



FREE REFERENCE · NO EMAIL REQUIRED

Media jargon, in plain English.

Every term a photographer, videographer or agency might use at you, explained so you can tell whether what you are being sold is what you need.

This exists because the fastest way to overpay for creative work is to nod along. None of these terms are complicated. They just get used as if you already know them.

TERM	WHAT IT ACTUALLY MEANS
Retainer	A fixed monthly fee for an agreed amount of ongoing work. Cheaper per item than one-off jobs, and it reserves the person's time.
Deposit or booking fee	Money paid up front to reserve the date. Usually non-refundable, because the date is now unavailable to anyone else.
Day rate / half day	The price for a block of time on site. A half day is usually up to four hours, a full day up to eight. It rarely includes editing time.
Scope of work	The written list of exactly what you are getting. The most important document in the whole arrangement.
Scope creep	Work that gets added after the price was agreed. Not malice, just drift. A written scope turns it into a quote instead of an argument.
Revision round	One batch of your notes, applied. Collect all your feedback into one list rather than sending it in pieces, or you will burn a round on three words.
Rush fee	The premium for delivery faster than standard. Real work, genuinely reordered around you.
Kill fee	What is owed if a job is cancelled after work has started.
Net 15 / Net 30	Payment due 15 or 30 days after the invoice date. Ask for a real date instead.

When someone uses a word you do not know, ask them what it means in one sentence. Anybody good will answer plainly and be pleased you asked.

TERM	WHAT IT ACTUALLY MEANS
Copyright	Ownership of the work itself. Usually stays with the person who created it unless a contract says otherwise.
Licence	Permission to use the work in agreed ways. This is what you are normally buying, not ownership.
Usage rights	The specifics of that licence: where, for how long, and for what purpose.
Perpetual	No expiry date on your licence. Worth asking for.
Exclusive	Nobody else can license the same images, including the photographer. Costs considerably more.
Commercial use	Using the work to promote a business. The line that decides whether releases are needed.
Model release	Written permission from a recognisable person to use their image commercially.
Location release	The same thing, for a property.
Work for hire	An arrangement where you own the copyright outright. Rare, expensive, and usually more than you need.
Credit	Naming the creator when the work is published. Free to give, and it matters to them.

THE ONE THAT COSTS PEOPLE MONEY

Paying for a shoot does not automatically mean you own the photographs. In most places the photographer holds copyright as the author, and you are buying a licence. That is normal. It only becomes a problem when nobody wrote down what the licence covers.

TERM	WHAT IT ACTUALLY MEANS
Coverage window	The agreed hours the photographer is working. Not the same as when your event starts.
Call time	When they arrive, which is usually before the window starts so they can set up.
Golden hour	The hour after sunrise and before sunset. Soft, warm light. Worth planning around.
B-roll	Supporting footage: hands working, details, the room. It is what makes an edit feel like a film instead of a talking head.
Establishing shot	The wide frame that tells the viewer where they are.
Hero shot	The single best frame, the one everything else supports.
Second shooter	A second photographer covering angles the first one cannot be in two places for.
Lav or lapel mic	The small clip-on microphone. If anyone is talking on camera, you want one.
Vertical-safe	Framed with enough room that it can be cropped to 9:16 for Reels and Stories without cutting anyone's head off.
Run of show	The timed schedule for an event. Send it in advance and you get better photos.

After the shoot

TERM	WHAT IT ACTUALLY MEANS
Culling	Choosing the keepers out of hundreds of frames. Genuinely takes hours.
Colour grade	Adjusting colour and contrast so everything looks intentional and consistent. Not a filter.
Retouching	Pixel-level work on individual images. Usually charged separately and only worth it on a handful of frames.
Raw files	Unprocessed camera files. Large, flat-looking, and not usable without editing. Rarely included, and usually you do not want them.
Hero piece plus cutdowns	One main film plus several short vertical versions cut from the same footage. The standard modern package.
Aspect ratio	The shape of the frame. 16:9 is wide, 9:16 vertical, 1:1 square, 4:5 the tall Instagram post.
Gallery	The private web page where your finished photos live for download.

Web and marketing

TERM	WHAT IT ACTUALLY MEANS
Above the fold	What someone sees before scrolling. The most valuable space you own.
Call to action	The one thing you want a visitor to do. Call, book, order. One per page.
Domain	Your web address. It should be registered in <i>your</i> name. Always ask.
Hosting	The service that keeps your site online. Separate from the domain, and from who built it.
Responsive	The site works properly on a phone. Two-thirds of your visitors are on one.
SEO	For a local business this mostly means your Google profile, your details matching everywhere, and a fast site.
Impressions vs reach	Impressions is how many times a post was shown. Reach is how many separate people saw it. Reach is the honest one.
Organic vs paid	Organic is what you get for free. Paid is what you get for money. Neither replaces the other.