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INTRODUCTION

Gone are the days of 9-to-5 jobs and of slaving behind a desk. Certainly, there’s still a big portion of us working as corporate slaves and stuck to the 9-to-5 routine but as we become more connected easily through technology, the concept of freelancing is becoming a popular choice among young professionals and millennials.

All thanks to online technology, we hear words dropped around like “online jobs”, “remote office” or “virtual office”. The attraction is understandable. After all, who wants to be stuck in a routine 9-to-5 job, navigating the morning rush and staying for hours to do overtime when there’s a better alternative of working from the comfort of one’s home?

Data from Gallup in 2013 revealed that only 13% of individuals surveyed from more than 140 countries are actively engaged or invested in their jobs, and more than 60% are simply dissatisfied and unmotivated.

This is like saying that most of the workers in the world do not look forward to going to work every day. There are, of course, many reasons for the dissatisfaction, but for many individuals, digital technology is providing more alternative and convenient ways of earning a living.
Just consider these:

The boom in the IT industry means more diverse job opportunities in the field, from a software programmer, a technical service representative to a content writer to a social media manager. This means higher demand for professionals who can perform these job functions.

Why get stuck in a 9-to-5 job when you can work from the comfort of your home, save on gas, avoid the morning traffic rush, and still be productive while in your pajamas?

Make a name for yourself as a legitimate professional, doing what you’ve always wanted to do, maximizing your skills and being your own boss.

These are only a few of the reasons why more and more professionals are shifting from 9-to-5 desk jobs to virtual and remote offices where they can work any time of the day with just a laptop and an Internet connection.

**Data Entry Job: The Easiest Of The Bunch**

A decade ago, people may look down on a “freelancer” or someone who works an online job. Online tutoring was not considered a legitimate profession. Medical transcription jobs do not require a distinct and unique skill set. A content writer working for websites is not a professional. Thankfully, this is not the case anymore these days.

As the number of professionals engaged in online jobs increase, so do the reputation and value attached to these online ventures. These are in large part due to two things: compensation and skill set. While it is true that there are a lot of online jobs that can be done by anyone and everyone (you don’t need a college degree to be a social media manager or a product review blogger), there is a growing number of online ventures that require a particular skill set, and offer a young professional an opportunity to build a niche in the industry. This can mean higher value and premium as an online professional.

In fact, there are many online jobs that pay relatively well compared to a regular office job. An added bonus is that one can even engage in these online ventures while still employed as a regular employee. The key is simply proper time management.
One of the easiest online ventures you can explore is data entry. There are hundreds of companies and organizations out there that are looking for individuals to help them enter or transform information into electronic format, and this is essentially what data entry professionals do. Like all online ventures, it is true that this is something anyone without prior experience can perform, but in order to thrive and successfully build a profession out of this, you will also need to have advanced training, commitment, and passion to the job.

In short, in order to be successful in this venture, you would need to build your skill set and master the tricks of the trade.

What This E-Book Is About

This e-book is your guide to making data entry your successful online venture. We’ll talk about what makes data entry jobs different from other online ventures, the various types of online data entry jobs, and the basic things you will need if you want to get started. Then, we’ll dive deep into the skills you need to make a success out of your data entry projects, including techniques in data entry, such as mastering the keyboard and making accurate, precise transcriptions.

We’ll also delve into the world of freelancing and online jobs, and talk about how you can establish your presence in the vast online world, and build a name and reputation for yourself as a data entry professional and a freelancer in general.

If you’re a beginner and considering getting started with data entry, this e-book is the right one for you as we help you navigate the ins and outs of this promising online venture. If you’ve done data entry jobs before, then this is a good resource for learning new techniques and tricks of the trade --- you just might be able to pick up a handy tip or two!
CHAPTER 1

WHAT’S IT ALL ABOUT

Online jobs are a dime a dozen, and the key is just finding the right one that best fits your work habits and skill set. Because of their popularity, online ventures are also prone to scams, so you would also need excellent online research skills to sift through the deals and pick out the real ones from the scams.

If you’re scouting for ventures online, here are the top online jobs that rake in actual money if you only know where and how to look:

**Online tutors** especially native English speakers are highly demanded by companies that offer English language tutorial services for non-English speakers. Depending on the company, you may be a conversational buddy, a reviewer for the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), an English grammar teacher, and more. You can earn as much as $20 per hour just by working from home.

**Content writers** are paid on a per project basis, and the rate is usually based on 500-word articles. A lot of companies nowadays are looking for people who can produce and generate content for their various communication and marketing platforms, from social media accounts to blogs, websites and promotional print materials like press releases and brochures.
Call center agents are popular since companies look for people who can field their phone lines, address customer concerns and questions, or even make cold calls to households to sell their products. Telephone mystery shoppers are one form of call center agents that are highly paid especially when they make successful calls. The pay is usually $5 – 10 for every successful call made. Other companies even add commissions for successful sales.

Forum participants are paid to post comments on blogs and participate in discussion forums and chat rooms. Payment is based on a quota system, i.e., 50 posts per pay-out period. Many of these chat rooms, discussion boards and blogs are provided by the company, usually to promote their products and services, or provide reviews and testimonials.

Of these, data entry jobs are one of the most popular and high-paying online ventures, with an earning of $6 to $20 depending on the project and the task required. Not bad considering that you will be working in the comfort of your home and at any time that is convenient for you.

If this is your first time to have heard of data entry though, we’re pretty sure you have a lot of questions in your mind. What is it really about? What is entailed in these data entry jobs? What do you need to be successful in this venture? How can you increase your value and premium as a data entry professional? We’ll answer all these questions and more in this chapter.

Understanding The Data Entry Hype

So, what’s all the hype with data entry jobs? In this age of technology, the highest currency is information. Organizations and corporations work with tons of information every day, and in a time when information can make or break companies, people are needed to process all these information. You might ask, “Why not let the machines handle it?”

While there are software and programs that can transcribe and translate information, one of the limits of digital technology is that it can only work with digital data or information. The reality is that there are still millions, trillions of bytes of information and data, relayed, passed on and communicated every day that is not in digital form. Companies and organizations still need individuals to help them transform all these information into a format that can be recognized, processed and stored into the company’s database. This is where data entry professionals come in.
Data entry jobs are essentially what the name suggests: a job that requires entering data or information into a software or program. In even shorter and simpler terms, these are typically typing jobs. Now, you might wonder, “Isn’t there anyone in the company who can do this sort of thing?” The thing is, because of the nature of the job, companies do not find it a smart business decision to hire a regular, full-time person whose sole duty is to enter and code information into a computer or database software.

For one, it’s smarter and more cost-effective for a company to hire and invest in a regular employee who can do more for the company besides type information. Secondly, because data entry is a high volume work (imagine encoding the records of thousands of insurance clients!), it can be time-consuming, and companies do not want their regular employees to be doing this kind of task on top of regular job functions. The solution? Outsource data entry jobs. With this kind of approach, companies can save on employee cost (no need to pay monthly employer share for insurance and employee benefits, for example!) while still getting the task of data entry done. This also offers relative relief for company employees who need not worry over such administrative tasks, allowing them to focus on their more important duties, such as customer service, sales, product quality and assurance, etc.

Types Of Data Entry Jobs

The demand for data entry professionals continues to rise as companies grow and operations expand. Even more, as more and more companies shift from manual to computerized and online operations, there is a high volume of information and data that needs to be translated and encoded into digital format. Data entry professionals may handle any one of the following types of information – and more!
As you can see, in the data entry sector itself, there is already a wide range of jobs and tasks that a data entry worker can do and may be expected to perform. Here are some of the basic types of data entry jobs available:

**Captcha entry.** This is one of the easiest and simplest forms of data entry jobs, although the least lucrative. Workers simply encode captcha images (those codes you’re asked to input when you’re trying to log in to a site) into a software program. Depending on the company, a certain number of encoded captcha images are needed in order to earn a minimum of $10 for every pay-out period.

**Survey forms.** Some data entry professionals work as survey respondents, that is, they fill out and answer survey forms on various survey sites – from reviews of a product to opinion surveys. While the rate would depend on the length of the survey, the average earning from this kind of data entry job is about $1-2 for every survey completed and filled out.

**Image to text.** This kind of data entry job is popular among book and publishing companies, and visual and advertising agencies. Here, data entry professionals are given an image (or in some cases, a PDF copy of a file) and are expected to write or convert the image file into a word document. It is a simple copy-and-type job.
Medical transcription. This is one of the most lucrative types of data entry jobs available. It has also become quite a distinct form of online data entry job so that high premium is given to transcriptionists with advanced training and excellent listening and coding skills. In this kind of job, you’ll be working with health or medical-related information, and your work will involve transcribing recordings of surgical procedures, inpatient intakes and prescriptions, abstracting health records of patients, and recording client information. Typically, medical transcriptionists are also expected to have some medical or health-related training and experience.

Data specialist. This is the most general form of data entry job where you may be asked to perform a number of functions, from inputting information into a company’s database, recording and maintaining a business’ product inventory, to creating a payroll list and reading and processing emails received from customers. The pay varies depending on the company and the exact nature of the job, but fast typing skills and an eye for details are critical for this kind of job.

These jobs can be categorized into five major classifications of data entry services: (1) data conversion, which requires processing unstructured data into an understandable format (i.e., digitizing information from papers and reports); (2) data entry processing services such as completing documents, questionnaires, surveys, and reports; (3) online data entry services, which includes online processing and filling out of forms, online entering of image files into a word document, or online copy and paste jobs; (4) offline data entry services where you may be asked to collect URL or fill out offline forms; and (5) image processing services such as scanning files into readable formats.
Is A Data Entry Job For You?

As mentioned, online jobs are a dime a dozen. You can have your pick from the many options available. When choosing though, you might want to ask: “Is a data entry job for you?” What can you get out of a data entry job?

**Perfect for those who like desk jobs.** While some people like to be on their feet, some are just as comfortable being glued to their seats for hours in a day, working in front of a computer. In fact, studies show that more than 50% of workers are actually not quite so averse to the idea of spending eight hours in the office. What makes office workers want a change of environment is due to a number of other factors, including office politics and gossip and a demanding, ungrateful superior. So, if you’re one of those looking to avoid office politics and talk but perfectly okay with sitting in front of a computer, then data entry jobs are perfect for you.

**Seeking for part-time and on-the-side projects.** The deal with data entry jobs is that it’s difficult to find a full-time gig. Most of the projects are part-time, and therefore perfect for those with enough free time on their hands and looking for on-the-side projects that will allow them to earn extra income. Because projects are part-time, the pay is not as high compared to other online jobs, so it may not be the ideal job for those looking to earn large amounts of money.

**Does not come with regular worker benefits.** Like most online ventures, data entry jobs do not entitle you to benefits, health insurance and vacation credits. This is not something that you might want to do in the long-term especially if you’re after things like insurance and employee bonuses.

**Easy way to make money without a degree or prior training or experience.** It’s true what they say about data entry jobs being one of the easiest online jobs to score. Since the task requires simple data encoding, you don’t need a degree to get a data entry job. Some data entry assignments might require advanced skills, such as editing and proofreading, but these are something you can gain from experience. In fact, a lot of the companies that outsource data entry jobs provide free training for those without prior experience. Almost often the case, the training is always part of the equation especially as companies use a particular software or program for the data entry assignments, and you will need to be oriented on the use of these.
What Do You Need As A Data Entry Professional?

Different online jobs require different sets of skills, but data entry is one of those that have the most minimal of requirements. At the same time, depending on the kind of data entry job you do, you might be expected to possess certain capacities unique to the task or project at hand.

Here are the things you will need and are expected to have as a data entry professional:

**Fast typing speed.** Since most data entry jobs are essentially typing jobs, one of the primary things expected from a data entry worker is accurate and fast typing skill. You are being paid to input a huge volume of information in the least possible time, so a fast typing speed is a key requirement of the job. At the very minimum, your typing speed should be at least 60 words per minute (wpm).

However, in addition to lightning-fast typing speed, you would also need accurate typing skills. This is what we call touch-typing skills. One of the reasons why companies specifically employ data entry professionals is because of their confidence that these people can accurately input strings of information, such as numbers and codes. Your familiarity with the keyboard and your ability to key in the correct information are critical.

**Software familiarity.** Depending on the data entry project, you may be expected to work with a variety of computer programs, including a word processor software, spreadsheets and databases. At the very least, you should have enough knowledge and experience working with these popular computer programs: Microsoft Office, PowerPoint, Excel, Access, Project, and Open Office.

Some companies that use specialized database and programs offer training on the use of these, so it shouldn’t be a problem. However, this also means that you will need to be a fast learner and should be comfortable working with technology in order to master the use of these specialized programs.

**English and communication skills.** Typing jobs also mean dealing with documents and files in English, and an excellent data entry professional is one who has a good command of the language to be able to properly input correct spelling, punctuation, basic sentence construction, etc. Data entry professionals, especially medical transcriptionists, should also be able to properly make sense of recordings and context, so excellent listening skill is also expected.
Loads of patience and concentration. When you’re dealing with a huge volume of data and working as a note-taker and transcriptionist, you need a strong sense of focus. Transcribing, for example, requires extreme concentration especially in times when the recording isn’t clear or is of low quality. Data encoding also means dealing with repeated and redundant information, such as phone numbers, contact information, payroll, credit history – all of which involve numbers, which can prove to be confusing. You should be able to properly concentrate in order to get the number sequences right.

Likewise, typing and encoding jobs entail long hours seated in front of a computer, and you will need to have enough patience for this type of sedentary activity. If you’re the restless type, you might end up doing low quality job.

Reliable Internet connection. Freelancers and online workers invest in a reliable and stable Internet connection. Depending on the project, you may be expected by the company to be online for a certain number of hours (considered as your billable and working hours), be readily available for an impromptu Skype call or stay logged in while using the company’s database or program.

In addition to these basic requirements for a data entry job, you are also expected to perform a number of responsibilities, depending on the project and the company you’re working for.

Validating information. Inaccurate data can cost a company hundreds, even millions of dollars, so it’s important for data entry workers to not just ensure that they type in the right information, but also that they make sure to validate and cross-check the data they encode into the program.

Retrieving information in the right places and in the right format. Some data specialists such as those who process emails are expected to remember bits and pieces of information for easy data retrieval.

Managing workflow. In some cases, data entry professionals who work for large companies may be expected to work with units and departments and even offshore offices, coordinating with managers on reports, documentation, and processing of important business information. One’s ability to deal with supervisors and management staff, and knowledge of company workflow and the kind of information to get are important.
Maintaining confidentiality. Outsourcing data entry jobs is a big gamble for companies given the threat of company espionage and sabotage. After all, company information is a key asset. Maintaining client confidentiality and privacy of their information is also just as critical. The integrity of a data entry professional is an essential value. You should be trustworthy, cautious, and able to handle and maintain the confidentiality of the data you work with everyday.

Do Data Entry Jobs Pay?

Now we come to the most important question: Do data entry jobs pay at all? We mentioned earlier in this chapter that while data entry jobs are easy and simple, the pay is not as lucrative compared to other online ventures. Indeed, it is true that you may get paid more if you work as an online tutor, a graphic or website designer, a content or ghost writer or even a blogger.

This is because projects are typically short-term, and most data entry professionals often have to scout for new projects and clients once the first assignment is finished. However, this is also a viable option for those who do not have prior work experience, such as fresh graduates, or those who have never tried online jobs before and would like to see how online freelancing is like as a source of income.
According to data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, data entry workers earn about $27,450 every year (2010 data). Depending on the assignment, payment can be hourly or per project. For entry-level projects, you can easily earn $10 to $15 per hour or $200 per day. For more lucrative projects, you can earn as low as $250 or as high as $750 for each project.

This is good enough especially as your only investment is a good computer and a reliable Internet connection. Because it’s work from home, you will also be saving up on transportation and/or gas costs, food allowance, and other things that regular office employees normally spend on. Like regular employees, you will be paid once or twice a month, allowing you enough chance to work around your monthly budget without straining your savings.

When you have gained enough work experience and training, you can take on more complex data entry projects that pay more. There is also the option of specializing in a particular type of data entry job, for example, medical coding or transcribing, which pays higher than most data entry projects.

If you’re looking for an online venture that is relatively easy and simple, flexible and convenient in terms of working hours, or a desk job minus the politics and the demanding bosses, a data entry job is something that is worth considering. Capital investment is cheap as you will only need a computer, a reliable Internet connection, and relatively good typing skills to get started. Unlike other online ventures, data entry jobs are easier to land as you will also not need a degree or a specialized training to work on an assignment.

But as with any online job, you will need to master and work on building your skills as a data entry professional if you’re looking to find success in this venture. We’ll talk more about these in the next chapters!
Now that you know the basics of data entry jobs, it’s time to talk about how you can get started in this venture. Where do you start looking for data entry jobs? How do you find legitimate data entry jobs that actually pay? How do you give your resume the boost it needs if you want to succeed as a data entry specialist?

These are some of the common questions you might have if you’re considering working as a data entry professional. Getting started is never easy, and it pays to have handy information that can help you decide as you begin your journey in the data entry field.

Knowing Where To Look

Now that you know the basics of data entry jobs, it’s time to talk about how you can get started in this venture. Where do you start looking for data entry jobs? How do you find legitimate data entry jobs that actually pay? How do you give your resume the boost it needs if you want to succeed as a data entry specialist?

These are some of the common questions you might have if you’re considering working as a data entry professional. Getting started is never easy, and it pays to have handy information that can help you decide as you begin your journey in the data entry field.
While it’s possible that there are companies and organizations near you that offer offline and online data entry services, the easiest place to look for data entry jobs is the Internet. However, beware. While there are many legitimate companies that offer legitimate data entry projects, there are also many fake companies that offer data entry job scams. If you make the mistake of signing up with the wrong company, you might find yourself encoding data and not getting paid a single dollar.

To start, here are some websites with an excellent pool of data entry jobs that you can explore. These are freelancing sites that also post other online jobs, from content writing to graphic design and more. In most, if not all of these sites, you need to set up an account in order to access job postings of member-clients and companies looking for freelancers. Typically, job ads posted in these sites are legitimate, but it still pays to always double-check the client or company to be sure.

An alternative option is Craigslist, which is also a good resource for local listings. However, this is also likely to contain scams, so be on the lookout for bad or poor English, quick response time, and interviews via email, which are some indicators of dubious online deals.

Another excellent place to look is in temp agencies. Multi-national companies that handle confidential information sometimes prefer to course their data entry positions to temp agencies to ensure that they get trustworthy and reliable part-time workers who can be trusted with the volume and nature of information that needs to be handled.

In some cases, companies also prefer to have more skilled data entry workers, and temp agencies can do the work of screening applicants based on their experience and testing them on their typing and software skills. There is also a higher likelihood of getting longer-term data entry projects with temp agencies, so it’s good to check with them for any available data entry jobs.

A last alternative is cold calling companies in your neighborhood to ask if they have data entry positions. It is highly likely, however, that whatever positions they have are posted on their website, or at the very least, their social media accounts, all of which you can access through a quick search on the Internet.
Weeding Out The Scams

A very important part of any online venture is sifting through the options and eliminating the scams and dubious deals. This requires careful and thorough research, cross-checking and validating, and a dash of gut feel.

Because data entry is thought to be simple, it is easy to sell, and most people often fall prey to get-rich schemes. While it is partly true that data entry is simple and easy, there is no legitimate data entry job that offers big bucks overnight.

Freelancers have shared stories of being scammed and taken advantage of by these dubious deals.

- Being promised a payment release for coding hundreds of captcha images a day. You get paid the first round only but not the succeeding times.
- Paying a registration fee for a data entry project. Note: You should never be asked to make any payment or cash advance for any project or job you’re applying for,
- Providing your credit card information (as part of some registration process) only to find out it’s a scam to phish for information.
The harsh truth is that data entry scams do exist just as much as the legitimate data entry jobs online. The challenge is for you to be able to weed out the scams from the legitimate deals. One thing you need to remember is that these scams appear to come in different forms but in reality, they all look alike. Typical data entry scams include:

Affiliate marketing (also called non-traditional data entry) where you are required to post a certain number of ads on online forums and chat rooms. Like pyramid schemes, you are paid mostly based on the number of ads you’ve posted.

Companies that supposedly provide classes, trainings, and workshops on data entry, promising you employment in the company after such training. You’d have to pay for these trainings and classes, of course, but more than likely, you don’t get any employment offers after, nor does the company provide data entry jobs.

Process rebates where you are promised payment for filling out online forms. The catch? You send a hundred dollars to have access to a program that the company supposedly uses for processing the rebates. You don’t get reimbursed for this in the end.

You may ask, what makes data entry jobs prone to scams? The answer is easy: A lot of people are looking for ways to earn money without the hassles. Online scams exist because a lot of people are willing to be scammed in their desire to find easy and instant ways to earn. To stop these scammers, online workers themselves would have to be extra vigilant not to easily fall prey to instant money schemes, which is what most scams are about.

Remember these things to help you identify and weed out data entry scams online (these also apply to other online ventures!):

Don’t believe deals that promise instant money success. No one has become an instant, overnight millionaire just from doing data entry work – or any form of online job for that matter. A data entry job is not a get-rich-quick scheme, so if you see any deal that promises this, steer clear of it!

As we have said, typing and data entry jobs are one of the simplest and easiest ventures, but because the work is also relatively easy and expertise and specialization not particular, they are also not one of the most lucrative jobs. A company that promises you instant success and money after just a couple of months of encoding data into a program is more likely just out to get your money.
Avoid too good to be true ads. A real job offer does not need to sell itself to you. If the deal seems too much of a good thing, chances are it’s a scam. As mentioned, data entry jobs are typically part-time positions that come with no benefits and perks. There is a higher likelihood of you being hired for a longer-term data entry project than being offered health insurance and leave credits like a regular employee.

Do a good research on the company or client. There really is only one way to weed out the scammers, and that is to do a thorough and extensive research on the company. You have to establish that an actual company, client or individual exists. A company website is an easy resource, but even this can easily be scammed, so if you can, use other ways by which you can establish the company’s actual existence. A good place to start is customer reviews. They are good indicators that the company does exist as customers have transacted and done business with them.

You can also check with official or government offices such as the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Better Business Bureau to see whether the company offering the data entry job is real or bogus. Other places you can search for information on the company are the Federal Trade Commission, Work at Home Scams Bulletin Board or the MLM/Pyramid Scams Bulletin Board, which provide a list of company scams and any other information on how to detect online scam deals.

If it’s an individual offering a data entry project, you can also check out reviews of previous workers in the actual website where the job is posted or where the contractor is registered. The use of these third-party job sites (i.e. Freelancer.com, Elance.com) lend an extra layer of security both for the contractor and the job applicant (this is why it’s difficult to detect scams on Craigslist because the site does not allow reviews or client ratings.).

Be careful with companies that advertise on Google or any search engine. Advertising on Google and search engines means a high volume of applications, which translates to extra work for the company’s HR department. A company that is truly in need of skilled professionals will post their ads on their website for easy and strategic screening. If you see an ad for a data entry job on Google, it’s likely that it’s a scam. Scammers are out to get as many people as possible, and posting on search engines is an easy, quick way of victimizing those who are looking for online jobs.
If the company’s asking for your money, it’s a scam! Job applicants need not pay a cash advance for some registration or recruitment process, nor are you expected to pay for any administrative fees to get more information about the job. Real companies that offer legitimate data entry jobs are upfront about the job and provide as much information about the position if they want to get the perfect data entry professional. They also have designated HR personnel who will process your application for free – not for a fee.

Know the difference between actual data entry jobs and ads selling information on how to land data entry jobs. One of the common forms of data entry scams are companies that offer information (i.e., training, classes, e-book, etc.) that can help you get a high-paying data entry job. This is different from a company that is actually offering a data entry position and provides detailed information about the job, the skills required for it, and the remuneration for the work entailed. The former is a scam, and the latter is a legitimate data entry job. The first one is a worthless offer as it only sells you information that you can easily get for free on the Internet.

Do not provide personal details until you have established the company or client as legitimate. True, you may not be asked to pay for any registration or sign up procedure, but you may be asked to provide your contact information and credit card details, which can be a form of phishing and identity theft. Before giving out any personal information, make sure that you have established the company as legitimate.

Ask for an employment contract before you start working. Some companies are out to get your work but would never pay. Even if it’s a part-time data entry project, you are entitled to get a copy of an employment contract that states your hours, pay, and any other specific conditions of the job. Consider this your form of security.

Use an escrow service. An escrow service is used for facilitating the payment and/or any transfer of funds from the company or individual. Before starting any work with the client, make sure that you have already set up an escrow account (i.e. PayPal, the most popular choice among online professionals). Provide details of your escrow account to the client so they can put the money in your account as soon as you’ve completed your work. If you don’t receive any notification (which you should), you should be able to check with the client.
Start with local companies. Be careful with offshore clients and companies. A major perk of online jobs is that you can tap into companies and clients outside of the country. The downside is that if there are any legal problems, it’s not as easy to address and resolve. Read carefully the fine print and employment contract if you’re working for a client outside of the United States.

Boosting Your Data Entry Resume And Other Tips On How To Score Gigs

Now that you know how and where to look for the best data entry jobs online (including how to cull the scams from the legitimate deals), it’s time to talk about how you can market yourself as a data entry professional and score the best gigs you can find.

One thing you need to remember is that there are also thousands, millions of people looking for online jobs. Competition, even when it comes to online work, is as real and as tough as competition when applying for a regular office job. Because there are a lot of online jobs that accept individuals with prior work experience, this can be both an advantage and a disadvantage for you.

This is a perfect advantage if you do not have any advanced degree, training or prior experience as this means that you have an equal chance of getting hired. On the other hand, this can be a disadvantage because companies still always prefer someone who already knows how to do the job and requires less training.

This is why your resume and how you package and present yourself as a data entry professional (or a data specialist) are crucial. Here are tips and tricks on how you can boost your resume, better market yourself, and up your chances of landing an excellent data entry gig:
Invest in a personal website or online resume that will display your work. In this age of tech, even HR personnel have taken to online platforms to search, seek out, and study job applicants. If you’re a freelancer or an online worker, there is no better platform to get visibility for you as a professional than online. LinkedIn is an instant choice for an online resume, allowing you to post information about your training, work experience, the projects you’ve been involved in, and even testimonials and recommendations from previous employers or clients.

Most creative professionals, such as graphic designers, website programmers, and even content and social media managers, also prefer to have a personal website which doubles as their resume and portfolio, allowing them to add, share and post their projects and outputs. You won’t even need to pay to set up your site, nor do you need to be a techie or experienced website designer. There are many platforms online that offer free, easy, drag-and-drop website templates. CargoCollective.com has a pretty cool interface if you’re looking for something minimalist and simple. Another good choice is Tumblr.com, which can also double as your blog.

Actively market yourself. Update your website every time you finish or complete a project for a client. Indicate the nature of the work involved, your tasks and responsibilities, and the major output that you completed. If you’re also active on social media, share the update on these sites as well so you can get out to your network that you’re available for freelance data entry work and you’ll never miss out on any opportunity.

Do not also be afraid to network. Given the proliferation of online scams, one of the best ways to secure a legitimate deal is to work with previous companies and clients, or get a recommendation from someone. So, do a good job with every project and keep in touch with previous and past clients. If they’re impressed with your work, there is always the possibility that you’ll be contacted again if there’s a new project. Likewise, employers are more likely to hire you if they can connect a profile to a face they’ve met before in real life or through the recommendation of someone. Get someone to say a few kind words for you or to recommend you to a client if an opportunity for work opens up. Join business fairs, meetings, and workshops – you’ll never know who might lead you to your next client.

Follow companies online. With social media a popular marketing and promotional platform, companies also post their openings and job posts on Facebook and Twitter. Tap into these sources of information so you won’t miss a good offer. This is also an excellent way of learning more about the company and the industry as a whole, giving you an idea of the skills and expertise companies are looking for when it comes to data entry professionals.
Familiarize yourself with the average salary of data entry gigs. Beginner data entry jobs are typically paid $10 – 15 per hour or $250 – 750 per project. A quick glance at Upwork.com, for example, shows that the pay for most data entry jobs range from $30 to $200. Depending on your schedule, skills and priorities, you may want to start with something quick and easy first (a good idea if you’re a beginner), so you can apply for the fixed-priced jobs with a smaller budget. If you’re looking for a more extensive work (runs for a couple of weeks or months), you may want to apply for those jobs that pay over $100.

Knowing how much data entry jobs are paid will also help you map your long-term plans as a data entry professional. Because most data entry jobs are part-time and on a per project basis, you might want to consider building on your data entry skills to eventually build a niche for yourself in a related industry. For example, administrative and customer service positions are more long-term and pay higher. You can also develop expertise in a technical field in data entry, such as in medicine/health or IT.

Build your skill set. Do not be complacent. Just because data entry jobs are part-time, easy and simple does not mean that you can be content with your performance and present skills. Work on improving your typing skills. There are community colleges, for example, that offer typing, clerical or secretarial certifications. This is a good investment especially if you want to be involved in more long-term, bigger projects.

Knowledge of basic computer programs and software are essential, but knowledge of and familiarity with other advanced types of programs and software can also get you additional points and higher chances of being hired by companies.

Consider doing it free the first time. Let’s admit it, even if companies are willing to take you on without experience or training, some companies are still iffy about hiring first-timers. If you’re just after the experience, you might want to consider doing a simple data entry for free first. Instead of being paid for the job, you can ask the client to provide you with an excellent recommendation or review to boost your resume.

Data entry is a growing industry in the online jobs market. One simply needs to know where and how to look for legitimate deals. Careful and thorough research can lead to interesting opportunities to build a niche as a data entry professional. At the same time, you also need to work on marketing yourself as a professional. Creating a visible presence online is a good way to start your career in data entry.
Chapter 3

Your Number One Ally: The Keyboard

Why Touch-Typing

If you grew up around the age of typewriters, mastering a computer’s keyboard should be a relatively easy task for you. For one, a computer keyboard is much simpler to use than a typewriter’s. Two, a computer is so much more flexible than a typewriter.

A primary requirement in building a career as a data entry professional, as we have mentioned in the earlier chapter, is excellent typing skills. Companies pay you to input and encode huge volumes of information with as much accuracy and speed as possible. An invaluable tool that you should therefore be familiar with is your laptop or personal computer.

More than knowledge of computer software or program, what is even more important is knowledge of touch-typing or speed typing. Imagine fingers flying on a keyboard – this is the concept of touch-typing. How to achieve this? Simple. You need to be extremely familiar with the keyboard. This is what we’ll teach you in this chapter: how to master the keyboard and become a true touch typist.
You can easily delete a word, phrase or sentence by simply hitting the “delete” key. Now, compare this with a typewriter where you will need to apply a correction fluid to every word or sentence to be deleted. Producing multiple copies of a document is also so much easier to do with a computer than with a typewriter. In fact, if you’ve mastered the typewriter keys, it’s safe to say that you’ll be able to easily master the computer keyboard as well.

In many traditional offices, one of the primary requirements for a secretarial or clerical job is fast typing skills, something that comes in handy for taking notes during meetings and dictations of bosses. Just how important are touch-typing skills in data entry jobs? Here are some of the benefits:

**Productivity.** A touch typist typically has a typing speed of 75 – 80 words per minute, as compared to a hunt and peck typist (one who spends additional time looking for the letters and keys to press) who types in 30-40 words per minute. Touch typists have thoroughly memorized the keyboard that they don’t even need to look at it when typing. This translates to more information inputted into the system or program, faster turn-around rate, and therefore, higher productivity.

**Accuracy.** Touch-typing develops not just speed but also accuracy in typing. The goal is to key in as much accurate information as fast as you can, given the huge volume of information to be handled. Again, the more accurate your typing is in the fastest time possible, the more productive you are. Touch-typing skills are particularly important because data entry jobs have strict deadlines, and correcting erroneous information that you’ve encoded can take up considerable time.

**Fatigue.** Others think that typing jobs are routine, boring, and therefore, easy. While there is truth to this, the lifestyle of a typist is also prone to physical and mental fatigue. Sitting for long periods of time in front of a computer can lead to obesity and cause back pain and neck strain, among others. The carpal tunnel syndrome, a condition that affects the arms, has also been closely linked to typing for long periods of time.

If you’re not an experienced typist or have not developed the skill of touch typing, you will find it doubly stressful to type long documents as you tend to hunch your back while you look for the keys to press on the keyboard. You strain your eyes more as you constantly shift between the keyboard and the screen, and you put additional strain on your hands because you use only two or at most four fingers when you type.
Touch typists, on the other hand, experience less physical strain as they assume a better posture (therefore less strain on the back) since they do not need to hunch over the keys. There is lesser eye strain as they tend to look only at the screen (no need to look at the keyboard as they have memorized the keys), and they are able to utilize all 10 fingers instead of just two or four.

**Focus.** Touch typists are better able to focus on the words they key in because their concentration is not divided between the keyboard and the screen. This means they can pay better attention to the things on the screen, pick out grammar and spelling mistakes, correct them, and notice other discrepancies in the data they’re inputting. In short, this means better productivity for touch typists.

If these are not enough reasons to convince you to develop the skill of touch-typing, just consider that this is an added skill that can land you other jobs in the future if data entry does not work for you. Companies will always be in need of office staff with efficient note-taking and typing skills.

**Getting Into Position**

Some of the common complaints of office workers who work 9-to-5 desk jobs are back pain, neck pain, and numbing or fatigue around the waist/hip area. Not only are these the results of long hours of sitting, but also of inappropriately designed office furniture. The importance of ergonomic furniture cannot be overly emphasized. The height of desks and chairs should match so that you don’t need to hunch your back or bend your neck in order to be at eye level with the computer screen. Seats should be adjustable and should have adequate back support.

If you’ll be working from home and expecting to spend long periods of time in front of the computer, it’s a good decision to invest in ergonomic furniture that reduces physical strain and promotes a healthy well-being.
As mentioned, typists are prone to physical fatigue, so proper posture is important. Take note of these reminders as you get into typing position.

**Head**

You should be at eye level with your computer screen. Keep your head erect. Bending your head forward (when the table is too low or when you constantly look at your fingers or the keyboard) will strain your neck. Tilting your head (if the computer screen is not eye level) can result in headaches.

**Shoulders**

Your shoulders should be relaxed, which can only be achieved if your head is in an erect position, not bent forwards or tilted up. The height of the table also affects the position of your shoulders. If the table is too high, you tend to hunch your shoulders, and if the table is too low, the tendency is to extend your arms in order to reach the keyboard, therefore straining your shoulders. To ensure that your shoulders are in a relaxed position, note that your elbows should be positioned at waist level when you’re seated.

**Elbows**

Your elbows should also be relaxed. Keep them close to your body and at waist level.

**Fingers**

The secret of touch typists is their ability to use all 10 fingers when they type (more on this in the later section of this chapter!). Understand that there is a designated finger for each of the major keys on the keyboard.

Your fingers should be slightly curved over the keyboard to facilitate quick and fast movement as you type.

**Wrist**

Your wrists should be flat on the keyboard, not raised, which can only further strain your shoulders. Follow a straight, perpendicular line from the knuckles of your middle fingers to your elbows.
Feet

Your feet should be flat on the floor. If your legs don’t touch the floor (your chair might be too high), you are adding strain on your back and shoulders. If your chair is too low and your legs are extended rather than resting comfortably flat on the floor, you are more likely to slouch, which can result to fatigue and numbing in your waist/hips area.

Other Reminders

Maintaining proper posture is just one thing. Your environment - your home office - also contributes to a productive and healthy typing routine. Because data entry jobs tend to become routine, it is easy to get distracted or not be in the mood for work. In some cases, working with series and strings of numbers (i.e., you’re working as a payroll encoder) can prove to be tiring and confusing. Therefore, you will need an environment that is conducive for working long hours in front of a computer screen.

When one talks of online jobs, a popular image that comes to mind is working in the comfort of your home, dressed in your pajamas. In reality though, a lot of successful, productive online professionals actually maintain home offices that mimic the look and atmosphere of an actual office. Studies show that such an environment enhances work productivity and makes it easier for freelancers to resist the temptation to be lax during work hours as a result of working in a comfortable environment.

Here are some more tips on how to create a conducive working atmosphere if you’re working a data entry job:

- Invest in good room lighting. Natural light is the best lighting, so it’s recommended to position your table near the window in your home that lets in natural light. Install window shades to block out the glare of the afternoon sun when the light becomes too harsh. Avoid using yellow or warm light as it can only make you sleepy.

- Have a filter in front of your monitor or computer screen. If you’re using one of the older computer models, a filter is recommended to block out the radiation from the screen. This can help protect your eyes especially as you will be staring in front of the screen for long hours. More modern computer and laptop screens, however, are now using a retina-display technology, which offers improved screen resolution and therefore, are friendlier to the eyes.
Get a copyholder that can be attached to your computer monitor. If you’re practicing your typing, this is the best place to put the hand chart for easy reference. When you start working on your projects, your work can go here, minimizing eye strain.

Get up and move around every 25 minutes so you don’t stiffen up. This will also give your eyes a chance to rest and your mind to refresh. If anything, this is also a good time to give those fingers of yours a rest from all the typing.

**Getting Acquainted With The Keyboard**

As mentioned, the keyboard is your best friend when you’re working a data entry job. Mastering the keyboard should be an easy task especially when you’ve worked with a typewriter before. Computer keyboards are also easier to use because they work with only a soft touch, whereas you will need to press harder with typewriter keys.

As we begin this section, the general assumption is that you are at least familiar with how a computer/laptop keyboard looks like. For this part, we’ll focus specifically on how to properly use the keyboard with the right fingers; this is the essence of touch-typing.

A typical computer/laptop keyboard has eight keys also known as “Home” keys. These are the keys for letters “a”, “s”, “d”, “f”, “j”, “k”, “l” and “;” (colon, semi-colon key) positioned in the middle of the keyboard. If you position your fingers on these keys, you will find that your two forefingers fall on the raised points of the “f” and “j” keys. The fingers of your left hand go on the “a”, “s” and “d” keys and your right fingers on the “;”, “l” and “k” keys. The key is to remember where your forefingers will go so that you can position your other fingers on the right keys.
Once your fingers are positioned on these main home keys, it should be easy for you to reach other letters, symbols and numbers on the keyboard. The hand guide below shows the letter keys assigned to each finger.

Both thumbs should rest always on the space bar. The small finger of your left hand is for the Caps Lock and Shift keys and the small finger of your right is for the Enter key. If you have mastered the use of all 10 fingers, it should be easier and faster for you to type. Contrast this with hunt and peek typists who only use four to six fingers, and therefore have a slower typing speed.

Of course, this is not something that you can master overnight. The use of the small (pinky) fingers is particularly tricky as they’re the least used and not as strong as the other fingers of our hands. In fact, even some practiced typists can use only eight fingers as the pinky fingers are often neglected.

**Going Full Blast With Typing Practice**

Now that you know where to position your fingers on the home keys of the keyboard, let’s begin with the exercises that will work those fingers, help you master the keys, and get you started on touch-typing.
Exercise For The Home Keys

Position all 10 fingers on the home keys.

Type the following text in the chart below, making sure not to use the delete key. Take note: Your thumbs should be positioned always on the space bar.

For this exercise, try not to lift or move your fingers. Simply press the keys on which your fingers move on.

Exercise For E, I, G And H

Position all 10 fingers again on the home keys.

Type the text in the chart below. Move the third finger of your left hand (D key) to press the E key, and the third finger of the right hand (K key) to press the I key.

There is no need to move or lift the fingers; just press the keys on which the fingers rest on except the middle finger to reach out to the E and I keys.
To practice keys G and H, position all 10 fingers on the home keys again. This time, move the forefinger of your left hand (F key) to press the G key, and the forefinger of your right hand (J key) to press the H key. You will notice that the G and H keys are just beside F and J. This should be an easy exercise.

Exercise For O, N, T, Y, And Shift

Position all 10 fingers on the home keys.

Type the text in the chart. To use the O key, use your right ring finger (L key). To type N, use your right forefinger (J key). To type T, move your left forefinger (F key).
Now, let’s try to capitalize without using the Caps Lock key. Let’s begin with the A S D F keys (using your left hand). Move the pinky finger on your right hand and press the Shift key on the right side of the keyboard. Hold and use the fingers of your left hand to press the A S D and F keys.

To capitalize J K L, move the pinky finger of your right hand on the Shift key on the left side of the keyboard, hold and use the fingers of your right side to press the designated keys. To use the colon, press the Shift key with your right pinky finger, hold, and use your left hand’s pinky finger to press the “;” (colon) key.

Ask; See; Don; Fog; Gas; Had; Jag; Keg; Leg; Nag; All; Sag; tag; tog; tin; ton; ten; tea; tie; toll tall till tell That Hill Fill Sell Tell Hill Gill Doll Noel Tent Hide Tide Lilt Hilt Silt Tilt Kilt Gilt Talk Gate Hate Fate Late Date I said I hated the doll that I felt it had a tin leg; She talked of Noel and said she asked if he hated jogging Ask to see Don and see if he sells gates; tents and dolls I said I felt fine and that I jogged in a field at right; He let his dog loose in the field and he fished in a lake The fog had filled the field and I fell on a sagging log;

To type Y, move your right forefinger (J key).

hyn; yhn; nhy; hyn; yhn; nhy; hyn; yhn; nhy; hyn; yhn; nhy; lo. ol. lo lo. ol. lo lo. ol. lo lo. ol. lo lo. ol. lo
Yet. Yes. Ten. Nay. Hay. Gay. Say. Lay. Kay. Joy. Toy. Eye. yell they flay sley yank yoke yolk toys eyes says nays lays They all liked seeing the toys shining gaily on a shelf. The lads yelled as they yanked the leg of a little lass. i said that they yelled in joy at the toys on the shelf. His eyes said it all. He talked of this feeling of hate. The yokls of the little eggs lay shining in the toy tin. Slay the nasty hog. Lay it on the shelf in the tool shed

**Exercise For The Comma, W, R And B**

Position all 10 fingers on the home keys.

Type the text in the chart below. To type the comma “,”, move the third finger of your right hand (K key) downwards and press the comma key. To type W, move up the ring finger of your left hand (S key) and touch the W key.
To type R and B, you will use your left forefinger (F key). Move up to press the R key and move down to press on the B key.

Exercise For M, U, P And C

Position all 10 fingers on the home keys.

Type the text on the charts shown below. To type M and U, you will use your right forefinger (J key). Move it down and press M, and move it up and press U.

ik, ,ki ki, ik, ,ki ki, ik, ,ki ki, ik, ,ki ki, ik, ,ki ki, WSW WSW SWS WSW WSW WSW WSW WSW WSW WSW WSW way, was, wag, wan, wad, wet, wed, won, wok, wow, win, wig, wall well will west wish wind wind when wear week weal Ask the lady who was at the Dog Show to talk to the lad.

We talked, we walked, we went in to tea, then we waited.
We will wait while the lady talks to the tail, weal lad.
What was the lad doing, whistling at those wagging dogs?
We won the shiny toy, yet we did not win the tin shield.
Wash the wig, so that she will want to look at it again.

frf rfr frf rfr frf rfr frf rfr frf rfr frf rfr frf bgb bgb bgb bgb bgb bgb bgb bgb bgb bgb bgb
bead bear bead bead been beef bell bil bass bees boil reel reef read reek roll rash rest root roof ride raid reed
There were lots of boys in the band and they enjoyed it.
The bread and rolls in the store had been there all day.
The bread baked in the kiln tasted better than the rest.
We had been riding the bikes all week and we were tired.
The bear reeked of beef stew so we beat a hasty retreat.
Billy had been rolling on the floor; he was boiling hot.

jmj jmj jmj jmj jmj jmj jmj jmj jmj jmj jmj jm juj uju juj uju juj uju juj uju juj uju juj uju juj
mash mash mars mats mail meal mile mole moon mend mind mint burn turn lure fuss dust rust must gust lust gush lush mush
My older brother kindly mended my new motor bike for me.
I must shut the toilet door and remember to use the key.
We must make our dinner more interesting and nourishing.
The wind gusted, and the mast blew around the main roof.
My mum mended the sagging hems. It was most kind of her.
The main meal of the day was roast beef and baked beans.
To type P, move up the pinky finger of your right hand (; key).

To type C, use the middle finger of your left hand (D key). Move it down slightly and press C.

Exercise For V, X, Q And Z

Position all 10 fingers on the home keys again.

Type the text on the charts below. To type V, move your left forefinger (F key) down and press V. To type X, move the ring finger of your left hand (D key) down and press on the X key.

To type Q and Z, you will use the pinky finger (A key) of your left hand. Move it up to press the Q key and move down to press the Z key.

A vexed taxi man viewed the jam with extreme impatience. The extra climb gave a better view over the next valley. The exit was hidden from the view of the old van driver. The fox jumped over the exit box and captured the voles. It was a police hoax and the vice teams were very vexed. Victoria views paying road taxes with very vivid hatred.
Exercise For Numbers And Figures

Position all 10 fingers on the home key.

Using the hand guide we showed earlier, type the number sequence below. Note that the left forefinger is for pressing 4 and 5 and the right forefinger for numbers 6 and 7, while the pinky finger of your right hand is for 0.
You will also notice that figures and other symbols such as asterisk (*) and the dollar sign ($) are indicated in the number keys. To use these figures and symbols, press and hold on the Shift key (on either side of the keyboard) with your pinky finger and press on the desired number key to use the figure or symbol (i.e., press 4 + Shift key to use the $ sign).

Punctuation marks are positioned on the right side of the keyboard. Use the pinky finger of your right hand to press on these punctuation marks. Therefore, it’s important that you build the strength of your pinky finger as this will be helpful for typing out punctuation marks.

Other Typing Reminders

It is recommended to use Courier New (font 12) for your typing drills. As a fixed font, the letters and numbers use up an equal amount of space, so there are no letters or numbers that are positioned too close or too far away from each other.

For the exercises, best to use double spacing so you can easily see the words you type per line.

Practice capitalizing letters by pressing on the Shift keys with your pinky finger. However, if you will be typing a word (or a series of words) in capital letters, best to press the Caps Lock key.

Always begin the exercises with your fingers positioned on the Home keys and your forefingers on the F and J keys (raised points/bars). This is one way to train yourself not to look at the keyboard when you type.

It helps to say the letters as you type to help you memorize them. It will also help your brain to easily associate the assigned finger to each letter or key.

Train yourself not to look at the keyboard (do not be a hunt and peek typist) as you work on the exercises. If you don’t remember, refer to the hand chart (helpful to have the copy holder within sight) instead of looking at the keys or your fingers.

Work on developing accuracy first. Do not be in a rush to improve your typing speed, which may only prove futile if you have to keep on deleting and retyping words because you misspelled them.
Use the keyboard with a soft touch – do not smash it. This is a common practice especially among those who learned typing using the typewriter. Unlike the typewriter keys, you don’t need to hit a computer keyboard. By refraining from smashing the keyboard, you also avoid overusing your hands/fingers, which can lead to additional strain and fatigue especially if you’ve been typing for long hours. Tap the keys only; do not hit them.

Devote at least 10 – 15 minutes a day on your typing exercises. Remember that it takes time to master and memorize the hand chart, and the best way to get the hang of it is to constantly and regularly practice.

Some Sentence And Paragraphs Drills

Here are some exercises to help you get started! There are more of these sentence and paragraph exercises in the next chapter!

Pack my box with five dozen liquid diet cans or jugs.
Crazy Fredericka bought many very exquisite opal jewels.
Sixty zippers were quickly picked from the woven jute bag.
Amazingly few discotheques provide jukeboxes.
Heavy boxers perform quick waltzes and jigs.
Jackdaws love my big sphinx of quartz.
The five boxing wizards jump quickly.
How quickly daft jumping zebras vex.
Quick zephyrs blow, vexing daft Jim.
The sphinx of black quartz, judge my vow.
Waltz, nymph, for quick jigs vex Bud.
Blowzy night-frumps vex’d Jack Q.
Glum Schwartzkopf was vex’d by NJ IQ.

Once you’ve mastered these sentence exercises, you can move on to typing paragraphs which will also test the use of your pinky finger for pressing the Enter key to add another line. This is also good practice for typing punctuations, numbers and figures/symbols.
Paragraph 1

If the reader will excuse me, I will say nothing of my antecedents, nor of the circumstances which led me to leave my native country; the narrative would be tedious to him and painful to myself. Suffice it, that when I left home it was with the intention of going to some new colony, and either finding, or even perhaps purchasing, waste crown land suitable for cattle or sheep farming, by which means I thought that I could better my fortune more rapidly than in England.

[Erwhon, Samuel Butler from typeonline.co.uk]

Paragraph 2

The battles of Marathon and Tours are examples of how war has often determined the development of Western civilization. The basis of Western civilization was probably decided at the Battle of Marathon about 2,500 years ago. In this battle, a small number of Greek soldiers led by a famous Greek general defeated 100,000 invading Persians under the Persian king. Because the Greeks won, Greek ideas about many subjects matured and became the foundation of Western society. Whereas Marathon laid the basis of Western civilization, its structure remained the same as a result of the Battle of Tours in A.D. 732. Before this battle, Muslim armies had taken control of a large number of countries, but they were stopped by a group of soldiers led by Charles Martel in France. If the Muslims had won at Tours, Islam might have become the major religion of Western society.

[De Anza College]

The art of touch-typing is a valuable skill that all data entry specialists should learn. It combines speed and accuracy, which are important in data entry jobs. As you work on developing your touch-typing skills, make sure that you pay attention to other things that contribute to a healthy typing routine, such as creating a conducive working environment and maintaining the right posture to reduce physical strain. An important reminder: It takes time to master touch-typing, so don’t rush, and just keep on practicing.
Congratulations! You have now mastered the keyboard, your number one ally as a data entry professional. It doesn’t stop here though. Now that you know your way around a keyboard, it’s now time to work on improving your typing speed. In this chapter, we’ll provide you with tips on how you can boost your typing speed, as well as more practice exercises to develop those lightning fingers of yours!

Remember that the one way you can have lightning-fast typing speed is if you have already mastered the keyboard and memorized the hand chart guide. Continue to practice, making sure that...

✓ You type using the correct fingers.
✓ Your typing is accurate – no misspellings, no wrong punctuations, etc.
✓ You minimize the use of the delete/backspace key as much as possible.
✓ You practice the use of your pinky fingers for pressing the Shift keys, Enter key and Caps Lock key.
✓ You don’t look at the keyboard as you type. Keep your eyes on the screen.
Working Your Way Towards Improved Typing Speed

Accuracy and speed are important requirements to become a successful data entry professional. At the beginning, the goal is to ensure that you develop accuracy first, that is, minimizing errors and mistakes in your typing as much as possible. It is counter-productive to be deleting words you typed because they’re misspelled or missing punctuation marks. Once you have developed accuracy, the next step is to improve your typing speed, until finally you can type fast and with less mistakes and errors as possible.

**Figure out your current typing speed.** A 60 words per minute typing speed is desired if you’re considering a data entry job. This is the minimum productive speed if you will be encoding words and paragraphs or strings of codes and numbers.

There are a number of online sites that offer typing tests that show you your typing speed, typing time, accuracy (percentage of correctly typed texts versus errors and mistakes), and problems keys on the keyboard that you need to work on (the proper use of fingers for the keys). Not to worry, most, if not all, of these sites offer these typing tests for free.

As a data entry professional, your number one asset is your typing speed, so if you know your typing speed, you can also include this in your resume and online profile. It’s bonus points for you if clients can see that you have a relatively fast typing speed, which means that you work fast and can complete the projects in due time.

**Set a typing speed goal.** It is not enough though that you remain at 60 wpm. You will need to set it higher. Again, the higher typing speed, the faster you can come complete the project, and therefore, a higher productivity. Clients would like to know that you can complete the project within the specified period of time AND with less mistakes as possible.

If your current typing speed is 60, aim for at least 70 – 80 words per minute. How to do this? Practice. There is no short or easy way to do it except to constantly and regularly practice.
Typing Exercises

Here are more sentence and paragraph samples to use as you work on your typing skills. Remember these pointers:

- Best to print out these exercises and put the sheets in the copyholder, which you can place on the side of your computer monitor.

- Keep your eyes focused on the screen; refrain from looking at the keyboard as much as possible. Your eyes should only be moving between the screen and the copyholder containing the texts.

- Read a string of words or the whole sentence before starting to type.

- Always position all 10 fingers on the main keys.

- Don’t smash the keyboard, instead tap or press slightly.

- Pay attention to your posture especially your back and neck.

- You can use an alarm that rings every minute to help you time your typing.
Sentence Practice A – Z

A  Alan Alstair added an apple to the apple pie mix.
B  Barbara bought boxes and boxes of beers for Billie.
C  Catherine is cooking a casserole for Cody.
D  Do a good deed daily and you will be called a do-gooder.
E  Erica Engel was elected to lead the entertainment committee.
F  Felly and Felicity fought over who gets to fight with Frank.
G  Give your good shot always and you will strike gold.
H  He held up a hand to halt the hitchhikers.
I  Ivy invited Ingrid to Iceland for her birthday.
J  Johnny and Jan are joining the joker costume party in January.
K  Keep the kitten off the couch.
L  Live your life like it’s your last.
M  Mindy made many friends during the museum visit.
N  Ned and Nate stuck by Nancy’s and Nellie’s side all night.
O  Olivia Googled the older boy next door.
P  Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper.
Q  Queenie isn’t quite the quiet girl from Queensland that I thought.
R  Robert rolled down the road, regretting his recklessness.
S  She sells seashells by the seashore.
T  Ted took the train to town to teach his Tuesday class.
U  Understand the things you need to understand.
V  Victoria lived in Liverpool with a view over the Mersey.
W  William walked up to the wandering girl.
X  Xander took the X-ray examination.
Y  Your yelling at the young children displeased the young parents.
Z  Zeny and Zak watched Zoolander yesterday.
More Sentence Practice A – Z

A “All Americans are angry atheists”, an angry aardvark asserted angrily. *Assembling an appropriate answer appears achievable.*

B Bara Brith beats brown bread. *But Bob, baring both broad biceps, begins breaking big brown beech branches.*

C Creepy creatures can’t catch crafty correctional captains. *Just click here and create an account.*

D During December David dated Daphne despite David’s dad disagreeing. *Detroit’s determined detectives discovered desperadoes doing despicable deeds during daylight.*

E English enthusiasts eagerly envision enhanced emotional elevation. *Exceeding even existing examples’ elicited elation.*

F Five funny features feel fairly finished for forum fodder. *Fellow fiction fanciers frankly forget fundamental facts.*

G Good grief, getting gobsmacked glimpsing great glory. *Grimy garbage grotesque gorillas.*

H Huge hits have historically harbored hidden hazards. *Harry Harangue-Hatcher is hollering, “Hip, hip, hooray!”*

I It is intriguing, if I innocently introspect, inquiring into industriousness. *I include Ignatz.*

J Just jubilate, juvenilley jacking Jamba Juice jugs. *Jam is judging Job’s Judaic journey.*

K Karen’s kids kept keeping kittens. *Kryptonite k-key knacks keep knowledge-knockers knackered.*

L Let’s lazily luxuriate, losing life’s latest lingering laments. *Low light levels line luscious landscapes.*
M  Madam Marsley, must Mixer make movies more mellow? 
Miss Melanie must make maroon matches.

N  No! Neither nuance nor novelty negates negativity. 
Nautical nuisance nears Neptune’s nalukettu.

Othello obscenely overturns Ophelia’s ovulation oration. 
Only Ontology, Orientalism or Orthography obviate overdoing Occultism.

P  Perhaps purple prose permeates popular periodicals. 
Please pardon Paul politely.

Q  Queer Quora questions quietly queue. 
Quit quibbling! Quixotically queer queens quip quietly.

R  Right? Radical reactionaries really resent redundancies. 
Regals resist rowdy rogues.

S  Surprisingly, there are many sentences that start with the letter S. 
Smart boys always go to Yale.

T  Tom truculently touched tender topics. 
Teutonic tonic turns technically terrific talk to tittle-tattle.

Undulating undercurrents undo undertakers’ uniforms.

V  Victoriously, Veronica viewed vicariously vicious vicars. 
Victor vexed Vivan’s visitors.

W  Well, we will wait without worrying, won’t we? 
What words will we write?

X  Xenu Xeroxed “xyzlacatosis.” 
Xerxes xeriscapes Xanthus.

Y  Yes! You yammering yokels yack, yack, yack. 
Youths yawn yearly.

Z  Zack zipped Zoe’s zoo zapper. 
Zoa zip zestily.
Sentence Practice With Numbers

1-5

Amy and Bailie bought 1 watermelon, 22 apples and 30 lemons at the fair.

The ingredients include 1 tablespoon of flour, 4 teaspoons of salt, and 5 lemon drops.

Please ask for 1 jacket, 2 pairs of pants, 3 jackets, and 4 shirts.

He scored 4 goals, had 20 misses, and committed 3 penalties.

The 40 pies they baked had to be packed in 10s and loaded into 4 boxes.

6-10

For the marathon, we needed to hire 6 cars, 7 motorbikes and 8 scooters.

She bought 16 lollipops, 8 bars of chocolate, and 10 candy bars at the store.

I live in Unit 91076, Westgrove St., Pine Hills Road.

The team’s scores were 60, 17 and 39 for the first three quarters of the game.

Will you bring me 7 books, 8 magazines, and 9 newspaper sheets?
Paragraph Practice

[Samples from https://k12.thoughtfullearning.com/resources/studentmodels]

Sample 1

Eating in the Student Center is a pleasant experience. First the food is excellent. It is well prepared, it tastes delicious, and there are many different kinds of food like hamburgers, tacos, pizza, and chicken. Moreover, each person serves his or herself, selecting just what he or she wants. Second, the environment in the Student Center is positive.

Sample 2

Working in an apple plant was the worst job I ever had. First of all, the work was physically hard. For ten hours a night, I took cartons that rolled down a metal track and stacked them onto wooden stands in a tractor-trailer. Each carton contained twenty-five pounds of bottled apple juice, and they came down the track fast. The second bad feature of the job was the pay. I was getting the minimum wage at that time, $3.25 an hour. I had to work over sixty hours a week to get a decent take-home pay.

Sample 3

Back when there were meals together, family members would have a chance to eat together, talk with each other, and share event of the day in a leisurely manner. But now families are more likely to be looking at the TV set than talking to one another. Many homes even have several TV sets, which people watch in separate rooms.

Sample 4

Friendship can be seen. It is seen in an old couple sitting in the park holding hands. It is the way they touch, a touch as light as a leaf floating in the autumn air, a touch so strong that years of living could not pull them apart. Friendship is seen in a child freely sharing the last cookie. It is the small arm over the shoulder of another as they walk on the playground. Seeing friendship is not casual. It is watching for subtlety, but friendship is there for eyes that can see.
Sample 5

The 14-year-old attends high school and is not in any special classes. She is allowed extra time to get to class when she needs it. She says, “I get it [teased] a lot, but I do have a small group of friends who are great about everything.”

Sample 6

It is evident that year-round schooling is not the best option for the school calendar. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the traditional school year. Why change something that works so well? The final bell rings. Let’s make sure this bell means that the “real” summer vacation has come.

Sample 7

Some people express themselves through beautiful art; others are masters of the page and speak silently through writing. I, on the other hand, express myself with the greatest instrument I have, my voice. I make my living by speaking to groups large and small. Nothing gives me more satisfaction than public speaking, and my interest in public speaking began when I was quite young.

Sample 8

Something happens inside of me when I listen to the music of the Counting Crows. Raw, uncensored emotion pours from the mouth of lead singer Adam Duritz. His voice seems to naturally synthesize with the background music of guitars, pianos, organs, drums, and accordions.

Sample 9

Coffee comes from small green beans that are really pits of a fruit resembling a cherry. The morning coffee poured into a mug comes from a small tree (or bush) that grew for seven years before it bloomed and grew the fruit that held the beans. After one of these trees produced one pound of coffee, its life was over (“Shrinking” 61).
Sample 10

It may seem like just another helpful source of information, but the Internet has taken the theft of “intellectual property” to a new level. Part of the problem is that most students don’t really know the exact definition of plagiarism or its consequences. Some say that using someone else’s ideas without attributing them is a form of theft, but most people don’t think of it as a serious crime.

Stretching For Speed

As a data entry professional, your hands are valued commodity. Extended periods of non-stop typing, however, can cause undue strain on your fingers and arms. In fact, carpal tunnel syndrome has been known to affect those who spend long periods of time typing in front of a computer.

Proper care of your hands/fingers is important, and taking breaks in between your typing can give your fingers the rest they deserve. Here are some finger stretches you can do to relieve the tension, get the blood flowing back on those fingers, and build strength for touch-typing.

Fist Exercise

This simple exercise can strengthen your hands and fingers, improve their range of motion (perfect so you can reach the number keys on the keyboard), and ease pain. Do this when you feel tightness in your hands.

Curl your fingers so that you make a fist. Hold it in position for a minute, and then release, spreading your fingers wide. Do this at least four – five times.

Claw Stretch

This can help improve the range of motion of your fingers.

Extend your hand in front of you with the palm facing up. Curl your fingertips so that they touch the base of each finger joint, resembling a claw. Hold in position for a minute and then release slowly.
Repeat four – five times with each hand.

**Finger Stretch**

This is similar to the claw stretch exercise above, improving also your range of motion and relieving strain.

This time put your hands on a table or any flat surface with your palms facing down but slightly curved (palm not touching the surface). Straighten your fingers and hold for a minute then release (go back to original position). Repeat four – five times with each hand.

**Finger Lift**

This exercise can improve the flexibility of your fingers and improve the range of motion. This is also a good exercise for building the strength of your pinky finger.

Put your hands palm-down flat on a table. From this position, lift one finger at a time off the table, hold for a few seconds then lower back down on the table. After lifting each finger, you can also try lifting all five fingers at once, and then lower.

Do this 10 – 12 times with each hand.

**Thumb Touch**

The thumbs are positioned only on the space bar and are not usually stretched when you type, hence are more prone to numbing and strain. For right-handed individuals, you will also notice that you tend to use your right thumb more in pressing the space bar, and the left thumb does not get as much movement as the right. Increase the range of motion of your thumbs with this exercise.

Hold hands out in front of you. Touch the thumb to each of the four fingers at a time, making the shape O (or the Ok sign). As you touch a finger to the thumb, make sure that the other fingers remain straight up and not bent.

Hold the O position for a minute. Repeat using all four fingers of each hand.

Another alternative exercise is the **thumb flex**.

Position hand in front of you, palm-up.
Stretch the thumb as far away from the other four fingers. Then, move the thumb back across the palm, bending it so that it touches the base of your small finger (picture forming the number 4 sign with your hand).

Hold this position for a minute. Repeat four- five times with both thumbs.

**Grip Strengthener**

This exercise improves flexibility of your fingers and also enhances holding/gripping strength. For this exercise, you will need a medium-sized squeeze ball.

Hold the squeeze ball in your hand and squeeze it as hard and as tight as you can so that you make a fist holding the ball. Hold on to the ball for 10 – 15 seconds then release. Repeat for 10 – 15 times on each hand.

You can do this exercise two to three times in a week, or during typing breaks to get the blood flowing in your fingers/hands.

It is also important that you also exercise your pinky finger. When you do these exercises, make sure to use your pinky finger, especially when doing the Grip Strengthener and Finger Lift exercises. These are ideal drills for developing strength of your pinky finger.

Here are also additional reminders to help take care your hands/fingers:

- **Warm your hands before exercise.** Do wrist curls or shake your hands and fingers first. You can also warm up your hands by soaking them in warm water for 5-10 minutes, especially if they’re painful or stiff. However, refrain from washing or wetting your hands right after typing for long periods of time. Give it a rest for 5-10 minutes before washing.

- **Massage the top of your palm with your forefinger,** rubbing slow circles to loosen and warm the muscle. Use oil or lotion.

- **Do not do these exercises if you have a finger/thumb injury.**

Developing your touch-typing skills require constant and regular practice. In addition to the exercises we have provided above, feel free to check out online typing sites for more typing drills to help you improve your touch-typing skills. As we have mentioned, your hands are a valuable commodity. Remember to take good care of them with some of the exercises we listed. Most of all, stop when you’re tired. Your fingers deserve a break!
Looking for a data entry job or any online venture is both easy and challenging. It is easy because there are a lot of online ventures to choose from --- from content managers to social media managers, to customer representatives, graphic designers, to online tutors and online IT programmers. However, it can prove to be challenging because as more and more individuals seek opportunities to earn online, the competition also becomes tougher.

You will need to stand out amongst the crowd, and your resume needs to catch the eye of hiring managers who receive a hundred, if not thousands, of applications every day. Indeed, getting hired for an online job these days is pretty much similar to your experience of applying for a regular office position – tough.

So, how do you stand out in the sea of online applicants? This is what we’ll talk about in this chapter. We’ll share pointers and guidelines on how you can “market” yourself as a data entry professional, boost your resume and land that coveted data entry assignment.
Understanding Online Job Hunting

2009 stats revealed that the Internet economy has created 1.2 million jobs, followed by Internet service providers that employed about 181,000 workers. In close ranks are content-related employment at 60,000 and software service at 31,500. Indeed, online technology has opened avenues for many companies to open their doors to remote, virtual, work-from-home professionals, and for these individuals to get gainful employment from their skills.

However, it is a known fact that while employment is fast and opportunities are vast, many of these online jobs are part-time ventures. This is good on one part as this means that the frequency of posting jobs is higher as companies open positions on a per project basis. This means that you can work on one project for one client for a couple of months, and find another new project with another client the next time around.

On the other hand, it is a challenge both for you, the applicant, and the hiring managers. With the boom of online ventures and the move of young professionals from regular 9-to-5 office jobs to virtual, online ventures, you have more competition. Similarly, where before a hiring manager only had to field a hundred online applications, now, a single job ad can have thousands of applicants. It doesn’t help that many of these jobs can easily be awarded to individuals living overseas/abroad. After all, technology makes it possible even for these individuals to deliver. This only means even more competition since there are other more talented and more experienced people who also want the job.

The big challenge now for many online job-seekers is to STAND OUT in the sea of applicants. How to do this? The first and most strategic place to start is your resume and online profile. Your resume or online profile is your ticket to the door, so to say. You will only be granted entry, in this case, have a chance to be interviewed for the position, only if the hiring managers find something note-worthy or striking in your resume. If your resume or online profile is as dull and uninteresting as the wallpaper on the wall, you can say goodbye to your chances of being considered for the job.
What Hiring Managers Look For In A Resume

In another section, we’ll talk in more detail about the key elements that your resume and online profile should have to gain traction and stand out amongst 50, 500, or 5,000 other applications. First, let’s talk about the characteristics of a winning resume and online profile. How should your profile stand out? Read on.

**Professionally formatted.** Emily Bennington, co-author of the book, “Effective Immediately: How to Fit In, Stand Out, and Move Up at Your First Real Job” explained that some resumes catch her eye because of their beautiful formatting. It is true that content matters, but typically, it’s the packaging that gets something noticed first. Hiring managers won’t be able to pick out which resume or online profile has the best content at first glance, but a professionally designed and formatted resume is always easy to spot. Package your resume with the same professionalism you would like to be associated with you.

One simple rule is to make sure not to include important information in headers, footers, side margins, or borders. Sometimes, these spaces are cut off when the document is saved in a different format or printed, cutting off the text as well.

**Concise but exciting language.** The old rule about 1-2 page resumes still stand. If you can, include only relevant and associated work experience. Instead of adding unrelated experience, work on expanding the description of your relevant work experiences instead. Even if it’s online, hiring managers do not have the time to scroll through an extensive list of unrelated details on your resume.

A good tip to keep your resume concise is to omit unnecessary articles in your content. Make it scannable by listing items, such as work descriptions, in bullets instead of paragraphs so that they’re also easier to read.

It’s also added bonus points if you can show the company that you know their language. For example, if your client uses “content specialist”, turn your “content writer” experience into “content manager/specialist” instead. Use strong verbs in your work description, writing, for example, “designed product advertisements” instead of “in-charge of product advertisements.”
Keep it error-free. Scan and proofread your resume and online profile a number of times before posting or publishing it online. If you can, have someone take a look and review your resume. A fresh set of eyes can give you a new perspective in terms of how your resume looks from the eyes of an unbiased reader. For data entry professionals especially when knowledge of English is important, make sure that you have the punctuations in the right places or that words are not misspelled. This is a simple reflection of one’s competence.

Make your resume and online profile easily available and accessible. If you can, save your resume in PDF format, or at the very least, in standard .doc form. Some computers may be unable to open or access .docx files. Saving it in PDF format also ensures that you save the original formatting, so that when it is opened in another computer, there are no unexpected changes in font style, spacing or margins.

Make everything consistent. Social media is a powerful tool to use if you’re looking for a job online, and you can use social media sites to boost your online presence and profile. Set up a profile on LinkedIn that contains content that is consistent with your online resume. A personal site that contains your portfolio or links to your work is also a helpful resource for hiring managers who would like to see the kind of work you’ve done before. If you’re using these platforms to gain better traction for your profile, make sure that you have the same information contained in your online resume. Package them in such a way that you also have a uniform look – same color theme, same professional-looking photo, same headers, etc. This is what we call branding.

Your Resume Essentials

In this fast-paced age of technology, boring old CVs just don’t cut it anymore. Your online resume should pack both the right content and perfect punch to get the attention of hiring managers. However, there’s only so much information you can share that the HR staff would find interesting and relevant for the position.

How do you cut out the clutter and unnecessary bits in your resume while still keeping it professional, striking, and worth reading? Focus on the essential parts of your resume. We’ve listed five important parts of your profile that you MUST pay attention to. These are the first things all hiring managers look at, and therefore your non-negotiables.
Title

The title tells hiring managers who you are as a professional and what you can do. It’s your attention-grabber, the first decision point for many hiring managers whether to continue reading your profile or not. A title tells hiring managers what they can expect from you as a professional, so it has to be specific and related to your capabilities and relevant to the job you’re applying for.

Here are some tips on how you write your titles:

- Keep it short, preferably a phrase or a string of words. You need not have a full sentence to communicate what you do.
- Include specific or notable skills, key values or relevant industries you’ve worked in before, for example, “Bi-lingual data encoder” or “Experienced medical transcriptionist.”
- Re-word your job title to match the job position you’re applying for or the client’s/company’s expectations.
- Include keywords in your job title. Aside from catching the attention of hiring managers, your job title also makes your profile searchable in other online sites. Include keywords in your title that are commonly used by the industry so that your profile will also come up in searches.
- You need not limit your job title to a single position or work. You can use symbols to set off multiple relevant job titles like this one: “Experienced medical transcriptionist | Top-notch data entry specialist.”

Descriptive Overview

Gone are the days of the job objective; hiring managers prefer to read the descriptive overview instead. Resume expert Lauren Milligan explains that the resume objective is nothing but a redundant statement. After all, it is every applicant’s objective to land the job and be an asset to the company. What is more relevant and preferred is a descriptive summary or career overview that provides hiring managers a better idea of what the candidate can bring to the table and what sets him/her apart from other candidates.

Descriptive overviews are also more beneficial for those who have had considerable work experience (not fresh graduates) and those who have worked in diverse industries or fields. This is a perfect opportunity for you to highlight your versatility and experience, emphasizing the things you can do and the expertise you’ve developed, and counter the impression of you hopping from one job to another.
The overview tells what you’re good at, which areas or fields you excel in, and how and in what ways can you be a valuable asset to the company (including how you can address their problems and concerns based on your career record or work experience). How can your services help the client? This is one of the things that you can include in the descriptive overview.

Remember these pointers in drafting your descriptive overview or career summary:

- Do not use first-person pronouns; use third person if possible, or omit pronouns all together.
- Keep it short. Like an elevator pitch, the overview should be about 3-4 lines of text only. Using bullets is also a good alternative. Keep your career statement to four – six bullet points with two – three focused sentences.
- Before writing, look at what the client or position is looking for. From here, highlight your three to four top selling points. Then, identify career highlights and experience that will be useful to the client or position you are applying for. Finally, tell them how both the company and your career goals can benefit from each other.

Work History And Feedback/Ratings

Once you’ve grabbed the attention of the hiring manager with your job title, the final decision point is the work history and feedback. For some managers, a couple of long-term, stable work experiences are a mark of a reliable, committed professional, while short-term (3-6 months only) engagements can be a turn-off. Depending on the values of the client, they may interpret your work history differently. What is important then is to highlight how your work experience has shaped and contributed to your skills and capacities and your being the right person for the job.
A few key reminders:

If you have long-term work experience, include the dates to reflect your commitment and motivation to a job.

If not, focus on building up the key responsibilities and duties you performed and most of all, your major job accomplishments.

You don’t need to put all your work experiences, especially those not related to the job or industry. Include only those that are relevant to the position, the company, the industry, or only if a particular work experience yielded an accomplishment that may be useful to the company in the future. Another way to cut down on your work experience is to focus only on the last 15 years of your career. Anything older than 15 years may be downplayed or omitted.

Make your work history readable by using both paragraphs and bullets. Use a brief paragraph to narrate the job responsibilities, and then emphasize your impact, contributions and accomplishments in bullet form.

Avoid dull words like “responsible for” or “duties include.” Instead, use active words like “lead” or “facilitated.”

Be honest. Resist the temptation of embellishing your work history by tweaking your employment dates just to show how committed an employee you are, adjusting your work responsibilities or claiming a contribution or accomplishment that you didn’t do. Hiring managers would eventually find out they’re a lie.

If you have a LinkedIn account or maintain an online profile on online job sites, feedback come in the form of recommendations from previous employers or bosses. They can also be reviews from former clients you’ve worked with. Modern CVs and resumes omit the References section, and hiring managers prefer reading recommendations and reviews from previous employers to get an idea of how you are as a professional. Aim to have three to five recommendations or ratings on your profile.

**Portfolio**

A portfolio is particularly beneficial for those working on output-oriented and creative projects, such as content writing, graphic design, website programming, etc. If your work history lists the tasks and specifications of the job that you did, a portfolio allows you to display the exact output you delivered.
Hiring managers can check your portfolio to see the quality of work you’ve done, if you’ve had experience working on a project similar to the one they have in mind, and whether your kind of work is the one they’re looking for.

Remember these pointers in creating a portfolio of your work:

- **Set up your portfolio on a site or platform that is easily accessible.** A blog or website is often a popular choice for showcasing work. You can look into sites that offer free website templates that feature drag-and-drop formats, photo uploads, and optimized linking.

- **If you don’t have enough work to put in your portfolio, include in your resume links to your work that hiring managers can check.** This is also used by graphic and website designers and content writers whose works are often commissioned by companies.

- **If you’re a ghostwriter, it is recommended to include only work where you were credited as author, writer or contributor.** You can also include a link to the company’s website where you have worked as a content writer.

- **Brand your portfolio.** The portfolio is an accompanying support to your resume and should therefore be packaged the same way as your online profile and resume. Ensure consistency in the use of visual and design elements, but take care not to sacrifice content.

**Qualifications/Certifications/Test results**

It is recommended to sequence the contents of your resume following the most important items hiring managers look for. This means, job title, overview, work experience, and educational background/certifications/tests. Sequencing is advantageous if you’ve had work experience before since the objective is to showcase your skills, expertise and experience as a professional.

However, this can be disadvantageous for fresh graduates who do not have any prior work experience. In this case, it is best to highlight your educational training/qualification as well as certifications obtained or exam results passed.
In fact, this section is equally important because some employers would like to know if you have the credentials, training and the eligibility to perform a particular task. If you’re a graphic designer, include any certification from an advanced training course you’ve attended. For computer and software programmers, include national certifications, trainings and workshops you’ve attended, as well as test results of programming tests and accreditation you’ve taken. If you’re looking for a data entry job, you can include here any secretarial or clerical training or short course you’ve taken as well as results of your typing test or proficiency use of a particular computer program or software.

While these certifications and tests scores are not the primary considerations for landing the job, these are also reflections of your initiative, willingness to learn and improve yourself, and your discipline as a professional. These are things that some hiring managers look for in applicants.

What tweaks can you do to boost this section of your profile? Here are some tips:

- Dates are optional unless to show the validity of a particular certification. For your educational background, you may opt to just put the month and year for the start and completion dates of your education.

- If you ranked well in a board exam, include your ranking vis-à-vis the number of examinees (i.e., Rank 65 out of 500 examinees). This is an added boost to your profile, showing your client your relative skill and competency.

- Include also major and/or relevant awards received in your education and training.

**Reasonable Rates**

Freelancing is a tricky venture. One of the common dilemmas of freelancers is that, because they are often considered as “semi-professionals”, rates usually are at a minimum. It has become an increasing challenge for many freelancers to establish themselves as “professionals” and therefore command a reasonable price for their work.

One way to do this is to include your rate for a project. Don’t hesitate to put a rate that is commensurate to the effort that a particular work requires. However, make sure that it is reasonable, one acceptable in the industry and matches your skills, expertise, and experience as a professional. It is acceptable to put a relatively high rate if you can prove that your work is top-notch and of high quality, otherwise charging too high can turn off clients.
Check other professionals’ rates or base from payment in previous projects and work engagements. Putting your rate will help hiring managers determine whether they can afford you for the kind of project they have in mind.

Other Tips In Selling Yourself As An Online Professional

Delete the clutter. Avoid repetitive information. If you have worked as a content writer for three different companies and performed more or less the same responsibilities, list them as job position rather than as separate assignments or work experience.

Use one font and distinguish headings, sub-headings and the main text with the use of italics, boldface, spacing, and other formatting attributes.

Update your resume and online profile every year or every time you finish a project or assignment. Make it your goal to have at least six major work accomplishments for the year so you have a rich and dynamic resume. It will also show that you’re a productive employee/professional.

Actively network and seek out recommendations. Clients will never hesitate to say a few kind words about you as long as you do an excellent job. Aim to get at least 2-3 new recommendations from your clients. Once you’ve turned over your work, thank them for the opportunity, and request if they can give you a recommendation or a brief review on your online profile. Reciprocate also by giving your own rating of the company or client.

Have long-term plans in mind. During interviews hiring managers would like to know your plans for self-improvement, for building your name and reputation in the industry, and other career plans. It pays to have an idea of where you want to go in the long-term as an online professional. Plans for taking short courses, attending advanced trainings, or undertaking further studies are added points.

Keep your social media presence “clean.” Hiring managers use online platforms to get to know job applicants, and by this we mean not just your LinkedIn profile, but also your social media accounts, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Unless your profiles are set to Private, hiring managers can easily read the content you share on these sites.
A single rant or complaint about a project or client can make or break your chances. Companies do not want to hire workers who will bad-mouth them in public.

If you’re a fresh graduate, highlight other information that companies may find useful or relevant. For example, you can list the relevant courses you took in school that may be handy for the position. Include a short course description (no more than two sentences) and major outputs, lessons or skills gained from that course. You can also include volunteer and internship experiences that are relevant to the job. Include the location, audience/company, and dates.

Find a photo that is professional-looking but also reflects your brand. Use it across all materials and platforms, from your LinkedIn profile to your social media accounts. Consistency is the key.

Marketing yourself as an online professional requires a touch of creativity and a dash of strategy. With more professionals shifting to online jobs, competition is tough and you need to stand out in a sea of equally talented, experienced professionals. As your ticket to the door, your resume should contain content that will interest at first glance hiring managers who field a hundred, sometimes thousand, resumes every day.
What makes freelancing an even trickier venture is that projects are usually part-time and short-term and the possibility of getting hired on another project hinges on your performance and the kind of work you delivered in previous assignments.

In fact, working as a freelancer or as an online professional is synonymous to being a businessman: To get more customers, you need to take care of your existing ones so that they will come back.

Indeed, most freelancers are successful in getting second, third or fourth projects with previous clients and employers. Others, however, are not. Given the competition, the strategy for success is clear: First, get your customers to come back, then, work on finding new ones.

This is what we’ll talk about in this chapter – how to keep your current clients and customers happy so that they will want to work again with you, and how you can capitalize on your customers and your work to get new clients and boost your position as an online professional.
Creating Your Customer Retention Strategy

A study by the Harvard Business School found that improving customer retention by even 5% can substantially improve profits by 25% to as high as 95%. Another report by Manta.com found that the income of most small businesses come from their repeat customers, that is, customers who come back and purchase a product or service. They also spend about 67% more than a new customer.

As freelancing is easily a business, we can use the same logic to explain why freelancers MUST have a customer retention strategy. Just as businesses deal with competition every day, freelancers also have to contend with the growing number of online professionals on the lookout for projects and clients.

Delivering high quality and top-notch service is integral of course, but having a well thought-out strategy on how you can keep your clients happy can contribute to a more successful “business” venture as an online professional.

Here are steps on how to build your customer retention strategy:

**Know what your customers need the most.** What are the things that any customer would like to get from a business? Top-notch service, quality, professional work, professionalism, excellent customer service. In fact, it was found that poor customer service is the top reason why more than 80% of US customers stop patronizing a business or brand.

Of course, customers and clients are happy if you can deliver what you promised you will deliver. However, you make them extra happy if you go the extra mile, such as thanking them for the opportunity to work with them, or asking for their feedback. This is why ratings and reviews are essential. By actively asking for feedback from your clients, you’ll have a clearer idea of how they see you and your work ethics, as well as what part of working with you they liked or valued.

**Work on improving your work based on customer feedback.** Getting feedback but not acting on them is a futile exercise. The next logical step once you’ve solicited feedback from your customers is to use the information to improve your work and your services as a freelancer.
So, if a common feedback from customers is that you have slow response time to emails, you might want to set up particular “office hours” when you spend an hour or two checking and responding your emails every day. You can set up an auto responder if you’re away, traveling, or do not have access to Internet/email for the moment.

**See what you can offer as a loyalty or rewards system (of sorts).** Albeit, this is something that is more applicable to regular businesses, it doesn’t mean that it’s not useful to you as you build your niche as an online professional. A loyalty or rewards program is like an incentive you offer to returning customers, such as discounts on their next purchase or freebies. Offer a similar “deal” with returning clients, such as a discounted rate or free editing services.

**Make your strategy personal.** Every client or customer wants to know that you see them as individuals in need of something, and not as companies that rake in profits from whatever it is you do for them. A research from the Peppers and Rogers Group showed that customers are usually turned off by indifferent or snobbish salespeople, and poor service.

Cultivate a personal relationship with your customers and clients so that they find it easier and enjoyable to work with you. Provide them updates with your work. Know them by their name.

### Five Concrete Ways To Retain Your Clients

Many freelancers make the mistake of thinking that once payment has been received or work has been submitted, the freelancer-client relationship has ended. The simple truth is that instead of constantly being on the prowl for new clients, you could just try to keep the ones you already have. Recurring clients are the gold mine every freelancer yearns for.

Here are five specific ways you can keep your customers happy and get them to come back:

**Communication**

In business, one of the things that customers value is the readiness of the crew to provide help and assistance. Even in companies and regular office jobs, a good mark of one’s credibility and reliability is speedy and professional communication. Clients and customers would like to know that you are ready and available when they need you.
How do you improve your communication experience with your clients? Here are a few tips:

At the very onset, make it easy to get in touch with you. Have a professional, easy-to-remember email address. Avoid an email address with strings of numbers and symbols that make it difficult to remember. If you’re providing multiple email addresses, make sure that you regularly check these email accounts to ensure that you don’t miss any email from them. If you’re providing mobile and phone numbers, make sure that these are active phone lines that you use.

Clients typically expect a fast response time, no longer than a day so it’s important that you can reply to them the soonest time possible. It is even more imperative given the expectation that as an online professional, you are connected and reachable at all times.

Explore ways by which you can make communication easier between you and your clients. Depending on the client and the project you’re working on, you may want to consider using voice or video calls to connect with them. These are easier modes of communication especially if you need to make an update or perform a demo. In many cases, a voice call is also much easier than email because you can talk to your client in real-time and concerns can be discussed in one phone call session, while the back and forth exchange of emails can be quite taxing and time-consuming for both you and your client. However, in deciding on the mode of communication, it is still best to let the client decide.

If you have to use email, make it less but detailed. Drop all the updates and issues you can in a single email. Format it using bullets and/or numbers so that it is scannable, itemizing each concern and update. It will also be easier for your client to address each concern if the contents are properly formatted.

Agree at the very start on schedules for calls and updates. It’s recommended that you and your clients come to an agreement about how often are updates needed, when they should be sent (when they expect updates to be sent), as well as convenient times and dates for calls or conferences. You need this especially if you’re working on a relatively big project that will span a couple of months at least. This is part of setting work-business expectations, and will make it easier for you as well to schedule your work time, particularly if you’re working on multiple projects or assignments.
Know the person to contact. Big projects typically require working and communicating with certain team members or the team leader. In such instances, ensure that at the start of the project, you know the key person to contact for any concerns you might have while working on the project. It is always difficult talking with different individuals on a project and can be tricky when it comes to decision-making, so you should know who to talk with for major issues and concerns regarding the project.

Feedback

Feedback is a critical part of your working relationship with your clients. This does not just refer to feedback given after the work, but most importantly, feedback while the work is ongoing. Providing your clients with update on your work can:

Show them that you’re serious about the job. Taking the time to write a weekly update of your work will show that you are as concerned as your clients when it comes to the progress of the work.

Assure them that you are working on the task. Clients would like to know that they are paying for quality work. One of the common pitfalls of freelancers is delaying working on an assignment, cramming only when the deadline is near and discovering issues and questions that should have been answered or resolved at the start of the project. As a result, submission is delayed or work is sub-standard because it was rushed. Providing updates to your clients weekly will bring out issues that are critical to the completion of the project, giving you enough time to work on them before the deadline.

Take the time to educate your clients. True, most clients have an idea of the kind of work they want done and how they want it done based on their system. However, as a professional and an expert, your role is not just to deliver the output but also use your expertise to provide an optimized solution for your clients. Some clients may only have a vague idea of how the finished product is expected to look like, but do not have an idea of the process entailed to get it done.

Go the extra mile by letting your client know the work involved – the steps to go through to accomplish the task. If they’re not up to date with the latest trends or technology, offer or advise on what might be a better solution or option. Your clients will appreciate this form of feedback, showing that you are not just concerned about delivering the product but also in helping the company. They will value you not just for the work you do, but also for your knowledge and expertise, something that can go a long way to cementing your reputation as an online professional.
Similarly, asking for feedback after the work has been delivered is important. Get your client’s thoughts on the following:

Have you met their expectations or exceeded their standards? What aspects of working with you should you improve on?

What did they like best about working with you, and what did they like the least?

How do you fare in comparison with the competition?

Would they recommend you to others seeking for the same services?

**Exceeding Expectations**

Like any kind of relationship, the one you have with your clients begins with interest, impressions and expectations. You project a positive, professional and interesting profile and they respond with interest. The first “meet up” via email or a Skype call transforms the interest into a positive impression, hence, leading them to award you the project. Finally, continued engagement between you and your client leads to expectations. They are convinced that you have the capabilities to work on and complete the project. You have secured their trust, and the client has set expectations on what you can do based on the positive impression you’ve created.

Some clients are easy to please, the just-deliver-the-work-when-we-need-it type. Some don’t care about the extra, little touches you add to the relationship. But more often than not, there are clients who, even if they may start with simple expectations, notice the little things you bring into the relationship. This is where the importance of exceeding expectations come in. By going the extra mile or delivering more than what is expected, you can show your clients that the project is more than just another assignment or job for you, that you are truly sincere in helping companies and clients.

No client would like to hire a mediocre worker, so exceeding expectations in the work you do and how you do it also reflects your brand of professionalism. Clients are assured that they get their money’s worth – with some extra even!
Here are some ways you can go the extra mile, exceed expectations and make your customers extra happy:

**First, do not make any promises that you cannot meet.** If you promised extraordinary, top-notch work, then make sure that you deliver extraordinary, top-notch work according to the standards of your client. It is easier always to begin by assuring your clients that you will deliver them work that they are asking for or in some cases, under-promising, and then just working on exceeding initial expectations.

**Submit work early as much as possible.** This is one of the easiest ways to exceed client expectation.

**Accommodate them when they ask for short-notice meetings or last-minute revisions or requirements.** Unless these are major tasks that have a significant bearing on your rate, you can always offer to work on a few last-minute revisions or edits for free.

**Be willing to negotiate.** If the amount is not substantial, agree to lowering the rate to a couple of dollars or cents especially if you’re working with returning clients. Consider this an incentive or customer reward.

**Do not rush interactions with your clients.** No one wants to be rushed or ignored, especially if it is part of what they’re paying for. This is also your way of providing effective, professional and courteous communication with your clients.

**Increasing Skill Set**

Consider the example of a flower shop that not only sells you flowers, but also offers free flower arrangement, delivery and courier service, and flower arrangements for events. They offer a versatile business, a kind of one-stop shop for all flower-related needs of their customers.

You can do the same as an online professional by offering related and complementary services that you can offer to your clients. Clients who have had experience working with someone who does a variety of things and delivers quality work will consider working with that person again because it lessens the effort in hiring another individual to work on another aspect of the project. In the long run, they get a better deal.
This is why it’s important that you don’t limit yourself to your existing skill set. Build your expertise by learning new things that you can add to the range of services you offer as an online professional. As a data encoder, you may want to get training or learn about copy-editing. If you’re a graphic designer, you can learn website design so that you can offer this as a complementary service. The key is to build and develop skills that are complementary that you can offer as part of a packaged service, which clients and companies may find useful or advantageous when they hire your services.

With a customized package of services, you can help companies save on administrative and transaction costs as they will only be working with just one individual – you. Study the industry and see the range of skills that are often required or needed by clients and customers. In data entry, for example, relevant associated skills are typing and encoding, content writing, copyediting, and transcription. You can also get a good idea from projects and assignments you’ve done with previous clients.

**Developing A Real Business Strategy**

Again, remember that being a freelancer or online professional is essentially being a businessman. You have to deal with competition. You need to deliver quality, excellent work so that you keep your clients happy and get them to come back and hire your services.

A smart businessman knows that customer retention is a more efficient strategy of building the business than chasing new clients or customers, although you should also remain equally active on this one as well. Remember these five important aspects of a business strategy: marketing, sales, administration, finances, and customer relationship.
As a freelancer and online worker, you need to utilize and maximize the most effective forms and ways of marketing that will enhance your presence and gain traction for your brand as a professional (marketing). Build a sales strategy that makes working with you easy. At the same time, pay attention to the financial and administrative side of the business, such as how you can make accessing your business more convenient and easier for your clients. Finally, do not neglect customer relationship. Treat clients with professionalism, and show that you are committed and sincere in delivering not just the output, but also in helping them with their problems. Going the few extra miles can go a long way.

Other Tips On How To Keep Your Clients Happy

**Do not accept work more than you can handle.** Because of the increasing competition, freelancers tend to accept project after project, forgetting to check their schedules and work commitments. When you have too much on your plate and you find yourself juggling too many things on a given time, quality suffers. As a result, you may end up delivering less than excellent work to your clients. Remember not to take on more than what you can handle. It is always worth turning down a few projects to focus on existing ones so that you can deliver excellent output. This always translates to happier customers who may come back for your services.

**Don’t accept work that you know you can’t do justice.** Do not be a hoarder. It is true that because freelancers are often hard-pressed when it comes to landing projects, turning down a job is almost always synonymous to passing up opportunity. However, know whether you are indeed the right person for the job. If you know that you can’t do the work justice and will only end up disappointing the client, it’s best to turn it down.

**Apologize for any mistakes and offer to correct them.** Do not be an arrogant freelancer who refuses to apologize for a mistake in encoding, a delayed submission, or an incorrect transcription. Own up to any shortcomings and offer to correct them at no additional costs.

They say that the best clients are always the returning ones. You can save a lot of hassle in building the groundwork of a relationship because you’ve already worked with them before. They know how you work, your terms, the quality of work you offer, and if they’re especially satisfied and happy with your work, they are more than willing to pay your rate without further negotiations. More importantly, they can help open your business to other potential clients. Happy and loyal customers are more than willing to recommend you to others in the industry that are looking for the kind of services that you are offering.
RAISING RATES

Some say that with online jobs, budget can be negligible. Certainly, if it’s your first foray in freelancing and still building your client base, you may be forced to accept work that does not pay as lucratively as you would like to. In some cases, you might even need to do some gigs for free or accept work at discounted rates just so you can earn that first review from a client.

The issue of rates in freelancing is a highly debatable topic, with some saying that freelancers should insist on being paid for the work they are delivering, while others maintain that some leeway may be allowed when clients ask for a discounted or lower rate. How do you navigate this minefield? Should you negotiate? And, more importantly, when do you increase your rate? These are some of the questions we’ll answer in this chapter!

Why Rates Are Important

First, it’s important that you understand the value of your rates as a freelancer. By now you already know that the life of a freelancer is different from that of a regular office employee. As a freelancer, you lose out on benefits like bonuses, insurance, cash gifts, commissions and other perks that a regular employee receives.
Therefore, you pay for your own insurance, and your earnings are spent for bills, as well as in maintaining your “business” as an online professional (i.e., monthly Internet subscription, etc.). A low rate would definitely mean reduced or lower earnings, even if you have a huge client base.

Your professional rate is therefore an important factor that determines your earnings per project. How else do rates reflect your worth as an online professional?

**Rates are a reflection of the quality of work that you offer.** There is a traditional, popular belief that expensive things equate to high or good quality, hence the fascination with branded items. Customers believe that in some cases, it is worth paying for a considerable amount of money if the product speaks of durability and great workmanship or a service promises reliability and excellent customer care.

The same thing applies to professional fees. Bosses get paid a higher salary because they have higher premium – more experience, better training and education, more skills that they can bring to the job. So, setting a high professional rate as a professional is synonymous to saying to your clients that they are paying for the quality work of a professional, that they are getting their money’s worth. Of course, it’s all good only if you can deliver on this promise.

**Rates are a mark of professionalism.** In traditional societies, white-collar jobs that are deemed “professional” often command higher pay compared to blue-collar jobs. This is why lawyers, doctors, teachers, etc are paid higher than cashiers, baggage boys, waiters and waitresses.

A popular dilemma with freelancing is that many freelancers are not seen as professionals (if you can do something even without prior experience or proper and rigorous training, your worth as a worker is diminished), and therefore clients and customers believe that it is acceptable to pay reduced rates to these “semi-professionals.” As an online professional, you need to establish yourself as an expert, and part of this is charging rates that are commensurate to the skills and experience you possess as a freelancer, the kind and quality of work that you do, and your expertise.

**Rates are practical ways to earn a living.** One of the reasons you’re probably working an online job is because pay as a regular employee is lower than what you can possibly get from being an online tutor, for example. So, if you want to successfully earn a living as an online professional, you need to set reasonable rates that will pay the bills and help you tuck in some extra for savings as well.
Some freelancers can afford to set lower rates because they’re working regular, full-time office jobs. However, if you’re a full-time online professional, your rate should be higher or equal to the pay you would otherwise get if you were a regular employee.

How To Determine Your Freelancing Rate

Before we delve into the crucial issue of when and how to raise your rates, let’s first talk about how you should set your freelancing rate in the first place. While there are standards and average rates for different types of online jobs, the reality is that the range is wide and very variable. In some instances, companies and clients themselves, such as content mills, set the rates and these are non-negotiables. Freelancers are therefore left to choose whether to accept the rate or not.

In setting your professional freelancing rate, the rule of thumb is to base it on three factors: your budget, your proficiency and competence for the work, and the time you have on your hands to work on the project. Laura Shin, in an article in the Forbes, explained the following key steps in determining and setting your freelancer rate.

**Consider your bare-bones budget and desired budget.** Draw up two budgets, one where you plot your bare-bones expenditures in worst case scenarios, and the other, a desired budget where you also provide for other items like an emergency fund, a travel fund, retirement, etc. These two budgets will show you how much you would be needing on a monthly basis if you’re considering only the most basic of necessities to survive, and how much money you need to earn/save if you want to live comfortably.

**Compare with your actual earnings based on your current rate.** Using these two budgets, compare your actual monthly earnings. You may realize that, with your bare-bones budget, your earnings are just enough, but not if compared with your desired budget. It may also even be possible that your monthly earnings are not even enough if you compare it with your bare-bones budget.

If you’re faced with a deficit, you will need to find other ways to get extra funds. These could include reducing further your bare-bones budget, finding other sources of income, such as taking in a flatmate to help you defray the cost of housing, for example, or taking out a loan, which is the least advised recourse.
Create a business plan. Shin advises setting professional and financial goals for the year. This means identifying how you want to approach your freelancing gigs based on strategic and purposeful plans. For example, you might want set a goal of increasing by 10% your freelancing earnings. Actionable plans for this goal may include taking in two new clients and increasing your rate by 2% with one or two clients, while keeping the same rate for others.

Project your earnings and figure in overhead. Use the strategies you’ve identified in your business to project how much you will likely be earning in a year if you cut down on expenses, get new clients, or increase your professional rate for one or two of your clients. Include in your yearly projection the opportunity cost (how much you will be losing) for those times you aren’t productive or not working (vacation leave, holidays, time spent running the business, etc.).

Compare your projected earnings with your bare-bones and desired budgets. From here, develop monthly and weekly goals where you set how much you should be earning. For example, with a projected annual earning of $120,000, you will need to earn $10,000 every month and $2,500 every week. Your bare-bones budget is $5,000 monthly and your desired budget is $9,000, giving you an allowance of $1,000 using your annual projected earnings.

Set your floor and goal. Now, with a goal of earning $2,500 every week, you now need to set your hourly rate. If you decided to go into freelancing to give yourself ample time to pursue other projects and not be tied down to an 8-hour job, then your objective might be to devote only five hours of the day working. With a $2,500 goal every week, this means that you will need to earn roughly about $83.33 every hour for six days of the week to achieve your weekly earnings goal. You can then use this amount to base your hourly rate on. You may choose to use this as your target or maximum hourly rate but set $50 as your minimum, in which case, you might need to seek out additional projects to balance the projects that pay only your minimum rate.

Given that productivity levels vary and some types of projects and tasks can be more time-consuming, you’ll also realize that you’ll be making less money if you stick only to an hourly rate. In this case, you might want to set your rate based on how long it will take you to work on and complete a project.
Raising Your Rates: What You Should Know

As mentioned, low rates are acceptable when you’re only just a beginner. But how about if you’ve been in the business for quite a time now, worked on enough projects and gained enough experience?

Many times, freelancers feel that they’re undercharging their clients despite their skills and the experience they’ve gained. Often times, the hesitation to increase rates come from the fear that by doing so will result in a drop in clients as they seek for cheaper, more affordable professionals. However, as explained earlier, freelancing is essentially a business, and you deserve to command a price commensurate to the quality of work that you can deliver.

The Benefits Of An Increased Professional Rate

For starters, here are a few reasons why increasing your rates can prove to be beneficial to your business as a freelancer and to you as a professional:

**Raising rates can help you weed out the cheapskates.** It is true that there are clients who are out to take advantage of freelancers just because they believe these people will accept any and all job offered to them. One of these are the cheapskates who will pay for your services for very low rates simply because they believe you’re willing to accept every project that comes your way even if the pay is low.

However, it is always so much more fulfilling and rewarding, not to mention financially smart for business, to work for someone who recognizes and appreciates the value you’re providing as a professional, and not because you cost less than the others!

**Price is subjective and reasonably high rates indicate quality work and good service.** No matter what, the traditional, popular belief that quality work is always worth the extra penny remains and clients know this. Clients are willing to pay the extra penny if it means they’ll be getting their money’s worth.

**You can do less work and still earn more.** You can put in more time and effort into your projects. With a higher rate, you can afford to take in fewer projects, allowing you to devote more time on your assignments and ensure that you deliver quality, top-notch work. The mistake of most freelancers is taking on too many projects because of the desire to earn more. The result is that they end up spreading themselves too thinly, leading to sub-standard outputs.
Increasing your rates keeps you in the competitive market. Notice how, every now and then, you see the price of a cup of coffee in your favorite neighborhood coffee shop increase by a penny or two every year or so? This is, in part, due to inflation, but another reason is also to ensure that your favorite coffee shop stays competitive in the local market.

Because of inflation, prices of commodities and services increase every year or so. If you’ve stuck to your professional rate five years ago and then suddenly jack up the price of your services to catch up to the market, your clients will notice the big jump and this will make them less willing to work with you again. Hence, it is smarter to regularly increase your rate by a dollar or two every year, an amount that is hardly noticeable to clients, as compared to a sudden 50 - 70% jump.

Raising your rates can help you better rethink your business plan. As mentioned, your rates are a reflection of the kind of professional you are and how you’re treating your business. Raising your rates will help you review your business strategy. Are you marketing yourself properly? Are you being paid commensurate to the quality of service that you offer? What kind of clientele do you want to build?

So now you ask, “Why should you raise your freelancing rate?” Increase your rate ONLY if you are providing increased value to your clients. This means that you are increasing your rate because you are providing higher quality work as a result of the following:

- Having gained enough experience from working with various clients on a wide-range of projects that you can apply in future projects.
- Having learned new skills from advanced training and courses you took or certifications and tests undertaken.
- Better customer service, which means, more time spent on your clients and better focus on the projects you accept.
- Having gained the ability to provide higher quality for the same services that you’ve been offering as a result of improved experience or new skills.
- Offering new, complimentary services. If you’ve started to offer copy-editing to your range of data entry services, you can easily adjust your professional rate to cover this added complementary service, offering your clients the opportunity to hire you to work on two services at a cheaper rate for them in the long run.
How To Raise Your Rates

Now, let’s talk about the most important question of all: How do you actually raise your rate? It is easy to justify the increase in your freelancing rate, but how exactly do you do this? How do you increase your rate to truly get what you deserve without chasing your clients (current and prospective alike) away? Personal finance entrepreneur Ramit Sethi lists the following pointers for increasing your rates. Read on!

**Ask your client directly how you can improve your work with them.** As we’ve mentioned, clients are willing to pay extra if they’re happy and more than satisfied with your work. So to help you decide whether to make that big jump, ask your clients for feedback on how it has been working with you and what things you can do differently to improve the services you provide. This will give you an idea whether your clients think an increase in your rate is worth their money.

**Start off a separate discussion by reminding them of the good and tough times you’ve helped them through.** Ease them into the shift by reminding them of the projects you’ve worked on together, the major outputs you’ve delivered for the company, the issues you’ve helped them resolved, and the times you’ve risen to last-minute challenges.

**Repeat what you know they want you to keep doing, and offer to do it for free.** This is where the first step comes in. Once you get an idea of the kind of work that your clients are hoping for, such as additional services they hope you can offer, or things that they said they want you to keep doing, then it’s time to tell them that you’re offering all these new services and more --- for free!
For example, if clients say that they’re hoping you can also do copy-editing to save them from hiring a separate copy-editor, then tell them that you’re offering copy-editing services as part of a complementary service. Hook them first with what they’re getting in a new deal before letting them know that you’re adjusting your rates.

**Tell them you’re becoming selective with your clients.** This is where you can let it slip that you’re increasing your rate. Begin by letting them know that as you seek to work on more focused projects, you also want to be more selective with your clients, and that you’re particularly eager to continue working them.

As a result, you’re increasing your rate so you can provide more focus and attention to your valued clientele. This is part of what we call building a select, privileged circle of clients where you reinforce your worth as a professional and their value as your customers.

**Offer to refer them to someone else.** Now, after all these pitches, it’s always possible that they will still refuse to work with you. Don’t be disheartened, and remember to stay professional. A way to do this is to kindly and willingly offer to connect them with someone who can provide the services they’re looking for.

**At an appropriate time, tell them what your competitors are charging.** Chances are, some clients will want to know more about why you’re increasing your rates, and if the opportunity presents itself, then justify your increase by explaining to them how much the competition is charging. Clients will come to better understand how projects generally cost in the industry, and may even realize that you’re offering an even better and more affordable deal in the long-term compared to the competition. You just might be able to hook them back in!

**Try not to do this over email.** A phone conversation is best. Price discussions can make or break business deals. Break the news gently especially to your loyal, long-standing clients in a professional, personal manner. A phone call is preferred as this provides more opportunity for you to properly explain why you’re increasing your rates.

Data entry, while it may appear easy and simple, requires a certain level of skill and expertise. It is still work that needs to be paid the right amount given the effort entailed to complete the project. Do not sell yourself short. As long as you can deliver high quality work and better value to your clients, there’s nothing that should stop you from increasing your freelancing rates!
Chapter 8

TRANSCRIBING SUCCESS

One of the most important related skills in data entry is transcription. In fact, it goes hand in hand with typing: excellent typing skills means good transcription work. If you can develop your transcribing skills along with your typing proficiency, you can tap into multiple opportunities in the data entry field.

What is general transcribing? What are the things you need to build and develop your transcribing skills? And, how do you make a living from doing general transcription work? We’ll answer these questions – and more – in this chapter!

Understanding General Transcription

General transcription is a relatively easy skill to acquire, as long as you put in the effort. Like data entry, this is something you can work on from home, and time passes quickly when you transcribe because you’re listening to an audio material while paying attention to what you’re typing. You’ll hardly notice the time passing by.

In fact, general transcribing is simpler to do than medical transcription as it includes transcribing any form of recording – from legal briefs and documents, lectures and presentations, to conference proceedings and meetings, and interviews.
Like data entry, you can easily be hired as a transcriptionist even without prior work experience, unlike medical transcription where some level of training and experience is expected given the nature of information to be handled.

Here are some of the common forms of general transcription work you may be asked to do:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviews with musicians and actors</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-recordings of authors or personalities for autobiographies and memoirs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews of students for their research</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Counseling sessions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Presentations of speakers at international conferences</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Panels at conferences, including the question and answer</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion panels for market research of companies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Podcasts of personalities and talk show hosts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Telecasts and web seminars</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dictations of bosses during meetings</strong></td>
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**What You Need As A General Transcriptionist**

So what do you need if you wish to do general transcription work?

**Persistence.** Yes, transcription, like data entry, is a relatively simple and easy job. But like data entry, general transcription can also be physically and mentally exhausting. Imagine listening to hours’ worth of recordings for long periods of time every day, your mind trying to process both what you’re hearing and what you’re typing on the keyboard.
Aside from this, there are also other challenging aspects to transcription: understanding and trying to figure out the nuances of languages, making sense of unfamiliar words and jargon, trying to separate the sound of the speaker from the background noise, and keeping up with the speed and manner of speech of the speaker, and many more. These alone are enough to turn you off transcription work, get you frustrated and make you give up on it altogether. So if you want to make a decent career as a general transcriptionist, you need to have enough patience and persistence for this job and the challenges that come with it.

**Fast and accurate typing speed (60 wpm).** Transcription work, like data entry, requires handling huge volume of information that needs to be encoded in a given period of time. Again, like data entry work, you will need to type fast and with as much accuracy as possible in order to finish the work in due time. If you can increase your typing speed to 70 – 80 wpm, you will be able to finish projects faster and take on more new assignments.

**Listening skills.** Transcription requires multi-tasking in your part. You will need to have sharp ears that are attuned and trained to nuances of language and speech, such as the ability to differentiate the voices of multiple speakers, accents, stress and emphasis.

**Good grasp of grammar and spelling.** Audio materials are transformed into written text for a number of reasons: for documentation, for more in-depth review and analysis (as in the case of legal proceedings), for easy reference (such as conference proceedings and meetings), and for purposes of study (such as interviews). Whether it’s for education, business, or official purposes, the transcribed work needs to reflect excellent grammar and spelling.

Because it is unavoidable that parts of the recording might be unclear or that the audio material is not of high quality, then your job as the transcriber is to make sure that the transcribed document makes sense, reflects good grammatical structure, and that words are spelled properly and used in the right context. In fact, it would be an added bonus if you have some knowledge of and are familiar with the jargon of most fields requiring transcription work, such as law, finance, education, engineering, and medicine/health.

In some instances, you might need to do some additional research just to clarify a term, check the spelling, or ensure that a word is used properly. Adequate research skills will also come in handy.
**Good proofreading abilities.** Equally important is your editing skills. As the one transforming the audio material into written text, you should be able to easily spot grammar mistakes, and spelling and punctuation errors. Suffice to say that proofreading is part and parcel of your transcription responsibilities. It is not something that clients will hire another professional to do.

**Able to follow instructions.** Depending on the client, the kind of audio material you would have to work with, and the purpose or reason for which the transcription will be used, the kind of transcription output may vary. Clients may provide specific instructions on the format and lay-out of the transcription, as well as particular ways on how certain parts of the audio material should be transcribed (i.e., transcribing only main speaker, describing background noise and ambience, etc.). These are things that require patience from you as a transcriptionist and more importantly, your ability to follow instructions to the letter.

**Deadline-oriented.** More often the case, the reason why clients outsource transcription jobs is because they need it urgently and they do not have available staff who can work on it and deliver in due time, hence, they’re looking for someone who can work on the transcription job full-time.

Meeting deadlines is a crucial part of transcription job, one you need to learn to observe if you want to make your customers happy and satisfied with your work. This is also why fast and accurate typing skills are necessary. It goes without saying too that you should have enough discipline to stick to your working hours (a challenge to do sometimes if you’re working from home) and to work in the times you should be working.

Likewise, as with any online job, you will also need to invest in a couple of equipment and supplies for your home office. These are small investments that should not cost a huge sum of money, but can go a long way in making your typing and transcribing experience all the more effective.

**Transcription software such as Express Scribe.** One would wonder, in this age of technology, if there’s a computer program or software that can churn out the texts of audio recordings. The thing is, usual audio materials feature multiple speakers and not all of them have very good audio quality. There is also the issue of jargon, accents, and the versatility of the English language. These are things that limit a computer program’s ability to accurately and properly transcribe audio recordings, hence the need for human transcribers who can make sense of the audio material.
It is true though that there are transcription programs around! One such example is Express Scribe, an audio player software that works with most computer and laptop models to help in the transcription of audio recordings. Simply install the program into the computer, and you can use it (with a foot pedal or keyboard) for easier transcription. What you have to understand though is that these programs do NOT actually replace the transcriptionist; it is only used to help make general transcription easier and faster through features like hotkeys that allow the transcriber to control playback when transcribing.

Most of these transcription programs (you can also check out InqScribe and Dragon Speech recognition) often have free versions that contain basic features, but there is always the option to buy and upgrade to their professional version with more advanced features. Express Scribe, one of the most common transcription software around, is also relatively cheap, with the professional version costing only about $50 – 60.

**Headphones/earphones.** You can always transcribe using the normal speakers of your computer/laptop (some would prefer this in fact as the audio is clearer and louder) but for convenience, others prefer investing in a good pair of earphones or headphones that they can use when they want to work on their transcription job in public places, such as libraries and cafés. In instances where parts of the recording is inaudible or not clear, putting on headphones/earphones can help you listen to the recording more closely and make out the sound.

**Internet access.** A stable and reliable Internet connection is a basic requirement in any online or freelancing job, including general transcription. You will use this for communicating with your clients, securing assignments and projects, and submitting your work. In some instances, audio materials are uploaded and available online and you will need to be connected to access these recordings.

**Foot pedals.** Foot pedals work with transcription software and are designed to make transcription work easier and faster. Essentially, foot pedals work to help you better control playback of the audio material by allowing your feet to press on three controls for rewind, play/pause, and fast-forward. Since you use your feet to control the playback of the audio recording, your hands are free to type.

They’re a big help especially because shifting from typing on the keyboard to pressing the pause and stop buttons can take up considerable time during transcription work. With foot pedals, you can improve concentration and ensure that your hands focus only on the task of typing.
Foot pedals are a significant investment especially if you wish to improve your productivity as a general transcriptionist. The price of one ranges from $100 - $350, depending on the brand. These pedals may be installed in your computer/laptop and are also compatible with most transcription software.

This is not a requirement though, as you can still transcribe audio material even without a foot pedal, especially if you’re working only with short audio recordings. This is entirely optional, and in fact, it is good training to learn transcription manually first.

Handling General Transcription Work

Now we’ve come to one of the most important things you need to know about general transcription work: how to do general transcription work. Finding and looking for transcription work online is pretty simple and straightforward. You can easily find transcription job ads on the same sites where you can scour for data entry gigs and other online freelance ventures.

Again, while demand is high, these kinds of jobs are also just as prone to scams as the next online job. Cross-check to make sure that the company or client is legitimate. Read reviews and ratings from previous customers to ensure that the client or company actually pays for work delivered. Remember that like any online job, you do not need to pay for any registration or administrative fee, nor do you need to make any cash advance to access a supposedly special software.

Once you’ve landed a transcription job, the real challenge begins. Here are pointers and guidelines on how to handle a general transcription project:

**Listen to the file first.** It is tempting to want to start transcribing already. After all, your goal is to finish the job and submit it before the deadline. However, getting right down to the business of transcribing without listening to the audio can pose some problems.

If you don’t listen to the file first, you might realize that you’re transcribing the wrong material just when you’re halfway through (or you suddenly realize that you’re listening to the file indicated in the client’s brief). The audio material might contain a lot of inaudible parts, with strong and heavy accents, which you need to discuss to the client for further clarification and instructions.
It’s even possible that the audio recording is incomplete or that the client failed to submit the other parts of the recording.

Listening to the file – and reading the client brief that comes with the project – will give you a general idea of the kind of material you’re working with, the extent of work required, the level of difficulty in transcribing, and other issues that you might need to discuss first with the client before you get started. If the material is long or covers days’ worth of recording, you don’t need to listen to everything. You can opt to listen to parts of the recording at least, paying close attention to the beginning, middle, and ending parts of the audio. At the very least, this will give you an idea if you’re working with a complete material or not.

Discuss the issues with the client. It is paramount that when you discover issues with the audio material, you discuss them with the client before you start your work. Sometimes clients also tend to underestimate transcription jobs and it is only after you have listened to the file that the transcription work requires more effort than usual and the rate is not commensurate to the effort needed to complete the project. You can also discuss this with your client before starting on the transcription, as well as other issues such as deadlines. If there are any problems with the audio quality of the material (e.g. if it’s absolutely impossible to transcribe), you can ask them for another version.

Double check the brief for any specific instructions on how the transcribed document should be prepared. As we have mentioned earlier, depending on how the transcribed document is intended to be used, clients may have specific instructions for the look, lay-out and formatting of transcriptions. Other companies may even require the use of particular programs (i.e., MS Word, Notepad/Textpad, or other online document platforms) for typing the transcriptions. These are all contained in the brief so make sure that you read it before starting.

Have a strong sense of personal discipline. We cannot overemphasize this little fact. Bear in mind that transcription can be challenging work; it is repetitive, and physically and mentally exhausting as you try to listen repeatedly to people talking (sometimes figure out what they’re trying to say) while you type at the same time.

Sometimes, it is even more difficult to concentrate working on a general transcription job than on a regular data entry. With data entry, you will need only to read the words and type, but with transcription work, you will need to listen first and then type. These are some of the common reasons why, while transcription is easy, most transcriptionists give up, get tired easily or fail to keep to their working schedule.
Your home office is also important. It is even more important for you to have a conducive working environment that allows you to fully concentrate and focus both on what you’re hearing/listening to and what you’re typing on the screen.

It is easy to get tired and exhausted with transcription jobs, and without a strong sense of discipline, you may find yourself stressed and harassed as you cram to complete transcriptions in time for the deadline. On the other hand, also make sure that you have enough breaks and rest hours. Ideally, you should rest after every hour of transcribing. Get up, walk around, give your ears and fingers a break. Breaks will clear your mind and give you the needed boost and energy to come back to transcribing with a refreshed sense of hearing.

**Proofread your work always before submitting.** Again, part and parcel of transcription jobs are copy-editing and proofreading. The document you’re transcribing may be used for educational purposes, for case analysis, for documentation and other official purposes, and therefore should be a professionally done work. Check the draft for spelling mistakes, punctuation errors and incorrect grammatical usage.

**Additional Tips, Tricks And Reminders**

**Set up text expanders.** As a transcriptionist, it is highly likely that you will be using certain words more frequently in your transcriptions. A strategic way of making transcription work easier is to set up text expanders, or a dictionary of shortcuts of frequently used words and phrases. You can easily set this up in the transcription software you’re using or with MS Office’s Auto Correct/Auto Complete feature.

The text expanders function very much like auto-correct so that when you type the first four or five letters, MS Office automatically fills in the complete word. This saves you the extra effort of typing words and phrases, reducing typing strain. Here are some samples of text expanders to give you a better idea:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cc</th>
<th>Credit card</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mm</td>
<td>Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyvm</td>
<td>Thank you very much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rsvp</td>
<td>Please review and reply when you get the chance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>addtl</td>
<td>Additional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comm</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:date</td>
<td>(insert date)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:time</td>
<td>(insert time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misc</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aka</td>
<td>Also known as</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Auto-save your work.** As you go about your transcription job, you will realize that Microsoft Office’s auto-save function is one of your best friends! You never know when the power would go out, when your computer would suddenly freeze, or when you’d have one of those unexpected problems with Microsoft Word and the document you’re working on would suddenly just close.

Thus, it’s important that you’ve activated Word’s auto-save function so that the program automatically saves your work after every couple of minutes or so. This way, should there be any problems, you’d have a copy of your most recent draft. In Microsoft Word, go to Tools > Options > Auto-Save > Save Changes.

**Have a back-up battery.** It pays to be always ready, and power outages are one of the many instances when you would need to have a back-up plan. To ensure that you don’t lose your work in case your computer shuts down due to a power outage, have a battery back-up that will keep your computer on for a few minutes, allowing you to save your work properly.

**Get acquainted with Microsoft Word’s Find and Replace function.** Another handy Microsoft Word tool is the Find and Replace feature that lets you easily make changes or edits to a word in the document. This is particularly handy for correcting misspellings of a word that you have used extensively in the document. Using the Edit menu, click on “Find”, type the word you need to find for editing, click on “Replace” and input the edit or changes you want to make. The edit is applied to the word all throughout the document.

**Use your transcription program’s clean-up feature.** A noisy background is one of the common problems with audio recordings next to inaudible speakers. Thankfully, transcription software like Express Scribe have a handy tool that lets you clean up and minimize, if not remove, these pesky background noise.

In Express Scribe, for example, go to Special Audio Processes > Reduce Background Noise OR Extra Volume Boost. The first one reduces the sound of the noisy background and the second can be used to enhance the volume/sound quality of the speaker. Remember however that this feature can only do so much. While it may be successful in reducing the noise volume, it does not fully and completely take out the noisy background.
Accepting And Working On Your Transcription Assignments

How does one manage his or her time when working on a transcription project? How should you approach transcription assignments – with a set schedule or a flexible turnaround? These are usual questions among many first-time transcriptionists who do not have a good idea yet of what to expect with each assignment.

One thing you should keep in mind: Not all transcription jobs are the same. And as with any online job, how fast you can work on a transcription project and how you manage your time will ultimately depend on your life and work style. Other considerations come into play as well. You just might be starting out and you work generally slower while you try to get the hang of the job. You’re still practicing to improve your typing skills. Or, you aren’t the type to sit still for long hours listening to an audio recording. In some cases, you might be working on multiple assignments for other online jobs. You might have other personal errands and activities to do every day. These are but a few personal considerations on whether to work on a set schedule or have a more flexible one.

Working On A Set Schedule

At the same time, companies have their own rules and specifications. Some clients would expect you to work for a specific number of hours every day especially if you’re working on a big assignment. Usually, you will be asked to sign or log in to their system at a set time of the day, download your next assignment, and put in the required number of hours and log in again at the end of the day to submit your work.

This kind of approach might work for you if you are concerned about your daily productivity and if you’re trying to meet your target hourly earnings. Working on a set schedule makes it easier for you to monitor your work every day and every week and your corresponding earnings. If you feel like you might have some problem sticking to your routine and being disciplined when it comes to your working hours, you might want to try working on a set schedule too just to train yourself for this kind of job. With this kind of work schedule, you can also be assured that you have time for personal things. At the end of the day, you clock off (just like any regular office employee), leaving you time to do personal things.
This kind of schedule may be too rigid for others, however, who would like to have greater control with their time and who work best at certain times of the day (i.e., night persons). Certainly, this kind of working schedule is also something that freelancers working on multiple assignments would not prefer as there may be times during the week that you need to focus on your other assignments.

**Working On Certain Turnaround Times**

Other companies are more lenient, offering you a huge volume of work and then giving you a deadline. Typically the turnaround time (deadline for completing and submitting the work) may range from 48 to 72 hours, or 12 hours if it’s rushed work, which they will also indicate before giving you the assignment.

This is certainly more flexible and may work for freelancers who are working mothers, housewives, students, and those working other jobs or working on other freelancing projects. This arrangement lets you better allocate your time according to your priorities and activities for the day, and even allows you to work during your best or optimum times of the day. Some freelancers, like mothers and housewives, work on their transcription assignments at night when the kids are asleep, the chores are done and there is lesser distraction.
However, you may not be able to properly monitor your working hours and hourly earnings, a clear disadvantage if you’re trying to achieve a certain target earnings for the week. In many cases, you might find that the times you’re supposed to be relaxing or taking a break, you’re actually working on your transcription project, effectively blurring the lines between your work hours and your break time. Finally, earnings for projects under this kind of arrangement are generally lower as you may sometimes be taking on smaller volumes of audio materials to transcribe because of other commitments and priorities.

The final decision will always depend on you, your priorities, and how you want to live your life as a freelancer.

**Show Me The Money: How Much Should You Charge For Your Work**

The boom in the online jobs market, coupled with the growing number of individuals seeking to make a living from working online jobs, have caused many companies to lower their rates. After all, people who are in need of work will accept any job, even if the pay is low. If you’re only starting out in the business, accepting such deals might be expected, accepted even. But understand that working on projects that do not pay commensurate to the work involved has its own downsides.

Who wants to be working on a project that pays less anyway when there’s always the option of working on those that pay reasonably well? If you keep on working on these projects with sub-standard rates, you’ll easily end up frustrated, exhausted and burned out. You’re doing a thankless job, slaving away on a work where you deserve more.

So, how should you price your work as a general transcriptionist? Here are a few pointers to remember:

- **Have reasonable rates especially if you’re only just starting out.** The normal range for a transcription job if you’re only a beginner is about $50 – 60 per audio hour (that is, for every hour’s worth of audio transcription) or $1 – 1.50 per page of transcription. Rates for more experienced transcriptionists can go as high as $100 – 135 per audio hour.

- **Figure in the level and extent of work involved.** Even while rates are normally charged or computed on an audio hour basis, you may also adjust your rate based on the extent of work entailed in transcribing the audio. More work means difficult audio, additional research to be done, use of specific templates or formatting, inclusion of timestamps in the transcription, multiple speakers, strong and heavy accents, etc.
As these would entail additional effort on the part of the transcriber, it only makes sense to ask for an adjustment to the rate.

**Factor in also the turnaround time.** Generally, the ratio between audio and transcription work is 1:3, that is, for every one hour or 60 minutes’ worth of audio recording, you will need to spend 3 hours or 180 minutes transcribing it. For some audio materials that are simpler to transcribe (i.e. high quality, no strong accents or multiple speakers), you can possibly make it 1:2.

You can use this to determine the turnaround time of your assignments and how much you should be charging for your work. If you’re only just starting out, expect that you may be working longer than the usual three hours to transcribe a one hour audio recording. This means that you cannot accept work with very short turnaround times. Your rate would be considerably lower as you will be working 4 – 5 hours just transcribing a one-hour audio material.

When you’ve gained enough experience, you can always take in more projects with shorter turnaround times.

**Other Helpful Tips In Navigating Transcription Jobs**

**Improve your transcription skills with constant practice.** Transcription requires honing both your listening and typing skills. Improve and be a better transcriptionist by constantly practicing. A number of transcription programs like Express Scribe and online sites offer free transcription practice exercises. StenoSpeed and Amazon MTurk, for example, have audio files that you can download and transcribe as practice.

**Consider specializing in a transcription job.** Doing general transcription entails working with a diverse set of audio materials, which means that you need to know a little bit of everything. You can streamline your work and build a niche as a transcriber if you will specialize in a particular area or field, such as medicine or legal transcription.
Likewise, clients are also willing to pay higher rates for foreign language transcribers and even those who can perform other additional tasks such as indexing and formatting the transcriptions in HTML for easy uploading on the Internet. These mean further training, but the rewards are also worth the investment.

**Ask for feedback from your clients.** It’s always a smart professional move to ask your clients feedback on your work. How did they find your transcription? Were you able to follow the instructions as indicated? Were they satisfied with your turnaround time? What should you work on and improve in your transcription work? Answers to these questions can go a long way to helping you improve as a transcriptionist.

**You don’t always have to go online to find transcription work.** Check out universities, research centers or media outfits near your area. There are a lot of students, academics, researchers, and program managers looking for people who can help them transcribe interviews, conference and workshop proceedings, and recordings. In fact, these are good places to jumpstart your transcription career. Most likely, they are legitimate transcription work and you can get good recommendations from them.

**Remember to take a break.** It bears repeating that transcription is a physically and mentally exhausting job. When you’re in the thick of transcription and eager to finish the work, it is easy to forget the time passing. Your ears and your fingers/hands need a break. After an hour of transcribing, put down your earphones, get up and take a walk.

General transcription is one form of online venture that you can try without prior experience or training. The most basic requirement would be a good grasp of English and relatively fast typing skills, which you can develop with practice. However, transcription jobs come with their own brand of challenges, and without persistence, discipline and the right working habits, you will find yourself burned out, disappointed and frustrated.

Cultivate healthy work habits by making sure that you do not get stuck working on your transcription projects for long hours without a break. More importantly, know the value and worth of the work you’re doing. Do not sell yourself short just because you’re a general transcriptionist.
CONCLUSION

Data entry is one of the many options you have if you’re considering an online career. It is simple and easy, something you can do even without experience or training, but it does not make it any less of a job. Like any online venture, you will need to work on developing and building crucial skills to make a success out of this venture.

A good knowledge of English grammar, fast typing skills, discipline to stick to working hours, and persistence and focus in handling huge volumes of information are but only a few of the skills and values that a good data entry professional should possess and cultivate. While the pay is not as immediately lucrative as other online jobs out there, there is a higher potential for success given the increasing demand of companies for individuals who can help them translate huge volumes of information into texts.

Building a niche as a data entry professional is akin to building a business strategy. You need to establish a good presence online, maximize the power of social media, and actively expand your network. Competition in data entry, just like with any regular job applications, is also tough. This is why a striking, eye-catching resume that provides relevant information to the position and reflects your worth as a data entry specialists and the value that you can bring to the company is essential. Use social media to create your own brand, maximizing platforms such as LinkedIn to strengthen your online presence.
With hard work and by ensuring that you always deliver top-notch, high quality outputs, you can build a healthy and robust client following. As a business, your primary priority is cultivating client relationship, and excellent customer service is of paramount importance. As you work with your clients, remember to remain professional at all times. Going the extra mile can make your them feel special and privileged. Indeed, remember that in business, it is smarter and more cost-effective to invest in making your current customers happy so they come back a second time (or more) to do business with you, than chase after one new client after another. In fact, satisfied clients are more than willing to bring new customers to your door – they will be happy to talk about your work to others who are also looking for a data entry specialist!

Data entry could be your gateway to a better work-life balance. As an online venture, it offers you the chance to be your own boss, work in the comfort of your home and at your most convenient times. This is your chance to have time to pursue your passions and hobbies, but still earn enough to pay the bills and help you tuck in some extra for savings. But like with any job, data entry is one that requires your passion and commitment, hard work (no slacking), and discipline.

Others think that data entry is simple and easy, and while this is relatively true, it has its own challenges. Individuals who are not motivated to actively seek out opportunities online may lose out on a lot of data entry ventures they can explore. Those who do not have the discipline and the persistence to sit for long periods of time typing can end up burned out and frustrated with a data entry job. Those who are not patient enough working with huge volumes of information may not strive to deliver good quality work. Even those who remain complacent and do not actively seek out ways to improve themselves as data entry specialists may eventually find themselves lagging behind the competition.

Opportunities for data entry abound online. Every day, hiring managers and clients post hundreds, thousands of data entry jobs. You only need to know where to look. If you’re looking for a more flexible, healthier lifestyle that does not tie you to a 9-to-5 office job, data entry is one venture you can consider exploring. With this type of online job, you have the freedom to choose the kind of work you want to do, control your own time, and most of all, build your own “business” as a data entry professional. The choice is always yours. Indeed, there are many opportunities online, and data entry is just one of them. If you’re looking for something easy and profitable, something that can give you a glimpse into the world of freelancing and online jobs, take on a data entry job first!