

Stock Photography & Photo Licensing Business — Workbook

This workbook accompanies the Stock Photography & Photo Licensing Business course. Use it to plan your portfolio strategy, build your metadata workflows, and track progress toward your passive-income targets. Complete each section after finishing the corresponding course module — the exercises build on each other.

Understanding the Stock Photography Market

Map your platform mix, analyse buyer segments, and identify 3–5 specific content categories where demand exceeds current supply.

Exercise: Buyer Segment Research Sprint

Spend 30 minutes searching your intended category on Shutterstock and Adobe Stock. Document what you find using the prompts below.

- Search your primary category on Shutterstock (e.g. 'remote work woman'). List the top 5 images by Best Match — what do they have in common in terms of composition, subject, and demographic?

- Check the upload dates of those top 5 images. Are there gaps older than 2 years? What subject or demographic is under-represented?

- Cross-reference the same search on Alamy. Are the results different? What does that tell you about which platform to prioritise for this category?

- Using Shutterstock Trends (trends.shutterstock.com), find one emerging trend keyword related to your category and note the percentage growth figure shown.

Worksheet: Platform Decision Matrix

Fill in this matrix for each of the four main platforms based on your research and the course material. Use it to decide your initial platform mix.

Platform name

Royalty rate (non-exclusive)

Minimum payout threshold

Approval method (auto / manual review)

Primary buyer segment for my category

Decision: Include in my initial mix? (Yes / No / Later)

Reason for decision

Checklist: Market Research Completion Checklist

- Created contributor accounts on Shutterstock, Adobe Stock, Alamy, and Getty iStock
- Read the contributor terms and royalty schedule for each platform
- Bookmarked Shutterstock Trends, Adobe Stock Discover, and Getty Creative Insights pages
- Identified 3 evergreen content categories where I have existing shooting access or skills
- Identified 1–2 trend-responsive categories from current platform trend reports
- Noted the 3–5 specific subject/demographic gaps I can fill from my first search audit
- Downloaded each platform's model release and property release template PDFs

Shooting for Stock: Technical and Creative Standards

Audit your gear and settings against submission standards, build a pre-shoot checklist, and plan your first stock-specific photo session.

Worksheet: Camera and Gear Audit

Complete this worksheet to confirm your existing gear meets platform minimums and identify any gaps before your first shoot.

Camera make and model

Sensor megapixel count

Does this meet the 4 MP minimum? (Yes / No)

Maximum usable ISO before unacceptable noise (test this at ISO 800 / 1600 / 3200)

Primary lens(es) owned

Does my primary lens produce visible distortion I need to correct?

Do I have a model release app installed? (Easy Release or equivalent)

Can I shoot RAW? (Yes / No)

Lightroom or Capture One installed and licensed? (Yes / No)

List any gear gaps that would limit my ability to meet submission standards

Exercise: First Stock-Specific Shoot Plan

Use the prompts below to plan your first dedicated stock shoot before you pick up your camera. Complete all prompts in writing before shooting.

- What is the specific subject/scene for this shoot? Be as specific as possible (not 'business lifestyle' but 'South Asian woman in her 30s working at a standing desk in a home office with natural window light from the left').
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- What are the 3 composition variations you will shoot? (e.g. tight portrait, mid-shot with copy space right, wide establishing shot with copy space left)
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- List every person appearing in the shoot and confirm you have a model release ready for each.
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- Do a pre-shoot prop and wardrobe check: list any items with visible logos you need to remove or replace before shooting.
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Checklist: Pre-Shoot Technical Checklist

- Camera sensor and lens cleaned
- Camera set to RAW (not JPEG or RAW+JPEG)
- White balance set appropriately for the lighting condition (not Auto WB for critical shoots)
- ISO at or below the tested maximum usable value
- Aperture set to f/5.6 or narrower for multi-person shots
- Shutter speed fast enough to freeze subject motion (minimum 1/125s for people)
- Memory cards formatted and backup card in bag
- Model releases printed or Easy Release app open and ready
- Wardrobe and props checked for visible trademarks and logos
- Test shot reviewed at 100% zoom on camera LCD to confirm focus before proceeding

Metadata Mastery: Keywords, Titles, and Descriptions

Build a reusable keyword methodology, practise writing titles using the formula, and create a metadata template you can apply to every future image.

Exercise: Keyword Tier Building Exercise

Choose one image from your first shoot (or a practice image) and build a complete 5-tier keyword set using the methodology from the course. Write each tier separately.

- Tier 1 — List every physical object, person, and element literally visible in the frame (aim for 8–12 items).
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- Tier 2 — List every action, state, and emotion depicted or implied (aim for 5–8 items).
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- Tier 3 — List every setting, environment, and context descriptor (aim for 5–8 items).
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- Tier 4 — List every concept, theme, and business/lifestyle value this image could represent (aim for 5–8 items). Then review: are all of these genuinely visible in the image or clearly implied? Remove any that require too much inference.
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- Tier 5 — List demographic descriptors and commercial use-case cues (aim for 3–5 items, e.g. 'horizontal orientation', 'copy space right', 'isolated on white').
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Worksheet: Master Metadata Template

Fill in this template for one image. Then save it as your base template in Stocksubmitter or Lightroom for reuse with modifications on each new shoot.

Image filename

Title (8–12 words, subject+action+setting formula)

Description sentence 1 (what is in the image)

Description sentence 2 (context, story, or suggested commercial use)

Complete keyword list (30–50 tags in priority order)

Primary platform category

Secondary platform category

Model release attached? (Yes / No / Editorial only)

Property release attached? (Yes / No / N/A)

Location (city, country if identifiable or 'not applicable')

Colour palette (list 2–3 dominant colours)

Orientation (horizontal / vertical / square)

Checklist: Metadata Quality Gate — Per-Image Review

- Title is 8–12 words and starts with the most specific subject noun
- Title does not start with an article (a, an, the)
- Description adds new information not already in the title
- Keyword count is between 30 and 50
- All keywords accurately describe the image, mood, or a legitimate use case
- No keywords are repeated in singular and plural unless both are distinctly common searches
- Primary and secondary categories assigned and confirmed as accurate
- Model release status marked correctly (commercial with release / editorial only)
- All optional fields filled (location, colour, orientation, number of people)
- File is saved as JPEG, sRGB, maximum quality, with embedded ICC profile

Building and Scaling Your Stock Portfolio

Set your income target and required portfolio size, build your 90-day launch plan, and design the tracking system you will use to iterate your content strategy.

Exercise: Portfolio Income Projection

Work through the earnings-per-image framework to set a realistic 12-month portfolio target. Use the prompts to complete your calculation.

- What is your monthly passive-income target from stock photography (be specific, e.g. \$300/month or \$1,000/month)?
 - Based on the course benchmarks, what EIPM (earnings per image per month) do you expect to achieve in your first year as a beginner? State your assumption and justify it with reference to your content category.
 - Divide your monthly target by your expected EIPM. How many approved images do you need across all platforms to hit your target?
 - How many images per week can you realistically shoot, edit, keyword, and upload? Multiply by 52 to get your 12-month portfolio projection. Does this match the required size? If not, what will you change?
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Worksheet: 90-Day Stock Portfolio Launch Plan

Map out your first 90 days of stock photography activity. Fill in each row with specific, actionable commitments.

Month 1 — Week 1 goal (e.g. all four accounts created and approval submissions passed)

Month 1 — Week 2–4 goal (e.g. first 30 images uploaded with complete metadata to all platforms)

Month 1 — Content categories targeted (list 2–3 specific subjects)

Month 2 — Rejection analysis action (what will you do differently based on Month 1 rejection data?)

Month 2 — Upload target (number of images)

Month 2 — Distribution tool set up (Stocksubmitter / PLUS / other)

Month 3 — Earnings analysis date scheduled (specific calendar date)

Month 3 — Top-performing category identified from earnings data

Month 3 — Content plan for Month 4 based on earnings data

12-month portfolio size target (calculated from projection exercise above)

Checklist: Portfolio Health Monthly Review Checklist

- Downloaded earnings CSV from each platform and merged into tracking spreadsheet
- Calculated EIPM for overall portfolio and by category
- Identified top 10 earning images and tagged their common attributes
- Reviewed rejection report and categorised rejections by type (technical / metadata / IP)
- Removed or updated keywords on the 10 highest-view, lowest-conversion images
- Planned next month's shoots around top-performing categories and identified trends
- Confirmed submission queue is loaded with at least 2 weeks of content in advance
- Reviewed model release files to ensure all releases are stored and retrievable
- Checked for any platform policy updates or royalty rate changes
- Updated portfolio size in income projection tracker

Your Action Plan

1. Create contributor accounts on Shutterstock, Adobe Stock, Getty iStock, and Alamy — complete the approval test submission for each within 14 days
2. Audit your camera gear against the technical submission checklist and identify any gaps (sensor size, ISO limits, lens quality) before your first stock shoot
3. Complete the Buyer Segment Research Sprint for your primary content category and identify at least 2 specific subject/demographic gaps you can fill
4. Build your 12-month content calendar with seasonal content planned 10–12 weeks ahead of each major buying peak
5. Shoot, edit, and upload your first batch of 20–30 images using the 5-stage weekly production

cycle, applying complete metadata to every image

6. Set up Stocksubmitter or a platform-native distribution workflow to push images to all platforms simultaneously

7. Review your first rejection report and diagnose the top 2 rejection reasons — implement a targeted fix before your next shoot

8. After 60 days, run the top-10 image audit, identify the shared attributes of your best performers, and direct your next content calendar toward those categories

9. Set up a monthly earnings tracking spreadsheet that calculates EIPM per category across all platforms combined

10. Complete the portfolio income projection worksheet and commit to a specific weekly upload number that puts you on track to hit your 12-month income target

