

AGENCY AND FREELANCE TEMPLATE

Client Communication Swipe File

Fourteen scripts for the conversations that are hard to start: late payment, scope creep, bad news, and the client who has gone quiet.

The emails that cost you money are the ones you put off writing. Every script here is short, unapologetic, and written to be sent the same day the problem appears. Adapt the wording to sound like you, but keep the structure, because the structure is what makes them work.

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How to use this swipe file

These are structures, not scripts to paste verbatim. Rewrite them in your own voice once, save them where you write email, and stop composing difficult messages from scratch.

- 1 **Send the same day.** Every one of these gets harder to send with time, and the problem gets more expensive.
- 2 **Keep them short.** Length reads as guilt. A four-line email about a missed deadline lands better than a fifteen-line explanation.
- 3 **State the position, then the option.** Not the other way round. Leading with options invites negotiation on the position.
- 4 **Never apologise for your own terms.** 'Sorry to chase' teaches the client that chasing is an imposition rather than a process.
- 5 **Put the ask on its own line.** Buried requests get missed, then you are chasing your own chase.

ADAPT THE TONE, KEEP THE BONES

If a script sounds too blunt for your relationship with a client, soften the opening line and leave everything after it alone. The middle is where the work happens.

The four rules behind every script

Warm opening, firm middle

Be pleasant in line one so the client stays in the email. Be unambiguous in line three so they know what is required.

One ask, on its own line

Every message asks for exactly one thing. Two asks means one gets answered and one gets forgotten.

A date, not 'soon'

'By Thursday' is actionable. 'At your earliest convenience' is a request to be deprioritised.

Consequence without threat

State what happens next as process, not punishment. 'Work pauses on accounts over 14 days' is a fact, not an attack.

Phrases to delete from every draft

INSTEAD OF	WRITE
Sorry to chase, but	Following up on
I was just wondering if maybe	Could you confirm
Whenever you get a chance	By <u> day </u>
I hope this is okay	(delete entirely)
It might be slightly outside scope	This is outside the agreed scope
Just a quick one	(delete entirely)

Money

1. Invoice is overdue, first chase

SEND ON DAY 1 OVERDUE

Hi name, invoice number for amount was due on date and is showing as unpaid. I have reattached it in case it needs re-sending to accounts.

Could you confirm the payment date?

Thanks, you

2. Invoice is seriously overdue

SEND ON DAY 14 OVERDUE

Hi name, invoice number is now number days overdue. As set out in our agreement, work pauses on accounts more than 14 days past due, so current work is on hold from date.

I would rather keep things moving. Can you let me know today when payment will clear?

3. Raising your rates

SEND 60 DAYS AHEAD

Hi name, a note that my rates change from date. From then, service moves to amount.

Anything already booked or quoted before that date is unaffected, so there is no change to current work.

Happy to talk it through if useful.

DO NOT EXPLAIN THE INCREASE

A rate change stated plainly reads as normal business. A rate change accompanied by three paragraphs about rising costs reads as an apology, and apologies invite negotiation.

Scope

4. The small extra request

THE ONE THAT DECIDES THE WHOLE PROJECT

Hi name, happy to do that. It sits outside the agreed scope, so it would be an extra amount and add about time to the timeline.

Want me to go ahead on that basis?

5. Repeated small extras

WHEN IT HAS HAPPENED THREE TIMES

Hi name, we have picked up a few things outside the original scope over the last few weeks. Individually they are small, together they are about hours hours.

Two options: I can quote them as a change order and we keep the original timeline, or we can swap them for something already in scope. Which would you prefer?

6. Revisions beyond the agreed rounds

FIRM, NO DRAMA

Hi name, this takes us past the number rounds of revision included in the project. Further rounds are billed at rate.

Before we start another pass, could we get everyone's feedback in one go? That usually resolves more in a single round than three separate ones.

NEVER DO THE SMALL THING FOR FREE

The first unpriced extra is not the expensive one. It is the one that teaches the client that scope is negotiable, and the next six arrive on that assumption.

Delay and silence

7. Waiting on the client

SEND THE DAY IT BECOMES BLOCKING

Hi name, I am waiting on item to move to the next stage. The timeline assumes it lands by date.

If it is going to be later than that, no problem, but the launch date moves by the same number of days. Can you let me know either way?

8. Client has gone completely quiet

SEND AT 10 WORKING DAYS OF SILENCE

Hi name, I have not heard back on item since date, so I have paused work to avoid building on assumptions.

Is this still a priority for you? If timing has changed, that is genuinely fine, I just need to know so I can plan around it.

9. Formal dormancy notice

SEND AT 20 WORKING DAYS

Hi name, with no response since date, I am treating the project as dormant under our agreement.

I will invoice for work completed to date. When you are ready to restart, let me know and I will confirm availability and any restart fee. Everything is saved and nothing is lost.

SILENCE IS INFORMATION

A client who stops replying has usually had a budget freeze, a reorganisation, or a change of priority they find awkward to explain. Making it easy to say 'not now' gets you an answer faster than a fourth follow-up.

Bad news

10. You will miss a deadline

SEND THE MOMENT YOU KNOW, NOT THE DAY BEFORE

Hi name, deliverable will not be ready for date. The new date is date.

The reason is one sentence, no excuses. Here is what I am doing about it: action.

If the original date is immovable for a reason I do not know about, tell me now and we will look at what can be cut to hit it.

11. Something broke, and it was your fault

OWNERSHIP WITHOUT GROVELLING

Hi name, what happened at time. It was our error.

It is fixed as of time. The cause was one sentence, and to stop it recurring we have change made.

Happy to walk through it on a call if useful.

12. Their idea will not work

DISAGREE WITH EVIDENCE, THEN OFFER A PATH

Hi name, I want to flag a concern with approach before we commit to it. In my experience it tends to specific consequence, and here it would likely mean impact.

What I would suggest instead is alternative, which gets you same outcome without that risk.

It is your call and I will build whichever you choose. I would not be doing my job if I did not raise it.

THE LAST LINE MATTERS

'It is your call and I will build whichever you choose' is what separates expert advice from obstruction. Say the concern once, clearly, then respect the decision.

Endings

13. Declining work

FAST AND CLEAN BEATS A SLOW MAYBE

Hi name, thanks for thinking of me. This is not a good fit for me, mostly because honest, brief reason.

Name at other business does this kind of work well and I would be happy to introduce you.

Good luck with it, and do come back for type of work you do want.

14. Ending an engagement

PROFESSIONAL, NO POST-MORTEM

Hi name, after time period I think this has run its course, and I am giving notice under our agreement. My last day on this will be date.

Between now and then I will handover commitment so nothing is left hanging. You will have list of what they receive by date.

It has been good working with you and I am glad to help your next supplier get up to speed.

LEAVE WELL

A clean exit is worth more than the last invoice. Clients who leave on good terms refer work, and the industry is much smaller than it looks.

Your own phrasing

Rewrite the openings and closings once in your own voice, then reuse them. The middles can stay as they are.

SITUATION	YOUR OPENING LINE	YOUR CLOSING ASK
Chasing money		
Refusing free work		
Delivering bad news		
Breaking a silence		
Disagreeing with a client		
Saying no to a project		

Where these live

SAVED AS SNIPPETS IN

REVIEWED ON

Email client, text expander, or CRM

THE TEST OF A GOOD SCRIPT

You send it within an hour of the problem appearing, without rereading it four times. If you are still editing on the third pass, the script is not yet in your own voice.

We build the systems behind the paperwork

Gatilab is an independent WordPress and search agency. We build sites, rank them, and stay long enough to prove the work moved something.

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SEO strategy

Technical fixes, topical coverage, and search visibility work measured against clicks, not scores.

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Research-led articles and editorial systems your team can keep publishing without us.

Conversion design

Landing pages, service pages, and forms designed around the decision the reader is actually making.

Need this handled instead of templated?

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