresco, Art Studio Pro, or Clip Studio Paint. Perhaps you have discovered a program yourself that works well for you. As long as the illustrations are made in high resolution (300DPI) and at 100%.

I illustrated my first book with color pencils. I loved the process but soon I realized that the process would take too much time, so I switched to Procreate.

If you prefer to work analog, there are a hundred thousand possibilities. Pencil, ink, gouache, oil paint, watercolor, or a combination of different types.

Please note that when the illustration is finished, you still have to find a way to properly digitize the illustration, by photography or scanning.



Character design

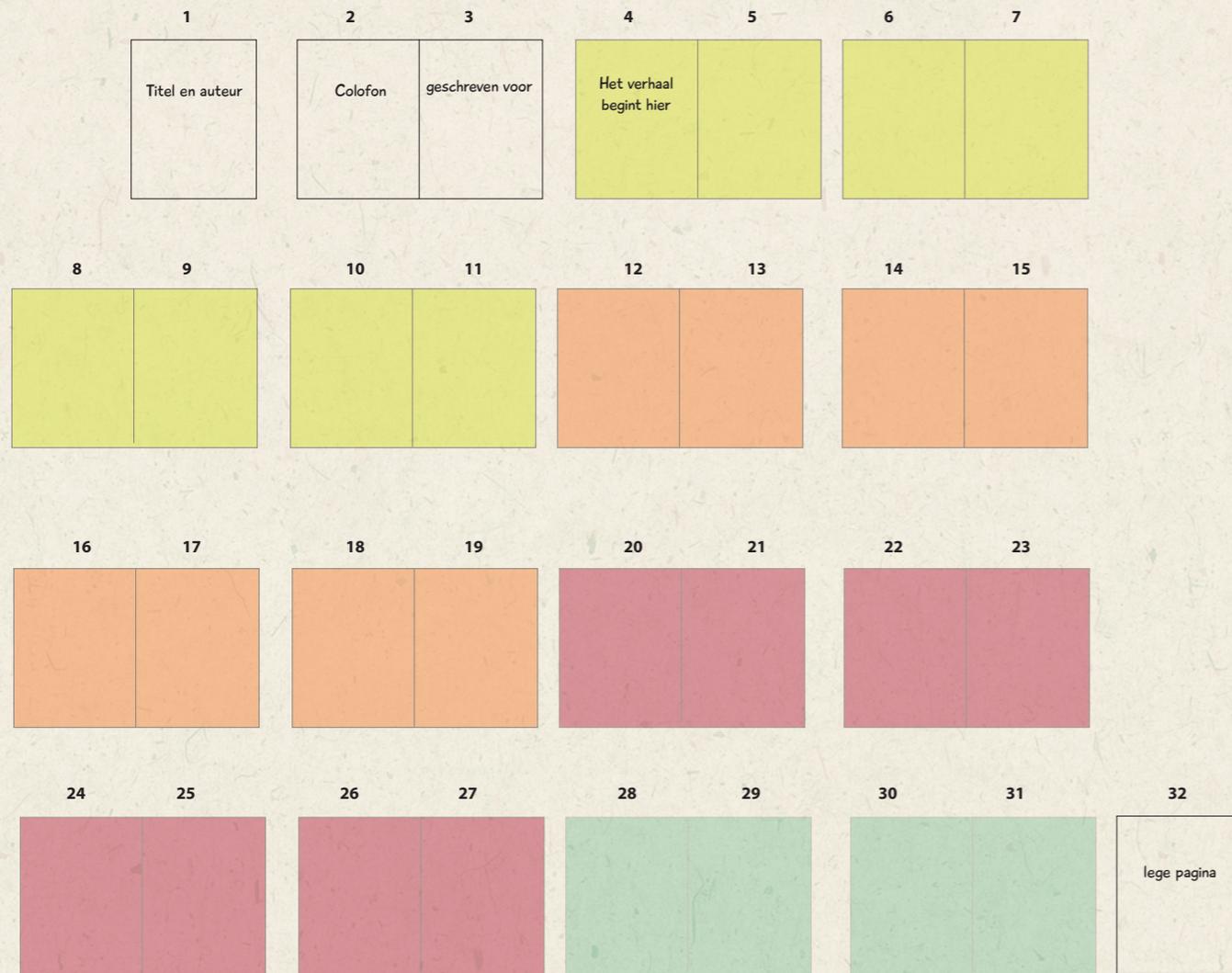
Now that you've decided on how you're going to create the illustrations, let's start designing the characters. Of course, you want the characters to look the same on every page. The best children's book characters that stand out, whether it's a superhero or a scared little mouse who conquers his fear, is the one that has that special quirk, the child can identify with.

When I illustrate a children's book, I often have a person I know in mind who has the same characteristics in terms of appearance or character. This helps me shape my character more easily, even if the main character is an animal. It's a way of visualizing it's behaviour and moves that helps in the development of your character.

You are now going to decide what the character looks like, what clothes it wears, what details in the clothes or hairstyle, and what facial expressions your character makes. Is your character thin, lanky, and flexible or big and bulky, boring or colorful, scared or a hero?

What will be the color palette of your character? Does your character have special items such as a ball, a kite, or a bag? A good practice is to draw your character in different poses. You can also use these poses later in your book.

The better you know your character, the easier it is to place your character in the different illustrations.



Creating a mockup

Creating a mockup is a step that many new illustrators skip, but it is very important. Nothing is more annoying than discovering afterward that the illustration you made for a certain page doesn't go with the text and you have to make the illustration all over again.

In a mockup, you make a rough sketch on every page of the illustration combined with the text. This allows you to immediately see how much space there is for the text and how much for the illustration.

Make sure there is enough space for the text. By choosing your font advance you can already get a good impression on how much space you need.

Print the mockup on paper so that you can fold it into a book. Now you can see whether text and illustrations work together and whether the book is a good read.

A mistake I often see as a graphic designer is that the illustrations are not illustrations but cute drawings that leave no space for the text

Tip: a good illustration does not repeat what is written in the text, it complements the text.



Developing the illustrations

Now that you've designed the characters and created the rough outline of the book in the mockup, you start working out the details. Some illustrators choose to work on several pages at the same time. For example, to draw the character on each page. As a result, they retain the feeling of the character so there will be little difference per page. Other illustrators finish page by page.

If you haven't already done that, make a clear line drawing of each illustration. You can use this line drawing as a base in the next step when you are going to apply color.

Now that you have the final line art, you might want to check them one more time with the text. Is there enough space for the text? Do text and illustration work together and is it easy to read?

Corrections in the layout are now easy to make before you put a lot of work into the final illustration.

Tip: Don't forget to make an illustration for the cover as well!



It's all in the details

Now that you're happy with the layout of the pages, you can finally start creating the final artwork. This will take quite some time. Pay in each illustration attention to the details such as in what season the story takes place, what time of year, what the weather is, and what time of day. Small details that give an illustration that little bit extra. If the story is set in winter, you will use more blue colors that radiate the cold than if it is set in summer with warm weather and therefore warm colors. You can also see these details in, for example, the flowers, plants, trees, and the sky.

When you work digitally, your files must be at least 300 DPI. This is important for the printing process. Make the illustration 100% or larger but never smaller. When you enlarge an illustration, you end up with a blurry image, something you definitely want to avoid. Working digitally also has its advantages, you can choose to copy certain elements, such as a background, flowers, trees, or other elements in the background. Be careful with copying the character, this can make the book look boring, so the child quickly loses interest despite the funny or exciting story.

If you work analogously, you will have to redraw each element in the illustration. Of course, you can cut and paste with a program such as Adobe Photoshop, but it is not a magical program. That also takes time and does not always have to give a better result.

Tip: Remember that learning how to illustrate is only a matter of lots of practice!



The last step

Before you can use the digital illustrations they have to be converted to CMYK. Many illustration programs work in RGB. CMYK colors are colors that are used in printing, so it is important to always convert the files. Now it's time to put the text and the illustrations into one file.

I always work in Adobe InDesign, but there are plenty of other free or cheaper options. Are you going to publish with Amazon? Then you can download a special program that helps you with the layout of the book. (Kindle Create and Kindle Kids' Book Creator)

If you have made all illustrations analogous, you will first have to digitize them by taking photos of the illustrations with a professional camera. This can be a difficult job because the light must be perfect. Scanning is another option, but again not every scanner at home can scan your illustrations properly.



The final product

You can be proud of yourself. You have not only written your first picture book but you also made the illustrations and published the book.

If you have chosen to publish with Amazon, you can now create your KDP account at <https://kdp.amazon.com/>.

In your KDP account, you upload the file for the cover and the file for the content. These are two different files.

After you have filled in all the information that is required, click on the magical publish button.

Amazon will check your book for content and errors. As soon as the book is approved after 72 hours, you can order the author's copies and you will have the book in your hands within a few days.

If you are unable to do everything yourself or if you still have questions after reading this book, you can always send me a message via [email](#) or DM on one of my social media channels. I'd love to help you!



Mireille van Yperen has been working as a graphic designer and web designer since 1995. In 2003 she started her own company DTPH. Thanks to her years of experience in the world of the graphic industry, she knows everything about design, color, and printing. In 2018 Mireille started writing, illustrating, and publishing her own children's books that she sells in her Spinselshop and at Amazon.

In addition to her graphic work at StudioDeeDesign, she still enjoys working on books by other authors and clients.

For more information go to: studiodeedesign.com
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