



Revision or change request?

A one-page decision guide for creative teams

The ninety-second check to run before you start work on any client request, with the exact wording to send once you have decided.

How to use this

When a client request arrives, do not open the file. Spend ninety seconds here first.

Once you have started work on a request, you have implicitly agreed it was included. The decision has to happen before the work does. That is the whole trick.

This is an operational process, not legal advice, and it does not replace your client agreement.

The three outcomes

Every client request is one of three things. There is no fourth option, and inventing one — "small change, I will just do it" — is how the month disappears.

	INCLUDED REVISION	CLARIFICATION NEEDED	CHANGE REQUEST
What it is	Adjusts an agreed deliverable within the approved direction	Not yet actionable, or not clearly in scope	Adds to, or replaces, what was agreed
What you do	Do the work, log it	Ask, in writing, before doing anything	Price it and send for approval
Uses a round	Yes	No	No, it is separate work

The test

Ask these three questions in order. Stop at the first clear answer.

1. WOULD I HAVE QUOTED MORE IF THIS HAD BEEN IN THE ORIGINAL BRIEF?

If yes, it is a change request. This is the single most reliable question, because it converts a vague scope argument into a pricing fact that you already know the answer to.

2. IS THIS IMPROVING THE THING WE AGREED, OR REPLACING IT?

Improving is an included revision. Replacing is a change request. A different headline is improving. A different concept direction is replacing.

3. CAN I NAME THE SPECIFIC APPROVED DECISION THIS CONTRADICTS?

If you can point to a date and a decision the client signed off, it is a change request, and your reason writes itself.

Still unclear after all three? Classify it as included and move on. Fighting over fifteen minutes of work costs more in goodwill than the fifteen minutes.

It is definitely a change request when it

- Adds a deliverable, page, asset, format, size, language, channel, or audience
- Reverses a creative direction the client already approved
- Arrives after the included rounds are used
- Changes the objective rather than improving the agreed deliverable
- Moves a deadline or breaks the agreed sequence
- Needs a third party, licence, font, or asset nobody scoped

It is definitely an included revision when it

- Adjusts an agreed deliverable inside the approved direction
- Corrects something against a brief or spec you were given
- Fits within an unused round
- Is your own error — a typo you introduced, a spec you missed, a bad export

Absorb your own mistakes without argument and without counting the round. That is what earns you the standing to hold the line everywhere else.

Flag it for clarification when it is

- Vague: "make it pop," "it feels off," "can you make it more premium"
- In conflict with something already approved
- From someone who is not the named approver
- Missing which asset, which element, or what outcome
- Possibly a change request, but not clearly enough to say so yet

Clarification is not a delaying tactic and it should not consume a round. It is the step that stops you spending a day guessing.

Ten worked examples

Illustrative scenarios, not real client cases.

REQUEST	ANSWER	WHY
"Try the headline in the darker blue instead"	Included	Adjusts an agreed element inside the approved direction
"Our CMO wants a completely different direction"	Change request	New stakeholder reversing an approved direction
"Also send a square version for Instagram"	Change request	New format and deliverable, not in the original list
"The logo is stretched on page 3"	Included	Your production error, absorbed regardless of round
"It just doesn't feel like us yet"	Clarification	No element, no outcome, nothing actionable
"Can you shorten the intro paragraph?"	Included	In-scope copy edit inside the approved layout
"Legal needs a disclaimer on every page"	Change request	New requirement from outside the brief, affects every asset
"Go back to the layout from V1"	Clarification, then likely change request	V2 was built on approved V1 feedback, so reverting discards approved work
"Can we get the editable source files?"	Change request if excluded at kickoff	This is exactly why you list exclusions up front
"Our client wants to review it too"	Clarification	A new approver adds an unagreed round. Confirm authority first

What to send once you have decided

IF IT IS A CHANGE REQUEST

Hi [Name],

Happy to take on [request]. It sits outside the current scope because [specific reason], so here it is written up for approval.

Additional work: [description]

Additional fee: [amount]

Timeline: +[number] business days

Revised delivery: [date]

Reply "Approved" and we will schedule it. If you would rather leave it for now, we will finish the current scope as planned and pick this up later.

Thanks,

[Your name]

Three things make this work. Open by agreeing to do the work, so you are pricing the request rather than blocking it. Give one specific factual reason, because "that's out of scope" invites an argument while "it adds a fourth concept where three were quoted" does not. And offer deferral as an acceptable outcome, because a client who feels cornered negotiates, while a client who feels in control approves.

Do not apologise. No "sorry to be difficult." Apologising frames a normal commercial confirmation as an imposition.

IF IT NEEDS CLARIFICATION

Hi [Name],

Want to make sure the next version solves the right problem. On [request]:

- Which specific element should change?
- What should it become instead?
- What should the change achieve for you?
- Is this a new requirement, or a refinement of the direction approved on [date]?

Once we have that we will confirm the plan, the timing, and whether it is covered by the current round.

Thanks,

[Your name]

Write it down either way

Whatever you decide, log it: the request, the date, who asked, your classification, and your one-line reason. A dispute six months from now is not settled by who remembers better. It is settled by who wrote it down.

One row in a spreadsheet is enough to start.

Where this comes from

This page is the classification step of **Revision Ledger**, a complete client feedback and approval system for creative teams: the scope record that prevents the argument, the ledger that holds the record, the feedback form that forces one consolidated response, the five client emails, and an AI prompt library that classifies a messy feedback email for you.

It runs in Notion or Google Sheets. Fifteen minutes to set up. One-time price, no subscription.

revisionledger.com

Reminder

This is an operating process, not legal advice, and not a substitute for a written agreement with your client. For anything involving a dispute, a contract term, or unpaid invoices, speak to a qualified professional in your jurisdiction.