

Beginner's Guide to Online Writing Jobs

How to Get Started and Earn...Even if You've Never Been a Writer

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Introduction

You're reading this because you need or want to earn extra income from home. Maybe you've lost your job or you're just ready for some extra cushion every month. Many families are in the same boat and aren't sure how to make it happen. I'm so glad you decided to read my book, because it's your answer to earning a part or even full time income by writing online.

The fact is that the web revolves around content. Every website, blog, and online business needs content to attract and keep their visitors. That means there are more opportunities for writers than ever before. If you want to be an online writer, you can. There is nothing to hold you back. There is no one to tell you, "no." All you need is a desire and passion to earn through your writing.

You don't have to be a Pulitzer Prize level writer, either. As long as you can write coherent emails and can research and write on a middle school level, you're good to go. Your skill and talent will develop over time-- this isn't something you're either born with or not.

I also want to mention that there is something for everyone when it comes to writing. You can write on any topic you desire, in any style you desire. I'm going to help guide you through the different writing opportunities so you can choose the path you're most attracted to.

Get ready, because learning how to earn money writing online is going to change your life. Imagine-- the web can really become your ATM. You can earn money whenever you have the time or desire to sit down and write. It doesn't get any better than that.

Are Online Writing Jobs a Scam?

First, I want to address a common misconception. I've heard it time and time again that aspiring online writers get discouraged because people in their lives tell them it's all a scam-- that you can't really make money online. The truth is that many 'opportunities' for earning money online *are* a scam.

But, earning money writing online is not. It's just like any other job or business on the planet. There is a demand for it and you can supply it. It's a simple equation-- there is money to be made as an online writer.

I will say that some writing opportunities are better than others. There are some 'content mills' and writing companies that are designed to take advantage of you. They'll pay you peanuts for your hard work. That's why I'm going to explain the opportunities that are out there but ultimately recommend you write for yourself.

The bottom line here is that you should not listen to anyone who tells you this is all a scam or that you can't make it work. You absolutely can-- push through, find the right opportunities (or make your own) and you can change your life as an online writer.

Types of Online Writing Jobs

I mentioned earlier that there are a variety of jobs out there for writers. There are companies that hire writers for their vast array of websites. Some of them pay fairly well-- such as Demand Studios. You can apply to become a writer for Demand Studios, just know that they often reject really good writers for no reason, I suspect when they have an overload of quality writers.

There are also content sites where you write whatever you'd like and people buy the content as it's written. Constant Content is one example of this. You can do quite well responding to content requests through this site. It's a great option for filler work or more.

Writing teams are another option. There are sites like iWriter and TextBroker where you can hire out content and earn money whenever you want to take on work. You only get earnings that are worth it after you prove yourself, though-- both have rating systems.

Then, there are bidding sites. Examples include elance.com, odesk.com, getafreelancer.com, and others. People post jobs on these sites and then writers offer bids. The client chooses the best bid (not always the lowest-- but the one that will get them the quality they want at the price they want). You can try these sites, just know that you need to follow the client's bidding instructions very closely and you need to mention something in your bid and on your portfolio that really sets you apart from the other writers.

Finally, there is the option to run your own writing business. This is the best option for a variety of reasons. It gives you complete control over the content you write and the income you earn. It can be a little intimidating to try to find your own clients and set your own prices, but it's something that will really benefit you in the short term and the long term. Writing jobs are so abundant that this is really the only long term option to consider...don't be fearful of this option.

The Best Path for You as a Writer

Now it's time to choose the best path for you as a writer. Don't feel like you're stuck with whatever decision you make. Many writers use all of the options to comprise their income. Others go with one or two. I suggest you visit the sites I mentioned and look at what other writers are doing to make up your mind.

You might also want to consider going with a site like Constant Content at first while you get over your initial fears of writing online. There isn't any client pressure there like there can be at other sites. A site like iWriter or TextBroker can be a nice way to ease yourself into working for clients, under the protective umbrella of a lot of rules on both sides.

At some point in the near future, after you get your feet wet, I do recommend you branch out. Start your own writing website where you post your samples and offer your services. Build relationships on business and marketing forums, social media, local ads, word of mouth, and list building.

Your goal should be to get an email list of business and marketing people who you can mail with your writing offers and build relationships with. It's easiest to get hired if people are already familiar with you. I know that this can seem overwhelming, but these are all things you can research how to do and get running. At the bare minimum, you should set up a blogger.com blog and post your samples and writing offers.

Starting Your Own Writing Business

This business model deserves its own section, because it's the way to go for writers. Set a website up (many use self-hosted WordPress) under the name you're using as a writer.

Include these sections on your website:

- Contact me-- you want your clients and potential clients to know how to hire you
- Samples-- Showcase your skills with a few samples
- Testimonials-- Ask clients to offer their feedback for your page
- About me-- clients are a lot more likely to hire people they've gotten to know. Get a head start by writing an About Me page
- Hire me-- they can do this through your contact page, but you should make it very clear how to hire you. You can even include ready-to-go buy buttons on this page
- Homepage- Your homepage should be like a sales page. It should entice clients to hire you. What sets you apart from other writers out there? Also, spell out which services you offer
- Opt-in form-- Definitely sign up for something like Aweber or GetResponse and put an opt in form (with a freebie or coupon) to get clients and potential clients to sign up

You can advertise your site a variety of ways. Join business and marketing forums and list it in your signature file. Tweet about what you do and share it on Facebook. Network with writers and business people online and off. Build your list and mail out special offers-- building a relationship with your list is a great way to get clients whenever you want or need to. Get the word out, offer great work, and things will take off from there.

Setting Goals

It doesn't matter what you're doing in life, you'll always get a lot farther if you set goals. The most successful people in the world have set goals to get where they are. It's one thing to say, "I want to succeed with my writing." It's another thing altogether to have it set in your mind that, "I will earn \$1000 per month with my writing within two months."

Which do you think you're more likely to achieve? It's clear that the more specific you are, the better.

Sit down now and brainstorm all the goals you have for yourself as an online writer. Think about what kind of schedule you want to keep (do you want to work part time yet earn a full time income?), how much you want to earn, when you want to earn it, how much you want to earn in 5 years, and so on. Just let your mind flow free as you think of all these things.

Then, go through and choose your top, most important, goals. Write these down and refer to them often. In fact, write them down often (many successful people re-write their goals every morning) for the best results.

How to Become a Better Writer

Are you worried that your writing isn't up to par? I have a strong feeling that you're going to do just fine. You're attracted to writing as a profession, so there is something in you that already knows you're a good writer or have the potential to become a good writer.

It is important to know that writing for the online environment is much different than writing scholarly articles and things like that. You need to write as if you're talking to a friend-- casual, easy to understand, and clear. Would you rate what you're reading right now as easy going and easy to understand? That is the goal.

I recommend you read some of your favorite websites, blogs, and ebooks to get a feel for the typical style of online writing. Try to emulate that style as you do your own writing. Choose a topic, research that topic, and then write a few great articles around that topic. It will be easier than you think (you can use these test articles as samples you can show clients).

The best way to become a better writer is just to write. Write every day. Try different topics and different kinds of writing. One of the great things about writing for clients is that you will get exposed to different demands, styles, and topics. It's a wonderful way to grow your talent, skill, and passion for writing. You'll find that it becomes easier and faster over time to produce great work.

Avoiding Burnout

It might seem strange that I've included a section on avoiding burnout before you've even gotten a chance to get started. It's because I want to caution you early on to avoid a big problem many writers have in the early part of their career. They get so excited to find that there is a ton of work out there. They see the money and want more and more. They take on so many jobs that they find themselves in a hole they can't seem to dig out of. They get frustrated and backed up and their income goes down as a result.

Only take on as much work as you can really handle. Even if you have a great special offer clients are scooping up like crazy-- cut off sales until you have a chance to catch up. There is no shame in keeping work in your queue for weeks or even a month or more. Just make sure you pay attention to client expectations and that you're doing a good job of delivering. Most importantly of all, make sure you feel good about your work, that you're getting enough rest, and that you're giving yourself time to have fun as well.

Everyone needs a break from writing sometimes-- even those who truly love the craft of writing.

How to Write Articles for the Web

Now, let's get into the nitty gritty of what it really means to write for the web. Articles are what online writers typically start out with. They are fast, easy, and often fun. It is important to keep a few things in mind before you tackle them for clients, however.

- They should be well researched
- They should have a clear purpose
- They should be easy to read
- They should (generally) be between 400-800 words
- They should deliver on the promise of the title
- They should have a great introduction
- They should be well organized
- They should have a conclusion, usually including a call to action

Well Researched

Don't write until you've done your research-- unless you know your topic intimately. I've been in this particular business for so long that I didn't have to research to write this book. For most topics, though, I have to research.

How? I typically start with Google. Visit forums related to the topic, check the Amazon table of contents for related books...and then Google those topics. Find high quality sources, studies, facts, and opinions. Gather notes on the topic. Your job is to act as a reporter. Cite your sources where appropriate.

Don't stress too much about the research and don't read and gather irrelevant facts. Focus on the task at hand and you'll be able to do fast, quality research.

Clear Purpose

You need to know why you're writing before you get started writing. Some articles are designed to inform and delight. Others are designed to pre-sell. Others are designed to do the selling. Some will go on a blog. Others will go on a website. Still others will be used for article marketing. Know what your client wants and expects before you start writing.

Easy to Read

Articles you write for the web should be extremely easy to read. Studies show that the average reading level of the online reader is around 7th or 8th grade. Even those who hold a PhD tend to want easy reading when they are browsing online or looking to buy something. There is a time and place for every kind of writing-- and the web is definitely where you want to keep it casual.

Don't use a 'big' word where a smaller one will suffice. Write concisely and make sure your work is free from fluff. Read blog posts from writers you enjoy and get a feel for how they write. I'll bet it's enjoyable, to the point, uses elements of storytelling, and (most importantly) satisfies what the reader needs and wants.

Length

There is no one correct length for articles. The typical length for web articles is generally between 400 and 800 words. Don't be surprised if you get a different request from a client.

Deliver on the Title

As an article writer, it will often be your job to come up with a great title for the articles you write. These titles should typically contain the keyword you're focusing on as well as a bit of mystery or intrigue to get people to continue reading.

Many writers neglect to make sure that the article directly delivers on what was promised in the title, so make sure you do that.

Great Introduction

I see many introductions that are very dull-- they don't entice the reader to go any further. Don't say things like, "This article is going to be about..." Start with something catchy instead. Deliver on the promise of the title and leave a bit of mystery to get people to read the full article. Typically, you shouldn't reveal information in the introduction since that is what you will do in the body of the article.

Well Organized

Your article needs to flow. It shouldn't skip all over the place so that it's nonsensical to its readers. It can really help if you write an outline before you get started.

Conclusion

Your conclusion should be exactly that-- the end of the article. Sum up what you've talked about and include a call to action, if appropriate.

There are variations to these 'rules', of course, but you'll do well if you stick with these until you get your footing.

How to Write Ebooks for the Web

Many writers enjoy writing ebooks even more than writing articles. There is something about it that just flows and almost seems easier. Then again, there are others who are fearful of writing ebooks-- they think bigger projects almost certainly have to be harder. I tend to disagree-- as long as you organize your outline before you get started and break your writing down into 'chunks' or sections, it can be easy and fun to write ebooks.

The process of writing ebooks is actually quite similar to writing articles:

- They should be well researched
- They should have a clear purpose
- They should be easy to read
- They should (generally) be over 5,000 words (reports are shorter but the process is the same)
- They should deliver on the promise of the title and table of contents
- They should have a great introduction
- They should be well organized
- They should have a conclusion

Well Researched

Before you get started, I suggest you create an outline. Check out other books' table of contents to get an idea. Visit forums in the niche you're writing about and see what their passions and fears are.

Research each section, in turn. Organize notes for each section so you can easily refer to them while writing.

Clear Purpose

You should understand the purpose of the ebook before you write it. Who will it be sold to? Will it become a Kindle book? Is it a freebie download designed to inspire email list sign ups for your client? Figure it out-- because it can make a difference in how you write the book.

Easy to read

Just as with articles, your ebook should be easy to read. Consider your reader and deliver on what they expect. Try to read a few books in the genre to get a feel for the typical style.

Length

Ebooks are generally over 5,000 words-- longer if they are to be published somewhere like Kindle. Reports have a lower word count. Just ask your client what they prefer-- many writers charge clients based on word count so this will be especially important to know.

Title and Table of Contents

Your ebook should have a clear title. What is the book about? Consider other titles in the same niche to get a feel for what you might call yours.

Along with the title, your ebook should have a clear table of contents. People often skip around when it comes to non fiction, or look to the table of contents when they need to find information later on.

Introduction

The introduction should start your ebook off right. Draw people in by detailing that you're going to deliver exactly what they need and want. Consider using elements of storytelling to draw them in. Don't reveal information in the introduction-- that's what you'll do in the various chapters of your ebook.

Structure

The structure of your ebook will be determined based on your outline. Your ebook should be very well organized so readers can find what they want and follow what you've written. Don't just write whatever comes to mind. You'll be able to write the ebook more easily and quickly if you have a plan in mind first.

Conclusion

Your ebook should end by reiterating the main points of the book. Consider the goal of the book in your ending. Let's say the book you're writing is designed as a pre-sell to a larger product. You'd want to guide people to the conclusion that they want that book as well. Or maybe the book was designed to encourage and help people on something related to the topic-- end positively and reaffirm that they are going to succeed. Your goal is to deliver what the reader needs and expects.

How to Write Sales Copy for the Web

Writing sales copy is a specialized skill. It also pays much better than other types of web writing. This isn't an area I'd suggest for you if you haven't gotten your feet wet with article writing and ebook writing first. I think you'll be much more comfortable if you already understand the basics of web writing. With that said, I don't think you should be intimidated by writing copy either. It's all about the psychology of the reader.

This book is focused on beginner level writing, so I won't go as in depth into copywriting. I want you to have a good understanding of it, though, so you'll be ready to try it out soon.

To write great copy, you need to:

- Fully research and understand your niche
- Come up with a great hook/angle for what you're selling
- Create a list of benefits of the product
- Craft a great headline
- Hit on points of emotion and the reader's problem
- Tell a good story that gets the reader on your side
- Create a great offer
- Close strong...with a call to action

Research Your Product

You need to intimately familiarize yourself with the product. Go through, page by page, and take notes on it. What makes it so great? How is it different from everything else out there? By the end of your note taking exercise, you should know the product from top to bottom. This will help set up everything else you do with your sales letter.

Research Your Niche

Just as important is getting to know the people of the niche. You need to understand why they'll buy the product, or not. There are real people looking at these sales letters and you need to touch their heart. You need to understand them possibly better than they understand themselves.

Visit popular blogs, forums, and websites to do this research. Look at common questions, hot topics, and points of emotion. Take notes on these things because you'll pull from them as you write.

Come Up With a Hook/Angle

You won't sell much of anything if it's not clear why the product is so great. Why should they buy this over something similar? You need to come up with a hook or angle for your sales letter that

draws people in and carries them through to the purchase, knowing that they won't leave without making that purchase.

List the Benefits

There are features to a product... such as that a desk is made of wood. That's good information but it's not good enough to buy. Let's say you're promoting a new standing desk, based on the data that sitting down for long periods of time is bad for your health. So this standing desk is indeed made of wood, but who cares? People care that the desk actually carries health benefits, increases productivity, etc. Focus on those things-- get to the heart of what matters.

Craft a Good Headline

Your headline should be crafted from your hook or main benefit. It should grab the target audience right away and lead them through so they'll read the sales letter.

Stir Up Emotions

Sales letters are all about emotion. It's not the same as writing a standard web article. You need to reach people on an emotional level. Your introduction should spell out their problem and what they are going through right now.

Tell a Good Story

You need to get people on your side. Your goal as the sales letter writer is to get the reader to feel connected with the product owner. Weave a story of how they (or you) have gone through the same thing. Detail your ups and downs...your missteps and your successes. Then, lead to the solution you found.

Create a Great Offer

People will buy nearly anything if it's a great offer. You don't have to compete on price, but you do have to make it clear that what they are getting is worth far more than what they have to pay. Build the value of the offer throughout the sales letter and make sure it looks like they are getting a bargain, no matter what the price.

Close Strong

Your close is important. You want to give a call to action. You want to catch people who've scrolled to the end. Reiterate the benefits and make it inevitable that they buy.

Do yourself a favor and learn all you can about writing sales copy. It will serve you well for everything you do online.

Easy Ways to Grow Your Writing Income

I recommend you get started with the basics first. But, I know you'll be ready to try new things and grow your business very soon. The first way you can do that is by offering additional services. Instead of just offering ebooks, why don't you offer to write the sales letter as well? Instead of just writing articles, why don't you offer to put websites up for people? It is much easier to get hired by those who've already hired you and liked your work.

You can also start to raise your prices as you become more in demand. As a new writer, you likely started out with fairly low prices. Put them up as your confidence increases and word gets out that your skills are well worth it. You might lose some clients but you'll gain many more.

Outsourcing and Managing

At some point, you might find that the demand for your services is more than you can keep up with-- even after you raise your prices. That's a good problem to have. That's when you can start to take on other writers and form your own writing team. Those writers will be really happy to have the work. You'll get a cut of what they earn for managing everything. It really is a great thing.

Be careful, though, because you need to make sure you hire writers who can match your skill level. There are some out there who just can't cut it (mostly because they don't have a guide like the one you're reading right now). You don't want to get stuck doing the work over again.

Some writers have others do the research and the writing and then they do the editing. Others have people in their team who take care of every step, so it's hands-off for them. The choice is yours. Just make sure you plan everything in advance so you know who is getting paid and when, and who has which assignment.

Writing for Yourself

At some point, every writer starts to realize that there is a great reason people are hiring them. It's because you are helping them earn a lot more money than they are paying you. Some writers are totally content with that and that is great. But others, like yours truly, like to write for themselves to earn even more.

You can write your own articles for niche websites. You can earn passively from your writing in a way that builds up over time. Amazon affiliate sites are a very popular way to do this.

You can create your own products and ebooks as well. You can sell them to people in your niche or even list them on Amazon Kindle to sell.

The fact is that you get the best education ever on writing for yourself when you've spent a lot of time writing for clients. Offering services is the fast track to a great online income. It then opens the door for whatever you want to do to earn money online.

Get Started and Earn!

You won't get anywhere with your business if you don't get started. It's not enough to dream about become an online writer. You have to turn the emotions off, stop over-thinking, and just get started. There are so many opportunities out there for you that it's incredible. You owe it to yourself to take the plunge.

It doesn't matter whether you've done any writing for the web or not. You can get started today with what you've learned here. Make this the day you decide to change your life for the better.

What is your first step going to be? It shouldn't be to just close this book and go about your daily life. It should be to sign up for a writing site, to write an article for Constant Content, or to go ahead and start offering your own writing services. It should be to start writing samples to show clients. It should be to research what other online writers are doing so you can get inspired.

Take that first step. Go, do it now.

I can't wait to hear your success story.

Jan Ashby
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