

How to Create Great Mood Board

Modified from a 2019 article by Alexander Huls on Pond5

Creating mood boards can be an essential component of any creative process. Whether you're working on a video project, a TV show, a feature film, a website redesign, or a brand refresh, it's a means of compiling a visual map that offers directions for the creative road ahead. You want those directions to be good, so here are some crucial tips to help you create dynamic, inspiring, and helpful mood boards.

Create Based on Feeling, Not Just Aesthetic

Mood boards may understandably be visually driven — they are meant to inspire the aesthetic of whatever you're working on, after all. However, they're called "mood" boards for a reason. Your boards should capture something of the feeling you want your project to have, not just a look.

During the idea gathering stage, when you're grabbing inspiration, it's important to operate on emotional instinct. Assess materials for what feels right and produces a, "Yes! This is perfect for my project" reaction. (This, by the way, is also a good way to filter down all the material you've collected at the end of the search period).

Be sure to consider the feelings of an eventual audience, too.

Remember the Purpose of a Mood Board

Creating a mood board is, in part, an act of instinct and creativity. But remember that mood boards often serve a practical purpose as well. They can be an important pre-production tool to drive the entire look of your project. Because of that, your boards should have a degree of finality, so they can become not just a guide, but also an unchanging reference during production.

Another practical purpose is that mood boards are often used to help secure funding for projects during pre-production. By giving them a degree of locked-in vision, potential investors know precisely what your intention is, and won't be surprised (or upset) by a result that wasn't clearly outlined. A mood board is a tool for communicating creative ideas. They can make it a lot easier and more effective by having a collection of images embodying an idea, rather than trying to describe that idea in words.

Venture Beyond the Internet

With the easy access the internet provides to an endless number of images, it can feel like there's little need to search beyond your browser for mood board material. But be sure to search offline, as well. Watch lots of movies and TV shows. Take pictures of anything you stumble upon that proves useful — be it a store sign, graffiti in an alley, or a floral arrangement in a display window. And consider going to the local library to browse old magazines, coffee table books, or even textbooks.

Your Mood Board Medium

Corkboards and scrapbooks once ruled the mood-board world, but the digital era has provided many more options. There are platforms like Pinterest, and programs like Canva, StudioBinder, Pond5 and others specifically designed to facilitate mood boarding. There are a lot of options in terms of mediums, and no wrong or right answer. It's all about preference. But give it some thought (or trial runs) early on, because you don't want to go down one avenue, find you don't like it, and have to adapt to another.