

Photographer's Guide To Communicating With Clients



WORDS MATTER.

Being a professional photographer is more than creating incredible images; it's about giving your client a great experience before, during, and after their session with you. A big part of that is knowing what words to use—and when to use them.

HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE WHAT YOU DO?

The language you use to talk about your work should be more than just industry jargon. Choosing the right words paints a picture in the mind of your customers. Often, the difference between terms is subtle, but the effect it has on consumers can be profound.

Use this list to better understand the connotations of individual words and phrases and how they add to (or take away from) your business. Using a vocabulary that reflects the quality of your work helps educate customers about the value of photography.

The terms you use also helps you establish a tone and voice for your brand. No two photography businesses are alike, so keep reading to discover the language that works best for your style, business, and customers. Many of these terms are self-explanatory, but we've included brief explanations for some of the them to help you decide which are the most appropriate for your business.



Who You Serve

- Consumer
- Customer
- Client

Lead Photographer (YOU)

- Professional Photographer
- Photographer
- Image Maker
- Artist (photographic/
portrait/etc.)
- Photographic Artist
- Portrait Artist

Additional Photographer

- Assistant (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)
- Second Photographer
- Shooter
- Second Shooter

The Project

- Commissioned Artwork / Campaign
– A formal way of saying the work was requested and paid for by the client.
- Collaboration – May or may not refer to paid work. This term is often used between creatives.

TIPS ON SELECTING TERMS

Formal language helps the client feel special and gives the impression they will have a positive, robust experience.

Planning Meetings

- Pre-Session / Design Consultation - Used interchangeably, these are terms for an informative meeting where the photographer and client discuss goals, expectations, ideas, and details for the upcoming job to ensure both parties on the same page.
- Client Meeting – Generic term.
- Pre-Production Meeting – Broad phase before shooting that involves anything and everything client-related. Typically used in commercial photography.
- Touch-base – A short touchpoint to go over details with the client.
- Discovery Call – A call to source out information needed to plan the shoot. The result of this is an estimate/quote.

Camera Capture

- Take a Picture – A colloquial term for creating photographs. This term implies it is a quick, easy act that doesn't require much thought or process.
- Create an Image / Image Creation – Refers to the intentional creative act. Includes composing what goes in the frame, lighting, timing, etc.
- Snap a photo – This phrase could belittle the expertise and training of a professional photographer. Like "take a picture," it connotes that anyone can do it by simply hitting a button.
- Document - Documentary photographers anticipate moments and tell stories using their craft.



TIPS ON SELECTING TERMS

The Event of Photographing

- Session – Portrait-oriented. A more formal version of “shoot.”
- Shoot – Often used for collaborative efforts and tests. This term is often used by photographers when speaking to commercial clients.
- Photo Shoot – An informal term that could refer to any type of photography. Not necessarily paid. This term is usually used by models and commercial photographers.
- Photo Session – Term used when creating photographs for paid clients, typically refers to portrait photography.
- Group Session
- Portrait Session
- Creation / Creation Appointment

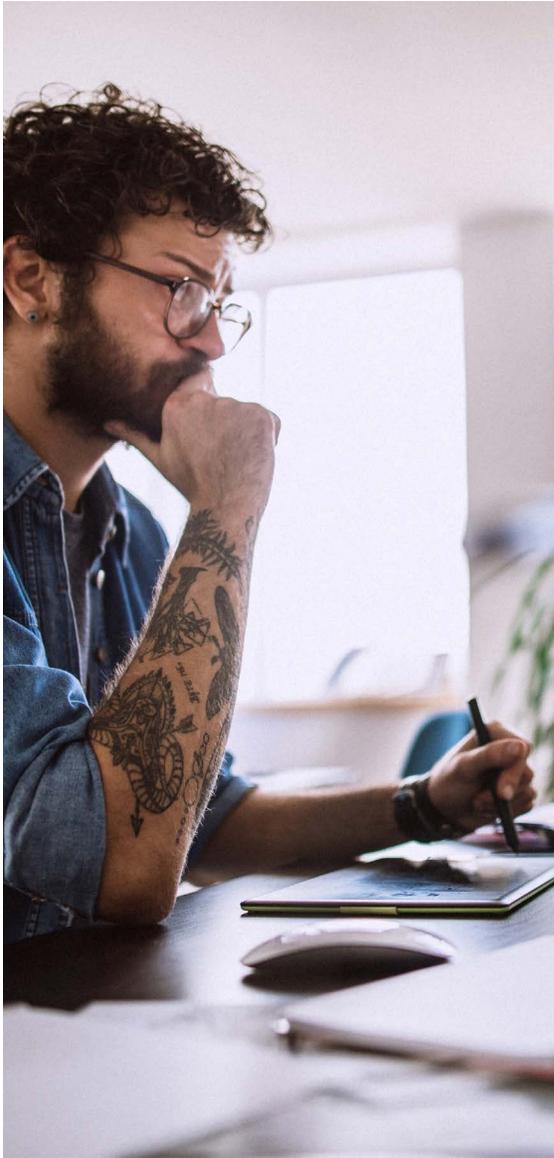
If you are cost-competitive, the language you use may be different than a more art-focused photographer.

AFTER Photographing

- Sales Meeting
- Sales Consultation
- Viewing Consultation
- Ordering Appointment – The term “ordering” sets the expectation that the client will make a purchase by the end of the meeting.
- Reveal / Reveal Session – A meeting where the photographer presents the client with their images. This term does not set purchasing expectations.

Editing

- Retouching – Implies something was wrong with the photo that needs to be fixed. Standard language used within the beauty industry, at modeling agencies, and by photographers.
- Enhancing – Has the connotation of making things better. Euphemism used when talking to people outside the photographic industry.
- Elevate - Euphemism typically used when talking to people outside the industry.
- Development / Develop an Image
- Processing
- Polishing



Editing *(continued)*

- Editing – Adjusting the image. Traditionally referred to simply selecting images.
- Refining / Finishing – This term removes the negative implication that something is wrong.
- Touch-ups – A way to express that minor details need to be retouched or enhanced.
- Culling Images – Paring down the total number of images. This term is used mostly within in the industry.
- Selecting Images – A more straightforward version of “culling images.”
- Proofing – Sharing images with the client prior to printing to make additional adjustments after color grading and editing is complete. Refers to prepping images for print, final look of designed pieces for albums, cards, etc. May also refer to when the photographer shows the images to the client for selection.

Photographic Deliverables

- Images
- Photographs / Photos
- Pictures
- Pics
- Portraits
- Artwork
- Content
- Digital Negatives
- Digital Files
- Proof Gallery / Finals Gallery

Professional Fees

- Sitting Fee
- Session Fee
- Creative Fee
- Licensing Fee
- Installation Fee
- Delivery Fee



Pricing

- Price – Casual term
- Cost – Informal term
- Investment – Formal term

Price Presentation

- Price Sheet
- Price List
- Price Menu
- Rate / Rate Sheet – Commonly used in the commercial industry (ex. “day rate”).
- Investment / Investment Sheet – This term has the connotation that the client’s money isn’t just being spent; it’s going towards something valuable.

Sale/Promotion

- Sale
- Promotion
- Deal
- Offering
- Discount – This term may cheapen your brand in the eyes of the client.
- Incentive – Alternatively “discount.”
- Bonus
- Percentage Off
- Special / Special Offer

Installation

- Hang Pictures – Informal term
- Display Portraits / Images – More formal than “hang picture.”
- Exhibit Images – Very formal. Often used in art galleries, museums, etc.

TIPS ON SELECTING TERMS

If you are framing yourself as a luxury studio, use luxury terms to elevate your brand.

Using a vocabulary tailored to your unique business not only builds your brand's voice but also helps clients understand the importance of what you do.

Write out the vocabulary you want to use and keep it somewhere visible to you daily. This will help you keep the appropriate vocabulary top of mind when interacting with your customers.

With a little planning and forethought, you can truly help clients see the difference hiring a professional photographer makes.

For more resources, visit:
[PPA.com/SeeTheDifference](https://www.ppa.com/SeeTheDifference)

