



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

How to Brief a **Style** So You Get It Back

Why naming a style transmits almost nothing, the seven measurable variables that actually carry one, and a one-page brief you fill in for any style at all.

START HERE

A style is a set of rules, not a look

Write Georgian, or Craftsman, or Brutalist in a brief and you have transmitted a feeling. The person drawing or modelling it still has to choose a roof pitch, a window proportion, a storey height, a wall material and a bond, and twenty smaller things. Whatever they choose, you will look at the result and say it is not quite right — without being able to say which part is wrong.

That gap is the whole problem, and it is not a problem of taste. It is a problem of unstated numbers.

What the style name carries

- A rough period and region
- A mood, which every reader supplies differently
- Two or three famous motifs
- A set of buildings you have seen and they have not

What has to be decided anyway

- Roof pitch, and how deep the eaves sit
- Window proportion, rhythm, head shape, reveal depth
- Floor-to-floor height, and whether upper storeys shrink
- Material, module, bond and mortar
- Symmetry, or exactly where it is broken
- The one detail a viewer uses to name the style

If you leave that right-hand column unstated, it gets filled in anyway — from whatever examples the other person happens to know. **Most style disagreements are arguments about the right-hand column being conducted in the language of the left.**

This is also how to learn a style

If you are studying, use the sheet on page 05 as an exercise rather than a brief. Take one photograph of a building you would confidently name, and fill the sheet in from it. Where you stall is exactly where your understanding of that style stops at recognition. Recognising a style and being able to specify one are different skills, and only the second is any use when you have to produce something.

STEP 01

Seven variables carry most of any style

These are not equally weighted with everything else. Get these right and a knowledgeable viewer will accept the building even if smaller details are simplified. Get one of these wrong and no amount of ornament rescues it.

VARIABLE	WHY IT DECIDES THE READING	HOW TO STATE IT
Roof pitch	The fastest single signal of period and region. A steep roof and a shallow one are different centuries before anything else is looked at.	In degrees, or as rise over run. If you have neither, draw the slope line on a reference photograph.
Eaves and overhang	The most common reason a technically correct style reads as wrong. It changes the shadow line along the whole elevation.	Flush, modest or deep, with a dimension if you have one — plus how the roof meets the wall: gutter, exposed rafter tails, boxed soffit, parapet.
Window proportion	Proportion is read before size. Tall narrow openings and square ones produce different buildings from the same plan.	As a ratio of height to width. Add the head shape: flat, segmental, arched, or a lintel expressed in another material.
Window rhythm	How openings are spaced across the elevation, and how much wall is left between them.	Number of bays, even or odd, and the pattern — regular, wide-narrow-wide, or grouped.
Reveal depth	How far the glass sits back from the face of the wall. It reads as wall thickness, and thickness reads as age and as construction method.	Flush, shallow, or deep, in millimetres if you know. Say whether the frame is visible from an angle.
Storey height and material	Floor-to-floor height sets the whole vertical feel. Material, module and bond set the texture and the scale of everything beside it.	Floor-to-floor for ground and upper separately. Material, unit size, bond or coursing, mortar colour, joint recessed or flush. For boards, width and lap.
Symmetry	Whether the elevation is mirrored, nearly mirrored with one deliberate break, or composed asymmetrically. Where the entrance sits follows from it.	Say which of the three, explicitly, and where the entrance is. Near-symmetry is a decision and has to be stated as one.

Then name the diagnostic detail

Every style has one element that a viewer uses to name it — the thing that, done wrong, makes everyone say the building is pretending. Name yours in one line, say what it must look like, and say what you would reject. **One named detail specified properly beats a page of general adjectives.**

STEP 02

Getting the numbers without being an architect

01 Work from one photograph, not five

Pick the single building closest to what you want and take your numbers from that. Five references get averaged into something that belongs to none of them, which is how a brief produces a building nobody recognises.

02 Use ratios, not millimetres

Windows roughly twice as tall as wide survives translation to any size of building. A dimension taken off a photograph usually does not, and it invites false precision from somebody who cannot check it.

03 Count things

Bays across the front. Panes per sash. Courses between the sill and the head. Steps to the door. Counting converts an impression into instructions, and it takes two minutes.

04 Mark the photograph instead of describing it

A line drawn along the roof slope, an arrow at the eaves, a circle round the detail that matters. One annotated image replaces three paragraphs and is far harder to misread.

05 Give each reference one job

Label them: **this one for form, this one for material, this one for light**. An unlabelled reference set is read as all three at once, and the result is a compromise of everything you sent.

06 Say what would be wrong

One line: if it comes back with X, it has failed. Nothing sharpens a brief faster, because it converts your taste into something checkable by somebody who does not share it.

07 Say what is not required

Naming the things you do not care about is as useful as naming the things you do. It tells the other side where to spend their effort, and stops them protecting details you would happily have lost.

Briefs should be short. What you need, the plans, a few references, one line on the goal. Over-specifying a small job backfires — taken literally it comes out ugly, and it misleads the people doing the work.

DIM KUZMENKO, FOUNDER, MAVERICK FRAME STUDIO

Short and specific are not opposites. The sheet overleaf is one page. It is shorter than the five pages of adjectives most style briefs turn into, and it decides more. **Specify the variables that carry the style, then stop and let whoever is doing the work handle the rest.**

STEP 03

The one-page style brief

Fill this in for whichever style you care about. It works the same way for a Tudor cottage, a Brutalist extension or a contemporary infill, because the questions are the ones that have to be answered either way.

STYLE I WOULD CALL IT _____ PERIOD / REGION _____
 WHAT IT IS _____ WHERE _____

MASSING storeys _____ plan shape _____ symmetry: full / near / none
 entrance sits _____

ROOF form _____ pitch _____ deg (or rise:run _____)
 eaves: flush / modest / deep _____ verge _____
 meets wall by _____ covering _____

WALL material _____ unit size _____ bond / coursing _____
 mortar colour _____ joint: flush / recessed tone _____

OPENINGS height : width ratio _____ bays per elevation _____
 rhythm _____ head type _____
 reveal: flush / shallow / deep _____ frame material _____
 glazing subdivision _____ frame colour _____

HEIGHTS floor-to-floor, ground _____ upper _____

DIAGNOSTIC DETAIL (the one that must be right) _____
 it must look like _____ it fails if _____

REFERENCES form _____ material _____ light _____
 NOT REQUIRED _____

Leave the blanks you cannot fill

A half-filled sheet is still a good brief, and the empty fields are useful information: they are the decisions you are delegating, and the other side now knows they are theirs to make. That is very different from a field nobody realised existed.

Use it as an approval sheet too

When work comes back, review it against this page rather than against a feeling. Each line is checkable, so comments become pitch is shallower than briefed rather than it does not feel right — which is the comment that costs a round and fixes nothing.



Maverick Frame production render.

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

Founder



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

