



FULLCIRCLEARTSTOOLKITS

SERIES 2 professional development... **Why should I have a contract**

or the importance of always working with a contract...

A contract

- is a document which sets out explicitly the terms on which you will deliver the work, whatever it is. The contract will include your obligations and the client's obligations.
- may be a formal document which requires signatures from both you and the client. It might be a letter or e-mail which sets out the terms on which the work will be done.




Remember!

- Your contract is your protection; never work without one
 - Your contract should set out exactly what you have been asked to do. This protects you from having to do anything you are not prepared for and from having to work under conditions that are unacceptable.
 - Your contract sets out what you will receive in return for the work you deliver. If you have difficulties getting the client to pay, or getting the information you need, it is your contract that makes it clear what should have happened. Your contract may also set out the procedures you can follow to resolve disputes.
 - Your contract is, in the worst case scenario, the piece of paper you refer to in order to show that you've fulfilled your obligations and now the client needs to fulfil theirs.




If the contract has come from the client, check it thoroughly before signing

- Many larger organisations have standard contracts that they will issue to all freelancers or sessional workers with the details of the work filled in. These are generally drawn up by the organisation's legal department and are designed, first and foremost, to protect the organisation. This is not to say they are trying to catch you out or leave you unprotected but be aware that you need to check each paragraph carefully. Even if it seems to be in complicated legal language. This might mean asking someone to read it with you.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions and even ask that things are altered or your own requirements added. This may take time, though, so respond to the contract as soon as you are able.

Once you have a contract, don't work outside of it

-  Working outside a contract means doing something that the contract does not cover, for example delivering a workshop for 25 four year olds instead of the 12 ten year olds specified in the contract.
-  As long as you have included them in the contract, you do not have to deliver work where your own access requirements are not met. For example, if you turn up to deliver a presentation on your work and a lip-speaker has not been provided as specified in the contract, you are under no obligation to go ahead with the presentation.
-  Of course, we are all fundamentally nice people who want to deliver our work. In the pressure of the moment, it is difficult to refuse to deliver. However, be aware that, if you do, you are working outside the contract. You might want to jot down a note to the effect that you agreeing to deliver despite the conditions not being as contracted, and that this is because of your goodwill. Then ask someone in the client organisation to sign it before you go ahead.

Finally

-  Most of the time, your contract is simply a really helpful document which makes it clear what you are going to do, when, for whom and how much you will get paid. Most of the time, that is the only function it will have.
-  The best working relationships are based on trust and respect and you cannot cover these in a contract. They depend on your professionalism and reliability.
-  For those very few occasions when things go wrong, your contract can be the tool which helps things get sorted out quickly and with your reputation and professionalism intact.