

# **The Ultimate Guide to A Successful Freelance Writing Career**

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## Introduction

### Who Am I and Why I'm Writing as if I Know What I'm Talking About?

You know what it's like to wrestle with the desire to write and come away with some success for all the effort. You wouldn't be here if that desire wasn't still alive. Seeing your words in print translates to increased personal satisfaction, but too often the world is not allowed to see your work or if they are the audience generally consists of family, friends or a few online friends you've probably never personally met.

This ebook is designed to help you take your writing to a new place or find a new place for your writing. I'd like to help you find a place where people are willing to pay you to write. This is the world of freelancing and there's plenty of work to go around.

What picture do you have in your mind when you read the word freelancing? Maybe it's a latte sipping, perfectly proportioned specimen of mankind cloistered in a mountain hideaway with a perfectly functioning laptop and a scenic view of Switzerland. That only happens in late night reruns of 'Romancing the Stone'.

In real life a female freelance writer may have to stop what they are doing to get the kids to soccer practice. They might grab a Starbucks™ on the way home, but it will likely spill in traffic. Ideas may be jotted on napkins from the fast food place and for some odd reason this individual will struggle with jelly stains and frequent interruptions.

If it's a guy he likely has a full time job and writes when the kids are in bed or suffers a bit of brain damage trying to write, listen to his kids and concentrate in the midst of trying to tune out the latest television game show.

No freelance writer has an absolutely perfect environment for writing and they struggle with where to find work and where to work when they actually land a job.

I hope to dispel some false assumptions many people have about freelancing and help you figure out what may be the best way to wedge your foot in the freelancing door.

This guide is not designed to help you with grammar and syntax questions. This guide isn't even about how to land a book deal. This guide is a crash course in moving you from that niggling desire you have inside to a place where you do something more with your writing than impress your friends.

So, what qualifies me to write this missive on freelancing? Well, I've been a freelance writer since 1995 and have participated in the writing of nearly 50 books. I have ghostwritten more than a thousand articles and that includes work for a Fortune 500 company that has used my work in the Wall Street Journal. I've also written more than a thousands additional articles that bear my name or a pseudonym.

In the past several years I can't think of a day when I didn't have writing I needed to do for someone. This isn't speculative writing. This is work I had been commissioned to do. This was work where money was either paid up front or paid quickly upon receipt.

If you are a person who has often intended to send something to a publisher, but could never quite hit the submit button or place the package in the mail then this ebook is for you. The nuts and bolts of getting started are within this electronic file.

I've answered enough questions from aspiring writers to know that insecurity is the biggest stumbling block you face. The rest of the Stumbling Block family consist of never knowing quite where to start, how to put a presentation together, what to write about and what to do with your words once you've actually strung a few together.

The truth is freelancing is a somewhat uncomfortable blend of creativity, vulnerability and business proposition. Most writers like the creativity part, but are uncomfortable with the rest.

It can cause more than a minor thrill when you see your name in print, but it can be devastating to receive a rejection notice. This is part of the world of freelancing and it's a hard concept to accept. We

all want publishers to fall in love with our stuff the way friends and family have, but the expectation levels for publishers are different. There are even times when we sabotage the process before we ever hit the submit button. This guide will show how we set our own most devastating roadblocks.

Freelancing is a tough job, but you can do it and I want to show you how.

Keep reading, you may be just a few pages away from discovering new paths for freelance success.

***Focal Point:*** *What is your greatest roadblock when it comes to writing? What steps can you take to remove this obstacle?*

## Why We Never Assume

Maybe I don't need to explain, but the truth is we do have personally held assumptions about everything – even things we know very little about.

When I first started writing I had absolutely no clue that I could be paid for what I did. I gave away my writing for four years without receiving anything other than a byline. My assumption was that if my work was good enough someone was going to call me and sing my praises in four-part harmony. In that fairytale phone call I would be told my work had value and that I should expect a check by Friday.

I never verbalized it that way, but I absolutely assumed that one day my work would be noticed by someone and that would be the turning point in my writing career.

The phone never rang and I was never 'discovered' the way I thought I would.

The turning point came when my wife looked at me and gently said, "Are you always going to write for free? Do you think anyone outside this area would even think about buying your work?"

She had seen me stay up late at night writing and sending articles to people who were very happy to receive content, but had either no ability or intention of paying for it. My wife's not a writer, but she saw that exercise as a bit insane.

In some ways I don't regret writing for free for so long. I've been told a writer needs to pen at least a million words before they write something really good. Maybe that time was the proverbial paying of dues for me.

That being said I took my wife's questions as the encouragement I needed and began to actively look for paying work. I tried some freelance websites and came away with slave wages. I wrote a story about a cooking disaster in my home and sent it to a recipe website and they actually paid me \$40. I became a member of a content delivery team and made enough money to pay for Christmas one

year. I sent manuscripts to a few publishers and came away with three book deals. The successes continued and the learning curve straightened out.

Today I pay quarterly taxes on my earnings and have to be very disciplined to get contracted freelance work completed on time.

If you assume freelance writing is easy – you're wrong.

If you assume someone will discover you – they probably won't.

If you think a publisher will love your work – you might be right, but don't hope for too much.

If you think that you can quit your day job – don't expect that day to come soon.

If you think that you know everything there is to know – you don't.

I'll be honest. I don't know everything there is to know, but I get emails almost daily from other writers looking for direction on how and where to take that next step. I have made it my goal to learn something new everyday and I've taken lots of steps. I have learned it is not in my best interest to assume I know how everything will work. Writing is a trip up a mountain with lots of trails so stop treating it like it's a recipe. There's no pinch of this and dash of that to make the process successful. It's as individualized as DNA.

So, today, you have the benefit of accessing several years of failures that led to success. Along the way we'll take care of a few wrong assumptions. There are a few potholes ahead – let's avoid them together.

### **Takeaways**

- **Assuming you already know the answer to every writing question is bad.**
- **Paying work does not generally happen without your involvement.**
- **Never stop learning more about writing and marketing your work.**
- **Failure happens – success takes work.**

***Focal Point:*** *What is your greatest assumption about freelance writing? Is it possible you are wrong?*



## **Let's Get Started**

I started writing this book with the underlying premise that you already have marketable writing skills. So, when I talk about getting started I will be talking very specifically about moving you from being able to write a great story to finding someone to pay you for writing that great story.

### **Know Your Market**

You really have two choices when it comes to writing for a market. You can either write a story or article and then research publications that might be willing to buy the work or you can research available opportunities first and then write for their specific need.

The choice is up to you and you might even try both approaches, but in most cases you will have more opportunity if you write to a specific need. While you may be interested in the migrating habits of the snowy tree cricket you may find that this subject has fewer writing opportunities than other subjects.

### **Finding a Market**

To locate an actual market for your writing you have two more choices to make. You can either do exhaustive online research looking for paying markets or you can purchase current writing market guides to aid in your research.

Two well-respected guides are...

Writer's Market Deluxe (published by Writer's Digest)

[www.writersstore.com](http://www.writersstore.com)

Sally Stuart's Writers' Market Guide

[www.stuartmarket.com](http://www.stuartmarket.com)

There are other online resources that can be accessed for a fee that provide similar information.

You can also sign up for regular writer's market email based newsletters such as...

Writing for Dollars

<http://awoc.com>

Worldwide Freelance

[www.worldwidefreelance.com](http://www.worldwidefreelance.com)

There are other resources, but both of these are free subscriptions and include freelance opportunities with each email.

A personal favorite freelancing site is Freelance Writing Gigs. This blog-based site provides regular links to actual freelancing jobs also at no cost to site visitors.

[www.freelancewritinggigs.com](http://www.freelancewritinggigs.com)

You'll find other sources for freelance work as well, but these should help you get started in locating available work and knowing what publications exist. You will be able to read submission guidelines and formulate a plan for moving forward with a publishable idea.

A little later we'll deal with how to write a freelance cover letter and what should be included.

I know you want to check some of the links I provided so I'll wait right here until you get back.

### **Takeaways**

- **In order to be successful you need to know your market.**
- **In order to know your market you will need to research opportunities.**
- **In order to research opportunities you need to spend a lot of time looking – or use a few of the links I provided.**
- **In order to use the links you need to be comfortable clicking.**

***Focal Point:*** *Will you take the time to review links or will you move on to the next section first? Will you come back?*

## Roadblock Removal

### Personal

Personal barriers are a huge problem for writers. If it's not self-esteem issues it's a lack of support from family members who routinely ask, "You do what?" and then snicker while gnawing on their corn on the cob.

If writing isn't something you've been doing for a long period of time it can be hard for some to seriously consider you qualified to assume the title.

Find a support group for writers. Many cities will have a writer's group, but if they don't you can locate one online that can feed your need for understanding. Sometimes that's all it takes to move past this particular writing roadblock.

### Professional

What is one of the most common thing new writers hear from publishers? "Where have you been published before?"

So, how do you answer that question when you realize you have found the Catch 22 in writing? After all, you can't publish until you've been published. You can get the job without experience and you can't get experience if you're never offered a job. This is the proverbial conundrum wrapped in an enigma. How do you get past this roadblock?

Unless someone gives you a break you may not find it easy to get that first paid publishing credit.

I'm convinced that some of the best writers in the world have never been published. They either never pushed hard enough or they gave up too quickly and their talent rested in their own mental mothballs.

I can't give you an absolutely successful three-step method for bypassing the publishing "Catch 22", but what I can suggest is to treat your craft as a business even before any money rolls in. Every

business has a start up phase. This is a time when there is a lot of work and little financial reward.

There is a trust factor that is not recognized in your early work. You are an unknown talent in a sea of other unknowns and no publisher has time to take you under their wing.

Long story short, if you are going to succeed as a writer it will largely depend on what you do, how you do it and your overall determination to succeed.

You must find a way to gain the trust of a publisher. The question is always, "How do you do THAT?"

If you are serious about developing your writing into a business then treat it like a business. Refuse to treat it as a hobby you'd like to get paid for. Make it a job. If you treat it like a creative exercise that maybe someone should pay you for you will be largely ignored and little remembered.

Start as small as you need to. Check with your local paper and offer your talent as an intern or string reporter. If they offer you the opportunity to write in the 'events' section of the paper accept it even if they don't pay. Show you can do the work and don't act as if this work is demeaning or trivial.

You are developing a track record so keep at it. Submit material to other publishers when you're not working as a free intern. Learn what you can from rejections and keep fine-tuning your writing and marketing skills.

You have to believe that all this effort is laying the groundwork for something better. Once a publisher extends a new level of trust you should embrace the challenge and nurture the trust. Prove you are capable and can meet deadlines. Exceed expectations.

Writing is an almost equal measure of creating new works and marketing those masterpieces and skills. Keep pushing forward because no one will do it for you.

Writing success is a steady progression of trust. Publishers are looking for dependable writers as much as they look for those who are exceptionally talented. They want both, but talented people who couldn't make deadlines have burned them too often, and these burns heal slowly.

You will have to prove yourself over and over again, but it can pay off in the long run.

Look for ways to use your writing skills to benefit non-profit organizations. Then ask these organizations to write recommendation letters or testimonials you can use in promoting your work. Use this type of experience to build a portfolio.

Above all, if you make a promise then you should deliver ahead of schedule. Give a spotless performance and allow multiple small successes to elevate you to the next step.

Look at your first year in freelance writing as a year of few financial rewards. You are getting your business going and if you can make it past the first year you stand a much better chance at making it in freelance writing.

Don't look at freelance writing as a sideline. Spend time everyday doing something meaningful to move your business forward.

It can be maddening to see the stumbling blocks around you, but you've got to be an individual with enough guts to find ways to move them.

### **Takeaways**

- **Educate your family on what you're doing. If they still aren't coming along for the ride find a support group who will encourage you.**
- **Beat the Catch 22 by being willing to start small with a big dream and don't forget to move up the ladder when the next rung presents itself.**
- **Accept small offers at little no pay and treat it like a paying position. Your boss will find it easy to trust you sooner if you take the work seriously.**

- **Get a few bylines and use them to help you move past the next roadblock.**
- **View this process as you would if you were starting a new business. It will take a while to get established.**

***Focal Point: Freelancing is a commitment. Do you have a support group to help you grow? What barriers have been the hardest to get past?***

## **Freelancing Isn't for Sissies**

I'm surprised how many new freelance writers equate freelancing exclusively with magazine work. While this may have once been true the times, they are a changin'.

With the advent of the Internet freelancing is a term used for virtually any kind of writing imaginable. This extends to things like greeting cards, business plans, copywriting, content for web pages, script writing, speech writing, technical writing, press release development and sales letter writing. This doesn't even take into account newspaper, magazine and Internet column writing as well as blogging and forum posting. The good news is all of these need freelancers who will be paid for their work.

The bad news is in order to get the jobs you need to learn the skills needed to write in any one of these disciplines. For instance greeting card writing is a much different than technical writing. Blog writing is nothing like a business plan.

A freelance writer needs to be able to learn these skills and shift their writing voice often to accommodate the latest freelance writing request.

The greater your ability to adapt and learn new writing skills the greater the marketability of those skills. There is nothing more satisfying than to have a client who may have only thought of you as being able to perform one set of writing skills ask if you know of anyone who could provide copywriting and being able to respond, "Well, as a matter of fact you just happen to be in the presence of someone well versed in such a writing discipline."

Then when they look at you like you've grown a third nostril you can say, "Ummm, yes, I do that, too."

One of the difficulties you might face as a freelancer is having more work than you think you can take care of on your own. You need to honestly assess your abilities and only accept work you are confident you can complete – on time.

If you push the limits too often you will lose clients. In virtually all cases clients will respond better to an honest evaluation of your time and energy than to deal with stall tactics.

Look at it another way. If you have too much to do you also run the risk of unwanted stress and high blood pressure in dealing with an overwhelming workload. It may appear to be an all-you-can-eat buffet, but you can't eat everything just because it's available.

### **A Freelance Perspective Shift**

It can be either freeing or downright debilitating when you begin to see that your skills have begun to move from hobby to job. That may sound strange, but it's true.

For some there comes the realization that this is a moment that allows them to do what they love the most and have the satisfaction that their skills can provide income.

Other new freelance writers feel that the joy they have in writing is slipping away by taking writing on demand jobs instead of writing based entirely on their level of personal inspiration. When the inspiration goes away some writers find it virtually impossible to create new work – no matter how much a client is willing to pay.

If you are one of those individuals that believes you must feel inspired to write you will need to find a new motivation to write or freelancing will be a miserable experience.

### **Takeaways**

- **Freelancing is much more than magazine and newspaper writing. In fact most freelance writing will never appear in typical newsprint.**
- **As a freelance writer you need to be adaptable to new skills and writing styles.**
- **You need to correctly determine how much work you can accomplish and make sure you complete contracted work on time.**
- **Moving into full on freelancing can reveal the type of writer you are. A shift in motivation and thought may be required to be successful.**



**Focal Point:** *What is your motivation for writing? Can you learn to write on demand?*

## A Freelancer's Writing Rights

Imagine sitting down with some friends for a game of cards. You hold a deck with all 52 cards. You can intentionally select any one of them to use when playing the game. Each card means something different when playing and you only use those cards when it is in your best interest to do so. This is how it is with the content you produce as a freelancer.

As the writer of these works you are the owner of multiple rights. Like the deck of cards you may not need to hand someone all of the 'rights' cards in order to find publishing success.

Let's take a look at some of the rights you have available and learn how they might be used to your advantage.

*Exclusive or all rights:* This term is used when you offer every right available to someone in exchange for compensation. This could be money, but sometimes it is simply satisfaction of getting your work published. It is rarely in your best interest to give exclusive rights without appropriate compensation.

*First serial rights:* Newspaper and magazine publishers most often request this right. What this right does is allow you to give an important card in your desk to the publisher in exchange for cash and a published article. First rights allow you to retain ownership in the article, but you have to wait for a specified amount of time before you can sell the article again. Once given you no longer have the first rights card to sell again and the exclusive rights card is also out of play, but you do have other cards to consider.

*Reprint (second) rights:* This right is used as a follow up to a previously published article. You typically can't receive as much compensation for this right, but you still have control of the article.

*Non-exclusive rights:* This right never goes away. You can use this right to allow as many publications as are interested to use an article. There are generally no restrictions on the number of publications that can print your article as long as it is a non-exclusive freelance card you are offering.

*Work for hire:* This is another one of those whole deck rights. In essence this scenario comes into play when you write as part of your job within a company. Anything you write while employed by the company will remain the property of your employer and they are not required to give you any publishing credits or additional compensation for the use of the work. You can also enter into this kind of agreement with a third party. If you are hired to ghostwrite a project you will be paid a fee, but you probably won't be listed as author and you will have no future stake in the financial success of the book.

*Electronic rights:* This is a relatively new arena and one that is often filled with abuse and misunderstanding. Some clients may believe that if they are granted an electronic right they own the article. Some have gone on to use the article in other media presentations. Others have compiled the material to create a secondary work (such as an ebook) and it's even possible to see parts of articles pulled to create a press release. Some freelance writers are not OK with what they view as 'stealing of the cards'. The best way to avoid this issue is to spell out what electronic rights you are allowing. For instance if you are only wanting to allow the client to use the content in one location on their website this should be clearly stated. Some of the educational process related to this right has to come from the freelancer helping the client understand that this really is different than a work for hire arrangement. The truth is in most cases you retain full ownership of the article unless otherwise agreed.

Other rights do exist, but those listed above are the primary rights you will deal with as a freelance writer.

### **Takeaways**

- **By knowing your rights ahead of time you can better determine how your content will be used.**
- **Not all rights are the same, but some writers give up all rights when they don't need to.**
- **There are only two rights that require you to give up ownership of the articles you write.**
- **Electronic rights are very important in the Internet age. Don't give up more rights than you need to.**

***Focal Point:*** *How does this information help you in determining the rights you can make available with your work?*

## The Tax Man Cometh

As with most any business you need to file paperwork with the appropriate state agency to obtain a business license. It may work to your benefit to maintain a separate checking account and keep tabs on allowable expenses and income.

It is possible to get by without paying quarterly taxes, but if your business does well you may experience a huge crunch come tax time (personal experience talking). Set up a quarterly tax payment with your tax preparer and don't forget applicable state and city taxes.

The good news is there is a broad range of deductions that can be taken by authors to help them confront the tax burden you will bear for writing income. These expenses can work to offset the total amount of taxable writing income.

What are allowable expenses for a writer?

While not exhaustive, here is a list of some of the more common deductions.

- *Supplies used in the development of your business and research on writing projects.*
- *Subscriptions to writing publications.*
- *Dues paid to writing societies and organizations.*
- *Books, furniture and equipment used in your business.*
- *Conference and convention fees associated with the writing profession.*
- *Some expenses related to a home office.*
- *Copyright fees if you have to pay for the copyright yourself.*
- *Entry fees for writing contests.*
- *Tax preparation fees.*

None of the information listed here should be considered legal advice. Certain laws exist in different states (and certainly different

countries) that make this general information. Legal information should come your accountant, tax preparer or attorney.

### **Takeaways**

- **Keep good income records even if you receive very little revenue from your writing.**
- **Keep track of all expenses.**
- **You will have a period of time to prove your business is more than just a hobby. Make it a business.**
- **Take advantage of every deduction available.**

***Focal Point:** Does the thought of keeping business records send tremors down your spine? How can you prevent this necessary record keeping procedure from holding you back from fulfilling your dream?*

## Letters, Forms and Function

I often receive questions about how to write a freelance query letter, what a confidentiality agreement is and how to write a simple contract.

In this section I'd like to show you a few samples of some of these documents. I'd also like to explain their function and allow you to gain positive insight into how this can help you land a writing job.

### **Nondisclosure Agreement**

One of the more simplified agreements can be initiated by a prospective client or it could be started by you if the idea you are sharing is something that is unique enough that there needs to be an agreement that the information will not be shared.

This is often referred to as a non-disclosure agreement in the United States and a confidentiality agreement in most other countries. What follows is the basic of what can be accepted as a nondisclosure agreement.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby affirm that I will not divulge any information I receive in regard to a project initiated by [publisher's name here] to anyone else without the express permission in writing of [publisher's name here]. This affirmation will be effective whether or not I am engaged to work for this project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

It is very simple, but allows the discussion of a sensitive idea with the written consent of a publisher and author. Without a nondisclosure agreement an individual could basically steal the idea and create his or her own project based on the information provided

### **Takeaways**

- **Confidentiality is important in almost every freelance writing job.**
- **Your client should be assured you will maintain the privacy of the idea even if you don't ultimately get the job.**
- **Signing a nondisclosure agreement provides the best alternative to project discovery and personal trust.**
- **You can use a nondisclosure agreement to protect any idea you want to pitch to a client.**

## **Sample writing contract**

Every writing contract is different and every contract responds to the actual needs of the customer. Don't think of this as a contract that can be applied in all instances and to each client. Adjust accordingly and seek legal advice. As with all information in this ebook it is subject to other legal and professional advice you may receive in your part of the world.

## **Freelance Service Terms**

**Parties and Assignment.** This agreement (Hereafter the "Agreement") is made and entered into as of the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_ (hereafter the "Effective Date") between and by \_\_\_\_\_ (customer name, hereafter referred to as "Client") and [your business name] (hereafter referred to as "Writer"). This contract is created for professional writing services and are applicable to the following project title(s):

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In consideration of the following contract, the parties mutually agree to the following terms:

**Work.** Writer agrees to produce creative texts (hereafter the "Work") at the request of the Client for mutually understood fees outlined in the "Reparations" section below and agreed to in execution of this contract. Writer will turn in or deliver the Work by a Client specified deadline. Writer agrees to be the sole author of the Work and will provide original content devoid of plagiarism. Writer agrees to use reasonable care to ensure the correctness of the contents facts.



Further, the Writer will take reasonable care to ensure the Work does not violate copyright or other applicable rights of a third party. Client retains the right to edit the Work for content, style or any other reason prior to publication. Writer will cooperate with Client in editing and revising the Work prior to acceptance. Writer will cooperate with Client if any complaints, claims or litigation should arise referencing the Work.

**Reparation.** Client agrees to compensate Writer in one of the following manners: \$\_\_\_\_\_ per hour, \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per word, or a flat project fee of \$\_\_\_\_\_. If the parameters of the Work are altered, or if it involves a substantially increased time commitment than originally estimated, Writer will inform Client and a renegotiated rate will be set. Writer will bill for half of the total estimated cost when Writer begins the Work and the remainder upon completion. Writer will require 50% of the total estimate cost up front for any first-time Client.

Long distance phone calls and postage will be considered incidental expenses and will not be passed on to Client. Mileage to events relevant to the work will be billed at the current IRS rate.

As an independent contractor the Writer is responsible for the payment of all applicable taxes with respect to the services performed on the Clients behalf. The Writer will not be treated as an employee for any purpose.

**Content Alterations.** Changes ordered by Client to the Work parameters following the execution of this contract are subject to additional charges. Should these changes negate any part of the Work already completed at the time of Client directed alterations, Client accepts responsibility for payment of work already completed as well as all interrelated services. This is in addition to charges assessed for the requested alteration(s).

**Project Termination.** Upon written or verbal cancellation, Client is responsible for payment of all expenses incurred and any work done toward the completion of the project based on the percentage of project completed. Should Client cancel the project following its

completion, Client is responsible for full payment as per the above estimate plus all related and incurred expenses.

**Payment and Collection.** Invoices not paid within \_\_\_\_\_ days of the invoice date will accumulate interest at \_\_\_\_\_% per month unless otherwise specified in writing. Client agrees to pay for each check returned for insufficient funds \$\_\_\_\_\_ per occurrence or \_\_\_\_\_% of the value of each returned check, whichever is greater. Client agrees to pay all reasonable attorney's fees (at least \_\_\_\_\_% of all amounts due, including interest) if any account is placed with an attorney for collection.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Client), declare that I have the authority to promise compensation for the services rendered by Writer for Work described herein. I declare that I have read, understood and agreed to these Service Terms.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Customer Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Writer) declare that I have read, understood and agree to the above Service Terms.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Writer's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

### **Takeaways**

- **Try to deal with as many eventualities as possible.**
- **By knowing what is expected you and your client can be comfortable having a better understanding of the terms.**
- **An agreement like this is designed for your protection – and your client's.**
- **This or other agreements can serve to best answer questions your client may have throughout the process.**

## Cover Letter

Unlike a cover letter designed for a book proposal you may find that you will often reply to freelance work by email. The response should be simple, provide links to online published work and have attached samples of your resume and additional writing.

This doesn't have to be extremely elaborate. Let me key in on a sample.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Your recent freelance job posting was intriguing.

Having provided freelance work for more than eight years I can understand the specific requirements you may feel are needed in this job.

You may have questions about my ability or credentials so I offer links to some work completed for national and international clientele.

[Link # 1]

[Link # 2]

Etc.

In the attachments provided you will find my resume as well as additional articles for your consideration.

Should you require any further information of samples please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I welcome the opportunity for further dialogue.

Kindest Regards,

[Writer]

## Takeaways

- Individuals posting work are not your friends so treat them as prospective clients. Professionalism should be first, foremost and always.
- Take time to craft your email. No spelling errors and double-check links.
- Your call to action should be evident in the reply so be gracious when responding. Don't beg.
- Recheck files you plan to attach to ensure resume details are correct and up-to-date.

***Focal Point:** How can these tools help you further your goals in freelance writing? Will you use them?*

## Freelancing Q & A

I get lots of questions about freelance writing, so let me take several of these questions one at a time and answer them in as concise a manner as possible.

*How do I market my work?*

One of the best ways is to develop a writer's website and then put together one or more social media sites that will point visitors back to your primary business website. Use your site information in the signature lines of emails and forum boards. Develop and issue press releases talking about your services and any new developments within your business.

Use free to use article sites to create backlinks to your writer's site.

[www.ezinearticles.com](http://www.ezinearticles.com)

[www.articlesbase.com](http://www.articlesbase.com)

[www.goarticles.com](http://www.goarticles.com)

The use of free article directories can also have a huge impact on your visibility as a writer because it allows your work to be used in places you wouldn't have thought to ask for publishing space. The condition of the use of free articles is a byline with links at the bottom. By providing links to your business in the bio section you can drive traffic to your site and potentially improve your site rankings in online search engines. You might even gain a few new clients.

Your website should supply samples of your work in a variety of disciplines and styles.

Keep a running tab of all the successes you've had and list them in any presentations you might make to potential clients. Be positive and never be afraid to present a call to action. If you want someone to hire you sometimes you actually need to ask for the job by giving him or her every possible reason to hire you. Sometimes clients just need a nudge in the right direction, just don't be heavy handed in the nudging.

Don't think of freelance work only as something that you do for someone in another state or country. Look for opportunities to write where you live. You may find a full plate of opportunity waiting just down the street or across town.

Get creative. You don't need me to tell you it is important to get your work out there. Take these suggestions and add a few of your own.

*How do I organize submissions?*

Well, you either have a photographic memory that can recall who you sent what to, or you use an article tracker to help you keep tabs on the location of your work and the status of any writing.

An article tracker is a simple software tool you can use to track submissions and their progress. You can list articles that may have been sold and ones that didn't make it and still need a good home.

Here's a link to one free article tracker...

[www.luminarypub.com/services/writersdb](http://www.luminarypub.com/services/writersdb)

If you are technically gifted it probably wouldn't be overly difficult to create a database program that does something very similar. Some of the fields that will prove beneficial are article title, publisher submitted to, submission date, status, income from sale, and expenses.

*How do I set a price?*

This is about as subjective a topic as you can find in the world of freelancing. Some content suppliers crank out material at \$1-\$30 per 400 word article.

Some writing organizations recommend a sliding scale based on difficulty ranging from ten cents to three dollars per word. Or \$30-\$350 per hour.

There is another simple formula that can be used to basically help you come to terms with what you want to make in any given year. If,

for instance you want \$100,000 after expenses this is how you would determine your hourly wage.

1. Divide your target amount by the total number of billable hours you will choose to work in the year (5-8 hours a day times the number of days you will work in a week). This will help you come to terms with the profit you will need.

2. Make a list of all your expenses and divide that over the total number of hours you will work in the year.

3. Add the hourly expenses with the hourly profit to come up with what you will need to earn per hour.

This idea can be used for virtually any business including writing. This idea also operates on the belief that you will not be writing for publications that dictate their own pay scale to you. As a freelancer you need to know that sometimes terms are dictated to you. Be willing to consider client's offers.

*How do I handle a difficult client?*

One of the best ways to handle a difficult client is to defuse the issues before there is the opportunity for difficulty. Have a standard contract (like the one above) in place that is signed by the client and by you. This contract will outline what you are doing for the client, what they can expect from you and what you expect from them. If the terms are spelled out in writing and the client has signed it there isn't a lot to complain about.

If there were still complaints I would work to resolve them in a professional manner.

I have to be honest; you will come across some clients that would not be satisfied even if Noah Webster wrote something for them.

Remember if you have a contract you can diplomatically refer them to the expectations and delivery of the product and show them that the contract was fulfilled as agreed.

### *How do I know when to walk away from a project gracefully?*

There are some telling signs early in the work phase that may alert you to issues that can indicate your client is not easy to work with. They may not be happy with the use of certain words or a source you've selected. They may not like the style of writing or the conclusion you came up with.

Let me just say that if you are writing for a client you need to know that adjusting your style and skill sets to their requirements is an absolute must, but there will be times when every small step you seem to take toward the client only moves them back three or four large steps. If that happens you might consider suggesting a different course of action to your client.

You may also find that once you engage in a project that it either is very uncomfortable or you honestly determine you don't have enough skills to manage the project. This would also be a strong indication that you need to bow out of the project.

### *How do I create an effective business name?*

All business names should be easy to remember without being too gimmicky. The name should have a distinct tie to what you do. Words like scribe, pen, words and content may be useful in helping potential customers understand and remember what you do.

One of the problems many writers encounter is developing a name that sounds very cool, but has no tie to what they actually do. If a passive consumer writes your business name down on a piece of paper will they recall what you do from looking at the name?

For instance if you're name was B&B Services would the potential client think of a bed and breakfast or a writing service? How about The Writer's Hatchery – where good ideas grow one word at a time? I actually had to do some looking to be sure I wasn't inadvertently borrowing an existing name. This may not be a perfect example, but it uses a term related to your craft while giving you some business branding opportunities (Okay, I admit the name was a bit gimmicky).



### *How do I introduce my business to generate client interest?*

If you have this desperate urge to go up to someone and say, “Hi, I write stories for a living. Do you need something written?” seek therapy.

Reverse your strategy and find out more about the individual. People love talking about themselves so spend some time getting to know a prospective client in a social setting.

If they ask what you can do for them DO NOT say, “I can write.” Instead, explain the benefits of what you can bring to the table. You should talk about things like your ability to help improved a consumers understanding of their business, the potential to increase sales or greater visibility in the community or online.

You see writing is a tool you will use to facilitate all the things the client considers to be beneficial to the growth of their idea or business.

Most clients will be primarily interested in what benefits you are able to provide. They may not necessarily interested in how well you write.

You should consider local chamber meetings or business get togethers to meet business owners who may need help in marketing.

Writing is not one-dimensional. Clients will need all kinds of writing taken care of. You may find some of the best-paid work you will do is writing for and about business or even academic or technical writing.

### *How do I write financial contracts so I know I'll be paid?*

You have already seen the sample contract above. I have a policy to gently require full payment in many cases on first orders. I will say something like, “I'll be happy to get started on the project we discussed as soon as payment has been made.”

I have lost a few clients because of this policy, but in most cases I later learned it was doubtful they meant to pay in the first place. This

strategy forces mutual trust in the process although understandably it is not always a workable solution.

Structure your contract to include the term, “best of my ability”. It is possible you will have a client that assumes (remember that’s a bad thing) your work will rival the greatest literary work known to mankind. While your work may be awesome it may not completely align with the expectations of the client.

Help your client understand the basic details of the contract before you get started. You don’t want anything to hinder them from paying.

List the remedial action that will be enacted for failure to pay. This could be turning the client over to a collection agency or arbitration.

*Is copyrighting my work really important?*

It’s can’t hurt, but it may not be totally necessary. For instance, if what you are doing is a work for hire project then there is no need to worry about a copyright because once you pass the finished product on to the client the work becomes their ownership and responsibility.

Copyrights cost \$35-45 per instance as of this writing. This might make sense when it comes to a book, but for an article you may actually spend more to copyright the article than you will be paid. If there’s any plus side to this you may be able to deduct copyright expenses on your taxes.

My suggestion is to allow your computer to do the talking for you in any dispute over intellectual property. Your computer will time stamp every file created on it. If the originality of the work is ever called into question you can produce the computer file that proves ownership.

If you’d like more information on copyright please check the following link.

[www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov)

*How is writing for the Internet different from writing for print publications?*

One of the primary differences between writing for the Internet compared to writing for traditional print is that search engines rank every page on the Internet while there is not the same scenario for print publications.

Why is that important? When you write for the Internet you will likely be presented with a keyword or key phrase that will be used to help the content you are writing gain high marks for the client when it comes to page rankings.

Internet based writing is also often less formal than standard print publications.

*What should I do when editors don't respond to me or don't pay me what they said they would or when they don't send me copies of the publication in which they printed my articles?*

This can be a tough one, especially when it already takes so long for publishers to get in touch to let you know if the article is even going to be used.

I recall a time when I had a magazine article in play for almost two years before I received a check. The article itself was accepted within two months of submission, but the submission guidelines indicated the payment was not made until the article was published. So I waited more than a year and a half longer to receive the check.

The first rule is to be patient because things move extremely slowly in publishing. I typically give publishers all the time they ask for and then add a month. At that point I send a very diplomatic follow up inquiring on the status of acceptance or payment.

If the response confirms payment is to be made, but has been delayed for whatever reason then you should hang on to that letter or email. They have admitted to owing you funds for services rendered.

I bring this up because I had a major publishing house contract for seven stories to be used in five books. I was quickly paid for two of the stories, but not the other five.

I kept in contact with them in a diplomatic way and later learned of some devastating circumstances that made it virtually impossible to pay at that time. I understand some of the other writers on that project ultimately marked it off as bad debt, but I periodically asked about the payment status. This was important to me because these books were in every bookstore I went into. I figured at some point the negative circumstance would change. Nearly three years later I received an unexpected package containing the books I participated in and a check for the full amount I was owed.

You don't have to use a verbal sledgehammer to collect especially if it is someone you would like to work with again. In my case I have been asked to work with this client again. However, this time there is a new understanding of how payment will be made and the previous scenario should be avoided by mutual agreement.

### **Takeaways**

- **Writers have lots of questions.**
- **Many of those questions are asked in this section.**
- **Spend some time reviewing the questions and answers.**
- **Grab a cup of coffee there's a lot to consider.**

***Focal Point:** Was there at least one question answered that was helpful? How will you use that answer to further your freelance objectives?*

## Know Your Freelancing Terms – A Glossary

*Advance:* Payment given to a writer prior to publishing that is subtracted from any future royalty payments or as a means of securing the writer's services for use in a publication.

*Assignment:* A contracted article produced by a writer appointed to the project.

*Byline:* Typically this indicates the inclusion of the author's name in an article.

*Clip:* Samples of previously published articles, essays, etc. that can be forwarded to editors to indicate the quality of the work the writer can bring to a project. This is sometimes referred to as a tear sheet.

*Columnist:* A writer who has been given the assignment of taking on a specific location in a publication with a regular feature generally dealing with a particular subject matter.

*Copyright:* Generally a government document that acknowledges the legal ownership of an article or manuscript as the intellectual property of a singular author. This is used to prohibit any other writer from using the content in his or her own work and without permission and compensation to the original author. Any future use of the material is at the discretion of the copyright holder.

*Copywriter:* This describes a salesperson that uses words or a writer who is a salesperson. These writers are skilled at advertisement marketing and in finding ways to get the media interested in a project that has commercial value. The names of these individuals are not generally attributed to any of the marketing materials they produce.

*Cover Letter:* A short letter of explanation to an editor about a submission. This type of letter should be kept to a single page in length.

*Editor:* The faceless and sometimes nameless individual that likes to send out rejection notices. Actually these individuals work to locate material suitable for the issue or section they have been assigned to

work on as part of a publication. They typically have many more submissions than they have space for.

*Electronic Submission:* This does away with the stamps, envelopes and lag time. You can send a submission via email or a form page on the publication's website. An answer may not be quick in return, but at least it arrives faster and generally in a format the publisher can easily use.

*Feature:* A story of general or broad interest that can be used as part of virtually any issue of a publication.

*Filler:* Reader's Digest is filled with this kind of writing. These are short items that are easy to read, sometimes humorous and provide something to pass time with when you're waiting for the dentist. They are like insulation – they fill up space in a publication and are generally help keep thing warm.

*Freelancer:* Someone not employed by a singular business or publisher on a full-time basis. These individuals work with a variety of clients to fulfill multiple requests. They are typically paid by the job or by the hour and are responsible for their own taxes and benefits.

*Ghostwriter:* A writer who is generally invisible to readers. These men and women write articles, stories and even full-length books for someone else. The credit for the book will go to the individual who hired the writer. These wordsmiths are responsible for a fair amount of literary works, but are comfortable providing the material on a work for hire basis and passing along all rights to the manuscript.

*Kill Fee:* When you receive notice that your work has been accepted by a publication, but for some reason they later change their mind you may receive this fee. You are then free to resubmit that work elsewhere.

*Manuscript:* A full-length book in raw text format presented to a publisher for consideration.

*Multiple submissions:* When you have several articles that you feel may be of interest to a single publisher you may decide to send them

to the publisher in one packet. Make sure this is allowed in the submission guidelines.

*Pays On Acceptance:* This is a method preferred by many writers. The editor will pay you for the article when they make a decision to include it in an upcoming edition of the publication.

*Pays On Publication:* A less popular, but often more common approach to paying writers. This scenario makes payment for the work contingent on actual publishing. Sometimes an author can wait months and sometimes years for payment.

*Query Letter:* A letter of investigation and intent. The writer will send the letter along to pitch an idea to the editor. If the editor believes the idea is good the writer may be encouraged to write the article for potential publication.

*Simultaneous Submissions:* A single writing forwarded to multiple publishers in the hopes that one of them will publish the material. Again, make sure any publisher you consider working with allows this by carefully reading their submission guidelines.

*Submission:* When you finish a specific writing and send it on to a publisher for full evaluation in hopes they will publish the material.

*Unsolicited Manuscript:* This is a bold move that presents a full-length story that has not been requested and was not previously pitched to the publisher. Although this is often thought of in relation to book writing it could also be considered true for articles you have not been asked to provide. In many cases the publisher will not read this type of material.

*Writing Sample:* A published or unpublished work supplied by a writer so a publisher can get a sense for the type of work the writer is capable of.

## **Takeaways**

- **Knowing the terms of the trade help you understand publishing potential.**

- **Submission rules can help you understand what publishers expect.**
- **Approaching publishers is easier when your work is packaged correctly.**

***Focal Point:*** *What can these terms do to help you improve your chances of acceptance? What is your top three terms? Why?*



## Stepping Out

You were born with a gift. You may have been hiding that gift for years, but it's time to do something with that ability.

You wouldn't have purchased this ebook if you weren't interested in doing something special with those words that come without your asking them to. Words that invade sleep and insist on being written down and words that have perhaps previously existed for your own eyes alone.

You might have purchased this ebook with the goal of turning your dreams into cash or you might have a small dream and wonder if it has the potential to grow. However you got here, you've made it this far. What are you going to do with what you now know?

Some might set this file aside and 'intend' to come back and review some of the information, but chances are pretty good this file will be forgotten. Others will savor this tome like a four-course meal and follow the links provided.

What I'm saying is some will take this material seriously – maybe that will be you. It's possible you will take a risk and apply for a freelance job. You might choose to take a step today that takes you closer to that first freelance payday.

Can I promise that you will gain unlimited freelance writing offers? No. What I can promise is that in this ebook file you have a significant amount of information and tools to bring you into the right places and with the right professional attitude to present yourself well with that next freelance opportunity.

My journey was not an overnight adventure and I messed a few things up along the way, but then again I did not have anyone to guide me in how to do this thing called freelance. My journey began with small steps and little knowledge. I ran smack dab into roadblocks.

The truth is I took some of those slave labor jobs where I earned \$2 for a five hundred-word article. At the time I was just happy to earn a little money doing what I loved to do. After writing a few of those articles the fun was absolutely drained from the process. I had to decide if I was willing to return to a creative hobby or if I had the drive to take to the next step.

I was determined to take the next step.

If you don't believe in your worth as a writer you will never convince potential clients that paying you what you are worth makes good business sense.

It seems as if the need for words is never ending. Words are needed to fill every new page on the Internet and they are useful in creating marketing materials for businesses around the world.

When you hear a commercial on the radio or watch one on television someone had to write the copy. When you hear a newscast there was an individual who had to write the news. The menu at your favorite restaurant had to have someone put it together.

Our world is made up of words and someone has to bring their creativity to the project in order for the effort to succeed. The need for freelance writers is not decreasing – it is growing.

It was easy to make the decision to package this information to share because there is plenty of work for motivated and skilled writers to join the fray.

You could join a content cooperative to gain work, but in most cases you are making money primarily for the individual who put the content business together. It takes a little time to learn the delicate touch needed to market your skills, but by striking out on your own you will find the greatest potential to gain improved income.

In order to move forward with your freelance business there has to be personal changes. Any meaningful alteration in life begins with a change in thinking. If you don't think you're worth it that's one thing,

but if you believe you have skills that have value then place a value on that skill and don't apologize for it.

One of my chapter titles is "Freelancing Isn't for Sissies". This can be very hard work and there are many things that need to be learned. But just like a guitar player that suffers through the development of calluses on their fingers you can soon play with the best – if you get to work.

### Takeaways

- **In many ways the future is a blank slate waiting for your words.**
- **You have the skills – what will you write?**
- **Better get started.**

## **BECOME AN AFFILIATE AND MAKE A 50% COMMISSION**

If you would like to sell this guide and receive a 50% commission for each and every copy you sell, you can become an affiliate at the link below:

<http://www.writingsuccessguide.com/affiliate.html>

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