

Writing an Academic Brief

What is the Point of a Brief?

Creative brief definition “a type of educational or business document including desires and requirements” i.e. what you want and what you need.

Despite the name, it’s usually better to write more than less.

What is the Point of a Brief?

It's helpful for you: A brief is a blueprint for your project and should be as helpful for you as it would for a client.

Going through the process of writing the project details down can often highlight areas of risk or things that need thinking about further.

What is the Point of a Brief?

Gives peace of mind: A brief provides confidence that you stay on course when it comes to the project scope and that you're not going to end up with any surprises.

What is the Point of a Brief?

A carefully written illustration brief is the foundation for a successful illustration project.

Its job is to provide structure, guidance and direction to your work.

When gathering information you should start by documenting the most important objectives.

How to write an Academic Brief

What's in a Bad Brief?

Let's start with what is not a good brief.

All too often it's three hastily written lines that contain almost no information, take the following example from a client:

“Hi, I'm looking for an illustrator to create some images for my website. How much would it cost and when can you have them done by”

What's in a Bad Brief?

That leaves us illustrators with more questions than answers.

How many illustrations? What are they of? When do you need them by?.... the list goes on and on and will lead to you having to back to the client time and time again trying to pin down important details that should have been sorted at the outset.

It is exactly the same when writing a brief for yourself; give yourself as much instruction and direction as you can.

What's in a Good Brief?

Project

It is important to choose a project name that is relevant to the actual project.

You should also go into details of what the project actually is; a picture book, game concept art, reportage etc. What 'problem' is your creative work solving?

You will need to create as comprehensive a description as you possibly can.

What's in a Good Brief?

What are the Learning Outcomes?

What do you want to learn from the project?

It may be new techniques, new software, or further development of existing skills.

Learning outcomes should be written in plain English and worded in a way that indicates learning rather than describing specific tasks.

All learning outcomes must be measurable, as they form the basis for assessment and evaluation.

What's in a Good Brief?

What are the Learning Outcomes?

Learning outcomes therefore usually:

Include only the most important outcomes.

Are achievable within the programme or modules of study.

Are easily understood by the student and lecturer.

Are written as a statement in the future tense (e.g., at the end of this module I am expected to be able to...).

What's in a Good Brief?

What is the Target Audience?

It may seem obvious but ask who are we aiming the illustration at?

If you are illustrating for a children's book it may seem obvious to you, but if it is an advertising brief it may not be so clear.

Who is the end user that your illustration will be communicating with/to?

Again, be as detailed as possible.

What's in a Good Brief?

Deliverables

Now you can go into details about specifically what the project requires.

Will it be 40 small spot illustration for a website or 12 double-page spreads for a children's book?

Will it be one illustration that needs to work across multiple formats or channels?

What's in a Good Brief?

Deliverables

What size do the illustrations need to be and what file formats do you need to provide?

If the project needs everything as low-resolution jpg's for the web and high resolution for print then you need to consider this in the scope of work.

How do you need to present the final artwork? Crop marks, bleed etc?

What's in a Good Brief?

Schedule

Obviously the final deadline is the most important part of your schedule (and must NOT be missed) but it is also important to create interim deadlines to keep yourself on track.

Plan a timetable or Gantt chart to make the best use of your time and keep yourself on track.

This doesn't have to be 'written in stone' and can be adjusted as you go along, but it is important to fully plan out your time.

“Fail to prepare, prepare to fail”
Benjamin Franklin