

shutterstock® custom

Contributor Success Guide



Creating great content





Working with world-class brands

Photographers and videographers get to work with global brands on simplified creative projects, providing the ability to take on commercial work by selecting assignments that they are qualified for and interested in. The result? Exclusive visual content that meets a client's needs. Why not make money doing what you love?

ABInBev

Nestlé

Unilever

L'ORÉAL

Johnson & Johnson

P&G





About Shutterstock Custom

We connect brands with photographers and videographers who can develop enhanced custom content in a short amount of time. We work on creative projects with contributors to develop cost-efficient assets that fit a brand's need for large volumes of authentic custom content.

Work with leading brands

We develop projects that align with a brand's needs and a contributor's skills. Submit your portfolio and the categories of work you are interested in shooting and we'll pair you with assignments built by brands that are the best fit.

Utilize your creativity, not your influence

Projects are sent to our contributors based on talent, and the skills outlined in their applications. They are not based on your ability to self-market your business as influencers or online personalities, removing the hassle of dealing with clients while getting paid gigs.

An education-forward platform that supports you

Our platform uses your profile details to send projects based on your skills and situations you have access to. We provide educational tools, onboarding, and support to help you succeed and grow as custom content creators.

A team behind you

We're here to support you. We know about all aspects of content creation and take care of all the logistical arrangements with the clients so you can stay focused on doing your best work.



Why should you become a contributor?

Visual communication has changed. Today, there are over 3 billion internet users consuming visual content all day, everyday. Global brands need to meet that content requirement. That means they need more high-quality content, faster. Our contributors meet that need.



What is custom content?

Custom content is created by our contributors by executing an assignment brief and producing photographs, videos, cinemagraphs, 360 videos, or GIFs that are specific to a brand's marketing requests.

Who are our contributors?

A global network of photographers, motion-format artists, production staff, and models who inspire people with their creative talent.

Our contributors are:

- Storytellers who use their lenses to portray a client's vision.
- Accomplished freelancers who manage and execute professional contracts with brands.
- Creatives who produce engaging stories that a brand's audience will believe in.
- Professional and semi-professional shooters who seek flexibility and contract arrangements that fit into their schedules.



Who are our clients?

We've helped some of the world's most loved brands create content that their audiences are inspired by. We work with brands like McDonald's and Marriott Rewards to establish visual brand identities that can be utilized by our contributors to create engaging content. Working with contributors in our network, brands have the ability to receive authentic, dynamic content that extends the capabilities of what they can share as visual content.



Assignments with Shutterstock Custom





Applying to be a contributor

Becoming a contributor means receiving opportunities to shoot commercial projects based off your visual specialities and skills. It means having access to a technology-driven platform that eliminates the need to pitch or market yourself to potential clients. Instead, receive projects that are a direct representation of the type of work you want to shoot.

Before you apply, you should:

Update your portfolio

Your portfolio of work needs to be up-to-date with the type of work you want to shoot with us. We assign contributors categories to shoot based off of the work our team sees in your portfolio.

Do your research

To learn a little bit more about what we do, explore our [website](#) and [blog](#). Learn what it means to be a contributor, as well as the type of learning opportunities you can receive once you are on our platform.

Evaluate where we fit

As a contributor you have the opportunity to create content for brands around the world. Every assignment enters a professional contract, and we expect that level of accountability in our contributors. You are accountable for every assignment and deadline you accept, so ensure that you've considered this responsibility before applying.



Completing an assignment

As a contributor, you will be put on assignments for our global clients. You are responsible for adhering to all of the brand guidelines, visual requirements, and deadlines that are outlined on the brief. Each assignment will outline what is required, and you will be given the opportunity to accept or decline interest in shooting. Ensure that you are confident you can complete the requirements in the time allocated before accepting.

You will have access to different tools, expenses, and people to help you succeed on assignments with brands. A few examples are outlined below.

On-location opportunities

Select assignments will offer the chance to shoot on-site with our clients, providing a great opportunity to develop client-contributor relationships within our organization.

Model budgets

Some assignments provide an allocated expense to hire models to shoot. These are great opportunities to shoot new models or friends that are interested in being involved.

Expense budgets

You will be given a budget for props or products, depending on the brief. You may also be shipped product depending on the brand's preferences.

Working with models

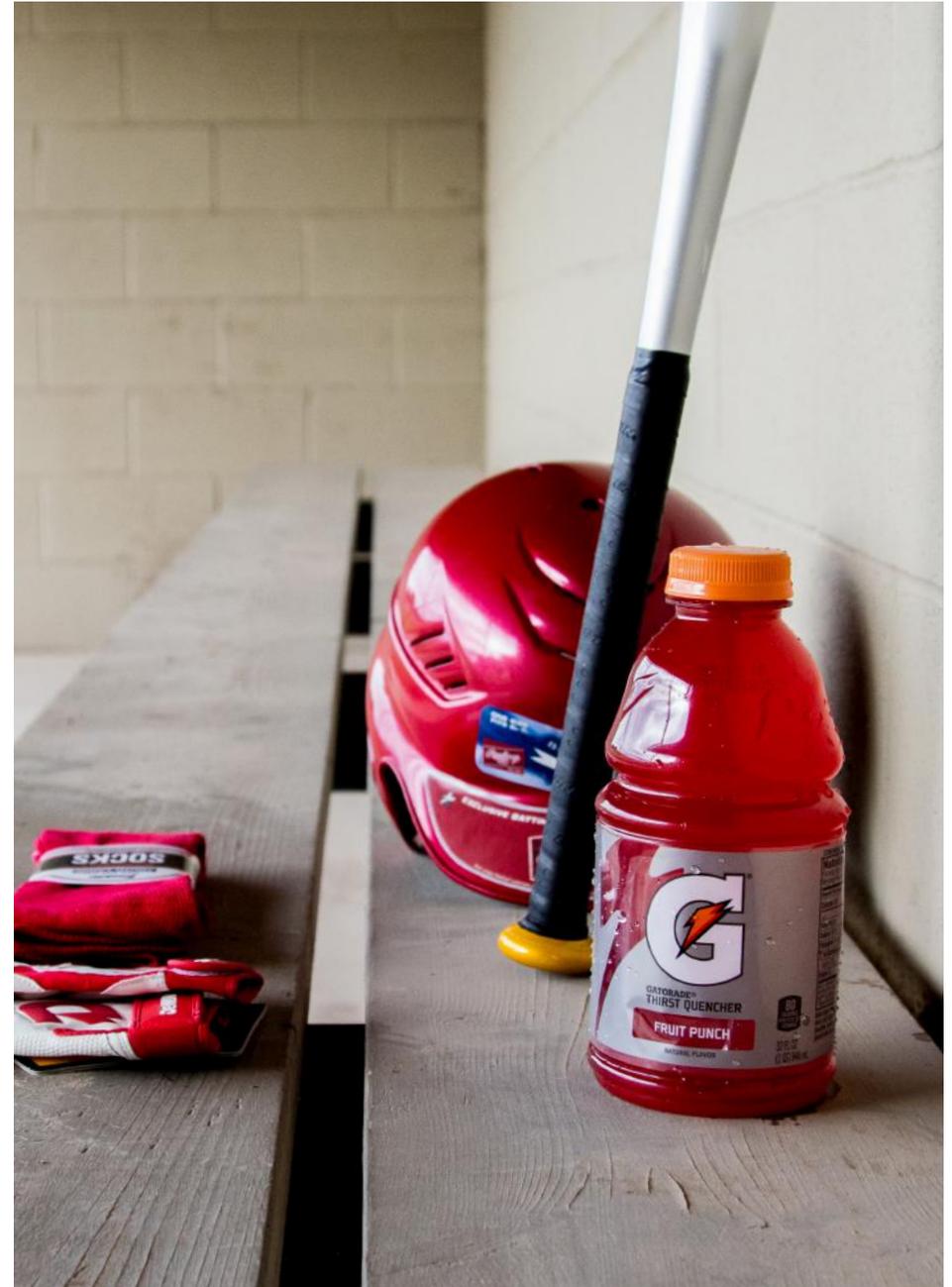
When you are given an assignment with models, the brief will specify the model requirements for that particular shoot. These requirements range from professional models to the ability to use friends or family as models.

Our clients are looking for genuine content to be shared, and often are required real people to showcase authenticity in your submitted content. This is a great way to get your friends and family in front of the camera, creating fun custom content that has the potential to be shared and seen around the world.



Working with expense budgets

Expense budgets allow contributors to purchase props, products, or other tools to complete and execute client briefs. This allows you the opportunity to take your work to the next level. If you have an assignment with an expense budget, you will be reimbursed by providing a receipt after the shoot. If you ever have questions regarding your expense allocation we encourage you to have an open conversation with your Project Coordinator.



Advancing and **growth** **opportunities**

Our internal team of creatives are here to support your journey as contributors. We're here to nurture the skills you have and help you develop new skills. There are training programs and learning content available to grow your skills, test your abilities, and help you receive more project opportunities as a result.



Creating great content





What is great content?

Images and motion-format clips are a means of communicating a brand's unique story. To maximize your success as a contributor, you need to understand what a brand wants - consistency is key.

Authentic visuals

While perfectly posed images may work for select commercial clients, our clients are looking for a bit more authenticity in their content, with high-quality images of people and places that look real.

A variety of compositions

Our clients always want a variety of visuals to select from, as they tend to post multiple pieces of content every day. By shooting unique compositions of similar scenes, you maximize your opportunities. Even if it's as simple as horizontal and vertical options, variety is key.

Images that aren't typical

Brands need a unique voice that represents the story they want to tell. By creating powerful visuals you'll diversify your portfolio and impress the client with your ability to take their assignment requirements and create something that surpasses expectations.

The ingredients of great visual content

Our contributors are storytellers who translate a marketing desire into stunning custom visuals that brands can use to build a visual narrative.



On-brief images

Our team works with brands to create briefs that outline the client's vision. This starts with identifying brand guidelines and dives into various sections of dos and don'ts to assist you in creating the right content. Following the brief carefully is the first step to creating content that makes an impact.

Immersive narrative

All content should present a visual narrative that has a strong pull. We provide our brands with images that tell their story. We need our contributors to produce these stories through their lenses, submitting images that are compelling from beginning to end.

High-quality styling

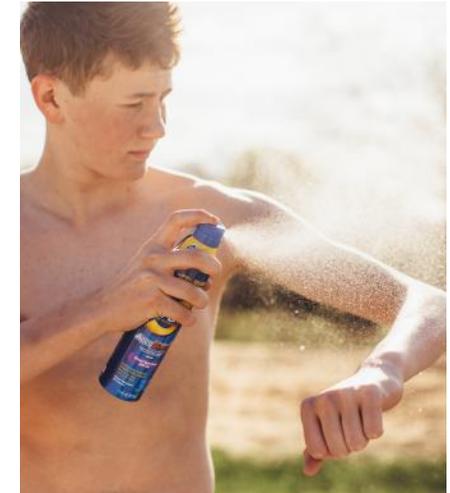
The models, environments, and props should align with the guidelines outlined in the brief, resulting in elevated content that propels a brand's visual story.

Unique, not cliché

Strive for unique, authentic content. Avoid the 'typical' commercial shot traditionally used in marketing efforts. The content you produce should be engaging, shareable, and give the audience a "I need to be in that moment!" feel. Stop people in their tracks and pull them in.

The ingredients of great motion content

Motion-format contributors are story gurus, who can take a shot list built by a brand and create an immersive experience for their audience.



The shot list is key

Built by our team and the brand, the shot list is essential to a successful shoot. As we may take individual clips stitched together for the client, we need to ensure all shots are captured. Once you have completed the shot list, you can play around with your creativity and capture additional.

Authentic moments, not staged

Motion is not forgiving; people can see right through content that is not authentic. Keep it light, keep your models engaged, and keep the content original and genuine.

Look for the unexpected

Capture surprising moments. While you are setting up a scene, your eye may catch something we miss. We hire you for your creativity, so if you have an idea that could elevate the shoot, share it.

Be part of the story, not an observer

Good motion content starts with an ability to integrate naturally into the situation, giving that “Is the camera even there?” feeling. You are there to tell the story, so you should become a part of it.



The ideal contributor explained

Becoming a contributor means creating a partnership, not just with us, but also with our global clients. Here are a few qualities our most successful contributors share.

Professional and accountable

When you take on an assignment, you enter a binding contract where you are responsible for delivering your content to the client and our team. Treat every assignment responsibly and hold yourself accountable to fulfilling the assignment requirements. Opening a dialogue with your Project Coordinator, submitting on-time, and providing on-brand work is a great way to create a well-balanced client-contributor relationship.

Creatively inspired

We want to see the inspired work in your portfolio translated into the work you create here. While a task may seem simple to create quickly, we love seeing your creative flair shine on assignments. Create inspiring content that showcases why you are in our network. Every image or motion-clip that you create stays on your portfolio, so be proud of everything you submit.

Engaged with our community

We want to continue to foster a community of individuals that align with our values. We love when our contributors follow us on social, ask questions, and get involved through the platform and email. Interact with the community to get the most out of your experience in this partnership.



How to maximize opportunities

Once you're a contributor with us, you'll start receiving assignment opportunities to shoot for our global network of brands. By doing well on assignments, you will grow as a contributor, and earn money doing what you love. Here are a few tips on how you can maximize opportunities with us.

Keep your portfolio up-to-date

When we are searching for contributors for assignments, your portfolio is our gateway to learn what you do. Ensure that your location, availability, access tags, and portfolio links are up-to-date. We'll only send you assignments based off of information you input.

As you grow your skills, add categories

You have the ability to submit your portfolio for re-review and add additional categories to your work. If you've added a new category of work to what you shoot, showcase that high quality work in your linked portfolio. You will go through a re-review process with our team, and if successful you can start shooting those types of briefs.

Join training programs

Occasionally, we provide the opportunity to take training programs to learn specific skills for a particular brand or category. If you are given these opportunities, it means you've been identified as having high-potential to be successful!

Submit on-brief and on-time

The content that you submit for an assignment is evaluated and you'll be given a score based on what we discover. To score well, the first step is to submit your content on-time. That means submitting all content, receipts, and model releases prior to the deadline. The content must also be on-brief and meet all submission requirements. Over-submit to ensure our curators and the client have options to select their favourite content from.



Reasons content gets rejected

Our curation team is responsible for quality control and enforcing brand guidelines in all submitted content. They are technically trained with a background in photography, and are highly selective when it comes to content submitted. It is your responsibility to be on-brief on every assignment you accept. Here are a few reasons why content gets rejected by this team.

No model releases

Content that is submitted with recognizable faces and no model releases cannot be legally accepted. Always ensure that you have the model releases uploaded before you submit your content.

Technically poor

Unintentional errors that cause blurriness should always be avoided. Remember not to shoot at a high ISO, use a tripod when possible, learn how to use aperture effectively, and ensure your shutter speed is fast enough.

Harsh or unflattering lighting

Poor lighting describes images or videos that have issues with color/white balance, exposure, brightness, or contrast. This is one of the top reasons why content gets rejected or re-shoots are requested.

Composition

Your image or video may be framed, cropped, or composed in a way that limits its editorial and commercial effectiveness. Include a variety of compositions in your submission to give the client and our curation team options to work with.

A close-up, low-angle shot of the front quarter of a bright red car. The car is parked on a cobblestone street. The focus is on the headlight, which has a distinctive shape with a white and orange lens. Below the headlight, a portion of the front bumper and a silver wheel with a multi-spoke design are visible. The background is slightly blurred, showing a brick building and another red car parked further away. The overall lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day or early morning/late afternoon.

Professional tips



Copyright and trademarks

Copyright is a form of legal protection that gives the creators of the original art created the exclusive right to display, reproduce, distribute, and financially benefit from the work.

To avoid issues with copyright and trademarks:

- Take out any environment logos or cues to different products that may appear in the background of your shoot. Be prepared to spot remove these out if you miss them.
- Remind your models to wear clothing with no logos or labels.
- Avoid submitting images of isolated objects that may bring to mind a specific product that is not the brand you are shooting for.
- Check out Shutterstock's list of [Known Image Restrictions](#) before you shoot.

What are the copyright guidelines for work I submit to Shutterstock Custom?

When you take on a project, you'll agree ahead of time how many of your submissions will be purchased for that project. Any photos purchased will have their commercial usage rights transferred to us. We then provide some of those shots to the client to use. Any shots that were submitted, but not selected/purchased, are yours to use as you please, granted you do not sell to a third party and that the image is not considered a similar.

Can I show my work for Shutterstock Custom in my portfolio?

You are allowed to display your accepted work non-commercially (not for sale) as part of a personal portfolio, with one caveat: we ask that you allow the brand to use it first, as we guarantee exclusivity as part of the brand's agreement with us and cannot leak confidential campaigns.



Similarars

A similar piece of content is determined by looking at the following elements in the images or motion-format clips that you submit to Shutterstock Custom: image content, props, environment, composition, technique, feel, concept, or post-production techniques. If any of these elements result in a resemblance or similarity between images that can clearly be identified, then the images would be deemed “similar.”

What does this mean for you as a Shutterstock Custom contributor?

For additional images that are NOT accepted by Shutterstock Custom on an assignment, but that would be deemed “similar” according to the definition above, do not resell or license similarars or state that similarars were taken for a client or brief.



Production strategies for effective work

Professional content creators have one thing in common — they plan every shoot they take on and know exactly what is expected of them. Here are a few quick tricks to know.

Make a plan

Whatever the assignment you are shooting with us, map out every shot and logistical detail that you need to know to be effective on shoot.

Time management

Keep a schedule to keep your shoot moving on time. If something isn't working, move on and come back to it later. Always be ready to pivot.

Come prepared

If you know weather could be an issue, come with a back up. If you know your model may not be able to make it, arrange a secondary person to call. Always come prepared knowing the issues that have the potential to arise.



Tips for independent work

On select assignments, you will be working individually as the creative director, producer, content creator, and editor of your work. As some of our concepts are simple projects that you can execute independently, keep these tips in mind on your next solo shoot.

Arrange all details well in advance

All logistical arrangements should be made when you accept the assignment so that no issues arise on the day of your shoot. The last thing you want to do is scramble.

Create a relationship with your Project Coordinator

Your Project Coordinator is here to support you as an independent content creator. Contact them if any issues come up or if you just need someone to bounce ideas off.

Align your budget with your time

Once you get the budget for your assignment, map out your time to effectively manage yourself and to make the budget work. Ensure that you feel supported to complete the task within the time you think it should take.



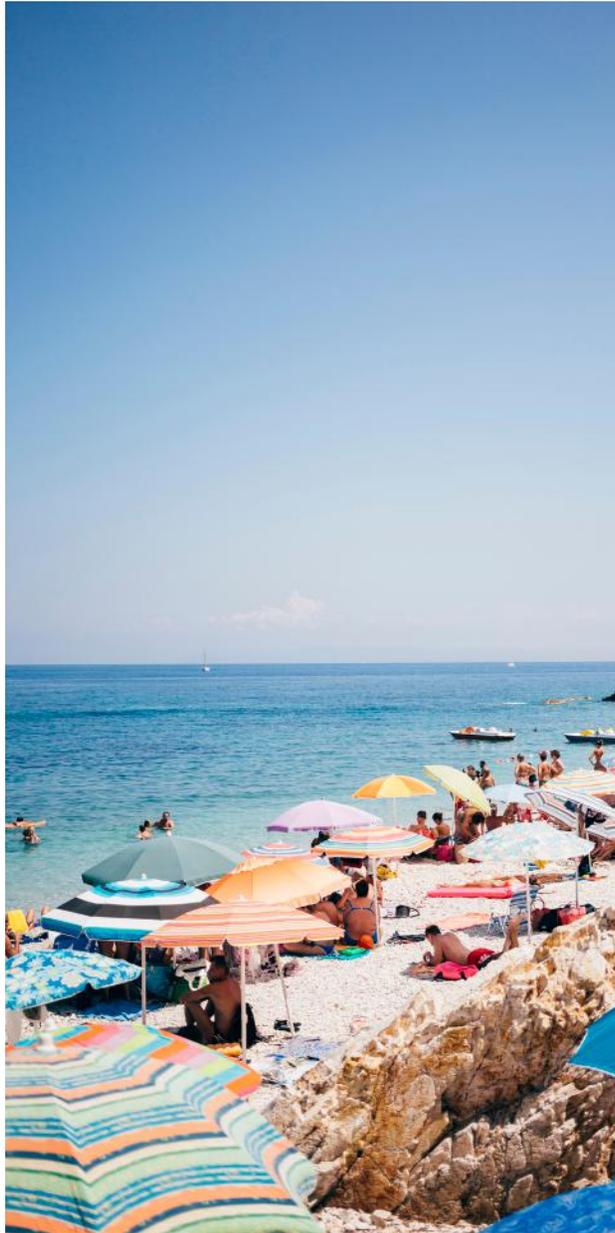
Working with a team

Some assignments will give you the opportunity to work with a team on higher production tasks. Leave what you don't know to the people who do! Finding and building the right team can be tricky, but building a successful team can be pivotal for full production assignments. Whatever your project is, you should always hold a pre-production meeting to go over last-minute details, including everything from wardrobe and props to lighting and subject placement.



Glossary





Assignment

If you are selected for an assignment after showing interest, you will receive the assignment in your profile. An assignment outlines all of the brief details and requirements that you need to adhere to. This includes the summary of the project, requirements, shot list, brand guidelines, deadline, expense and model budget, as well as compensation details.

Brand guidelines

Found on an assignment brief, a brand's guidelines include product, people, environment, and technical requirements.

Curation

Curation is the process of our team going through your content and selecting assets that will be delivered to the brand. This is the final step before you are compensated.

Custom content

Custom content is created by our contributors by executing an assignment brief and producing images or motion content that is specific to a brand's marketing requests.

Interest check

Based on your contributor profile, our team will send you assignment offers when one becomes available. An interest check is sent by our Project Coordinators to you through the platform to gauge your interest and ability to take on assignments. When you receive an interest check, you will have a few hours to accept or decline interest.

Project Coordinator

Your Project Coordinator is an internal team member that is responsible for being your point person on specific projects. When you receive an assignment opportunity, you will receive the Project Coordinator's contact details for that particular project.



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