01

PART ONE

What brands actually buy

> *Brands aren't paying for your follower count. They're paying to skip a production crew.*

You do not need 10,000 followers.

You've probably been told to wait. Hit 10K, *then* pitch. Get verified, get "real," then ask to be paid. **It's bad advice, and the brands you want to work with already know it.**

Here is what a brand is actually buying when they hire you: a person who can point a camera at their product and make something that doesn't look like an ad. That's the job. Everything else — your follower count, your engagement rate, your aesthetic — is evidence that you can do the job. It is not the job.

Understanding that changes what you're selling, and it changes who you can sell to. So before you write a single pitch, let's look at the math a brand is running on their side of the table.

The two options every brand has

A skincare company wants six thirty-second videos for their paid ads this quarter. They have two ways to get them.

Option A is an agency. Creative director, scriptwriter, videographer, editor, studio day, talent, three rounds of revisions, a project manager to hold it together. Six weeks from brief to delivery. Five figures.

Option B is six creators with four thousand followers each, filming in their own bathrooms with window light. Two weeks. A fraction of the cost. And here's the part that matters most to the brand: the footage usually performs better, because it looks like a person instead of a commercial.

> You are not the cheap version of Option A. You are a different product, and for a lot of briefs you are the better one.

FIGURE 1.1 The same six videos, two ways to buy them

OPTION A

Production agency

Creative direction	$1,800
Scripting, 6 spots	$1,500
Studio day + crew	$3,600
On-camera talent	$1,800
Edit + 2 revisions	$2,400
Project management	$900

TOTAL **$12,000**

6 weeks · 1 look · 1 voice

OPTION B

Six creators

Creator 1 — 4.2K followers	$275
Creator 2 — 8.1K followers	$350
Creator 3 — 1.9K followers	$200
Creator 4 — 6.4K followers	$300
Creator 5 — 3.3K followers	$250
Creator 6 — 900 followers	$175

TOTAL **$1,550**

2 weeks · 6 looks · 6 voices

1 **Look at the follower counts in Option B.** Not one of them would clear a 10K gate. The brand didn't buy reach here — they bought six different faces, six different homes, and six different ways of talking about the same bottle. That variety is the product. One agency shoot can't produce it at any price.

2 **The smallest account on the invoice still got paid.** 900 followers, $175. She was hired because her three sample videos were good, not because of her audience. That is the entire premise of this book.

Professionally produced short-form social video runs roughly $1,000–$3,000 each in 2026 (Vidico); beginner UGC creators typically charge $150–$300 per video (Influencer Marketing Hub, Influee). Full sources in Appendix A2.

Why small accounts often convert better

There's a reason brands keep coming back to creators your size, and it isn't charity. At four thousand followers, a meaningful share of your audience actually knows who you are. They've seen your face enough times to have an opinion about you. When you say a moisturizer is worth the money, it reads as a recommendation from someone they follow.

At four hundred thousand, that relationship thins out. The reach is enormous and the trust per viewer is lower. Both are useful to a brand — they just get bought for different reasons and out of different budgets. Reach comes out of awareness spend. You come out of the creative budget, which is a different pocket and often an easier one to open.

77% Marketers saying creator content beats branded ad creative	**2–3×** Engagement rate of creators under 100K vs. macro accounts	**$0** What a brand spends on studio time when they hire you instead

The belief to kill before you turn the page

Almost every creator who never lands a deal is stopped by one sentence. Here it is, and here's what replaces it.

✗ **THE BELIEF THAT KEEPS YOU UNPAID**

"I need 10,000 followers before anyone will take me seriously enough to pay me."

✓ **WHAT'S ACTUALLY TRUE**

"I need three pieces of work worth showing, and a list of thirty brands who need work like it."

The second is entirely within your control this month. Part Two builds the pieces, Part Three builds the list. Neither needs a single new follower.

1.2 — THE EIGHT DEAL TYPES

"Brand deal" means eight different things.

The phrase covers at least eight separate transactions with wildly different pay, effort, and strings attached. Knowing which one you're being offered is the difference between a fair trade and having your face run in a paid ad for two years in exchange for a $30 serum.

Here they are ranked by how likely each is to be your first. Read the table, then the detail on the next two pages.

FIGURE 1.2 The eight deal types, ranked for beginners

DEAL TYPE	WHAT YOU HAND OVER	FIRST-TIMER PAY	DIFFICULTY
Gifted product	1–2 posts, you keep the item	$0 + product	●○○
Local / in-person	Visit, film on site, post	$75–$300	●○○
Paid UGC	Raw video, brand runs it as an ad	$150–$300	●●○
Affiliate	A link, a code, ongoing posts	5–20% cut	●○○
Sponsored post	Post on your own channel	$75–$250	●●○
Livestream	Segment or full-stream sponsorship	$100–$400	●●○
Content licensing	Extended rights to work you made	+20–50%	●●●
Ambassador	Months of content, often exclusive	$500+/mo	●●●

Shaded rows are where roughly nine out of ten first deals land. Ranges are entry-level 2026 US figures and vary widely by niche and market — sources in Appendix A2.

The four you'll meet first

Each card gives you the trade, the catch, and the one thing to watch for before you say yes.

01

Gifted product

They ship you the thing, you post about it, you keep it. No cash changes hands. Easiest yes in the business and the fastest way to build a portfolio that isn't self-funded.

WATCH FOR

Agree the exact number of posts up front. "Post whenever!" turns into four follow-up emails asking where the content is.

02

Local / in-person

A restaurant, gym, salon or plant shop pays you to come in, film, and post. Usually cash or comped service. Decision-maker is standing at the counter, which is why these close in days instead of months.

WATCH FOR

Get the visit date in writing. Small businesses reschedule constantly and your time is the thing being spent.

03

Paid UGC

You film it, you send them the raw file, they run it as an ad. You may never post it on your own account at all. This is where your follower count matters least of anything in this book.

WATCH FOR

Usage rights and term length. "We'll use it in ads" needs a where and a how long, or you've sold a licence you can't price.

04

Affiliate

A tracked link or discount code. You earn a cut of whatever sells. Zero barrier to starting, and no ceiling — but no floor either, which is the whole problem with it.

WATCH FOR

Never let a brand swap a paid deal for "commission only." That's a brand asking you to carry their risk for free.

The four that come later

You'll grow into these. Know the shape of them now so you recognise one when it lands in your inbox.

05

Sponsored post

Content on your channel, disclosed as an ad. The classic deal everyone pictures. It's priced against your audience, which is exactly why it isn't usually your first one.

WATCH FOR

Disclosure is not optional. Mark it as an ad — the brand's legal team will ask, and platforms will bury you for hiding it.

06

Livestream

A sponsored segment, a product drop mid-stream, or a whole stream underwritten. Common in gaming, growing fast in beauty and fitness.

WATCH FOR

Define the read. "Mention us sometime" is unbillable; "60-second segment at the top of hour two" is.

07

Content licensing

A brand already has your video and wants to keep using it — longer, wider, or on paid media. They pay again for that. Most creators never invoice for this and leave real money behind.

WATCH FOR

Track when every licence expires. You can't invoice for a renewal you didn't know had lapsed.

08

Ambassador

A retainer. Set content every month for three, six, twelve months. Predictable income, and usually the first time a brand asks you for exclusivity.

WATCH FOR

Exclusivity has a price. If you can't work with their competitors for a year, that year costs more than twelve one-off posts.

Every one of these is a different product with a different price. The creators who get underpaid are almost always the ones who didn't know which one they'd agreed to.

It will be smaller than you imagined.

And that is completely fine, because **the first one is not about the money.** It's about converting yourself from someone who has never done this into someone who has.

Your first deal will almost certainly be one of three things: a gifted arrangement with a small brand, a local business that pays you a couple hundred dollars to come film, or a modest paid UGC job for a company you've never heard of. It will not be the brand whose products are on your shelf right now. That one comes later, and it comes because of this one.

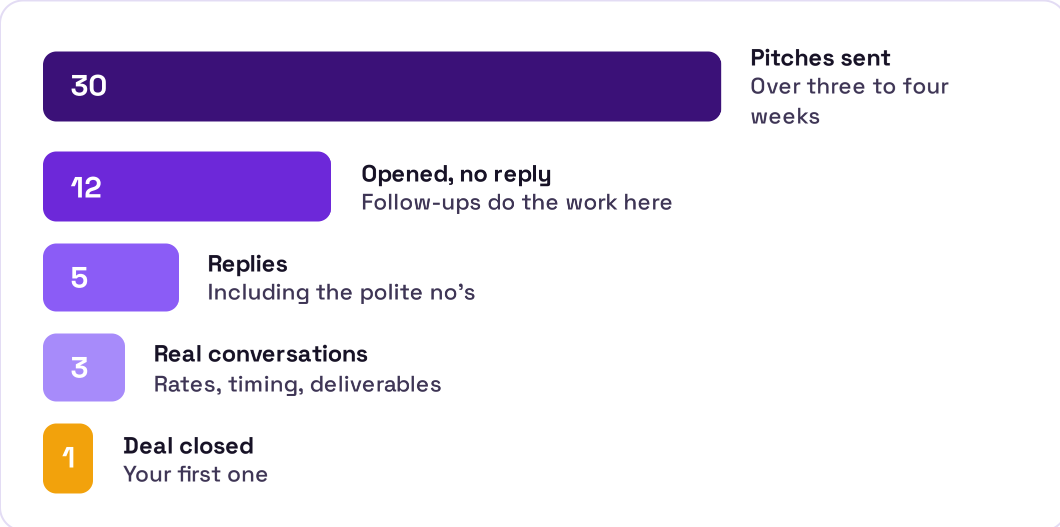
What that first deal actually buys you is worth more than the invoice:

- **A real piece of work** made to someone else's brief — which is a completely different skill from making content for yourself, and the thing every future brand is checking for.
- **A name to reference.** "I recently worked with..." opens doors that "I'd love to work with..." does not.
- **A price you've actually charged.** The hardest number to say out loud is your first one. After that it's just a number.
- **Proof to yourself** that the whole thing works, which is the fuel for the next thirty pitches.

Silence is the normal case, not the bad case

This is the part that makes people quit in week two, so read it twice. Cold outreach for brand deals runs on volume. Most of your pitches will get no reply at all — not a rejection, just nothing. That is not a verdict on your work. Coordinators are busy, inboxes are full, timing is everything, and a no-reply is usually a not-right-now.

FIGURE 1.3 What thirty pitches realistically returns



1 **Almost every creator quits somewhere in row two.** They send fifteen pitches, hear nothing, and conclude they're too small. What actually happened is that they stopped one follow-up short of the reply. Part Four covers the follow-up cadence that recovers most of this row.

2 **One deal from thirty pitches sounds brutal until you price it.** At $250, that's roughly $8 per pitch sent — and a pitch takes minutes once your templates exist. The second round converts better, because by then you have a name to drop.

Reflects 2026 cold-outreach benchmarks: campaigns under 50 recipients average 5.8% replies vs 2.1% for large blasts, and research-led personalisation lifts that to 9–15% (Instantly, Belkins, Woodpecker). Walk-in pitches convert far higher than any email figure.

Be the obvious choice for something small.

Brands don't search for "a creator." They search for a creator who makes the specific kind of thing they need. A coordinator with a budget and a deadline is looking for the fastest yes — and the fastest yes is the person whose existing work already looks like the ad they're trying to make.

You don't need a permanent identity. You need a sentence a stranger can act on. Fill this in before you go any further.

EXERCISE — YOUR POSITIONING LINE

I make ______________ content

for ______________

who want ______________.

If you can't fill the second blank without saying "everyone," you haven't picked a lane yet. Narrow it until it feels slightly too small — that's usually the point where it starts working.

BEAUTY

I make **honest drugstore skincare** content for **people with sensitive skin** who want **to stop wasting money on products that burn.**

COMEDY

I make **workplace sketch** content for **burnt-out office workers** who want **to laugh at their own Monday.**

GAMING

I make **first-hour impressions** content for **players with no time** who want **to know if a game is worth the weekend.**

FITNESS

I make **small-apartment workout** content for **beginners without a gym** who want **to start without buying equipment.**

Where you are now

You know what a brand is buying, what the eight deals are worth, what your first one will realistically look like, and which lane you're standing in. That's the whole foundation. Part Two turns it into something a brand can look at.

DO THIS IN PLUG

The deal types you switch on in your profile are the ones brands can order directly from your page — so the choice you just made in 1.2 sets up everything downstream. Turn on the ones you're genuinely willing to deliver and leave the rest off.

Discover then filters brands by what they're **open to** — in-person deals, paid shoutouts, gifted — and matches them against your follower count, so you're only looking at brands that actually work with creators your size. **Your positioning line from 1.4 goes straight into your Creator Style**, which every AI-drafted pitch later in this book pulls from.

YOU'LL NEED THIS ELSEWHERE

Affiliate deals run on networks Plug doesn't operate — ShareASale, Impact, LTK and the Amazon Influencer Program each need their own signup. Same for the platform-native marketplaces inside TikTok and YouTube. Worth registering for all of them; they're free, they're slow, and they occasionally produce a deal while you sleep.

Next: building three pieces of work worth showing — starting from nothing, with no deals behind you.

02

PART TWO

Build your assets

> *Nobody hires a creator with nothing to look at. The good news is you can build the whole thing this weekend.*

You get eight seconds.

A brand coordinator opens your link between two meetings. She is not reading. She is scanning for one thing: **does this person's work look like the ad we're trying to make?**

Everything on your page either helps her answer that in eight seconds or gets in the way. There is no third category. That single test decides what goes on the page, what order it goes in, and what you cut.

Most creator portfolios fail it for the same reason: they're built to describe a person instead of to sell a service. A paragraph about your journey, a wall of platform links, a screenshot of your analytics. None of it answers her question, and by the time she's finished not finding the answer, she's back in her inbox.

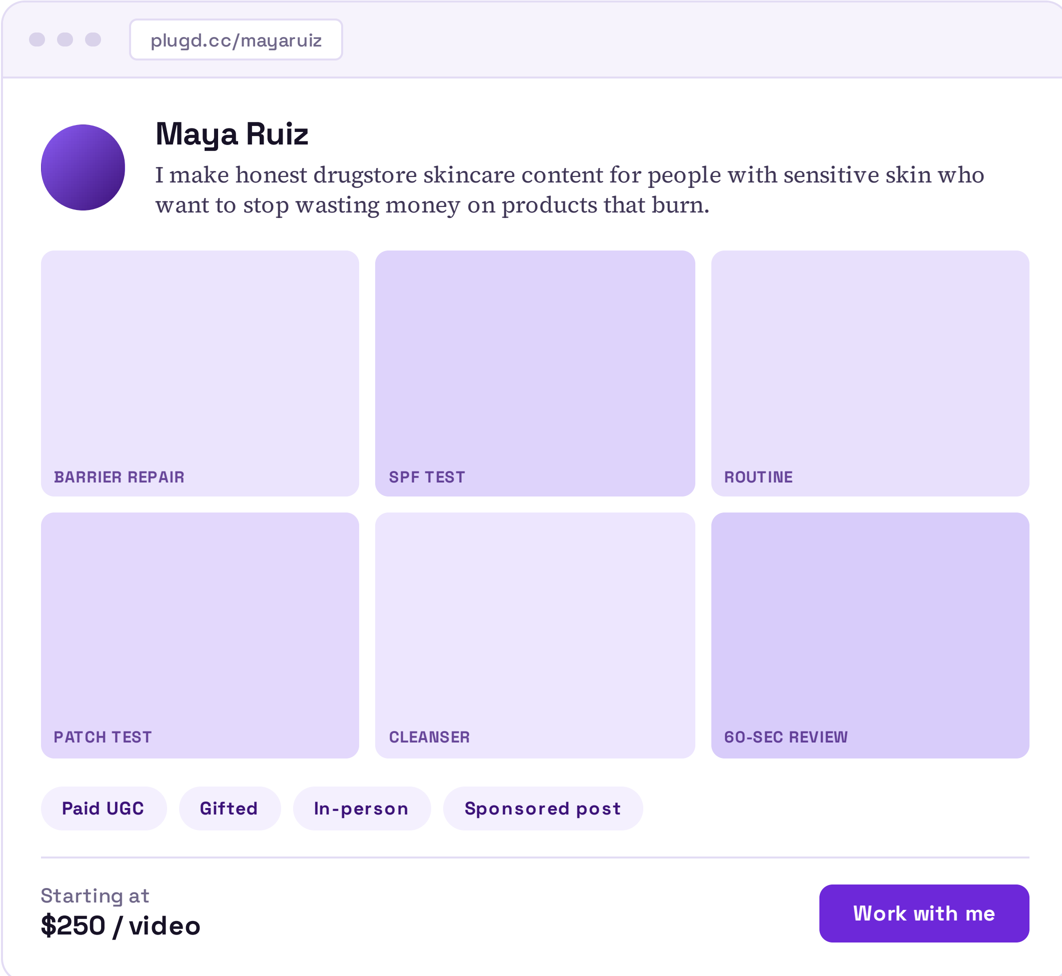
The five blocks, in order

- **Who you are and what you make** — one line, not a paragraph. This is your positioning line from 1.4, doing its job.
- **Three to six pieces of work** — the whole argument. Vertical, watchable, and the same shape as the ads she runs.
- **What you're open to** — the deal types you actually take, stated plainly, so she knows whether to email you at all.
- **Rates or a rate request** — either a starting number or a clean way to ask. Never nothing.
- **One way to contact you** — one. Not five icons pointing to five inboxes you check at five different frequencies.

That's the page. It fits on one screen on her phone, which is where she'll open it, because she's between two meetings.

> Your portfolio is not an About page. It's a sales page with one product on it, and the product is you doing a specific job well.

FIGURE 2.1 The five blocks, on one screen



1. **One line, not a bio.** A coordinator can tell in three seconds whether Maya is a fit for a sensitive-skin brief. A paragraph about her skincare journey would take twenty and answer nothing.

2. **Six pieces, all vertical.** Same aspect ratio as the ads the brand runs. Nothing here is a carousel or a selfie — it's all footage a brand could imagine cutting into a spot.

3. **Deal types stated up front.** She takes in-person work. A local brand now knows to ask. Half the deals in this book start because someone advertised that they were open to them.

4. **A number and one button.** "Starting at" anchors the conversation without boxing her in, and there's exactly one thing to click. No Linktree, no five icons.

Maya has 3,100 followers and had never been paid when this page went live. The page is doing the work, not the audience.

FIGURE 2.2 The same creator, two pages

✗ DOESN'T GET A REPLY	✓ GETS A REPLY
"Content creator | Dog mom | Coffee ☕" — describes a person, sells nothing.	**A positioning line** — says what she makes and who it's for.
Follower screenshot — hands the brand a number to reject you on.	**Six pieces of work** — the proof, shown instead of claimed.
Eleven platform links — every one is a chance to leave.	**One link, one button** — a single path forward.
Mixed formats — square photos next to horizontal vlogs next to memes.	**All vertical, all consistent** — reads as a body of work, not a scrapbook.
"DM me for collabs!" — unprofessional, and she won't.	**A real contact route** — an inbox she monitors.
No rate, no deal types — every question becomes an email she won't send.	**"Starting at $250"** — sets the floor before the brand does.

What to cut, without regret

Every one of these feels like it's helping. None of it is. Cut all of it today and your page gets stronger by the end of the afternoon.

- **Your follower count.** If it were your strongest asset you wouldn't be reading this book. Let the work argue instead.
- **The personality bio.** Save it for the caption. This page has a job.
- **Analytics screenshots.** Nobody has ever hired a creator off a screenshot of a dashboard.
- **Anything over eighteen months old**, unless it is genuinely your best piece.
- **Work in a niche you no longer want deals in.** You get hired for what you show.

Make the work first. Nobody will know.

Here's the loop that stops most people: you need work to get deals, and you need deals to get work. **You break it by making the work yourself, this week, with money you've already spent.**

It's called spec work, and it's normal in every creative industry. Designers build fake campaigns for real brands. Copywriters write ads nobody commissioned. Nobody considers this dishonest, because nobody is claiming it was paid — it's a demonstration of what you'd do if you were hired.

You already own products worth filming. The moisturiser on your shelf, the game on your console, the protein powder in your cupboard. Pick three you'd genuinely recommend, and treat each one like a brief you've been handed.

Three formulas that work in every niche

You don't need creative range yet. You need three finished pieces that look professional and prove you can follow a structure. These three cover almost every brief a beginner will ever be handed.

Shoot each one twice: once as a wide "brand" cut with no talking, once with your voice over it. That gives you six usable pieces from three products, and it shows a brand you can deliver in either style — which is a question they will actually ask.

> Three products, three formulas, one weekend. That's a portfolio, and it costs you nothing you haven't already bought.

FIGURE 2.3 The three formulas, frame by frame

FORMULA 01 **Problem → Product → Result**

FRAME 1	FRAME 2	FRAME 3	FRAME 4
Close on the problem. Dry patch, laggy load screen, empty gym bag.	Say the frustration out loud in one sentence.	Product enters frame. Hands only. Show the label clearly.	The result, same framing as frame 1 so the change is obvious.
0:00–0:03	0:03–0:07	0:07–0:15	0:15–0:25

FORMULA 02 **First impression / unboxing**

FRAME 1	FRAME 2	FRAME 3	FRAME 4
Package already in hand. Never film yourself walking to the door.	One honest expectation. "I've heard this is overhyped."	Open it. Texture, weight, smell, the physical detail.	Verdict in one sentence. Commit to an opinion.
0:00–0:03	0:03–0:08	0:08–0:18	0:18–0:25

FORMULA 03 **Day-in-the-life integration**

FRAME 1	FRAME 2	FRAME 3	FRAME 4
Establish the moment. Morning, pre-workout, 2am raid.	Product appears in use, not presented. It's just there.	One line on why it earned its spot in the routine.	Carry on with the day. No hard sell, no sign-off.
0:00–0:04	0:04–0:12	0:12–0:20	0:20–0:28

Under thirty seconds each. Vertical. Shot on a phone in window light. Brands are buying the structure and the clarity, not the camera.

FIGURE 2.4 Formula 01, four ways

BEAUTY

A $9 moisturiser

Problem: flaking under makeup, filmed close.
Product: hands applying, label visible for two full seconds.
Result: same close-up, six hours later, makeup still sitting flat.

THE DETAIL THAT SELLS IT

Same lighting and same angle in frames 1 and 4. Without that, there's no before and after — just two clips.

COMEDY

A desk lamp

Problem: taking a video call lit like a police interrogation.
Product: lamp arrives mid-meeting, deadpan.
Result: same call, now lit like a skincare ad. No dialogue needed.

THE DETAIL THAT SELLS IT

The product still has to be legible. Comedy briefs get rejected when the brand can't find their product in the joke.

GAMING

A $40 headset

Problem: missing footstep audio, shown as an actual death on screen.
Product: unboxed fast, on your head in four seconds.
Result: same map, same corner, you hear them first.

THE DETAIL THAT SELLS IT

Use real gameplay you actually recorded. Stock footage reads as fake instantly to anyone who plays.

FITNESS

A resistance band

Problem: no room and no equipment, filmed in the actual small apartment.
Product: band anchored to a door, ten seconds of setup.
Result: full session finished in the same square metre.

THE DETAIL THAT SELLS IT

Don't clean the room. The constraint is the story, and staged perfection kills the relatability you're selling.

Label it honestly, then stop apologising

Spec work only becomes a problem when you let a brand believe it was commissioned. So don't. On your portfolio, mark these pieces as *sample work*, or *concept*, or *self-directed*. One word is enough.

Then say nothing further about it. Do not open a pitch with "I haven't worked with any brands yet, but..." You have made work. Made work is the qualification. The brand cares whether the video is good and whether you can hit a brief — and a well-labelled spec piece answers both.

✗ **UNDERSELLS YOU**

"These are just some test videos I made — I don't have real clients yet, but I'm learning!"

✓ **STATES A FACT**

"Sample work — a concept spot for a brand I use. Happy to shoot the same structure for yours."

The self-check before anything goes on your page

Watch each piece back on your phone with the sound off, then again with the sound on and the screen face down. Two questions:

- **Silent:** is it obvious what the product is and what it does, in the first three seconds?
- **Audio only:** would the first sentence make a stranger keep listening?

If a piece fails either test, it's not ready. That's usually a hook problem, not a filming problem, and re-shooting the first four seconds fixes it more often than re-shooting the whole thing.

Price the work, not the audience.

The standard advice is to charge a hundred dollars per ten thousand followers. **Ignore it.** It prices the one asset you don't have, and it prices out the deal type most likely to be your first.

Paid UGC doesn't touch your audience at all — the brand runs the video in their own ads. Charging by follower count for work that never appears on your feed makes no sense, and brands who buy UGC regularly already know it. They're paying for a produced video, delivered on time, that fits a brief.

So price the deliverable. How many videos, how long, how many revisions, and — the one that actually moves the number — what they're allowed to do with it afterwards.

Set a floor and hold it

Before you name any number, work out what you will not go below. Add up the honest hours: planning, shooting, editing, revisions, emails. Multiply by a rate you'd accept for skilled freelance work. That's your floor, and the point of having one is that you stop negotiating against yourself at 11pm when a brand offers you sixty dollars.

Below the floor you can still say yes — but only for something other than money. A first case study. A local business you want a relationship with. Product you'd have bought anyway. Trade something real, or hold the line.

> The hardest number to say out loud is your first one. After that it's just a number you say.

FIGURE 2.5 A starting rate card — sub-10K, no track record

Rate card — starting rates

Entry level · revise upward after every three closed deals

Single UGC video Up to 30 seconds, one revision, organic use only	$200
Bundle of three Same brief, three variations, one revision each	$500
Sponsored post on your channel One video, posted and left up 12 months	$250
Local / in-person visit Up to 2 hours on site, 2 deliverables	$250
Extra revision Beyond the one included	$50
Rush turnaround Under 72 hours	+25%

Paid media usage is quoted separately. Everything above assumes organic use only. The moment a brand wants to put spend behind your video, it's a different product at a different price — see the next page.

Anchored to 2026 beginner UGC benchmarks of $150–$300 per video, with bundle pricing reflecting the 15–25% multi-video discount brands expect (Influee, Veel, Influencer Marketing Hub). Sources in Appendix A2.

FIGURE 2.6 One video, three licences

This is the single most valuable page in Part Two. The video doesn't change. The price more than doubles, and the only difference is what the brand is allowed to do with it.

ORGANIC ONLY	+ PAID MEDIA, 3 MONTHS	+ WHITELISTING, 12 MONTHS
$200	**$300**	**$500**
They post it on their own channels. No ad spend behind it. Default assumption if nobody says otherwise.	They can run it as an ad for three months. Your face is now in a campaign with budget behind it.	Ads run from their account as if they were yours, for a year. This is the one brands ask for casually.
BASELINE	+50%	+150%

1 **"We'll probably use it in some ads" is a licence request.** It rarely arrives sounding like one. Treat any mention of ads, boosting, whitelisting or "running it" as a separate line item, and quote it separately. If you don't, you've given away the expensive part for free.

2 **Every licence has an end date, and expiry is money.** When a twelve-month term lapses and the brand is still running the ad, that's a renewal you can invoice for. Creators who don't track expiry dates simply never send that invoice.

Industry guidance puts paid-media usage at roughly 20–50% of the base fee and whitelisting around 30% per month, with perpetual rights at 100%+ (Modash, Influish, Lumanu). Term, territory and exclusivity all move the number.

2.4 — THE 15-MINUTE SETUP

Do this before you turn the page.

Part Three puts thirty brands in front of you. None of that works without a link to send them. Fifteen minutes, right now.

- [ ] **Write your positioning line** at the top of the page — the one you filled in on the last page of Part One. — 2 MIN
- [ ] **Upload three to six pieces** of work, vertical, best one first. Spec work counts and gets labelled as sample work. — 5 MIN
- [ ] **Switch on your deal types** — the ones you'll genuinely deliver. Include in-person if you'd take a local job. — 1 MIN
- [ ] **Set a starting rate** or a clean way to ask for one. Something has to be there. — 2 MIN
- [ ] **Put one contact route** on the page and make sure it reaches an inbox you actually open. — 1 MIN
- [ ] **Open it on your phone** and run the eight-second test on yourself. Can a stranger tell what you make and who for? — 2 MIN
- [ ] **Send the link to one friend** and ask them what they think you do for a living. If they get it wrong, your top line is wrong. — 2 MIN

That's the whole asset. It is not permanent, it is not precious, and you will rebuild it after your first three deals. It only has to be good enough to send.

Where you are now

You have a page a brand can scan in eight seconds, three to six pieces of work you made yourself, and a floor price you won't go under. That's everything Part Three needs.

DO THIS IN PLUG

The **portfolio builder** is the five blocks in this chapter, in this order, with themes so it doesn't look like everyone else's. Your deal types and starting rate live on the same page, and the whole thing becomes the link you send in Part Four.

Shot Planner turns any of the three formulas into a frame-by-frame storyboard before you pick up your phone — the fastest way to stop staring at a product wondering where to start. **Video analysis** then scores what you shot on hook strength, pacing and CTA clarity, which is the automated version of the silent-and-sound self-check on the previous page.

A **UGC example helper** is on the way SOON — it'll generate worked examples of the shot you're about to make, so you can see the structure before you film it.

YOU'LL NEED THIS ELSEWHERE

Plug won't film or edit for you. CapCut handles the cut, Lightroom or your phone's native app handles the colour, and a $15 clip-on light does more for your footage than any software. Buy the light before you buy anything else.

Next: the thirty brands. Where the first yes actually comes from, and why it's closer to home than you think.

03

PART THREE

Find the right brands

> *Your first yes is closer to home than you think — usually within about three miles of it.*

3.1 — WHERE FIRST DEALS ACTUALLY COME FROM

Count the people between you and yes.

There's one number that predicts whether a pitch works better than any other, and it isn't your follower count. **It's how many people stand between you and the person who can say yes.**

At a national brand, that number is six or seven. Your email lands with an assistant, gets forwarded to a coordinator, queued for a manager, raised with a director — who has an agency on retainer that handles creator sourcing anyway. Nobody is being rude. The path just doesn't exist.

At the coffee shop four blocks away, that number is zero. The person who can say yes is the person who hands you the coffee.

Ranked by odds, not by prestige

Local businesses
Restaurants, gyms, salons, plant shops. No content team, no agency, owner on site. Best odds by a wide margin.

Small DTC brands
Founder-led, already posting creator content, small enough that the founder still reads the inbox. Where most first paid UGC deals come from.

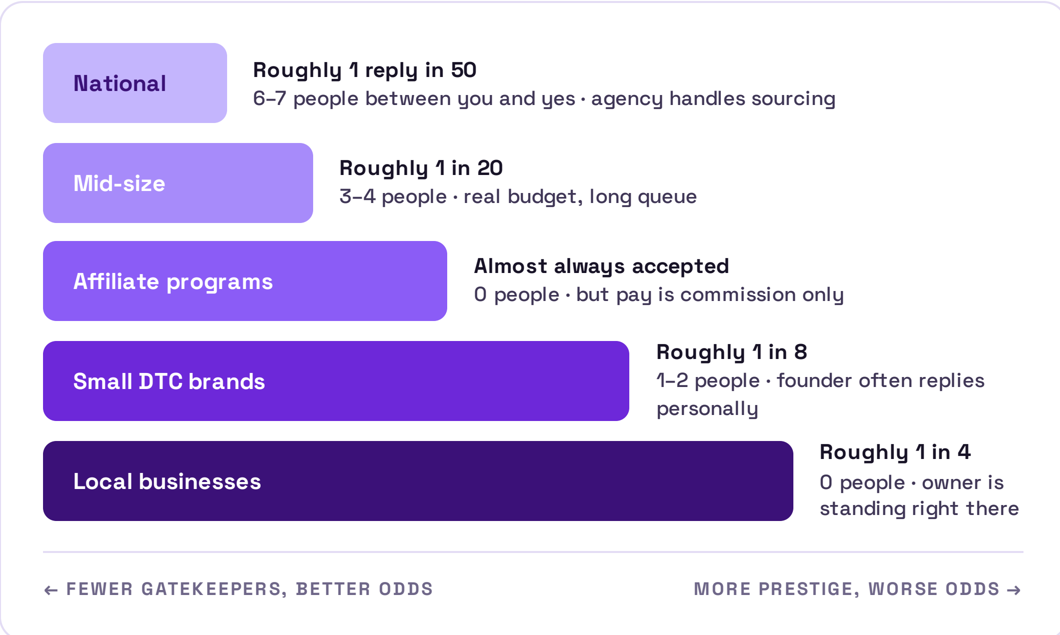
Affiliate programs
Always open, no gatekeeper at all. Also no guaranteed money. Worth signing up for while you pitch.

Mid-size brands
A creator program and a queue you're now in. Real money, slow timelines. Include a few.

National brands & agencies
Come back in a year with a portfolio full of the deals above. Not a judgement, just a sequence.

Pitch where the decision-maker is reachable. Everything else in this chapter is detail.

FIGURE 3.1 Where to spend your thirty pitches



1. **The bars are reply rates, not payouts.** A national brand pays more per deal — but at one reply in fifty, thirty pitches to that tier returns nothing at all. Thirty pitches to the bottom two tiers returns several conversations. You cannot pay rent with prestige.

2. **You will want to skip the bottom two rows.** Everyone does — the brands there aren't the ones you daydream about. But those rows are where your case studies come from, and case studies are what make the top rows answer you next year.

Email tiers track 2026 cold-outreach data: 1–3% replies with no personalisation, 9–15% with research-led personalisation on a small list (Instantly, Autobound, Belkins). In-person pitching isn't email and converts far higher.

Walk in and ask.

This is the single most under-used route in the entire creator economy, and it's the one nobody wants to do, because **it involves talking to a human being in person.** Do it anyway. It works, and it works fast.

The plant shop down the road has the same problem as a national skincare brand: they need content and they don't have any. The difference is that nobody has ever offered to make it for them. You will be the first person who ever has.

Why they say yes

- **No content team, no agency.** The owner is filming their own posts on a Tuesday night and hating it.
- **The decision-maker is on site.** No forwarding, no queue, no procurement process. They can say yes while you're standing there.
- **You're local, which is the point.** Their customers live within a few miles. So do your followers. That overlap is worth more to them than a hundred thousand strangers.
- **The budget is small but real.** A couple hundred dollars is a normal marketing decision for a business that spends more than that on a single ad in the local paper.

Timing matters more than your script

Never walk in during a rush. You will be a nuisance and you will get a no that has nothing to do with your offer. Restaurants: mid-afternoon, between two and four. Gyms and studios: mid-morning, after the early class clears. Salons and shops: early in the week, when the diary is thin.

Ask for the owner or the manager by role, not by name. If they're out, ask when they're usually in, and come back then. Coming back a second time is itself a signal — it tells them you're running a business, not chasing a freebie.

FIGURE 3.2 The walk-in, start to finish

YOU	"Hi — are you the owner? I'm Maya, I live around the corner. I make short videos for small businesses and I'd love to make one for you. Do you have two minutes?"	**OPEN** Name, proximity, what you do, and a two-minute ask. Proximity is the part that earns the two minutes.
THEM	*"…Sure, what kind of thing?"*	**READ THIS AS YES** Not enthusiasm — just permission. That's all you needed.
YOU	"Something like this." *[Phone out, one video already playing, sound off.]* "Thirty seconds, filmed here, you can post it yourself or I can. Here's my page."	**SHOW, DON'T DESCRIBE** Have it queued before you walk in. Fumbling for a link loses the room.
THEM	*"That's cool. What do you charge?"*	**THE MOMENT** Do not flinch and do not discount. Your floor from 2.3 exists for this second.
YOU	"$250 for two videos, filmed in one visit. If you'd rather see it work first, I'll do one on a gifted basis and we go from there."	**PRICE, THEN A LADDER** Real number first. The gifted option is a step down you offer — never the opening.
YOU	"Either way — here's my card, everything's on there. Can I message you Thursday to check?"	**LEAVE WITH A DATE** "I'll think about it" dies quietly. A named day gives you permission to follow up.

The whole exchange is under ninety seconds. Rehearse the first two sentences out loud until they stop sounding rehearsed — the rest follows on its own.

FIGURE 3.3 The twenty-second handoff

1. **Hand them the card and ask for their phone.** People hand it over — the card is unusual enough that they're curious.
2. **Tap the card to the top of their phone.** Your portfolio opens. No app, no scanning, no typing.
3. **Let them scroll while you say nothing.** Ten seconds of silence while they watch your work is worth more than anything you'd have said.
4. **Leave the card.** It costs you a dollar and it sits by their till for a month.

What to bring

- **Your phone, charged, with one video already open.** Not your camera roll. One video, queued, ready to play.
- **Your portfolio link on something physical** — a tap card or a plain printed card. Something stays behind when you leave.
- **A number you've decided in advance.** Write it on your hand if you have to. Deciding your price in the moment is how creators end up working for a sandwich.
- **Nothing else.** No printed media kit, no folder, no laptop. This is a conversation, not a presentation.

Do five of these in one afternoon. Not one — five. The first two will be awkward and the fifth will be smooth, and it's the fifth one that usually says yes.

3.3 — BUILD YOUR THIRTY

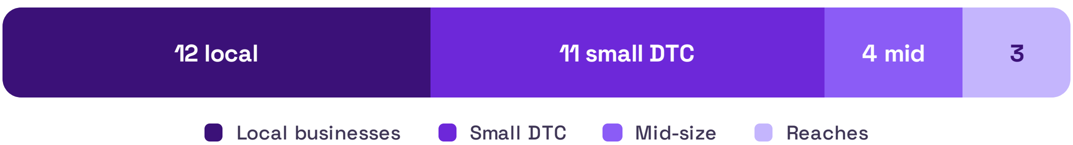
Five brands is not a list. It's a wish.

Go back to the funnel in Part One: thirty pitches, one deal. That number isn't pessimism, it's arithmetic. **A list of five brands cannot mathematically produce a deal**, no matter how perfect the five are.

Building the list is a single sitting — ninety minutes, once, and it feeds you for a month. Do it properly and Part Four becomes mechanical: open the list, send the pitch, log the date, move on.

The mix

Don't fill thirty slots with your dream brands. Weight the list toward where the replies actually are, and keep a few reaches in for the day one of them lands.



Where to find the small DTC eleven

- **Your own shelf.** Everything you already buy and would recommend. Start here — it's the easiest pitch you'll ever write.
- **The ads in your own feed.** A brand running ads has a budget and is already buying creative. Screenshot every one you see for a week.
- **Who your niche's mid-size creators post about.** If a 40K creator just did a paid post for them, the brand buys creator content as a matter of course.
- **Competitors of anyone who says no.** A no from one brand is a qualified lead for the three brands that compete with them.

FIGURE 3.4 Your thirty, in one place

Pitches

30 TRACKED · 6 LIVE

All | Local | DTC | Needs follow-up · 3

	Brand	Dates	Status
VP	**Verdant Plants** LOCAL Dana, owner · In person *Repotting series — they film their own, badly*	Sent **04 Aug** F/up **08 Aug**	REPLIED
BS	**Bare Skin Co.** DTC Priya, marketing · Email *Running ads with no creator work in any of them*	Sent **05 Aug** F/up **09 Aug**	OPENED 2×
SC	**Salt & Cedar** LOCAL hello@ · Email *Autumn menu launch is three weeks out*	Sent **05 Aug** F/up **09 Aug**	FOLLOW UP
NW	**Nomi Wellness** DTC @nomi · DM *Barrier repair — matches my top spec piece*	Sent **06 Aug** F/up **10 Aug**	FOLLOW UP
HS	**Hearth Studio** LOCAL Owner · In person *Class teaser — walk in Tuesday, mid-morning*	Not sent —	QUEUED
AG	**Alder Grooming** MID creators@ · Programme form *Reach — long queue, worth the slot*	Sent **07 Aug** —	SENT

24 more queued

New pitch

1. **The angle line is what keeps every pitch different.** One sentence on why *this* brand, written while you're researching rather than at 11pm. Without it, thirty pitches sound like one pitch sent thirty times.

2. **Two dates per row, not one.** Sent and follow-up. Part One's funnel showed twelve of thirty pitches opened with no reply — that row is recovered by the second date, and only if something reminds you it exists.

Six of the thirty shown. The same fields work in a notes app if you're not using Plug — what matters is that the angle and the follow-up date live somewhere you actually look.

Work the list in batches

Don't pitch thirty brands in one night. You'll write thirty versions of the same tired sentence and every one will read like it. Batch them instead: six or seven a sitting, twice a week, over three weeks. That pace keeps the writing alive and it staggers your follow-ups so you're never facing all of them at once.

Group each batch by tier, too. Six local pitches in one sitting is one mental mode. Six DTC emails is a different one. Switching between them mid-session is what makes the fourth pitch sound like a form letter.

The list is alive

Every no adds names to it. Every brand that ghosts you goes back in the queue for next quarter, because coordinators change jobs and budgets reset. Every brand you actually work with has three competitors who now have a reason to talk to you.

✗ **TREATS THE LIST AS FINISHED**

"I pitched my thirty and got one deal. Now I need to find thirty more from scratch."

✓ **TREATS THE LIST AS A SYSTEM**

"Six of those thirty replied. Four said not now — they go in the Q4 batch. And I now have a case study to re-pitch the other twenty-four with."

Round two always converts better than round one. You'll have a real deal to reference, sharper copy, and a shorter list of brands who've never heard of you. Most creators never find that out, because they quit at the end of round one.

Thirty pitches, not three hundred

You can send three hundred pitches in an evening. There are tools built to help you do exactly that. **Don't.**

Here's the part that surprises people: spraying does get replies. Generic outreach lands around two per cent, and three hundred emails is a big enough number that a few come back. Volume works, in the narrowest possible sense.

Look at what it costs. The same evening spent building thirty real pitches returns about the same number of replies — and leaves every one of those brands still willing to hear from you. Spraying burns 294 companies for the same handful of conversations.

FIGURE 3.5 The same evening, spent two ways

✗ SPRAYED

300 pitches

Time spent	4 hours
Reply rate	~2%
Replies	6
Brands you can pitch again	0

Six replies — and 294 brands who now associate your name with a mass email.

✓ BUILT

30 pitches

Time spent	10 hours
Reply rate	~15%
Replies	5
Brands you can pitch again	All 30

Five replies — and every brand still open to you next quarter.

Every brand gets its own page

Not one page with the name swapped out — a page built for them. Their product in frame if you own it. Work chosen to match what they sell. A note that could not have been written for anybody else.

Twenty minutes each, six a sitting. Part Four builds the page itself.

Reply rates from 2026 cold-outreach benchmarks: 1–3% with no personalisation, 9–15% for research-led pitches on a small list (Instantly, Autobound, Woodpecker). The replies are comparable. What differs is everything you keep afterwards.

There’s a person behind hello@.

Every inbox has someone sitting in it. At a four-person brand, hello@ rings on the founder's phone. **The question isn't whether the address has a name on it — it's whether your pitch reads like it was written for whoever opens it.**

A name helps, and it's worth ten minutes of looking. But a specific, well-aimed pitch to a general inbox at a small brand beats a generic one sent to a named coordinator, every time. Company size tells you which battle is worth fighting.

Who’s actually behind the address

- **Influencer or partnerships coordinator** — literally their job. Rare at small brands, gold when they exist.
- **Social or content manager** — owns the content calendar and feels the gap you're offering to fill.
- **Marketing manager** — has a budget line and can approve a few hundred dollars without asking anyone.
- **The founder** — at a small brand, often the fastest yes in the building.
- **hello@ or info@** — at a small brand this *is* one of the four above, reading on their phone. At a large one it's a queue. Judge by the size of the company, not by the shape of the address.

The rule of twenty

Under roughly twenty employees, write to the general inbox and get on with it. The founder or the one marketing hire is reading it, and the ten minutes you'd have spent hunting is better spent on the pitch itself.

Over twenty, find a name. That's where a general inbox genuinely does become a queue nobody owns, and where a named recipient is the difference between a reply and silence.

Three places to look, in ten minutes

LinkedIn is the fastest. Search the company, filter people by "marketing" or "social." A name plus a pattern gets you an address in about two minutes.

The website — about, team and press pages, and the foot of any press release. At a small company the press contact often handles partnerships too.

The brand's own posts. Small brands tag their team, and their community manager replies to comments from a personal account with a name on it.

Address it to someone either way

Whatever the address, write to one person. "To whom it may concern" tells the reader this went to two hundred other companies, and everything after it is read in that light.

If you found a name, use it. If not, name the role — it does nearly the same work, because it shows you thought about who should be reading this.

✗ READS AS A MASS EMAIL

"To whom it may concern, I am a content creator reaching out regarding collaboration opportunities..."

✓ READS AS ONE EMAIL

"Hi — if you handle creator partnerships, this is for you. If not, could you pass it along?"

That second version gives whoever opened it a job. General inboxes are often read by someone who isn't the buyer but knows exactly who is, and forwarding takes four seconds if you've made it obvious what the email is.

And if a brand has a creator or partnerships form, use it — it routes straight to the person who handles this, which is what you were hunting for a name to achieve anyway.

The address decides who opens it. The first sentence decides whether they keep reading.

FIGURE 3.6 Guessing a work address from a name

You have a name and a domain. These six patterns cover the overwhelming majority of company email addresses. Send to your best guess; if it bounces, try the next.

first@ priya@bareskin.co Most common at small brands	**first.last@** priya.shah@bareskin.co Most common overall
firstlast@ priyashah@bareskin.co Common in US tech	**flast@** pshah@bareskin.co Common at larger companies
first_last@ priya_shah@bareskin.co Less common, still worth a try	**firstl@** priyas@bareskin.co Rare, last resort

1. **Check the pattern before you guess.** Search the domain for any published address — a press contact, a careers email, a signature in a PDF. One confirmed address tells you the pattern for everyone else in the company, and turns guessing into knowing.

2. **A bounce is information, not failure.** Log it and move to the next pattern. What you must not do is send the same pitch to four guessed addresses at once — if two land, you've just shown up twice in one inbox looking careless.

Free verification tools will confirm whether an address exists before you send. Worth using once you're pitching in volume.

Three checks before you spend an hour.

You can lose an entire evening researching a brand that was never going to work with anyone like you. Ninety seconds up front prevents it. Three questions, in this order.

- [ ] **Do they already post content that isn't theirs?** Check their tagged photos and their feed for anything shot by someone else. A brand that has never once posted a creator's video is a brand you'd have to educate before you could sell to — and that's a longer job than it looks. 30 SEC
- [ ] **Are they spending money on anything?** Ads in your feed, a sponsored post, a booth at a local event, a professionally shot product photo. Evidence of a marketing budget is evidence they can pay you. No evidence anywhere usually means no budget anywhere. 30 SEC
- [ ] **Would your existing work look at home on their page?** Open your portfolio in one tab and their feed in another. If the two look like they come from different planets, it's a no — or a note to make one spec piece that bridges the gap first. 30 SEC

Two out of three is a pitch. One out of three goes to the bottom of the list. Zero out of three isn't a rejection of the brand — it just isn't this quarter's pitch, and your thirty slots are finite.

> The goal of qualifying isn’t to find perfect brands. It’s to stop spending your best writing on brands that were never going to answer.

Where you are now

You have thirty names, weighted toward the tiers that actually reply, each with a contact, a route and a one-line angle. Part Four turns each row into a pitch.

DO THIS IN PLUG

Discover is this chapter with the ninety-second qualify already done — **6,000+ brands and growing**, each carrying a **FIT score** against your niche and follower count, plus an **open to** filter showing which deal types they actually accept. Every brand ships with its contact — a name where there is one, the right inbox where there isn't — so Section 3.4 is already done for all 6,000. Shortlist as you go and your thirty builds itself.

Near me puts local businesses on a map, which is Section 3.2 turned into an afternoon route — pick five within walking distance and work them in one loop. **This week's drops** adds new brands matched to your niche on a rolling basis, so the list stays alive without another ninety-minute sitting.

Every pitch you send, in person or by email, lands on your **Pitches page**. That page is Figure 3.4 — angle, both dates, status and follow-up reminders in one place, so the tracker is somewhere you're already working instead of a spreadsheet you stop opening in week two. And the **tap card** in Figure 3.3 opens your portfolio straight from their phone.

YOU'LL NEED THIS ELSEWHERE

Local coverage is built city by city, so if the map is thin where you are, 3.2 still works entirely on foot — walk your own high street and add what you find as you go. LinkedIn does the name-finding in 3.4 better than anything else, and a free email verifier will confirm a guessed address before you send. None of that lives in Plug, and all of it is free.

Next: the pitch itself. Line by line, what each sentence is for, and the follow-up cadence that recovers the replies you thought you'd lost.

04

PART FOUR

The pitch

> *A pitch is a one-screen answer to "why should I care." Everything that doesn't answer that is costing you the reply.*

Six sentences, six jobs.

Your pitch is read on a phone, in a hallway, by someone with ninety unread emails. **It has about four seconds to earn the next twenty.** Everything in it has to be doing a job.

Under 150 words. Six sentences is plenty. If it's longer than one phone screen, the length itself is telling them this will be effort.

What each line is for

- **Subject line** — gets it opened. Specific beats clever, every time.
- **First line** — proves a human wrote this to them specifically.
- **Proof** — one piece of evidence you can do the job. One, not five.
- **The idea** — something concrete you'd actually make for them.
- **The ask** — small enough to say yes to in one word.
- **The link** — one, at the end, and it goes to their page.

The test for your first line

Could you send that exact sentence to a different brand without changing anything? If yes, delete it and write another one. That sentence is the entire difference between a pitch and a mass email, and a coordinator can tell which she's holding before she's finished reading it.

"I love your brand!" fails. "I've been buying the barrier cream since February and I still can't find anyone making content for the sensitive-skin angle" passes, because nobody else could have written it.

> Specific is the whole strategy. Everything else in this chapter is just the shape you pour it into.

FIGURE 4.1 Every line, doing its job

To priya@bareskin.co
Subj Two video ideas for the barrier cream

Hi Priya,

I've been buying the barrier cream since February, and I still can't find anyone making content for the sensitive-skin angle you lead with on the label.

I make short skincare videos for people who react to everything — my patch-test series is the one that keeps getting saved.

Two ideas I'd shoot for you: a 30-second "six hours later" test filmed in the same light start to finish, and a first-week diary for people scared to try anything new.

Worth a look? Both concepts and my work are here: mayaruiz.co/bareskin

Maya

1. **The subject names their product.** Not "collab opportunity" — a specific thing she recognises, and a promise of ideas rather than a request for her time.
2. **The first line couldn't be reused.** A date, a product, and an observation about their own packaging. This sentence is why the rest gets read.
3. **One proof, chosen to match.** Not a résumé — the single piece of evidence that lines up with what this brand sells.
4. **Ideas, not availability.** "I'd love to collaborate" asks her to do the thinking. Two concrete concepts do it for her.
5. **A three-word ask.** "Worth a look?" can be answered with "yes." Compare that to "let's schedule a call to discuss a potential partnership."
6. **One link, built for them.** Not a portfolio homepage — a page with their name in the URL. Section 4.4 builds it.

118 words. One phone screen, no scrolling, no attachment.

Subject lines that get opened

The subject is doing one job and it isn't charm. It's telling a busy person what's inside so they can decide in half a second. Name their product, or name the thing you're offering. Never both, never neither.

✗ DELETED UNREAD	✓ OPENED
"Collaboration opportunity!"	"Two video ideas for the barrier cream"
"Hi from a content creator 👋"	"UGC for Bare Skin — three concepts"
"Partnership inquiry — please read"	"Filmed something for you"
"Let's work together!!"	"Sensitive-skin content, from a customer"
"Quick question"	"Free video for Verdant Plants?"

The four things that kill a good pitch

- **Apologising for your size.** "I only have 3K followers but..." tells them to value you at "but." They can see your numbers. Don't hand them the objection.
- **Asking for a call.** A call is thirty minutes of their day. A link is eight seconds. Ask for the eight seconds.
- **The paragraph about your journey.** Nobody has ever hired a creator because of their origin story.
- **Attachments.** Media kit PDFs get stripped by filters, don't open on phones, and can't be updated after you send them.

Every one of those feels like effort, which is why they're so common. Effort isn't the same thing as relevance, and only one of the two gets replies.

4.2 — TEMPLATES BY DEAL TYPE

Four templates.
Fill in the brackets.

Same six jobs every time — what changes is the ask. Use these as scaffolding, then replace the bracketed parts with something only you could have written. A template that stays a template doesn't work.

Gifted — 78 WORDS

SUBJECT Two video ideas for [product]

Hi [name] — I've been using [product] since [month], and [one specific observation about their brand].

I make [niche] content for [audience]. Two ideas I'd shoot for it: [idea 1] and [idea 2].

Happy to do these gifted — you send the product, I deliver both videos and post one. You're free to use both on your channels.

Worth a look? Everything's here: [link]

Local / in-person — 74 WORDS

SUBJECT Video for [business]?

Hi — I'm [name], I'm [proximity: "just down the road", "in the neighbourhood"]. I make short videos for local businesses.

I'd come in for an hour, film [the specific thing that's good about them], and you'd have two videos to post that week.

$[rate] for the pair. If you'd rather see it work first, I'll do one and we go from there.

My work: [link]

Paid UGC 92 WORDS

SUBJECT UGC for [brand] — three concepts

Hi [name] — I've been seeing your ads for [product], and [specific observation about the creative].

I make [niche] UGC — short vertical spots shot to a brief, delivered as raw files for you to run. [One line of proof.]

Three concepts I'd shoot for it: [1], [2], [3].

Rates start at $[rate] per 30-second video for organic use; paid usage quoted separately.

Want the full concepts? Samples here: [link]

Sponsored post 81 WORDS

SUBJECT [Product] and [your handle]

Hi [name] — my audience is [specific audience], and [product category] is the thing they ask me about most.

[One line of proof — a post that performed, a comment thread, a save rate.]

The idea: [concrete concept] on [platform], posted and left up for twelve months.

My rate for that is $[rate], including one round of changes.

Recent work: [link]

For **affiliate**, there's usually no pitch at all — you apply through their program page. Worth doing for every brand on your list while you wait on the others.

FIGURE 4.2 One template, four niches — the first line only

You don't need four sets of templates. You need one structure and a first line that could only have come from you. Here's that line, written four ways for four different creators pitching the same kind of small brand.

BEAUTY

Pitching a skincare brand

"I've been buying the barrier cream since February, and I still can't find anyone making content for the sensitive-skin angle you lead with on the label."

WHY IT WORKS

A date, their product, and a gap in their own marketing they'll recognise instantly.

COMEDY

Pitching a desk-lamp brand

"Your ads are shot beautifully lit, which is funny for a lamp company, because the reason anyone buys a lamp is that their video calls look terrible."

WHY IT WORKS

Shows you understand the product's actual job, and does it in the voice they'd be hiring you for.

GAMING

Pitching a headset brand

"I've had the mid-tier pair for eight months of ranked, and nobody's made the one video that would sell them — footstep audio, before and after, same map."

WHY IT WORKS

Proves you own it and use it, then names the exact video they're missing.

FITNESS

Pitching a resistance-band brand

"Every video on your page is filmed in a gym, but the whole point of bands is that you don't need one. I film in a studio flat with no equipment at all."

WHY IT WORKS

Identifies a mismatch between their content and their product, then positions the creator as the fix.

Every one of these took about ten minutes of looking at the brand. That's the whole cost of the difference between this and a mass email.

4.3 — TONE: MATCH THEM, DON'T PERFORM

Write the way they write.

Read three of the brand's posts and one of their emails if you have one. Then write your pitch in roughly that register. You're not changing what you say — you're removing the friction of sounding like a stranger.

FIGURE 4.3 The same ask, four ways

POLISHED

"I'd be glad to put together two concepts for the barrier cream and send them across this week."

For established brands, agencies, anyone whose own copy is formal.

FRIENDLY

"I've got two ideas I'd love to shoot for the barrier cream — want me to send them over?"

Safest default. Works for almost every small DTC brand and every local business.

BOLD

"Nobody's made the sensitive-skin video for this yet. I want to be the one who does."

For brands with attitude in their own voice. Lands badly anywhere else.

STRAIGHT TO THE POINT

"Two concepts for the barrier cream. 30 seconds each, $200 per video. Samples attached below."

For busy operators and anyone who has asked you a direct question.

When you can't tell, use friendly. It is the only one of the four that never actively costs you a reply.

The ask is identical in all four. Tone changes how it's received, not what's being asked for.

One brand, one page, one link.

The email gets you eight seconds. The page is where you actually make the case. **And it should be built for one brand — not a portfolio you send to everyone with the name changed.**

This is the part that separates the creators who land deals from the ones sending volume. A generic link is just a slower way of being a mass email. A page that opens with their product in your hand answers the only question they had before they've consciously asked it.

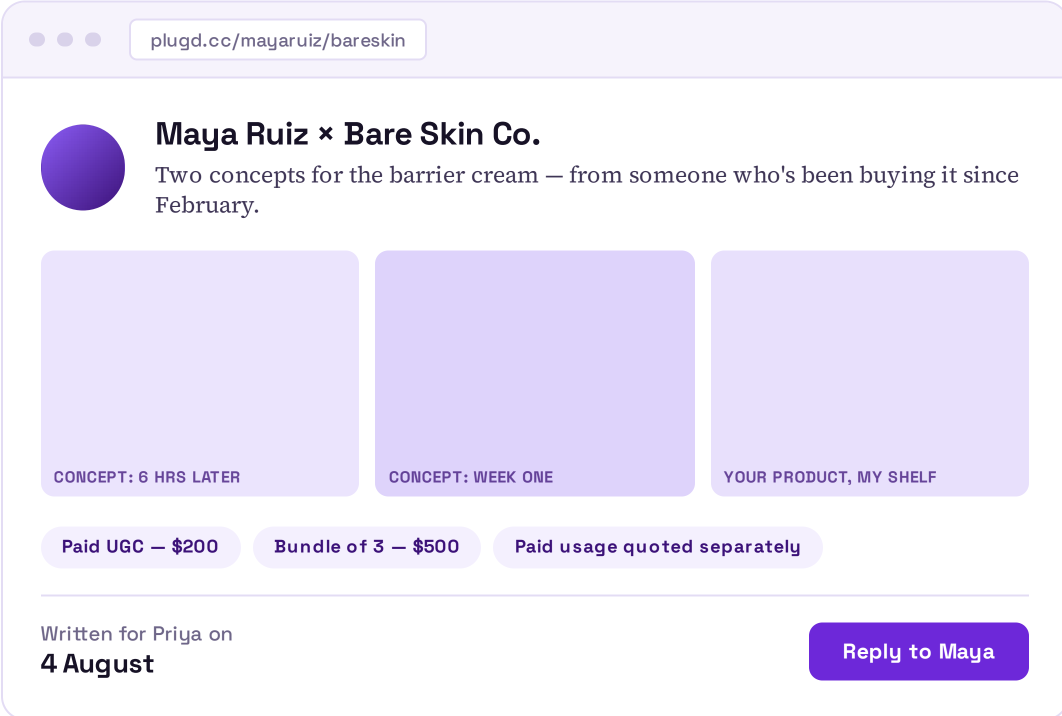
Why a link beats an attachment

- **It opens.** PDFs get stripped by filters and render badly on a phone, which is where this is being read.
- **You can change it.** Sent the wrong rate? Fixed in ten seconds, on the version they're about to open.
- **You can see if they looked.** An opened-but-unanswered page is a completely different follow-up from one nobody clicked.
- **It's one thing.** No download, no zip, no "let me know if you have trouble opening this."

What goes above the fold

Their name, your positioning line, and the single piece of work most likely to make them say yes. Not your best work — the work closest to what they sell. Those two are rarely the same thing, and picking the second one is the whole discipline.

FIGURE 4.4 A page built for one brand



1. **Their name is in the URL.** Before anything loads, the link itself says this was made for them. A shared portfolio link says the opposite just as loudly.
2. **The first tile is a concept, not a credit.** She isn't browsing your greatest hits — she's deciding whether you can make the thing you just described.
3. **Their product, physically in frame.** If you own it, shoot it. One photo of their bottle on your shelf outperforms a paragraph of enthusiasm.
4. **Rates sized to this brand.** A four-person DTC brand and a mid-size one shouldn't see the same numbers on the same page.

Twenty minutes to build. That's the arithmetic behind thirty pitches instead of three hundred.

What actually changes, brand to brand

"Customised" doesn't mean swapping a name into a template. Six things change on every page, and each one takes two or three minutes.

The work you show, and its order
Reorder for them. Lead with the piece closest to what they sell, even if it isn't your favourite. Cut anything irrelevant — three well-chosen pieces beat six general ones.

A video made for this brand
The strongest move available to you. Shoot thirty seconds with their product, or with the exact concept you pitched. It converts better than everything else on the page combined.

Images they'll recognise
Their product on your shelf. A frame from the concept you described. A rough moodboard of what you'd shoot. Proof you've already started thinking about it.

A note written to them
Two or three lines that could not appear on any other page. Same test as your first line — if it's reusable, it isn't doing anything.

Deal types and rates that fit their size
Offer what makes sense for this brand. A local café shouldn't be reading a whitelisting rate; a mid-size brand shouldn't be reading your gifted terms.

The ask at the bottom
Matched to what you asked for in the email. If the email said "worth a look," the page shouldn't end with a contract.

> Twenty minutes, six a sitting. The creator who sent three hundred generic links spent the same evening and can never pitch any of them again.

Most deals close on touch two.

Part One's funnel had twelve of thirty pitches opened with no reply. **That row isn't rejection — it's an inbox.** The follow-up is the single highest-return thing in this chapter, and almost nobody does it.

Not because it's hard. Because it feels like nagging. It isn't: one polite, specific message four days later is normal professional behaviour, and the person receiving it has forgotten your email exists rather than decided against it.

Three touches, then close the file

Three is the number. Beyond that you're spending goodwill you'll want later, and a brand that hasn't answered three good messages isn't going to answer a fourth. Log it, park it for next quarter, move on.

Each touch adds something

Never send "just bumping this." A follow-up that adds nothing tells them there was nothing there the first time. Each one carries something new: a fresh idea, a piece of work you've made since, a reason this is timely now.

And if your page shows they opened it, say so lightly. *"Saw you had a look — happy to answer anything."* That's not creepy; it's the same information a sales call gives you, and it turns a guess into a conversation.

FIGURE 4.5 The three-touch cadence

TOUCH ONE
Day 0
The pitch. Two concepts, a link built for them, a three-word ask.

Log the date. Set the next one now, not later.

TOUCH TWO
Day 4
"Hi Priya — adding a third idea in case it's more useful: [idea]. Same link, no rush."

Adds an idea. This is where most replies actually come from.

TOUCH THREE
Day 11
"Last one from me — I'll stop here. If timing's wrong, happy to check back in the autumn. Either way, good luck with the launch."

Graceful exit. Leaves the door open for round two.

1 **Touch three does more work than it looks.** Naming an end removes the pressure, and a surprising number of replies arrive to exactly this message — because it's the first one that doesn't need anything from them.

2 **Set the follow-up date when you send the pitch, never afterwards.** Four days later you'll be writing the next batch and you will not remember. This is the entire reason the tracker in Figure 3.4 has two date columns.

Four days, then seven. Close enough to stay in memory, far enough apart to stay polite.

Where you are now

You can write a pitch that gets opened, build a page that answers it, and follow up in a way that recovers the replies you'd otherwise have lost. Part Five is what happens when one of them says yes.

DO THIS IN PLUG

The **pitch maker** drafts from your Creator Style and the brand's own brief, in whichever of the four tones from 4.3 fits — and outputs it as an email or a DM. Take the draft as a first draft. The line only you could have written is still yours to write.

Every brand you pitch gets its **own page and its own link**. That's Figure 4.4 — add a custom video, images of their product, a note written for them, and rates sized to their brand. **View tracking** tells you when they opened it, which turns touch two from a guess into a timed message.

Follow-ups live on the same page: **reminder dates** set when you send, and **canned follow-up copy** for the nudge, the re-open and the last check-in — the three touches in Figure 4.5.

YOU'LL NEED THIS ELSEWHERE

Send from a real address you check daily — a pitch that bounces or lands in spam never happened, and no tool fixes your own inbox for you. DM pitches go through the platform itself, and for those, keep it to four sentences: DMs are read in a scroll, not at a desk.

Next: they said yes. What to say when they ask your rates, and the three clauses that quietly cost you money.

05

PART FIVE

Close, deliver, get paid

> *The deal isn't real until the terms are written down. Everything expensive that happens to creators happens in the gap before that.*

The four words that decide what you earn.

A brand has replied and asked what you charge. **This is good news** — nobody asks the price of something they've decided not to buy. It's also the single highest-stakes message you will send all year.

Most creators answer it with a bare number, and a bare number is a trap in both directions. Too low and you've set your ceiling for this brand permanently. Too high and you've priced a job whose shape you don't actually know yet.

Never quote before you know three things

- **How many deliverables**, and roughly how long each one runs.
- **Where it's going to be used** — their organic channels only, or behind ad spend.
- **For how long** — a campaign, a season, or "indefinitely," which is a word to slow down on.

You can ask all three in one friendly sentence, and asking them is itself the signal that you've done this before. A creator who asks about usage is a creator who knows what usage is worth.

Answer with a range and a question

Give a real starting number so you're not being evasive, then attach the variable that moves it. That structure does two jobs at once: it anchors the conversation at your floor, and it teaches the brand that paid usage is a separate line item before they've assumed it was free.

> Whoever says a number first sets the anchor. Make sure that number is yours, and make sure it's the floor rather than the ceiling.

FIGURE 5.1 The reply, line by line

To priya@bareskin.co
Re Creator collab — sensitive skin

Hi Priya,

Glad it's a fit — happy to put numbers on it.

Quick check on two things first: how many videos are you after, and would you be running them as paid ads or on your own channels only? That's the main thing that moves the price.

For a single 30-second video with organic use, I'm at $200. With paid usage it's typically $300–$350 depending on the term. Bundles of three or more come down per video.

If you can tell me roughly what you're planning, I'll send exact numbers today.

Maya

1. **Warm, then straight to business.** No apology, no throat-clearing, no "I know I'm quite new to this." Six words of warmth and then the answer they asked for.
2. **The two questions do the pricing.** Asked before the number, so they read as professional process rather than as haggling after the fact.
3. **A real floor, then the multiplier.** $200 is specific enough to be credible. The paid-usage range in the same breath establishes that ads cost extra before anyone has assumed otherwise.
4. **Close with a same-day promise.** It keeps the thread moving and quietly signals that you're organised enough to be worth booking.

Figures follow the rate card in 2.3. Substitute your own — the structure is what matters, not the numbers.

When they come back lower

They usually will, and it's rarely personal. Budgets are set before anyone talks to you. The useful move is not to defend your number but to change what they get for it — that way you protect your rate and they still get a yes.

✓ CONCEDE THESE

Timeline — a later delivery date costs you nothing.

Revisions — offer two instead of one.

Length — a 20-second cut instead of 30.

Bundle price — three videos at a lower per-video rate is more money, not less.

Raw files — often worth little to you, feels generous to them.

✗ NEVER CONCEDE THESE

Paid usage — the moment there's ad spend, it's a different product.

Perpetuity — "forever" cannot be re-sold, ever.

Exclusivity — it costs you every competitor for the whole term.

Whitelisting — ads run from your identity. Always priced separately.

Your floor — below it, trade for something real or walk.

The sentence that does this work is short: *"I can't go below $200 for that scope — but I can do three videos at $500, or the same video with a shorter delivery window if timing is the issue."* You've held the rate and handed them two ways to say yes.

✗ SOUNDS LIKE AN APOLOGY

"Sorry! I know that's probably a lot. I can definitely be flexible if the budget doesn't work — whatever you think is fair!"

✓ SOUNDS LIKE A BUSINESS

"$200 is my rate for that scope. If the budget's fixed, I can adjust what's included — happy to work out which version fits."

Nobody legitimate needs your money.

Creators are targeted constantly, and beginners most of all, because a first deal is the thing you least want to lose. **Almost every scam in this space fails one test: a real brand never needs money to flow from you to them.**

Not for shipping. Not for a "creator verification fee." Not to cover an overpayment. If any part of the arrangement involves you sending money, buying something, or returning funds, it is not a brand deal.

Two rules that prevent nearly all of it

- **Nothing gets shot or shipped before terms are in writing.** Not a full contract necessarily — an email that states deliverables, usage, term and fee is enough for a small deal, and it's enough to make a scammer disappear.
- **Slow down whenever you feel rushed.** Urgency is the tool, not a side effect. A real coordinator with a genuine deadline will still let you read the terms.

No tool can tell you something is safe

This is worth being blunt about. A checker — any checker, including the one in Plug — can tell you that something looks wrong. It cannot tell you that something is fine, because a clean, careful, well-written scam looks exactly like a clean, careful, well-written offer. Absence of red flags is not a green light.

So treat every check as a filter, never as permission. What actually protects you is the two rules above, applied every time, including the times you're excited.

FIGURE 5.2 The list worth screenshotting

STOP	**"We've overpaid — please wire back the difference"** The cheque or transfer reverses days later and the money you sent is gone. This is the oldest one, and it still works.
STOP	**"Just cover the shipping" for a gifted item** Gifted means free. A brand that wants content badly enough to send product can afford postage.
STOP	**Payment offered in crypto or gift cards** Irreversible by design, which is the entire reason it's being offered.
STOP	**Bank login, card number, or SSN requested up front** An invoice needs an account number to pay into. It never needs your password, and a W-9 comes after a signed deal, not before one.
STOP	**A "contract" that's a link you must log in to view** Credential phishing dressed as paperwork. Real agreements arrive as attachments or through a signing service you can verify.
SLOW DOWN	**The email domain doesn't match the brand** @bareskin-partners.net is not @bareskin.co. Impersonating a real brand costs a scammer nothing.
SLOW DOWN	**Extreme urgency with no terms attached** "We need this posted tomorrow, paperwork to follow" reverses the only order that protects you.
SLOW DOWN	**An offer far above your rate, unprompted** Flattering, and occasionally real. Verify harder, not less, when a number feels too good.
SLOW DOWN	**No trace of the company anywhere** No site, no ads, no staff, an account made last month. Not proof of a scam, but a reason to ask more questions before you shoot.

The top five are stop signs — walk away and don't reply. The lower four are reasons to slow down, verify, and get terms in writing before anything else happens.

You’re not selling a video. You’re selling permission.

This is the part nobody explains to new creators, and it's where most of the money is. **The file you deliver is nearly worthless on its own. What the brand is buying is the right to use it** — and that right comes in sizes.

Figure 2.6 showed the same video at $200, $300 and $500. The difference was never the work. It was the permission attached to it. This section gives you the vocabulary to spot which size you're being asked for, because brands will not always say it plainly.

The four questions that define any licence

- **Where can they use it?** Their own channels, paid ads, email, in store, on packaging.
- **For how long?** Three months, a year, forever.
- **Where in the world?** One country or everywhere.
- **Can you work with anyone else?** That's exclusivity, and it's the one most often slipped in for free.

If an offer doesn't answer all four, it isn't finished, and the missing answers always default in the brand's favour unless you ask. Asking is not difficult and it is not rude: *"Just so I quote correctly — where will this run, and for how long?"*

None of this is legal advice. It's the plain-English version so you know what you're agreeing to and when to get someone qualified to look.

FIGURE 5.3 The words that change the price

Organic use

They post it on their own accounts. No money behind it. This is the default and the cheapest thing you can sell.

WHAT IT'S WORTH
Your baseline rate.

Paid media

They put ad spend behind it. Your face and voice now appear to people who never chose to follow anyone.

WHAT IT'S WORTH
Meaningfully more, scaled to the term.

Whitelisting

Ads run *from your handle*, using your identity, targeted by them. Often requested very casually.

WHAT IT'S WORTH
A separate line item, always.

Term

How long the permission lasts. When it ends, they stop or they pay again.

WHAT IT'S WORTH
Shorter terms, priced to renew.

Perpetuity

Forever. You can never re-sell that use, and you will never invoice for it again.

WHAT IT'S WORTH
A large premium, or a no.

Exclusivity

You can't work with their competitors for a set period. Sometimes a whole category, sometimes worded very widely.

WHAT IT'S WORTH
Priced by what it locks you out of.

! **Two words to slow down on: "perpetuity" and "all media, worldwide."** Either one turns a single video into an asset the brand owns the use of forever. That can be worth agreeing to — at a price that reflects it, not at your standard rate.

Category exclusivity is the one most often granted by accident. Read what "competitors" is defined as before you agree to avoid them.

FIGURE 5.4 A real offer, read properly

OFFER — AS RECEIVED BY EMAIL

	Deliverables	2 × 30-second vertical videos, raw files delivered
	Fee	$400 total, paid on delivery
1	**Usage**	"All marketing channels, including paid social"
2	**Term**	"Ongoing"
3	**Exclusivity**	"No competing skincare brands during the campaign"
	Revisions	1 round included
	Timeline	Delivered within 14 days

1 **"All marketing channels" is a paid-media licence.** The fee was quoted as though it were organic. That single line is the difference between $400 and roughly $650 for the same two videos.

2 **"Ongoing" means perpetuity unless you fix it.** Reply: *"Happy to do 12 months — after that we can renew."* That one sentence converts a permanent giveaway into an invoice you can send again next year.

3 **"During the campaign" has no end date attached.** Exclusivity needs a number of months, and it needs a price. Ask what the campaign period is, then decide what that lockout is worth.

Nothing here is dishonest — this is a normal offer, written the way normal offers are written. It costs the creator roughly $250 only if they don't ask.

Agreed is not paid.

A signed deal is a promise. An invoice is how the promise becomes money, and a surprising number of first deals stall here — not because the brand refused, but because **nobody ever sent them something their finance system could process.**

Send it the day you deliver

Not at the end of the month, not when you remember. Payment terms start counting from the invoice date, so a week of delay is a week added to your wait. Attach it to the same email as the files if you can.

Net 30 is normal, not an insult

Most companies pay on a cycle, and thirty days from invoice is standard. It isn't a judgement on you and it usually isn't negotiable at a larger brand. What *is* negotiable is a deposit: for anything over a few hundred dollars, or with a brand you've never worked with, half up front is a reasonable ask and a normal one.

The paperwork nobody warns you about

In the US, a brand will usually need a W-9 from you before their system can pay anyone, and they'll issue a 1099 if you cross the reporting threshold in a year. This is routine, it arrives after the deal is agreed rather than before, and it's the point at which it's worth talking to an accountant rather than guessing.

> The invoice is not the awkward part of the job. It's the part where the job becomes real.

FIGURE 5.5 Everything an invoice needs, nothing it doesn't

Invoice

Maya Ruiz · maya@mayaruiz.co
Billed to: Bare Skin Co. — Attn: Priya Shah

No. 2025-014
Issued 18 Sept 2025
Due 18 Oct 2025

UGC video — 30 sec, vertical Concept "Barrier repair" · 1 revision included	**$200.00**
UGC video — 30 sec, vertical Concept "Patch test" · 1 revision included	**$200.00**
Paid media licence — 12 months Meta and TikTok, US only, from delivery	**$250.00**

TOTAL DUE **$650.00**

Terms: Net 30 · Licence runs 12 months from 18 Sept 2025 and expires 18 Sept 2026 · Renewal quoted separately · Bank details and reference below.

1. **The licence is its own line.** Listing it separately makes it visible as a thing that was bought — which is what makes renewing it a conversation rather than an ambush.

2. **The expiry date is written on the invoice.** Now it exists in their records and yours. A year from now this is the document that lets you send a renewal without an argument.

Numbered invoices matter more than they look — sequential numbering is what makes a finance department treat you as a supplier rather than an inconvenience.

When the money is late

It will happen, and almost always because an invoice is sitting in a queue rather than because anyone decided not to pay you. Chase early, chase warmly, and chase in writing. The goal is to get paid and keep the client, and those two things are usually the same move.

DAY 31	"Hi Priya — just checking in on invoice 2025-014, which was due yesterday. Could you let me know where it is in the process? Happy to re-send if it's easier."	**ASSUME A SYSTEM, NOT A PERSON** "Where is it in the process" gives them an easy answer that isn't an apology.
DAY 38	"Following up on 2025-014, now a week past due. Could you point me to whoever handles payables? Happy to deal with them directly."	**ASK FOR THE RIGHT DESK** Your contact often has no visibility into finance at all.
DAY 45	"Invoice 2025-014 is now 15 days overdue. I'll need it settled this week before I can take on further work. Let me know if anything's outstanding at your end."	**FIRM, STILL PROFESSIONAL** A consequence, stated calmly. No threats, no emotion, no exclamation marks.

Three warm, specific messages recover the overwhelming majority of late invoices. If a brand is still silent well past that, you are no longer chasing an admin delay, and that's the point to stop spending your own goodwill on it.

Hit the brief first.
Be brilliant second.

Creators lose repeat work for one reason more than any other, and it isn't quality. **It's delivering something better than what was asked for, instead of what was asked for.**

A coordinator has a slot to fill and a brief they had to get approved. A video that ignores half of it, however good, creates work for them — they now have to defend your choices to someone above them. Make the version they asked for. If you have a better idea, deliver both.

The four things that get you rebooked

- **Every item on the brief, ticked off literally.** Product visible for the stated time, phrase included, logo where they asked, aspect ratio exactly right.
- **Early, not on time.** A day ahead of deadline buys you enormous goodwill for almost no cost.
- **Files they can actually open.** One link, clearly named, no expiry, raw and edited if you promised both.
- **One round of revisions, taken gracefully.** Notes are not criticism. Do them fast and without commentary.

Read the brief back before you shoot

Write their requirements as a short checklist in your own words, and send it before you film: *"Just to confirm — vertical, 30 seconds, product in frame from the start, mention the 48-hour claim, no competitor products visible. Anything missing?"*

Ninety seconds of work. It catches misunderstandings while they're still free to fix, and it tells the brand something about you that no portfolio can.

Where you are now

You can price a deal, spot the terms that quietly cost you money, avoid the scams aimed at people in exactly your position, invoice properly and deliver something worth booking again. Part Six turns that one deal into the next four.

DO THIS IN PLUG

Deal pages keep the whole thread — offer, replies, terms, files — in one place instead of scattered across your inbox. The **negotiation helper** reads that thread and drafts the reply, whether you need advice on a number, a nudge, or a way back into a conversation that stalled.

Scam detection runs over incoming offers and flags what looks wrong. Read 5.2 again on why it will never tell you something is safe — that isn't a limitation to be fixed, it's the honest shape of the problem.

Licensing tracks every term and expiry date from Figure 5.5, so a lapsed licence becomes a renewal invoice instead of free usage. **Invoicing** runs through Stripe with payment links, and **video analysis** checks a cut against the brief before you send it.

YOU'LL NEED THIS ELSEWHERE

Get a lawyer to read anything perpetual, anything with broad exclusivity, or anything over a few thousand dollars — one hour of their time is cheap against a term you can't undo. An accountant handles W-9s, 1099s and whether you should be an LLC. And if a brand genuinely refuses to pay, small claims is a real option that costs less than most people assume.

Next: the recap email almost nobody sends, and why it's the highest-return message in this entire book.

06

PART SIX

Turn one deal into a career

> *The second deal is ten times easier than the first — but only if you finish the first one properly.*

The highest-return email in this book.

A week after you deliver, send the brand a short note telling them how the content performed and what you'd make next. **Almost no creator does this, which is precisely why it works.**

Here's the thing nobody tells you: the brand often has no idea how your content did. It went to a coordinator, got scheduled, ran, and disappeared into a dashboard nobody opened. If you're the person who tells them it worked, you become the creator they remember when the next budget lands.

And it reframes what you are. A creator who reports results is a partner. A creator who delivers files and goes quiet is a vendor. Those two get treated very differently the next time there's money to spend.

Five lines, sent seven days after delivery

- **What you delivered** — one line, so they don't have to remember.
- **What it did** — whatever numbers you can actually see. Views, saves, shares, comments, the tone of the replies.
- **One observation** — why you think it performed that way. This is the line that makes you sound like someone worth consulting.
- **The next idea** — specific, and built on what just happened.
- **The ask** — small, same as always.

If the numbers were mediocre, send it anyway. An honest read on why something underperformed, plus what you'd change, is more impressive than a good result you can't explain.

FIGURE 6.1 The recap, seven days later

To priya@bareskin.co
Subj How the barrier cream videos did

Hi Priya,

Quick follow-up on the two videos from the 18th — wanted to send you the numbers rather than leave you guessing.

The "six hours later" cut did 41k views and 2,300 saves, which is about triple my usual save rate. The patch-test one did less reach but the comments were almost all people asking where to buy.

My read: the save rate is the interesting one. People are bookmarking it to buy later, which suggests the before-and-after framing is doing more work than the product demo.

If it's useful, I'd shoot a 30-day version next — same framing, longer arc. Happy to put a concept together.

Either way, glad they landed. Worth a chat?

Maya

1. **Numbers first, no preamble.** She can forward this to her manager without editing it, which is exactly what you want to happen.
2. **The honest mixed result.** One video did well, one didn't. Saying so is what makes the first number believable.
3. **The observation is the whole email.** Anyone can paste a screenshot. Reading the number is what gets you booked again.
4. **The next idea is already there.** No new brief needed, no new budget conversation. Just yes or not yet.

Send it even if you were paid a flat fee and owe them nothing further. Especially then.

Now go back to your list.

Twenty-four brands from Part Three never replied. **You are now a different person to every one of them**, and you have a sentence you didn't have in August.

"I recently made two UGC videos for Bare Skin Co." changes the arithmetic of every pitch from here. It isn't bragging — it's the evidence a coordinator was missing. Someone else took the risk on you and it went fine.

Write the case study while it's fresh

Four lines, on your portfolio, within a week of finishing:

- **The brief** — what they wanted, in their words if you can.
- **What you made** — the deliverables, plainly stated.
- **What happened** — the same numbers from your recap email.
- **The work itself** — one video, playing, above everything else.

This is now the highest-value thing on your portfolio, and it beats six pieces of spec work by a distance. Put it first.

Then re-pitch, in three groups

GROUP 1	**The 24 who never replied** New first line, same structure: "Following up from August — since then I've worked with [brand]." A cold pitch has become a warm one.
GROUP 2	**Their competitors** The most qualified leads you now own — you've proven you can make content for this category, and their rival did it first.
GROUP 3	**One tier up** The mid-size brands you skipped. With a real client and a case study, the odds in Figure 3.1 have genuinely moved for you.

Every three deals, go up.

Most creators raise their rates once, reluctantly, after eighteen months of resentment. **Do it on a schedule instead and it stops being an emotional decision.**

The rule: after every three closed deals, raise your base rate by fifteen to twenty-five per cent. Not because your costs went up — because you're faster, better, and less risky than you were three deals ago, and that's worth more.

DEALS 1–3	DEALS 4–6	DEALS 7–9
$200	$250	$300
Your starting floor from 2.3	A case study on the page	Three named clients, repeat work

How to actually do it

- **Don't announce it.** There is no email to send. You simply quote the new number to the next new brand who asks.
- **Existing clients get notice, not a surprise.** "My rate for new work from January is $250 — wanted to flag it early." Sent once, without apology or explanation.
- **Expect to lose one.** If nobody ever pushes back, your rate is too low. Losing the occasional price-sensitive brand is the system working.
- **Raise the licence too.** Paid usage and whitelisting scale with your base rate. It's easy to lift the video price and leave the expensive part behind.

The percentage matters more than the starting number — run the same ladder from wherever your own floor sits. The $200 starting point is the 2026 beginner UGC benchmark from 2.3.

6.4 — YOUR NEXT THIRTY DAYS

Start Monday.

This is the whole book as a four-week plan. It assumes you're starting from nothing, and it assumes about an hour a day. Do it in order — each week is built on the one before.

WEEK 1	**Make three pieces and put them somewhere** Pick three products you already own. Shoot each with one of the formulas in Figure 2.3. Build the page from 2.4 and set a starting rate. Label the work as sample work and stop apologising for it.
WEEK 2	**Build the thirty** Ninety minutes in one sitting. Twelve local, eleven small DTC, four mid-size, three reaches. A contact and a one-line angle for every row. Walk into five local businesses on the Saturday.
WEEK 3	**Pitch in batches, properly** Six or seven a sitting, twice this week. Own page and own link for each one, twenty minutes apiece. Set every follow-up date at the moment you send.
WEEK 4	**Follow up, then close one** Touch two on everything from week 3. Finish the remaining pitches. When someone asks your rate, answer with Figure 5.1 in front of you and don't flinch.

Thirty days, an hour a day, and no new followers required. That was the promise on page one, and it's still the whole offer.

One last thing

The creators who make this work are almost never the most talented ones. They're the ones who sent touch two. Who asked what "ongoing" meant. Who sent the recap email when they didn't have to, and who went back to the twenty-four in November instead of starting over.

None of that is talent. All of it is just doing the unglamorous thing on a schedule — and it is completely available to you, starting Monday, at whatever size you are right now.

DO THIS IN PLUG

Your **deal pages** keep the finished work, the terms and the thread together, so the case study in 6.2 writes itself from something you already have. **Licensing** holds every expiry date — when a twelve-month term lapses and the ad is still running, that's a renewal invoice rather than free usage.

The twenty-four who never replied are still sitting in your **Pitches page** with their angles attached. Re-pitching them in November is a filter and an afternoon, not a fresh ninety-minute list-building session.

And as deals close, your **creator tier** moves — Fresh Plug through to OG Plug. It's a small thing, but it's a visible record that you did this, which on the days it feels slow is worth more than it sounds.

YOU'LL NEED THIS ELSEWHERE

Nothing in this chapter needs a tool. The recap email is a plain email, the case study is four lines, and the rate rise is a decision. Every one of them is free, and every one of them is skipped by most people, which is the entire reason they work.

SHARING & COPYRIGHT

Please pass this on.

This guide is free, and it's built to travel. **You're welcome to share the whole thing with anyone you like** — a friend starting out, a Discord, a class, a comment section.

We'd rather it reached the creator who needs it than sat locked in one person's downloads folder. Send the file, post the link, screenshot the pages that helped.

- ✓ **Share the complete PDF** with anyone, as many times as you like, free of charge.
- ✓ **Screenshot or quote pages** in posts, videos, newsletters or courses — a credit and a link back is appreciated, not required.
- ✓ **Use the templates** in your own pitches, forever, without asking us.
- ✗ **Don't sell it** or bundle it into anything paid.
- ✗ **Don't edit or repackage it** — no removing the branding, no rebranding it as your own guide, no chopping it into a course.
- ✗ **Don't use it as your own lead magnet** or put it behind an email capture that isn't ours.

Nothing in this guide is legal, tax or financial advice. Rates, benchmarks and figures are illustrative and vary by niche, market and moment — treat them as starting points, not promises. For anything perpetual, exclusive, or above a few thousand dollars, talk to a lawyer.

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