

# Get Started in



# Freelance Writing

By Jill Black

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Net Writing and Publishing Success

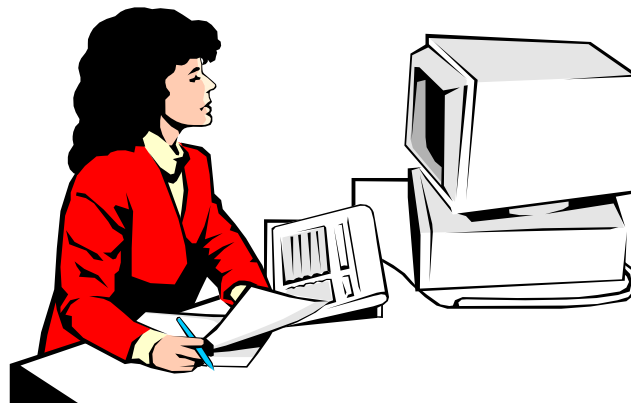
<http://www.netwrite-publish.com>

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## Introduction to freelance writing


As a freelancer there are many opportunities available for working from home or to provide an extra stream of income for you in your spare time by filling the needs of a widely diverse market as a paid freelance article writer both on the internet and in offline publications.



## What is a Freelancer?

A freelancer is an independent writer who earns his/her living by contracting for work projects, working for no fixed employer, and may work for a number of employers at any given time.

You will be required to negotiate the terms and conditions of work and all work must be completed to the satisfaction of the client's requirements.

 **Tip:** The objectives and requirements of both parties should be understood fully by both parties from the start to save any problems later on - this includes terms of payment.

As a freelancer you need to keep up with the latest developments to compete in the marketplace.

This requires studying and researching the needs of the marketplace along with selling yourself to your potential clients.

## Getting Started

The freelance market can be fiercely competitive at times requiring emphasis on marketing your work effectively and assessing your expertise and skills.

"How to" articles tend to sell well and most successful freelancers maintain constant contact with marketplace trends and requirements seeking those areas where they can fill the needs of potential clients.



You will need a resume and/or a writer's brochure.

When writing your resume use short sentences with each paragraph easy to read and clearly outline your qualifications or related experience for the job.

Normally you will only have a few seconds to make an impact on your prospective client - this can make the difference between hiring you or someone else.

To find a niche (your niche) Web monkey has a very good article on finding and defining your niche as a web freelancer.

<http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/98/44/index4a.html?tw=jobs>

Many writers prefer to stick within the topic subjects they can write confidently on although a good freelancer can research and write on any topic if and when required.

When you are decided on the subject niche you would like to fill, seek out magazine publications - online and offline - on your chosen topic.

If you do not wish to bid for online work contracts at some of the sites listed below until you have gained confidence in your work then you can start your freelance career by seeking out publications in your chosen field that accept articles e.g. if your interest is in fishing go to your local outlet selling magazines and see if they accept article contributions (this can usually be found near the inside of the front cover in most magazines)

See resource [Freelance writers market guidelines](#) for online magazines.

Many freelancers start by submitting to local community newspapers/letters as a way of establishing credibility as a published writer.

Send a query letter or email your chosen publication/s with your subject ideas and an outline of your proposed article and how they may contact you if interested.

However, expect to wait some time - sometimes up to three weeks or more if approaching offline publications for a reply as most editors are very busy people.



## Freelance writing ideas and opportunities

To create your home-based freelance business and earn money based on your individual knowledge, creativity, talents and skills there are many areas and opportunities to choose from that involve freelance writing. Some of the common areas include...

- Article writing and fillers.
- Photojournalism
- Travel writer and photographer
- Stringer for international newspapers or magazines
- Newspaper or magazine columnist
- Writing services for web page content, web sales copy, email and auto responder messages
- Newsletter writing services – traditional and online publications
- Press release services
- Writing tutorials and training courses – for print and online publications
- Writing user manuals – for print and online publications
- Public relations presentations
- Classified advertising and advertorial services - traditional media and online (an advertorial is an advertising supplement that reads like an editorial)
- Brochure, leaflet writing services
- Booklet writing services for corporations, associations and clubs - for print and online publications
- Resume and job application writing services - traditional and online
- Speech writing services
- Manuscript writing services
- Editing services - for print and online publications
- Report writing services e.g. company reports, in-house journals or club and association journals
- Document translation services - do you know more than one language?
- Compiling information directories, databases and related services
- Screen or script writing
- Ghost writing

- Indexing services - for books, periodicals, directories...
- Business card, letterhead, fax headers, and envelope creation services
- Greeting cards and verse -electronic and traditional
- Postcards and postcard caption writing -electronic and traditional
- Cartoon and caption writing - traditional and online
- Certificate and award creation services - traditional and online
- Flash movie scripts
- Online game scripts

All of these ideas and more can be turned into a profitable Internet business easily run from home working on a full or part-time basis.

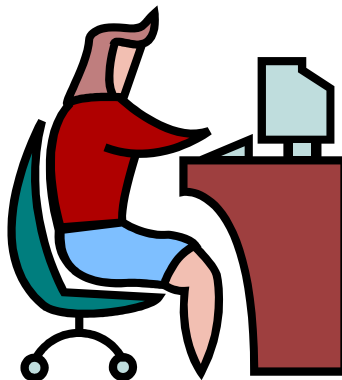
### The bottom line...

***"Diversifying individual talents and building a personal portfolio that provides multiple streams of income is increasingly becoming a factor towards enjoying a individually designed and unique lifestyle or as a recession proof policy against downturns in the economy..."***

## Setting up the office

When setting up your office workplace it should be designed for comfort and efficiency.

If possible, set aside a certain area of your home especially for your business.



Bookshelves for storage of reference material.

Plan and design your daily work and personal routines. Decide how many hours you will devote to your new business? Then set a schedule for yourself.

Leave time for personal leisure activities and allow time to spend with family and friends etc. Avoid spending every spare minute of your waking time on your business and neglecting the other areas of your life. This is an easy trap to fall into.

Stationery requirements include standard items such as pens, pencils, paper, and notebook or several notebooks to carry with you for jotting down your ideas as they occur.

Most people keep several notebooks, with pens, in the car, beside the bed, in their pockets because you never know when inspiration will strike.

A small tape recorder is also another popular way to record ideas as they occur.



A filing cabinet or some other method for storage of research material and normal hard copy business documents that must be kept.



A separate telephone line and fax are good additions for any home office.

To spread the word about your new business venture use your stationary letterheads and business cards to advertise and promote your web site URL to everyone you come in contact with.

### Business account

You need to open a business account at some stage to keep your business transactions separate from your personal finances for taxation purposes.

### Develop a budget

Make a budget of your living expenses. Allow for web hosting fees, domain name registration and other expenses associated with your new business.

Know how much you will need to be earning from your business before you give up your regular job.



When your business generates profits in excess of your normal wage then you can make your new business a full time profession.

This avoids a lot of stress that can be associated with a new venture.

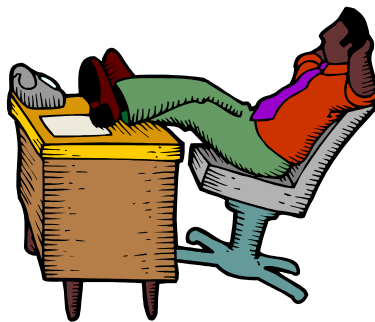
### Find out about tax obligations

Find out about your tax obligations and any zoning restrictions to starting your business from home before you start.

### Develop an easy to follow strategic plan

Develop a plan to give focus and business direction. Take one step at a time. Develop and modify your plans as your business grows.

## **Remain flexible in your plans & ideas and have FUN**



## Planning your writing time



"Anyone can call themselves a writer but you eventually learn one thing... if you want to see your writing in print and be paid for your efforts you must first write something"

It is true that people are very busy, but a little extra time can always be found. This may mean giving up watching so much television, going out for drinks with your friends or other activities that are unproductive in the long run...

As a independent writer you need to be a self-starter, creative, motivated, independent, self-disciplined, productive and organized all while coming up with new ideas, writing articles or books and running your business.

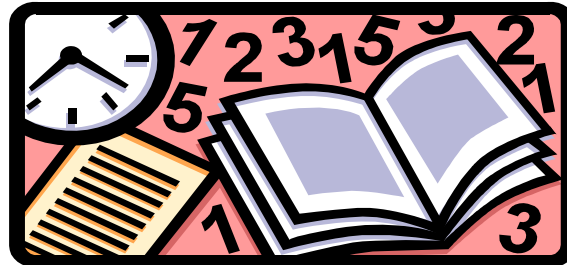
There are thousands of writers that produce material everyday while looking after small children, running their web site or business or while working at a full time job. So how do they find the time?

Before you begin on your writing career start by freeing up the time you will require by clearing all those jobs around the home you have been meaning to do. This helps to psychologically free your mind to enjoy the time spent writing and is known to create a "flow on" effect. An organized and uncluttered life leads to uncluttered, clear and concise writing.


When you have cleared those "niggling" jobs out of the way decide that from now on whatever needs to be done around the home you will set aside a specific time to get these chores done as part of a regular schedule.

## Pre-plan your time...

It is important to think of time as your most valuable asset...and it is... when writing and running your business from home.



From the beginning you need to learn to write on a regular basis and set yourself reasonable writing goals.

 **Tip:** Don't cause yourself unnecessary frustration through setting unrealistic goals e.g. to produce 3,000 words a day. This will reflect in your work not being as good as it might be if you try to write under this kind of pressure. If you fall short of your writing goal on a regular basis, it may be time to reassess your goal.

## Keep a daily log of your writing accomplishments.

Develop a writing schedule for yourself and stick to it the same way, as you would organize your other regular day-to-day activities.

### Step 1

- Decide how many hours you will devote to writing.

### Step 2

Plan and design your daily work and personal routines.

- What you have to do each day.
- What you want to do each day.
- When you are going to do it.

Avoid spending every spare minute of your time on your writing. It is easy to fall into this trap and lock yourself away neglecting the other areas of your life.

Leave space in your schedule for your spouse, family and friends to avoid any resentment's should they suddenly find themselves excluded from your life. This especially applies to young children who may not understand if you are suddenly unavailable.

You may not be able to find the time to write every day but your success will be determined by the amount of time that you do spend writing.

Choose the actual writing times that suit you best. If you find you work best early in the morning then develop a regular routine and write at this time. Similarly if you work best at night then establish an evening routine.

Some writer's work at two, three, four-hour stretches at a time, others work a full eight-hour day, while some prefer to do marathon stretch until they are finished.

Have a notebook or several notebooks to carry with you for jotting down ideas as they occur throughout the day outside of your writing time. Most people keep several notebooks with pens, in the car, beside the bed, in their pockets because you never know when inspiration will strike.

A voice activated tape recorder is also another popular way for recording ideas when circumstances mean you are away from your computer or it would be impractical to use a notebook e.g. when travelling in a car.

Most articles or books require some research. Allocate this research time into your schedule. Some research tasks can only be done during business hours, the actual writing however can be done at a time that best suits you.

When organizing and planning your time for writing and find you can only spare the time to write part-time or for only an hour a day... take heart and remember!

Anthony Trollope wrote Victorian novels before dawn or on his way

to work in the Post Office. William Faulkner wrote "sanctuary" part-time while working in a boiler room.



There are many stories of writers who have overcome personal obstacles to achieve recognition through their writing.

Compared to these people how big are your own distractions, interruptions and other excuses for not getting on and earning a living from your writing?

## Ways to find work on the Internet


The Internet has made it easier to build a successful freelance career as an independent professional.

To find markets on the Internet visit Yahoo groups, Topica etc and join the many writing job newsletters and job boards.

There are also many sites that bring people together to find contract work ... Some offer a free service, others you will need to register with and/or supply your resume before you can get started.

Here are some places to start...

<http://www.writerfind.com> (international)  
<http://www.freelanceworkexchange.com>  
<http://www.freelancewriting.com>  
<http://freelancing4money.com>  
<http://www.worldwidefreelance.com> (international)  
<http://freelancewrite.about.com>  
<http://www.burymen.com> (click on the freelance job and non-fiction writing link)  
<http://www.burbages.com>  
<http://www.flipdog.com>  
<http://www.guru.com>  
<http://www.writersweekly.com>  
<http://writerslounge.com>  
<http://www.smarterwork.com>  
<http://www.writerswrite.com>  
<http://www.bullhorn.com>  
<http://www.writestart.com>  
<http://www.jobsonline.com>  
<http://www.elance.com>  
<http://www.travelwriters.com> (for travel writers)  
<http://www.sunoasis.com>  
<http://www.twinn.com>  
<http://www.allfreelancesearch.com>  
<http://www.allfreelancework.com> (sister site of allfreelancesearch.com)  
<http://usfreelance.com>

 Tip: The government is one of the largest sources for freelance contract work in most countries. Don't forget to check out what work contracts they may have available.

Another option for the freelancer is to do some detective work of your own to source work.

Apart from enquiring with local businesses in your area you can also look for new web sites on the Internet and send a congratulatory email.

Explain your services and how your work can help them while politely enquiring if they have any current or future needs for the services you can offer and how they may contact you.


For Example ...

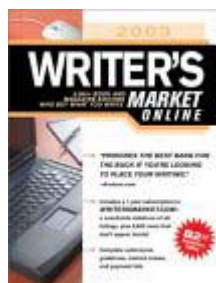
I am a full-time freelance writer specialising in online content. I can help your website get results through email communications, website copy, and niche-filling articles tailored to your audience...

Newly launched web sites can often be found via press release sites –

<http://www.internetnewsbureau.com>  
<http://www1.internetwire.com/iwire/home>  
<http://www.pressreleasenetwork.com>  
<http://prweb.com>

Sign up to receive the daily releases if you are serious about earning money as a freelancer.

 **Tip:** Invest in writers market and digest books (both local and international). These list thousands of markets, niches and industries requiring the needs of freelance writers.




[2003 Writer's Market Online](#)



Put together a portfolio with a selection of your best articles...

If you enjoy for example, travel writing, include a selection of your best photos if sending queries to offline editors as many will ask if you will be supplying photos along with your story.

 **Tip:** Using photography to Increase Your writing income can be the turning point in any writer's career. Just as writers look for ways to publish more work, editors search for complete materials to publish. By combining text with the right pictures, writers can create packages editors want and increase their opportunities for selling in new markets.



[Photography for Writers: Using...](#)

For free online courses to learn more about photography and places to sell stock photos on the Internet visit:

[Photography Resource Center](#)

At the bottom of the article include your resource box. For example: Joe Bloggs is a freelance writer and web master at your domain.com and whatever ties your web site into the article...

## Checklist when writing feature articles



1. Have you selected your intended subject topic and carefully planned out your idea?
2. Have you sent your idea query pitch to magazines or newspapers who may be interested? or will you write "on spec"?

With many magazines and newspapers now accepting material online it is now possible in many instances to email your queries directly to the publication. Have you read the publishers guidelines carefully to make sure if this method is acceptable?


Before sending your query pitch:

- Is it likely to be what the publisher needs: have you studied the publication?
- Is the timing right. Have you checked the magazines editorial calendar? If it is a seasonal article is now the best time to send your query?

If you have answered yes to these questions then package your idea into an attractive proposal and send it off to the editor of your chosen publication.

3. Have you adequately researched your topic?

Read everything you can on the topic from all available sources - bookstores, newspapers, libraries and Internet sources. Never discard anything about your subject topic since you don't know until you write it up what you may actually want to use.

 Tip: Saving magazines, newspapers and clippings for the subject matter can save time when researching future writing assignments on the same topic or when working to deadlines. Catalogue all your collected material for easy reference.

4. Have you interviewed the key person/people you need for your proposed feature?


Now it is time to organize your material into a feature article.

5. Have you discarded everything in your research except for factual information?

True research and liberal use of factual material gives an original perspective to your feature article and also avoids the possibility of plagiarism.

Have you checked and cross-referenced your facts amongst your various sources.

6. Have you decided on the length of the article? Have you checked the length is suitable for the publication you are sending it to?

 Tip: Do not waste the editor's time by sending a 2000 word article to a publication that requires articles between 500-750 words.

7. Will you use quotes in your article? Quotes and antedates bring a story to life. Are the quotes from a reliable source and have you double-checked that quotes used are accurately recorded?

8. Do you have a good lead, middle and ending?

9. Have you proofread and edited your article to achieve the best possible version through re-writing your drafts to arrive at your final version?

10. Have you made all corrections and necessary changes, have you checked spelling (this includes people and place names) grammar, punctuation etc?

11. If the feature is to be visual - have you provided the appropriate photographs, artwork, line drawings, or other illustrations to compliment your feature?

This increases the payment amount you can expect to receive if you are a feature photojournalist or travel feature writer who can offer original photographic perspectives of your subject topic.

12. Have you included everything in your envelope before sending your article to the publisher (including photos properly packaged) or, if the magazine or newspaper accepts online submissions have you given everything a final check before hitting the send button?



## Tips for Conducting Interviews

At some stage in most writer's careers there comes a time when an interview will be required to add extra dimension, insight or depth to your work. This may be for an article, research for a book or other project you are working on.



In offline interviewing there are generally four ways to conduct an interview:

In person (face-to-face interview)

By telephone

By mail

By Fax or email

Here are a few tips for when the day arrives and you need to conduct an "in person" interview ...

Many beginner writers find interviewing a daunting experience and so avoid them if possible. To overcome nervousness practice, and then practice some more, on your family and friends before ever requesting your first "live person" interview.

### Tools you will need

Cassette Recorder

Notebook and Pen

Press Pass

A press pass is not a necessity for carrying out interviews. If you

do have a press pass remember to take it along with you though as a sign of your professionalism when you introduce yourself.

## Background Research

Do your homework on the person before going to the interview

This could involve a search of the persons online press kit page, through media press clippings, at the library, the who's who directory etc.

Having some background knowledge will give you greater self-confidence and will help give a stronger line as to the questions you may want to ask.

Interviews can be 10 minutes, 30 minutes, 1 hour or over the course of a month or more e.g. if you are doing an autobiography.

When you make a time for the interview propose to take at least 30 minutes.

Suggest you go to the persons, home, office or place of business and at a time suitable for them. Being in their own environment will help put them at ease and may provide the right background to your interview.

Dress appropriately for where you are going, and who you are meeting. As a rule wear clothes that will not cause offence as many people you meet will be very conservative.

## Preparing Questions

Rule #1 don't ask stupid questions... and don't ask questions you can find out through research unless it's to confirm a point.

Prepare your list of questions in advance. List the questions and points you want to ask in brief heading form.

Maintain eye contact with the person you are interviewing as much as possible.

Listen carefully and establish a relaxed style of questioning.

Allow the questions to flow according to the context, glancing at your list only to refresh your memory or fill a long pause in the conversation.

If a pause should occur, wait for the person being interviewed to continue the conversation. Never direct how the interview proceeds or you may miss the opportunity for obtaining other relevant information outside of your line of questioning.

Be open to new questions and new points raised during the interview. Flexibility in your interviewing will allow you to pursue interesting or relevant sidelines as they come up. These may be areas of activity that you are unaware of despite your research.

Don't worry about ending up with more information than you require. Use what you need and put the rest in your files to be used at another time.

### Cassette recorder and notebook

Check the cassette recorder batteries, cassette tape and volume **before** you arrive for the interview.

Your cassette recorder should be compact, light and discreet in appearance. I find it best to use a recorder that uses standard size cassettes as they are easier to obtain than micro cassettes if you find yourself in an out of the way place.

After the introductory formalities ask permission if you can use a recorder **before** the interview starts, then produce it and get started on the interview.

Few people object to a cassette recorder but if they do, just use your notebook.

Using a cassette recorder helps establish an easy-going communication between you and the person you are interviewing as you are not constantly looking down to write notes.

Holding the recorder in your non-writing hand allows you to operate the on/off button and to write any notations if needed with your other hand.

Never thrust the recorder in a persons face as they will feel self-conscious, causing them to become tongue-tied.

Use your notebook for the accurate spelling of names (company, location etc), jotting down a few main points and perhaps some question reminders for later.

Be careful when recording that you don't loose concentration as this will tend to "deaden" an interview.


Listen carefully to what is being said and be sure to understand the answers otherwise it will be difficult to write clearly enough for your readers.

If you don't understand something ask! "Can you put it into simpler language?" or "Can you clarify that a little more".

If a person is evasive of a question or doesn't give an answer, ask the question in a different way and at another point in your interview.

If someone gives "off the record information" turn the recorder off. Always Guide the interview, but don't dominate it. If the person strays too far from the subject, then quickly guide the person back. Don't forget to turn the recorder back on when the interview proceeds again.


When you get home label your cassettes so there is no chance that you accidentally tape over any information you want to keep.

 **Tip:** Always keep the cassette on file in case someone should claim they have been misquoted. If the interview is likely to be in any way contentious the cassette should remain on file for at least a year or two.



## Photographs with the interview

There are going to be times when you may need to use a photograph of a person for the project you are working on.


 **Tip:** If you take photographs, always get a signed agreement before taking them and as a safeguard for yourself have them sign a [Model Release Form](#). There have been many cases when a person's photo has been used without his/her prior consent and the person has sued for modelling fees, invasion of privacy, or various other reasons.

Take any photos you require at the end of an interview when the person is relaxed.

If possible have the person do something that is relevant to the interview rather than just standing or sitting.

Alternatively photograph the person in surroundings that have meaning to the theme of the interview.

If this is not possible then just take a mug shot (a facial close up) that you can use.

 **Tip:** People will sometimes cross out the word electronic on a consent form if they do not want their picture to appear on the Internet and only permit their photo to be used in a print publication. Always respect their request if this is the case.

## Ask open-ended questions

Ask open-ended questions instead of ones that invite a yes or no answer will give more interesting responses.

These questions usually begin with who, what, when, where and how, and cannot be answered with a straight yes or not.

Example: "How did you get into writing?" "What made you decide

on this particular area of writing"? and so on.

This type of questioning sets the framework of the interview and is a useful tool when digging for significant information.

Write up the information within hours of the interview if possible or at least within a day or so.

As a courtesy offer to send the person a copy of the finished article.

Creative Interviewing:  
The Writers Guide to Gathering Information by Asking Questions



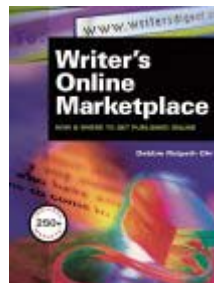
[Creative Interviewing: The Writer's...](#)

This comprehensive book covers everything an aspiring interviewer needs to know from developing listening and observation skills to conducting interviews by electronic mail and surfing the Internet for story ideas.

## Suggested reading for freelance writers



[Freelance Writing for Magazines and...](#)



[Writer's Online Marketplace : How &...](#)



[Sell & Resell Your Magazine Articles](#)



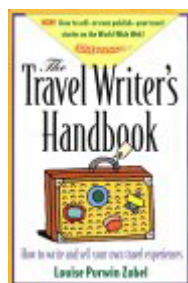
[You Can Write a Column \(You Can Write...](#)



[Writer's Guide to Queries, Pitches &...](#)



[Writing Articles About the World Around...](#)



[The Travel Writer's Handbook: How to...](#)

## Additional Resources

### FREE BUSINESS COURSES

Make today the day you take action and accelerate your business learning by taking a free University Masters Course featured here. These Courses are designed to cover all those vital "must get it right" issues with fresh, original, and valuable thinking...

#### The Info-Product Masters Course

The Info-Product Masters course takes you step-by-step through the process of how to find your ideas, then create, produce and sell your knowledge and informational material (book, report etc) online.

Send a blank email to receive this course [Click here](#)

#### The Net Writing Masters Course

Becoming an effective Net Copy Writer is an essential part of doing business on the Internet. Learn how to sell your products, or those of others. Or even use it to start your own copywriting business.

Send a blank email to receive this course [Click here](#)

#### The Service Sellers Masters Course

The complete resource for building a client base for your service-oriented business. The possibilities are endless. And whether your clients are "local" or "global" in nature, the Service Sellers Masters Course shows you how to use the net to build a client base in a fast, cost-effective way to attract clients from around the world ... or from around the block

Send a blank email to receive this course [Click here](#)

This completes this short introduction to “Get started in freelance writing”...

For more resources visit:

**“Net Writing and e-Publishing Success”**

<http://www.netwrite-publish.com>



**For a selection of quality books for writers and entrepreneurs  
visit**

[http://www.netwrite-publish.com/success\\_bookstore.htm](http://www.netwrite-publish.com/success_bookstore.htm)

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