

What Is a Materials Release?

A **materials release** is a legal document that gives your production permission to use **pre-existing materials** — such as photos, footage, artwork, social media posts, or even behind-the-scenes clips that someone else owns.

If you're using third-party assets in your film, doc, series, or branded content, a materials release protects you from legal claims and ensures you have the right to distribute the final work.

When You Need a Materials Release

- Incorporating **archival footage** or **found footage**
- Using **social media content** (even if public)
- Showing **logos, brand assets, or signage**
- Using **art, music, or photos** that are not original to you
- Including **“behind-the-scenes” footage** shot by someone else
- Using **screen recordings** or online clips (especially in commentary or education)

What Happens If You Don't Use One

You may face:

- Legal takedown requests
- Claims for licensing fees or damages
- Inability to secure distribution, festival placement, or E&O insurance
- Reputational harm and project delays