

The Freelance Writing Roadmap

A 5-Step Guide



The ultimate resource for finding jobs, sending pitches, and leveling up your skills as a freelance writer!

BY BRINA PATEL

Step 1: Determine Your Niche + Service

This topic is under constant debate within the freelancing community, but when you're first starting out, **niching down is important!**

Why?

Because it'll help you begin to establish yourself as an **authority** in a particular industry.

Don't worry — you can change your niche later, or branch out into multiple, but to start out, pick **one** or **two**.



important tips

1. Ideally, you have **prior experience** in this niche. If you don't, that's okay. Instead...
2. Pick a niche that you're **passionate** about!
You want to write about a topic that interests you, and that you won't get tired of covering.
3. Finally, choose a niche that's **broad** to start (i.e. travel). You can narrow down as you go (i.e. family travel, digital nomad life, luxury travel).

Next, you want to figure out which service you'll be offering. Most freelance writers are **copywriters** (email campaigns, sales pages, ads, etc.) or **content writers** (blog posts and articles). This guide will focus primarily on the latter category of freelance writing.

However, I will share an **incredible** copywriting resource at the end!

Step 2: Put together a writing portfolio



important tip

Your portfolio does **not** need to be fancy to start. In fact, I keep a few of my portfolio items in a **Google Doc**. As long as there's a designated folder of writing samples you can share with potential clients, that's all that matters.

I know this part sounds scary... But I promise, putting together a portfolio is a **lot less daunting** than it sounds!

In fact, it can even be **fun**. Here's how to create your first writing samples:

1. Publish to **Medium** (a free blogging platform).
2. Offer to take on **unpaid work** for a friend or colleague's blog.
3. **Write your own articles** on a topic related to your niche (see above on how to save them).

Step 3: Start Searching for Jobs

Here are the methods that have allowed me to land **high-quality** writing jobs:



1. **Opportunities of the Week Newsletter:** This twice-weekly newsletter by Sonia Weiser offers a roundup of **writing jobs** and **calls for pitches**. Sign up at Sonia's website (\$4/month).
2. **LinkedIn:** This online professional networking site lists **thousands** of writing jobs. You can search based on **experience level, pay, location**, and more.
3. **Bonus:** The following page shares **outlets that pay**. I've also shared a comprehensive list of paying outlets on my **blog** (under the January 2023 archives).

important tip

Fiverr and Upwork might be useful in helping you build your portfolio, but I would NOT recommend them as part of your long-term job-hunting strategy. **Competition is intense**, and you have to **lowball your prices** to find consistent work.

MEDIA OUTLETS THAT PAY WRITERS

HEALTH & WELLNESS

- *Verywell*
- *The Paper Gown (Zocdoc)*
- *Well+Good*
- *Wondermind*
- *Women's Health*
- *Men's Health UK*

TRAVEL

- *Fodor's Travel*
- *Atlas Obscura*
- *Gastro Obscura*
- *AFAR*
- *Travel + Leisure*

BUSINESS/ ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- *Business Insider*
- *The Robora*
- *The Muse*
- *Black Enterprise Magazine*
- *Ozy*

WOMEN'S LIFESTYLE & BEAUTY

- *SELF*
- *Bustle*
- *Good Housekeeping*
- *Byrdie*
- *Elle*

important tip

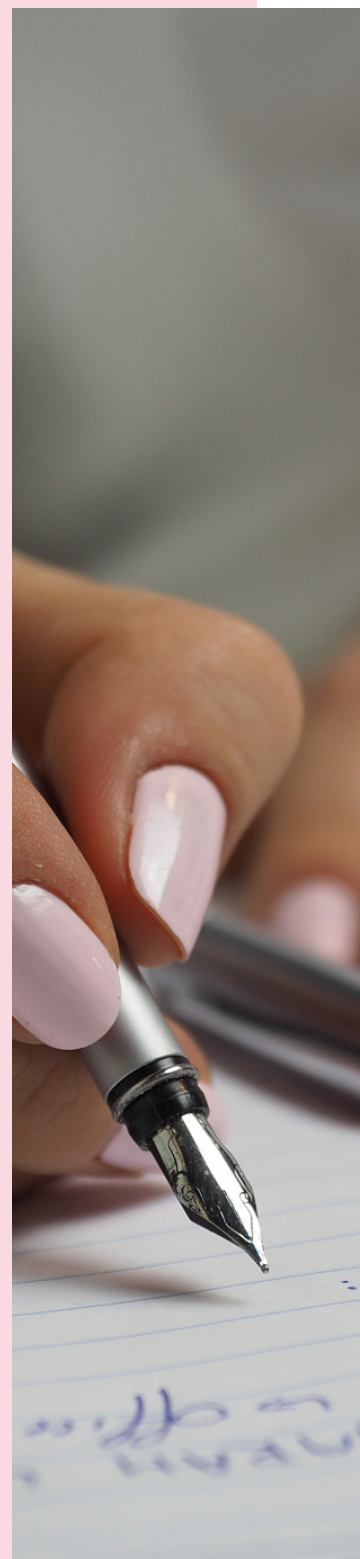
Google "write for us" and the publication's name to find information on submission guidelines!

I've also shared the post "**42 Publications That Pay Freelance Writers in 2023**" on my blog (under the January 2023 archives).

Step 4: Send Those Pitches!

Here are 7 tips to help yours stand out.

1. **Familiarize** yourself with the publication you're writing to. Who is their **target audience**? What type of content do they publish (i.e. interviews, listicles, etc.)?
2. Start with a **catchy headline**, which you'll include in the subject line. Don't be afraid to be **bold, funny, sassy, or steamy**! This is the first impression you'll be giving off, so take time to play around with headline ideas.
3. Use a **compelling opening statement**. Introduce yourself in 2-3 sentences, then jump into the story idea. Start off with an interesting **fact, question, quote, or anecdote**. The goal is to get the editor/recipient to keep reading.





4. Answer the **two big "why"s**:
- *Why should the publication cover the story **now**?* Is it tied to current events? An upcoming heritage/awareness month? A trending topic?
 - *Why are **you** the one to tell the story?* Which new **perspectives** are you adding to the conversation? If you have **credentials** or **experience** that are worth mentioning, list them here!

5. Keep it brief. Aim for no more than **300 words**. Stick to the **main arguments**, and if you plan to **interview** sources, list those, as well.

6. Include **writing samples**. If you can, make sure they relate to your story idea. If not, make sure your samples showcase your **best work**.

7. Follow up after **two weeks** if you haven't heard back yet. Editors are busy people!

Pitching Template

Subject Line – PITCH: [Proposed Headline]

Body –

Hi, [Editor's Name]!

My name is [Your Name] and I'm [brief description]. I have a story idea about [your idea] that I think would be a great fit for [Publication]. Let me know if it resonates!

Hed: [Proposed Headline]

Paragraph 1 – Hook: Open with an interesting fact, question, quote, or anecdote.

Paragraph 2 – Explain: Lay out the key points of your story idea in 4–5 sentences.
(If you plan to interview other sources, list them here.)

Paragraph 3 – Big “Why” #1: Why should the publication cover this story now?
(Think heritage/awareness month, current events, popular trends)

Paragraph 4 – Big “Why” #2: Why are you the one to cover this story?
(This is where you'll dive deeper into your credentials, experience, etc. If you have writing samples, you'll link them here.)

I appreciate your time and consideration, and look forward to hearing from you!

All my best,

[Your Name]

Sample Pitch

Subject Line- PITCH: Vip Sitaraman, 24-Year-Old Entrepreneur and Consultant for Fortune 500 Companies, on the Importance of "Scary Hour"

Hi [Editor's Name]!

I hope all is well. I saw your recent call for pitches and wanted to throw an idea your way. Let me know if it resonates!

Hed: Vip Sitaraman, 24-Year-Old Entrepreneur and Consultant for Fortune 500 Companies, on the Importance of "Scary Hour"

Vip Sitaraman has an impressive work history for a Gen Zer, to say the least. In the past 7 years, he's been recognized as a 2x VC-backed startup entrepreneur who has created digital products used by over 30 million people. Vip has also designed collateral that's closed over 9 figures in deals for high-growth startups and Fortune 500 companies.

What's Sitaraman's secret to success? Taking full advantage of what he calls "scary hour." In other words, he carves out an hour of time each morning to tackle the most daunting but impactful task on his agenda.

Furthermore, Sitaraman minimizes communication overload, avoids analysis paralysis, and prioritizes a "don't do" list. I'll interview Sitaraman for this piece and have him elaborate on each of these points with examples, so that readers can implement them into their own lives.

I think this story would add to Business Insider's ongoing discussion about how readers can maximize their time and energy, so that they can get the most out of their workdays.

A bit about me: I'm a freelance writer from Sacramento, California. I've written about influential members of the South Asian community for *Brown Girl Magazine*, and my work has also appeared in *Verywell Mind*, *Better Humans*, and *LA Family Travel*. I'll leave my full portfolio [here](#).

I appreciate your time and consideration, and look forward to hearing from you!

All my best,

Brina Patel

Step 5: Sharpen your skills



When it comes to freelance writing, continuing to learn is as important as the writing itself! Here are 3 resources for expanding your knowledge base.

1. **WriteTo1K:** This course by Elna Cain is a **must** for new freelancers, as it covers everything from **setting rates** to **finding clients** via social media.
2. **Copy Posse courses:** If you're a **copywriter**, or want to learn copywriting-related skills (i.e. writing email campaigns), the Copy Posse has the most **engaging**, information-packed courses. These courses, taught by founder Alex Cattoni, all help you **design items for your portfolio**.
3. **Paid learning platforms** (i.e. MasterClass, Udemy) are also worth the investment, as they offer lessons from many **world-renowned** writers. There are also a ton of incredible YouTube channels that can help you **improve your craft for free** (Reedsy and Alexa Donne are a couple of my favorites).

Where to go from here...

First of all, congrats! You've decided to enter the **supportive** and **rewarding** world of freelance writing. Though it can feel overwhelming in the beginning, I promise things will make much more sense with **time**, **practice**, and **persistence**. The steps and tips outlined in this ebook will guide you along your journey with greater ease.

Don't hesitate to reach out with any questions — I'm here to help. (Also, **share** your published work with me... I'd **love** to see it)! Happy writing!

Yours truly,
Brina

P.S. I'll leave you with little extra motivation below. Remember: Your words **MATTER!**



Thank you!

We're all made of **stories** that yearn
to be **shared with the world...**

And these stories **weave us**
together, like threads in an **ever-**
expanding tapestry.



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