A proforma invoice is a document you send to a buyer before a sale is complete. It sets out what you expect to provide, how much it is likely to cost, and the proposed payment and delivery terms. Think of it as a written offer in invoice form: it helps both sides agree on the details before you commit to the transaction.

If you have ever been asked for an invoice before work begins, goods ship, or a purchase order is approved, a proforma invoice may be the document the buyer needs. It is sometimes called a **buyer approval invoice** because the customer can use it to review the price and request approval internally before the sale happens.

A proforma invoice is usually not a request for final payment and, by itself, is generally not proof that a sale has been completed. The rules and tax treatment can vary by country and transaction, so check local requirements if you are unsure. Once the sale is confirmed or the work is completed, you may need to issue a final invoice with the actual charges.

What Is a Proforma Invoice Used For?

The main purpose is to describe a planned transaction clearly before it is finalized. A freelancer might send one before starting a large project. A supplier might send one before shipping goods internationally. A small business might provide one so a customer can get budget approval or arrange payment.

In each case, the proforma invoice gives the buyer something specific to review—not just a verbal estimate. It can show the products or services, quantities, prices, taxes or estimated charges, delivery details, and payment terms. That makes it easier for the buyer to confirm the scope and for you to catch misunderstandings before they become expensive.

Common reasons to send one

- **Get buyer approval:** Give a customer a document they can share with a manager, finance team, or purchasing department.
- **Confirm the planned sale:** Record the items, quantities, and prices both parties are discussing.
- **Support a purchase order:** Provide the information a buyer needs to create or approve a purchase order.
- **Prepare for international shipping:** Share a description and estimated value of goods before dispatch. Customs requirements differ, so confirm which documents are needed.
- **Request an advance payment:** State the deposit or prepayment terms for a job or order that has not yet been completed.
- **Reduce scope disputes:** Put proposed deliverables, exclusions, or assumptions in writing before work starts.

In short, a proforma invoice can help document a **sale before it happens**. It is useful when everyone needs to agree on the plan first.

Proforma Invoice vs. Final Invoice

The two documents can look similar, but they serve different purposes. A proforma invoice describes a proposed transaction. A final invoice records the actual transaction and tells the buyer what they owe, subject to the applicable rules and your agreement.



Detail Proforma invoice Final invoice When it is sent Before the sale is confirmed, goods are shipped, or work is completed After the sale or billable work has taken place, according to your process What it communicates Proposed items, prices, and terms Actual amounts charged and payment requested Does it usually request final payment? Not necessarily; it may describe a deposit or proposed payment arrangement Yes, it normally states the amount due and how to pay Can details change? Yes. The buyer and seller may revise the proposal before the sale Corrections should follow your normal invoicing and accounting process

Do not assume that putting the word “proforma” on a document automatically determines its tax or legal status. If a buyer asks for a tax invoice, or if you are unsure which document applies, check the rules for your location and transaction.

What to Put on a Proforma Invoice

I remember a project where made a mistake that cost them thousands.. A useful proforma invoice is clear enough for someone who was not part of your conversation to understand the offer. The following fields cover the basics.

From

Add your business or personal trading name, address, and contact details. Include any business registration or tax details required in your location. If you are a contractor or solo consultant, use the name and contact information your client recognizes.

Bill to

Enter the buyer’s legal or business name and billing address. If the goods or services are for a different person, site, or department, you can include a separate delivery or “ship to” address. Confirm the spelling and billing details with the customer—small errors can slow down approval.

Document reference and date

Give the document a clear label such as “Proforma Invoice” and https://the-invoice-generator.net add its issue date. You can also include a unique reference number, project name, or purchase-order number if the

buyer has provided one. Keep references organized, but do not present a proforma reference as though it were a final invoice number if your accounting process distinguishes between them.

Line items

List each product or service separately. Include a useful description, quantity, unit price, and line total. For services, describe the work or milestone clearly—for example, “Website design, discovery and initial mock-ups” is more informative than “Services.” Add any shipping, discounts, or estimated taxes as separate lines where appropriate.

Terms and delivery details

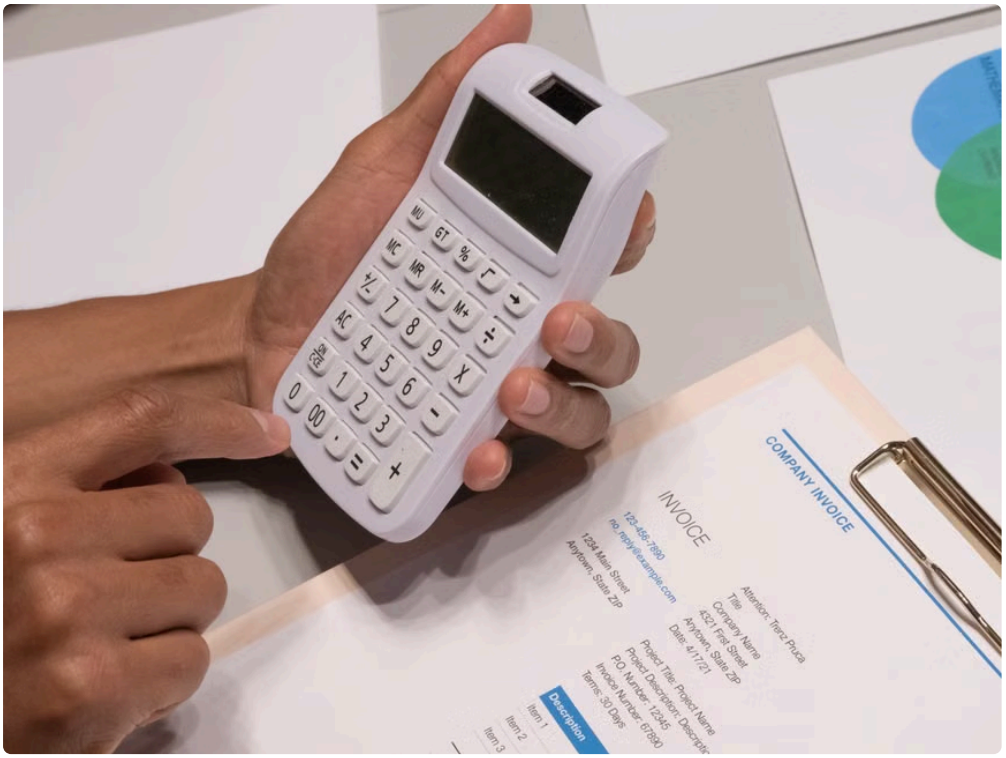
State what the buyer is being asked to approve and what happens next. Include proposed delivery or start dates, the deposit amount if there is one, and any conditions that could change the estimate. If the price is valid only for a limited time, give the buyer a specific expiration date. Avoid wording that implies a firm guarantee if important costs or quantities are still unknown.

Payment Terms and Due Date Logic

Payment terms are worth checking carefully. “Net 30” usually means payment is due 30 calendar days after the date specified in the terms—often the invoice date, but not always. If your terms say Net 30 from the document date, and the date is April 1, the due date is generally May 1. If the document is dated May 1, 30 days later is May 31. Always verify the calendar calculation and state the starting point clearly.

Ask yourself this: for a proforma invoice, you might write “deposit due before production” or “payment due within 30 days of final invoice,” depending on the arrangement. Do not accidentally create confusion by giving a proforma invoice a payment due date that conflicts with your agreement. If the buyer needs to pay before delivery, say exactly what amount is due, when it is due, and what it covers.

Also be specific about the currency. If your customer and your business operate in different countries, write the currency code or name rather than relying on a symbol that could mean more than one thing. Exactly.. Confirm who is responsible for bank fees, shipping, duties, or other additional charges when those apply.



How to Create One Quickly

1. **Confirm the buyer's details.** Ask for the billing name, address, and any required purchase-order reference.
2. **Describe the proposed sale.** Add the products or services, quantities, prices, and any known additional costs.
3. **Set the terms.** Explain the deposit or payment arrangement, delivery expectations, and the period for which the offer is valid.
4. **Review the dates and totals.** Check arithmetic, tax treatment, currency, and the due-date calculation.
5. **Send a clearly labeled copy.** Make sure it says "Proforma Invoice" so the buyer understands it is a proposal, not a final invoice.
6. **Issue the final invoice when appropriate.** After the sale or billable work is confirmed, create the correct final document and reconcile it with any payment already received.

Using a Proforma Invoice Generator

A **proforma invoice generator** can save time when you need a clean document without rebuilding a template for every buyer. For a small business, useful features are usually simple: fields for sender and buyer details, flexible line items, accurate totals, and a quick way to export a PDF.

For example, the-invoice-generator.net is one option to consider if you want to create an invoice-style document in a browser. Look for a workflow that lets you fill in the important fields, review the result, and use **Download PDF** without being forced to create an account first. Fast PDF export is particularly handy when a buyer needs a document for approval right away.

It is also worth checking what happens to your information. In-browser privacy and local drafts can be useful: a draft stored on your own device may let you return to your work without sending the details to an account-based service. But "saved in the browser" is not the same as a permanent backup. Clearing

browser data, changing devices, or using private browsing can remove a local draft. Download a copy you can find later, and avoid entering sensitive information unless you understand how the tool handles it.

If you use a tool that offers account access, such as **Continue with Google**, weigh the convenience against whether you actually need an account. Check what data is requested and whether signup is required to save or export your document. Google Analytics may be used by a website to measure visits and usage; its presence does not, on its own, tell you how invoice details are stored. Read the tool's privacy information for specifics rather than assuming.

Some products also offer a **Save & Send** workflow for keeping a copy and sharing it with a customer. Before sending, preview the PDF and confirm the recipient, line items, terms, and totals. If you are comparing paid options, look for plain pricing rather than vague feature tiers. One example price is: **Pro: $39 a year ($3.25 a month, 35% off) or $5 a month. US dollars, plus tax where it applies. Cancel any time.** Confirm the current price and what the plan includes before you subscribe.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- **Calling it a final invoice:** Label the document clearly as a proforma invoice so the buyer knows it describes a proposed transaction.
- **Leaving out key details:** A vague line item or missing buyer address can create delays during approval.
- **Using unclear payment terms:** Write what "Net 30" is counted from and check that the due date matches.
- **Forgetting currency or extra charges:** Make taxes, shipping, discounts, and other expected costs visible.
- **Treating a local draft as a backup:** Export or download a copy if you need to keep a reliable record.
- **Reusing document references carelessly:** Keep references organized and check that any final invoice number is unique in your own records.

Is a Proforma Invoice Right for You?

If your buyer needs to approve a purchase before you begin work, ship goods, or finalize an order, a proforma invoice is often a practical way to show the proposed deal in writing. It gives both sides a chance to check the scope, price, delivery plan, and payment terms before the sale is complete.

Keep the document clearly labeled, fill in the From and Bill to details, describe the line items, and make the terms understandable. Check the due-date math—especially when you write Net 30—and save a copy of what you send. With those basics covered, a proforma invoice can make buyer approval smoother and help you move from a proposed sale to a confirmed one with fewer surprises.