



Photography/Video Releases Best Practices “Do’s and Don’ts”

Do’s:

- Do have signed agreements/contracts with all photographers and videographers. Work-for-hire agreements with vendors need to be documented in writing.
- Do obtain a written release from the subject(s) appearing in the photo or video.
- Do remember that NYU students, faculty, and staff do not sign universal releases when they begin their association with NYU.
- Do ensure the release has the correct wording describing the type of project. e.g. “promotional,” “advertising,” etc.
- Do add a job description to each release. e.g. “Marketing Photos for 2017 Presidential Inauguration.”
- Do file releases as accurately to identify participants when needed. The NYU Photo Bureau can help archive releases as requested.
- Do respect the wishes of the subjects. Even if a release was signed, remove photo(s) or video(s) from circulation upon the subject’s request.
- Do keep records of email conversations with the subject; even if a release was signed.
- Do take wide shots without focusing on individual subjects if releases cannot be distributed due to unforeseen circumstances.
- Do have a parent or guardian sign a release form if the subject is under 18 years of age. A release form signed by an individual under the age of 18 is not legally binding.

Don’ts:

- Don’t assume oral agreements are binding with subjects or vendors.
- Don’t post media on any NYU platform, including social media, without ensuring NYU has the necessary rights. Rights are secured by a formal written release signed by subjects appearing in the media. Rights must also be obtained from the photographer/videographer when the material is being used for paid advertising.
- Releases from subjects may not ultimately be required for certain project types such as news reporting. However, interpretation can get tricky so it’s better to have a signed release when in doubt.
- Don’t assume one signed release covers all forms of usage. The wording of a release matters. Usage is not unlimited unless clearly stated in the release. For example, if someone signs a release that gives permission to use their photo only in a brochure, that same release does not give permission to print their photo on a magazine cover or upload to social media
- While the wording in the agreement may be considered legally binding, as a courtesy, NYU students, faculty, and staff should be informed as to how their image and likeness is being used. Ultimately their wishes must be respected.