What You Actually Own

A checklist for your best short — from the course From Shorts to Feature

You own the copyright to what you create. But owning it and being able to sell it are different things. A buyer will ask three questions: what did you already hand over, what's in it that isn't yours, and can you prove it's yours? Use this checklist to find out.

Title of the short: _____

Date first posted: _____

Where it's posted (platforms): _____

Part 1 — Who made it

☐ I created it myself (wrote, shot, and edited it).

☐ Other people contributed (names and roles listed below).

☐ Every contributor has signed an agreement saying who owns what (see Tool 3).

☐ I have the original source files (raw footage, project files) saved in a folder I control.

Contributors:

Name	Role	Signed agreement?

Part 2 — What I licensed to the platforms

☐ I know that posting gives each platform a broad license to my video, and that I still own the copyright.

☐ I've read the current terms of every platform I post on, and noted the date below.

Platform	Date posted	Terms last read

Part 3 — Music and sound

☐ Every song or sound in the short is original, or licensed for film use (sync license for the composition and master license for the recording).

☐ I did not rely on a trending sound or a platform's music library for anything I might pitch or submit.

☐ I saved a clean version of the video without trending audio.

Track / sound	Source (original, library, trending, other)	Covers film use? (Y / N / Unsure)

Part 4 — People

☐ I listed every identifiable person who appears or is heard, including people in the background.

☐ Each one has signed an appearance release (Tool 2), or I plan to get it signed.

☐ For anyone under 18, a parent or guardian has signed.

Person	Release signed? (Y / N)	Minor? (Y / N)

Part 5 — Places, logos, and other people's work

☐ I have a location release for any private property or business I filmed in.

☐ I checked for prominent logos, brand names, artwork, murals, and posters in the frame.

☐ I didn't use anyone else's footage, images, or clips without permission.

Part 6 — AI tools (if you used any)

☐ I listed every AI tool I used and what I used it for.

☐ I checked each tool's terms for commercial use and ownership of the output.

☐ Any real person's voice or likeness that I recreated or altered was used with their written consent.

AI tool	Used for (voice, footage, character, music)	Terms checked (date)

Part 7 — Proof

☐ I keep releases, licenses, and agreements together in one folder for this short.

☐ I filled out a one-page log for this short (Tool 4).

☐ The short is registered with a copyright office (U.S. Copyright Office registration number and date below), or I have a plan to register it.

Registration number / date, or plan: _____

Your result

Count the boxes you could not check. These are guidelines, not rules:

- No gaps, or only small ones: this short is ready to pitch or submit.
- Gaps in music, people, or ownership: fix these first. They are what stop a buyer.
- Many gaps: treat this one as content, and use the checklist before you shoot the next one.

My result: _____

Educational use only. This checklist is not legal advice, and rules vary by country and by situation. For anything you plan to sign, pitch, or sell, talk to an entertainment attorney.