

Content brief

What a writer needs before the first draft: who searches for this, what already ranks, and what we will say that nobody else does.

Working title

Writer

Editor

Due

1 The piece in one sentence

Format, topic and where it will live.

2 Search and intent

The query to rank for, and what the person typing it actually wants.

Primary keyword

Monthly searches and difficulty

Secondary keywords and questions to answer

What the searcher wants to walk away with

3 What already ranks

Read the top three results first. The gap they all miss is where this piece earns its place.

URL

What it does well

What it misses

4 Reader and angle

Who is reading, and the one thing this piece says that the others do not.

Who is reading, and what they already know

Our angle, and the proof behind it

5 Outline

The headings in order, each with the question it answers.

Headline (H1)

Section heading

The question it answers

Notes or sources

6 Proof, links and the next step

Sources, people to quote, pages to link, and what the reader does next.

Sources, data and people to interview

Internal links to include

Call to action

7 Specs

A length range, the visuals, and any voice rules.

Length range

Visuals needed

Publish date

Voice notes and words to avoid

Worked example

A filled brief for a buying guide

A sample to show the level of detail that works. The site and the numbers are illustrative.

1 The piece in one sentence

A 1,800-word guide on choosing a video production company, on the blog and linked from the video services page.

2 Search and intent

Primary: how to choose a video production company. About 300 searches a month, low difficulty.

Questions: what to ask on the first call, red flags in a quote, how many quotes to get.

Wants a short list of checks they can run on two or three companies this week.

3 What already ranks

Result	What it does well	What it misses
A directory listing	Lots of options in one place	No way to judge them
A production company blog	Clear steps	Ends in a sales pitch
A marketing magazine	Good questions to ask	No example of a real quote

4 Reader and angle

A marketing manager hiring video for the first time. Knows what they want made, not how production is priced.

We show a real quote, line by line, and the three questions that expose a padded one. Nobody in the top results does.

5 Outline

Section heading	The question it answers	Notes
Start with the brief, not the portfolio	What do I need before I call anyone?	Link brief template
Read a quote line by line	What am I actually paying for?	Annotated quote
Five questions for the first call	How do I compare companies?	Checklist
Freelancer, studio or in-house	Which model fits my volume?	Comparison table

6 Proof, links and the next step

Interview the head of production for the quote walkthrough. One public industry pricing survey.

Video services page, creative brief template, pricing guide.

Download the creative brief template.

7 Specs

1,500 to 2,000 words.

One annotated quote image, one comparison table.

No jargon. Short sentences. One idea per paragraph.

Before you hand it to the writer

Seven checks. A brief that passes them gets a first draft you can edit, not rewrite.

- ☐ You have read the top three results yourself.
Not a summary of them. The gap in field 3 only shows up when you read them.
- ☐ The intent matches the format.
A query that wants a list gets a list. A query that wants a price gets a number near the top.
- ☐ The angle is something only you can say.
If a competitor could publish the same piece tomorrow, the angle is not finished.
- ☐ Every outline heading answers a question.
Headings like "Introduction" and "Conclusion" answer nothing. Name the question instead.
- ☐ There is at least one source of proof the others do not have.
An interview, your own numbers or a real example. This is what search engines and readers both reward.
- ☐ The internal links point at pages that exist.
Check each one. A brief that links to a draft page sends the writer guessing.
- ☐ There is one call to action.
Two next steps means the reader takes neither.

From brief to published, in five steps

The order that keeps rewrites to a minimum.

- Step 1** Editor fills fields 1 to 4
The search work and the angle. Agree them before any outline exists.
- Step 2** Writer drafts the outline
Field 5. The editor approves the headings before the writer starts the draft.
- Step 3** First draft
Answer first in every section. Proof and links go in now, not in the edit.
- Step 4** One edit round
Against the brief, not against taste. If the brief was right, one round is enough.
- Step 5** Publish and check
Request indexing, then look at the queries it ranks for after a month and update the brief for the next piece.