

Brand & Commercial Photography — Workbook

This workbook is the operational companion to the Brand & Commercial Photography course. Each section maps directly to a course module and gives you the exercises, worksheets, and checklists to apply what you learned to a real or spec shoot. Complete the action plan at the end to have a working commercial photography practice — not just theoretical knowledge.

Reading the Brief and Pre-Production

Use these exercises to practise extracting a complete creative brief, building a shot list, and styling a scene before your first real shoot.

Exercise: Brief Deconstruction Exercise

Find a brand you admire (or a local business you want to pitch). Pull up their website, Instagram, and any available marketing materials. Using only what you can observe publicly, reconstruct the six sections of their creative brief as if you had been hired to photograph their next campaign.

- What three adjectives describe the brand's visual style? Write specific words (not 'nice' or 'clean') — try 'sun-bleached coastal' or 'dense urban industrial'.

- What usage channels are their images likely needed for? List every touchpoint you can identify (website, social, print, etc.).

- What is missing from their current photography that a commercial shoot could fix? Be specific — wrong colour temperature, inconsistent backgrounds, stock images that do not match their product?

- Write the two-paragraph intake email you would send this brand to fill in the sections you could not confirm publicly.

Worksheet: Shot List Builder

Complete this worksheet for a real or spec shoot. Every row is a committed deliverable. Do not leave the Intended Use or Notes columns blank — ambiguity on set costs time and money.

Shot Number (S01, S02...)

Scene Description (what is in the frame, action if any)

Orientation (Landscape / Portrait / Square)

Intended Use (Hero / Social / Email / Print)

Props Required

Talent Required (Y/N, role)

Checklist: Pre-Production Sign-Off Checklist

- Received a written brief (or sent intake form and received responses)
- Confirmed all six brief sections: brand overview, objective, visual style, deliverables, timeline, usage rights
- Shot list created with shot numbers, descriptions, orientations, and intended uses
- Shot list approved by client in writing (email or signed proposal)
- Mood board created with 10–15 annotated reference images
- Mood board approved by client
- Location scouted and photographed at shoot time of day
- Studio booked or outdoor permit confirmed
- Talent agreements signed by all subjects
- Equipment checked: batteries charged, cards formatted, backup body confirmed
- Grey card or ColorChecker packed
- Backup location identified in case of weather or access issues

Lighting for Brand Consistency

Document your lighting setups, practise building a colour-consistent workflow, and develop your talent-direction skills using these worksheets and exercises.

Exercise: Lighting Diagram Documentation Exercise

After each practice lighting session, complete a lighting diagram card for the setup. Photograph a test subject in each of the three core commercial setups: flat, Rembrandt, and rim. Compare the three results side by side and answer the questions below.

- For each setup, note the key light position (degrees from subject axis), modifier used, and power setting in Ws or guide number equivalent.

• Which setup produced the most flattering result for a product? Which produced the most flattering result for a portrait subject? What specifically made it work?

• If you were to use this setup on a real brand shoot, what industry or brand aesthetic would it suit? Name two brands whose existing photography matches this lighting style.

Worksheet: Lighting Setup Log

Fill in one row per lighting setup during practice and paid shoots. Over time this becomes a reference library you can rebuild any setup from — particularly useful for multi-day campaigns.

Setup Name / Date

Key Light (type, modifier, distance, height, angle in degrees)

Fill Light (type, modifier, ratio vs key)

Rim / Hair Light (type, power, position)

Background Light (type, modifier, if used)

Camera Settings (ISO, aperture, shutter speed)

Colour Temperature / White Balance Setting

Scene / Subject Description

Notes (what worked, what to change next time)

Checklist: Shoot-Day Colour Consistency Checklist

- Grey card or ColorChecker in camera bag
- Photograph grey card as first frame of every new lighting setup
- White balance synced across all images from each setup in Lightroom or Capture One
- Monitor calibrated within the last 30 days (record calibration date)
- Hero image selected and colour-graded for client approval before batch processing
- Campaign LUT or Lightroom preset exported and labelled with client and shoot name
- LUT applied to all finals in batch export
- Final files spot-checked against brand Pantone or HEX codes if provided

Exercise: Talent Direction Practice

Find a willing friend, family member, or colleague who is not a professional model. Set up a simple portrait or lifestyle scene and run through the WARM framework. Photograph three rounds of 10 frames each, applying a different direction in each round.

- Round 1 — give no direction at all, just say 'look natural'. Round 2 — apply the WARM framework fully. Round 3 — give physical actions only (no posing instructions). Compare the three sets. Which produced the most natural and brand-appropriate expressions?

- Note which of the four common problems appeared (stiff shoulders, forced smile, camera anxiety, awkward hands) and which fix from the course worked best for your subject.

Post-Production and Retouching

Build your culling discipline, document your retouching stack, and build an export preset library so every delivery is clean and professional.

Worksheet: Culling Audit Worksheet

After your next shoot or a practice session, complete this worksheet to track your culling performance. The goal is to understand your shot-to-select ratio and identify patterns in your shooting.

Shoot Date and Client or Project Name

Total Frames Captured

Frames Eliminated in Pass 1 (technical failures) — count and %

Frames Flagged as Selects in Pass 2 — count and %

Finals Selected in Pass 3 — count

Contracted Deliverable Count

Shots on Shot List with No Strong Frame (list shot numbers)

Culling Time (minutes)

Notes: what shooting habit caused the most rejects?

Exercise: Retouching Stack Build

Take one of your practice commercial images and build the four-layer retouching stack described in the course in Photoshop. Save the layered PSD and export both a before and after JPEG for comparison. Answer the prompts below.

- Which layer made the biggest visual improvement? Would you use the same emphasis on a different type of commercial image (e.g. product vs portrait)?
 - At 100% zoom, identify any visible cloning or healing artifacts. What tool or technique would you use to correct each one?
 - Compare your final JPEG against the brand's existing photography. List two things your retouch does better and one thing you would do differently next time.
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Checklist: Pre-Delivery Quality Control Checklist

- All files named using the CLIENT_CAMPAIGN_SHOTNUMBER_VERSION_FORMAT convention
- Every shot on the approved shot list has at least one delivered file
- All files spot-checked at 100% zoom for cloning artifacts, sensor dust, and stray objects
- Colour profile embedded correctly (sRGB for web, Adobe RGB for print)
- File dimensions match the export spec for each intended use
- No watermarks or copyright overlays on client files
- Folder structure in delivery package matches shot-list categories
- Read-me text file included with licence terms, file descriptions, and contact information
- Gallery or Dropbox link is password-protected
- Master archive (RAW + 16-bit TIFF) backed up in at least two physical locations

Pricing, Proposals, and Running a Commercial Practice

Use these tools to price your first commercial job correctly, write a proposal that closes, and build a portfolio strategy that attracts the clients you want.

Worksheet: Job Pricing Calculator

Use this worksheet to price a real or hypothetical commercial photography job. Fill in every line — do not skip expenses. The total is your minimum quote before negotiation.

Client Name and Project Description

Shoot Days Required (number)

Day Rate (CAD \$)

Creative Fee Subtotal (days x rate)

Usage: Media Types (list all channels)

Usage: Territory (local / regional / national / global)

Usage: Duration (months or years)

Usage: Exclusivity (exclusive / non-exclusive)

Usage Fee (CAD \$)

Studio Rental (CAD \$)

Equipment Rental (CAD \$)

Travel and Accommodation (CAD \$)

Props and Wardrobe (CAD \$)

Talent / Model Fees (CAD \$)

Assistant / Second Shooter (CAD \$)

Post-Production Hours x Hourly Rate (CAD \$)

Miscellaneous Expenses (CAD \$)

Expenses Subtotal (CAD \$)

Subtotal (creative + usage + expenses) (CAD \$)

HST / GST (13% or 5%) (CAD \$)

Total Quote (CAD \$)

50% Deposit Required (CAD \$)

Exercise: Proposal Writing Practice

Using the brand you researched in Section 1, write a full commercial photography proposal as if they had responded to your outreach email and asked for a quote. Use the six-section proposal structure from the course. This can be a spec document — treat it as real.

- Write the Project Overview paragraph restating their campaign goal in your own words — prove you understood the brief.

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- Draft your Fee Breakdown with creative fee, usage fee, and at least three itemised expense lines. Is your total consistent with the day-rate benchmarks in the course for your experience level?
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- Write your Licensing Terms in one paragraph using plain language (not legalese). What media, territory, and duration are you licensing?
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- What is the one clause in your Terms and Conditions section you would be most nervous about enforcing? How would you handle a client who challenged it?
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Checklist: Commercial Practice Launch Checklist

- Portfolio trimmed to 12 or fewer images curated for one target industry niche
- Custom domain registered and portfolio website live
- Three spec shoots completed in target niche if no paid commercial work exists yet
- Proposal template built in HoneyBook, Dubsado, or equivalent platform
- Photography contract reviewed (at minimum, use a standard PPOC or ASMP contract template)
- Bank account set up for business income (separate from personal)
- HST/GST registration completed if billing above \$30,000 CAD annually
- List of 20 target local businesses in your niche identified and researched
- Personalised outreach email drafted for top five targets
- LinkedIn profile updated with commercial photography positioning (not hobbyist language)
- Rate card created with day rate, usage fee structure, and package minimums
- First spec or paid shoot booked and shot list drafted

Your Action Plan

1. Complete the Brief Deconstruction Exercise for one real local brand you want to pitch — this is your prospecting research
2. Book a three-hour studio or location practice session and shoot all three lighting setups (flat, Rembrandt, rim), documenting each in the Lighting Setup Log
3. Photograph a grey card in each lighting setup and practise the white balance sync workflow in Lightroom or Capture One before any paid shoot
4. Complete one full spec shoot: write a brief, build a shot list, style the scene, direct a non-professional subject, cull the images using the three-pass system, and deliver a 10-image gallery
5. Build the four-layer Photoshop retouching stack on three images from your spec shoot and create a named Lightroom preset or .cube LUT for the campaign grade
6. Set up a file naming convention and create export presets in Lightroom for web, social, email, and print — test them on your spec shoot images
7. Complete the Job Pricing Calculator for the spec shoot as if it were a paid commercial job — what would you have charged?
8. Write a full proposal for the brand you researched using the six-section structure and have it reviewed by a peer or mentor
9. Send personalised outreach emails to five target businesses using the warm outreach framework from Module 4
10. Register on HoneyBook or Dubsado and migrate your proposal template, contract, and deposit workflow into the platform before your first paid quote

