FOB FINANCE OPS BRIEF

A FREE CHECKLIST FOR FREELANCERS AND SMALL BUSINESSES

The Freelancer Invoicing & Payments Starter Kit

Invoice essentials, getting paid internationally, and free tool picks — drawn from official pricing and tax pages, not from invented reviews or statistics.

1. Invoice essentials
What to agree in writing before you design the invoice, and the particulars a later bookkeeper will need to see on it.

2. Getting paid internationally
Currency, VAT treatment, US tax forms, and a way to compare multi-currency accounts from official fee pages.

3. Free tool picks
What Invoice Ninja's free-forever plan actually includes, how that differs from a 30-day trial, and when systeme.io is a different job.

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Prices and plan limits cited in this kit were taken from official public pages checked on 25 November 2026 and can change. Re-check the live pages before you buy or subscribe.

How to use this kit

This is a working checklist, not a ranked "best of" list and not a substitute for an accountant. Tick the items that apply to the engagement in front of you. When a figure is quoted, it is a vendor-published price or limit, dated 25 November 2026. If the live page has moved on, trust the live page.

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1 Invoice essentials

A clean invoice cannot fix an unclear agreement. Settle the commercial terms in writing before you open the invoicing tool, then put enough particulars on the PDF that the client's accounts-payable file and your own books can both use it.

Agree in writing before the work starts

- [ ] Scope of work or deliverables, and how they are accepted.
- [ ] The fee and the currency of the fee (for example, USD 2,000, not "the shekel equivalent of $2,000").
- [ ] Who bears exchange-rate movements between the invoice date and the payment date.
- [ ] Who pays bank or transfer fees on each side.
- [ ] The invoicing cycle and payment terms (for example, 14 or 30 days from an approved invoice).
- [ ] Your legal name, address, and tax status, which the client may need for their own file.

Put the right particulars on the invoice

- [ ] A unique invoice number and the invoice date.
- [ ] Your legal name, address, and any VAT or tax identification number you are required to show.
- [ ] The client's legal name, address, and, where relevant, their VAT number.
- [ ] A clear description of the services, and the period they cover.
- [ ] The amount, the currency, and any discounts or deposits already applied.
- [ ] Payment terms and how the client should pay (account details or a payment link).
- [ ] The VAT or sales-tax treatment, written in plain language (for example, "VAT at 0%" with a short reason, or "VAT not charged — confirm the rule that applies").

If you work in the EU or bill EU clients, the EU's Your Europe VAT rules and rates pages are the official starting point. Requirements differ by member state.

Invoicing software helps with numbering, currency labels, and a client portal. It does not decide whether a zero rate is allowed. Invoice Ninja's hosted plans, including the Free plan, list automatic currency conversions and a client payment portal on the pricing page checked on 25 November 2026.

2 Getting paid internationally

The questions that delay payment sit underneath the PDF: the invoice currency, who bears transfer fees and exchange-rate movements, whether you charge VAT, which tax form a US client will ask you to sign, and where the money should land.

Decide the VAT or sales-tax treatment — carefully

A “foreign client” is not automatically a zero-rated sale. Write the treatment on the invoice so that a bookkeeper who was not on the call can understand it a year later.

If you are registered for VAT in Israel. The starting point is the Value Added Tax Law, 5736-1975, section 30, which lists transactions taxed at a zero rate. Section 30(a)(5) addresses certain services provided to a foreign resident, subject to conditions and exceptions in the law and in the regulations. In broad terms, this provision is used when the client is a foreign resident, the service is supplied to that client, and the facts do not fall into an exception — for example, where the service is also provided to an Israeli resident, or where the foreign resident has a business or activity in Israel. Those conditions are legal tests. Confirm the treatment with an Israeli accountant before you issue a tax invoice at 0%. If the zero rate applies, the invoice is still a tax invoice; it should show VAT at 0% and the required particulars, and the sale is still reported in the VAT return as a zero-rated supply.

If you are a VAT-registered business in the EU billing a business client in another EU country, the EU’s Your Europe page on cross-border VAT explains that business-to-business services are often subject to the reverse-charge mechanism: you may invoice without charging VAT, and the client accounts for it. There are important exceptions. Include both parties’ VAT numbers where required.

If the client is in the United States. US sales tax is a state-level subject and is usually the client’s question for a remote service performed outside the United States. Do not assume, and do not invent, a federal “no sales tax on services” rule. Ask the client what they need on the invoice, and ask your own adviser whether any tax applies in your country of residence. Billing in US dollars does not, by itself, remove a tax obligation in your country of residence.

Expect tax forms when the client is in the United States

A US company that pays a non-US freelancer will often ask for Form W-8BEN (individuals) or W-8BEN-E (entities) before the first payment. The IRS publishes both: About Form W-8BEN and About Form W-8BEN-E. The IRS says the place where personal services are performed generally determines the source of the income, regardless of where the contract was made or where payment is made. Foreign-source income paid to a nonresident is normally not subject to US withholding in the situations the IRS describes. If you perform part of the work while physically in the United States, the analysis changes. Fill the form truthfully, keep a copy, and do not treat a signed W-8 as tax advice.

Tell the client how to pay you

Name a payment method that you have already opened and tested. The usual options are:

- ☐ A local bank transfer in the invoice currency, if you have account details in that currency.
- ☐ An international wire (often SWIFT) to your home-currency account, which can involve intermediary-bank fees and a conversion you do not control.
- ☐ A multi-currency account or money-transfer provider that gives you local receiving details in USD, EUR, or GBP.
- ☐ A “Pay now” button, only after you confirm the gateway accepts the currency you billed in and can pay out to a country and currency you can actually use.

Fees, payout times, and eligibility vary by country and corridor. Compare the live fee pages. You do not necessarily need a US company or a traditional US bank account to receive USD; some multi-currency providers publish local receiving details. That is not the same as US tax residency or a deposit-insured US bank account.

Multi-currency accounts, from official pages (25 November 2026)

Airwallex, Wise, and Payoneer all publish a way to receive, hold, convert, and pay out in several currencies. They are not interchangeable, and they do not publish one global fee for every customer. Eligibility comes first: confirm that the provider accepts customers in your country. Airwallex publishes a dedicated Israel pricing page; Wise notes that customers in several countries, including Israel, can hold account details. Those are statements of availability, not an application result. This table is not a ranked recommendation and does not invent typical payout times or average savings.

Provider	Account / setup	Receiving (published examples)	Conversion / other published fees
Wise Business	Registering is free. Account details in 22 currencies: a one-time 31 USD fee.	Domestic (non-Swift / non-wire) receipts in AUD, CAD, EUR, GBP, HUF, NZD, PHP, SGD, and USD: free. USD wire/Swift: 6.11 USD per payment (GBP Swift 2.16 GBP; EUR Swift 2.39 EUR).	Converting and sending listed from 0.23%, varying by currency. Wise states it does not inflate the exchange rate. Holding money is listed as free.
Airwallex Explore	$0 per user per month, including up to 10 free Spend users. Grow is $12 per Spend user per month.	Collect and hold in 20+ currencies; free batch transfers to 120+ countries (vendor-stated). Inbound receiving fees are on the schedule for your country of registration.	Convert at 0.5% above interbank for major currencies and 1.0% for all other currencies. SWIFT transfers listed at $15–$25 (SHA and OUR). Same headline FX margins and SWIFT range appear on the Israel pricing page.
Payoneer	Mostly transaction-based, not a monthly subscription. An annual account fee of 29.95 USD applies if the account receives less than 6,000 USD or equivalent in any 12 consecutive months (not charged in the first year for paid annual plans).	From another Payoneer balance: free. Receiving account in your local currency: free. In a currency that is not your local currency: 1%, minimum 1.00 USD or equivalent. A payer using a credit card: up to 3.99% + 0.49 USD.	Moving funds between Payoneer balances: 0.50%. Withdrawal to a bank in the same country, in local currency, in a published list of countries: 1.50 USD in the USD example given. Withdrawal with a conversion: 1.2%–4%, and in some countries a minimum of up to 20.00 USD may apply.

Sources: Wise Business pricing and receive-fees pages, Airwallex plans and pricing (and the Israel page), and Payoneer pricing (that page states it was last updated on 1 January 2026). All checked on 25 November 2026.

Price one real invoice, then choose

- [ ] Confirm eligibility in your country, and which legal entity of the provider you would contract with.
- [ ] Write down the receiving fee for the method your client will actually use (local ACH vs wire vs card).
- [ ] Write down the conversion fee and the rate if you will not spend or hold that currency.
- [ ] Write down the withdrawal fee to your own bank.
- [ ] Add account fees that apply even when you are idle (Wise's one-time 31 USD setup; Payoneer's 29.95 USD annual fee below the 6,000 USD threshold; Airwallex's $0 Explore plan versus $12 per Spend user on Grow if you will use cards and expenses).
- [ ] Only then compare. A 0% receiving fee can be offset by a wider conversion margin or a payout fee.

Keep a file that will make sense later

For each international client, keep in one place:

- [ ] The signed agreement and any change orders.
- [ ] Every invoice, including the VAT treatment you applied.
- [ ] Tax forms you signed (for example a W-8BEN) and the date you sent them.
- [ ] Proof of payment, with the amount received, the currency, the exchange rate you booked, and the fees deducted.
- [ ] Any advice you relied on for the VAT treatment.

If you report in a different currency from the invoice — for example, you bill in US dollars and file accounts in shekels — record the rate and its source on the day your accountant tells you to use. A later accountant or auditor will ask for that file, not for the name of the app.

3 Free tool picks

Freelancers look for free invoicing software because the first job is to send a clear bill and get paid, not to subscribe to a full accounting suite. "Free" is used in two very different ways on vendor websites. Separate three offers before you open an account:

- [ ] A free-forever plan with a published cap, such as a limit on clients or documents.
- [ ] A time-limited trial of a paid product, after which you pay a monthly or annual fee.
- [ ] A self-hosted product that has no subscription but requires you to run the software yourself.

Only the first of those is free invoicing software in the everyday sense. A trial is useful, but it is a delayed paid plan. Payment processing is a separate bill in every case: a $0 software plan does not mean a $0 cost to collect the money.

Invoice Ninja's hosted Free plan

According to Invoice Ninja's pricing page, checked on 25 November 2026, the hosted Free plan is priced at $0 and is described as free forever. The published client cap is up to 5 clients, with unlimited invoicing. Unlimited invoicing on a five-client cap means you can bill the same clients as often as you need; it does not mean an unlimited client list. Invoice Ninja also states that it publishes native apps for macOS, Windows, Linux, iOS, and Android, and that the same plan limits apply on every device.

The same page lists these items on Free:

- [ ] Four invoice templates (Bold, Clean, Modern, and Plain).
- [ ] A logo on invoices, a real-time invoice PDF preview, and a client invoice and payment portal.
- [ ] Online payments; deposits and partial payments; recurring invoices and auto-billing.
- [ ] Products and inventory; vendors and expenses; projects and billable time, including Kanban boards.
- [ ] Automatic currency conversions — a software feature for preparing the invoice, not a substitute for a multi-currency account or a VAT decision.

Hosted plan	Published price (25 November 2026)	Client cap
Free	$0, described as free forever	Up to 5 clients, unlimited invoicing
Ninja Pro	$14 per month when billed monthly, or $140 when billed annually (the page describes annual billing as a single yearly payment that includes two months free; equivalent, it says, to $11.67 per month)	Unlimited clients and invoices
Enterprise	From $18 per month when billed monthly; the FAQ says $18 per month for 1–2 users, up to $300 per month for 51–100 users. Confirm the live figure for the number of users you need.	Unlimited clients
Premium	From $280 per year	Unlimited clients

Paid plans are described as carrying a 30-day money-back promise; read the live wording on the day you subscribe. Pro is the first plan on which Invoice Ninja lists unlimited clients, all 11 invoice templates, removal of "Created by Invoice Ninja," late-payment reminder emails, reports, API access, and a branded URL in the form YourSite.invoicing.co. Additional account users (up to 100), per-user permissions, bank account sync, a branded portal on your own domain, and e-invoicing / PEPPOL access are listed on Enterprise, not on Free or Pro. Invoice Ninja says you connect a payment gateway such as Stripe, PayPal, Square, or GoCardless; gateway fees are set by those processors, not by the plan table.

Visit Invoice Ninja to create an account (affiliate link). Or read the live pricing page first, and start from the plan that matches your client count. A longer walkthrough is in Invoice Ninja plans, explained from the pricing page.

How this differs from FreshBooks' published model

FreshBooks is invoicing and accounting software in the same broad category, but it does not publish a free-forever plan on its pricing page. FreshBooks' help centre states that accounts start on a free 30-day trial. After that, the regular USD prices on the pricing page and the 2026 price-change FAQ, checked on 25 November 2026, are:

Plan	Regular monthly USD price	Client cap
Lite	$23 per month	5 clients
Plus	$43 per month	50 clients

Plan	Regular monthly USD price	Client cap
Premium	$70 per month	Unlimited clients

Yearly billing is described as a 10% discount. The pricing page sometimes shows a short promotional rate; promotions expire. Compare plans on the regular prices, then look at whatever offer is on the live page on the day you subscribe. FreshBooks also states a 30-day money-back guarantee. Lite and Invoice Ninja's Free plan share a five-client cap, but they are not the same offer: one is $0 for as long as the vendor keeps the plan, the other is a paid plan (after a trial). FreshBooks lists estimates on Lite, and lists proposals, retainers, and financial reports from Plus. Team members are listed as an add-on at $11 per user per month on USD plans, with two included on Premium. FreshBooks lists cards, ACH, Apple Pay, Google Pay, and Buy Now, Pay Later on its pricing page, with published U.S. card fees in its 2026 FAQ. Fees outside the United States can be different.

A straightforward way to choose a free or low-cost invoicing setup

- [ ] Count billable clients, including anyone you invoice even occasionally. A five-client cap is tight if you take on short projects throughout the year. At five or fewer, Invoice Ninja's Free plan is the one the vendor tells you to measure first. Above five, Pro is the first published plan that removes the cap.
- [ ] List the documents you already send. Invoices and recurring invoices are listed on Invoice Ninja's Free plan. Proposals and retainers are listed on FreshBooks from Plus, not on Invoice Ninja's published Free list.
- [ ] Decide how clients will pay you. If they will pay by bank transfer, you may only need a clean PDF. If they will pay by card, confirm which gateways the vendor lists for your country, and add the processor's fees to your price list.
- [ ] Check who needs a login. Invoice Ninja lists additional account users on Enterprise, not on Free or Pro. FreshBooks lists team members as an add-on at $11 per user per month on USD plans, with two included on Premium.
- [ ] Only then look at a promotion or at annual billing. A discount does not change the year-two price. If you are not sure you will stay, monthly is the more reversible choice.

systeme.io — a different job, with its own free plan

If you also sell a course, a coaching offer, or another digital product, or you want email funnels and a simple landing-page builder, that is a different job from invoicing. systeme.io is an all-in-one platform for sales funnels, email, websites and blogs, online courses, and an affiliate program you can run yourself. It is not invoicing or accounting software, and it should not be compared with Invoice Ninja or FreshBooks as if they did the same job.

systeme.io's pricing FAQ, which the company last updated in April 2026 and which still appeared on the pricing page on 25 November 2026, says plans are based primarily on contact limits. The FAQ says the free plan never expires and does not require a credit card.

Plan	Published monthly price	Contacts	Sales funnels	Courses
Free	$0	2,000	3	1
Startup	$17 per month	5,000	10	5
Webinar	$47 per month	10,000	50	20
Unlimited	$97 per month	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited

The same FAQ states that all four plans include unlimited email sends, unlimited sub-accounts, 0% transaction fees from systeme.io, and the same set of core tools. "0% transaction fees" means systeme.io does not add its own cut on top of a sale; payment processors still charge their own fees. Alongside the caps above, the free plan list includes 1 blog, 1 affiliate program, 1 custom domain, 1 automation rule, 1 email campaign, and a limit of 500 students. Other rows in the marketing comparison can be easy to misread: systeme.io also says "unlimited students" among the items all plans include, while the same FAQ gives the free plan a 500-student cap. If a limit decides the purchase for you, confirm it on the live grid. Webinar is the plan the FAQ says adds evergreen webinars, which are not part of the lower plans. The pricing page also advertises annual billing with a "2 months free" badge. If you are not sure the product fits, the free plan or monthly billing is the more reversible way to find out.

Visit systeme.io to create an account (affiliate link). Or read the live pricing page first, and start from the plan that matches your contact count and other caps. A longer walkthrough is in systeme.io plans, explained from the pricing page.

Further reading on Finance Ops Brief

This kit is a checklist. The full arguments, caveats, and source lists are in these English-language guides:

- Free invoicing software for freelancers in 2026
- How to invoice international clients from Israel — and from anywhere else
- Airwallex vs Wise vs Payoneer: multi-currency business accounts, from the official fee pages (no affiliate links)
- Invoice Ninja vs FreshBooks: official prices, client caps, and how to choose
- Invoice Ninja plans, explained from the pricing page
- systeme.io plans, explained from the pricing page
- How to build a 13-week cash flow forecast

Sources

- Invoice Ninja, Pricing (checked 25 November 2026)
- Invoice Ninja, Pricing update January 1, 2026
- FreshBooks, Pricing (checked 25 November 2026)
- FreshBooks, 2026 FAQ: price change
- systeme.io, Pricing (checked 25 November 2026; the FAQ on that page states it was last updated in April 2026)
- Wise, Business pricing and fees for getting paid (checked 25 November 2026)
- Airwallex, Plans and pricing and Pricing and fees (Israel) (checked 25 November 2026)
- Payoneer, Pricing (checked 25 November 2026; the page states it was last updated on 1 January 2026)
- Value Added Tax Law, 5736-1975, section 30 (including section 30(a)(5)), official Hebrew text via Nevo (nevo.co.il). This kit does not reproduce the statutory text.
- European Union, Your Europe: VAT rules and rates and Cross-border VAT
- IRS, About Form W-8BEN, About Form W-8BEN-E, Source of income – personal service income, and Foreign source income

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