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H

ow to Write High Quality Freelance Articles

Employers and agents frequently require “high quality” articles; failing to meet that expectation leads to the rejection of your work, or means that you will not win the bid in the first place.

New freelance writers know there will be hoops through which they must jump to get, and keep, their jobs. They often ask for a concise definition of the phrase “high quality article.”

The new freelancer can fortunately count on a degree of consensus among employers and publishers, at least in terms of what they expect from a high quality article written for the web.

Experience proves that clients and submission sites routinely set the following minimum expectations. Satisfy these guidelines, and you are on the path to earning money as a freelance writer.

Readability

Keep your article easy to read. Writing for the web is often entirely different from academic writing such as your college papers.

Cast aside the old notions of “full” paragraph development. Due to the nature of reading prose on a screen, rather than a printed page, web writing demands shorter paragraphs, commonly no more than two or three sentences.

Sometimes one sentence makes for an effective paragraph on the web.

- Your objective is to keep paragraphs of an article brief and punchy. Do not ramble. High quality web articles are focused pieces.
- Add “air” to your articles. Even short pieces can sometimes be split into two or three subsections.



Create subheading for each, preferably containing a keyword. Dividing your article into subsections makes it easier on the web reader's eyes.

- Readers greedy for information love bullet points. Bullets shout “important idea.”
- Add graphics whenever possible. Photos and other “eye candy” breathe extra life into your writing.

Of course, it remains important to correct all spelling and grammatical errors prior to publication or submission as a writing sample. You want to be a professional. Prove you have mastered the fundamentals.

Word, Words, Words: Article Length

Freelance assignments almost invariably specify a word count. The count will vary depending on the purpose and nature of the eventual article, and the style of the place of publication. Web writing tends to be comprised of short pieces for review purposes and longer pieces for informational ones.

Of course, many high quality publication outlets permit high word counts, but high word count does not necessarily correlate with quality web writing. Studies of internet reading habits indicate that long articles focusing upon topics that are not trending, or "hot," lose readers quickly. Article publication sites suggest that, if your topic requires 800 words or more, you split the lengthy piece into multiple shorter articles, each with a tight focus.

Certainly, you will see exceptions to this rule. The material you are currently reading, for example, violates this guideline, although it *is* divided into a multitude of sections. Studies of internet reading habits have also proven that, the hotter the topic, the longer an article can be.

At the outset of your freelance career, you cannot go wrong by sticking to some general rules:

- Provide solid information, rather than opinion.
- Stay focused on a single topic.

- Do not ramble, or repeat ideas, for the sake of raising the word count.
- Insert appropriate and popular keywords.
- Use an active, rather than passive voice.

Style Guides are Instructions: Follow Them

Article submission sites, employers, blogs- virtually any place to which you may submit an article- might have a style guide, and provide you with a set of specific instructions you must follow. Consider these as project specifications. If you receive instructions, but ignore them, you risk rejection and waste a good job opportunity.

If the job specification indicates that you must not link to a source more than once per article, don't. If the specs say to put the keyword in the first position of your article title, do it. If the specs require that you write an introductory, italicized blurb of 160 characters or less, incorporating your keywords, and to place this above the body of the article, but below the title, do exactly that.

If project or article specifications are not sent to you, it is perfectly OK, and exhibits a degree of professionalism, to request them. Article submission sites post their publication requirements clearly.



Be Your Own Editor, and Proofread Your Work

How often have you found that, after checking your own work, you see an error the next time you open the file? Everyone has the same experience.

Face the fact: you did not proofread your piece carefully enough. Even professionals commit the same mistake; pros, however, learn to double-check and proof their articles.

When you see error-free prose, you are probably looking at a piece revised several times and proofread at each stage. If a piece is truly important to you, do what many professionals do: have a third party proof it for you. Not just anyone. Find a proofreader who knows his job. If it makes financial sense, hire a third party to execute the task.

Consider: you have a deal in place to be paid \$20 for a set of error-free original articles, or a set of web pages. The employer stated upfront that, if your submission contains errors, forget about payout. You worked hard, but your reward will be rejection. Would you pay a proofreader \$5 to help guarantee that you will pocket the other \$15?

Follow all of the above advice consistently, and you will find yourself far along the path to writing high quality articles for the web, and competing for more lucrative jobs, too.

Time Management for the Freelance Writers

No permanent boss. No rush to get dressed in the morning. Home for the kids after school. Sounds ideal, but freelancing is anything but sunshine and lollipops. Freelancing is tough. You have swapped the corporate safety net for autonomy, and you are now 100% responsible for your income and expenses.

Welcome to the world of telecommuting where, at first, you'll love the idea of not having to punch in, but soon realize that you are *on* the clock *round* the clock. You don't punch in because you never really punch out; when you work at home, there's a danger that you never leave the office.

To avoid rapid burnout, learn time management techniques.



Prepare Yourself for Work

Try to forget that you are comfortable and at home. Maintain a work area; keep it as clean and uncluttered as possible. To the extent you can, remove belongings and devices from your workspace if they distract you more than they inspire you to write. You are your own supervisor now.

Prepare yourself mentally for work every day, the same as you would if you were going to an office to do a similar job. Some people can be productive in their pajamas; others need to get dressed; still others, force themselves to get dressed as if they were actually going out to the office, to put them in the proper frame of mind to work.

No matter how you get it done, you must honestly, tenaciously put yourself in a "work" frame of mind, or you will not be consistently productive. To lapse into inefficient work habits will be easy. Every time you skip a bid on a job and head to the park, or watch TV instead of write, you move a step closer to your next job, back at the office to which you swore you'd never return.

Schedule Your Time and Understand Your Capacity

One of the main reasons new freelance writers fail is because they overextend themselves. Turning down money is rough. If you are good, you will likely have to turn down money on a regular basis in order to succeed.

What? Say that again? Sure: you will regularly pass on new jobs, to devote proper attention to current and scheduled projects, or risk failing to deliver what you promised to those who have already hired you. Failing your customers is bad business. They will never rehire you, nor will they refer you to colleagues, both of which represent a substantial loss of future business.

Develop a firm idea of not only what you can do, but also how much of it you can complete within a given timeframe. If you have met your capacity to produce within a given timeframe, you will need to turn down additional offers carrying the same deadline.

Be prepared to walk away from the money if taking it means you are setting yourself up to fail. If you meet or exceed the expectation of clients in hand, they are more apt to become repeat customers. A level of trust develops. As you prove you keep your word to your customers, and deliver them quality work, they tend to become, when possible, more open to you asking, "Ms. Employer, you know I like to do my best for you, and I'd really like to tackle that project. Given my current commitments, I could not finish it by your Friday deadline, but by Sunday night, I'm sure I could."

You will be surprised, at first, how often you get the job anyway if, and only if, your record of accomplishment attests that you deliver quality work on time. Establishing that track record requires an understanding of your capacity for work during a given timeframe. You also must schedule all aspects of your life to allow time to focus on your clients.

If you deliver your client a rush job, it will likely be sloppy or uninspired. She will know it. Remember, you no doubt showed her an example of some of your best work to get



the job. She has a right to expect a certain quality level from your work. Anything less will likely be readily apparent. Freelancers who disappoint are rarely rehired.

In short:

- Know your production rate
- Schedule your days to complete projects on time assuming that rate
- Manage your time to stick to that schedule
- Do not take on more work than can be confidently and suitably delivered per rules 1-3.



Minimize Distractions

Freelancers tend to work from home. In the old office, we fantasized about how simply we'd become productivity at home, where we'd encounter none of the distractions so common to the office.

It then grew crystal clear that kids are noisier and needier on weekday than on weekends; the neighbors dogs bark at squirrels all day; you get more calls from marketing companies at home than you did at the office; and the living room suddenly, absolutely must be painted, or you will die from shame. The pantry looks ratty, too.

You will have to manage your schedule around the rhythms of your home, as well as the lifestyles and needs of family members. That might mean you need to adjust your work schedule to utilize odd hours, such as after the children go to bed, or during their naps, or when your spouse goes shopping. You may need to awaken far before dawn to find time to work while you are fresh and otherwise unfettered.

Naturally, you will experience times when none of this is possible. When you must work amidst distractions, proofreading your work will assume even greater importance. While a freelance writer should try to avoid burnout by taking occasional breaks, he also needs to capitalize on every moment conducive to channeling energy and focus on the work at hand.

You thought you would get away from office politics and distractions and so become more productive, but found a new set of obstacles blocking your route to productivity and creativity. Like all other successful freelancers, however, you will adapt to your new circumstances by practicing effective time management.

Take Advantage of Freelance Article Submission Sites

Practice writing short pieces on a wide range of topics, even in subject areas with which you are unfamiliar. Every good writer can produce a short, high-quality article addressing their favorite subject area; the best freelance article writers can also write about subjects previously unknown to them, or even on topics they find distasteful or with which they disagree. Your employer, remember, might not care at all about what *you* want to write; she needs writers to address *her* topical needs.

Develop your abilities to write to different topics by posting articles to not only a variety of article sites, but in different sections of each site. It is good practice and, at the same time, you are building a multifaceted portfolio to which you can point your next employer!



Remaining aware of search and Twitter trends has become important to freelancers, too, especially those who produce news articles. A topic that is trending upwards represents an excellent opportunity to write a piece that is sure to be read; the search trends, by definition, indicate that the topic is popular.

Study the article submission sites carefully. Each has a set of submission rules and, often, a style manual to which writers must adhere. Don't be put off by such restrictions on your content. Rather, push yourself to rise to the challenge of producing pieces to meet specifications. Developing the ability to “write to spec” represents a crucial step forward in your freelance career. Some sites will allow a writer to publish nearly anything, no matter how poorly written; other sites set their expectations for authors very high.

Practice on the more lenient sites, and work your way up, as your skills develop, to the more strict. When your article is accepted at the more exclusive outlets, you have passed another milestone. Portfolios gain in credibility when employers can find your work at sites whose style manuals are demanding.

Learn Why Writers Get Hired

Time spent to develop an understanding of exactly why your client would pay someone to write for her will reward your effort in numerous ways. Most employers in this field are engaged in some form of marketing, and you, the writer, are helping them to sell something, whether product or service.

Once you understand what your employer's goals are, you will be able to discuss your role in his project more intelligently, and gain his respect. The requirements for your work product, your article or review, for example, will be clarified. One byproduct of learning what your current or potential employer does, and needs, is that you now have that information, too, and can perhaps use it to help develop your own business later on.

When you know why you get hired, you will know exactly what you are expected to produce.

Blog Yourself, Then Tweet It

Promoting your own writing has become increasingly important. Your articles compete with hundreds of thousands of others for attention from readers. Any means of gaining



visibility for your own work needs to be fully explored, and producing your own blog is among the best. At your own blog, the style guide is up to you, but to fully realize the potential of your blog to impress employers, you should put to use everything you have learned about article writing while working for others.

Your blog can be a huge component of your overall writing platform, or portfolio. Use it wisely. Follow search engine optimization (SEO) techniques just as you would while writing a piece for a client. What you self-publish will prove to prospective employers that you do, indeed, have the skill you claim on your job applications. If you adhere to proper SEO principles, your blog will attract readers, raise your stature in the writing community and, hopefully, capture the attention of an employer looking for a writer exactly like you.

Never underestimate the power of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Digg, and the growing list of others. Such sites and services represent amazing opportunities to promote your writing by circulating links back to the location of all of your publications. Google and other search engines now factor links from social media sites into their search algorithms, which means that, the more social media links to your work, the higher the search engine ranking you will receive. Higher rank equals more hits, and more hits can lead to more jobs.

As your reputation as a writer grows, so will your ability to advance from the pursuit of short articles and rewrites, for which the pay rate is relatively low, to more lucrative, higher-profile writing gigs.

Those who invest enough time and effort perfecting their craft will reap financial rewards if they study and capitalize on market trends, understand their employer's needs, write daily, and take full advantage of the dazzling array of outlets for writing on the web.

Get the Job! Bidding Techniques to Secure Freelance Work

Details. It's all in the details. How many times have you heard that? Well, now is the time to take it to heart. Winning bids on freelance writing projects requires acute attention to detail.

Amazingly, many wanna-be freelance writers fail to perfect their resumes, and choose not to provide prospective employers convenient links to their portfolio. Perhaps even



worse, a quick study of freelance writer profiles reveals numerous grammatical and spelling errors, even within a biography in which the writer pledges perfect English and extreme attention to detail!

To stand out from the morass whose profiles and portfolios betray their owner's lack of experience and talent, invest time developing a solid, complete, error-free profile, containing links to quality work samples, at every possible opportunity.

Your profile and portfolio is who you are as a writer. As Bill Parcells, the great football coach says, "You are what your record says you are." Your profile and portfolio comprise your record as a writer. Make sure the record is accurate and complete. If your record is inaccurate, your lack of ability will be immediately evident; if your record appears incomplete, you have not provided a potential client enough information on which to base a hiring decision. In all likelihood, both categories of error will prevent your winning a job.

No substitutes exist for the following activities:

Create a Flawless Profile

Get used to the notion that writers are a dime a dozen. Anyone can claim he is a writer, and thousands and thousands make that claim. Your profile has to prove that you, unlike all the pretenders to the craft, not only *are* a writer, but a *good* one.

Proof begins by ensuring that your profile is written well. If I am an employer, and I look at your profile, I will immediately reject you as a candidate if your profile is not well-written. I will have no confidence in your ability to deliver quality work.

Even a rudimentary profile should:

- Cover prior work experience and, when possible, details regarding the projects on which you have worked.
- Note the variety of software applications with which you are familiar
- Point to places at which your work has been published
- Describe your strengths as a writer, and mention your special skills, such as in a particular genre or format

It should be self-evident, but your profile absolutely must be proofread, and proofread again, and a third time, too...and then shown to another person to look it over before you consider it ready to publish.

Thousand of writers forfeit the opportunity to make money every day simply because they misspelled words in their profile, or let a verb form that didn't agree with a subject slip by without correction.

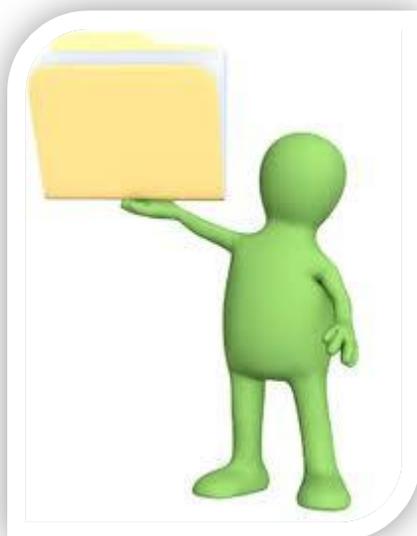
A Portfolio is No Place for a Missing Link

Some clients prefer that you attach writing samples to emails; others want samples pasted into an email or other messaging system; a third set wants to see live hyperlinks to your work. Never waste an opportunity to provide links to your work.

If you can prove a publication history though links to a variety of sites and writing samples, your prospective clients can find and instantly recognize the quality of your work. Busy employers will sometimes hire the first writer whose work suits their needs,

and your convenient portfolio links put your proof of suitability on their desktop in a flash.

Links to publication venues with strict style guides and acceptance criteria attest the quality of your work, because it has already passed through the approval process. To



some degree, it has been "vetted," independently judged and deemed worthy to publish. Your next employer has every reason to expect that you can produce another, equally worthy piece for her.

If you have published pieces on the web, show them off in links within the profiles you create (yes, you may have to do this many times!) to facilitate job applications. Don't stop there, though: create a Word document and/or pdf listing the links to your showcased pieces around the web. Don't be shy: if you've got them, flaunt them! Employers often ask for this kind of document during the application process, so it is best to be prepared. Being able to immediately

send a document of links to your work the moment the request arrives proves that you are prepared. It proves that you have anticipated an employer's needs.

As your portfolio grows, consider adding a second "links" document to your job application toolbox. Keep one "master" list, and prepare a shorter list of the pieces in which you take the most pride. Now and then, a client will specify that she wants to see one or the other, so be ready in advance.

Jump Through Hoops, and Follow Instructions

It doesn't matter if a potential, or active, client asks you to do something you don't think is necessary. Do it anyway, or risk losing the bid, or a job.

If you are asked for two samples, do not deluge your interviewer with dozens. When told to paste something into an email, do it- don't attach the file. Perhaps you will be asked to send a pdf version of your sample. Send a pdf. Don't send a different format. Don't

supply a 10 page proposal if you are asked to produce a proposal no longer than 100 words.

Employers often have legitimate reasons to request that specific instructions be executed. Common sense suggests that it is important to show your client that you can follow instructions but, incredibly, many freelancers don't. Be among those who do, and you will automatically increase your odds of winning your bid.

Power Bidding, or Giving Yourself a Fighter's Chance

Keep your bids punchy; make them as brief and descriptive as possible. Prove to the client that you read the job posting by tailoring your answer to target his specific needs. Your client knows what he wants. Your first contact with him has to prove and reinforce that your skills, availability, and capabilities are an exact match to his stated requirements.

For example, you will routinely encounter postings like this: "Long Term writer wanted to for articles on French Cuisine. Must be submitted in Word document format."

A proper reply will be concise and state facts. Consider this: "I am a full time freelance writer (this describes your availability in general) with seven years of MS Word program experience (directly addressing a primary job requirement) and available immediately. I spent my college freshmen year in Paris as an exchange student. I am fluent in French and thoroughly familiar with both traditional and modern French cuisine."

Quite possibly, a writer who had never been to France could land the job; however, your brief indication of an extra level of expertise in the field distinguishes you from all of the other applicants, who can perhaps only write, or speak French but know nothing about food. Moreover, you did not waste anyone's time with a long essay about why you love the Eiffel Tower. Whether you do or don't appreciate the architecture in France is



irrelevant to the person who posted the job for a food writer. Address the specific points made in the job post.

Know Your Work Capacity, and Be Available

After proving that you can follow instructions from your potential client, having the capacity, or time, to complete meet his needs is next in importance. If you are available immediately, make sure you say so but, more importantly, make sure that you are, indeed, available and ready to produce.

If you do not have the time to take on a job, you should not be bidding on it. Freelancers must be available as per the needs of their employers. Writers who prove that they are available as advertised, and can therefore deliver work on deadline, will stand a better chance of developing a client list. The next time that employer has a project, rather than



post it publicly, she may contact you directly to see if you are available for more work. This situation develops frequently in the world of freelance.

Employers commonly develop a pool of proven talent into which they dip for prospects to work on new projects, or to help business colleagues who may ask them for a referral to someone good.

A second aspect of being "available" is just as crucial.

In the world of online freelance article writing, it is critical that you are "available" to respond to inquiries from prospective employers on a daily, if not continuous, basis. Jobs often carry severe deadlines. You might get an email offering you the job to write three articles, with the caveat that they must be completed within 24 hours. If you don't check your email every day, you won't get the message until the deadline has passed.

Make yourself available online, via email or instant messaging systems, and respond rapidly to inquiries and job postings alike.

If a writer follows all of these suggestions, she will- it has been proven and proven again- raise the probability that she will win bids and begin to grow a client list. Eventually, rather than having to spend so much time looking for work, jobs may begin to look for you- but only if you follow a principled approach to the application process, and deliver on your promises.

Meta Tags Mean Money for Writers!

Resourceful freelancers bid on projects requiring them to deliver more than prose.

Writing for the web sometimes involves elements that writing for print does not. By mastering a few concepts about how search engines and browsers work, a freelance writer can provide his client extra value, thereby gain a competitive edge, and win more bids.



A considerable number of employers now look for writers capable not only of producing an article, but of adapting that article for display on a web page, and for better search visibility. Put another way, you will sometimes be required to deliver a simple text document; at other times, you may be asked to assume part of the role that used to belong exclusively to a web master or site administrator.

Relax. It's all good, and simple to learn. You do not need to go back to school and learn how to write reams of code, and some rudimentary skills can put more money in your pocket.

Formerly, a writer would simply submit a document to the webmaster, who would build your text into the pages online. Today, at many article submission sites, the process is semi-automated, and what is not automated is done manually by the writer. The webmaster once handled the processes of publication, such as formatting and rendering your article visible on a web page, but today's writer routinely executes this role. Writers should understand the techniques of basic meta data tagging and extracting keywords for SEO.

Meta Title Tag

To keep the concepts as simple as possible, let's define a "meta tag" as a piece of information *about* a web page. A meta tag must be produced even if, sometimes, the tag is generated automatically by an application to help build web sites. Meta tags pass information to your browser and search engines. The information includes a brief description of, and keywords pertaining to, the page. Search engines rely, in part, on information placed within meta tags to index the web's billions of pages.

Although that might sound somewhat complex, it is incredibly simple to create a meta title tag for a web page. Here is the format:

```
<title>My Page Title</title>
```

The phrase between the tags `< >` above will appear in the title bar of a browser when it points to your page. Search engines consider the words between meta title tags as part of your overall set of keywords. Keep in mind that the title of your page is not the title of your article; each page could have a dozen or more article titles on it. A page has not a title, but a meta title.

Since the meta title should reflect the whole page, and not just one article, your meta title should be an encompassing description of the whole page. To continue our illustration above, a better meta title for a page that contains a number of articles might be:

```
<title>My Page Title, the best site for news, investing and sports</title>
```

An example from the real world:

```
<title>The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia</title>
```

When searching and surfing, we routinely see the meta title on pages of search results. We don't ever see the tags themselves- they stay behind the scenes. Rather, we see the information from the meta title tag displayed as part of the search results and in our browser's title bar.





Keep your meta titles to under 60 characters! That's the size limit. In fact, 56 characters is a safer limit. Anything beyond that number will be ignored. Try to use a powerful and appropriate keyword in your meta title. A meta title such as `<title> Stuff About Me</title>` will never help the search engines find your work.

Meta Keyword Tags

Meta keyword tags work in much the same manner, but can be even more important. Search engines pay very careful attention to the word and phrases in your meta keyword tags. You might have already used meta keyword tags without knowing it- if you have chosen "tags" for your blog posts, you have become familiar with the idea.



Creating meta keyword tags is slightly more complex than meta title tags, but easy to get the hang of. The structure of the tag differs from the title tag. Let's look again at the *NY Times* source code:

```
<meta name="keywords" content="Corporations,Classified  
Information and State Secrets,Suits and Litigation,Supreme Court">
```

Stick to five keywords or less. Separate them with commas, and without spaces between the words. Choose them wisely: these are by far the most important means of attracting traffic to a web page or site.

Meta Description Tag

The meta description tag can contain more information (think: more appropriate keyword opportunities!) than can the title tag. It is not limited to 60 characters. Often, the contents of the meta description tag forms the main part of the search results when someone is searching for your topic. Therefore, once again, be certain to load your

primary keywords into the beginning of the tag. Here is the meta description tag from the *NY Times*:

```
<meta name="description" content="Find breaking news, multimedia, reviews & opinion on Washington, business, sports, movies, travel, books, jobs, education, real estate, cars & more.">
```

Tip: never forget to close the description tag with a period! If you leave it out, the tag will not be effective.

Putting all the tags together

If you were searching all the keyword contained in the tags above, one of the first items on your search results page would look like this:

- [The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia](#)

Sep 28, 2010 ... Find breaking news, multimedia, reviews & opinion on Washington, *business, sports, movies, travel, books, jobs, education, real estate, cars ...*
www.nytimes.com/

Recapping the Importance of Meta Tagging for the Freelance Writer

Meta tagging makes money. Employers can always use writers who can not only turn a phrase, but help the company make money. The writer who understands the role of meta tags can, when necessary, better execute the creation of web pages, rather than simply create the articles to go on them. The company won't need to have an IT person help you. You have saved the company money.

In addition, your understanding of the way meta tagging works will have the crossover effect of improving your focus on developing keyword-rich, appealing content that readers can find easily. That, too, helps the boss make money. Advertisers, for example, will want to buy ad space on pages chock full of keywords related to their business.

Writing is a highly competitive field. Give yourself an edge by developing additional skills, especially those that can upgrade your finished pieces at the same time as they render you increasingly attractive to employers.

Prominence and Submission: How to Publish at Article Writing Sites

We are free to publish what we please on our own blogs, but most article submission sites demand that certain criteria be met before they will accept an article, or allow it to remain unedited once it has been published. Sites encouraging article submission range in the stringency of their criteria: some are quite lax, others rather demanding.

By definition, you are most often in the company of superior writers at sites whose editors or submission guidelines insist that you adhere to rules ensuring that your prose is at least fundamentally sound. Employers quickly learn which sites insist on higher quality writing. When your portfolio includes pieces published at the sites with better reputations for showcasing quality writers, you stand of better chance of winning your bid for work. In effect, publication at a site whose guidelines are strict prescreens for the quality that will interest an employer.



Therefore, aspiring writers must become familiar with the criteria set by a range of article submission sites and, if possible, map out a plan to produce work that first satisfies the most lenient outlets, and progress towards the sites that demand higher quality. Doing so will help you avoid frustration. You will build confidence in your abilities as your pieces are accepted increasingly better, higher-profile sites.

If you follow this path, your developing skills will lead you to prominence in the writing community but, first, you must submit to not only the sites, but the rules upon which they insist.

Common Expectations at Article Submission Sites

To ensure that your finished piece is ready for submission to an editor, employer or an article submission site, it must meet the common minimum expectations for contemporary web writing, such as:

Point of View: As a blogger, you have no doubt deployed first person point of view. As soon as you use the phrase “I think,” or “I saw,” you are in first person mode.

However, many, if not most, article submission sites insist that your writing is at least in second person (“You can”), and many good sites insist on third person (“One can”). To distinguish themselves from blogs, many sites prefer that a writer adopt the more objective third person stance. Such sites are not looking for “opinion pieces.” Often, they are looking for factual, more journalistic prose. For some, third person points of view come naturally; others must practice it. All good writing handbooks have sections discussing these different modes, and it is well worth your time to study and master them. Versatility will be your reward, and versatile freelancers get more opportunities to win bids.

Keywords: At this point, the web probably contains hundreds of millions of articles. Part of your job as a web writer is to make your article does not get lost in the haystack. It must be the needle that gets found. The best way to make it easy for someone to



discover your great article is by working suitable keywords into your content, so that someone who searches for, say, “best orange racing bike” will find your review article, rather than go read a different article about “taking oranges on bike races to maintain hydration.”

Conduct research on the term “keyword density.” Learn the ins and out of its strategy. Most article publication sites recommend- and some absolutely insist- that your article

feature a stated keyword density. Numerous free tools are available to help ensure that your content meets the keyword density requirements of a given publisher or employer.

Hyperlinks, URL’s and Anchor Text: Today’s writer must learn how to embed hyperlinks into his text, and how to control the action a browser must take when

following a hyperlink in the text. Do you want the link to open in a new window? The same window? Does it need to open a video player? Double-check all embedded links to make sure that they are “live.” “Dead” or broken links are those that do not lead where they are supposed to, and not only frustrate to your readers, but get your article flagged by an editor, who will insist on revision.

Short Paragraphs: Recent studies indicate that, when reading online, we prefer short paragraphs. Strive to compose brief, informative prose. Punchy paragraphs hold a web reader's attention. Break long articles into shorter sections. Use subheadings.

Effective Subheadings: Parsing a long article into subsections not only holds an online reader's interest, but also helps search engines locate your article. Subtopics should be expressed in short phrases rich in keywords. Format your subheadings in bold: some search engines assume that bolded text is of greater importance to your content. Bolding judiciously also improves the appearance of your piece, pumping a little air into the layout. Look carefully at how your favorite magazines present articles. They usually have distinct sections with subheadings. It looks polished and professional, provided you do not overuse the technique.

Subsections should be created for appropriate reasons, rather than for the sheer sake of skipping some lines and making some text bold. For example, if your subsection promises “How to Roast a Turkey,” do not proceed to discuss how to prepare mashed potatoes in that section. Stay focused within your subsections.

Most site submission guidelines will address at least a few, and possibly all, of the web writing fundamentals introduced above. To help you improve, many sites have live editors who provide feedback, and suggest fixes to your piece. Take advantage of their advice. Your editor is telling you how to properly submit a piece perfectly prepared for publication. Follow the editorial guidelines and your article may be featured prominently on the site's landing page.



Freelance Writers - Fill a High Quality Box of Tools Free

Most of the time, the truism “you get what you pay for” is accurate. For freelance writers, thankfully, that nugget may not always hold true.

Thanks to some talented software developers, freelance writers have numerous programs to assist them with their work, and some of the free tools are superior to the tools for which you must pay. Deploy these powerful tools risk-free, and watch the quality of your work rise.



Step Aside, Webster, and Beat It, Roget: the New Dictionary and Thesaurus

Even the best writers consult a dictionary or a thesaurus. If you want your copy to be precise, referring to standard word definitions is fundamental to the process. When revising your drafts, a thesaurus can help you discover the perfect word for a given phrase.

Although many writers retain their old hardcopy reference works, the prevailing reference tools have now been migrated to the web as well as built into extraordinarily powerful software applications. The latter offer unparalleled convenience.

The latest applications don't hog computer memory like earlier versions, and do not require you to surf back to a site every time you need to look something up.

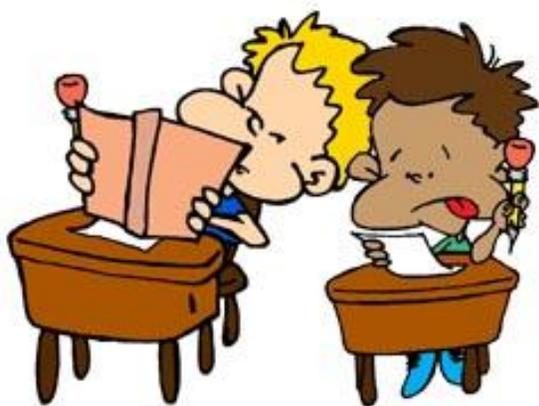
[WordWeb](#) is one of my favorites. Two features of the program stand out: it can be used offline, and it can work with a wide range of popular file formats. Updating the software is a breeze and, because it takes up little space on your hard drive, it is perfect for loading onto portable storage systems, such as thumb or flash drives. *Wordweb* has amazing capabilities for a free application: it is compatible with doc, docx, pdf, txt, and

odt formats and does not conflict with other software. It seems to open flawlessly no matter what other applications you run.

Crime Fighters: Detecting Plagiarism

“Make sure your articles are 100% original,” the job posts say, even within solicitations for rewriters. On rewrite projects, freelancers are expected to generate unique prose; for original compositions, your prose should be equally unique, save for properly cited passages.

To meet this goal, writers frequently use duplication detection tools. The most popular tool may be [CopyScape](#), which is quite powerful and offers several levels of content



protection and monitoring. *Copyscape*, however, in its upgraded versions, is not free to use. Fortunately, fledgling freelancers who many not yet have enough steady income have a free tool, complete with the power to work offline: [Dustball](#). *Dustball* is quite accurate; it approximates the power of *Copyscape*. A newly available version of the program promises more accurate results, but for a price.

Computing Keyword Density

Specifications set by your client may include a requirement that your copy achieve a given keyword density. Keyword density is a measure of how often per each 100 words a specified keyword appears. It is expressed as a percent, as in “2% keyword density.” Density factors into the search engine algorithms, and helps the search engines to locate your articles when listing search results.

[Live Keyword Analysis](#) reigns among the leaders in the field. With this tool, writers can check the keyword density of their articles (or any other writing). Keep in mind that keyword density is one of the factors that draw readers to your work, and therefore to your client's site. Use of the tool is crucial, because, if the keyword density of your work

is too high, the search engines penalize you in their rankings. Over-repetition of the keyword in an article is often regarded as spam by the search engines. As in seasoning food, sometimes a little bit goes a long way.

But Wait, There's More! Freelance Writing Tools

Eventually your writing toolbox will grow. You will find tools you like, picking up tips from fellow writers in forums. To help fill your toolbox, here are some other favorites:

[Free Keyword Density Site Checker](#) – Follow this link, and enter any URL. Within seconds, the tool will analyze the text and extract its keywords to provide you with a useful report. These keywords are crucial to know in order to produce effective SEO content to embellish an employer's site.

[Open Directory Research Site](#) – Long in the tooth, but still worth knowing, Dmoz remains great for research. Since Dmoz has been around so long, it sometimes provides better results than Google and yahoo, if you are searching for material that has been on the web for a very long time, but is only rarely accessed.

[Personal Paper Grader](#) – is like having your old English teacher back as your partner; this time, however, you will welcome her help. Personal Paper Grader augments your vocabulary, suggests synonyms, provides an analysis of the reading level required to understand your article, and offers tips to improve your grammar and spelling too boot. The red marks may bring back some nasty memories, but the helping hand will save you time, effort, and make you a better- and better-paid-freelance writer.

