

PROJECT H-02 • THE HIGH TIER

A real freelance run, in five weeks.

The *Freelance* Run

*You have a skill. Sell it as a service.
Take real clients. Get paid.*

9-12

GRADE RANGE

5

WEEKS

Service

PROJECT TYPE

Build *Something*
Good

A NOTE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This kit is for *doers*, not describers.

You are about to spend five weeks running a real freelance practice. Not a simulation. Not a class project. A real one. By the end of week five, you will have at least one client who paid you real money for real work, an honest accounting of how much your time was worth, and a calibrated answer to the question of whether to keep going.

The hard skill in this kit is scope management. Most freelance failures happen because the work expands beyond what was agreed to. The client asks for one more thing. Then another. Then another. The freelancer keeps saying yes. The hours pile up. The pay stays the same. The effective hourly rate collapses.

This kit will teach you how to define scope precisely, defend it kindly, renegotiate when the work genuinely changes, and walk away when the trade is no longer fair. These are skills that working adults pay thousands of dollars to learn from books, courses, and consultants. You will learn them by running the work.

"Scope is the first lie freelancers tell themselves and the second lie they tell their clients. Most of the rest of freelance failure is just the cost of those two lies compounding."

A WORD ON ACCESS

This kit is licensed for one family. You are welcome to use it with all the kids in your immediate household. If you are running this in a co-op, classroom, or microschool with multiple unrelated families, please reach out about institutional licensing at buildsomethinggood@b7collective.com.

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PARENT INTRODUCTION

Your role for the next five weeks, *and what to leave alone.*

Your kid is the operator. You are the legal account holder, the back-channel logistics, and the person who protects the standard. That is the entire job.

What you do

- Open and own any platform accounts (PayPal, bank, Stripe, payment apps). Your kid is a minor and cannot legally hold these accounts. They run the work behind your account.
- Sign any service agreements with adults. Your kid drafts them. You sign them.
- Help vet the first three potential clients. You know your community better than your kid does.
- Be the first audience for the rate card and the proposal. Push back honestly.
- Honor the result, whatever it is. The certificate is tied to finishing the work, not to hitting a revenue number.

What you do not do

- Do not do the actual work. If the kid is doing graphic design, you do not touch the design files.
- Do not write the cold outreach for them. You can review it. You cannot author it.
- Do not negotiate scope on their behalf. They have to learn to do this themselves, even when it is uncomfortable.
- Do not rescue the project when it gets hard. The dip is the lesson.
- Do not soften the effective hourly rate calculation at the end. The number is the number.

THE ONLINE ACCOUNTS RULE

The parent is the legal account holder. The kid is the operator behind the account. The kid does the design, the writing, the photography, the customer service, and the decision-making. The parent owns the account, links the bank, files the taxes, and signs the agreements. This is not a workaround. It is the correct structure for a minor doing real commerce.

Tax note: Income generated through these platforms is your reportable income. If the project generates more than a few hundred dollars, consult your accountant.

EVERYTHING IN THIS KIT, AND WHERE TO FIND IT

Twenty-nine pages. *One running practice.*

FRONT 01–05

Cover, Welcome, Parent Intro, Roadmap, How to Use, Materials List

5 pages

SKILLS 06–10

Scope Management *scaffolding*

5 pages

Annotated proposal, weak counterpoint, your turn, self-check rubric

WEEK 01

Onboarding

3 pages

Service Definition. Rate Card Builder.

WEEK 02

Build

5 pages

Where the Work Is. Pricing for the Real Economy. Outreach List. Cold Email Anchor.

WEEK 03

Launch

3 pages

Time Tracking Workbook. Scope Creep Watch.

WEEK 04

Run & Adjust

3 pages

Invoice Template. Change Request Log. Payment Tracker.

WEEK 05

Reflect

3 pages

Effective Hourly Rate Calculator. Reflection. Decision.

BACK

Certificate. What's Next.

2 pages

HOW TO USE THIS KIT

Read this once. *Then start.*

The arc

Five weeks. The first builds the offer. The second lands clients. The third runs the work and tracks time. The fourth invoices, collects, and handles change requests. The fifth calculates what your time was actually worth and decides what comes next.

If you miss a week

The arc still matters. Don't skip weeks. Resume where you left off and add days as needed. Don't double up. Doing two weeks in one weekend defeats the purpose. The certificate is tied to finishing all five weeks of real work, not to running on a five-week calendar.

A note on rates

Set your starting rate honestly. Most first-time freelancers under-price by 40 to 60 percent. The Rate Card Builder in week one will give you a defensible starting number. Use it.

MATERIALS LIST

REQUIRED

- ☐ A skill you can offer (writing, design, video, tutoring, photography, code, music)
- ☐ Computer with internet access
- ☐ Email address (parent's or supervised kid account)
- ☐ Parent's PayPal, Venmo, or bank account for receiving payment
- ☐ Printer (to print proposals and invoices, or to print this kit)
- ☐ Phone for client calls if needed

RECOMMENDED

- ☐ Portfolio of prior work, even if it's school assignments
- ☐ Calendar app (Google Calendar, Apple Calendar)
- ☐ Time tracking app (Toggl free, Clockify free)
- ☐ Cloud storage for client files (Google Drive, Dropbox)

OPTIONAL

- ☐ Simple invoicing tool (Wave free, Stripe Invoicing)
- ☐ Domain name with simple portfolio site
- ☐ Business cards if doing local outreach

THE HARD SKILL

Scope *management.*

The skill that separates freelancers who make money from freelancers who run themselves into the ground.

Scope is the agreement about what you will and will not do for the price you agreed to. It sounds simple. It is not.

The reason scope is hard is that scope creep does not feel like a problem until it has already happened. It feels like helping. The client asks for one more revision. You say yes. They ask for a second logo variation. You say yes. They ask if you can also handle the Instagram post. You say yes.

Each individual yes is small. The cumulative effect is that you end up doing two times the work for the same money, your effective hourly rate collapses, and you start to resent the client. The client, meanwhile, has done nothing wrong. They are just a client asking for things. The failure is yours, for not protecting the scope.

The next four pages teach you what tight scope looks like, what loose scope looks like, how to write your own, and how to grade it before you send it.

WHAT RIGHT LOOKS LIKE

A high schooler's proposal for *a local bakery's Instagram refresh*.

A real proposal that holds scope tightly. Read it. Then read the margin notes.

Proposal: Crumb & Crust Bakery Instagram Refresh

PREPARED BY

Maya Chen, freelance social media designer
maya.chen.design@gmail.com / Prepared April 24, 2026

THE PROBLEM

Crumb & Crust's Instagram has 14 posts in the past year. The grid looks inconsistent. Photos are taken on phones in low light. No visual identity ties posts together.

WHAT I WILL DELIVER

1. A one-page visual style guide (color, type, photo style).
2. Twelve finished Instagram posts ready to publish, with captions.
3. A posting schedule for the following month.

WHAT I WILL NOT DO

I will not write content beyond the twelve posts. Not manage comments, replies, or DMs. Not film or edit video. Not run paid ads. Out of scope.

TIMELINE & INVESTMENT

Two weeks from agreement. \$240 total. Half at start, half on delivery.

REVISIONS

Two rounds on the style guide. One round per post. Additional revisions \$25 per round.

CHANGE REQUESTS

Scope expansion (more posts, video, ongoing management) gets its own engagement, scoped and priced separately.

Names the gap

Specific. Numbers. Why the work matters.

Numbered deliverables

Three specific items. Anyone can count them.

Names the boundary

The "will not" list is the scope's spine.

Bounded revisions

Without limits, scope creep is automatic.

Reframes change requests

Scope expansion gets its own engagement, not free work.

WHAT WEAK LOOKS LIKE

Same project. *Vague proposal.* Watch what falls apart.

A nearly identical engagement, written without scope discipline. This is how most first-time freelancers end up working twice the hours for the same money.

Proposal: Crumb & Crust Social Media Help

FROM

Maya, freelance designer
maya.chen.design@gmail.com

WHAT I'LL DO

Help refresh the bakery's Instagram and make it look more professional. I'll create some posts and improve the overall look. I'm flexible and happy to help with whatever you need to grow the bakery's online presence.

TIMELINE

A few weeks. I'll work as fast as I can and let you know when I have updates.

COST

\$240

REVISIONS

I'm happy to revise things until you're satisfied with the work.

NOTE

If anything else comes up that I can help with, just let me know.

"Some posts"

How many? Two? Twenty?
The client decides later. Maya does whatever they ask.

"I'm flexible"

Scope is unbounded. The client owns Maya's calendar.

"A few weeks"

No deadline. The project drags on for a month.

Unlimited revisions

The most expensive sentence Maya could have written.

"Anything else"

Maya just opened the door to every adjacent task: video, DMs, ads. All free.

YOUR TURN

Now write your own. *About a real client.*

Use this template to draft a proposal for a real prospective client. Don't fill it in with placeholder text. If you don't have a real client in mind yet, do this exercise first as practice and revisit it after week two outreach.

THE PROBLEM YOU ARE SOLVING

What gap have you seen in the client's current situation? Be specific. Use a number if you can.

Build
Something
Good

WHAT YOU WILL DELIVER

Number the deliverables. Each one should be countable. "Twelve posts" not "some content."

WHAT YOU WILL NOT DO

Three things adjacent to your work that you are explicitly not doing. The spine of your scope.

GRADE YOUR OWN PROPOSAL BEFORE SENDING

The *five-criteria check*. Honest only.

If any criterion lands on Weak or Missing, rewrite that part before sending.

CRITERION	STRONG	ADEQUATE	WEAK	MISSING
Specific Problem Named Names the actual gap with a number or specific observation. Not "improve their presence."	☐	☐	☐	☐
Countable Deliverables Each deliverable is numbered or counted. A stranger could verify whether you did the work.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Explicit "Will Not Do" List Three or more items the client might assume but you are not delivering. The boundary is named, not implied.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bounded Revisions Number of revision rounds named. Additional revisions priced. Not "until you're happy."	☐	☐	☐	☐
Change-Request Reframe Scope expansion is named as a separate engagement, not free addition. Future work is welcomed but priced.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Would you sign this if it were sent to you? If the answer is no, the rewrite is the work.

Build the *offer.*

A real freelance practice starts with a real offer. By the end of this week you will have a service definition, a defensible rate, and a rate card a client could actually pay against.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

Pick the freelance service you can credibly offer right now. Not what you wish you could offer. Not what would be cool to offer. What you can deliver well today, with the skills you actually have.

Build the rate card. Write it like a real document a real adult could quote against.

WHAT WILL BE HARD

You will want to set the rate too low. Almost everyone does. The Rate Card Builder will give you a defensible floor. Use it.

You will want to offer too many services. Resist. One clear thing you do well beats five things you do okay.

ARTIFACT 01 OF 02

Define the *service*.

A service definition that's specific enough to price. Vague services don't get hired. Specific ones do.

THE SERVICE IN ONE SENTENCE

"I help [who] do [what] by [how]." Example: "I help local restaurants refresh their Instagram presence by producing branded post packs."

THE SKILL BEHIND IT

What specific skill makes you credible? Where did you build it?

THE BUYER IN YOUR HEAD

Who would actually hire you? Be specific. Local? Online? Friends of family?

HONESTY CHECK

If you cannot name three real examples of the work you'd be selling (in your portfolio, school assignments, or personal projects), the service is too far from your actual skill. Pick a service where you can already point to evidence.

ARTIFACT 02 OF 02

Build the *rate card*.

A one-page document a client can read in 30 seconds. Build yours below.

THE FLOOR RULE

For a high school freelancer doing professional-quality work, the defensible floor is \$20 to \$30 per hour for skilled work (writing, design, video, code) and \$15 to \$20 per hour for general support work (admin, organization, simple tasks). Pricing below this signals hobbyist quality. Most clients will believe you.

YOUR LEAD PACKAGE

ITEM	DETAIL	PRICE
Package name		
What is included		
Estimated hours		
Implied hourly rate		
Add-on options		

WEEK 01 COMPLETE



Service defined. Rate card built. Ready to land clients.

PARENT CHECK-IN

Look at the rate card. If it feels uncomfortably high to you, that's likely correct. Honor the number your kid set if it's defensible.

Land *three* clients.

A target is three confirmed paying clients by end of week two. You will probably contact ten or fifteen people to land three. That is a normal conversion rate. Don't be discouraged.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

First, read the next two pages: where to actually find clients, and what small businesses can realistically pay in 2026.

Then build an outreach list of fifteen real prospects, weighted toward the warmer layers.

Send personalized outreach. Send proposals to anyone interested.

WHAT WILL BE HARD

Sending the first message is the hardest part. You will overthink it. The message you draft on Monday is good enough to send Tuesday.

Most prospects will say no, ignore you, or reply much later. This is not about your work.

FINDING REAL CLIENTS

Where the work *actually* is.

You will not land Coca-Cola. You will not pitch Target. The real freelance work for a high schooler exists in five layers, ordered from warmest to coldest. Build your list weighted toward the top.

-
- | | | |
|-----------|--|-----------------------|
| 01 | Family and family friends
The aunt who runs an Etsy shop. The family friend who is a realtor. Your parents' co-workers with side hustles. Easy yeses, small jobs. Your reputation is on the line, so deliver well. | ~1 in 3
conversion |
|-----------|--|-----------------------|
-
- | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------------------|
| 02 | Co-op, neighbors, congregation, team
Parents in your homeschool co-op. Neighbors. Families from your synagogue, church, mosque, sports team, music ensemble. People who already know your name and have seen you show up reliably for something else. | ~1 in 5
conversion |
|-----------|---|-----------------------|
-
- | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------------------|
| 03 | Local small businesses you actually patronize
The coffee shop you visit weekly. Your dentist's solo practice. The dance studio your sister attends. The neighborhood gym. The independent bookstore. You have foot-traffic credibility. They know your face, even if not your name. | ~1 in 8
conversion |
|-----------|---|-----------------------|
-
- | | | |
|-----------|--|-----------------------|
| 04 | Warm introductions through adults you know
Ask your parents, mentors, or teachers: who do they know who runs a small business or works as a solo professional? A warm intro from someone who can vouch for you converts at least three times better than cold outreach. Always give them a one-line ask they can forward verbatim. | ~1 in 6
conversion |
|-----------|--|-----------------------|
-
- | | | |
|-----------|--|------------------------|
| 05 | Cold local outreach
Small businesses you have noticed in your area but do not know personally. Lower hit rate, but valuable practice for the rest of your career. Do not exceed five of these in your fifteen. | ~1 in 25
conversion |
|-----------|--|------------------------|
-

DO NOT PITCH

Chain stores. Franchises. Anything with a corporate marketing department. Anything where the decision requires HQ approval. If you cannot identify the one person who decides, skip it. Your time is finite and these will not respond.

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PRICING IN THE REAL ECONOMY

What small businesses *can actually pay.*

Small businesses are tight. The right price feels like a reasonable trade for the owner. Not a bargain, not a stretch. Below are honest 2026 benchmarks for high school freelancers working with small local clients.

SERVICE CATEGORY	FIRST-PROJECT RANGE
Small business Instagram refresh (12 posts)	\$150 to \$300
Service business basic website edits	\$200 to \$500
Logo for a tiny startup or solo entrepreneur	\$150 to \$400
Tutoring (per hour)	\$20 to \$40
Pet sitting or dog walking (per visit)	\$15 to \$25
Photography for small business (per session)	\$100 to \$250
Short social video editing (per video)	\$40 to \$100
Newsletter or copy writing (per piece)	\$50 to \$150

The 1 to 2 percent cap rule

A useful mental model: a first-time project for a small business should fit inside one to two percent of that business's monthly revenue. A bakery doing roughly \$20,000 a month grosses can plausibly spend \$200 to \$400 on a one-time marketing project. A solo therapist grossing \$8,000 a month can spend maybe \$80 to \$160 on a website edit. If you cannot estimate, default to under \$300 for a first project.

WORKED EXAMPLE: WHY \$240 WAS RIGHT FOR CRUMB & CRUST

The bakery on page 7 grosses an estimated \$25,000 a month. Two percent of that is \$500. Maya's \$240 lands well inside the cap. A \$1,200 brand identity package, however good the work, would be a stretch the bakery cannot justify. When you cannot raise the price, scope smaller. Never the same scope at a discount.

ARTIFACT 01 OF 02

Build the *outreach list*.

Fifteen real prospects. Names, contact, why you're reaching out.

#	PERSON OR BUSINESS	CONTACT	WHY THEM (ONE SPECIFIC REASON)	STATUS
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				

ARTIFACT 02 OF 02

An anchor for *your cold email*.

A structural reference. Don't copy it. Generic outreach gets ignored.

Subject: A small Instagram refresh for Crumb & Crust

Hi Sarah,

I'm Maya, a high school student in town who does freelance social media design. I've been a customer of Crumb & Crust for two years and I noticed the bakery's Instagram has gone quiet over the past few months.

I'd like to propose a focused two-week project to refresh the visual identity and produce a month of polished posts. Total investment \$240. I've attached a one-page proposal.

If this isn't the right time or fit, no worries. If it's interesting, I'd be glad to talk for fifteen minutes.

Thank you for the morning bread.

Maya Chen
maya.chen.design@gmail.com

THE ANCHORS INSIDE

Specific subject line. Personal note showing you know the business. One specific offer with a number. A way out for the prospect. One concrete next step. One human touch at the end.

WEEK 02 COMPLETE



Fifteen prospects contacted. At least one client confirmed.

PARENT CHECK-IN

If your kid landed zero clients after fifteen outreaches, the issue is usually the message, not the rate. Read three sent messages.

Run the *work.*

Now you deliver. The agreement is signed. The first half of payment is in. The clock starts. Track your time honestly. Watch for scope creep. Defend the boundary.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

Track every minute you spend on client work. Honest tracking is non-negotiable.

Deliver against the proposal. Specifically. Don't add things the client didn't ask for.

If a scope question comes up, mark it on the Scope Creep Watch and respond within 24 hours.

WHAT WILL BE HARD

The client will ask for something extra. They are not being unreasonable. They forgot what was in the proposal. Your job is to remind them, kindly.

You will be tempted to do the extra thing for free because saying no feels harsh. Use the Scope Creep Watch script.

ARTIFACT 01 OF 02

Track every *working minute*.

Round to the nearest 15 minutes. Don't forget the small tasks: emails, calls, file uploads, revisions. Those are the hours that disappear from most freelancers' tracking and erode their effective rate.

[illegible]

ARTIFACT 02 OF 02

Catch creep *before it costs you.*

When the client asks for something not in the proposal, write it here first. Then decide: absorb, reject, or convert into a paid change request.

[illegible]

WEEK 03 COMPLETE



Work delivered. Time tracked. Scope held.

PARENT CHECK-IN

Ask your kid how many hours they've actually worked vs. how many they originally estimated. The honest answer is usually 1.5 to 2x. That gap is the lesson.

Invoice. *Collect.* Adjust.

The work is delivered or close to it. Now invoice cleanly, collect what's owed, handle any remaining revisions, and process change requests properly.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

Send the final invoice. Use the template on the next page.

Follow up on any unpaid invoices using the payment tracker.

Convert any scope creep from week 3 into properly priced change requests, or absorb the cost knowingly.

WHAT WILL BE HARD

Asking for money is uncomfortable. Send the invoice the day the work is done. The longer you wait, the harder it gets.

Some clients pay slow. That is normal. The follow-up sequence in this kit handles it.

ARTIFACT 01 OF 02

A clean *invoice template*.

Use the structure below. Send as PDF. Match the formality of the client.

Invoice		Invoice #	
		Date	
		Due Date	
FROM	TO		
DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	RATE	AMOUNT
Total Due			\$
Payment due within 14 days. Payment methods: PayPal, Venmo, bank transfer. Late invoices accrue no interest, but future projects require prepayment.			

ARTIFACT 02 OF 02

Change requests. *Payments.*

Change Request Log

Any scope expansion the client agreed to pay for. One row per request.

DATE	WHAT WAS ADDED	HOURS	PRICE	APPROVED?

Payment Tracker

Every invoice, every status. Don't trust your memory.

CLIENT	AMOUNT	SENT	DUE	PAID	NOTES

WEEK 04 COMPLETE



Invoice sent. Payment received or chase started.

PARENT CHECK-IN

If money has not arrived yet, that's normal. Ask whether your kid sent the invoice the day the work was done. Late invoices are the most common cause of late payments.

What was your time *worth*?

The whole point of the past four weeks was to find out what your time is actually worth, not what you wished it was worth. The Effective Hourly Rate calculator on the next page gives you the honest number.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

Calculate your effective hourly rate. All hours, all revenue. Honest only.

Reflect on the gap between what you charged and what you should have charged.

Decide whether to keep going, change the offer, or stop.

WHAT WILL BE HARD

The number may be lower than you expected. That's the lesson, not the failure.

You may want to round the hours down. Don't. Round up if anything.

ARTIFACT 01 OF 02

Calculate your *effective hourly rate*.

This is the number that matters. The price you charged is fiction until it's divided by the hours you actually worked.

STEP	WHAT TO CALCULATE	YOUR NUMBER
1	Total revenue earned across all clients (after platform fees)	\$
2	Total hours worked across all clients (from week 3 + 4 trackers)	
3	Hours spent on outreach, proposals, admin (week 1 + 2)	
4	Total hours invested (step 2 + step 3)	
5	Effective Hourly Rate (step 1 divided by step 4)	\$ /hr

The number on row 5 is the truth. Compare it to your stated rate. The gap is the cost of underestimating, scope creep, and unbilled hours combined.

IF THE EFFECTIVE RATE IS LESS THAN HALF YOUR STATED RATE

You either underestimated the work, lost hours to scope creep, or both. For the next engagement, double your time estimate, write tighter scope, and price accordingly. Working freelancers learn this through three or four engagements. You're starting to learn it now.

ARTIFACT 02 OF 02

An *honest* reflection.

Every prompt has an answer. None of them are "I tried my best." The number is the number. The lesson is in what you do with it.

WHAT NUMBER DID YOU HIT, AND WHAT DID YOU SET OUT TO HIT?

Revenue, clients, hours, all of it. Both the goal and the actual.

WHERE IN THE FIVE WEEKS DID THE GAP FIRST SHOW UP?

If you missed your goal, find the moment things started to drift. If you hit your goal, find the moment you knew you would.

WHAT WILL YOU DO DIFFERENTLY? ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP GOING?

Specific advice. Real decision. Either keep-going or stop is fine. The certificate is yours either way.

WEEK 05 COMPLETE



Reflection done. Decision made. Certificate ready.

PARENT CHECK-IN

Whatever the number was, sign the certificate. The certificate is for finishing the work, not for hitting a goal.

BUILD SOMETHING GOOD • PROJECT H-02

The *Freelance* Run

A real freelance practice, run for five weeks.

THIS CERTIFIES THAT

completed the full five-week arc of The Freelance Run. They defined a service, built a rate card, ran outreach, landed at least one paying client, delivered the work, tracked their time honestly, invoiced, and calculated their effective hourly rate. The work is done. The proof is in the world.

OPERATOR'S SIGNATURE_____
DATE COMPLETED

AFTER THIS PROJECT

Three *honest* directions.

There is no single right answer. Pick the one that matches what you actually want, not what looks impressive.

DIRECTION ONE

Keep going. Raise the rate.

If your effective hourly rate held up reasonably and you enjoyed the work, the next step is to take the lessons from this run and price the next engagement higher. Most working freelancers raise rates 20 to 30 percent between their first and third clients.

DIRECTION TWO

Change the offer.

If the work was fine but the offer didn't fit, redesign it. Maybe the package needs to be smaller and pricier. Maybe you need to focus on a different buyer. Maybe the deliverable should be different. Run a second cycle with a refined offer.

DIRECTION THREE

Stop. Try something else.

If the work felt wrong or the rate was unsustainable, the right call is to stop. Freelancing is not the only path. The skills you built (scope management, asking for money, time tracking) transfer to every job you'll ever have. Run a different BSG project next.

*Whatever you choose, you finished a real freelance run. Most adults never do that. **You did.***