

Don't sign **something insane.**

10 contract clauses every independent trainer and consultant should read carefully before you sign.

For freelancers, trainers, MVPs, and data pros.

Swipe through

What caught me off guard

When I started consulting, I assumed the hard part would be the work itself.

The work I knew how to keep getting better at. What caught me off guard was everything that happens before the work starts: the contract, the terms, and the paragraphs that decide who carries the risk when a project goes sideways.

Quick disclaimer: I am not an attorney, and this is not legal advice. These are simply business terms I have learned to slow down on.

01

CLAUSE

Scope of work

What exactly am I delivering?

Training is rarely the whole answer. Materials, sample files, office hours, recordings, post-session support, setup, planning calls. When the scope is vague, unstated work has a way of becoming your problem.

02

CLAUSE

Payment terms

When do I actually get paid?

Net 15, Net 30, Net 60 are not just accounting phrases. Neither is "upon client payment" or "after final approval." Look for a deposit, a kill fee, separate expense reimbursement, and payment tied to delivery, not someone else's sign-off.

03

CLAUSE

Cancellation terms

If they cancel, what happens? If I cancel?

What I am checking for is balance. Holding a date has value. Custom materials get built, travel gets booked, prep time gets blocked. The cost is real even if the session never runs.

04

CLAUSE

Liquidated damages

Could I owe far more than I'm paid?

I am cautious about any penalty that dwarfs the fee. If a day rate could trigger many times that amount, I want to know exactly what sets it off. Illness? A canceled flight? A software outage? Those details matter.

05

CLAUSE

Travel and expenses

Who pays for travel, and how?

Lowest-cost itineraries with no regard for schedule or reliability are shortsighted. Safe, close lodging is not luxury, it is risk management. Flights, hotels, meals, bag fees, per diems: the agreement should say so clearly.

06

CLAUSE

Intellectual property

What can I still use after the project ends?

So much of a trainer's value is what they have already built. There is a big difference between licensing materials for one workshop and signing them over outright. A dataset built for one class may become a webinar, a course, even a book.

07

CLAUSE

Non-compete and non-solicit

Who am I barred from working with later?

Non-solicit is often fair: don't go around the partner who introduced you. A broad non-compete is different. In analytics training the market is not infinite. I cannot sign away my ability to keep working in my own field.

08

CLAUSE

Indemnification

Does the risk match my actual role?

Teaching a Python class is not the same as certifying financial statements. I pause when the language makes me responsible for broad business losses, third-party claims, or platform problems far beyond what I actually do.

Two more to check before you sign

09 Insurance requirements

Required coverage can change the economics of a job. Read it before you sign. Don't agree to carry insurance you don't actually have.

10 Who you're signing as

You, your LLC, or somehow both? Make sure the contract and the signature block match the actual business relationship before you put your name on it.

The mindset, not the verdict

I stopped asking "is this whole thing good or bad?" and started sorting each term into a bucket:

- **Looks fine**

The term matches the work.

- **Needs clarification**

Probably fine, but get the details in writing.

- **Needs negotiation**

The risk feels too high for the fee or scope.

- **Needs legal review**

Broad, unclear, or serious enough to get help.

- **Price it in**

Acceptable, but only if the fee reflects it.

Knowing the material cold is what gets you hired.

Reading the terms is what keeps the work sustainable.

Sometimes the right move is to sign. Sometimes it is to ask for clarification. Sometimes it is to negotiate. And sometimes the best business decision is to walk away.

Need practical analytics training, or trying to make your own training work more sustainable?

Let's connect.