

Approval Rights Decoder: What Can They Do With Your Work?

Because “final cut” isn’t just for directors.
By Lex Nova Lawyer x Thoolie

Approval rights are one of the most overlooked parts of a contract — and one of the most dangerous to ignore. Whether you’re an influencer, a screenwriter, or a creator working with a brand, you need to know: *Can they change your work? Re-edit it? Post it without your okay?*

What This Is

A practical guide to **approval rights** in content and production deals — and how to negotiate fair ones.

Includes:

-  What “approval” really means in legal terms
 -  Common red flag clauses
 -  Industry-specific traps (influencer, film, talent)
 -  Sample language (good vs bad)
 -  What to ask *before* you lose control of your content
-

What Are Approval Rights?

Approval rights determine whether *you get a say* in how your content, image, name, or work is used, changed, or released.

If you don’t have approval rights, you’re giving up control.

🚩 Red Flag Clauses to Watch Out For

Clause Language	What It Really Means
<i>"Client agrees to deliver final assets, which may be edited at Brand's discretion."</i>	They can change, remix, or recontextualize your work without input.
<i>"Producer shall have sole approval over final cut, marketing materials, and distribution."</i>	You have no say in how the final version looks or is promoted.
<i>"Brand may post, edit, or use content in perpetuity in any media now known or hereafter devised."</i>	You've lost all future say — across all platforms, forever.
<i>"Influencer grants brand full creative discretion."</i>	You're handing them the scissors, captions, and control.

✅ Better Language to Ask For

❌ Don't Use This	✅ Use This Instead
"Brand may edit at discretion"	"No edits without prior written approval from Influencer"
"Producer retains final cut"	"Creator retains approval over all edits, captions, and public uses of content"
"Materials subject to minor editing"	"Edits limited to minor formatting; all content use requires approval"
"Final materials may differ from draft"	"All final materials must be approved in writing by Creator before use"

Industry-Specific Approval Traps

Film / TV

- **Danger:** “Final cut” may belong to the financier, not the director or screenwriter
- **Fix:** Ask for “meaningful consultation” or “shared approval” over major elements (script, edit, credits)

Influencer / Brand Deals

- **Danger:** Brand re-edits your post or uses it in a way that doesn’t match your voice
- **Fix:** Limit use + edits. Require *written approval* before paid promotion, whitelisting, or reuse.

Music & Video Collaborations

- **Danger:** Your vocals, likeness, or beat ends up in another project without context
- **Fix:** Approval over final mix, visuals, and any additional uses



Sample Approval Clause (Fair Version)

“Creator shall retain approval over all final content, edits, captions, and usage, including paid promotion and reposting. Brand shall obtain written approval prior to publishing or boosting content on any platform.”



What to Ask Before Signing

- Can they **edit** or remix my work?
- Can they post or use it **without checking with me**?
- Do I get to see and approve the **final version** before it goes public?
- Can they use my name, image, or voice in **other materials**?
- Is “approval” mentioned clearly — or just implied?

Final Tip from Lex Nova Lawyer

Don't confuse "review" with **approval**.

If your contract says you'll be "consulted," that doesn't mean they need your *yes*. True approval = *your decision*, not just a heads-up.

Want smarter contracts?

Thoolie's paid templates include editable approval rights — so you can protect your content *before* it goes live.