

Release Forms

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On a professional production, obtaining proper written permissions is the responsibility of the producer and can prevent complicated problems down the line in the event the project is licensed for broadcast or distribution.

The four most common release forms used in documentary productions are:

- *Appearance Release*, for non-actors
- *Minor Appearance Release*, for children, it must be signed by a parent or legal guardian
- *Materials Release*, for obtaining permission from the owner or license holder to use photographs, audio, video, film or other media which may be copyrighted or owned by others
- *Location Release*, for use when you are filming on property you do not own

A version of the forms listed above may be download from <https://kino-eye.com/documents/>. These are the forms that I use in my productions and were written for me by an experienced entertainment attorney with the goal of using the fewest number of words possible, so you'll find they are more concise than many other forms you'll find on web.

In any professional production, a good idea to establish a relationship with a qualified and reputable entertainment attorney that understands documentary. If you're working with professional actors you'll probably need a special actor/model release form which is beyond the scope of this class.

Edit these forms as necessary for your particular production and requirements. Releases are important because some film festivals, most funding bodies, and all broadcasters and distributors will require them as part of the chain of title, a series of documents that establish the producer's right to put the components in their film or video. For locations, it's important to know who actually owns the building or land you want to film on and also to find out who the current occupier is. For example, if you are filming in a rented house you should get permission from the landlord as well as the tenant who is renting the property.

Some books I recommend in order to become more familiar with legal issues related to the production of film/video include:

The Pocket Lawyer for Filmmakers: A Legal Toolkit for Independent Producers by Thomas A. Crowell, [Amazon link](#)

The Independent Film Producer's Survival Guide: A Business and Legal Sourcebook by Gunnar Erickson, Mark Halloran, and Harris Tulchin, [Amazon link](#)

Archival Storytelling: A Filmmaker's Guide to Finding, Using, and Licensing Third-Party Visuals and Music by Sheila Curran Bernard and Kenn Rabin, [Amazon link](#)

Please be advised that this document by no means constitutes any form of legal opinion or advice, always consult an experienced entertainment attorney when you have legal questions regarding your production and distribution activities.