

Estimate, quote or invoice? A one-page cheat sheet

Which document to send, what to print on it, and when it turns into the next one.

The three documents

	Estimate	Quote	Invoice
What it says	"This is what we expect it to cost"	"We will do this work for this price"	"Please pay this amount by this date"
Can the price change?	Yes, if the job turns out different	Only for agreed changes or extra work	No, it is the amount due
When you send it	Before the work, when there are unknowns	Before the work, when you can commit	After agreement (deposit) or after the work
Needs a date limit	Valid until	Valid until	Due date
Client's next step	Accept, ask questions, or decline	Accept and sign, or decline	Pay

Wording to copy

On an estimate

This is an estimate based on what we could see on [date]. The final price may change if [named unknowns, e.g. the condition of the boards under the carpet] differs from what we expect. We will tell you before doing any work that changes the price.

On a quote

This quote is a fixed price for the work listed above and holds until [date]. Not included: [exclusions]. Changes you ask for will be priced and agreed in writing before we do them.

On an invoice

Invoice for [the work] as agreed in quote [number] on [date]. Payment due by [date].

Handover checklist

- ☐ Estimate or quote accepted in writing (signature, email or online acceptance)
- ☐ Any changes since then agreed in writing, with their prices
- ☐ Invoice uses the same client details, items and tax as the accepted document
- ☐ Invoice references the estimate or quote number
- ☐ Copies of all three kept with the job's records

The full guide: fynl.io/blog/estimate-vs-quote-vs-invoice/

Free estimate maker: fynl.io/free-estimate-maker