



GETTING STARTED AS A WRITER

1ST EDITION



writerswork

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HOW DO YOU EVEN START?

YOU HAVE THE PASSION AND TALENT. NOW
YOU NEED THE KNOW HOW.



COPYWRITING IS ONE OF ...

THE MOST EXPENSIVE FREELANCE
WRITING TASKS THAT CLIENTS PAY FOR.

It takes writing skills, the ability to research and write with confidence on topics you have little experience with, project management skills to meet deadlines, and excellent communication to maintain a relationship with clients.

Most importantly, it requires knowledge on how to write copy that sells. A client is paying for more than words on a screen.

They want copywriters to craft a story that will convert their target audience into paying customers. If you can accomplish all of this, you will be able to start a successful writing career with work-life balance and flexibility.

But how do you even start? You have the writing chops, but what kinds of copywriting are people looking for?

How do you find clients? What is the best way to stay on task while working from home?

Let's start with the types of copywriting projects you can perform.

WEBSITE CONTENT

A website is more than just a beautiful design. Businesses will often hire someone to design a gorgeous website, but those design and development firms typically do not provide website content.

What good is a great-looking website if there's no useful content to help the visitor take action?

This is where your copywriting services come into play.

The homepage of a website needs to immediately draw a visitor's attention, summarize what the business is about, and include multiple calls to action to contact the business or visit the other pages of the website—and it should not be too lengthy. A professional copywriter can make website copy dazzle while layering in the elements

that will persuade a client to click through. Many clients will hire copywriters to start with the homepage and, if they like the work, will hire that same writer for the rest of the website pages.

Another common website copywriting job is for landing pages. Landing pages are used in ad campaigns to transmit a clear and concise message about the product or service they are advertising.

Often businesses link to a landing page in social advertising, AdWords campaigns, text club links, and QR scans.

The copy on the landing page needs to have an attention-grabbing headline, information layered specifically to answer questions and build trust with the business, and lots of calls to action with an aim to convert visitors to users.

It's important with website content to remember to be brief and project confidence in the writing. This should not be treated as an essay or a how-to guide. Website copy should represent the business culture and branding in a snapshot.

BLOGS

Blogs are probably the most commonly hired type of copywriting service available. This is because of Google's SEO standards.

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization and is a strategy that businesses use to increase their ranking in search results.

To ensure that Google's top-ranking sites are ones that their users will benefit from, the search engine tries to give preference to sites that will provide fresh, relevant, and helpful content.

The best way for businesses to get the attention of Google is through blogging.

Because businesses need a continual stream of blogs to increase their rank in search results, this gives you an opportunity to become a blog copywriting expert.

It takes a little more research to specialize in blogging, and many times clients will want to see that you have experience with the subject matter before hiring you as a regular copywriter.

But there are ways to build up that experience and then score continual writing gigs as a blogger.



Writers Work members are able to build their portfolios and subject-matter expertise through the resources made available in our University Library.

There are five main types of blogs you should be aware of if you are interested in pursuing blogging as a copywriter.

Helpful. These are the most common types of blogs, focused around providing useful information to the end user.

For example, if you are writing for a landscaping company, you could write a blog about the top five types of trees for the area.

This provides a potential customer with useful information that can help them outline their landscaping project.

Events. Event blogs give details on an event the client is attending or hosting. These are fairly simple, with details about the event including where and when it is, ticket prices, parking information, and reservations.

Promotional. Promotional blogs are meant more for freelancers who pursue a career as a professional blogger. These writers get paid to use a product in a DIY how-to guide or to review a product. However, you may be ghostwriting these types of blogs as a copywriter.

Instructional. Instructional blogs are very useful for service-based companies. These companies may ask you to provide an instructional blog that ties into their services. For example, an electrical company may want a blog on how to understand GFC outlets and wiring. These types of blogs take more research.

Guest. Guest blogging is another type of blog you may provide often for clients. Businesses may “trade” spots on a sister company’s blog to feature their own business to a new audience. This type of blog will likely be similar to a Helpful or Instructional piece of content.

One important note about blogging: Do not expect to have your name as the author on the blog. In most cases, copywriters take on the role of a ghostwriter.

The exception is if you have already established yourself as a subject-matter expert and your bio reflects your experience.

CASE STUDIES

Case studies are data-driven accounts of a business's successes, usually used to illustrate the good work they do to potential customers.

Crafting a case study takes a great deal of communication with the business to get the situational data that will be included, research about the industry standards, and what competitors of the business are doing.

You can also expect to spend a lot of time rewriting the study to ensure that it is concise yet informative.

ARTICLES

As with blogging, becoming an article copywriter can generate ongoing work that helps you maintain a steady income.

Articles differ from blogging because they are meant to be a little more prestigious.

Mainly, articles are used on other high-traffic websites to help the business gain exposure to a larger audience.

This is different from blogging, as blogs are only posted on the business's websites (with the exception of the occasional guest blog) and are more specific to their smaller audiences.

Both blogs and articles are constructed in such a way to help the business gain higher ranking in search results, but articles are a vehicle to capture a new audience and direct them to the company website for more information.

BROCHURES/FLYER CONTENT

As with website copy, a copywriter is helpful in crafting content that appears on any printed promotional content such as brochures and flyers. Often a business will pay someone to design these printed pieces, but these designers do not provide copywriting services as well. A professional writer with a skill for voice and branding is essential to complete this task.

The important thing to remember when providing copywriting for printed materials is to ask for a copy of the design mockup. This is vital to know where your content can appear on the printed material.

It will also guide you on word limitations. There is a limited amount of printed space on a brochure, for example. Having a digital mock-up will allow you to write material for the brochure, copy and paste it into the available spaces, and see if it fits.

You may need to add more copy to balance out the design, or less copy so it is easy to read.

PRODUCT REVIEWS & DESCRIPTIONS

Often, a copywriter will be hired to provide product descriptions for an e-commerce business.

Many times, a retailer will not have the wordsmithing skills to transmit everything important about a product they are selling within the description. A copywriter can take product specs and weave them into an enticing story that makes a consumer want to buy the product.

A copywriter may also be asked to provide reviews of the product that can be added to online retail stores, on the product website, and in promotional materials.

Sometimes you will be sent the product to review and at other times the business wants you to read the product specs and functionality to craft a product review. This type of work is where the more creative copywriters have a chance to shine.

EBOOK & BOOK GHOSTWRITING

We talked briefly about ghostwriting above, but being a ghost copywriter is most common with eBook and book writing.

Sometimes people will have a great idea for a fiction or non-fiction book and have an outline of what the contents should be but have trouble writing it professionally.

At other times, an author is too busy to meet a contract deadline and will want a copywriter to get the words down for them.

Whatever the case, being a ghost copywriter requires a difficult balance of creativity and

following a strict voice that is outlined by the original author.

It can also be difficult to win the ghostwriting jobs that pay well, but many copywriters find their homes here and see great success.



You can search the web's top writing job sites from one dashboard inside the Writers Work app.

LINKEDIN ARTICLES

LinkedIn articles are extremely beneficial to B2B (business to business) businesses. Their clients are other businesses and the highest concentration of their target market is on LinkedIn.

One of the best ways to showcase knowledge and attract attention on LinkedIn is by using the social platform's publishing tool.

The problem is that CEOs and business owners don't have time to write captivating articles on LinkedIn that work at converting businesses to clients. This offers an opportunity to present yourself as a professional copywriter who can represent

the CEO's ideals and voice on LinkedIn. To become this, you need to have conversations with the CEO to get an idea of his or her voice. You also need to become familiar with the company and read other LinkedIn articles from competing thought leaders. Becoming a LinkedIn copywriter requires research and finesse in your writing.

WHICH OF THESE FORMATS ARE BEST FOR YOU?

No matter which avenue or avenues you choose to deliver your copywriting services, it is important to write copy that sells. You don't have to be a marketing wiz, but you need to convince the target audience of what you are writing.

While some types of copywriting that we listed previously will probably be easy for you to accomplish, you also need to consider where your skills and expertise will lie.

When you first start out as a freelance copywriter, you will have little experience to advertise. This means you need to look at your work, education, and personal experience to outline what your areas of expertise are.

Create a shortlist of different topics that you feel you have enough experience to write about with confidence and minimal upfront research.

When making this list, you also want to leave room for growth. Understand that you can challenge yourself with topics that aren't in your wheelhouse if a client is willing to hire you for it.

Accept that you will “lose profit” learning to accomplish the topic. Once you know the types of content you are willing to provide and what areas you feel comfortable writing about, you can move onto making yourself a professional “brand.”

You will have a longer and more difficult path to success if you try to pitch yourself to clients with no online presence and no samples of your work.

Many clients are not willing to hire blindly, and the ones who are willing do not want to pay for it.

Branding yourself as a professional copywriter will take some time. But relax!

In order to be successful at freelance copywriting, there is a lot of upfront time investment required.



Most of the features listed below are included in your writer's profile at Writers Work.

Here are some things you should start with to brand yourself and build an online presence:

Put together an attractive bio. Your bio should include your years of experience, your expertise areas, any education that stands out, and your biggest copywriting project, if applicable.

Set up a website. This may sound expensive and daunting, but it isn't. There are many free website creation tools you can use to create a simple website. The website you create will be used as a virtual business card, an online portfolio, and a menu of services.

Get professional headshots done. Headshots will be your biggest expense as you are starting to brand yourself, but it's an investment well spent. Having a professional headshot is an attractive feature that will

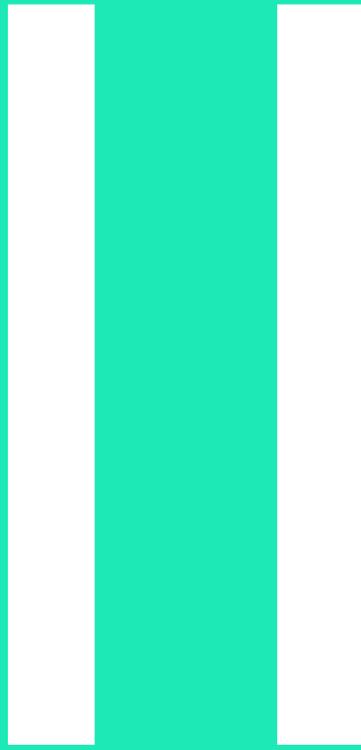
make potential clients trust you instinctively and allow you to stand out from the freelance crowd.

Invest time in your LinkedIn profile. Like we said above, LinkedIn is the place to go for all business owners. Investing time in filling out your LinkedIn profile until you reach all-star status will help you get noticed.

While LinkedIn Publishing will also be very beneficial, having a stellar profile alone can help you secure copywriting jobs.

Create a portfolio. Create a portfolio to add to your website and to any freelancing sites you plan to use to get clients. Even if you have to write new pieces that match what you have listed as your expertise, this will be a good selling point.

Get a professional email. You don't have to go all out and get an email with a branded ending, but you definitely shouldn't use the same personal email you have had since high school. Creating a professional Gmail account with your name will work great.



YOUR WRITER'S TOOLBOX

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TOOLS TO GET
THE JOB DONE.



AS YOU GET STARTED ...

ON YOUR FREELANCE COPYWRITING JOURNEY, YOU NEED TO KNOW WHAT TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE TO MAKE YOUR JOB EASIER AND MORE EFFICIENT.

This may seem obvious— isn't Microsoft Word the only thing you need to write your content for clients?

While that is the most essential tool, there are many other items you will need in your writer's toolbox.

MICROSOFT WORD VS. GOOGLE DRIVE

The go-to tool for freelance copywriters beginning their careers is usually Microsoft Word, and for good reason.

Nearly everyone has Microsoft Office with the ability to open your files, and the software provides great editing capabilities to collaborate back and forth with comments from your client.

So why would you use anything else?

Because technology has made it possible for today's writers to do some pretty incredible things. Take, for example, Google Drive and, more specifically, Google Docs.

Google Docs offers the same capabilities as Microsoft Word, except on-the-go.

By using a Gmail account, you can have access to a Google Drive to store and share your documents.

A Google Doc does everything a Microsoft Word document can do, but there are three main benefits to Google Drive over Microsoft Word.

1. With a Google Doc, you do not have to save multiple versions of a document with edits if you don't want to.

Not only can you track changes like on Microsoft Word, but you can see a history of changes in case you want to revert to a previous version.

2. As with Word, you can make a comment on a document and track changes on edits with

your client. But for true collaboration, Google Docs provides greater benefits. You could have three people in the document at once making edits and be able to see who is making each change.

You could have a conference call with your client, make edits live, and review for a final draft.

3. If you plan on doing your work on different devices, Google Docs is the way to go.

Unlike Microsoft Word, which only allows you to access a document on one hard drive (or a previous version in an email you sent), Google Docs allows you to open the most recent document from any device anywhere to make changes.



Documents created in Writers Work can be accessed from any device, and be exported into Word, PDF, and Markdown.

GRAMMAR CHECKING SOFTWARE

There are some great editing capabilities that come with Microsoft Word, but relying on the software and proofing the document will still

likely leave you with grammar issues.

Every grammatical error will be a notch against your professionalism and your quality. Clients who are the least bit unhappy with how much you are charging for your work will use the slightest grammatical error as a reason to cut ties.

For this reason, it is wise to invest in a subscription-based grammar checking software. There are some great ones out there that will help you double-check your work or question whether a sentence should be phrased differently.

It is important to remember that grammar checking software is no substitute for personally proofreading your work.

There is still only so much software can do to maintain correctness. Instead, grammar software should be used as a backup before sending to the client for review.



Grammar, spelling readability score, word count, and other advanced text-analysis features come standard in the Writers Work document editor.

WORDPRESS KNOWLEDGE

Whether you are going to start your own blog to help market your writing skills or you are asked by a client to both write and post blogs, it is a good idea to familiarize yourself with WordPress.

WordPress is the preferred platform for most businesses and freelancers out there.

It is easy to use, highly compatible with website design platforms, and ranks very well in Google Search. You will often have clients who are technologically challenged and will want you to write and post the blogs or website content on Wordpress.

This is incredibly useful to you as you can use this skillset to charge a little more for your writing services or charge an additional fee for posting.



Did you know the content you write from inside Writers Work can be published directly to WordPress?

Luckily for you, WordPress is incredibly easy to learn and use. The two main sections of WordPress you will need to know for content are the Posts section (where you post blogs)

and the Pages section (where you upload website content).

The editing and formatting capabilities are just like Microsoft Word and you can preview your changes on the front end of the website before publishing.

Tip: To make your WordPress skills even more useful and profitable, you can learn and offer basic SEO for your blogs and website content.

What will be most helpful to you in achieving this is downloading the free plugin called Yoast SEO on WordPress. Yoast will prompt you to enter in your focus keyword near the bottom of the blog/website page.

It will then analyze your content and tell you what you need to do to make your content more SEO-friendly.

This could be adding the keyword more often, using more header tags with the keyword, adding external links, or inserting a photo with the keyword optimized in the file name.

ONENOTE FOR MEETINGS/DRAFTS

Along with the array of Microsoft products that are useful, OneNote provides an excellent way to organize your brainstorming, drafting, and client meeting notes into one central place.

You can create different notebooks for each client you have, journals for each project you are working on, and subcategories for different phases of your project.

OneNote provides a superior way to visualize your writing project and organize the bits and pieces into a cohesive content product. You can track commentary and edits from your client to navigate your draft and save your own notes and brainstorming for future project pitches.

STAYING ORGANIZED

One of the most important parts of being a self-employed freelance copywriter is getting and staying organized. Once you start to lose track of deadlines, take on more projects than you can handle, or miss important notes from your clients, you will see your business take a sharp decline.

If you want to be successful in this business, you have to stay organized.

Some of the organizational tools you can add to your writer's toolbox are:

Planners. Planners are very old-fashioned, but also very reliable. It is nice to have something on paper where you can scribble project deadlines on different days, schedule client meetings, and take important notes for the completion of your copywriting projects.

Online Task Management. Along with paper planners, there are many great online task management tools that will help you stay on track with your deadlines.

While a planner is great for your goals and hard deadlines, an online task management system can help you break the project into small chunks with due dates before the hard deadline.

These systems are also good for keeping track of followups you need to perform with your client, reminding you when you need to do some self-marketing (like posting a new

LinkedIn article), and helping you create goals of how many new freelance copywriting jobs you should apply to each day. An example of an online task management system that is free to use is Asana.

Bullet Journaling. Bullet journaling is a newer craze that combines the idea of planners and task management.

While a bullet journal takes a little initial time investment, avid bullet journalers swear by the process to keep them on task.

See this video for an explanation on how to bullet journal: <https://youtu.be/fm15cmYU0IM>.

RESEARCH AND THESAURUS

The final tools you will need in your copywriting toolbox are research skills and the ability to use a thesaurus to spice up your writing.

The most important part of growing as a copywriter and being able to take on more clients is research. The ability to research helps you learn about new topics, be able to write about them with confidence and

experience, and advertise your knowledge to gain new clients.

Having great research skills includes understanding how to filter out reliable and unreliable websites, weeding out articles that are not relevant to your client's point of view, and using Google News and Google search filters to find the most recent articles.

If you need to find ongoing information about a certain topic, it is valuable to set up Google Alerts to discover the most recent articles about your topic.

We all get into a rut when we are writing, feeling as if we use the same words and phrasing for the same topic over and over.

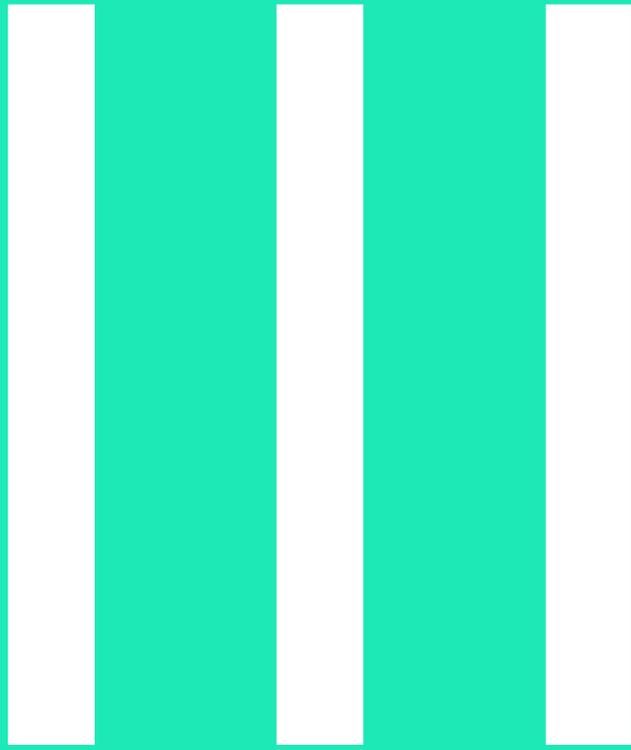
This is where the thesaurus comes in handy. As a professional writer, you know that you shouldn't go too extreme when finding a replacement word.

There is no reason to choose an extra fluffy word that no one has ever heard of when writing about home remodeling for a client.

But it is good to flex your writing muscles and explore some other options for the common words you can't stop using.



Writers can find synonyms, antonyms, definitions and sentence examples of words inside the Writers Work text editor.



WHAT ARE YOU WORTH?

LEARNING WHAT TO CHARGE AND WHEN TO
RAISE YOUR RATES.



SO YOU KNOW HOW TO GET STARTED ...

AND YOU HAVE YOUR TOOLS IN PLACE
TO BE A SUCCESSFUL FREELANCE
COPYWRITER.

But how do you know how much you should charge your clients?

This is the biggest question that new freelancers face, and it can be tough to figure out. There are many different types of copywriting and each will have different rates depending on time commitment, writing skills, and the level of experience you have.

To get to the bottom of setting up your rates, there are a few exercises you have to perform to decide what you are worth.

STEPS TO SET BASE PRICING

Start with Google. The best place to begin your research to set your freelance rates is Google. There are studies done every year

on the state of the freelance market.

Usually, these studies are broken down by the type of freelance work provided, level of experience, and location. You can filter down the study's results to find the data that applies specifically to you.

Often, the studies will provide a pay range that will give you a good starting point to set your pricing.

In addition to official studies on the state of the freelance market, there are numerous articles online with advice on how to set or increase your rates as a freelance writer.

These come from seasoned freelancers as well as freelance job sites to help writers set their rates.

Reading these articles can be extremely beneficial in getting a feel for what others are charging and what clients expect to see when it comes to rates.

Tip: Remember to factor in where and what you will be writing! Many studies online are basing rates on people who contribute to

large sites like The Huffington Post. As you are starting out, you will not be at that level for a while, so you definitely need to lower rates from there.

Explore other freelancer's rates. Sometimes the best way to figure out what you should be charging is by looking directly at what others are charging.

As you sign up for freelance job sites, take the time to browse user profiles of other freelancers.

You will be able to see what their skills and specialties are, as well as the rates they have set. Try to find freelance profiles that are similar to your skills and experience; you can use those as a baseline to set your pricing.

By directly comparing yourself to existing freelancers on these job sites, you will be able to match your pricing to what clients are already used to seeing.

This allows you to present your skills to win job bids without turning clients away due to your pricing requirements.

Analyze your experience. If you were to start in on a new job industry, you would have to accept entry level pay in order to gain experience.

The same thought process goes into setting your rates as you begin freelancing.

If you are transitioning from an entirely different industry, or are fresh out of college with no related job experience, then you will have to set your rates lower as if you are an entry level writer.

For example, if freelancers with your skills but with more experience are charging \$80/hour for their services, you will need to lower that rate since you do not have that experience.

However, if you are a copywriter at a company and you are trying to start a freelance career instead, that experience can be applicable towards your pricing, as you will highlight it in your profile.

Another important thing to note is not to

treat your pricing as if you are working a 9-5 job.

When you are paid by a company, you are required to work every hour of an eight-hour work day. However, as a freelancer, none of your work is guaranteed to fill up an eight-hour day.

There will be weeks where you only work 10-20 hours and weeks where you could work upwards of 50. To compensate for the time you have to spend finding clients, you can raise your rates higher than labor standards at companies.

For example, if you would normally make \$20/hour working at a company as an entry-level copywriter, you could raise that rate to \$30-40/hour as a freelancer.

Include living costs. In addition to being able to raise your rates slightly higher due to the lack of guarantee of working hours, you also need to factor in the living costs that you have to pay out of pocket.

This includes any benefit that would be

covered by a company that would employ you, such as:

- a. Health Insurance
- b. Retirement
- c. Life Insurance
- d. Disability
- e. Dental
- f. Vision

SETTING PROJECT RATES AND HOURLY RATES

Once you have an idea of what others are charging, you need to put your base pricing into definitions.

Many copywriters maintain both a project rate and an hourly rate. Each freelancer has their preference on what they like to use, but here are the broad ways you can utilize each.

Project Rate. Project rates are a common way to get the most profit for your skills and experience. You can set project rates by word count, page, character count, chapters, etc.

By setting a project rate, you can factor in the time it will take you, plus expenses for your skills and experience.

For example, if your hourly rate is \$40/hour and a 500-word blog about marketing will take you half an hour on average to write, you can factor in the value of your skills and experience, making it possible to charge \$60 (as your project fee) for that 500-word blog post.

Hourly Rate. Hourly rates are usually used when you are not sure how long a project is going to take and you don't know what you would charge for it at a project rate.

Hourly work is also good for performing research for a client or doing organizational tasks (i.e., a blog editorial calendar).



Whether you choose an hourly or project rate, Writers Work makes it easy by allowing you to track your time, word count, character count, and more.

As you decide these parameters, be sure you're able to explain the logic behind the pricing. This will allow you to market yourself better to clients who want to negotiate on your rates. You can explain why you have your

prices set in that way. It also helps you find opportunities to “make the sale.”

If a client is wary of your pricing and will have continual work for you, you can “discount” your price and be able to explain why it is discounted. This could help you secure future work.

WHEN CAN I RAISE MY RATES?

Deciding when to raise your rates can be tough. You want to be paid what you are worth, but you don't want to lose out on client opportunities because of pricing.

Most freelancers follow the rule of annually raising their rates, much like a company would give out an annual 3% raise to employees. The annual rate raise should be in small, incremental amounts that match cost of living increases.

The exception is when you decide to “promote” yourself from moving out of the entry-level status to gain freelance experience into a more seasoned professional. Usually after the first year of successful freelancing, you can afford to raise your rates a little

higher than a standard annual bump.

When deciding how much to raise your rates (either after the first year or on an annual basis), you have to take a look at your finances.

Factor in how much it costs to cover your bills, how much you want to put into savings, and what your plans are for how you want to spend your money (including any expected major purchases).

Create a set amount that you would love to be paid every month and decide how many clients or types of jobs you would need to secure to reach that amount.

If the number of jobs you need to find is a large number that would be difficult to meet, try to raise your rates to lower the amount of jobs you have to find.

This is a fine line to walk, as you want your rate increase to be in line with the state of the market and your personal skills.

To raise your rates without losing clients,

here are a few things to remember:

Revamp your profile, portfolio, and website.

This is especially important if you are raising rates dramatically after your first year of freelancing. Everything about your business portfolio needs to clearly explain why you are worth the amount you are charging. Add more items to your portfolio and revise your website and freelance profile copy to highlight your impressive experience.

Maintain current clients at your existing rate.

If you raise your rates on your existing clients frequently without discussing it with them, then you are going to lose them. You want to maintain clients as long as possible, so provide grandfather rates in order to keep them.

Be able to sell yourself in your project bids.

Every time you bid on a project, focus on your experience and skills to help justify your rates. If you can sell yourself in the bid, the pricing will be an afterthought that the client will “make work” because they want your quality of writing.

Tell clients you are willing to negotiate on rates. Clients like to see they have an option to negotiate on project rates when you are bidding on their work. However, you should always have a “discount” strategy in place where you know the exact amount you will come down to on your rates for various projects.

It is easy to go too cheap on your rates in order to get a client’s patronage. However, that will lead to a cycle of clients taking advantage of you, leaving you with little profit. If a client wants your quality, they will pay for it. If not, they are probably not a good client to work for anyway!

Create a plan to pitch to long-term clients why you deserve a rate increase. Just because you have grandfathered your rates for existing clients doesn’t mean they will never pay you more. But you have to approach rate increases for your existing clients as if you're asking your boss for a raise. Create a pitch that successfully targets your existing clients. In the pitch, explain your quality and the benefits the client will receive by the increased rate.

NW

START FINDING CLIENTS

YOUR FOUNDATION IS IN PLACE. NOW, LET'S
PUT THAT WORK INTO ACTION.



YOUR PORTFOLIO AND ...

THE BEGINNINGS OF YOUR ONLINE
BUSINESS PRESENCE IS ESTABLISHED.

You know how much to charge. Now it's time to build up your client list. There are many different avenues you can use to find clients, both directly and indirectly.

LINKEDIN

Building and establishing your LinkedIn profile is an excellent way to spread awareness to businesses that may be in need of your writing services.

We mentioned earlier the importance of setting up your LinkedIn profile in order to garner attention for your services. Here are some specifics about what you need to do to establish a LinkedIn presence that will help you get clients.

Make your profile a resume. Try to fill out every field on your profile with specific information that highlights your skills and expertise. Make the introductory summary attention-grabbing and informative so that

it prompts your profile visitor to keep looking through the rest of your experience.

Ensure your profile picture is a professional headshot. In addition to a professional headshot, utilize the cover photo space to create a graphic design image highlighting your services.

Try to get people to give you recommendations on LinkedIn.

Recommendations act as reviews and will be very helpful in getting clients to believe in your expertise.

Share thought-provoking posts on LinkedIn. Find articles that are informative about your industry and comment on them in an intelligent way as you share them.

Write LinkedIn articles about your industry to showcase your writing skills. These can be used as profile pieces, and you may receive inquiries about your services after writing them.

Make connections with freelance thought leaders. In addition, join freelance writing groups, as businesses will explore those to

find writing talent.

The goal with LinkedIn is to be elevated to a thought leader status. This is accomplished by having an all-star profile, regularly posting, and contributing LinkedIn articles that generate a lot of attention and buzz.

FREELANCE WEBSITES

As you are starting out, freelance websites are one of the surefire ways to find clients and build your portfolio. Each website has its pros and cons to helping freelancers find clients.

Here are the top three sites to get you started.

Upwork. Upwork absorbed what was the number one freelance writing website, Elance, and tried to improve the site to help writers find more clients.

Instead of having a membership like Elance did, Upwork charges a higher fee out of what the client pays you. So, if you charge \$20 to a client for a writing job, Upwork may take \$8 out of that as their “fee.”

This can seem like a turnoff to many freelancers, but you only need to adjust your rates higher to compensate for that fee and explain that to clients who question your price.

Upwork is an excellent job site, as it is a central hub that businesses worldwide go to in order to find freelance writers to hire.

Paying the fee is worthwhile to explore the vast pool of writing gigs.

Freelancer. Freelancer is a great website to help you earn more for your projects and attract excellent jobs to add to your portfolio.

However, the site takes a more competitive approach. There are contests set up that freelance writers compete in to gain a writing gig. This is a great way to test out your experience and your confidence in your writing abilities.

Craigslist. While not strictly a freelance site, many businesses will post want ads looking for writers for their projects.

Craigslist is an excellent way to find local clients to build up a networking rapport, but businesses who use Craigslist to find writers often do not pay very much.



Writers Work delivers writing opportunities from the top job sites on the web to each user's dashboard.

LOCAL NETWORKING

Local networking is an excellent way to make a name for yourself in your area. The more you network locally, the more opportunities you'll have to gain long-term clients that are easy to work with, since they live close.

Networking can be difficult to start, but here are some tips:

Check for freelancing groups. In metro areas, there are often groups for all types of freelancers - writers, graphic designers, marketers, etc. These are excellent groups to join to partner with other freelancers and share services. For example, if a graphic designer who is designing a website receives a request to also provide written content, they can reach out to you to provide the content.

Join business networking groups. There are many business networking groups established locally with the same sort of idea as the freelance groups. They often have a chair for each type of business (i.e., a chair for a landscaping company, a chair for a bank, etc.) and they refer business to one another. Joining this group as a freelance writer can prove to be a great opportunity to find more business.

Get involved in local writing group communities. Local writing groups can help you improve your work and find opportunities to grow your business.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networking, especially on LinkedIn as we mentioned previously, is an excellent way to get your name out there as an expert freelance writer. You can utilize SEO, social media, and blogging to help you reach more potential clients.

SEO. SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization and can be a scary word. Everyone says you need it, but they also say it is incredibly complicated to be successful at.

While this is true, you only need the very basics to ensure you appear online.

Inject your website copy with natural keywords around your services and try to work these into the page titles as well.

For example, create a Freelance Writing Services page on your website and ensure the copy explains the various services you provide in-depth.

Try to get your name, website, email, and phone number listed on writing directories. Having profiles on various freelance websites will help, but try to find some writing directories where you can be listed.

Any opportunity you have to provide guest article content, take it! Try to contribute guest articles with your bio and a link to your website within. This can be difficult, but every guest article can help improve your SEO rank.

Social Media. Social media is an excellent way to promote yourself, your knowledge, and find new clients. Not only can you

share posts on social media sites that showcase your expertise and industry knowledge, but you can also spend a couple hours per day networking with other freelancers to help cross-promote one another. The more you network online, the further your presence will reach.

Blogging. Creating regular blogs on your website that explain and highlight the importance of professional writing and your other services to businesses will be important for a number of reasons.

First, contributing regular “long-form” content will help improve your website’s rank on search results, making it easier for potential clients to find you. Second, it will showcase your knowledge in a tangible way. Third, you will be able to use the blogs you create on social media to help spread them further.

Try to aim for at least two blogs a month, but the ideal amount of blogging you should aim for is one blog per week. To help stay on top of the schedule and to keep your blogs relevant, create an editorial calendar with at

least a month's worth of topics planned in advance.

You can also keep a “bank” of blog topic ideas and work them into your editorial calendars as you are creating them. Try to keep re-sharing your blogs on social media to get more traction for your efforts.



OPTIONS FOR GETTING PAID

BALANCING THE PROS AND CONS OF ALL OF
YOUR FINANCIAL OPTIONS.



BEFORE YOU START GAINING ...

CLIENTS AND HAVE WORK ROLLING IN, YOU NEED TO DECIDE WHICH PAYMENT OPTIONS YOU WILL OFFER TO YOUR CLIENTELE.

Much like choosing which freelance sites to use, each method of payment comes with its own pros and cons. With the exception of freelance sites that offer payment on their platform, there are three main types of payment options that most freelance writers offer: PayPal, check by mail, and direct deposit via W9.

PAYPAL

PayPal is one of the easiest and most widely used ways to get paid on the internet.

There are many perks to using PayPal as your preferred method of payment. First, PayPal is incredibly easy to use. The platform allows you to create invoices and send them to clients with a payment due date. On the invoices, you can break down each item by

price and provide descriptions of the work you did.

Bookkeeping is easy if you manage all payments through PayPal, as it keeps a history of all transactions and provides monthly reports that you can use during tax time.

One of the biggest benefits of PayPal is the security. The platform provides advanced security from hackers and hides your personal information from clients.

You can choose what your clients see and you can even add logos to your communications via PayPal to add a level of professionalism.

As with anything, there are drawbacks when using PayPal. While it is free to create an account, PayPal makes money by charging a service fee for each transaction.

This is usually a percentage of what a client pays you. The fee is very small and you are able to write it off on your taxes at the end of the year, but you can always adjust your

rates to account for it.

CHECK BY MAIL

Another common payment method, especially with clients who are local to your area, is paying by check in the mail.

Some freelancers give out their home address to send checks by mail, while others set up a PO box to keep anonymity with their clients. This is an important thought to keep in mind. Before you offer check by mail, or before you accept this offer from a client, be sure to research their company and ensure they are reputable.

If it is a larger company with a solid reputation, inquire about their payroll process. A company with a professional payroll system that asks you to fill out tax documentation is most likely safe to entrust with your personal information.

However, if they are a small business or individual client that does not have a reputation and is planning on sending personal checks, it is not wise to give out your address. Instead, encourage

the client to use PayPal.

A big benefit to having clients pay you by check in the mail is the lack of associated fees.

Between PayPal and freelance sites, there are fees everywhere that cut into your profit. The check will give you the full amount.

There are some drawbacks to check by mail. The first is a lack of convenience.

You will have to create invoices manually to send to the client as opposed to doing everything through the easy-to-use PayPal software.

When creating invoices, it is important to send a non-editable PDF to protect yourself. Keep the original copy on file in case there is a legal payment discrepancy.

The other drawback is you have to wait a longer time to receive your payment.

The client has to process your invoice, send

the check, have the check travel through the slow mail process, and arrive at your doorstep.

DIRECT DEPOSIT

The most popular option for payment is direct deposit. Similar to check by mail, it is important to ensure the client is reputable with proper payroll practices before agreeing to direct deposit.

Since you are giving out your bank account information in order to have money direct deposited, you need to protect yourself by doing plenty of research about your client.

Don't be afraid to ask questions! And, if the client is not giving full transparency about their payroll practice, push them to use PayPal instead to protect yourself.

Much like the check in the mail, one benefit of direct deposit is that there will not be any fees charged for the service. Another benefit is that you will receive your money much more quickly than with a check in the mail. The only warning is to ensure you are giving your personal banking information to a reputable client you can trust.

W4 VS W9 TAX FORMS

Whether you are signing up for a freelance site or are working directly with a client for payment, you will be asked to fill out tax forms to report your income.

There are two types of forms you may be asked to fill out: a W4 or a W9. Each of these forms are more for the clients than for the freelancer, as it makes a difference in how their payroll taxes are calculated.

A W4 is the traditional tax form that you would fill out if you are starting a job at a company. This is mainly for part-time or full-time workers that have a set hourly or salaried rate.

There are some clients who will want you ongoing for a few hours per week and will ask you to fill out a W4.

A W9 is traditionally what freelancers are asked to fill out by job sites and clients. It is used to classify yourself as a 1099 misc. worker for the client.

This form is used if you will be paid more

than \$600 in a year by the client. Most clients ask freelancers to fill out these forms at the beginning of their work, just in case that amount is reached.

With either of these forms, the client needs to mail you a W2 (if you filled out a W4) or a 1099 form (if you filled out a W9) during tax season, so you can report your payments as your income.

If you have a client that did not have you fill out these forms, you will need to confirm that they are not claiming you as a worker, so you do not have to claim the income on your tax return.

WM

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PITCH

INCREASE YOUR VALUE AND MAKE CLIENTS
WANT TO HIRE YOU.



REACHING YOUR DREAM ...

OF BEING A FREELANCE WRITER IS NOT EASY FOR ONE MAIN REASON:

Getting a client base built up takes time and effort. The best way to jump that hurdle is to work on your stellar pitch.

When you take the time and effort to pitch well, it doesn't matter how much you charge or what your requirements are; clients will want to hire you.

Each type of project will require its own nuances, but there are three basic requirements to craft an excellent pitch:

Summarize Experience. Start your project pitch strong with a summary of your excellent experience. You should highlight the most impressive things about you that are relevant to the job you are trying to get from a client.

For instance, if you have experience writing health blogs and legal articles and you are

trying to win a legal article job, you want to focus on that aspect of your experience.

If available, provide a link to past testimonials of your work. If you have education relevant to your freelance writing expertise, include that as well.

Remember, you want to be impressive with your experience, but brief so as to hold their attention.

Personalize for the Client's Project. In the next section of your pitch, you want to talk about this client's project and your ideas for it.

You still want to weave in your experience with the format (i.e., whitepaper, blog, etc.) when applicable, but focus on their specific project needs and how you can solve them.

The more personalization you can give the better, as many pitches from competing freelance writers will be generic, copy-and-pasted descriptions.

End with Pricing. Finally, you want to wrap up your pitch with what you would charge to

omplete their specific project.

Sometimes the client will request an hourly rate or a project rate. If you know it would be easier to price one way or the other to ensure you make a profit, tell the client that you are going to charge that way regardless of what they offer as a preference. You will not get tossed out for your recommendation!

Often, clients do not know the best way to pay and only need to be educated. When constructing your pricing, clearly explain why this is the best price for your experience and the project's needs.

Now that we have covered the basics, there are certain nuances you will need to follow with each type of pitch.

PROJECT PITCHING

Project pitching will likely be the most common type of pitch you will perform. This is done through emails, freelance websites, and job ads for freelance writers.

In this pitch, you have time to type out your selling points and make them perfect. You

will also be able to create various templates where you can add spaces for personalization for each project. Following the steps we went over will set you up for project pitching success.

THE NETWORKING “ELEVATOR PITCH”

If you are planning to do any type of local networking (or if you find yourself in contact with businesses who may need your services), you will want to practice and perfect your “elevator pitch.”

The purpose of this pitch is not to get a project right away, but to make connections for employment longevity. The reason why it is called an elevator pitch is because salespeople used to enter elevators with businessmen with the purpose of quickly selling them products in 30 seconds or less.

There are hundreds of books from salesmen and women who have perfected the elevator pitch, but it will be a little different for freelance writing.

Essentially putting together your elevator pitch is going to take the same steps as your pitch steps above, but condensed down.

You are going to open by explaining that you are a freelance writer, and then in one sentence, highlight your experience.

You will ask to know more about the work the client does and then personalize some of your ideas on how to make their business better through quality writing.

Then, instead of pricing, you provide a business card with your contact information and ask for a card of theirs in return.

PITCHING WHEN SOMEONE COMES TO YOU

Over time, with enough networking and an established online presence, you may find that clients will begin coming to you to inquire about your services.

This is usually a very exciting time in any freelance writing career, but do not rest on the assumption that they want you. You still have to pitch yourself and your expertise so they do not try calling other people to address their pain points.

When someone wants to know more about

your freelance writing services, you should approach it like a job interview. Be prepared to answer their questions with concise and positive examples of your work ethic and expertise.

You'll also want to construct some questions of your own about what their specific needs will be so you can bounce back ideas about how you plan to fulfill them.

BONUS TIP: PROPOSALS VS. PROJECT PITCHES

You will not always only be pitching for individual projects. If you do networking right, find clients with large projects, or have people approach you asking for a large-scale commitment and quote, you may find yourself in need of a proposal.

Proposals are longer versions of a project pitch with more details, both about yourself and the project you want to win. Here are the components:

- You begin with a professional cover page showcasing your business and highlighting the client's business as well.

- The first page is a short, one-page biography outlining your experience. If you can provide a professional headshot and information with your website, that is a great way to display your contact information right away.
- The second page will start with a summary of your client's business and what their objectives are that your services will fulfill. Then, you move into the strategy - how you will provide your services for the budgeted amount to specifically accomplish their objectives.
- The rest of the proposal will continue with your strategy, as well as the tactics you plan on using to carry out that strategy. Then you'll want to move into a breakdown of their budget and how you plan on allocating that budget with your specific services.
- With larger projects that require a proposal, you'll want to end with terms and conditions regarding delivery of your services and payment from the client.

- Outline a promise for the delivery window for what you have specified, and require payment within a 30, 60, or 90 day window of issuing the invoice (this is more your preference). Finally, require the client to sign and date the document to act as an unofficial contract.

WMI

4 BEST PRACTICES TO ENSURE A GOOD PROJECT

CREATE THE KIND OF WORK THAT IMPRESSES
– AND RETAINS – CLIENTS.



ONCE YOU GAIN CLIENTS ...

WITH YOUR STELLAR PITCH, THERE ARE MANY THINGS YOU CAN DO THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT TO ENSURE YOU CREATE A GREAT WORKING RELATIONSHIP.

When you work well with your clients, it not only makes your job much easier to do, but can also help guarantee future projects.

In addition to providing high-quality writing services, there are four best practices to follow to ensure a good project.

COMMUNICATION

The first and most important practice to follow throughout your project is excellent communication. This can no doubt be difficult when you start gaining clients (and when you have a couple of needy clients as well!).

Ideally, freelancers will be strictly on top of all communication with potential clients during

the pitch process, setting a precedent that clients expect them to follow throughout the project. All too often, however, this communication gets less frequent throughout the project.

It is vital to have a speedy response time and to provide informative feedback. Every response needs to completely answer your clients' inquiries in the email, along with additional details and assurances on the status of their project.

Just as it is important to be speedy and thorough in your communications, you also need to secure communication from the client about the scope of work and expectations.

At the beginning, ask questions about the project's needs and what the client expects for the end result. If you have doubts or questions throughout the project, it is important to ask them right away and get clarification. This will ensure that you deliver the work the client expects and that you maintain a relationship without losing a client or being forced to give a discount or refund to preserve the relationship.

PRICE AGREEMENTS IN WRITING

To help protect your work and livelihood, it is important to have clients agree to pricing in writing.

This is often done through emails, but you need to start the conversation by stating the exact work you will provide for the price and have the client agree to the amounts.

Otherwise, you may get into sticky situations where the client does not want to pay what was promised. If you do not have clear statements in writing, you may not have a right to that payment.

STICK TO DEADLINES

Similar to effective communication, providing a deadline and sticking to it is an important step in carrying out a positive project.

The client may provide a deadline they would like to have the project returned or completed by. Make sure to look at this date and the scope of the work to ensure you can accomplish this deadline. It is fine to negotiate on a better deadline, but missing the due date

does not set up a productive relationship with your clients.

Remember: It is always better to under promise and over-deliver.

MORE COMMUNICATION!

You thought we were done with communication? No way! Communicating is important throughout the project, even if the client is not reaching out to you.

Don't forget that your client is busy as well. They may not have time to keep close tabs on the progress. To make a strong positive impression on your client, aim to provide weekly (or twice-weekly for shorter deadlines) updates to the client.

In addition to updates, it is important to feel out the perfect ebb and flow of communication for different points in the project. Freelance writers always struggle with three main communication points with clients without crossing into that harassment window:

Nailing down project details. In the beginning, it is difficult to figure out how often you

-should email about whether or not you are hired for the project and what the specific details are to carry out the project. It is a good rule of thumb to follow-up one week after the initial pitch if there is no response, then wait another three weeks before following up again. If the client has responded once but is difficult to nail down details with, try following up three days after the last communication, then weekly for a couple of weeks.

Following up on approval of work. Waiting to hear back from a client on whether your work is approved or needs edits can be difficult. After you have worked on a project, you of course want feedback right away. Try to wait a couple of days before following up, and continue to follow-up every three or four days until you get feedback.

Inquiring about pending payments. This is the most difficult communication to follow-up on.

First, it's smart to send your invoice along with the draft of your work so that they have the

amount to pay right away. The longer you wait between communications to send the invoice, the longer it will take for payment to be completed.

Second, wait until the client has approved all materials in the invoice. See if they mention paying your invoice. If so, wait 4-10 business days before following up, depending on the method of payment.

For instance, payment online should only take about one business week, while checks in the mail may take up to two weeks.

Wait three days before following up to inquire if the client received your invoice and the expected date of payment.

After that, wait one week before inquiring again and follow-up weekly if you receive no response. Try to layer in inquiries into future work the client may need done so the emails do not seem like a barrage of "where is my money?"

WMI

GETTING PICKY

TOEING THE LINE BETWEEN BUILDING A PORTFOLIO, AND BUILDING A CAREER.



WHEN YOU ARE STARTING OUT AS A FREELANCE WRITER ...

IT IS TEMPTING TO TAKE ON ANY CLIENT WHO IS WILLING TO GIVE YOU AN OPPORTUNITY.

While it's fine to build your experience with lower paying clients in the beginning, there is a definite difference between gaining experience and spending time on clients who are not worth the effort.

Here are some of the warning signs of bad clients:

PENNY PINCHING

We already talked about setting your rates lower as you start off, as well as when you should think about increasing them. After you've set your initial rates, define your bottom dollar you are willing to earn. As you negotiate prices early on for client projects, stick with your bottom dollar and do not go

below it. This can be scary, as you will lose potential clients. But understand that certain clients do not want to pay for writing services and will get away with tiny payments to get what they need.

Often, these clients will end up resorting to hiring offshore freelancers that are willing to be paid \$1 for 100 words (not the kind of work you're looking to fulfill at that rate!).

How do you know when a client is penny pinching? First, stay away from clients whose budgets are way below your bottom dollar.

Second, be firm about your rates. If the first offer they counter with is insultingly below your bottom dollar, tell the client your minimum and refuse to budge after that.

POOR COMMUNICATION

Communication is key when it comes to being a successful freelance writer. If you are working on establishing a client relationship with a new project, keep an eye on how the client communicates.

See how long it takes them to respond and

whether they fully read your previous communication by responding to all your inquiries.

Just as you are going to take time to answer their inquiries fully, the client should show the same respect to you.

This is a fine line to walk, as your clients are likely very busy and communications with you could be at the bottom of their to-do list.

There are two key things to look for in communications with your client. They must fully outline their project requirements and specifically answer your questions in the beginning.

If they are vague or change their requirements, it is a sign that the client will constantly be on a different page than you. If you are constantly following up with them for the simplest requests and getting half-thought-out responses, this is a red flag.

It is difficult to complete a project (and get paid) if a client refuses to do his or her part in communicating.

DEMANDING CLIENTS

This is covered briefly previously, but you'll want to keep an eye out for clients who are demanding too much for the budget or are changing project requirements.

If, during negotiations, the client demands a laundry list of skills and requirements for a very small budget, give them a firm estimate for all their requirements as well as a breakdown of what services can be included in their budget.

The important tactic here is to not budge in your stance. Once you set the budget and expectations for the project, the client should not deviate from those. If they do, remind the client of the original outlines.

If they still push for changes outside of the project scope, you need to be firm with your requirements and ask for an additional budget to complete these unexpected changes.

WHEN TO FIRE

If you adhere to these tactics when having a bad client experience, then there will be no reason to fire a client. It is never a good

feeling - firing a client is like quitting a job. There is a sense of failure and a moment of “what am I going to do next?”

However, there are few instances when you should seriously consider terminating your relationship with a client:

- If the client has not paid for multiple invoices, or for one invoice in over two months, with excuses as to why they have not paid.
- If the client drops off the face of the planet and stops communicating about the project.
- If the client changes the project requirements too often for the same budget and refuses to pay you more for the work you are doing.

In all of these instances, the big downfall is you will likely not get paid for the work you have done. If you perform your work through freelance sites, there is often a pay guarantee. Clients have to sign a contract with the site to ensure they provide payment (since client payment is how the site makes money as

well). Otherwise, you have to have some kind of a contract signed, and even then there is no guarantee unless you go through the trouble of taking them to small claims court.

IX

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL WORKING FROM HOME

OFTEN TIMES, THIS IS WHAT SEPARATES
SUCCESS FROM FAILURE.



YOU HAVE YOUR PAY NAILED DOWN

•••

YOU HAVE A PRESENCE ONLINE FOR CLIENTS TO FIND YOU AND FOR YOU TO FIND THEM.

You have perfected your pitch and have gained some great clients. Now you need to start working.

Seems easy right? What many people don't realize is that, while working from home sounds luxurious, there are some drawbacks.

There are numerous distractions you are faced with, from chores to television. It can also be quite lonely. Even if you are communicating with clients via email or phone, you have no coworkers to vent about challenges or complain about that one crazy client.

Once you gain a larger client base, you may find yourself working day and night with no

reprieve. You can also get stuck in a rut of wearing ratty sweatpants and old stained t-shirts every day, which is not good for anyone!

All of these challenges are an impediment to your success as a freelance writer. To help overcome these, here are some tips to manage working from home with ease.

SET A SCHEDULE AND STICK TO IT

Even though you are walking from your bedroom to your computer, you want to act like you have the same routine as anyone driving to the office for the day.

Begin by setting your start and end times for working. If you plan to start working at 8am, set your alarm for 7am so you have time to get ready and eat breakfast beforehand. You have the bonus of not having to factor commute times into your day, making it easier to set a strict start time with a leisurely morning routine.

Take a lunch break in the middle of the day, for either 30 minutes or an hour. If you want to use that time to get chores done or squeeze in a workout, go for it! But limit

yourself to a specific time to ensure you get back to work and don't waste your day. Try to limit errands in the middle of the day to only those that will fit within your lunch break; but if you must be gone longer, be sure to make up your time throughout the rest of the day.

Make an end time to finish working and stick to it. This means no cutting out an hour early to go run an errand or hit up a gym class. Even though we all have days where our brain can't take anymore, try to take a mental break like people in an office do, and keep working until your end time for the day.

Along with this, try to avoid working overtime whenever possible. It is easy to blend your work hours into the nights and weekends since you are at home, but doing so will drive you stir-crazy over time and will cause unneeded stress.

CREATE A SEPARATE OFFICE SPACE

Don't even think about working at your kitchen table throughout your freelance career. You will need a space that is only for work. This will help separate your relaxed-at-home self from your career. You want to make this space in a part of the house that is not

used for anything else. Try to make it speak to your creativity so that you have inspiration to complete projects with skill and professionalism.

Set it up in such a way that you have everything you will need for the day right there to avoid wandering the house for a jacket, pens, a phone charger, and whatever else you may need throughout the day.

WORK OUT OF THE HOUSE

Working inside the house exclusively is lonely and can make you a bit stir-crazy after awhile. Make a goal to work outside of the office at least a couple of times a week for at least part of the day.

This can be in a library or a cafe where free Wi-Fi is available. Working outside the home gives you a breath of fresh air and helps spur creativity.

If you can, try to attend some local business networking groups to help you socialize more. This is good for your mental health and is also a great way to build up a local client base.

UTILIZE FREE TIME

Especially early on in your writing career, you will find free time on your hands where you have no client work to perform, but 10 hours left in the week to fill.

This doesn't mean you get an extended weekend! Instead, utilize all of your free time into growing your freelance writing business.

Some ideas include:

- Submitting at least 5 project pitches on the days you have the most free time.
- Improving your website content with more detailed information about your services.
- Writing a blog giving advice to your target audience on the importance of professional freelance writing for their business.
- Creating scheduled posts on social media and interacting with the industry on social networks to gain exposure.

- Asking former clients for testimonials of your work.
- Budgeting and planning for improvements in your clientele and project rates.
- Creating pieces for your portfolio that highlight your skills as a writer.
- Joining a local freelance or business networking group so you can attend their events when you have free time.



TROUBLESHOOTING

THINGS WON'T ALWAYS GO YOUR WAY.
HERE'S HOW TO MAKE SURE ROUGH SEAS
DON'T SINK YOUR SHIP.



THROUGHOUT YOUR FREELANCE LIFE ...

THERE ARE ALWAYS GOING TO BE CROSSROADS WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS THAT YOU WILL NEED TO FIND A SOLUTION FOR.

While there is no one right way to do things, there are some tips to help you troubleshoot the best course of action for your business.

WHAT DO I DO DURING A DRY SPELL TO GET MORE WORK?

Every single freelance writer has those moments where it seems all the work has dried up and they cannot win any clients with their pitches and proposals.

The good news is the dry spell is temporary and there are plenty of things you can do in the meantime to increase your workload.

Focus on improving your website. Take a hard look at your website. Do you need to update your skills or portfolio? Do you have

testimonials to add? Make your website as up-to-date as possible. If you have the resources to improve your design, do it!

Check out your marketing. Next, see how your self-marketing is doing. Try to write some stellar blogs in your downtime that are helpful, creative, and unique. Share these on social media. While you are sharing on social media, create lists of influencers, other freelancers, and industry beasts that you can interact with. Aim to spend at least two hours throughout the day on social networking.

Analyze your pitch. Take a look at the last few pitches you submitted and start breaking down what worked and what didn't. Try to improve your pitch templates and strive to make notes for yourself on what to do better.

Keep submitting for jobs! Spend more time trying to find opportunities where people need freelance writers. Dig deep in your freelance job sites and see if there are any other websites you can join for opportunities. Don't forget to keep an eye open for networking opportunities.

WHAT DO I DO WHEN A CLIENT REFUSES TO PAY?

Sometimes you have clients that are really slow to process your invoice, and at other times you have clients who outright refuse to pay for the work you provided.

In the first situation, there is not much you can do besides continue to follow up and impress a sense of urgency with payment.

If you still have work to do while waiting for an invoice payment, let the client know you will not continue work until the invoice is paid (although we recommend waiting to do this until a month has passed since you submitted the invoice). If you don't, keep following up.

If the client is through a freelance site and has not responded in a couple of months, you have some options.

You can escalate the lack of payment up through the help center of your website to see if there is anything they can do to help. You can show that the project requirements were filled but the client has not paid. It is a good idea to do this as a last resort to avoid risking

a low rating from the client for your work.

MY CLIENT IS DEMANDING MORE FOR THE PROJECT THAN WHAT WAS IN THE BUDGET - WHAT DO I DO?

When your client is demanding more work for the same budget, it's tricky. On the one hand, you want to provide great customer service and avoid nickel-and-diming clients to the point where they do not want to work with you anymore (or worse, leave a review about your "tendency" to do this).

But you absolutely deserve to be paid for your work!

In this situation, you have to analyze what the client is asking for and how much you would charge for this work. If it is a fairly small amount, you can consider it an investment in the client relationship if you believe more future work will come from them.

You can even preface agreeing to the additional work by saying, "Usually I charge X amount for this, but I can do it for the original amount we talked about since

this is our first project together.” This could be impressive for the client and they will want to hire you for additional work, paid in full.

However, if this is a subsequent project you are working on for a client, or if they are asking for a lot of free work, then you need to be blunt. Tell them it was not in your agreed-upon scope of work and there will have to be an additional fee if they want it.

MY CLIENT IS UNHAPPY WITH THE QUALITY OF WORK I PROVIDED - WHAT NEXT?

First, you have to ask the client what specific aspects of the writing you provided are not meeting their quality standards.

Sometimes the client did not outline what they expected out of the project and will blame it on quality. In this case, you can diplomatically point out what they wanted as the end result and showcase how your delivery matches their request.

If there were issues in your quality that you can't pin on miscommunication, then the best course of action is to offer edits or a rewrite

for free. If they want to continue working with you, state your edit and rewrite policy for future revisions. Take the time to learn from your mistakes and be sure to carry out better quality work in the future.

HOW DO I NEGOTIATE PROJECT PRICING?

A lot of clients will try to play hardball on pricing, especially when you are just starting out as a freelance writer.

The trick to negotiations is to always have your bottom dollar in mind, but to never sink to your bottom dollar until the second or third round of negotiations.

The most important thing to remember is to never go below your bottom dollar. You know what you need to make for your “salary” and going below that for a pushy client will only result in a hectic and time-consuming relationship.

XI

TAXES AND THE JOY OF SELF-EMPLOYMENT

A PAIN? YES. ANNOYING? YES. A DEAL-
BREAKER? HECK NO!



ARGUABLY THE LARGEST DRAWBACK ...

OF BEING A FREELANCE WRITER IS ONE
OF THE COMMON PERILS OF
SELF-EMPLOYMENT - TAXES

When you work for a company, the accounting department does all the work for you regarding taking out the appropriate chunk of your salary to pay for your local and federal taxes.

The biggest mistake freelance writers make when they start their self-employment venture is they forget to account for their taxes. When you start collecting money from clients without setting aside a portion, you will get a nasty shock when it comes time to file.

Here are four tips to help you calculate your taxes and get the most out of your refund.

DECIDE YOUR FINANCIAL GOAL

When you are calculating how much money to take out of your payments for taxes, you

need to think about what your financial goal is. There are two main options - do you want to have more money throughout the year and break even at tax time, or do you want a large refund at the end of the fiscal year with less money throughout?

If your goal is to break even the best you can, then you need to estimate how much money you will make throughout the year. Then research tax brackets and see which bracket that income level falls into.

Take that percentage out of your payments to see a friendly balance of zero come April.

If you would rather have a big fat refund in April with only the bare necessities throughout the year, you would follow similar steps as above in calculating your projected income.

Take a look at the tax bracket where that income falls and, at minimum, double the percentage. That is how much you should take out of your payments. This may require a little more hustling on your part to get enough clients to sustain your take-home pay, but it

will be worth it come tax time.

The most important thing to remember when calculating your income: Report every payment you receive. This is especially true with clients who give you a W-4 or 1099 form to fill out, or any time you receive a digital payment transaction for your services through PayPal or direct deposit.

Even if you have cash-only payments and you think the client is not reporting that they paid a freelancer, always report it. As an independent contractor, you are far more susceptible to audits than someone whose tax return only consists of W2s from a company. You need to report all income to protect yourself in case of an audit.

SAVING ACCOUNT VS QUARTERLY PAYMENTS

No matter which percentage of withholdings you choose, the money you take out of your payments for taxes should be socked away somewhere. One of the best ways to do this is to set up a separate savings account from others you may have for personal use. This account is only to transfer tax “payments” into.

Think of that savings account like deductions taken from traditional paychecks - there is no way to get the money out. Never, under any circumstances, are you to withdraw the tax payment money from this account until you have paid your balance at tax time.

Often the temptation of the tax payment money sitting where you can access it anytime can be too much. In these cases, you may want to consider sending quarterly payments to the IRS.

The IRS encourages business owners and independent contractors to send in their tax withholdings throughout the year in quarterly installments.

Doing this ensures that you are paying taxes on your reported income without risking using the money for something else.

The drawback is, if you paid too much money to the IRS, you will have to wait for a refund check in the mail, as opposed to immediately drawing it out of your savings, once annual payments are submitted.

TRACK ALL EXPENSES

As a freelance writer, you have a lot of expenses you pay to keep your business running. The good news is you are able to deduct them from your income tax to reduce the amount you owe to the IRS. Some expenses that you should track include:

- Software subscriptions, such as grammar editing software (including Writers Work)
- Fees that freelance job sites require you to pay with each transaction
- Membership dues from joining various networking groups
- Payment processing fees from your bank or online payment services like PayPal
- The miles you drive to attend client meetings that are not reimbursed
- Anything you purchased on behalf of a client's business that was not paid back (for example, if you bought a licensed image to use in a blog post that was not part of your writing fee)

- Equipment you need to complete your job (for example, a desk, chair, printer, scanner, computer, keyboard, mouse, camera, etc.)

As you claim expenses, it is important to note that you are only allowed to claim the full expense if that item is ONLY used for your freelance business.

For instance, if you only use the grammar software for editing client projects, then you can deduct that full expense. But if you use your computer for online shopping or paying bills outside of work, you can only deduct a percentage of the expense. That percentage is based on how much you use that item for work-only purposes as opposed to recreational.

WRITING OFF SERVICES

In addition to regular equipment expenses you need to complete your job, you also have the ability to write off home services that assist you in doing your job.

While these can also be used for recreation, you can write off portions of your electric, internet, or phone bill depending on how you use them for work.

Much like items that are used both for work and recreation, you can only write off the percentage of that service that you use for work-only purposes.

Here is how that works:

Electric - You can only write off electric if you have a separate office space set up for freelance writing only.

It cannot be used for any other purpose besides completing your job. To write off this expense, you need to calculate the exact square footage of the space that you use for work. Then you need to average your electric bill amount throughout the year and divide it by the total square footage in your house.

Narrow it down to the square feet you use for your work space and that amount is what you can deduct.

Internet - The internet is required for you to find clients and communicate with them, so a portion of that bill can be written off as a deduction as well. Decide the percentage of

time you use the internet for work only and then for recreation. Average all of your internet bills throughout the year and find the percentage of that amount that is used for work only.

Phone - Deducting your phone bill is only relevant if you spend a good deal of time talking to clients in conference calls and not much time making personal calls. If you do speak with clients on the phone on a regular basis, you need to follow the same steps as you did for your internet bill to find out how much you can deduct.

XIII

TIME TO WRITE

KNOWING IS HALF THE BATTLE. THE OTHER
HALF, WELL, THAT'S UP TO YOU.



IF YOU WANT TO BE A WRITER ...

THEN YOU HAVE TO WRITE.

That statement may seem obvious, but every writer is guilty of procrastination and avoidance.

It's in our nature.

The information in this guide, and across the web, will unquestionably provide a solid foundation for you to build your writing career on.

But don't get caught up on learning "too much." The best way to hone your craft, master the skill of freelancing, and feel comfortable with the rollercoaster ride that, at times, will be your new life, is to jump right in.

There is no better time to become a freelance writer. Content is king. Businesses that want to rank on Google and build audiences across social media need to provide their customers and prospects with awesome content.

awesome content.

There's no reason why that content can't be written by you.

Better yet, today's freelance writer has access to a world of job opportunities and tools that make it easier to find work, manage projects, and develop their skills

This guide outlines many resources you have at your disposal. Our own platform, Writers Work, is designed to provide writers every tool they need to start - and build - their careers. From job searching to professional development and project management, we've packed a whole lot into one dashboard.

If you're taking advantage of our 30-day money back guarantee, go ahead and give the site a spin, and let us know if you have any questions along the way!

Regardless of the tools you use, in the end, your success comes down to your passion for what you do, your commitment to your clients, and your ability to adapt to change.

We can't stress enough how important it is to connect with fellow writers - whether in real life, virtually, or both!

Your colleagues in the trenches with you will pick you up when you're down, celebrate your successes, and share their own wisdom and expertise.

And with that, we think the only thing left to say is the one thing you should remind yourself of every day, even on those darkest of days when the screen is blank and your mind is racing.

IT'S TIME TO WRITE.

