

# Design brief

For one design job: a web page, a campaign visual, packaging or a logo refresh. Fill it in before the designer opens a file, and send the brand files with it.

Project

Brief owner

Designer

Date

## 1 The job

Name the piece and where it lives, then sum it up in one sentence.

What we are designing

Where it will be used

New, or an update?

The job in one sentence

## 2 The problem it has to solve

What is wrong or new today, and what must not change.

What is wrong, or what is new

What has to stay the same

## 3 Who will see it, and how

Who looks at it, on what screen or surface, and for how long.

Who they are

Where they see it (device, distance, seconds)

## 4 The one thing it must communicate

If someone looks at it for three seconds, what should they take away?

What they should do next

Headline or key copy, if written

## 5 Must-haves and brand assets

What has to appear, and the real files, so nobody rebuilds a logo from a screenshot.

Must appear (logo, copy, legal lines, product shots)

Files we will send, and the folder link

## 6 Formats and sizes

Every output with exact dimensions and file type, because each new shape is another layout.

| Item                 | Size (px, in or mm)  | File type            | Where it is used     |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
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## 7 References: like this, not like this

Links to work you like and work you do not, each with one line on why.

Like this (link and why)

Not like this (link and why)

## 8 Timeline and approvers

Review dates as well as the deadline, and the one person whose yes is final.

Key dates

First concepts

Feedback due

Final files

Goes live

Approvers (name and role)

The one person whose yes is final

## Worked example

## A filled brief for a launch visual

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

### 1 The job

A launch visual for the new mobile expense app, adapted for the homepage hero, LinkedIn ads and Google display ads.

### 2 The problem it has to solve

Our ads still show the desktop product, but the launch is mobile only. In a side-by-side review, last quarter's ads were hard to tell apart from two competitors.

Keep the logo, the brand blue and the typeface. The product screens and the layout can change.

### 3 Who will see it, and how

Finance managers at companies of 100 to 500 people who approve team expenses.

On a phone, scrolling LinkedIn between meetings. About two seconds to catch their eye.

### 4 The one thing it must communicate

Approve expenses from your phone in seconds. Next step: "Get the app".

### 5 Must-haves and brand assets

Logo, the real approval screen on a phone, the line "Approve in seconds", both app store badges.

Vector logo, brand fonts, color codes and three product screens at full size. Folder link sent with the brief.

### 6 Formats and sizes

| Item            | Size           | File type | Where it is used            |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Homepage hero   | 2880 × 1200 px | WebP      | Website, with a mobile crop |
| Square ad       | 1200 × 1200 px | PNG       | LinkedIn feed               |
| Wide display ad | 1200 × 628 px  | JPG       | Google responsive display   |

### 7 References: like this, not like this

Like: one product shot on a flat brand color, big type, plenty of space. Links to three past ads we liked.

Not like: stock photos of people at laptops, heavy gradients, more than one message per ad.

### 8 Timeline and approvers

First concepts May 6. Feedback May 9. Final files May 20. Live June 1.

Approvers: brand lead, product marketing manager. Final yes: head of marketing.

## Before you send it

Eight checks. Each one you skip tends to come back as an extra round of design.

- ☐ **The job names one piece and where it lives.**  
"New visuals" is too vague to start on. "Homepage hero and three display ads" can start today.
- ☐ **The one message can be read in three seconds.**  
Read it out loud. If it takes longer, cut words until it does not.
- ☐ **All copy is final before design starts.**  
Copy that changes late breaks layouts, most of all on small formats.
- ☐ **Every format has exact dimensions and a file type.**  
Sizes added after a concept is approved mean another round of layout work.
- ☐ **The brand files are attached to the brief.**  
Vector logo, fonts and color codes. A logo copied from a web page looks blurry in print.
- ☐ **There are references for what to avoid.**  
Designers learn as much from what you dislike as from what you like.
- ☐ **Vague style words are gone.**  
Swap clean, modern or premium for what you mean: white background, one typeface, no gradients.
- ☐ **One named person has the final yes.**  
When five people can each say no, the design drifts toward the safest option.

## From brief to final files

The order that keeps rounds of changes to a minimum.

- Step 1** **Send the brief and the files together**  
The designer reads it the same day and sends questions within one working day.
- Step 2** **Concepts in the hardest format first**  
Usually the smallest or tallest size. If the idea works there, the other sizes tend to follow.
- Step 3** **One round of combined feedback**  
The brief owner collects it, settles conflicts, and sends one list back.
- Step 4** **Adapt to every format, then sign off**  
Check each size on a real phone or at print size before the final yes.