



DORSET ART WEEKS

ESSENTIALS FOR DORSET ART WEEKS


A GUIDE TO OPENING YOUR
STUDIO / EXHIBITION

DORSET
VISUAL
ARTS

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MAKE YOUR DORSET ART WEEKS A SUCCESS



This guide offers advice and tips to help you maximise your participation in Dorset Art Weeks (DAW), whether you have taken part many times over the years or a first-timer.

Evidence from past events consistently shows a strong link between self-promotional efforts and venue footfall. Artists who dedicate time to publicity and promotion generally see higher visitor numbers and increased sales or commissions.

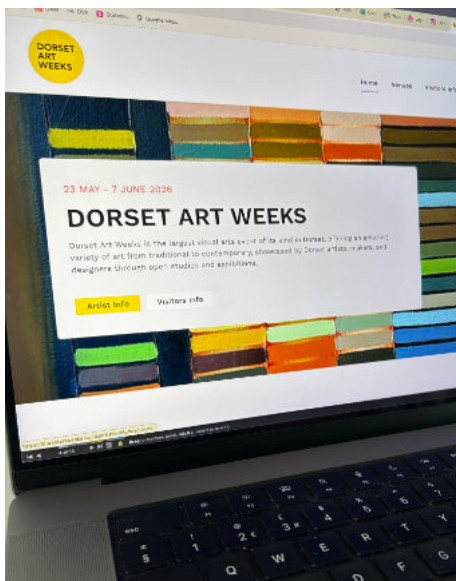
SELF-PROMOTION FOR DORSET ART WEEKS

Whether you are a solo artist at your studio or home or a larger group exhibition in a public space, self promotion is key to making the most of DAW.

You want to tell people about it in all the ways possible to you. You are part of DAW and that's a great start!

We are here to promote DAW as a whole. All this builds a body of awareness in the approach to the event.

Our 'umbrella' promotion includes:



Printed DAW Guide (print run 35,000), which comes out in April and is distributed throughout the county and selected places surrounding the region by a professional distribution service, using a targeted distribution strategy, ensuring there is very little wastage of expensive brochures.

Distribution of early promotional flyers (5,000 in March) to targeted outlets around the county to get the word out about the event (new for 2026).

Our website (new design for 2026), with all your venue listings and other information for visitors wanting to know more about DAW.

Paid print advertising and editorial pieces, including Dorset Magazine, Visit Dorset, Blackmore Vale, Sherborne Times, Marshwood Vale, Pier Journal, Dorset Business Chamber and Evolver's DAW supplement.

DORSET ART WEEKS

Regular social media campaigns (Instagram/Facebook), newsletter to subscribers, press releases.

Specialist PR advisor to promote interesting DAW features/stories to local and national press.

While the small Dorset Art Weeks (DAW) team works hard to promote the event as a whole, individual venue promotion is crucial. **The more you advertise your studio, exhibition, or venue, the better your chances of attracting visitors.** We simply cannot cover every part of Dorset with advertising, so your local marketing efforts will benefit both you and nearby venues.

Many visitors use the DAW Guide to plan their trips, with some travelling long distances or even timing their holidays to coincide with the event. However, many also look to see which venues are local to them. Therefore, **increasing your local advertising is highly effective in driving footfall.**

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So what can you do?

PROMOTING YOU AND YOUR VENUE

To attract visitors to your Open Studio or Exhibition, a strong online presence and proactive communication are essential.

Online Presence:

Ensure Consistency: Make sure your website and main social media profiles are current, feature recent work, and have consistent, correct contact information. If you are a DVA member check that your profile page is up to date with recent work.

Showcase Your Work: If a potential visitor sees your image(s) in the Guide and visits any of your online avenues, will they see a flavour of what may be shown at our Open Studio or exhibition? This may be the persuader on whether they decide to visit you.

Announce the Event: Add the Dorset Art Weeks event, including your specific opening dates and times, to your website. Use the official DAW logo.

Direct Communication:

Email Signature: Include the event details in the footer of all your outgoing emails.

Initial Notification: Send a 'Save the date' email to all contacts as soon as possible so they can schedule their visit.

Follow-Up Invitation: Before the event, send a full invitation detailing your opening times. Be sure to include the main DAW website address: dorsetartweeks.co.uk.

TIP: While a well-designed email is effective, consider sending some printed invitations to important contacts, specific clients, or potential galleries.

BUILDING YOUR NETWORK

Digital Promotion

Start/Grow Your Mailing List: You may not have a mailing list - that's ok. DAW is an excellent opportunity to begin building a vital mailing list, a key professional tool for any artist or maker.

Social Media: Actively promote your participation in DAW across all your social media platforms.

Local & Personal Outreach

Personal Network: Tell your family, friends, and neighbours, and ask them to spread the word. Personal recommendation is an extremely effective way to attract visitors.

Local Press & Publications: Check the submission deadlines for local "What's On" sections, village publications, and parish newsletters. These deadlines can be very early (monthly or quarterly). Provide them with details about what you are doing, your opening times, and a compelling photograph of you in your studio. Local editors can be more interested in featuring a resident artist than the broader DAW event.

Feature Opportunities: If you wish to attract attention from larger publications, develop an interesting, unique story that they can feature.



DORSET ART WEEKS

Advertise with us

Dorset Art Weeks Guide 2026

Limited availability!

FLOW

Dorset Art Weeks 2026
Headline Commission Award

DEBBIE LEE

OPEN CALL

Closing date
Friday 30 January 2026

23 MAY - 7 JUNE 2026
DORSET ART WEEKS

23 MAY - 7 JUNE 2026
DORSET ART WEEKS

The DAW GUIDE & COLLABORATION

Guide Distribution

In April/May, distribute the official DAW Guides you receive to key local spots, such as pubs, cafes, shops, schools, and community centres.

Note: Check the main distribution list on the DAW website to avoid duplicating efforts in locations we already supply.

Stock Replenishment: If you notice a listed outlet has run out of Guides, please notify us, and we will try to restock them promptly. Do not take Guides from these public outlets for your own distribution.

Artist Collaboration

Connect with other participating artists nearby to maximise your reach.

Joint Promotion: Consider working together to create a joint flyer or a local 'trail map' to guide visitors between your venues. Ensure this material includes the DAW logo, website, and QR code (you can download these from the Resources page on our website).

Flyer Swap: If you create individual flyers, swap them with nearby venues. Encourage visitors to visit each location, share knowledge about your work, and exchange useful information. This combined effort significantly boosts visitor numbers for everyone!



GUIDANCE ON PRICING & SELLING YOUR ARTWORK

Setting prices for your artwork is a personal decision with no fixed rules. Be confident in the value you place on your work, considering its success and your current standing in your art career - whether you are an emerging artist or an established creative.

Key Pricing Considerations

Value and Market Position: Are you an emerging artist testing the water, or an established creative with exhibitions and open calls under your belt, or something in between?

Do not undervalue your work or that of other artists. Be rational about where your prices sit in the market. Research other artists' price points to ensure yours are competitive and fitting.

Beyond the Hours: Pricing is not simply a calculation based on the hours spent creating the piece.

Framing Costs: If you choose to have work professionally framed, ensure you factor this cost into the final price.

RESOURCES AND IDEAS

Online Resources

The DAW logo and social media posts are available for download in the 'RESOURCES' section of our website.

Printed Resources



You will receive a supply of A4 posters and flyers when you collect your Guides and directional signs. If you require more, you have the option to print your own copies. We have created additional poster and flyer templates that you can download from the website for self-printing:

DAW Poster

A design with the dates for strong visual impact.

Branded A4 Poster with Blank Space

This template allows you to easily add your own venue details. It is ideal for display in local establishments, letting visitors know you are nearby. Consider collaborating with other nearby venues to share one poster.



Poster & Flyer Placement Ideas

Car rear windows

Local cafes, newsagents, shops

Parish or town notice boards

Pubs and community halls

Note: Laminate any materials placed outdoors for weather protection.



Offering a Range of Prices

It is advisable to offer items at various price points to appeal to different visitors:

Original Artwork: Offer higher-priced originals, both framed and unframed.

Prints and Reproductions: Include mounted prints or Giclées.

Reduced Section: Consider having a "studio sale box" for reduced-price items.

Small Items / Promotional Materials

Greetings Cards: People often like to buy cards as a token of appreciation. Even if you only sell cards during DAW, it's far better for visitors to have something they remember you by than leaving with nothing. They may return at the next DAW or contact you about something they've seen. Remember there will be a minimum order for printing cards. Do not undercharge for cards - the average greeting card is £3.

Business/Postcards: If cards are beyond your budget, a business card or postcard is an excellent promotional giveaway. Explore cost-effective online printers - Ask fellow artists who they would recommend.

Handmade Business Cards: Some artists create handmade business cards from studio offcuts, offering a personal touch and a memorable keepsake for visitors.

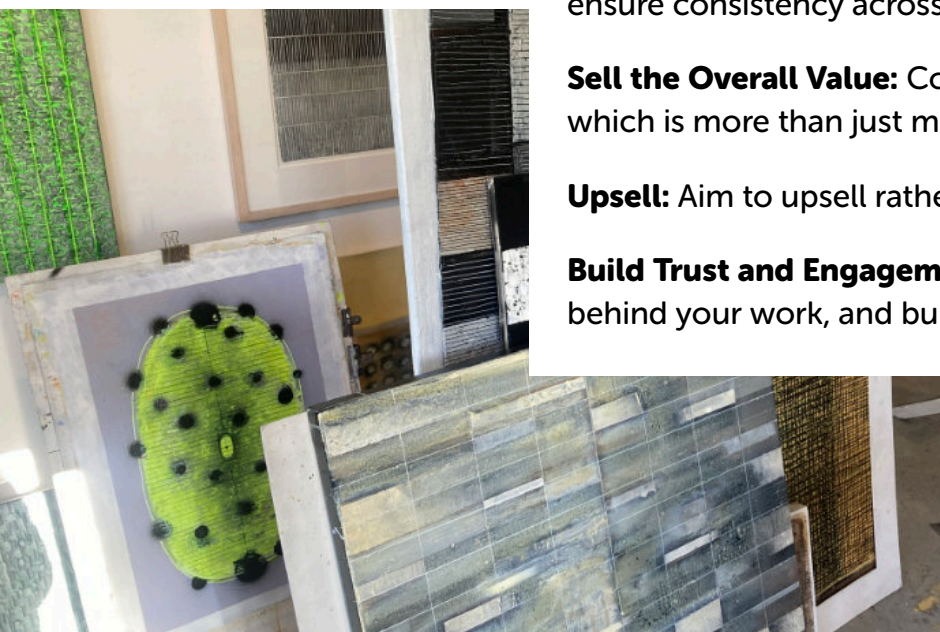
Selling Strategy

Be Confident, Realistic, and Consistent: While there are no strict rules, maintain confidence, be realistic about your prices, and ensure consistency across your work.

Sell the Overall Value: Consider the overall value of the work, which is more than just material costs and time.

Upsell: Aim to upsell rather than be talked down on price.

Build Trust and Engagement: Engage with visitors, tell the story behind your work, and build trust to encourage return sales.



PREPARING YOUR VENUE



Dorset Art Weeks (DAW) features a wide variety of open studios and exhibitions in diverse locations. Give yourself plenty of time to plan and prep your space - it always takes longer than you think!

For Public or Group Venues

If you are using a public space, your set-up window before opening may be short, making thorough planning essential.

If you are part of a group, meet beforehand to inspect the venue and decide how to divide the space between you.

Check the venue's specifications: Does it have a hanging system? What are the general 'do's and don't's'?

For Your Own Studio or Home

While you have more flexibility in your own space, remember that time passes quickly and suddenly the event is days away. Refer to our checklist to help you plan.



CREATING AN ENGAGING EXPERIENCE

Your exhibition reflects you!

If you are opening your studio, resist the urge to tidy away everything. Visitors are keen to see a "working studio."



Encourage Interaction: A mix of curated finished work (available for sale) and 'work in progress' is highly engaging.

Be Active: Visitors find it much more interesting to see you actively working (even just sketching) than sitting idly. Use this to your advantage to spark conversation.

Set up a Workspace: If you are using a non-studio space (like a room in your house), can you set up a worktable to do some work? You are open for several days and engaging in your creative process is a fantastic way to fill the time and not just waiting for the next visitor to turn up. Plus you may produce some great work!



Presenting Your Work

Pricing: Ensure all artwork has a clearly visible (preferably printed) price label, including the title and medium. For browser work, place these details on the back. People often don't like asking about prices - make it easy for them.

Artist Bio: Write and print a biography about yourself and your work. Visitors are likely to read this if it's displayed near your art.

Take-Aways: Consider producing a postcard with a short bio and contact details as an alternative to a business card.

MANAGING YOUR VENUE AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Cover/Breaks: If you are a solo venue, the days can be long. Do you have someone who can give you a break for lunch? Do not close your venue—if visitors arrive and find you closed, it reflects poorly on you and the entire event. Prepare cover in good time.



First Impressions: Make your venue welcoming and easy to enter. Remember, visitors have made an effort to see you, so a strong first impression is essential. This positive experience helps build your following and ensures a memorable visit. Even if a sale doesn't happen immediately, a good experience can lead to future purchases and encourages visitors to return next year.

External Appeal: Apart from the DAW directional signs you will put out near your venue to guide visitors to your entrance (see signs). How are you going to welcome visitors or passers by? Yellow bunting, a welcome sign on the gate or door, posters in the window. Make the outside enticing to encourage more visitors to enter.

Atmosphere: Quiet music can help create a relaxed environment. Check licensing rules for venues.



Interacting with Visitors: It's always good to greet visitors when they arrive; walking into a stranger's home/studio can be intimidating, and being ignored is very off-putting. After the initial welcome, gauge the situation based on the visitors' reactions. While some will prefer to look at the work in peace and in their own time, most will appreciate a reasonable chat with the artists. For many, meeting and talking to the artists is a major part of the DAW experience and what makes it so special and different from seeing work in a gallery setting.

Good communication with visitors, making them feel welcome, often leads to a greater engagement with the work, which can then result in possible sales.

Working Presence: If possible, be working on something while the studio is open.

Accessibility: Be prepared for visitors with accessibility requirements to contact you in advance of their visit. They might ask to arrange alternative ways to view your work.



Safety and Security

Public Liability Insurance (PLI): Securing PLI is your responsibility. DAW organises and promotes the event as a whole but cannot insure individual venues. Resources like a-n.co.uk offer useful information. If using a public venue, confirm their insurance coverage.

Venue Tidiness & Safety: Tidy all public access areas. Minimise potential hazards (e.g., cables, steps, low doors/beams).

Privacy: Clearly signpost or block off 'private' areas of your home. Hide away personal items. Tidy your garden if visitors are walking through it.

Be aware of distractions: if you have cash, store this securely. Ensure valuable works are also secure. If you are a solo studio, be mindful that you are inviting strangers into your own space.

Neighbours: Tell your neighbours what you are up to - there may be more cars around than normal. Invite them in to see your work!

Sales and Administration

Payment Options - Offer multiple payment methods to maximise sales:

Cash: Have a cash box with petty cash for a float.

Card Payments: A card reader (e.g., Sum Up or Zettle) is highly recommended, as many people do not carry cash, especially for larger purchases. These readers cost around £30 and charge a small commission. Even if you use it once a year for DAW, that's fine as there are no ongoing fees. Please note, this works with your phone, so you will need a good signal or wifi at your venue. If you already own one, make sure it works in advance of DAW and your app is up to date if you haven't used it in a while.

Bank Transfer: Have your bank details readily available for customers who prefer to use online bank transfers.



Contact Building: Use a visitor book or printed sheets to build your contact list. Ask visitors if they would like to sign it before they leave. It's important to state clearly on the form that their information is confidential and will not be shared with any third party.

Packaging: Wrap purchases with care. Have bubble wrap or brown paper and a wrapping area ready, especially for high-value items.

Stock Management (Especially for Group Shows): Consider whether customers can immediately take away their purchases. This is particularly relevant in group exhibitions. If they can, ensure you have replacement artwork ready to fill the gap. The customer may have travelled quite a distance to visit you and prefer to leave with their purchase.

Supplies Checklist

- Red dot stickers
- Receipt book for recording sales
- Cellotape/paper tape
- White/blu tac
- Hanging string/wire
- Bubble wrap / brown paper
- Cash tin / float
- Spare price labels
- Browser for unframed works
- Card stand
- Cable ties for directional signs (reusable ones are available)
- Old works
- Work in progress
- Materials/equipment
- Sketchbooks



Private View Planning

If you decide to have a PV, think about:

Invitations: Plan when to send postal invites, e-invites, or cards.

Logistics: Arrange refreshments and consider the best timing (early or late in the day).

Support: Get help!

Preparation: Prepare everything well in advance.

SIGNAGE

Maximising Visibility

Using DAW Branded Directional Signs

The new 2026 branded Directional signs are double-sided, larger, and clearly legible, featuring "OPEN STUDIOS & EXHIBITIONS" prominently.

Place directional signage out the night before the event starts and remove them immediately after the event closes.

You may wish to add your venue number to your signs, but remember that visitors focus on the yellow arrow rather than small details.

Recommendation for adding Venue Numbers: Use readily visible methods like purchasing bin numbers to stick on, or attaching a laminated A4 sheet with the number typed in a large, clear font. Avoid thin Sharpie markers, which are hard to read.

Use the supplied PDFs to print your own additional posters or banners in advance (see Resources on the DAW website).

If you require extra signage, you are welcome to utilise old DAW signs you may have.

The branded signs are reusable. Please keep them safe for next year's DAW as they are not currently recyclable.



Placement Guidelines

Avoid placing signs where they obstruct road junctions, street furniture, or other official road signs. They could be removed by Highways if they are not positioned safely.

Ensure directional signs are visible from main roads to guide visitors into your immediate vicinity.

Your signs are intended to direct visitors once they are nearby. If your venue is just off a main road, place a sign there.

Signs should be placed safely, without obstructing other road signs.

You cannot legally put signs on verges so be sensible and remove them if you are not open. These are put up at your own risk and the council or highways may remove them.

Please ensure all signage is removed within 24 hours of the event concluding.

Remember

The goal is to make finding your venue as easy as possible through clear and consistent signage.

Remember visitors also have your full address, directions, and what3words to help them reach your door.

Visitor Contact

Ensure the contact number provided in the Guide and on the website is accessible throughout the event so visitors can contact you if they are nearby and need assistance finding your location.



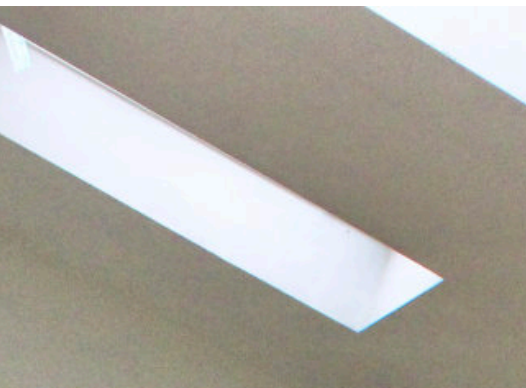
DOCUMENTING YOUR DAW

Gathering and Monitoring Visitor Feedback

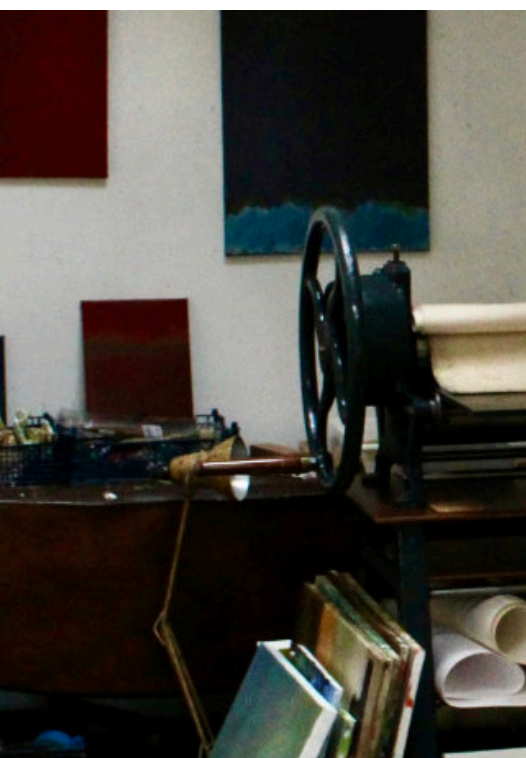
Collecting visitor feedback is essential for understanding your audience and improving future events.

Visitor Count: Maintain a clear and accurate tally of all visitors who enter your space. This can be done with a simple clicker, or an attendance count sheet. This will also be vital information for the DAW team and you will be asked for this information on our feedback form after the DAW has ended.

Visitor Book: Ensure your visitor book has clear headings for Name, Email Address, and a column for the crucial question: "May we add you to our mailing list for future updates? (Y/N)" (consent is vital for GDPR compliance). A comments section can also provide useful feedback.



Photographing your DAW



Take clear, well-lit photos of your studio before the event starts. Capture your artwork and display areas.

Action and Interaction: The most compelling images are often those that show your studio/exhibition in action.

Capture photos of:

- You, the artist(s), at work or demonstrating a technique.
- Meaningful conversations between visitors and yourself.
- The overall atmosphere of the studio - the interaction between people and art. **Note:** Always be mindful of visitor privacy and ask permission before photographing individuals.

FOLLOWING UP ON LEADS, SALES ENQUIRIES AND MAINTAINING MOMENTUM.

The closing of DAW is the beginning of the crucial follow-up process. Sustaining the interest generated during the event can convert viewers into purchasers.

Make sure that you follow up any leads as a result of your exhibition. Many visitors will have shown interest in your work and, if they have given permission, may appreciate further communication. A simple card or email is a good idea – "It was a pleasure meeting you at my studio yesterday. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like more information on my work or future projects."

Mailing List: For all visitors who granted permission on your visitor book, add their details to your mailing list database. This allows you to communicate with them about future exhibitions, new works, and other relevant artistic activities, turning a single visit into a lasting connection.

Post-Event Press: Did something great happen to you during DAW? A major sale, a visit from a notable person, an unexpected public engagement, or an overwhelming visitor response - share your news! Send a concise email to the local press with a selection of your best photos and a brief, enthusiastic summary of the event's success.



The most important thing to remember is to Enjoy yourself!

Opening your studio to the public for an event like Dorset Art Weeks is a significant undertaking, and it's essential to keep a positive and enthusiastic mindset throughout the entire process. Yes, there is a lot to think about, and a lot to organise, apart from creating your artwork itself. While the preparation checklist may seem long, covering everything from insurance and signage to tea-and-biscuit provisions - if you approach it with enthusiasm and focus on the joy of sharing your passion, the entire experience will be far more rewarding for both you and your visitors.

Open Studios and exhibitions represent a unique and invaluable opportunity. The audience is specifically seeking out and interested in the creative process and the resulting art. This is your chance to open your doors, not just on your finished pieces, but on your creative environment, your inspiration, and your techniques. You are not just selling art; you are sharing your passion.



The DAW team wishes you the best of luck!

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to email us at producer@dorsetartweeks.co.uk

Visit our website for up to date information and news. dorsetartweeks.co.uk

Follow us on Instagram @dorsetartweeks

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