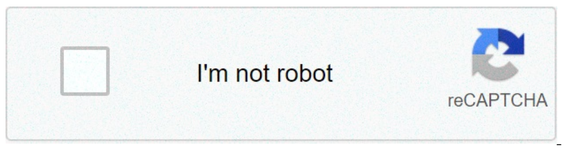

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Are prisoners required to work

If you're doing real work for a person or a firm, you should get paid real money, under a real agreement. Seems simple, but too many freelancers and creatives don't require their clients to sign contracts. Here's why you should break the habit of being nice and agreeable.Mike Monteiro, design director at Mule Design, provides a few solid, unbendable rules about contracts—namely, don't start work without one. For even the greenest of freelancers, he recommends hiring an actual lawyer to do actual work for you, so you can do actual work for others:Get a lawyer. By and large the first thing I hear when someone tells me they're having a problem getting paid and I tell them to hire a lawyer is, "That's too expensive." My lawyer makes me money. He makes sure my contracts are strong and helps me negotiate with confidence. Having him as an advisor makes me confident enough in what I'm doing that I ask for what I'm worth and don't negotiate my rights away. His job isn't to sue clients, it's to make sure we never land in a place where we HAVE to. I happily write two checks every month. His is the first, my therapist's is the second.In other words, a good lawyer is something you should strive for, with as much vigor as a clean portfolio site design. Check out Monteiro's related talk, named after a key Goodfellas monologue about payment problems, at Vimeo.Getting Comfortable With Contracts [Mule Design Studio's Blog; Photo by Steve Snodgrass.] As an abstract term, prison is quite simple: it's a place where your freedom, movements and access to basically everything is restricted, usually as punishment for committing a crime. But for anyone who has ever done hard time, a prison is so much more: it's a place where dignity, privacy and control are given up to guards and prison administrators, where isolation and boredom can drive someone insane, and where the simplest of necessities seem like luxuries. In the United States, where more than two million people are in prisons and more than 400,000 work at them, prisons are big business [Source: U.S. Department of Justice].Prisons have historically been used for a number of purposes. They are most commonly used to jail criminals, but they have also been used to lock away political dissidents, the mentally ill, prisoners of war and even people who couldn't pay their debts. The prison camps of the American Civil War were notorious in both the North and South for being unsanitary places with horrendous living conditions. Overcrowding, disease and malnutrition lead to hundreds of deaths [Source: AltonWeb]. In the 18th and 19th centuries, people who couldn't afford to pay their debts were often thrown into jail, or used as forced labor. The time spent working or in jail was an alternative way to pay off the debt. Today, certain debtors still get sentenced to jail -- those who don't pay child support or tax bills can be convicted and given a prison sentence.The cultural functions of prisons are more complex. A prison sentence is a punishment. In this regard, it serves both as a form of justice (we believe people who commit crimes should suffer some form of retribution) and as a deterrent(prison is unpleasant, so people are reluctant to commit crimes for fear of going there). Prisons often serve as a safeguard, keeping dangerous people locked away from society so they cannot commit any more violent crimes. In some cases, prisons are used to rehabilitate criminals and set them up for a new life with an improved education, job and social skills and a new outlook.U.S. prisons are broken down into three basic levels of security: maximum, medium and minimum. Minimum security prisons often resemble camps or college campuses. They are reserved for non-violent offenders with relatively clean criminal records, or prisoners who have served most of their term in a higher-security facility and displayed exemplary behavior. A medium security prison restricts the daily movements of the inmates to a greater extent, but instead of cells they usually have dormitories, and the prison is usually enclosed by a razor-wire fence.Maximum security prisons are what most people think of when they think of prison. However, only a quarter of all prisoners in the United States are housed in a maximum security facility. These types of prisons are reserved for violent offenders, those who have escaped (or tried to escape) or inmates who could cause problems in lower security prisons. They are surrounded by high walls topped with razor wire, and armed guards in observation towers shoot at anyone who makes it "over the wall." We'll describe life in a maximum security prison in more detail in the next section.When an incident occurs at a maximum security prison, all the inmates are confined to their cells for several days, with absolutely no freedom whatsoever. This is known as lockdown. In 1983, two guards at a federal prison in Marion, Illinois were murdered in separate incidents on the same day. That prison went into permanent lockdown. Since then, several prisons have been built and run under permanent lockdown -- they are known as SuperMax prisons. Most maximum security prisons have a SuperMax unit within the prison that has permanent lockdown status. Officially known as a Security Housing Unit (SHU), prisoners simply call it The Hole.We'll examine what life is like inside a prison next.Private PrisonsA recent trend has been the privatization of prisons. A company runs the prison intending to make a profit -- they are hired as contractors by the government to design, build and manage the prison. The government then pays the company per prisoner/per day. In other words, the more people that are in jail, the more money these companies make. The Corrections Corporation of America and the GEO Group own about 75 percent of all the private prisons in the United States [Source: State Action]. Roughly 20 percent of all U.S. inmates are held in private prisons [Source: New York Times]. When a person is first arrested and placed in jail awaiting bail, there usually isn't much processing beyond a search for weapons. Someone who has been convicted and sentenced faces a longer and more extensive procedure when they arrive at the prison where they will be spending the next few months, years or decades.New arrivals can be dropped off by taxi, or by a friend or relative. The other option is to be picked up at the local sheriff's headquarters by the prison bus. The bus, which is generally uncomfortable, will make quite a few stops at other police departments and prisons, picking up and dropping off convicts. Cons refer to this as a diesel tour.Once the new convicts arrive at their home prison, they are usually stripped, disinfected and subjected to a very thorough inspection to make sure they aren't smuggling anything into the prison. Their possessions are catalogued and boxed up -- convicts are allowed to bring in little from the outside. Usually not much more than eye glasses, a few books and their legal papers are allowed. State prisons may be a bit more lenient than federal prisons in this regard.Cons (and often guards) usually refer to new arrivals as fish. Some portions of the initial processing may take place in full view of other prisoners in their cells, in a special section of the prison reserved for new cons -- this is known as the fish tank. Prisoners are held here for at least 30 days while prison officials process their paperwork, find room for them in the prison and possibly assign a prison job to them. The vast majority of the menial labor performed in prisons, including laundry, maintenance,janitorial services, cooking and landscaping are performed by the prisoners for as little as 10 cents an hour.The typical prison cell is eight by six feet (about 2.5 by 1.8 meters), with a metal bed tray (either bolted to the wall or free-standing on metal legs), a sink and a toilet. There may be a window allowing a view outside the prison. Prison overcrowding has forced most prisons to keep two prisoners in each cell, so an additional metal bunk is placed above the bed. In severe cases, three prisoners have been placed in a cell. A few cell blocks have a dormitory set-up, with eight or more prisoners in a larger cell with multiple bunks, but this is uncommon.The typical maximum security prison is divided into wings or blocks, each of which has its own staff and can be sealed off from the rest of the prison. A block may have multiple tiers. The cells are arranged around an open central space that contains a security booth, a kiosk protected by metal mesh and glass for a clerk/guard who keeps an eye on the prisoners. Additional armed guards may be positioned in glassed-off cubicles (bubbles) in observation posts within each cell block. Guards who come into contact with prisoners usually do not carry a firearm because a prisoner could steal it.In general population cell blocks (cell blocks other than the fish tank and the maxium-security unit), the prisoners are allowed to roam outside their cells most of the time. They can walk around the cell block to visit other prisoners in their cells or go outside to the prison yard, a large area used for exercise and socializing. The yard is watched by armed guards in towers high above.At various times throughout the day, the guards conduct counts. During a count, all prisoners must stand in front of their cells while the guards do a head count to make sure no one is missing or in a place where they aren't supposed to be. If a prisoner is in the wrong place and doesn't make it to his cell for the count on time, he will face disciplinary action. Counts are conducted at regular intervals at the same time every day. There are counts in the middle of the night as well, but for those, the prisoners can usually stay in their beds while the guards count them from outside the cell.We'll look at commerce inside the prison and prisoner contact with the outside world in the next section. While in prison, cons are subject to the rules set by prison officials. If a con commits an infraction, he gets a hearing before the warden or some lower ranking officials. If the committee finds the prisoner guilty of the infraction, penalties can be issued. Some examples of punishment:Time in solitary confinement (The Hole)Removal of accumulated "good behavior" timeTransfer to a less desirable prison jobConfiscation of itemsTransfer to another, higher-security prisonRelatively minor infractions result in "shots." A shot is a mark against the prisoner, placed on his prison file. When the prisoner comes up for parole or requests permission for some kind of additional privilege (like a better prison job or a work release program), the number of shots on his record will be considered.There are more informal punishments as well. Guards can mete out discipline without any hearing in many circumstances. A common tactic is to ransack the prisoner's cell searching for contraband, possibly damaging some of the inmate's possessions. If any contraband is found, the inmate will be in even more trouble. Guards can also use physical force on inmates who disobey direct orders. It is not uncommon for guards to fire shotguns at prisoners whenever they see any commotion.Serious crimes that occur in prison, such as murder or assault, can result in charges being pressed and a full trial.Not everyone in a prison is a psychopathic murderer, but in maximum security prisons, a larger percentage of the inmates are violent offenders -- people who are willing to use violence to get what they want. Prisoners often maintain a "might makes right" philosophy. Inmates who show cowardice or fail to stand up to threats are quickly marked as pushovers and forced to run errands and provide contraband for other prisoners. They may also be beaten or abused.When a beating or even a murder happens in prison, there are rarely any witnesses. Cons have a strict rule against "snitching," so even a murder in a crowded prison yard can go unsolved. This rule isn't upheld by any sense of honor -- snitches are repaid by swift, violent retribution. Other inmates often learn quickly to keep their mouths shut, no matter what they saw.Prisoners outnumber guards in prisons. If the prisoners rise up violently, they may gain control of sections of the prison (or even the whole prison), take guards hostage and capture weapons. Many inmates take advantage of the momentary lawlessness to commit violence against other prisoners. In some cases, the prisoners have a genuine grievance because of poor conditions in the prison.The most notorious prison riot in U.S. history is the Attica Riot of 1971. Inmates complained of deplorable conditions at Attica Correctional Facility in Attica, New York, but were ignored. They assaulted a guard and took over most of the prison, attempting to negotiate for better conditions. Eventually, state and local police stormed the prison. In the riot and the retaking of the prison, 39 guards and prisoners were killed.In 1980, the New Mexico State Penitentiary near Santa Fe was the scene of a brutal uprising. While no guards were killed, seven were severely beaten and 33 inmates were killed. Some of the inmate killings were reportedly the result of torture.We'll look at some more of the controversies associated with prisons in the next section. Prisoners are entitled in all circumstances to respect for their persons and their honour. (Geneva III)First off, prisoners of war are prisoners of the country that captures them; they are not prisoners of the soldier, unit, or commander of the unit that captures them. Also, much along the lines of "innocent until proven guilty," any captured combatant is assumed to be a prisoner of war and must be treated accordingly; if there is any doubt as to the applicability of POW status, the rules regarding prisoners of war must be followed until a proper tribunal is convened to determine whether POW status is applicable on a case-by-case basis. When the United States systematically denied POW status to captured Taliban combatants in the 2001-2002 war in Afghanistan, it was in violation of the third Geneva Convention. In the course of an armed conflict involving parties to the Geneva Convention, captured combatants are POWs until proven otherwise.Like the sick or wounded, prisoners of war (POWs) are protected under the Hague and Geneva laws from any violence, indignity, or biological experimentation. POWs must receive medical treatment if they need it, and medical staff must be brought in to the POW camp at least once a month to make sure everyone is okay. Unlike the sick or wounded, however, the military hierarchy is observed when it comes to prisoners of war: Officers can't be assigned to the same paid labor as enlisted troops; and while hard labor may be assigned to an enlisted troop as disciplinary action, an officer can't be punished in that manner.Most of us have seen in movies and on TV the interrogation response of "name, rank and serial number." This stems from the third Geneva Convention, but its purpose is not exactly what it seems. It's true that prisoners of war have to provide their name, rank and serial number (as well as date of birth), but this is not only for identification purposes. It is also to assure that the person be treated "according to his rank or status." If an officer fails to make known that he is an officer, he can't be granted the privileges due an officer.On the topic of questioning POWs, the interrogation tactics that seem to be common practice in a time of war are all illegal. The third Geneva Convention outlaws everything beyond the simple asking of a question:No physical or mental torture, nor any other form of coercion, may be inflicted on prisoners of war to secure from them information of any kind whatever. Prisoners of war who refuse to answer may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to any unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind.Confinement is illegal (POWs can't be held in prison cells unless it is for their own protection), but internment is allowed -- they may be kept within certain boundaries. However, their location must be as far from the fighting as possible. Besides being held in a special "camp," prisoners of war are supposed to be granted all of the rights and privileges that their captor grants to its own armed forces, at least in terms of food, water, shelter, clothing, exercise, correspondence, religious practice and other basic human needs. They are supposed to be informed of their exact location -- supplied with their mailing address, in fact -- so that their relatives may send them letters and packages.Beyond the protection from violence, intimidation and affronts to personal dignity, prisoners of war are supposed to be safeguarded from "public curiosity" (Geneva III). The broadcasting of pictures and video of wounded prisoners of war is an affront to their dignity and an appeal to public curiosity, and as such is prohibited.Once captured by the enemy, prisoners of war are subject to the laws of the armed force that is holding them. They must act according to the rules and regulations of their captors, and breaking those rules leaves them open to the same trial and punishment as that faced by a member of the detaining military. They are under the control of the detaining power and their detention is legal; as such, their escape is a breach of that law. So if they escape, they can be punished. But only if they are recaptured before they make it make to their own army. If they successfully escape -- if they return to the territory of their own armed forces -- and then are captured once again, they cannot be punished for their previous escape. This same rule of success negating the offense applies to spies who escape their captors: If a spy breaks free and is caught before he makes it "home," he can still be tried as a spy; if he makes it back to his own side and is then recaptured, he is no longer considered a spy who is subject to trial and punishment -- he is considered a prisoner of war, and is therefore protected.

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