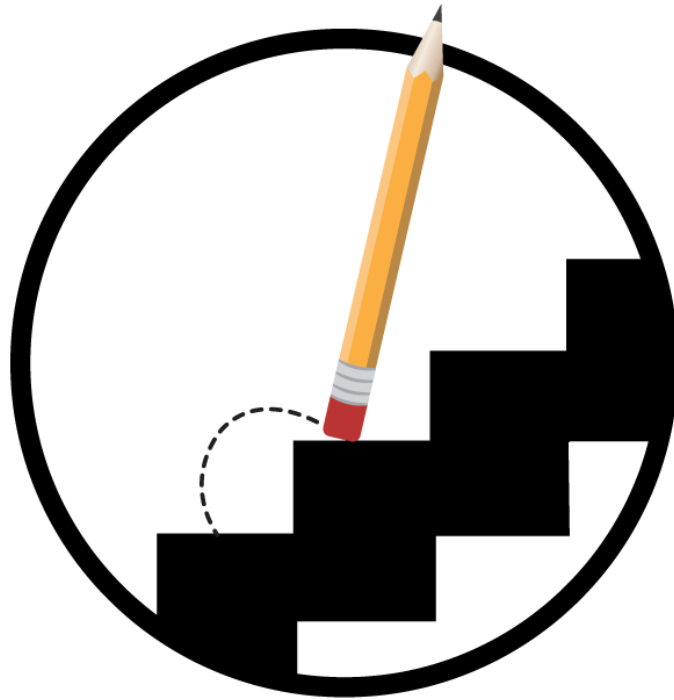


The Step-By-Step Guide To Freelance Writing Success

STEP BY STEP CHECKLIST



By Carol Tice

Chapter 1- Finding Best First Markets

1. Create a low-hanging fruit list of your work and life experiences and interests; then boil it down to 6 or fewer main passions to pursue for paid writing.

Places I've Worked:

Life Experiences:

Personal Passions:

2. “Follow the money” and research which niches have the most earning potential, to narrow your list to 2-3 most lucrative opportunities. Use resources such as [Hoovers](#), the [Writers' Market](#) and [The Book of Lists](#) in your city to research industries and particular magazines or companies.

My Best-Paying Opportunities:

a)

b)

c)

3. Identify several likely starter markets within your chosen niches, whether they're local publications, small businesses, charities you support, or organizations where you participate. Don't just say “local charities” – identify the exact prospects you would approach.

Possible first clients:

4. Identify likely types of writing assignments you could easily pitch and do for these first markets from our list of first assignments.

Example: you decide healthcare is one of your topics. You might start with your local doctor's office that has three doctors working out of it. You're going to look to your local phone book and who you patronize look for the break-in markets within your chosen industries that would be natural segues for you, where you could chat up the owner. Or there's some little magazine or newspaper in your town, where editors are easily accessible. These easy places where you could pitch them something.

My Best Starter Assignment Types:

a)

b)

c)

8 Great Types of First Markets

Which types of writing might be good break-in assignments for me? Here's our list of easy writing gigs:

1. Small businesses I frequent:
2. Charities I support:
3. Organizations I am active in:
4. My local newspapers:
5. Local alternative papers:
6. Other free papers:
7. Writing contests I could enter:
8. Family & friends who own businesses:

7 Types of Great Break-In Assignments

What should I write for first assignments for these entry markets?

Here are 7 easy types for brainstorming:

1. Book or restaurant reviews

2. 1-person interviews
3. Front-of-book (FOB) pieces
4. Event coverage
5. Celebrity interview
6. Web content
7. Personal essays

Chapter 2: How To Market When You're A Newbie With No Clips – Without Seeming Desperate

How to Get Your First Clips

Identify some initial targets for pro bono work or for your first paid gigs, if you've already got a few clips. This will be based off of your low hanging fruit passion list that you identified last week.

Good pro bono project targets for me:

Possible pitch script for pro bono work with dignity:

I'm reaching out to you because I'm a freelance writer looking to build my portfolio in the area of [insert the industry or type of writing assignment]. In analyzing your current marketing materials, I noticed you were missing [insert the piece they need — it could be an About page on their website, press releases, case studies].

Because I want to build my reputation in this area, I'd be willing to do [name the project] for you without charge. All I'd ask in return is that you refer and recommend me in the future, if you're happy with my work. I'd also need you to not mention that I did this project for you without charge. We both win here. You get a free marketing piece [or article], and I get a valuable entry in my portfolio.

I'm happy to tell you more about my writing background and discuss this with you further. Let me know if you're interested.

How to Look for Paid Work

1. Research prospects from your list above. What can you identify that they could use writing help with?
2. Think about solutions you could offer.
3. Contact the prospect by mail, in person, or phone, and make your pitch.
4. Follow up.
5. Provide samples, or create marketing pieces to give out – a newsletter, a blog.

TO DO:

Who are my top prospects?

What do they need?

How will I reach out?

What will my follow-up method be?

What marketing pieces do I need to create?

Chapter 3: 10 Marketing Strategies for New Writers

How will you reach your prospective new clients? Good strategies for new writers include:

1. **Your writer website.** Could I put up a quick site using [Zoominfo](#), LinkedIn's Professional Portfolio tool, a free site such as Yola, or supported WordPress platform such as [NAIWE](#), [OutstandingSETUP](#), or [Writer's Residence](#)?

2. **Your blog and guest blogging.** Be sure to have a “Hire Me” tab on your blog, to alert prospects who might visit that you do take clients. For more on using your blog as a great writing sample to get gigs, check out [*How to Be a Well-Paid Freelance Blogger*](#).
3. **Better-quality job boards.** Research whether niche boards such as [*Gorkana*](#) or the paid listings on LinkedIn could offer better quality leads than Craigslist.
4. **In-person networking.** Are there local writer or business networking events I could attend? Think ahead on conversation-starters for breaking the ice.
5. **Phone/Skype calls.** Who could I build relationships with through a quick online call?
6. **Targeted emails or letters of introduction.** Might an LOI be an effective way to reach my target clients?
7. **Query letters.** If I’m interested in breaking into consumer magazines, I need to develop story ideas and write query letters. Resources include Linda Formichelli’s [*Renegade Writer*](#) site and her packet of Query Letters that Rock.
8. **Social media.** What platforms am I active in now? Could I explore adding LinkedIn, Twitter, or local listservs or forums?
9. **Partnerships and alliances.** Are there local photographers, webmasters, coders, or designers I could meet for mutual referrals?
10. **A marketing plan.** Next, boil down your marketing action items into a marketing plan that explains who your target client is, and what you plan to do as far as marketing to reach them.

My 2-minute, starter marketing plan

My target client type is:

Marketing I will do:

Frequency: number of per week/month

Sample LOI script:

As a freelance writer focused on [topic], I loved your recent newsletter piece on [related topic].

In checking out your [newsletter/website/brochure/whatever], I noticed you don't have any [recent coverage of Topic X, an About page, team bios, case studies, etc.]. I'd love to help you out with that. Do you work with freelance writers?

[1-line bio here: "I am a Houston-based freelance writer specializing in medical writing."]

[State some relevant experience here: "I was a long-time dental receptionist before becoming a freelance writer, so I know the dental industry well."]

May I send you a few of my [relevant topic] clips? [Or if you have none, you need another call-to-action — maybe, "I will give you a call in the next few days to see if I can learn more about your needs and tell you about how I can help."]

Chapter 4: Build Your Confidence To Negotiate

Feeling nervous about putting your writing out there? Here are our 10 confidence-building techniques:

1. Create a list of your strengths.
2. Gain perspective by realizing others have bigger challenges.
3. Live the fear – get someone to laugh at your work.
4. Keep and read previous clips and raves.
5. Realize plenty of mediocre writers are earning a living, and many people hate writing. There is demand for what you do.
6. Say, "I'm a freelance writer" out loud, often as you can.
7. Walk away from naysayers.
8. Celebrate successes – no matter how small.

9. Write a lot.
10. Be your own cheerleader – remember, confidence comes from within.

10 Negotiating Tips:

1. **Define the scope.** Always, before you bid.
2. **Make them blink first.** Ask, “What’s your budget?”
3. **Delay or use silence.** Say, “Let me think on this and send in a bid tomorrow.”
4. **Don’t negotiate when you don’t feel well.** Set a future appointment time instead.
5. **Don’t cave in to pressure.** Clients who’re in a huge hurry often turn out to be clients you wish you hadn’t taken on.
6. **Refuse to blind bid.** Say, “I’ll be happy to give you a precise quote once I know the details of your project.”
7. **Raise objections.** If there are special circumstances such as rush work required, point that out – then, ask for more money.
8. **Ask for feedback – or stand firm.** Depending on how bad you want the gig, either say, “That’s my bid,” or end with, “If you’re considering another writer based on price, I’d appreciate an opportunity to revisit my bid.”
9. **Bid by the project.** Whenever possible, as opposed to by the word or by the hour.
10. **Have a contract in writing.** Without it, your client doesn’t have to pay you – ever.

A script for setting an appointment later:

Thanks for contacting me about X-Y-Z project. I’m currently wrapping something else up, but I’m very interested in learning more about this project. Can we set an appointment to chat in a few days? I’m available Thursday afternoon or Friday morning. How does that look for you?

Chapter 5 Insider Tips & Tricks For The Pro Writer

4 Tips to Get Ready to Write:

1. **Study the market.** Read the target magazine or business website. Notice the writing style, the ads, the topics.
2. **Analyze the audience.** Who is the intended reader here?

3. **Get and use quotes.** They bring articles to life.
4. **Research – and organize your materials.** Look for credible sources, not Wikipedia.

Article writing tips:

Write great headlines. This is especially critical online. Learn about headline writing from the [Headline Hacks](#) report, and from the report [Why Do Most Headlines Fail?](#)

Write strong lede sentences. Make that first sentence want readers to read more.

Write solid nut grafs. Don't forget to pull your article together with a paragraph that lets us know what we'll learn in the rest of the story.

Use the inverted pyramid. Organize the most important stuff up top, and editors won't end up cutting important points.

Use writing conventions. For articles, that means complete sentences. Know or learn grammar rules.

Know online writing style. Blog posts are more like copywriting: think short, punchy sentences and paragraphs with scannable elements like bullet points.

Write a strong, Web-friendly headline and lede. Remember, the first sentence shows up in searches, too.

Use a conversational tone. This is especially important for writing online, but applies to most consumer magazines, too.

Understand search engine optimization SEO. You'll help promote your career and make clients look good, too. A good resource is the blog SearchEngineLand.

Use social media. Twitter is the biggest blog-promotion tool – start using it ASAP. Also try out Google+.

Tips for reviewing and proofreading your work:

Remember to rewrite. Editors want your best 500 words, not the first 500 words you think of.

Slow down. Remember to leave enough time to meet your deadline, so you don't have to file in a rush and turn in sloppy work.

Shrink your draft. Trim out excess paragraphs, ideas, sentences, and words before you turn in your work.

Expect to be edited. Edits are routine – don't get depressed about it!

Chapter 6: How To Avoid The 12 Biggest Mistakes Of New Freelance Writers – And Earn Big

1. Getting stuck in self-doubt.
2. Allowing rejection to crush you.
3. Not creating a writer website.
4. Wasting time deciding on a niche.
5. Failing to use your contacts.
6. Thinking low-paying gigs are all that's out there.
7. Forgetting to study your market.
8. Writing weak query letters.
9. Avoiding direct contact with clients and sources.
10. Thinking you can't negotiate.
11. Not reviewing your own work.
12. Failing to market your writing.

Marketing script:

Here's a script for reaching out to former contacts to reconnect on LinkedIn:

"I see you're at X place now. Me? I'm freelance writing. I'd love to have a Skype call with you sometime, and catch up. Just let me know if you know anyone who's looking for a writer who does X. I'm looking for a couple new clients right now."

Learn More About Freelance Writing from the Authors

Blogs

Carol Tice: Make a Living Writing

<http://www.makealivingwriting.com>

Laura Spencer: Writing Thoughts:

<http://www.writingthoughts.com>

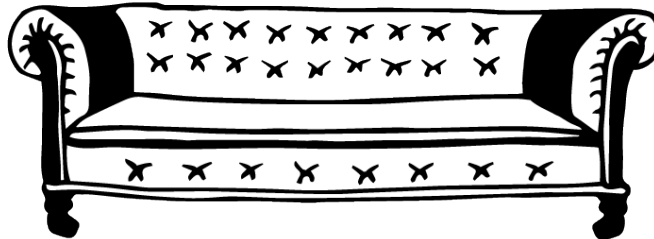
E-books

13 Ways to Get the Writing Done Faster: 2 Pro Writers Share Their Secrets, by Carol Tice & Linda Formichelli

How to be a Well-Paid Freelance Blogger, by Annabel Candy, Sean Platt, Carol Tice, and Greg Ciotti

Both available at: <http://www.makealivingwriting.com/ebooks>

freelance writers den



Freelance Writers Den is the learning and support community where freelance writers learn to grow their income – fast. The Den offers support forums, live Den meeting events, and more than 100 hours of recorded trainings and transcripts.

Membership is \$25 a month – no obligation, leave at any time. See what members say, view a video on the Den's benefits, and get on the waiting list to hear when we next open to new members, all at <http://freelancewritersden.com>.