



FEAR NOT!

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING



INSIGHTS, TIPS &
TECHNIQUES FOR
**FREELANCE
WRITERS**

BY CAROL TICE



EDITED BY ANGIE MANSFIELD

FEAR NOT! Confidence- Building Insights, Tips, and Techniques for Freelance Writers

By Carol Tice

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INTRODUCTION

Why isn't everyone a freelance writer?

After all, the lifestyle is awesome—you get to be your own boss, set your own hours, and write interesting projects. No more waiting for a skimpy raise that may never come, or worrying about being laid off! Your earning potential is limited only by your drive to put it out there.

And yet, many people who dream of living the freelance writer's life stay stuck in their day jobs, year after year.

There's one big reason why: They're shaking in their boots.

Freelancing feels risky. Asking for a gig. Turning in a draft to an editor and hoping they'll like it. Publishing a piece of writing and waiting for the reaction.

It feels like so much could go wrong—and you could end up embarrassed, or screw this up and see your freelance dream come crashing down.

The good news is, there are plenty of strategies you can use to push past your fears and take action to claim the freelance career you want. This e-book is a collection of the best fear-beating posts from my Make a Living Writing blog, culled from over 700 posts that have gone up since 2008.

I hope the tips in this e-book help you to move forward and launch your freelance writing career—or if you're already writing, to grow your writing income!

Enjoy,

Carol Tice

NOTE: Some links in this e-book are affiliate links. That means we earn commissions if you buy products through those links. It won't cost you more, and we appreciate your giving us credit for referring you to these useful resources.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carol Tice



I'm a longtime freelance writer and former terrified singer-songwriter. Since 2008, I've been a passionate advocate for fair writer pay. I've authored or co-authored [two print books and six e-books](#) for entrepreneurs and freelance writers, including *The Pocket Small Business Owner's Guide to Starting Your Business on a Shoestring* (Allworth Press 2013) and *Freelance Business Bootcamp*.

I've earned a full-time living from writing since the mid-90s. I write the award-winning [Make a Living Writing](#) blog, which appears on the 2014 and 2015 Writer's Digest Top 101 Best Websites for Writers, and is a three-time winner of Write to Done's [Top 10 Blogs for Writers](#) contest. My freelance writing clients have included *Alaska Airlines Magazine*, *Forbes*, *Entrepreneur*, Dun & Bradstreet, Lending Tree, Costco, *Nation's Restaurant News*, and many more.

In 2011, I founded [Freelance Writers Den](#), the community where writers learn how to grow their freelance income—fast. It now has over 1,200 members. My new coaching program for mid-career writers, [Den 2X Income Accelerator](#), launched in spring 2015. Along with Linda Formichelli of The Renegade Writer blog, I teach writing and marketing for freelancers at [Useful Writing Courses](#).

I'm an L.A. native who's lived on an island near Seattle for the past 20 years, with my husband, the 2 kids who're still at home, (the grown one is my social media manager now) and Rex, the wonder dog. You can get in touch with me on [Twitter](#), or drop me an email at carol@caroltice.com.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Angie Mansfield



I've been freelancing for about seven years. I started out in the dreaded content mills when I got laid off from work. I've since worked my way into real clients, with no small amount of help from Carol and her Freelance Writers Den.

I now focus on writing [case studies and white papers](#) for my B2B clients. I joined the Den moderating staff in 2013, and now act as Moderator-in-Chief and weekend troubleshooter. In my spare time (ha!) you can find me on [Twitter](#) or revamping my [TranquiliGeek](#) blog.

A SHORT PRAYER FOR FREELANCE WRITERS



Just for today, let me be compassionate with myself.

I forgive myself for not writing enough, or well enough, or fast enough.

I am thankful today for my unique creative gifts. Instead of dwelling on regrets about what I haven't accomplished yet, I will focus on what I can do now to develop my craft.

Let me take at least one, small step today to put my writing out there.

When my query letters go unanswered, I will remain serene and remember that it's often not about me or my writing.

I will listen and learn from people whose feedback I value, but trust that my most important guiding voice and source of confidence as a writer lies within.

When opportunities arise, let me evaluate them with clear eyes and have the wisdom to pass if the gig isn't right for me.

I will not let feelings of panic or desperation lead me to make bad choices, but trust that if I do my marketing, the right gigs will come to me.

Because the people who matter to me are important, I will strive to set aside device-free time today in which I am fully present for them.

I will make time to move my body, stay healthy, and take in the beauty that surrounds me. I know it will fuel more creativity.

Grant that I lie down in peace tonight, grateful for the chance I've had today to write, to grow, and to send my message out into the world.

CHAPTER 1: FEAR-BUSTING TOOLS & TRICKS

The Key Thing Aspiring Writers Need to Do to Become Legit



Do you feel like you can't call yourself a pro writer right now?

If you introduce yourself to people as an aspiring writer, I want to help you change that today.

Insecurity is sort of a pandemic in the writer community.

- We never feel like we've got enough clips yet.
- Or enough expertise to write on some topic we'd like to do.
- We're not old enough.
- Or our novel hasn't been published.
- We only write copy, and that doesn't "count."
- Maybe you've only written on your own blog and never gotten paid yet.

The conclusion we draw from all these situations is that we're not "there" yet. We're not legit.

The litmus test for writers

I had an insight about this issue of aspiring versus “real” writers while at the [Surrey International Writers Conference](#) in British Columbia.

One of the keynote speeches was given by novelist [Susanna Kearsley](#).

She asked the audience: “Do you write?” All heads nodded.

She replied, “Then you’re not an *aspiring* writer. You’re a writer!”

Aspiring writers are the people who sit watching TV or playing Mafia Wars, all the while saying, “One day, I want to write that novel!”

If you’re sitting your butt in the chair and getting it done, you’re a writer. If you’re lying there at night when you should be sleeping with ideas for stories racing through your head, you’re a writer.

How to stop aspiring

Kearsley begged the audience to remove the word “aspiring” from their vocabulary.

And if you’re a writer, you should do it.

When people ask, say, “I’m a writer.”

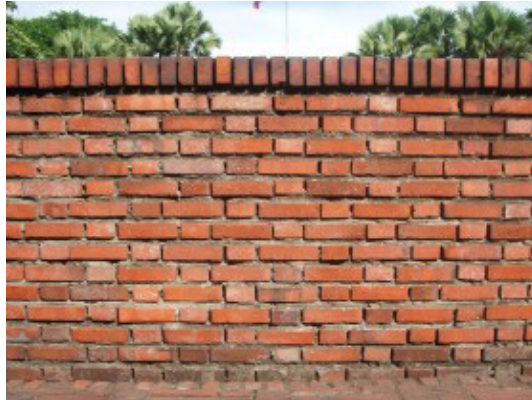
Remember, the marketplace is not the judge of whether you’re a writer.

Think of all the writers whose work was never discovered until after they died. Were they not writers?

Of course they were.

If you’re doing it, you’re a writer.

How to Eliminate All Your Freelance Writing Obstacles – With a Simple List



When you think about trying to grow your freelance writing income, does it seem overwhelming?

Just too hard?

Do there seem to be daunting obstacles in your way?

I'm going to show you how to remove them all.

For you to understand my solution, I must begin with a [Jewish folk tale from the Old Country](#) — for me, Eastern Europe.

Once there was a large extended family living in poverty on a tiny farm plot. The father felt he was losing his mind. His life was just too difficult! His children were always crying. His mother-in-law was constantly complaining. His tiny house was always so noisy and chaotic.

Life was horrible.

So he went to the rabbi, and explained his plight. His rabbi hesitated not a moment before advising him:

Bring your chicken into the house.

The man tried this immediately. Now, things were worse! The chicken pecked at him, there was even less room; now he was really miserable.

Complaining to the rabbi, he was advised to bring his goat into the house, with similar results. Then his cow, as well.

By now, as you might imagine, things were truly wretched. He went back to the rabbi one last time. And the rabbi said:

"Now, take all the animals out of your house."

The man complied with haste. Immediately, he realized life was wonderful! With no one but his family in the house, things were relatively peaceful again.

Of course, things were exactly the way they were in the beginning, when he was miserable. What was different?

Get a perspective on your problems

The key to eliminating your obstacles is to change your attitude.

Instead of thinking about all of the reasons pursuing a freelance writing career is difficult for you, consider all you've got going for you.

Adopt an attitude of gratitude for all you have. If you think this won't make a huge difference in the energy and self-confidence you bring to freelancing, I challenge you to give this a try.

For instance:

Are you able to use all your fingers to type? I know a [gifted woman writer](#), as well as a [kick-ass brilliant blogger](#), who don't enjoy that advantage. Yet they have productive, successful writing careers. They managed to overcome this formidable obstacle.

Are all your family members safe at home? I know a wonderful writer who copes with being a single mom because her spouse is in jail. Despite this tough obstacle, she was still out trying to hustle up freelance gigs.

Feeling down? There's a simple way you can turn your attitude around.

Make a gratitude list

I find making this list never fails to cheer me up. A few of the items I've put on it over the years:

Both my parents are still living.

My house is not in the path of a lahar (sudden, deathly volcanic mudflow), like some in my region.

I live in a beautiful part of the world.

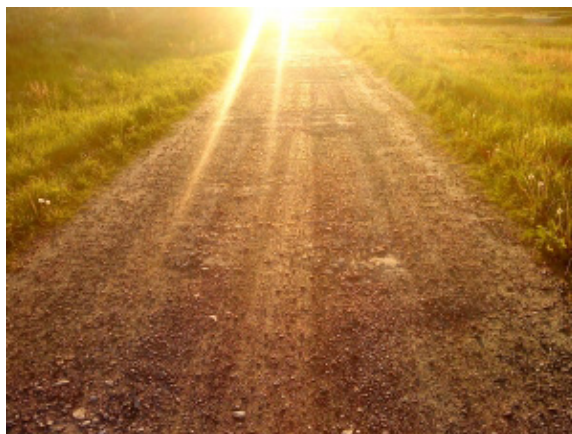
All of my children are healthy.

My spouse is not deployed on a submarine or aircraft carrier for six months at a time, a situation many wives deal with where I live.

Because I have loose change in my home that I don't need to immediately spend to feed my family, I know I am among the richest people on earth.

Hopefully, my examples above have given you a little fodder for your own gratitude list. Once you start one, remember to come back and keep updating it. Keep listing and building on your strengths, and you'll be less weighed down by your challenges.

Conquer Fear and Get Rich with This 7-Step Plan for Writers



Is fear holding your writing career back?

When I ask writers about this, I get responses that worry me.

I've learned fear is an epidemic in the freelance-writing world. For instance:

- Fear your work will be laughed at.
- Fear you won't be able to deliver the quality writing a gig demands.
- Fear that one flubbed assignment will spell the end of your freelance writing career.
- That you'll never be able to earn your living through that thing you love: writing.

Well, fear not.

I met someone who knows all about fear and how to beat it to unleash a life of achievement and prosperity — and below is his system for growing self-confidence. He is Tim Sanders, a former Yahoo! executive, author of the popular book *Love is the Killer App* and, more recently, [*Today We Are Rich: Harnessing the Power of Total Confidence*](#). Tim gave me permission to share the gist of his inspiring talk with you.

Tim's book tells the story of his hardscrabble childhood. He was basically a throwaway kid and ended up raised by his grandma, Billye, from the age of four. She brought him up on her farm by herself and put him on a solid path to college, but his world fell apart in his twenties, when his dad was murdered.

After 15 years of floundering with his self-esteem in the tank, he finally got back on track by returning to the basic values Billye instilled in him from childhood. Here are his rules:

- 1. Fight scarcity thinking.** Often fear comes from a "small pie" mentality that says there's only so much to go around. Billye taught Tim there's always enough — and we can bake up more. Bravely share what you have, even when it's not much, and you will build your self-worth and unleash abundance. Once, Tim recalls, a homeless man came to their door, begging for work. Though they had little, Billye fed him and gave him chores to do, then paid him \$20. The magic of giving is it

makes you realize your good fortune.

2. **Screen out the bad news.** Billye rarely watched the TV news, preferring inspirational readings. In an age where you can surf the 'net and see alarming stuff 24 hours a day, Tim advises staying off Twitter and online news sites that first hour or so when you wake up. Instead, read something uplifting — maybe a book about writing. Keep a diary of how much time you spend consuming negative and troubling information — then cut it way back.
3. **Surround yourself with positive people.** Chase more negativity out by avoiding snarky social-media conversations and people who gossip. Find mentors and friends who will build you up.
4. **Remember the good times.** Tim says what you park by the “front door” of your mind — the memories you keep fresh — should be uplifting memories of past achievements. When you're feeling scared or down, review these past successes to remind yourself of your abilities. Personally, I loved this point, as when I am flummoxed by a big feature article, I'll still sometimes get out my old portfolio and flip through some of my favorite past clips. Reading those stories makes me realize if I wrote those complicated pieces, I can do this one, too. The only emotion that's as strong as fear, Tim says, is validation.
5. **Learn the pecan method for dealing with criticism.** When Tim came home stung by classmates' criticism, Billye handed him a pecan. She taught him criticism is an opportunity to learn something valuable — whether it's about you or maybe the other person. Swallow the useful part of the feedback — the nut. Then, throw away the rest — the shells.
6. **Exercise your gratitude muscles.** People who feel down aren't taking the time to appreciate all the good things that happen to them each day, Tim says. It's been said the biggest natural-resource shortage these days — especially in America — is gratitude. Billye kept a dusty old dime-store “horn of plenty” centerpiece on her table, a Depression-era reminder that abundance is all in your perception of things.
7. **Prepare for loss.** Tim was doing well until the unexpected loss of his father knocked him for a loop. Know that bad things will happen, and rehearse in your head how you would cope. We all have setbacks in our personal lives and our writing careers — that query you thought was so terrific that never got a response, or the client who dropped you without explanation. Think about the resources you could draw on to bounce back from setbacks before they happen, and you'll be ready.

Know that success is not a destination — it's a direction. Keep moving forward.

CHAPTER 2: INSPIRATION

7 Inspiring Thoughts to Cure Your Newbie Writing Jitters



If you've been working full-time jobs, the idea of becoming a freelance writer can be both exciting and terrifying.

It's like stepping off the ground to walk a tightrope where one false move will send you plummeting to your death. There's more glory, a higher degree of difficulty — but it feels so risky.

The good news is, freelancing doesn't have to be so scary.

The fact is, the independent-contractor economy is booming. The [Intuit 2020](#) report envisions that by that year, more than half of us will be freelancers, with more than 80 percent of major corporations stating they plan to increase their use of freelance help.

There's plenty of opportunity. What's the trouble?

If you're full of doubts about whether you can 'make it' as a freelance writer, here are seven key ideas that helped me get over the fear hump and launch my freelance writing career:

1. You are human.

You may be freaked out by the idea that you will make a mistake, and then your freelance writing career will be ruined forever. But that doesn't happen. Perfection is not expected.

Entrepreneurs at tech startups talk about learning to fail fast, and fail forward. Learn from your mis-

takes, keep going, and you'll be fine.

2. The whole world isn't watching.

I used to have terrific stage fright, back when I was a performing singer-songwriter. And if I was about to throw up before I went on, the thought I would cling to that helped me get up on stage was, "No matter how bad I blow this gig tonight, a billion Chinese could care less."

We tend to feel all eyes are on us, as writers. But today's mistake is tomorrow's fishwrap—or, online, today's mistake gets pushed down the blogroll and vanishes from the home page.

You'll be surprised how many people won't even notice your errors. Unless you lie or make things up, you will live to write another day. Corrections can be issued and apologies made. It's OK.

There is no Universal Editor Network that one grumpy editor could use to blackball you from ever getting another gig. Doesn't exist. So relax.

3. Every writer started at zero.

It's easy to feel that the world is full of long-established freelance writers with impressive portfolios, and that you can never, ever break in and get started from scratch now.

But that's provably false. Because every writer working today once was exactly where you are now! They each found a way to get that first client to hire them to write. You can, too.

4. You know something useful.

I often hear from writers who worry they're either too young or too old to get started in freelance writing. No such thing.

No matter what age you are, there are markets that want you. There are youth brands, and there are brands that market to the 60+ demographic. Are you a mom who's been out of the job market a while? There are parenting and women's magazines, too, and niche product companies whose goods you probably use and love.

Somewhere in your life experience or job history, there is information that would make you the perfect writer for some client, somewhere. Figure out what you've got, and then use it.

5. New writers are needed.

Not every prospect can afford to pay a seasoned copywriter \$125 an hour, and not every magazine can pay \$1 a word or more for articles.

There are smaller clients in every town and city in the world, and they need more affordable writers. Small-town editors are also more willing to work with new writers, and teach them how to improve their writing.

Nonprofits, associations, and organizations need you, too. Do a few of these lower-priced gigs, and you'll be ready to move up and earn more.

Remember, writers retire and move on to other things. Fresh blood is always needed. So stop thinking you're bugging prospects when you pitch them. They need you.

6. You can write your way there.

It can feel impossible to earn your living as a writer, especially if you're looking at an empty portfolio right now.

But each thing you write is a building block for your career. Write [your writer website](#), and presto — you have a Web-content clip.

If you have a plan for where you want to go, you can build your own yellow-brick road and travel down it to the destination you have in mind. That's exactly what I did. I knew no one, had no credentials, and started with nothing but my brain, my pen, and an eagerness to learn.

I've been paying all my bills with that since 1993.

7. No credentials are required.

I wish I had a dime for every writer who emailed me to say they never pursued freelance writing because of their lack of formal credentials. Or who tells me they're going for their MFA or Master's in journalism, because that will finally qualify them to write professionally.

I'm sure glad I didn't know a degree in English or journalism was required when I started, since I don't have one. In anything, actually.

Definitely would have kept me from pitching *Forbes*, *Costco*, *Alaska Airlines Magazine*, and probably many other blue-chip markets I've written for over the years.

There is only one credential required in freelance writing: You can write well. You have command of the language, you can write to suit a client, and you can tell a compelling story.

Clients want to look at what you've written, and if they like it, they hire you. That's it. Nobody cares how you learned to write well.

If your heart tells you this is how you're meant to make your living, draw up your plan. And then start writing.

Why You Need to Go for Your Freelance Writing Dream Now



Quite a few writers have told me they fear taking any action to start trying to make it as a freelance writer.

They're frozen because as long as they don't try to get published, they can preserve the fantasy that their freelance writing dream might still come true, one day in the mist-shrouded future.

As soon as they actually tried to be a freelance writer, they ran the risk that it wouldn't work out. Then their dream would be shattered, forever. So they do nothing, year after year.

Oh, man. That is a disastrous attitude.

Today, I'm going to tell you why you've got to snap out of this and go for your writing career right away.

You see, I had a big dream like that once. And it died. Here's why that was the best thing that ever happened to me.

I dreamed a dream in time gone by...

The bug bit me when I was about 14. I loved music, and I wanted to be a singer-songwriter. Like Joni Mitchell or Joan Baez or Grace Slick, or ideally all of them rolled into one.

I practiced piano and learned a little guitar. I scribbled lyrics on every available space. I sang in a high-school vocal group.

I dropped out of college because I felt like I was wasting time there when I should be playing gigs. Moved back to L.A., started going to songwriting workshops, and scraped together a band.

Then I started trying to play gigs. And a weird thing happened.

Confronting chaos

Live rock performance is the ultimate uncontrollable scenario. Anything can and does happen.

Your drummer may decide to take the overnight party bus to Vegas or eat psychedelic mushrooms (or both at once) rather than turn up at the gig.

The sound system may malfunction and no one can hear you. Audience members may hoot, ignore you, or throw things. Or only two people show up, but you still have to play anyway.

You make mistakes while you're playing. You forget lyrics.

When I say "you" there, of course I mean me. All those things happened to me. Some more than once.

And I hated it.

An unpleasant fact about me slowly became obvious.

Losing it

I discovered I am a control freak about my art.

I like to deliver my art to the world fully formed and perfect. The randomness of live performance both terrified and frustrated me.

Having everyone watch me while I delivered the song I was trying to get out there made me crazy nervous. It turned me into a scared little girl, a persona that didn't mesh well with being a woman fronting a rock band.

The other requirements of building a life in rock 'n' roll didn't appeal to me either, like the part where you need to hang around smoky clubs until 2 a.m. drinking and trying to get some club owner to book your band.

I'm asthmatic. Cigarette smoke makes me need my inhaler. Also, I'm good for one, maybe two drinks tops before I curl up under the table and take a nap. Hanging out with drunks is not my idea of fun.

This dream wasn't working out at all like I imagined.

Breakdown

When you're doing something over and over that you find radically stressful, your body has a way of trying to stop you.

For me, the performance stress made my voice shut down. I couldn't sing properly.

The intense fears about what was going to happen during my set — what would go wrong and make me look stupid this time — made my throat constrict.

Within the first couple of songs, I would go completely hoarse. The next day, I couldn't speak above a whisper. It became clear that getting a regular gig where I'd need to sing every night was out of the question.

I tried voice coaching. I did exercises and sang scales. I did relaxation and visualization.

But it was no use. I physically and emotionally wasn't cut out for live performance.

When one door closes...

Right around this time, I entered an essay contest on a lark and won. They paid me \$200.

And everything changed.

I had discovered a form of writing where they paid you — as opposed to my having to pay as a songwriter, for rehearsal space and studio time and to four-wall clubs to play gigs.

Even better, writing prose allowed me to tinker and perfect what I wanted to say. When I was happy with it, I sent it out into the world and readers enjoyed it—and *I didn't have to be there while they read it*.

I loved it. And I never looked back.

Getting it right

I tried the songwriting dream—tried hard, for most of my twenties. I played the [Whisky](#). I spent loads of money, made demo tapes, shopped tunes, got a couple of them licensed even, and played a lotta gigs.

Then finally I realized it wasn't making me happy, let it go, and moved on to find a new dream.

That new dream led to a ton of fun, earnings, and satisfaction. Years of well-paid freelancing, and then staff writing, and then freelancing again.

And then, starting this blog to share what I knew. Next, I launched [Freelance Writers Den](#), and created a business that helps thousands of people and has made me financially secure.

None of it would have happened if I was still sitting in my room singing songs to myself and hoping some day I might be a singer-songwriter — but never going for it for fear of finding out I couldn't cut it.

Facing that reality and learning exactly why that career wasn't a fit for me gave me the insight I needed to find the right path.

How dreams come true

Dreams are born in our heads, but they're forged and perfected in the fire of experience.

I had a dream of being a kind of writer, and by trying, I became one — just a bit different kind of writer than I originally imagined.

With no experience, your dream stays a vague notion that might or might not even be something you'd like, if you really tried it.

You might discover that though you imagined it would be awesome, in reality you hate meeting editors' demands, or conducting interviews, or writing business copy, or having to endlessly hustle for gigs.

But there might be something related, two steps removed or just around the corner from that first big dream you had, that you'd love. And you're wasting precious time not finding out.

CHAPTER 3: OVERCOME YOUR FEAR OF EDITORS

4 Survival Tips for Writers Caught in the Waiting Game

By Goldie Ector



You know that amazing feeling when you write a terrific pitch to a potential editor or freelance writing client and then click “send?”

But then, you don’t get a response immediately.

One time, I actually said to myself, *I sent them an email an hour ago, and they haven’t responded yet. Did they die?* (They didn’t.)

The stress of waiting for a response can drive even the sanest freelance writer crazy.

But you don’t have to let it. Here are a few tactics I use to stay sane while I’m waiting to hear back:

Try niceness

We tend to be our own harshest critics, but that’s not really useful.

Try using a nicer inner voice when you talk to yourself. Understand where you’ve come from, how far you’ve come, and where you’re going. Give yourself a chance.

And remember, you’re not a failure because someone didn’t answer your email.

Tip: Ask yourself: would you speak to a child with the same tone as your inner critic? I hope not. Nurture your growth the same you would any child's.

Move forward

Sometimes waiting is hard because you don't have anything else to do. But you do have something to do. A writer who is not writing should be reading, marketing, dealing with life — anything other than watching your inbox.

Take your mind off that query-in-limbo by getting busy. Work on more queries or letters of introductions. Find more editors and clients to send pitches to.

Tip: Make a "to do" list. Even if that list says "make a list," the need to fill the page will make you find things to do.

Track progress

Have you set [tangible goals](#)? How much are you doing to work toward them? Did you send more emails today than yesterday? Did you finally get that snail mail to the post office? Yes? Good for you!

Your activity has just as much value as your clients getting back to you. Don't pooh-pooh your grunt work.

Tip: Keep a journal. Record your highs, lows, and everything in between. That way you can look back at the actual record, rather than relying on your memory to see how much you're doing.

Make a change

After taking a measurement of your progress, if you see that things aren't moving along, then it's time to make a change.

Waiting is part of the job, but it's not the entire job. Eventually, you should see results for your efforts. If one marketing tactic isn't working, try another.

Tip: Writers don't become awesome on their own. Have someone look over your emails, website, and marketing packages to make sure they're the best they can be.

Freelance writing is not a microwave. You don't put a single-serve query in the outbox and get a hot, delicious paycheck after four minutes. Like all good things, it takes time.

Goldie Ector is a Denver-based freelance writer and university financial aid counselor. You can find her at [Pen and Pad Freelance](#).

How Writers Can Stop Being Crushed by Fear of Rejection



Being a freelance writer means dealing with rejection.

A novelist is free to sit in a garret and spin their tales for years on end without fear of negative feedback, but freelancers have to put it out there day after day and hear “no” again and again.

How can you bear it? How do you keep it from killing your soul, from growing discouraged, from giving up?

At 2013's [World Domination Summit](#), I met someone with an inspiring answer.

His name is [Jia Jiang](#). As a teen in China, he met Bill Gates and was inspired to come to the U.S. to study, live, and work.

A year ago, he quit a successful corporate job to chase his dream of entrepreneurship. But when a key funder for his startup pulled out at the last minute, he was devastated.

He hated the feeling of intense pain this rejection gave him. He decided he needed to conquer this feeling.

And that's when Jia's fortunes started to change.

Begging for rejection

He embarked on a project to toughen himself up by repeatedly experiencing rejection. He called it [100 Days of Rejection Therapy](#). His plan: To make outlandish requests sure to result in rejection each day for three months. The repeated rejections would surely diminish the pain he felt at rejection in the future, as he struggled to build his startup.

So he began to ask crazy things of total strangers. Would you let me drive your police car, Mr. Policeman?

Could I make the safety announcement on a Southwest Airlines flight?

Could I play soccer in your back yard?

Would you make me a set of Krispy Kreme doughnuts that look like the Olympic rings, in the next 15 minutes?

As you'll see in [this video](#), Jia's experiment had unexpected results.

Contrary to what he expected, many of the people he asked to reject him refused. Instead, they agreed to his odd requests. And people were uplifted and thrilled and drawn into his quest to conquer rejection pain. More than 5 million people have watched his Olympic-doughnuts video on YouTube.

It's an intriguing idea. What if you asked for the impossible, and some of the people simply said "yes"? If you dared to ask, anything could happen. Your whole life could change.

From washout to celebrity

As word of his project spread, Jia became a popular public speaker, hitting TEDx, and finally speaking to a mob of 3,000 at World Domination. He received a standing ovation. His resulting book, *Rejection Proof*, was published by Crown Publishing's Harmony Books imprint in April 2015.

Jia dared to confront his worst fears, and in that act of courage, found the seed of his success. This is true for all of us.

Stare down your fears, and you will transform your soul. And what you need in life will be yours.

Feeling grateful for a "no"

At another World Domination event, I got to meet another blogger I've long admired, [Jeff Goins](#). In his mastermind session, when asked how he deals with rejection as a writer, Jeff said, "Say thank you for rejection, and then move on."

Why? Rejection helps us learn. Rejection tells us this is not the door we will open today. We need to press on to find other opportunities.

Rather than fighting rejection, if you simply and quickly accept that answer, you can move on faster. You can spend less time dwelling on that negativity, and move forward.

If you can seek rejection and accept it without fear, the world is yours. Jia proved it.

What to Do if You Get a Freelance Writing Gig – But Then You Panic



Here's something that happens to most freelance writers, early on in their career:

You're out there, sending query letters or pitching companies your marketing writing help. And finally, one of them actually calls you back.

You meet. They want to work with you. They make you an offer, and you accept.

Ecstasy!

Then you go home and think about what just happened, and a terrible gnawing feeling of dread begins to form in the pit of your gut.

Soon, you're freaking out.

You realize you have no clear idea how to do this assignment.

You're not sure you *can* do it.

And now you're terrified you're going to flub this up and look stupid.

How to stop freaking out

The first thing to do in this scenario is realize that worse things have happened.

And that this has happened to many other writers before you.

Likely, no lives are at risk here.

Even if you mess this up totally, you will not die. And this one disaster will not destroy your chances of having a freelance writing career.

Now that you have a perspective on your situation, you're ready to fix this and get your assignment done — and done right.

Here are seven tips for ending the panic and getting your assignment back on track:

1. **Breathe.** Don't do anything in haste. Stop and analyze your situation. Do a calming activity until you can think rationally about the situation.
2. **Find out why.** What is the cause of your panic about this gig? Once you put your finger on it, you can start solving the problem.
3. **Ask lots of questions.** Now you can go back to your client to resolve your issue by asking for more information. Say, "How many sources would you like to see in this story?" or "Who is the core audience for this marketing piece?" or whatever you forgot to ask — or didn't realize you needed to know until later. Get the knowledge you need to create a roadmap for writing this. Editors will not be put off by a request for more information. It shows you care about making this assignment the best it can be.
4. **Break it down.** Often, I find, the cause of freak-out is feeling overwhelmed. Make a list of all the tasks that need to happen related to this. Next, put them in priority order. Now, start at number one, and just focus on getting that done. Then, move on to the next step. See, don't you feel better already?
5. **Learn more.** If you're stuck midway through an assignment with a problem — like a source that's flaked out on you — go back to your editor or marketing manager and ask them how you should proceed. Editors just hate surprises, so they'll respect you for telling them early while there's still time to fix it, rather than giving them an ugly surprise later when you turn in a mess. Or, if you feel like you don't know enough about your topic, find another expert to interview. Do more online research. Fill in the holes.
6. **Ask for more time.** Often, there is wiggle room in deadlines. If you're concerned you can't get it done on time, ask if it would be a problem to take another day or week. Yes, it would be more pro to turn it in on time. But if you can't turn in top-quality work on time, great work that's a little late (and with the editor knowing it will be late) is better than crappy work on time.
7. **Get an expert's advice.** Many new writers would love to bounce these dilemmas off a pro writer and get their advice, I've learned. I get so many questions from freelance writers who're in a panic about their gigs and need answers right away that I created a community for writers looking to grow their income. Whether you tap into [Freelance Writers Den](#), or chat on a LinkedIn group, or attend a writer's circle in your town, find a community, a mentor—somewhere you can get support.

CHAPTER 4: BUILD CONFIDENCE

Is This Missing Piece Stalling Your Freelance Writing Career?



Writers often tell me, “I am totally doing this freelance writing thing! I’ve always wanted to be a writer. It’s time to quit the job and go for it.”

A year later, they write me again. And they have not gone for it.

They are still right where they started, lacking the nerve to put in their notice and leave that day job. Or earning peanuts writing for content mills, because it’s easy.

Loads of people want to be freelance writers. They read books, they read blogs, they [take classes](#).

But when it’s time to actually get out there and market your freelance services and find clients, or time to do some writing, nothing happens.

Something is missing.

Here’s what freelance writing really is

Writers love to dance around this and say it’s all about our creativity, our freedom, our muse, writing about what we want. To which I say, baloney.

That’s writing a novel. Being a freelance writer is something else. Freelance writers are in business. Plain and simple.

Maybe you didn’t lease a storefront, but you are in business just the same. Your family’s ability to eat rides on your success.

And all business involves one key ingredient. If you don't have this, your freelance business cannot succeed.

To circle back, why has that new writer not taken the plunge? It's because they had an insight about what this path will entail — and it stopped them dead in their tracks.

Leaving the “secure” world of corporate employment and starting their own business involves taking a risk. So they make their plans, but then, when it comes right down to it, they balk.

Why? Because they don't see themselves as risk-takers. Instead, they are risk-averse.

Without the willingness to take risks, you cannot make a go of this freelance writing thang. It will fizzle and die on you.

Fear of risk is the death knell for aspiring freelance writers. If you want to do this, you have to take risks. You'll need to build up your tolerance for risk. Here are three tips on that:

1. Reframe the question

You think that embarking on a freelance career is a big risk. Now, flip the equation. How much of a risk is it to stay in your current job? Or if you are writing for content mills, how secure is that situation?

Corporations are increasingly fickle when it comes to their workforce. You could be out on the street in the next economic downturn, or just because a new boss doesn't like you.

The content mill could close or change their rules. Happens all the time. Remember Suite 101? Or Associated Content?

Yet most people think of having a steady job as the “safe” option, and marketing their freelancing as the “risk.” My experience coaching laid-off writers for nearly a decade now says that's wrong.

Also, when you look five or ten years down the road, what do you want to see? How about at the end of your life?

You can look back and regret how you stayed stuck in a job you hated, or be reflecting with satisfaction on the fulfilling life you've had, living your dream career.

For those of us with kids, there's also the question of what you're modeling. Do you want to encourage them to go for their dreams, and they can achieve whatever they set their minds to? Well, that message will be stronger if you're doing that, instead of punching a time clock.

When you think about it that way — with the long view of how you are spending the precious moments of your life — taking a “risk” on freelancing seems less scary.

2. Understand inaction

Most risk-averse writers I know dither and procrastinate a lot. They keep trying to edge their way around their fears, to stay safe, to keep from doing the scary stuff that might fail.

And they are missing an important fact: Not taking action is also a risk.

It may feel safer, but it's not. It's just another form of risk.

While you are not moving forward, others are. Prospective clients who might have loved to work with you are finding someone else. New competitors are sharpening their skills, learning about industry changes from interacting with clients, and doing their marketing.

Each day you don't act, you get older, and farther away from your goal. Because inaction breeds more fear.

Stop thinking you're playing it safe by waiting and watching. In fact, you're risking your chance to make freelance writing your career, every moment you wait.

3. Take calculated risks

As it happens, I am a fairly conservative person when it comes to risk-taking. This item is something that's really worked for me.

You can do things to lessen your risk. For instance, finding the next, better-paying client before you drop the lower-paying one.

You can also find [mentors](#), or [join a writer community](#) where you can learn more and avoid the freelance pitfalls. That knowledge reduces your risk that actions you take will flop or be a waste of time.

For instance, one writer I heard from this week reported she'd wasted a year bidding on Elance (now UpWork) gigs and only landed three of them. She wanted to know whether I thought bid sites were a waste of time! Only someone with no mentors or writer network could have wasted that much time without wising up.

With some savvy in your corner, you're not taking foolish risks where you end up starving. You are taking considered, well-thought out risks.

You learn to go after clients you have the best chance of getting. You figure out the marketing method that works best for you, because you're willing to risk trying different things.

This is sane, smart risk-taking. As you learn more, you build the confidence to bet on yourself.

Take little leaps

You can condition yourself to risk by starting small. Think of it as jumping over a puddle before you try to tightrope walk over the Grand Canyon.

Maybe it's sending one query letter, or posting one blog comment. Writing a 300-word article for your local newspaper.

Make a list of small risks you could take to move your freelance writing business forward. Then, start checking them off.

Start exercising your risk muscle—because as you build a freelance career, you're going to need it.

The risks only get bigger as you become more successful. As your portfolio builds, you have a reputation that could be damaged if you screw up. You gain thousands of blog readers who stand ready to applaud — or trash you — each time you post.

You decide to invest money to produce an e-book—money you may or may not get back. But it's good to invest in yourself to grow your writing business. It's a smart risk you should take that could provide an ongoing income.

To sum up, it's all risk. Every moment of life is, really.

Each stage of building a good freelance income will bring new risks. The more practice you get at taking risks, the better you get at developing your spidey-sense of what choices will pay off best for your freelance business.

Get used to risk now. Stretch your risk muscles and learn to tolerate that feeling of discomfort you get just before you jump. That's the missing skill that takes your freelance writing career straight to the top.

How to Conquer Your Terror of Screwing Up a Freelance Writing Gig



If there is one single reason my blog exists, it's this: Freelance writers are scared.

Of making mistakes. Of doing or saying the wrong thing to an editor. Afraid that maybe, you don't have what it takes.

Worried about failing, but also about succeeding. Like one writer who recently commented in the [Freelance Writers Den](#):

"I am terrified that I will get a job only to discover that I can't complete the research or (horror) discover I can't write."

Or this comment I got on one of my guest posts:

"As a newbie, my self confidence is fairly low. So I'm a little bit reluctant to send [a letter of introduction] to possible clients, and maybe even afraid I'm not experienced/good enough to fulfill the client's needs."

"Do you have any advice how I can increase my self confidence and overcome fears of rejection?"

As a matter of fact, I do. There are only a few basic ways of overcoming these fears:

Build yourself up

Ask yourself: Where is this insecurity coming from? If you've got negative tapes playing in your head, it's time to replace them.

If it's because you're not writing regularly — which I have to suspect is the case with the "I'll discover I

can't write" comment—you need to start. The more you write, the more confident you will be.

If you work on your writing, you're willing to market yourself, and you're committed to improving as you go, there is no reason you can't do this.

Start telling people, "I am a freelance writer." The more you say it, the more confident you will feel about doing it. It's a sort of magical thing that happens to our brains when we hear things spoken aloud.

Do you really think you can't use the Internet to find sources? I bet not.

If you really thought you couldn't write, you wouldn't be here. You wouldn't even try this.

These are probably irrational fears.

Just recognizing that may help you to de-stress and start moving forward.

Live the fear

Are you afraid people will laugh at your writing (and not because it's a humor piece)?

Then arrange to make it happen. Have a friend read your work aloud and then ridicule it.

You will realize this is unlikely to happen in real life. And if it did, you would survive it.

Break it down

Maybe you are scared because in fact you are overreaching for where you're at currently in your writing career. So aim a little lower.

See if that local business you patronize, where you're chatty with the owner, would let you rewrite their website for a free sample.

Or if that local library newsletter would let you do a quick author Q&A.

Start with people who are likely to say yes.

Build a little portfolio, and you will start to build your confidence.

Slowly, you'll start to feel like you've got some ground under your feet, and taking steps forward won't feel so scary.

Know that I still pass on gigs where I feel like I don't know how to execute it. We all do. It's no crime to say "That gig isn't for me."

This applies to marketing, too. If you're terrified to make cold calls or do in-person networking — then don't!

Do the types of marketing that are in your comfort zone to start, and gradually expand that zone.

Face it

If you're afraid of rejection, like that second writer I quoted, I've got some bad news for you.

You are going to be rejected. Repeatedly.

It is inevitable, if you are going to write for a living.

The only way to conquer this fear is to be rejected, and to discover that it did not kill you.

Each rejection makes you stronger and more able to withstand future disappointments in your freelance writing career.

The only way to toughen up is to get out there and start pitching.

Don't be terrified that mistakes will happen or that you'll get in over your head. You can relax. Because it *will* happen. For sure. But it'll be OK.

Realize every writer is scared and imperfect

Here's the secret nobody tells you: Experienced pros are also scared.

When I write my first article for a new client, I am petrified.

Every time.

It takes ages to write. I feel like everything's riding on its being absolutely brilliant.

The only difference is that pros just push on, even though we're afraid.

Also, established pro writers don't always hit it out of the park, either. I could write a whole book on my missteps, but here's one recent one:

I did a [Forbes post about franchising](#), based on some new survey data. My interpretation of the data managed to offend both the leading franchise industry organization and the company that did the survey, among others. I've been accused of being unpatriotic and patronizing, to name the printable things.

Several malcontents have left comments critiquing my post that I just have to live with. On a site with 30 million monthly views.

Sigh.

What you write won't always please everybody. But you have to stand by it, and move on. And keep improving.

CHAPTER 5: BUST YOUR FEAR BY IMPROVING YOUR CRAFT

What to Do When Your Writing Sucks

By Ivy Sheldon



We all know what it feels like to read brilliant writing. It draws you in, awakens your emotions and leaves you feeling alive with personal revelations. Most of all, it changes you for the better.

But what happens when you read your own writing, and it doesn't quite rise to that level? Some writers will say, "I know I can do better." But too many will say, "This isn't good enough, and never will be. I should just give up."

This is the moment when self-criticism becomes unhealthy and debilitating to your career. Your writing is going nowhere because it can't get past your toughest critic — you.

As a writer and new blogger, I've been there. Negative thoughts will always creep into my consciousness and threaten to shut me down. In order for my career to survive, I've developed a few techniques to help turn my harsh self-criticism into constructive learning and growth.

Reflect on past work

When I was writing my first pieces of content for my creativity blog, I felt I'd turned out a couple of gems, and quite a few lumps of coal. Nothing I'd written sounded right. My personal style wasn't visible, and I couldn't hear my own voice in my writing. But one piece I'd written, a personal essay, made me smile. I could hear myself loud and clear in it — and could feel the passion behind my words.

"What's different about this piece? What makes it so great?" I asked. Answering those questions

helped me learn which writing style and type of content works best with my personality and skill set.

Trust in your value

One affirmation always drives me forward when I'm struggling during the writing process: What I am saying — the message I am delivering — is important.

Some works of art are meant to be created and shared with the world. In his memoir, Stephen King likens the fiction story to a fossil waiting to be unearthed by the writer. If you trust that your story is meant to be heard, it will find its way out.

Every little bit helps

Brilliant writing doesn't happen overnight. It takes years of practice and dedication. Look for the good in your work and realize that not everything you write needs to be published.

These days, when I write something I'm not crazy about, I simply tell myself, "This was great practice. I'm honing my writing chops."

Just keep moving and watch your writing evolve into what you always knew you were capable of.

Then one fine day, you can look at your work and say without hesitation, "Now, that's some damn good writing!"

Ivy Shelden is a freelance writer and blogger. She is the founder of [The World is Yours](#), a blog dedicated to helping people reconnect with their power to create their own life.

How to Get Over Your Paralyzing Article Writing Fears



It's a long way to go from the spark of a story idea to a finished article that appears in a magazine. Along the way, many writers get stuck.

The years go by, and they don't get published. Their dream of seeing their byline in a magazine falls by the wayside.

Writer fears on parade

Among the fears I hear a lot:

"I'm worried my story idea isn't good enough."

"I'm not sure which editor to send it to, so I gave up."

"I'm scared to do interviews! Are there any articles I can write where I won't have to talk to anyone?"

"I write my draft, but then I'm afraid to send it in."

"I had an editor ask me to write an article, but then I just froze."

"I got my draft back and my editor wanted all these changes. Now I'm crushed! And I think my writing must not be any good."

Here's the one I saw recently that really tore it for me. One writer posted in the [Freelance Writers Den](#) forums:

"I sent this pitch to my first choice magazine three weeks ago."

“When would it be safe to send this to another publication?”

Okay. Let's stop this, right now.

Is it safe?

If you've been living a corporate, day-job kind of life, freelancing can seem scary. Nothing is assured.

And that leaves you alone with your insecurities rattling around in your head, filling up your thoughts.

The first thing to do is to stop thinking this way, and reframe how you think about the things you need to do as a freelancer that scare you.

Here are three ways to attack and overcome these fears.

The worst-case scenario

First, ask yourself: What are you really afraid of, anyway? What's the worst that could happen, in any of these scenarios above?

In all cases, I'm going to take a flier and guess that your life is not in danger here.

Maybe your pride gets a little dinged. An editor says “no.”

So what? There are a lot of editors in the sea. You move on and try another one, is all.

When you think of it that way, what's so scary? Nothing. Freelancing is completely safe to try. Just go for it.

Life isn't safe

The second way to think about freelancing fears is to view them in the right context.

What is really safe in this world? Nothing. Not your day job. Not your lifespan. Not a thing. Each breath involves risk. And so does freelancing.

Why not dare?

Freelancing favors the bold. It's about taking risks and seeing what happens, and learning from that and doing better next time.

See it as an experiment. Emotionally detach yourself a bit from it and view it like a scientist. What could happen if I sent that query? Wrote that article? Let's find out!

Try, measure, improve, repeat. That's a successful freelancer's path — and the road out of being mired in fears and not moving forward.

Up your skills

To answer that last writer's question, it was “safe” to send that query to another publication all along. Or as safe as freelancing will ever be. Feel that danger, and do it anyway.

That's the only way to succeed as a freelance writer.

4 Ways Freelance Writers Can Obliterate Their Weak Points



Many writers tell me they have obstacles holding them back from taking the plunge into freelancing.

They worry they write too slow, or don't have a journalism degree, or are introverted and won't be able to do enough marketing.

These stories always make me think of Kristy. She's a friend I had in high school who didn't own any shoes.

Kristy's father was a professional gambler who was often out of town, or out of money. Or both. With the result that most of the time, Kristy and her mother were barely scraping by.

What impressed me was that it didn't stop Kristy from doing anything. She left the tiny apartment she shared with her mother each morning, attended school, and even sang in a vocal group with me, for which we wore a dressy skirt-and-blouse ensemble she had designed.

We performed in swanky venues like banquet halls and fancy restaurants. We even played the Hollywood Bowl once!

Kristy was never asked to leave any of those places because she was barefoot. She never even got called out at school because she went shoeless.

I was fascinated by that, so I made a study of what she did that allowed her to skate by without this usually essential item of attire.

Faking confidence

Kristy's secret: She never looked down and drew attention to the fact that she was barefoot.

She never acted sad or like anything was wrong. She held her head up, met people's eyes with complete confidence, smiled her dazzling smile, flipped her super-long, strawberry blonde hair over her shoulder, and let her gorgeous soprano voice ring out.

I can only imagine how Kristy felt inside, knowing that her poverty was on view for anyone who cared to notice. But she certainly wasn't going to give students who might taunt and humiliate her any hints on where to stick in the knife.

And it probably wasn't a coincidence that the singing outfit she designed for our group included a full-length skirt.

How to play to your writing strengths

Kristy's approach to dealing with her deficits works great for freelance writers, too.

Recently in Freelance Writers Den, we've been having writers do a SWOT analysis as part of our [Freelance Business Bootcamp](#). That is, writers have to identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in building their freelance business

This has been a fantastic exercise that I strongly recommend for all freelance writers!

Once they've identified their weak points, students look at ways to improve on or minimize those weaknesses and maximize their strengths.

Here are a few tips on how to do that:

1. Fail to mention your weak spot

One writer recently wrote me that she feared her three advanced degrees and complex writing clips on arcane topics would put off prospects. They might feel she was overqualified or would want sky-high rates!

I pointed out that she could simply not bring up her academic background, and create a concise bio signoff for herself that focused on her writing experience or industries she knew.

The same goes for whatever you've got in your life that you think might make clients shy away. Are you about embark on a six-month backpacking trip? Have a physical disability? Your first love is writing your novel? The client does NOT need to know.

Don't be like the girl in the photo above, showing folks what you don't have on the ball. Just keep that shirt buttoned up.

2. Ignore deficits and just go for it

Many writers have fears that their lack of a writing-related degree will make it impossible for them to pursue a freelance writing career. Fortunately, I never let the fact that I'm a college dropout stop me from writing for prestigious publications including *Forbes* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

Realize that freelance writing is a field with no qualifications except what you can put on the page.

I can tell you from experience, clients don't care how you came by your article writing skills — in a back alley or at Columbia. If you can tell a story, you can write your way to the career you want.

3. Play up your strengths

Instead of sitting around bemoaning what you don't have on the ball, learn to emphasize your strengths, just like Kristy did.

Did you used to work for a mortgage lender? Bet those types of firms would love to have you write their websites. Prioritize those likely prospects to the top of your marketing calendar.

Do you write fast? Maybe specializing in rush work could allow you to earn more. Let your writer network know you can dive into the breach if they have a client with an emergency they don't want to handle.

If all your clips are from content mills, just write super-strong query letters and don't get into a discussion of your portfolio. More than one writer has [gotten a national magazine article sale](#) that way.

4. Take action to turn weaknesses into strengths

Sometimes, writers have a weakness that poses a true obstacle to their being able to earn a living as a freelancer.

Say, you want to write articles for great-paying magazines or top websites, but worry that you don't have the writing chops.

You know you're a weak headline writer, or you have a hard time matching your writing style to that of the publication. Or you're shaky on how to get great quotes and weave them into the story.

In these situations, you've got three choices. Spend years writing and try to improve on your own, let your career stagnate, or take a shortcut—[take an article writing class](#) and get a mentor to share decades of their experience and tips with you.

CHAPTER 6: SLAY YOUR BLOGGING DEMONS

One Writer's Fear-Busting Journey to \$1,500 a Month in Blogging Gigs

By Steph Weber



As a new mom trying to juggle a toddler and run a household, I blamed the busyness of life for my lackluster freelance writing success.

But that was a total cop-out.

Fear was the true culprit. It stifled my creativity, filling my head with “what ifs” the way only a failure mentality can.

I’d like to say I faced those fears strategically, or that I faced them head-on. But in my case, it was more of a happy accident. But that accident netted me \$1,500 a month in new blogging gigs. Here’s how:

Under-Qualified

Years ago, I worked in a local hospital — first as a patient registrar and then as an insurance claims collector.

But when I began writing, healthcare never even popped up on my radar as a topic to write about. I figured my three measly years left me severely under-qualified to write about the topic.

I had been a member of a national healthcare association for a number of years, too, but had never

pitched their magazine. The fear was always there, telling me I was too inexperienced to offer their readers anything worthwhile.

One day, glancing through the most recent issue, I realized I was familiar with 70 percent of the information being presented. A light bulb flickered. Perhaps I knew more than I thought.

Full of Doubt

Bolstered by newfound enthusiasm and with a topic in mind for the aforementioned magazine, I sought out a source to pre-interview.

And then I froze.

I had never pre-interviewed anyone. Sure, I had done interviews before, but that was when I already had an assignment. Fear and doubt flooded back in.

What if I can't pitch the story successfully? What if the source gets mad when the story doesn't get picked up? I was envisioning my demise before I even picked up the phone.

History told me that this rabbit-hole was deep and never-ending. So, going against every fiber in my being, I quickly scanned LinkedIn for a source and tapped out a message.

Imposter

When the source agreed to the interview, panic struck. Hard.

I'd be forced to chat with him — on the phone, in real time, without the safety net of a carefully orchestrated email. He would know the lingo, the most critical issues facing his industry currently.

What would he think of me when I was "umm"-ing my way through the conversation?

He would obviously see I was an imposter. And rejection would inevitably follow.

Validation and Victory

When I called the source the next day, I didn't flounder through the conversation at all. At the end of the interview, he was so impressed with my knowledge, he asked if I was looking for [freelance blogging gigs](#).

The validation felt euphoric. It was like flipping fear the bird.

He's now an ongoing weekly client and there's talk of more work, too. Plus, he happily sang my praises to a colleague of his.

Guess what? His client is now my client as well. And I've boosted my monthly income by \$1,500. Take that, fear!

In fact, I've been so busy with blogging work that I haven't even pitched the story to the association magazine yet. But I will. Because as it turns out, I'm not an under-qualified, self-doubting imposter after all.

Steph Weber is a former marketing specialist turned freelance healthcare, business, and food writer and blogger. She does her darnedest to teach businesses how to get along with writers on the [Blogosphere](#).

Behold My Cringe-Worthy Blogging Fails (and Why They Don't Matter)



You may think successful bloggers are always in the groove, delivering great stuff. But it's not true. I've made plenty of mistakes on my blog.

Let's take a trip down memory lane and review all the things I have done wrong.

My blogging boo-boo parade of shame:

- **My initial design really sucked.** I mean, it was brown. And weird. You couldn't really tell what my header graphic was supposed to be. I didn't know anything about design when I started, and had to learn the hard way that [design matters](#).
- **I had dates in my URLs for years.** And it was a massive technical pain to change that out and make all the older posts forward to a URL that doesn't have a date in it.
- **My e-book was too long and expensive.** And [took too long to write and publish](#).
- **My e-book wasn't available on Kindle.** Like duh! But it was only a PDF. Lamesauce!
- **I only had one e-book for about 3 years.** Way to go on creating a marketing funnel, eh? Pretty shamefully low output. I've just added one small new one on [writing productivity](#). I'm trying to get better.
- **I sometimes launch products without any marketing cycle.** I just put them out there. I run out of time to organize a campaign to do pre-promoting and all the stuff you're supposed to and just have to give up.
- **I don't do A/B testing on my sales pages** to optimize them and improve conversions. For years, I couldn't figure out the technical end of doing that, and it never got onto my to-do list. (I finally have [LeadPages](#) now, which makes it easy, but I got that in *year seven* of my blog!) I know my friend [Derek Halpern](#) is going to come over and hit me now that I've confessed, but there it is. I just don't have that killer, capture-every-possible-dollar instinct. I feel like the people who're interested in what I talk about here will subscribe, even if my button should be a better color or I should have used 16 pt. type instead of 14.
- **I don't do enough keyword research.** Seriously, I hardly do any. I know I should be research-

ing more of what people search on that brings them to this blog and then writing more posts with those words. I know. But I mostly go with my gut of what I think writers need to learn to earn more, that I can boil down to post size and give a snappy headline.

- **I don't have a popup.** You may know that you can convert tons more visitors into subscribers if you use one of those annoying pop-ups. But I hate them. I considered using [Pippity](#) because it's less aggressive, but haven't implemented it yet. Soon, I'm going to experiment with using LeadBoxes, LeadPages' tool that pops up a box only after a reader clicks to request it. That seems less obnoxious to me.
- **Sometimes my feed fails.** I set the publish time wrong and then it misses my RSS 'send' deadline. And then my post doesn't go out. Then the next day it goes out twice. I apologize in advance for when it happens again.
- **I suck at marketing emails.** Earlier this week I sent one that said [NAME] in it because the auto-fill-in thing failed because it wasn't coded right. I mean, honestly. That's just embarrassing. Thanks to everyone who didn't unsubscribe.

I'm sure there are more glaring errors I'm guilty of, but that's a good list to get you started.

Now that I've shared this, I can let you in on the blog secret that nobody tells you:

You don't have to do everything right in blogging

And there is no one right way, anyway.

Blogging is an imprecise art. Typos are tolerated. You can see top bloggers running posts with grammar and spelling errors every day.

You can make a lot of mistakes, and still be a solid success as a blogger.

How? All you have to do is care about your readers, and help them.

And be yourself. Be honest.

Those are the things that matter.

If you do that right — and keep building your relationships with them and learning more about how to help them — your blog will be able to grow and thrive.

You can learn as you go, keep making your blog better, and keep building your audience.

CHAPTER 7: GAIN CONFIDENCE THROUGH PRODUCTIVITY

Is This Insidious Affliction Shrinking Your Freelance Writing Income?



When you start out as a freelance writer, there's a lot to learn. I know when I got back into freelance writing in 2005, I subscribed to dozens of email newsletters and spent hours every day, reading, watching videos, and attending live events.

But learning how to be a successful freelance writer is a bottomless pit. There's always more you **could** know that **might** help your freelance writing career.

And often, new writers fall into this pit, and forget to get any clients. They get a creeping learning addiction that eats up all their time and prevents them from moving forward.

It's devilish because it's easy to rationalize that you're doing something productive with all this studying. But if you never take action, it's just another form of procrastination.

I see these writers leaving loads of comments on the [Freelance Writers Den](#) forums, or on LinkedIn's writer forums, or commenting on every single blog post on popular blogs.

They ask arcane questions like these:

“Should I create a mirror site to protect my writer website in case it’s hacked?”

“What’s the best SEO keyword tool?”

“Should I do marketing on autopilot with email autoresponders?”

“What are the best apps for coordinating writing projects with clients?”

A year later, these writers sometimes quietly confide to me that they’re flat broke and had to take a day job. They were so busy learning *everything* about how to be a successful, 21st Century freelance writer, they fell victim to analysis-paralysis — and forgot that the top priority is getting clients and generating freelance writing income!

How can you focus, learn what’s essential, and move forward to earn as a freelance writer? Here are my tips:

1. Find clients first

Job One is marketing. Yes, I know, your writer website isn’t up yet. Or you don’t have any clips. Or they’re all 7 years old.

Doesn’t matter. You have to be marketing, this week and every week, if you’re going to make a living at this.

Stop studying every marketing technique under the sun and feeling that you can’t pick up the phone until you’ve mastered all the fine points. Instead, pick something that seems doable for you that you have at least a basic grasp of, and start doing it.

See what happens. Then, refine. As you learn more, your marketing will get better. But in the meanwhile, do some, anyway.

Block out some time each week for marketing, right now. As much time as you can possibly spare. Pitch with whatever you’ve got — your life experience, your knowledge from past jobs.

Next, prioritize doing any current client work you have.

Whatever time is left is the time you have for learning. Don’t let the learning time swamp your more important tasks and stick to your allotted learning time per week.

2. Prioritize your learning

There are many things you could learn about freelance writing that might help you. But what are the most important things? The list is different for each writer, but there are some basics you probably want.

If you haven’t written a lot, you probably need to learn about writing in the style you plan to earn in. You need some online tools that present you well to clients searching online, such as a strong writer

[website](#) and [LinkedIn profile](#). You should learn [how to qualify prospects](#) and [avoid scams](#). You might need to know how to do [networking](#) or write [query letters](#), depending on the type of writing you want to do.

Take your list of what you think you need to learn, and prioritize it by asking yourself: How much would learning this improve my ability to earn more freelance writing income? What's the potential increase in income I could see from this, and how quickly would it happen?

This process will help you put aside questions like which app might be super-best for some aspect of freelancing. For instance, use the apps or online tools you already know for now, because using one over the other is unlikely to get you more income — it's just a convenience issue. Pick any popular SEO tool, and it'll probably serve your needs just fine, rather than worrying about testing out ten more tools in case one is slightly better. Also, consider outsourcing technical things you might need, since they're not core to being a freelance writer.

Instead of wandering from topic to topic, order your list with the highest-value learning first that's most likely to pay off in more income.

3. One thing at a time

Now, take your learning wish list and go through it *one item at a time*. Delete or avoid everything else. Your brain can only absorb so much! Don't fall into the time-wasting trap of reading and reading, and retaining none of it.

I've used this rule a lot in recent years, and it's eliminated my information overload. I just learn one topic at a time, then implement what I've learned, then move on. For a long time, I only learned about how to [build a successful blog](#). I recently went through a phase where my focus was self-publishing best practices, as I was putting out more [e-books](#).

Then, I focused on learning how to make email marketing campaigns and live events more effective. I scan my newsletters and if they aren't touching on my top-priority topic, I move on. No going down side trails to learn about the fine points of [case study writing](#) or exploring new social-media platforms like [Ello](#) right now, thanks!

4. Cull your subscriptions

To help bring your learning urge under control, review how many subscriptions you've got to email newsletters. Also, note how many relevant physical publications you're getting.

Now, unsubscribe to any that you haven't opened or read in the last few months. Get rid of them.

When those [emails crowd your inbox](#) or that stack of publications mocks you from the nightstand, it's too easy to get pulled away from essential tasks.

5. Accept that mistakes will be made

Many writers keep learning and learning rather than taking action, because they're afraid they'll make a mistake if they don't "know enough." At some point, they tell themselves, they'll know how freelancing works, and then they'll confidently move forward and do everything right. And on they go, reading and reading.

But there's always more to know. Also, you can stop worrying that you might make a mistake, because no matter how many newsletters you read, it's guaranteed that sometime, [you will screw up](#).

The good news is, you'll survive, and live to write another day.

Stop hiding behind that stack of books about freelance writing and get out there! That on-the-ground experience trying to get gigs is the only way you'll find clients and learn where you fit into that big ol' freelance marketplace.

How One ADD Writer Focuses and Cranks Out Drafts

By Jessi Stanley



I'm constantly coming up with ideas. Until recently, however, I wasn't doing anything to develop those ideas.

Then I was inspired to try a freewriting approach that helps this ADD writer actually start writing. This post, in fact, is a result of that system.

With my system, I can grab hold of ideas as they speed through my mind and easily generate lots of copy.

My inspiration

A recent memoir-writing project about the singer/songwriter Bob Dylan gave me four key insights that inspired me to develop my system.

1. In reading about Dylan, I discovered how prolific he's been, and how he seems to have ideas sort of floating around in his head waiting for him to write them down.
2. Then I studied memoir style by reading an essay about the poet Sylvia Plath. I was impressed to learn she could write two to four poems per day. This got me thinking that she must have had a bunch of ideas, too.
3. I thought about my own ideas and all my past journaling. I had easily and quickly filled notebooks by freewriting, or writing whatever came to mind.
4. I started thinking how I could apply freewriting to my own writing needs. Maybe I, too, could be prolific if I could stop thinking so much and start writing.

My system

The system is simple.

The goal is to stop thinking and start writing. This is NOT focused final-draft writing (although it can

be used to generate a first draft).

Instead, it's like free association or brainstorming. Just write whatever comes to mind.

There are only three rules.

1. Free-write about possible topics.
2. Make a separate Word document for each idea (as ideas arise).
3. Write for about one hour, as fast as possible without stopping to edit.

The first time I did this, I ended up with three separate Word docs for three different blog posts. I jumped back and forth between the different docs as ideas for the different posts came to mind.

The second time, I ended up with four Word docs (that is, four topics).

On a few other occasions since then, I used a variation of this system to generate copy for a single topic. The process was the same in that I picked a topic and wrote whatever came to mind. I just didn't time myself or worry about generating additional topics.

Could it help you write?

Now that I've finished my Dylan project and this blog post, I plan to start using the one-hour system at least once a week to generate copy for future writing projects. Try it—this can work for you, too.

Jessi Stanley is a freelance writer and editor/ghostwriter in Greenville, NC. She's [@stanleyjessica](#) on Twitter.

CHAPTER 8: MARKETING AS AN INTROVERT

One Shy Writer's Lazy LinkedIn Strategy for Landing Great Freelance Clients

By Amy Dunn Moscoso



Do you hate marketing your freelance writing?

Do you agonize over letters of introduction without ever sending them out?

I can relate. I'm shy when it comes to marketing myself to new clients.

But last September, I managed to (almost) skip marketing and still get high-paying writing gigs, with an easy LinkedIn marketing strategy.

I call it LinkedIn Peeping — and it's ideal for online lurkers.

In three months, it's landed me \$7,500 in assignments, plus weekly red-hot leads. Not bad for a writer who was pulling in a big \$200/month in 2013, writing for content mills and agencies.

Here's how I used LinkedIn to land great freelance clients:

Three easy steps to get noticed by prospects

1. Do a LinkedIn search for ideal customers in your niche. In companies, people who hire freelancers include the:

- CEO
- Vice president of sales/business development
- Marketing director
- Communications director

I've had CEOs personally reach out or pass my profile on to marketing directors. A website project converted in days, since I was CEO-approved.

2. Peep at similar people, once you've found a good prospect.

- Use the same titles and industries with different cities and countries. Go for world domination!
- Visit your client's profile. Look for "People Similar to Ideal Client." This is a listing of people in similar industries and similar job titles on LinkedIn.
- Also look at the "People Also Viewed" section. This will show you the people other users think are similar, which can be a broader group than what LinkedIn finds.

If you and your dream client have mutual connections, [request an introduction](#).

3. Join your ideal client's groups and make contact with those inside. You never know — you might be the only writer in there.

- Look for discussions between CEOs and decision makers.
- Like or comment on their discussions and see who's viewed your profile.
- Identify problems you can solve and share solutions.

Why peeping works

When I was new to living in China, I was poking around on LinkedIn — and avoiding letters of introduction. Thinking I was anonymous, I checked out the profiles of CEOs in renewable energy and manufacturing in my new city, Tianjin.

But I wasn't anonymous — and my name popped up in all those CEOs' "Who's Viewed Your Profile" lists. And it turned out to be a good thing.

The next morning, a CEO I'd peeped at sent me an InMail, requesting a meeting to discuss a brochure for one of his companies. I wrote it, the brochure helped secure millions in venture funding for the company. As a result, I landed an ongoing position with them as a marketing communications consultant.

Engage to get even more work

In China, I'm in demand as a writer in a town full of engineers, architects, and manufacturers. But I wondered: Could rarity be independent of location? I joined a manufacturing group and liked a CEO's comment.

The next day, he sent me an InMail. He was thrilled to "find" a writer on LinkedIn, and he also needed a brochure to proceed with a deal worth millions.

I'm now a convert to using LinkedIn to help clients find me, wherever they're based.

Amy Dunn Moscoso is a Canadian B2B marketing writer based in Tianjin, China. Learn how to enhance your LinkedIn marketing by visiting her blog [Killer Key Messages](#).

5 Ways Introverted Writers Can Do Painless Marketing

By Nillu Nasser Stelter



If you're anything like me, one of the reasons you're a freelance writer is that you enjoy solitude.

Whether you write best in a hideaway or in a crowded cafe, you're comfortable inside your own head.

But good writing skills and original ideas aren't enough to make you a success in this business. You need [kick-ass marketing skills](#), too. If you're an introvert, you may find marketing doesn't come easily.

You still need to do it, though.

Here's how you can market yourself painlessly if you're an introverted freelance writer.

1. Use social media that suits you

Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn; the sheer number of social media options out there is daunting.

To do social media well, you need to update your content regularly, so why not play to your strengths?

If you're a succinct communicator, you may take well to Twitter.

Happy to share personal information? Then Facebook may be a good fit for you.

Or if you prefer connecting in a professional capacity, try LinkedIn.

Do what comes naturally, and don't spread yourself too thin.

2. Try one-on-one, in-person queries

If you're an introvert, you may balk at going to networking meetings. If too much interaction with strangers drains your energy, there are equally effective alternatives.

Build confidence by arranging one-on-one meetings with prospective clients where you can impress with your research and attentiveness. You may even win extra brownie points for taking the initiative.

3. Make your business cards a talking point

If you must attend a large meeting, make life easier by bringing business cards that are a cut above.

Show off your creativity by opting for handcrafted cards over standardized ones. Create a talking point by including a generous offer for first-time clients — a free consultation, perhaps — or using a memorable logo.

Stand out from the crowd on your own terms, and let your business cards break the ice.

4. Let your website do the talking

For the introverts out there, a strong [writer website](#) can do the hard work for you in presenting your brand to the world.

On your landing page, tell prospective clients about what you offer them. Write an engaging bio, add a picture of yourself, include your contact details — and you're good to go.

Hundreds of repetitive conversations saved, and you can breathe easy.

5. Choose to listen

It's a competitive market out there, but who said we have to compete on the same terms? Allow your personality to work for you and turn your pitch upside down.

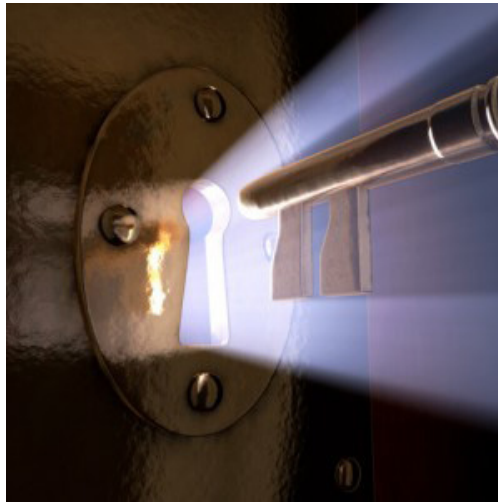
Instead of focusing on what you can offer your client, tease out their concerns with insightful questions. Then, impress them with your ability to recognize the subtle nuances of their business. Close by wowing them with your perfectly tailored solutions.

Regardless of your personality type, in a world where many are shouting "look at me," the quiet ways you market yourself may be the most effective.

Nillu Nasser Stelter is a fiction and freelance writer living in London, UK. She identifies as an ambivert and is married to an introvert. Learn more about Nillu at NilluNasserStelter.com.

CHAPTER 9: FEAR-BUSTING STRATEGIES

Unlock Your Writing Potential with the QTIP Method



When you start a new freelance writing gig, are you full of hope? I know I am.

This gig is going to be great. We're sure of it. This is the sample that's going to really take the portfolio up a notch. It's a game-changer. Exciting!

Then, things start to go wrong, and often, writers go straight down the emotional drain. For instance, take this recent comment from a Freelance Writers Den member (I've condensed it here):

"Recently, I joined a freelance team developing an annual report for a local medical group. This is one of my first copywriting jobs, and I've never worked in health care.

"The first writer left, and I became the main writer. I had already done a little writing for them, and the project director loved it. So I was feeling good about this promotion.

"Now, after producing multiple sections for the report, my confidence has taken a beating.

"The project director has rewritten much of what I've turned in. I asked her earlier about her changes to see if I could get some feedback and improve, but she assured me the changes mostly reflected political considerations and subtleties of tone.

"I need reassurance that this is normal. Is there some way of knowing if the problem is all on my end?"

"I was thinking this experience might provide a way into future healthcare copywriting gigs, but now I wonder if I'm really cut out for it."

Doubt creeps in, and the next thing you know, you think you don't have what it takes to be a freelance writer.

Why does this happen? It's due to a key error that writers seem to be prone to. You can fix it with my QTIP approach.

It's not about you

Writers have deep-seated fears that we aren't really talented enough to do this for a living. If things go wrong, we jump immediately to the conclusion that it's our shortcoming.

But in my experience, most writers who are trying to do this for a living are perfectly competent wordsmiths.

What we often aren't is self-confident.

When I read the story above, I immediately thought of other possible reasons why this writer's copy is being rewritten. Maybe this manager...

- **...is a poor communicator**, and knows it. When they see what they haven't explained, they're embarrassed to go back to you for rewrites and just do it themselves.
- **...has too short of a deadline** to go back and forth, so they're just doing their own rewrites.
- **...is a control freak** who needs to rewrite everything, just to feel they touched the project.
- **...hates the blank page**, and researching and interviewing. They really just want you to create that first draft, and then they're good.
- **...needs to leave on vacation ASAP**, and doesn't have time to take you through what they need tweaked
- **...isn't feeling well** and isn't up to explaining what they need.
- **...has an evil boss above them** who always wants tons of revisions, and your manager wants to shield you from his irrational rage.

- **...are jealous that you're 'the writer' and they're not**, and need to prove to themselves they're talented.
- **...thinks rewrites are routine**, since they are, with many copywriting gigs. They've no idea you find this upsetting or stressful.

I could go on and on here, but that gives you a strong sense of how many other reasons there could be for the rewrites besides "you're not a good writer."

Look at the facts

If you find your confidence sinking during a writing project, consider all the many possible reasons things might not be going as you expected.

Put on your detective hat and consider the facts. In this case:

- After doing a little writing, this writer was hired to do more.
- Another writer had already washed out — it's a tough crowd.
- Feedback asked for after the rewrites was positive.

Conclusion: This writer is doing great. The client is dysfunctional, but happy. Rewrites are normal, and don't reflect any lack on the writer's part. It would be a mistake to extrapolate from this one experience and make any conclusions about whether this copywriting niche is for you or not.

What went wrong? This writer forgot to QTIP. That stands for Quit Taking It Personally.

Most of what happens in the world of freelance writing is not about you. It's about your client — their time constraints, their budget, their situation, their personality.

The decisions your clients make are business decisions, and a million factors go into each decision. Not knowing what's going on behind the scenes shouldn't lead you to conclude that you're the problem.

Ask questions, if your client doesn't seem happy. Learn all you can, and do the best you can.

Make this change

Beyond that, the key thing to do is reframe how you view your career. Believe in yourself, and don't be ready to fold your tent and give up if you have a setback.

Think of every client and gig simply as a learning opportunity, or maybe as a crazy adventure. It'll be easier to get over the lumps and bumps that come your way with that outlook, as opposed to walking around thinking you're inadequate and just waiting to get busted for it.

When you QTIP, it's a lot easier to stay confident and keep pitching more clients, no matter how weird any one gig turns out.

Stop Doing This Now to Explode Your Freelance Writing Income



I've got a question for you: How's your freelance marketing going?

Not so good? I know many writers who, when you press them, finally admit they're not doing any marketing at all.

What's happening is, writers go to market their services, but then they don't. Something stops them. Something inside their heads.

Talking yourself out of it

It seems that when many writers sit down to make a marketing plan and start sending those query letters or letters of introduction or making those cold calls — or whatever you do — a bunch of toxic thoughts crop up.

I've seen a real epidemic of these negative ideas from [Freelance Writers Den](#) members lately. For instance, one writer targeting universities for copywriting work wrote:

"I get ready to call, but then I assume they all have grad students or interns or a marketing staff."

Or this one, from an experienced freelance writer whose income has been stymied by her lack of marketing:

"I talk myself out of looking for clients because I figure 'no one will hire me,' or 'the market has changed.'"

Another writer commented:

“I just can’t imagine why a company would both hire and PAY me.”

Finally, here’s an email I got:

“Pay rates at my established clients have gone down... Companies I used to work with no longer do newsletters, annual reports, etc., or they’ve taken them in house. Other companies only want to work via content mills. Everyone wants work done well for rock-bottom rates. I’ve always been able to make a living wage as a freelancer. Now I question if this is a sustainable career after all.”

It’s enough to get you feeling depressed and hopeless, hmm?

But you can snap out of this — and you need to, to grow your freelance writing income. To do it, I’ve got one big tip for you today:

Stay in reality

The important thing about those first three thoughts above is that they do not represent reality. They’re just things you’re saying to yourself — that clients don’t need you, that you don’t merit compensation. That freelancing is a mirage, and couldn’t possibly be real. These are ideas that exist only in your head.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics would not be projecting that [freelance workers will outnumber people with jobs by 2020](#) if there was no living in this.

Also, in the case of that last one, beware of extrapolating that your very limited personal experience accurately represents what’s going on in the vast freelance marketplace. Your few clients who don’t pay freelancers well anymore are not “everyone.”

Yes, the marketplace evolves. Clients who once paid freelancers well decide to go another direction — I had one \$95-an-hour client decide to fire my editor and go with a multimedia agency for content instead, for instance.

But there’s always another side to that coin. Meanwhile, two other businesses decide they’ve had it with what they’re getting for cheapo rates and gets serious about commissioning truly quality content at professional rates.

I know, because my Den “Share Your Success” forum is full every week of stories of how writers at all career stages are getting raises, finding better clients, and earning more. Freelance writing is a real career, people. Not just for established writers like me, but for new freelancers, too. You can earn a living at this.

Of course, it’s easier to have a pity party about how your existing clients are no longer great than it is to make 100 cold calls, eh?

And that’s what this sort of negative self-talk is all about — finding an excuse to avoid marketing. It’s easier to insist there are no good-paying clients than to haul your butt to a networking event or conference and put in the shoe leather to find them.

Meanwhile, out in the real world, every survey done of companies reveals that they love using freelancers and forecast they will use more freelancers in future. There's also evidence that [freelance rates are rising](#).

There's one other thing to take to heart here:

Clients need you

I don't care if you are fresh out of college or you've been writing for 20 years. No matter where you're at in your freelance writing career, there are clients who would love to have your help and are happy to pay for it.

When editors get together, do you know what they talk about? How they wish they could find more reliable, talented, responsible writers with fresh voices and ideas.

Remember, the vast majority of freelance writing gigs will never be advertised. They're hidden. You can't conclude anything about the market by reading Craigslist ads or checking the UpWork listings.

Instead, envision a magazine editor slumped over her desk, wishing she had time to grow her stable of good writers. A small business owner overwhelmed with the 24/7 demands of keeping his business alive, looking over his rudimentary website or abandoned blog in despair. These clients are waiting for you to reach out and show them the solution is a freelance writer.

They're waiting for you to get in touch.

Stop the self-sabotage

Here's the key thing to do: When you're tempted to spin a bunch of gloomy webs that keep you stuck where you are, just stop doing that. Right away.

There's a simple truth in freelancing: Marketing leads to good clients. Not marketing leads to starving.

If you can stop sabotaging your marketing efforts, your income can grow exponentially. I've seen writer after writer dig into marketing and report back a year later that their income has doubled, tripled, or more.

Suddenly, you have your pick amongst the prospects you've attracted, instead of scrabbling desperately for whatever crumb a low-paying client tosses your way. More leads mean you can say "no" to losers and [keep only the great clients](#), which also results in better income.

Take your foot off the brake

Imagine you're in a car and you're standing on the brake hard, all while saying, "I think cars no longer go. I can't seem to get anywhere! Guess it's time to give up and go back to using a horse-and-buggy."

This is the scenario negative-thinking freelance writers are trapped in. You've got to take your foot off the brake and put it on the gas to get down the road. Suddenly, you discover cars work just great.

I've yet to meet a writer who does consistent, effective marketing who doesn't get better clients. Stop the internal monologue that's keeping you from getting out there to meet the clients who need you.

CHAPTER 10: CHANGE YOUR FEARFUL THOUGHTS

25 Little Words That Can Ignite Your Writing Career



Sometimes, it only takes one simple thought to change your whole approach to freelance writing.

Recently, I've been going to support-group meetings as I deal with some [personal life issues](#).

At those meetings, they say a short, simple, well-known, non-denominational prayer. It's by Reinhold Niebuhr.

It's a prayer I certainly have known for a long time. I probably first encountered it in my late teens.

But I never thought of applying it to my life as a freelance writer.

Which is too bad, because it contains a powerful message for anyone who is struggling to build the freelance career they want.

Here it is:

The Serenity Prayer

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

Usually, people apply this thought to difficult people in their lives. The prayer helps us learn to let go of attempts to control other people's behavior — attempts that are utterly fruitless.

Because we can only control one thing in this world, and that is our own mind.

Saying the Serenity Prayer recently, it struck me that there are so many ways freelance writers can get off-track thinking and worrying about things they can't control.

Things like:

- The global economic downturn
- The economic slump in your town
- The stiff competition
- Your age ("too young" or "too old")
- A lack of impressive writing samples

I wish I had a dime for every writer who's told me they can't possibly earn a good living as a freelancer because of one of those stumbling blocks above, so I could retire now.

I hear this chatter day in and out:

"You know, I just can't charge professional rates. The economy in my small town is still really slow."

"I can't see the point of trying to be a healthcare copywriter when there are already so many! My local healthcare writers' association has 800 members alone."

Obsessing on circumstances we can't do anything about takes the focus off what we can do to move forward.

Instead of thinking "limited pie and not enough slices to go around," change your mindset to envision an ever-expanding marketplace where writers can tap into pent-up market demand for writing services.

You have to put your focus where it's productive. You have to gather every drop of your energy and use it all to take the steps that are within your power.

What's happening doesn't matter

For one more insight into how the Serenity Prayer could transform your freelance career, let me share a recent event in my life:

I took my daughter to the drop-off for a three-day outdoor education trip. More than 100 fourth graders were gathering in the gym with their sleeping bags and duffels, getting ready for this highly anticipated event, which parents fundraise for all year.

Most of the kids looked happy and excited, as you'd expect. They were meeting their counselors, put-

ting on their cabin's bandannas, and chattering with friends.

But not everyone was a happy camper.

Some kids were in tears, trailing parents who had clearly dragged their student there under protest. Others looked angry, worried, or overwhelmed.

And yet, they were all going on the same journey. Their world was exactly the same, but inside some heads, negative thoughts formed which caused some children to miss the chance to enjoy a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

How to get what you want no matter what

As my mom has said to me a million times, it's not about what happens to you in your life. It's about what you decide to do about it.

If the economy is tough, you can market harder.

You can volunteer and get more and better sample clips.

You can turn your age to your advantage by connecting with clients who sell to customers like you.

You can send more query letters or letters of introduction, grow your network, ask more people to refer you.

Also, you can take care of yourself. You can eat right, exercise, and get enough sleep.

Then, you can write more, and better.

Let go of the things that aren't within your sphere of influence. Stop worrying about them.

Just do what you can to grow your writing career. I promise you'll be amazed at what happens.

3 Steps to Escape the Fear Trap and Put Your Writing Out There



Do you have a blog post you've written, but you can't seem to press the "publish" button?

A query letter you can't manage to send? An article you keep putting off submitting to your dream magazine?

Writers will often take a writing course, listen to podcasts, buy writing books, and at the end of it, I still hear this:

"I need to gain self-confidence so I can start putting it out there!"

We writers are happy when we're sitting alone in our back room, creating.

But when it's time for that writing to see the light of day and be read by others, it's often another story.

We freeze in our tracks. I've talked to writers who are cashing Social Security checks, and still waiting for the paralysis to lift so they can finally embark on their dream of being a writer.

Clearly, we need to speed this up so you can get your writing out there! Here's a three-step process for that:

1. Know that you are not alone

The first thing to do if you're stopped by fears is to realize you are not the only one going through this. In fact, pretty much every writer deals with fears that their writing:

- won't be good enough
- will piss someone off
- will have mistakes
- will be laughed at
- will be ignored

- will be rejected
- won't be ready on deadline
- will need rewrites and edits that you won't be able to pull off
- will be wildly successful and bring more pressure to be brilliant next time

Stop thinking it's just you. Trust me, it's not.

Personally, when I write a first piece for a new client, I still feel massively afraid that I am going to screw it up and let them down.

It takes twice as long as normal to write it. But I do write it and turn it in. How?

2. Be accepting instead of afraid

Instead of fearing all those scary things I listed above, I'd like to encourage you to take a new outlook on them.

Accept that these things are *sure* to happen.

You will screw up. Someone will be angered. And you will find an audience, somewhere.

Accept it all as an inevitable part of life as a writer. This stuff just goes with the territory. You can hardly write a word without at least one of the things on that list happening to you.

Realize it will happen, and you will survive. You will live to write another day.

After one heinous error I committed as a staff writer, I was very down. I felt like my career was ruined! My editor pointed out that in a week, another issue would come out, and this one would be largely forgotten. Memories are short, and people move on. And he was right.

There is no Universal Editor Network out there that will instantly notify every other editor not to hire you if one doesn't like your writing.

If you make a mess, you will find other markets, and you will be fine. I speak as someone who has burned more than one editor bridge in my time. I continue to get writing gigs and have new client leads come my way.

3. Make a choice to act

Recently, I came across a powerful thought about the fear that freezes writers in their tracks and keeps them from building a living from their writing.

It's that *acting based on fear is a choice*.

In his book *Uncertainty*, Jonathan Fields relates that surveys of highly successful CEOs revealed they were all wracked by doubts. The thing that made them successful was that they had developed ways of pushing on past those fears and acting anyway.

We can't control our feelings. Our fears are often very deep-rooted. It's unlikely we'll be able to extract them from our psyche. Stop waiting for that to happen.

Instead, find ways to trick yourself into moving forward despite the fears. It's really a fake-it-'til-you-

make-it situation.

Personally, when I'm stuck with anxiety about a piece of writing, I usually break things down into smaller pieces.

Today, I'll just research sources to interview for that article I'm freaked out about. Tomorrow, I might email them. If they respond, I'll set interviews for yet another day. One day, I'll just research statistics that relate to my story. This next day, I'll just read and highlight my notes. Or create an outline.

And so on, until suddenly I review my notes and realize I'm ready to write it.

You make take baby steps, or perhaps a giant leap will get you over the hump. I know a writer who made dozens of cold calls every week to start her business — just went crazy with it. That was what it took for her to get it rolling.

But however you approach it, choose not to sit in fear. Instead, act out of love for yourself and your writing talent.

Act out of the realization that life is short, and you don't want to reach the end of it with regrets and thoughts unwritten.

This is the secret of gaining self-confidence as a writer: Each action you take will build your confidence that you can do more.

On the other hand, the longer you sit with your writing fears and let them paralyze you, the more those fears magnify and the harder it becomes to put it out there.

There's only one way out of this syndrome. You've got to make a move, and then another and another.

There will never be a better time to get started than right now.

GOT RAVES OR FEEDBACK ON THIS BOOK?

We'd love to hear about it! Please leave a review on Amazon or Barnes & Noble, if you bought this e-book on those sites – or send me your thoughts at carol@caroltice.com, and I may post them on this e-book's page on my Make a Living Writing blog.

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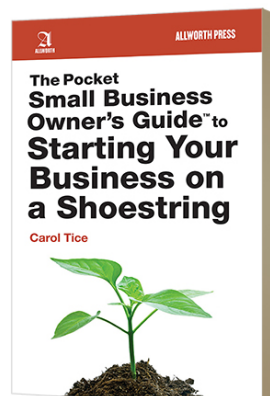
All of the above e-books are available at: <http://www.makealivingwriting.com/ebooks>

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I've put 20+ years of wisdom gleaned from interviewing business owners into *The Pocket Small Business Owner's Guide to Starting Your Business on a Shoestring*, by Carol Tice (Allworth Press 2013) <http://shoestringstartupguide.com>



Blogs & Websites

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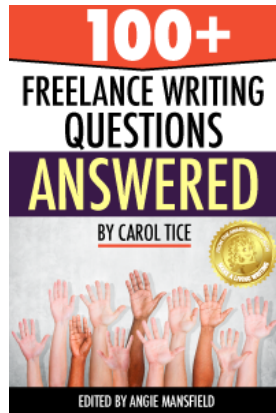
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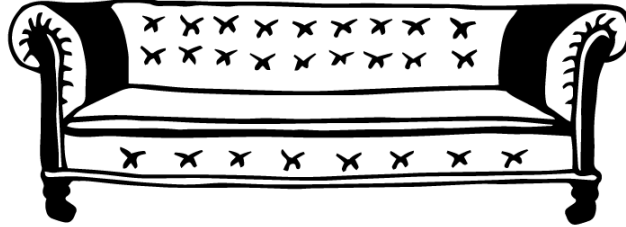
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