

How to



As a Freelance Writer

Presented by:

Carol Tice of [Make a Living Writing](#)

& Anne Wayman of [About Freelance Writing](#)

Welcome to
How To Break In & Earn Big as a Freelance Writer

Carol Tice is a longtime freelance writer whose credits include *Entrepreneur* magazine, *BNET*, *Seattle Times*, *Seattle Magazine*, Yahoo! Hotjobs, Copyblogger, and others. Her corporate clients include Costco, American Express and Dun & Bradstreet. She is one of WriteToDone's Top 10 Bloggers for 2011 with her blog, MakeALivingWriting.com and she mentors writers looking to grow their income.

Anne Wayman has been freelancing for longer than she really wants to admit. She has been published by Hazelden, which still sends her royalties, as well as a number of consumer and trade magazines. She's also edited both newspapers and magazines, giving her the ability to see both the writer's and the editor's point of view. Anne has ghostwritten two best sellers and a number of other books and has been writing on the 'net since she was one of Match.com's first 30 or so employees. She also coaches writers. Her writing blog is AboutFreelanceWriting.com.

In this Webinar report, they share their own experiences of first figuring out how to break into freelance writing, and then discovering how to grow that start into a successful, lucrative freelance-writing business.



Carol Tice



Anne Wayman

TIPS FOR BREAKING IN

Carol Tice's Tips:

- **Conquer your fear.** If there's something you fear about freelance writing, try to arrange to experience it. For instance, if you fear being laughed at, arrange for a group of your friends to come over and read one of your drafts, and then laugh at it. You'll discover it's survivable, and probably, you'll realize what you fear is unlikely to really happen. Know that every editor in America does not know every other editor, so if you blow it one place, it will not end your career. Also, try to keep a perspective – remember that no matter how bad you screw up, 1 billion Chinese could care less. My post [10 Ways Freelance Writers Can Banish Fear](#) has more fear-busting strategies. If you're afraid you'll make one misstep or mistake and ruin your chances of being a freelance writer, know that won't happen – and all writers make mistakes. You will survive. More inspiration on this at [How to Ruin Your Freelance Writing Career](#).



- **Enter contests.** Contests are a great way to make connections with editors, not just a way to collect a little prize money. [Writer's Market](#) has hundreds of contests listed. I won two early in my career – and another just recently, Top 10 Blogs for Writers – and all of them proved to be major career boosts. Nine months after I quit songwriting and started writing articles, I was writing for a section of the *Los Angeles Times*, thanks to winning a contest. [Contests can rocket your career forward](#) and get you noticed by editors.



- 3. Write for Patch.** AOL's online neighborhood papers are the community newspaper of the future – they're a great place to break into reporting, and a step up in pay from mill rates. I've heard from writers who're making \$2,000 a month writing for multiple Patches in their city. [Pay is about \\$50-\\$100](#) for most stories, but you can resell across their network and get more. Contact your local Patch editor, or ask AOL if they might be starting a Patch in your neighborhood – you might get in on the ground floor as an editor and earn more. Mill clips seem to work fine here.
- 4. Write for the alternative press.** Alternative papers are always looking for writers. Pay is similar to Patch in general. The clips are valuable – I got a staff-writing job off my alt-paper clips.



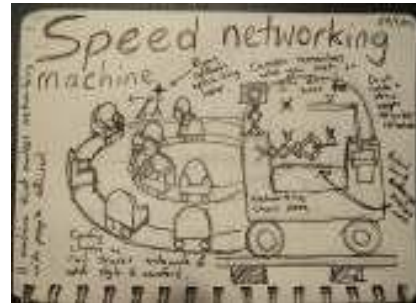
If you are involved in community events – you go out to clubs or restaurants, attend city council meetings, or are active in civic organizations – pitch the editor an upcoming event and ask if they have anyone covering it. I developed a long-running relationship with one alt-paper after asking if they had anyone writing up an upcoming protest.

- 5. Write for local niche publications.** Look beyond the newsstand for publications that take newer writers. Early in my career, I wrote for a small career-focused newsweekly in my city. A current example of a similar publication is [Working World](#) in Los Angeles, which pays \$200 an article.



Another place where a simple inquiry might get you hired is pitching magazines or newsletters created by professional associations. At one point, I wrote for my local library system's newspaper to get clips. To break in, read the publication and suggest similar story topics that haven't been covered recently.

6. **Network and meet editors in person.** I've met wonderful editors at networking events. Some events are free, and some are paid but worth it. For instance, I'm told the annual event held by [JAWS](#), the Journalism and Women Symposium, is great for meeting national magazine editors. Personally, I'm considering going this spring to [SOBCon](#), a limited-attendance, exclusive event for bloggers. Some people do their best pitching face-to-face, so if this is you, get out there and meet people.



7. **Write online content for small businesses.** The Internet teems with small companies that need help making their websites look better.



Analyze some local businesses' websites and pitch them your services. In your pitch, mention what you saw that could use improvement – a blog, case studies, the About page. Do one or two sites for the samples, then start raising your rates.

8. **Write for nonprofits.** Small nonprofits are always hard-up for good writers willing to volunteer or work for cheap. Once you have a few clips, you can begin pitching medium-sized to larger organizations and start making better pay. Start with nonprofits where you're personally active, or find nonprofits on [Guidestar](#) or [CharityNavigator](#).



9. **Join a community.** You don't have to slog along, trying to figure out the freelance-writing game all on your own. Seek out and connect with other writers in organizations that provide resources to help ramp up your career. Whether it's a local writer's group, a professional organization such as the National Association of Independent



Writers & Editors ([NAIWE](#)) or a blogging community such as [A-List Blogger Club](#), groups help you feel less alone — and help you find the knowledge you need to move forward.

Anne Wayman's Tips

1. You already know how to break in.



Often when someone asks me a question about how to break in to freelance writing, they already know the answer. If you've gotten to this webinar you already know how to break in – it's write and submit, write and submit, improving your writing and write and submit.

There really isn't any other secret than that.

2. Overcome your fear of breaking in with bookending.

Bookending is simply recognizing you're afraid or reluctant to do something you know you should. You can move forward by calling a friend and briefly committing to spend 10 or 20 minutes on it. Then, when the time has passed, you call back and report that either you've done it or you haven't. It creates accountability which helps break up fear.



You may want to read: Bookending – [My Favorite Writing Tip](#)

3. Writing is a learnable skill.

Of course, to break in you've got to write reasonably well. You don't have to be a master, but you do need to know how to put a sentence and a paragraph together. You need a sense of story, if you will. Fortunately, writing is a learnable skill. Take some classes. Your local community college is a good place to start. A writer's workshop that will actually help you evaluate your manuscript can help. So can reading your own work out loud a week or two after you write it.



4. Write for your local small paper.

Small newspapers need writers. The [freebies or very small community newspapers](#) will often pay a small amount - \$5-\$25 per piece. Here's how to approach them:

- Call and find out the deadline and the name of the editor
- Two days after the deadline call her (yes, it's usually a woman), introduce yourself as a writer and offer two ideas. Ideas like a new business in town, a new little league star, etc.
- You will probably be given an assignment that is quite different. Listen carefully. Ask questions so you've got the details of what she wants and the deadline. If you use a digital camera reasonably well, ask if they want pictures.
- Write the article well and submit it the day before the deadline if possible, but certainly on deadline.



Chances are you'll have your first paid clip. Do it again, and again. If they have a website with your article, link to it on your website. You do need your own website.

5. Cold call for clients.

Cold calling is a great way to get writing clients and it can also work to get assignments from some editors, particularly small local newspapers and other publications. Here are the steps:

- Assemble a list of potential clients – at least 50. The yellow pages are great because you can write on them.
- Write a brief script – Hi, my name is Anne Wayman. Who there handles your freelance writers? May I speak to them please? Hi Joe, my name is Anne Wayman. I specialize in writing (something about their industry). I wonder how I might be of help to you? – Then you shut up and listen to what he has to say. Listen carefully. Listen deeply. If you listen to him rather than worrying about what



you're going to say, you'll know how to respond. Be prepared to email samples or have a meeting with your samples.

- Call 5 companies a day for a week. I'll bet you get some work. Do this again the following week. After you've assembled the list, 5 calls will probably take less than an hour.

[Read more cold calling tips here.](#)

6. Offer guest posts to blogs.

We bloggers are always looking for posts. Mostly we do it ourselves until we reach a level where we're perceived as valuable. Find some blogs that you like and offer to do a guest post for each one. They don't have to be famous or even well-known, at least not as you get started.



Do as good a job as you possibly can and be open to editing. You won't get paid – at least until you're writing for truly high-powered blogs if then – but you will have articles you can link to from your website credit list.

7. You need your own website or blog.

If you're serious about freelance writing you've simply got to have your own website, or blog. A blog can be used as a website – using it that way you won't have to update it often, but it's so easy to update when you want to – ends up being cheaper and often easier than working with a web designer.



The reason you need your own site is twofold: your customers are looking for you on the web and publishers love being able to click on a link to view samples. It truly isn't an option.

Read more about [why you need a website and how to do it.](#)

8. Stop reading and start writing and marketing.

Stop reading about writing and start writing.

Stop reading about marketing and start marketing. Nothing will happen until you do – so as Nike says, “just do it.” Sure it’s scary at first, as Tom Cruise says, “Courage is the discovery that you may not win, and trying when you know you can lose.” But as Carol

asks, “what is the worst that can happen?” If you don’t write and attempt to market your writing you’ll always regret it. Chances are, however, if you write and keep at it, and work at selling your writing, you’ll soon break in.



Earning Big With Freelance Writing

Carol Tice's Tips

1. **Consistently market your business.** High-earning writers have a marketing plan and do marketing activities on a regular, ongoing basis. They do multiple forms of marketing simultaneously. For instance, in the past year, I've [used LinkedIn](#) and Twitter, [gone to in-person networking events](#), sent [query letters](#) and worked on [SEO for my writer site](#). Each of these strategies resulted in some new clients.



Successful writers persist for several months with a strategy, then [evaluate results](#) and adjust their marketing accordingly. For more, read the [7 Habits of Highly Paid Freelance Writers](#).

2. **Work on contract.** Low-earning freelance writers send queries to many publications, thinking in terms of getting one assignment with each query. High-earning writers think of their query as an opportunity to form an ongoing relationship with an editor.



One great way to form a more long-term relationship with an editor is to pitch multiple story ideas in a single query. This says, "I have a steady stream of ideas, not just one. I could solve a lot of problems for you." Editors love to have a stable of go-to writers they can count on for ideas. Be one of them!

3. **Find specialty niches.** There are many specialty areas that can pay well, including healthcare, insurance, finance, technology, nonprofits, and textbooks. Try to develop an expertise area that's in demand.



If you think you don't have any specialized expertise, think again. Do you go to a chiropractor, or maybe you've been treated for a serious disease? You have healthcare experience.

Have you sued someone, or worked as a legal secretary? I have earned tens of thousands in legal-focused writing work off my past as a legal secretary.



5. **Write lots of queries.** Smart writers don't rely on Craigslist ads as their only source of job leads. They proactively form new relationships by learning how to [write compelling queries](#) and sending queries out regularly. Frequent querying helps you move forward and avoid getting obsessed with whether a single query will be accepted.

6. **Negotiate rates.** Rather than simply jumping at the first rate they're offered, [pro writers negotiate](#).
Tip: Try to make the prospect name a price first.



Ask, "What's your budget for this project?" Try to get them to name a range. Then, gather a lot of information about the project before you name a price.

7. **Target larger publications and businesses.** Many writers get stuck in a rut of writing for small-circulation publications or small businesses. Once you have a few clips, start prospecting for bigger clients.



This mostly requires a change in mindset. Writers feel scared or unworthy of writing for \$1 billion or Fortune 500 companies. But it's no different than writing for small business, really – you listen carefully to client needs, do the research, write, take client feedback, and rewrite until they're

satisfied. Big clients are worth marketing to because they are a great source of ongoing assignments.

8. **Take rush work at high rates.** I've earned thousands in extra income taking rush work. Remember that rush work should always pay more than your regular rates. Otherwise, you're just letting a client turn their problem into your problem. Instead, turn their problem into your big-earning opportunity.



8. Manage multiple projects. To earn big, you can't work on one project



at a time. Each week needs to integrate marketing activities with work on several projects – researching, interviewing and writing. You need to take good care of yourself so you can juggle these projects sustainably and not get burned out. For an example of what a \$10,000 billing month might look like, I've included my assignment spreadsheet for Jan. 2011 on the Webinar.

Anne Wayman's Tips

1. You've got to know you're awesome.

As I read the comments that revealed so much insecurity I wondered how in the world I could breathe real self-confidence into each and every one of you. After a bit, I realized I can't. Knowing your worth and getting comfortable with it is an inside job. I can, however, give you some techniques that have helped me, including:



- Gratitude – I often do a gratitude list in the evening. Here's an [article on gratitude](#) I wrote.
- Replace negative self-talk with at least neutral or better yet, positive self-talk. [As A Man Thinketh](#), the classic by James Allen, is a great guide in spite of the gender specific language.

2. Submit to high paying markets and/or raise your rates.



You're the one who gets to set your own rates. Instead of submitting to the lowest paying markets and/or content mills in hopes of selling something, start as high as you can find. Sure, you might not be ready for *Atlantic Monthly* yet, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't aim at the high-paying gigs. Check out the trade magazines – some of them pay really well and the credits will impress many editors.

If you're working with corporate or individual clients, raise your rates. How would it feel to double your hourly rate? I started this exercise at an embarrassingly low number. I couldn't imagine doubling it, but I was able to up it almost 20%. Now I'm 4 or 5 times that rate.

You do want whatever number you choose to roll easily off your tongue – so practice. It gets easier every time you say it, and when you believe it, so will your prospects. I promise.

3. **Track your money.**

If you're going to make it big, you've got to know what big means to you. That's not only about goal setting, but about actually tracking your money so you know how much is coming in and how much is going out. It's all part of what I call Clear Money Consciousness. Getting clear about your money is absolutely critical to making it and keeping it.



4. **Track your time.**



If you're going to make it big in freelance writing, you've also got to be clear about how you're spending your time. I make it a point to track my time every month or so. Recently I was surprised to discover that while I know how many hours it takes me to ghost write a book, I wasn't clear on how long it took me to write a blog post. I thought it took considerably less time than it does. Knowing the truth has meant I'm not feeling as far behind as I was before I tracked, because I'm not as tempted to cram 30 hours into 24.

5. **Learn the basics of SEO.**

Look, more and more writing is going on the web every day and every piece of writing needs to attract an audience. That's what search engine optimization is all about. When you learn the art of gracefully making your writing attractive to search engines as well as readers, you put yourself ahead of the crowd.



6. Develop a *who can I help* attitude.

One of my favorite bloggers is [Jonathan Fields](#). He told how he has started his day by tweeting “... [who can I help today?](#)” and [challenged readers to do the same](#). If you follow my tweets [@AnneWayman](#), you know I’ve accepted the challenge. When I put service first something nifty happens to me, inside me. Try it. Let me know what happens.



7. Why *what I charge* says *nothing* about *what you charge*.

I can’t count the number of emails I’ve gotten that ask one way or another, “What’s the going rate?” Makes me want to scream. There is no standard fee for... whatever. Oh sure, if a job post or market listing posts a set price, you probably won’t get a higher one. But when a client asks what do you charge, it’s totally up to you to set the fee.



How could it be otherwise? I don’t have your experience. I don’t have your living expenses. I don’t have the willingness and often the ability to do what you do.

Yes, knowing what others charge, particularly those who charge more, is interesting and can help us recognize our worth as writers, but setting our fee is up to each one of us – independently.

8. Don’t be afraid to turn down work!

You don’t have to take every job that’s offered. If the price is too low or the deadline too short or they have some requirement that just doesn’t work for you, turn it down.



For example, I just turned down a book project because they had an extremely short deadline and wanted to pay me less, rather than more my usual fee. I can do this with

confidence because of two things. I know more work is out there, and because I've got some savings. Turning down poorly paid work or gigs that make unreasonable demands simply opens up space for better paying work under better conditions.

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Subscribers to the Make a Living Writing blog receive the free report, [40 Ways to Market Your Writing](#).

Carol Tice would like to offer you a special discount code, FIVEBUCKSOFF, good for a \$5 discount on any of the products in her [Make a Living Writing Store](#), including her eBook *Make a Living Writing: The 21st Century Guide*.

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Next Webinar by Carol & Anne

Secrets of a Money-Making Blog



Tuesday, April 12, 2011 – 1 p.m. PT; 4 p.m. ET