

FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

The Glossary of Words in a CGI Quote

Around forty terms that appear in quotes and specifications, each one written as what it commits you to rather than what it means in a textbook.

Dim Kuzmenko
Co-Founder, Maverick Frame Studio

maverickframe.com

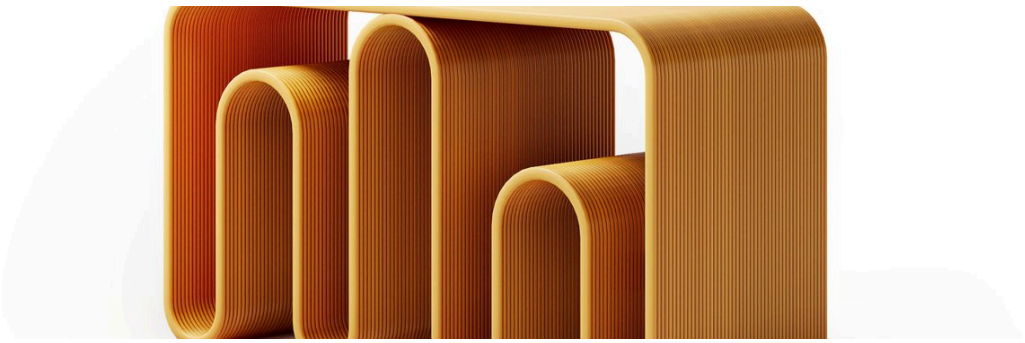
START HERE

Five words that cause most of the disputes

Almost every argument between a client and a CGI studio traces back to a term both sides used confidently and understood differently. None of them is obscure. They are the five below, and each one is fixed by a single line in the brief.

TERM	WHAT EACH SIDE USUALLY MEANS	THE LINE THAT FIXES IT
A view	You: one image. Them: one camera position, which may be delivered in several crops, or several day states, each counted separately.	“A view means one camera, one lighting state, one delivered file. Additional crops or times of day are counted as views.”
A revision round	You: until it is right. Them: one consolidated list of comments, returned once.	“A round is one written list covering all views, answered once. Define what counts as a new round.”
Final	You: approved and finished. Them: rendered at full settings, which may still be before colour grading.	“Final means delivered files at agreed size and format, after grading, signed off in writing.”
Source files	You: everything needed to continue the job elsewhere. Them: the layered image file, not the 3D scene.	“State separately whether we receive the 3D scene, the textures, and the layered image files.”
High resolution	You: good enough to print large. Them: the pixel dimensions in the quote, whatever they are.	“Give the longest edge in pixels for each deliverable, and the intended output.”

Nothing in this guide is an industry standard, because there is no industry standard for most of these words. That is precisely the point: they are not defined for you anywhere, so they have to be defined in your own document.



Maverick Frame production render.

GROUP 01 & 02

Deliverables, and the model itself

What you are being sold

Still	One rendered image from one camera. The unit most quotes are built from.
Hero image	The single image carrying the project. Usually costs more because it takes more iterations, not more pixels.
Photomontage	CGI composited onto a real photograph. Commits you to supplying, or paying for, a photographic plate shot to specification.
Flythrough / walkthrough	Animated camera through a scene. Priced by finished duration, not by effort, so every second you add is a cost.
360 panorama	A single point you can look around from. Cheaper than a walkthrough, and a different experience — you cannot move.
Virtual tour	Several panoramas linked by hotspots. Commits you to a hosting platform and to who maintains it.
Turntable	Product rotating on a fixed camera. Simple to produce, and it needs the model finished all the way round.
Configurator asset	Geometry and materials prepared so an end user can change options live. A different build to a render model, decided before modelling starts.
Cutaway / exploded view	Geometry sliced or separated to show what is inside. Requires parts modelled separately — expensive to retrofit.

The model

Topology	How the geometry is constructed. Clean topology can be edited later; messy topology renders once and resists every change.
Polygon count	The size of the mesh. Commits the model to a use — print close-up and web viewer want different counts.
LOD (level of detail)	Several versions of one model at different weights. Ask whether you are buying one or a set.
UVs / UV layout	How flat textures wrap onto the surface. Bad UVs mean nobody can change a finish or a label without redoing work.
Real-world scale	The model is its actual size in stated units. The most common reason a delivered model is useless to the next studio.
Origin / pivot	The zero point the model sits at. Wrong origin turns assembly and configurator work into a manual fix per object.
Proxy	A stand-in object swapped for the heavy version at render time. Normal practice; ask whether proxies are included in a handover.
Retopology	Rebuilding geometry cleanly, usually from a scan or a CAD import. A line item, not a freebie.
CAD import	Engineering geometry brought into a render package. Converts precise surfaces into meshes — quality of that conversion is a real cost.

GROUP 03 & 04

Light, render, and the files

How the image is made

PBR material	Physically based material described by maps rather than by a look. Portable between renderers, which matters if you ever change studio.
Texture map	The image file a material points at. If maps are not delivered, your model is a grey shape.
HDRI	A high dynamic range environment image used to light a scene. Fast and convincing; less controllable than built lights.
Global illumination	Light bouncing between surfaces. The reason a room feels like a room. It is also where render time goes.
Sun study / sun path	Light set from real latitude, date and time. Commits you to supplying a north point and a date.
Depth of field	Selective focus. Cheap to add, easy to overdo, and a common way of hiding unfinished background.
Render pass / AOV	Separated components of one render — reflection, shadow, depth, object masks. Ask for them: they make late edits possible without re-rendering.
Denoising	Cleaning render noise algorithmically. Standard practice; over-applied it softens fabric and foliage detail.
Post-production / grade	Colour and contrast work after rendering. Where a lot of the final look lives. Confirm it is included.
Real-time render	Images or motion produced by a game-style engine rather than an offline renderer. Different economics, especially for animation.

Files and formats

Native scene file	The studio's working file. The only thing another studio can genuinely continue from.
FBX / OBJ / glTF / USD	Exchange formats. Each carries a different amount — geometry always, materials sometimes, lights and cameras rarely.
TIFF / PNG / JPEG	Delivered image formats. TIFF and PNG keep quality and transparency; JPEG is the web copy.
Alpha channel	Transparency baked into the file so the subject can be placed on any background. Ask for it on product work by default.
Layered file	A PSD or equivalent with elements separated. Lets your team make small changes without a new round.
Colour space	sRGB, Adobe RGB, CMYK conversions. Decide before delivery if anything is going to print, and confirm the requirement with your printer.
Aspect ratio and crop	The shape of the frame. Agree every output shape up front, because re-cropping a composed image loses the composition.

GROUP 05

The commercial words

The terms that decide what happens after the images are delivered. These are the ones worth reading twice in a quote, because they are the ones that determine what next year costs.

Scope	The list of deliverables the price covers. If a deliverable is not named in it, assume it is not included.
Revision round	One consolidated set of comments, answered once. The definition belongs in your document, not theirs.
Change of scope	A new request rather than a correction. The boundary between this and a revision is the most common source of an unexpected invoice.
Milestone	A defined point — grey model, first render, final — used for payment and for approval. Ask for approval at grey model stage; it is the cheapest place to change your mind.
Usage licence	Where, for how long and in what media you may use the images. Often narrower than people assume, especially for paid advertising and out-of-home.
Exclusivity	Whether the studio may show the work, and whether the assets may be used for anyone else. Two separate questions; ask both.
Source files	The 3D scene, textures and layered images, as distinct from the rendered outputs. Priced separately almost everywhere.
Archive	Whether the studio keeps your scene, for how long, and what retrieval costs. The answer decides the price of your next angle.
Rate for future work	A stated price for additional views from the existing scene. Agree it while you still have leverage, which is before the first invoice.

Paste this into the email that accepts a quote

Before we proceed, please confirm in writing: (1) what counts as one view and how additional crops or times of day are charged; (2) how many revision rounds are included and what constitutes a round; (3) the longest edge in pixels and the file formats for each deliverable; (4) whether an alpha channel and render passes are included; (5) the usage licence, its territory and its term; (6) whether we receive source files, and at what price; (7) how long you archive the scene and what a new view from it costs next year.

Seven questions, one email, sent before work starts. A studio that answers all seven clearly is telling you a great deal about how the project will run — and one that cannot answer them has not thought about them yet, which is information too.

WORKING WITH A STUDIO

Cost, and how to brief it

Two things people ask us before anything else. Both answers are short.

COMMISSIONED WORK	FREELANCER	STUDIO
Single exterior still	$100 – 300	$250 – 600
Single interior still	$120 – 350	$300 – 700
Package, 5–8 views	$600 – 1,500	$1,500 – 4,000
Animation, per minute	$1,000 – 3,000	$3,000 – 8,000

Market ranges we are willing to publish. Turnaround and revision-round figures are deliberately not in this table: ours vary too much by project type to state as a benchmark, and an invented number here would be worse than none.

How to brief it — shorter is better

This is the opposite of what most people assume. Four things:

- What you need — **how many images, and of what**
- The plans and elevations, as they are
- A few reference images for mood and light
- One clear line on what the images are *for*

Inflating a small job into a fifty-page specification backfires: taken literally it comes out ugly, and it misleads the people doing the work. Tell them the intent and let the team that does this daily handle the detail.

The mistake that costs the most

The biggest failure we see is not choosing the wrong vendor. It is **timing**. People start looking only after the first supplier has already failed and the deadline is on fire, then choose in a panic.

Line up and vet rendering partners **before** you need one. One, ideally a few, briefed and ready to take work. It costs an afternoon now and saves a project later.

10+
YEARS RENDERING VISUAL STORYTELLING

350+
BRANDS & AGENCIES EMPOWERED GLOBALLY

95%
CLIENT SATISFACTION RATE

40%+
OF OUR COMMISSIONS NOW INCLUDE MOTION OR 360

MAVERICK
FRAME
STUDIO

When the image has to hold up, talk to us

We are a CGI studio: architectural and product rendering, 3D modelling, animation, 360 tours and VR. Ten years, 350+ brands and agencies, and the kind of work that still looks right when somebody counts the windows.

Send us the plans and a line on what the images are for. You get a scope and a price, and no obligation to use either.

START HERE

maverickframe.com/contacts

SEE THE WORK

maverickframe.com/gallery

WRITTEN BY

Dim Kuzmenko
Co-Founder



Maverick Frame production render. · Cost ranges are market ranges as of 2026 and are not a quotation.