

How To Furry Version 2.0

The purpose of this guide is to provide a codex of behaviors, norms, cultural attitudes, and the more important parts of the furry lexicon. Specific topics covered include fursona creation, commissioning artists, roleplay, and which conventions are worth attending. It is the hope, of those who write this guide, to provide a singular resource that can be used as an encyclopedia or guide to the furry fandom. By doing so, we hope that individuals searching for information might find this resource helpful in understanding furies.

To begin, when discussing furies, there is one unique term that should be understood. That term is “Fursona”. The word “Fursona” means “An anthropomorphic character which has been created for the purpose of representing someone within the furry fandom.” Such a character may be used in works of fiction. However, the primary purpose of the character is to represent its creator.

Almost 100% of furies have a Fursona. In many ways, a Fursona is an answer to the question “What would you look like if you were anthropomorphic?” Because the furry fandom has an immensely strong presence on the internet, this character is often treated the same way someone may treat a screen name. That is to say, the character is fairly personal, unique, and used to identify a person.

Creating a fursona can be a fairly involved process. The process itself does change from person to person, but most people will agree there are certain checkpoints that all paths will eventually lead to. One of the earliest points in creating a fursona is species selection. Species selection can be an interesting process in and of itself, due to the variety of ways that people go about it. The specific species used is not limited by many factors. The only real limitations are your ability to communicate specific details about the species and your connection to the species. Many furies, a dominant portion in fact, have some form of connection to the species used in their fursona. The connection does not need to be particularly deep. A choice based upon a nickname from high school is just as valid as a choice based on a life-changing event involving an animal. For the purpose of the character and your involvement in the furry fandom, you will be looking at this animal a lot. Understanding this, the bare minimum for species selection is that you can tolerate looking at your selected animal for extended periods.

When considering a species, it is important to remember a few things. First and foremost, the animal you select doesn’t need to be real. Dragons and Gryphons, for example, are acceptable choices. Furthermore, the animal you select can be a hybrid of two or more naturally occurring animals. One such hybrid that had some prevalence years back was a “Folf” (fox-wolf hybrid). Bear in mind however that stranger selections will be more difficult to work with. Depicting these characters is rather dependant upon artistic talent. So if you are not an artist then you will need to communicate details about your Fursona to someone at some point. As a result, if you want 13 polka-dots on your Fursona’s forehead in a very specific arrangement then you should be very good at communicating.

After a species has been selected, there are a few other checkpoints in the process. Most of these are lumped together in a “general traits” category by most people. These general traits typically include name, fur coloration, markings, height, weight, and eye color. There are a few traditional approaches to this process. Two main approaches stick out more than the others, which will be covered here. The first method is to keep things fairly true to life and the other is to run with your imagination.

Keeping things true to life, as one might expect, means that, for the character creation process someone will be keeping as many real-world details as possible. This means that information like height, weight, and eye color will be a direct copy of a person’s real-life information. Keeping things true to life may also mean keeping fur, scale, or feather patterns and colors close to what occurs in nature as well. The traditional method is used to create a character that is a fairly direct representation of what someone looks like in real life. Identifying this kind of character, at a glance, is as simple as looking for a back-story. If the character has an elaborate back-story, then it wasn’t created using a true to life method.

The second method for character creation is letting your imagination run wild. This process is exactly what it sounds like. A character created using this method must only have a physical resemblance to the species it was based off of. Fur colors, eye colors, and other physical traits do not need to exist within the realm of physical possibility. For example, a fox with blue fur and purple eyes that is capable of

flying is acceptable to someone who has used this method. These characters often include traits that their owners wish to emulate or would like to have one day. It is not unusual to see characters that have been created using this method being in shape and having a low percentage of body fat, for example.

The final meaningful checkpoint, when creating a fursona, is determining whether or not it will be a “feral” or “non-feral” character. The word “feral” refers to the natural body shape of the species as it occurs in the world. Non-Feral refers to anthropomorphic characters that display obvious human qualities like hair, eyes, bipedalism, and human hands and feet. Non-Feral characters can also display emotion through language and hand gestures.

It is not unusual to have someone wish to change their fursona. Many factors can come into play for wanting to leave a certain species or style. Much like the process of making your fursona, everything can vary. The only real difference is that you clearly communicate with everyone what has changed. If you originally were a shark, and want to change over to a giraffe, people need to know that the change took place. Else your friends might get confused.

The most common way to inform everyone is to post a journal or a widely seen text post detailing the new fursona. Often times, this includes an upload of some artwork featuring the new you. Most times, people don’t share why the change took place. Though it’s generally accepted that it’s a personal matter, and it’s in bad taste if you pressed the question. Most of the people that do share the reasoning basically say that they are not “connected” with the species or character anymore, and it’s as simple as that. It’s what happens with the old fursona that things can get a little complicated.

There are varying ways to handle the old fursona. Some people with multiple characters and OC’s choose to keep the design but change the personality a little. This way they don’t feel like they are losing a part of their past. Other people will get rid of the character completely and never speak of them again. Though it’s more common that they just keep the artwork uploaded and just don’t do anything with the design again. Lastly, and least common of all, is to give away the old fursona. Sometimes the fursona just “fits” better with another person. They may be a friend or family member that is just more attached to the character that you are, and that is fine. Just be sure to make it clear that the change is happening! Again, you don’t want to cause confusion if you can avoid it! It is also recommended that you change the name of the fursona as well, as a new person taking it may want it to feel more like them.

There is a certain kind of character that, generally, is looked down upon. That character is known as a “Sparkle-dog”. Let’s start with what a sparkle-dog is. To put it simply, a sparkle-dog is a character or Fursona that is so over-designed that it hurts the eyes. Most sparkle-dogs consist of rainbows for no real reason, superpowers, and physical features that are there for the sake of having them. People that make sparkle-dog characters are attempting to make a really original character, but end up doing too much. It’s not a bad thing to have a superpower, or to have wings. Just keep in mind that these should be a feature of the character, not THE feature of them!

Having a sparkle-dog character is not necessarily a bad thing. It’s just that most of the time, it feels like a copout to taking the time to design and fully flesh out a character. With a Fursona, it feels even worse. If you feel like your fursona is getting a bit much, then show someone. Most of the time, a fresh set of eyes will be able to tell if something is going too far.

The main reason that people make sparkle-dogs is that they want to make a unique character. Though there are many more ways to do so without changing the look of them at all! Things like personality and the stories you can tell will make someone stand out much more than being made of sparkles and glitter.

Moving on from character creation, there is one topic that will be of significant importance to most people who wish to actively participate in the furry fandom. That topic is acquiring art of a fursona or other character that you may have created. It should be noted that this process is where you really start to note a lot of customs within the furry fandom. As a result, this section should be taken as being subject to change.

There are so many artists in the furry fandom. Because of this, there are a few ways that they display their commission information. Some have journals linked in their profile ID’s on websites such as furaffinity and weasyl that explain what their prices are. Some even have pictures with an example of each style they are offering and a price point. Though a few artists have a more fluid

system of commissions. These artists don't have anything open all the time, but instead post journals with limited slots and a specific style. This can get a little annoying, as you will have to follow them and keep updated with their journals to try to snag a spot. In the end though, if you have any questions about their commissions and what they offer, just ask! Most artists are friendly and will be willing to answer a few questions about their artwork and prices.

In most every situation, artists accept payment through PayPal. If you do not have an account there, then you will be hard-pressed to find an artist willing to work with you outside of conventions where you can pay with cash.

Some artists will accept art in payment for art! This is called an art trade. While not all artists accept this as a viable form of payment, it might be worthwhile to see if they do. Most artists will have it clearly labeled near their commission information if they accept art trades. If they do not, or you cannot seem to find it, then assume they will not be willing to do an art trade. If an artist doesn't want to art trade, then do not push the subject. Some artists get all their money to live via commissions, and the idea of giving art without monetary payment can be really offensive. If you do find someone willing to accept your art for a piece of theirs, then contact them to set up the terms. Most of the time, you will have to settle a bit and you may not get exactly what you want. Art trades are fun to get something random for a little something random from you.

This brings us to the next topic. There is a question that will come up every few weeks for people that are at least somewhat active in the fandom. The topic is, "Is asking for free art acceptable?" Yes and no. For this, it REALLY depends on the artist. Most of the time, it will be a no.

Again, some of these artists live their lives by their art. To get nothing for their effort will be about the worst thing they could do. Though some artists will do free artwork. These artists might be just starting out or wanting to expand their fanbase. Free art is just one way they can do so. Usually, they give out free art in one of three ways. They can offer them as a raffle, where you submit your name or leave a comment on a journal and they pick a winner by using a random number generator.

Alternatively they can have some type of contest, like 10000 viewer or to color a lineart of theirs.

Finally, they could simply have a free art livestream. In the streams, the artist will be giving away some style of artwork to people in the chatroom. These may be simpler versions of their commission work, but free art is free art, and it's in poor taste to complain about something you paid nothing for.

This is true for the same reason you don't tell someone handing out free samples at the supermarket that you want a different product because you don't like what they gave you.

As a general rule it is rude to complain about the quality of free art or the specific details.

Unless the artist is drawing your character in an offensive manner, comments should be limited to relevant information to the character. Relevant information includes weight, height, fur color, eye color, and special items that the character is typically depicted with. It is fine, for example, to mention that a character has green eyes and not brown. Generally the artist picks the pose, background, style, and specifics of any art produced without payment.

Changing topics, roleplay is something that should be addressed. As someone might expect, roleplaying comes up a lot among furies. After all, this is a group of people built around the idea of fictional characters with unusual features that sometimes have bizarre personalities to match. Because of how often roleplay comes up, it is vital to understand how to roleplay properly and do things well.

The first vital step to roleplaying is understanding your character's species. Do some research on how your species acts and behaves to get a better understanding of how you should roleplay. Of course, your character should have a personality that you've defined, so make sure to adhere to that as well.

Generally, only you and your roleplay partner(s) decide when enough is enough. Because roleplay can exist on the entire safe-for-work and not-safe-for-work spectrum, there isn't really a set limit to what you can and can't do. However, if you are roleplaying on a website with rules for how to roleplay, make sure to follow them, as infringement can lead to banning.

There are plenty of forums available for roleplay, all you have to do is search for them! Another method is private roleplay, involving two people. This takes place through private messages.

The internet is a great place to start when looking for a convention. There is a plethora of resources available to you. A simple Google search can lead you to a convention that is in your area, and that is readily accessible to you. Another method is through simple word-of-mouth. Ask people! A great way to find conventions is by asking people who have been to them before. Megaplex, Anthrocon, Rainfurrest, Midwest Furfest, Furry Weekend Atlanta, and What the Fur? are the most noteworthy conventions that you are likely to hear about. However, there are smaller ones that are more local to different areas.

There are a number of people that you should make an effort to talk to at your first convention. First and foremost, there's a good chance you know a few people there. Usually these people are acquaintances that you know from reddit, Furaffinity, or a livestream. Seek these people out first. You know them, you share an interest with them, there's a good chance that you'll have fun with them. If you're going to a convention, then there are probably also some artists that you are following. It's worth it to seek these people out as well.

NOTATIONS:

There are obviously a few gaps in this guide that will be filled in version 3.0. Depending on reception to this guide, those gaps will be filled sooner rather than later. These gaps include, terminology, places to socialize, and other cultural norms within the fandom. As always, any party who is interested in contributing to this guide is welcome to participate in all future iterations.

Authors and Contributors:

Rob Swanson - Outline, Introduction, who to talk to at your first convention, Fursona Creation, Species Selection, some topics in the Fursona Creation categories, some edits to the Commissioning Artists category for elaboration to Zaezar's work.

Zaezar - Changing the Fursona, Which conventions are worth attending (outline), Sparkle-dog Avoidance, Getting information, Making payments, Is free art acceptable?

Kit (aka Kirito on weasyl)- Where to find conventions, How to play your character's species, When is it too much (Roleplay), Where to roleplay, Feral vs. Non-Feral.

NOTES FOR AUTHORS AND CONTRIBUTORS:

Type stuff here if you want people to double check something that you did.