

Illustration Brief Template

Define the image's job before anyone chooses a scene. Complete the fields that remove consequential guesses, then keep project-wide style rules in a separate guide.

1. Project and placement

Project title	Article, campaign, product page, or publication name
Image location	Hero, section image, newsletter, social crop, or other placement
Source passage	Paste the heading, paragraph, claim, or transition this image supports
Article summary	Summarize the complete article in one sentence

2. Audience

Primary reader	Role, context, and current knowledge of the subject
Reader decision	Question or decision the reader faces at this point in the article

3. Visual job

Reader outcome	After seeing the image, the reader should understand, compare, verify, or feel...

Meaning and creative direction

Separate required meaning from creative freedom. Constraints protect the argument; preferences guide selection without drawing the final composition in prose.

4. Required content

Must appear	People, objects, relationships, sequence, or evidence that carries meaning
Must stay accurate	Facts, proportions, order, labels, or product details that require verification
Creative freedom	Choices the illustrator may make about metaphor, viewpoint, spacing, and arrangement

5. Style system

Approved system	Visual Skill, style guide, medium, palette, texture, and abstraction level
Reference 1	Link or image plus the exact property to borrow, such as composition
Reference 2	Link or image plus the exact property to borrow, such as finish or texture

6. Avoid

Wrong readings	Misleading interpretations, claims, stereotypes, or factual errors
Unwanted motifs	Cliches, embedded text, logo use, stock-photo poses, or off-brand elements

Delivery, review, and set consistency

A creator can only meet requirements that the brief names. Record the format, reviewer, and acceptance test before production starts.

7. Deliverables

Dimensions	Aspect ratio, pixel dimensions, and print resolution when relevant
Files	Final format, alternate crops, source file, layers, and color mode
Usage	Channels, territory, duration, licensing, and budget for commissioned work

8. Review

Review owner	One person responsible for consolidating feedback
Schedule	Draft deadline, final deadline, checkpoints, and included revision rounds
Acceptance test	The criteria that determine whether the image performs its visual job

Set consistency and final check

Use one shared system for the set, then give each image a distinct visual job and composition. Review the sequence before polishing individual files.

For an illustration set

Shared rules	Palette, medium, character treatment, texture, and negative rules
Planned variation	How composition, scale, and subject should change across the set
Distinct jobs	List the visual job assigned to each image in the sequence

Final brief check

☐ The creator can state the image's job in one sentence.
☐ The brief includes the exact source passage and enough article context.
☐ Required meaning and creative freedom are easy to distinguish.
☐ Each reference names the property to borrow.
☐ Dimensions, files, deadline, reviewer, and acceptance criteria are present.

Companion guide: zyncli.com/blog/how-to-write-an-illustration-brief