



A FREE CHECKLIST FROM ARDENT SELLER

# Legal Documents Every Maker Should Have

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The 10 documents that keep a handmade business out of trouble — what each one is, when you need it, and a box to check it off.

A starting map — not legal advice.



# The paperwork that protects you

Most makers run on a handshake until the day a handshake isn't enough — a custom order goes sideways, a wholesale buyer stops paying, a customer demands a refund you never promised. You can't justify a lawyer for every piece of boilerplate, but you shouldn't be improvising either. This checklist names the ten documents a handmade business should have, what each one does, and when you actually need it — so you know exactly where your gaps are.

## HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Read each document below and check the box if you already have one — and if it's current. Most makers find they're missing three or four. The ones to fix first are whatever matches how you sell today: take commissions? You need a custom-order contract. Sell wholesale? You need a wholesale agreement. Run any kind of store page? You need policies and a privacy note. This checklist is the map. The full pack (closing page) is the documents themselves.

## The 10 documents

**01**

### Bill of Sale

A plain record that ownership of an item passed from you to a buyer.

A bill of sale is a short, dated record showing that you sold a specific item to a specific buyer for an agreed price, and that ownership has now passed to them. For a maker it is most useful on higher-value, one-off, or in-person sales — a commissioned piece, a booth sale of an expensive item, or anything a buyer might later want proof of purchase for.

**You need it when:** Use it whenever you want a clean paper record of a single sale — especially in-person, custom, or higher-value sales where a platform receipt isn't enough.

We have this — and it's current.

02

## Custom Order Contract

Clear terms for a made-to-order piece — scope, deposit, timeline, and revisions.

A custom order contract sets out what you're making, when it'll be ready, what it costs, how the deposit and balance work, and what happens if the customer changes their mind or asks for revisions. It's the single most useful document for any maker who takes commissions or made-to-order work — it prevents the slow scope-creep and "that's not what I pictured" disputes that eat custom work alive.

**You need it when:** Use it before you start any made-to-order or commissioned piece, as soon as the customer says yes and pays a deposit.

We have this — and it's current.

03

## Returns & Refund Policy

A fair, readable policy you can post on your shop and link from every order.

A returns and refund policy tells customers — before they buy — what can be returned, in what window, in what condition, and who pays return shipping. A clear policy heads off most disputes, sets expectations, and is expected by customers and most selling platforms (Etsy and Shopify both encourage or require one). This template is written for handmade goods, with sensible carve-outs for custom and perishable items.

**You need it when:** Publish it on your website and shop policies page from day one, and link to it in order confirmations.

We have this — and it's current.

04

## Shipping Policy

Set processing times, costs, and what happens when a parcel goes missing.

A shipping policy tells customers how long you take to make and dispatch an order, what shipping costs and options you offer, and what happens with delays, lost parcels, and customs. Setting an honest processing time is the single best way to cut "where is my order?" messages, and a clear lost-parcel line keeps you from eating the cost of every carrier mishap.

**You need it when:** Publish it alongside your returns policy, and restate your current processing time anywhere a customer checks out.

We have this — and it's current.

05

## Terms of Service

The ground rules for your website or online shop, in language people can read.

Terms of service (also called terms & conditions) are the rules for using your website or online store: who can buy, how orders and prices work, what customers may and may not do with your content, and the basic limits on your liability. For a small Shopify, Etsy-linked, or standalone store, a short readable set of terms is plenty — this template gives you exactly that.

**You need it when:** Publish it on your own website (most needed for a standalone or Shopify store), and link to it in your footer and at checkout.

We have this — and it's current.

06

## Privacy Policy

Tell customers what you collect and why — covers the basics for a small shop, with notes on where bigger obligations begin.

A privacy policy explains what personal information you collect (names, addresses, emails, payment details), why you collect it, who you share it with, and what choices people have. If you run a website, take email sign-ups, or use analytics, you almost certainly need one — and privacy laws like the EU/UK GDPR and California's CCPA impose specific requirements. This template covers the basics for a small maker shop and flags where fuller obligations begin — it is a starting point, not a compliance guarantee.

**You need it when:** Publish it before you collect any customer data on your own site, link it in your footer, and reference it at sign-up and checkout.

We have this — and it's current.

07

## Photo & Model Release

Permission to use photos of a person — for shoots, markets, and customer features.

A photo and model release is permission from a person to use their image — in your product photos, on your website and social media, and in ads. You need one any time a recognizable person appears in content you'll publish: a hired or volunteer model, a customer you want to feature, or a friend modeling your jewelry. It protects you from a later "I never said you could use that" claim.

**You need it when:** Get it signed before a shoot, or before you publish any photo or video in which a real person is recognizable.

We have this — and it's current.

08

## Wholesale Agreement

Terms for selling your products to a shop that resells them — pricing, minimums, payment.

A wholesale agreement governs selling your products at wholesale prices to a retailer who marks them up and resells them. It covers minimum orders, wholesale pricing, payment terms, lead times, and how reorders work. It also protects your brand — for example, by setting a minimum resale price so a stockist can't undercut your own shop. It's the backbone document once a maker starts selling to boutiques and gift shops.

**You need it when:** Use it when a shop wants to carry your line, before you accept the first wholesale order.

We have this — and it's current.

09

## Consignment Agreement

Terms for leaving your products in a shop that pays you only when they sell.

In consignment, you leave your products with a shop, you keep ownership until they sell, and the shop takes a commission on each sale and pays you the rest. It's common for makers placing work in galleries, boutiques, and gift shops. The key differences from wholesale: you own the goods until sale, you carry the risk of slow-movers, and you need clear terms on commission, payment timing, and who's responsible if items are lost or damaged in the shop.

**You need it when:** Use it whenever a shop or gallery wants to display your work and pay you as it sells, rather than buying it outright.

We have this — and it's current.

10

## Independent Contractor Agreement

Terms for hiring help — a maker, assistant, photographer, or VA — as a contractor.

An independent contractor agreement sets the terms when you pay someone to do work for your business without making them an employee — a production helper, a craft-fair assistant, a product photographer, a virtual assistant. It covers the work, the pay, the fact that they're a contractor (not an employee), who owns what they create for you, and confidentiality. Getting the contractor-vs-employee line right matters, because misclassifying a worker can create tax and legal problems.

**You need it when:** Use it before someone starts paid work for your business as a contractor.

We have this — and it's current.

## Want the documents, not just the list?

This checklist tells you which documents you need. The Craft Business Legal Pack is the documents themselves: all 10 templates, each as a fillable PDF and an editable Word document (drop them straight into Google Docs), plus a 12-page guide that walks through what each document is for, the most common mistakes makers make in each, and the “your state may differ” boundaries. Fill in your shop's details and you have a working set of agreements and policies in an afternoon — for a fraction of one hour of a lawyer's time.

### GET THE FULL LEGAL PACK

Available on the Ardent Workshop storefront. [See the full Craft Business Legal Pack >](#)

## Keep the records these documents point to

Half of these documents only work if you can find the order, the customer, the deposit, or the wholesale terms behind them. A consignment agreement is only as good as your record of what's out on consignment; a custom-order contract needs the deposit and balance tracked.

### MEET ARDENT SELLER

Ardent Seller is inventory, order, and customer software built for makers. It keeps your vendors, customers, wholesale accounts, deposits, and order history in one place — the records that make these agreements enforceable instead of theoretical. There's a free plan to start. [Start free at ardent seller.app >](#)

### IMPORTANT — NOT LEGAL ADVICE

This checklist, and the templates in the paid pack, are general educational starting points — not legal advice, and not a substitute for a lawyer. Laws differ by state and country and change over time. For anything high-stakes — a large commission, a significant wholesale or consignment relationship, hiring help, or any dispute — have a qualified attorney in your jurisdiction review your documents before you rely on them.

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