
A C O M P L E T E G U I D E

Price Your Design Work and Get Paid



A freelance designer's system for quoting projects that clients
say yes to

C O N T E N T S



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Examples in this guide are illustrative. The people and businesses in them are fictional, and the figures in worked examples are there to show the arithmetic, not to report results.

A freelance designer's system for quoting projects that clients say yes to



The number that breaks most freelance designers isn't the rate they charge — it's the rate they accidentally accept. A client pushes back, the designer shaves \$200 off the quote, the project runs four hours longer than expected, and by the time final files land in the client's inbox, the effective hourly rate has collapsed below what the designer would earn at a salaried junior role. The problem was never confidence. It was the absence of a system: no logged scope, no tracked hours, no floor the designer had committed to in writing before the conversation started. Every section of this guide is built to close that gap — through a Notion-based Project Log, a disciplined quoting routine called the Scope-Price Loop, and a quarterly check called the 90-Day Rate Review that keeps your numbers honest without requiring you to start from scratch every time a new brief lands.

This guide is for freelance graphic designers who quote custom client projects and want to stop second-guessing their numbers. After reading, you will be able to build a complete quoting system in Notion, run it on any brief, defend your price when a client pushes back, and adjust your rates on evidence instead of instinct.

Read the guide in order the first time — each chapter assumes the Project Log and its fields exist and are already set up, so skipping ahead will leave gaps. After that first pass, treat it as a reference: return to Chapter 5 the next time a client sends back a lower number, open Chapter 11's checklist before every quote goes out, and run Chapter 10 every 90 days on the calendar event you'll set up before you close the guide. The scenarios are illustrative, the tools are real, and every checklist item is something you can act on today.



Before You Quote a Single Project: the Three Project Log Fields That Prevent Undercharging



The moment a client says 'send me a quote,' most freelance designers open a blank invoice and start guessing. That guess — pulled from memory, shaped by the client's vibe, adjusted downward when the designer feels uncertain — is where undercharging begins. It does not begin at the negotiation stage or when a client pushes back. It begins before a single number is typed, because there is no record to anchor the number to. The Project Log exists to fix that. Setting it up before your next quote means every record that follows is built on the same structure, and that structure is what lets you defend a price without flinching.



1 Write the Scope Block first

List every deliverable and format in plain language inside the Project Log record. Scope Block must be complete before Estimated Hours or Quoted Price are touched — this is the first pass of the Scope-Price Loop.



2 Set Estimated Hours honestly

Enter the number of hours you genuinely expect the project to take. Check a similar closed project's Actual Hours field if one exists. This field stays hidden from the client's Quote Document.



3 Confirm Quoted Price clears your floor

Divide Quoted Price by Estimated Hours. If the result falls below your Hourly Floor, adjust the price or renegotiate scope before the Quote Document is built. Never send a quote that fails this check.

Three fields must be filled in on every new Project Log record before any price is discussed with a client: the Scope Block, Estimated Hours, and Quoted Price. The Scope Block is a plain-language text property — written in the record, not in your head — that lists exactly what is included in the quoted price: which deliverables, which formats, which rounds of feedback. Estimated Hours is a number property that captures how long you genuinely expect the work to take; it never appears in the Quote Document the client sees, only in your Project Log database view. Quoted Price is the final number you send. The reason these three fields must exist together is mechanical: Quoted Price divided by Estimated Hours gives you your effective hourly rate for the project. If that number falls below your Hourly Floor, the quote is wrong before it leaves your inbox. Without all three fields present at the same time, that check cannot happen.

EXAMPLE · ILLUSTRATIVE A freelance designer opens a new Project Log record after a call about a brand identity package. Before writing a single number, the designer types out the Scope Block — three logo concepts, one chosen direction developed to final files, one style guide page, two file format exports. With the scope written, the designer enters Estimated Hours: 18. Quoted Price: set at a number that, divided by 18, clears the Hourly Floor. The check passes. Only then does the Quote Document get built from that record. Two weeks later, the client asks whether 'brand guidelines' were included. The designer opens the Scope Block, reads it aloud on the call, and the conversation ends in thirty seconds.

“The Revision Limit field defaults to 2 rounds on every new record — change it per project before sending the Quote Document, but always start from 2, because a default you consciously override is a decision, while a blank field is an accident waiting to cost you hours.”

IN PRACTICE

- 👉 Open Notion and create a new record in your Project Log immediately after any client conversation that might lead to a quote — set Project Status to Scoping before closing the tab
- 👉 Write the Scope Block as a plain-text list in the record: name every deliverable, format, and included service explicitly, and stop typing only when a client could read it and know exactly what they are and are not buying
- 👉 Enter your Estimated Hours in the number property field — be honest, not optimistic; if you have a similar Closed project in the Closed-Project View, open it and use its Actual Hours as a reference point
- 👉 Divide your intended Quoted Price by Estimated Hours and confirm the result meets or exceeds your Hourly Floor before entering any number in the Quoted Price field
- 👉 Check the Revision Limit field — it should read 2 by default; adjust it now if this project warrants a different number, and note the reason in the Scope Block so the decision is documented
- 👉 Set Client Tier to Tier 2 on every new record regardless of how well you know the person — leave it there until the first invoice is paid, then review it against the Tier 1 and Tier 3 criteria before your next quote to that client

PROJECT NAME _____

CLIENT (role or company type, not a personal name) _____

SCOPE BLOCK (list every deliverable, format, and included service — one item per line):

ESTIMATED HOURS _____

HOURLY FLOOR (your minimum acceptable effective rate) _____

QUOTED PRICE (must equal or exceed Estimated Hours × Hourly Floor) _____

EFFECTIVE RATE CHECK (Quoted Price ÷ Estimated Hours = ?) _____

REVISION LIMIT (default: 2 — edit here before Quote Document is sent) _____

CLIENT TIER (default: Tier 2 — review after first invoice is paid) _____

PROJECT STATUS (set to Scoping on record creation) _____

NOTES (any scope edge cases or client requests not yet included in Scope Block) _____