# (How to make money online)

# GET FREELANCE WORK

# Making Money By Freelancing Online

# Chapter 1 The Freelancing Market

## Introduction

With the modern job market growing increasingly impersonal and difficult to break into, online freelancing has had a surge of popularity in recent years. Nobody wants to be beholden to a business that may coldly and bureaucratically determine the terms of their employment, and the average worker may not have any personal professional connections that can lead them to their dream job.

Freelancing is one way of overcoming that obstacle. Most of us have, at one time or another, thought about how pleasant it would be to choose clients who will hire us for a task that is actually needed, and that you want to do, and most importantly, to work on one's own terms. You probably remember your childhood lemonade stand or bake sale more fondly than your first after-school job, because you had total control over it. So that is what freelancing is all about: doing what you want to do, for a client who knows exactly what they want--no more, and no less.

But before you imagine your freelancing career, think about the skills that are in demand, and the talents that you possess.

## Writing

Writing is a major freelancing market. It is easy to find niches within the category of writing, even if you don't have any formal training. If you speak a second language, you will be in demand for translation jobs. If you can type quickly, it is fairly easy to get transcription jobs, as medical and legal transcription is in great demand, and requires little more than a keyboard and a set of headphones. Copywriting and ghostwriting are good niche markets if you specialize in writing appealing prose, but don't need a lot of time to revise.

Participation in studies is another way to get paid for writing, and is a good choice even if writing is not your strongest suit. Professional clients often need real testimony and feedback from regular people, so you may get paid to write responses in surveys, forms, and polls. All of these are very simple jobs, but are also in demand. The only caveat in the study participation market is this: you may need to spend some time viewing, listening to, or reading media provided by the client before you answer the questions.

## Data and Analytics

Jobs in this category can be done at various skill levels. Data entry is merely time-consuming work that anyone can do, but few want to do, and it has no requirements beyond an average typing speed and the ability to enter repetitive information accurately. It's a great option for someone fresh to the freelancing market.

On the other hand, data crawling, which involves scraping information from the web, may require advanced programming skills. If you are crawling for numerical or scientific data, you may need knowledge of statistics.

In between these extremes, data editing may involve reformatting text files into a more orderly document. Anyone can spend time doing this by hand, but you might be able to do it more quickly than others if you are crafty and know a little about automating text editors with macros.

## Coding and Development

Coding and development is a large sector of the freelance market. These freelancers develop web sites, program desktop and mobile applications, and code video games. In addition to knowing how to program, you may need visual design skills. This is not a good option for the beginner looking to dip a toe into the freelance market, but if coding is your skill, this guide will help you find a few sites to join.

## Creative and Design Jobs

Creative freelancing and design is another freelancing submarket consisting of drawing, digital painting, graphics design, photo manipulation, video editing, animation, typography, and web design, and application (or user interface) design, and much more.

While the beginner may be able to draw attractive graphics at a low cost, it takes quite a lot of specialization to transition into more complex design jobs. The principles of editing an image in Adobe Photoshop are entirely different from laying out a magazine in Microsoft Publisher, which is in turn entirely unlike designing a CSS theme for a web page.

This category is often a literal competition, meaning that instead of applying for jobs, you submit a finished product to a prospective client, and only the chosen winner is paid. If you are discouraged at the prospect of not winning despite producing work, don't fret. The competition format is mostly for short jobs (like logo or font design) or template-based jobs (like layout or web design). There are plenty of small design jobs, like icon and logo design, and it will take less than an hour to produce and enter a finished product.

More intensive jobs, or jobs involving feedback and refinement, like animation and video editing, most likely will not ask for finished products upfront.

# Chapter 2 Getting Started

## Getting a Foot in the Door

The best way to gain a foothold in the market is to simply sign up for a variety of freelancing sites (see chapter 3). But first, think about how looking for freelance gigs differs from a traditional job search. Usually there are no resumes or interviews--instead there are portfolios of past work and brief online chats. You can stand out more easily in the freelancing market, since there are fewer formalities.

Of course, it still takes effort to break into the freelancing market. The main advantage is that the freelancing market moves at a much faster pace. You will get a few rejections from your dream clients, but you will not be waiting for years for a position to open up again. Freelance gigs are very short term, and even if you are rejected, you have a good chance of getting hired almost immediately for a similar job from the same client.

One more basic tip that can't be repeated enough: follow the instructions when you apply to a job posting. Just because freelancers are more casual, that doesn't mean the web site is. Most jobs won't have a long and confusing list of requirements drawn up by the client. But if the site asks you to do something odd, like post a certain string of words in your messages' subject line, that web site is probably weeding out spam. So follow technical instructions closely so that you don't get lost in the spam filters.

Finally, if you're not sure about something during a job, ask for clarification instead of wasting time and having to redo your work. If you do have to redo something, salvage as much as you can for use in another project. You may be paid by the job, not by the hour, but time pays. Finish plenty of small jobs rather than trying to win a big job--quantity is more important than quality in the early stages, and getting hired by plenty of people is more important than being paid high rates.

## Your Reputation

You will need to stay dedicated and earn a reputation. The clients who hire you will rate you and review your profile. You'll most likely have to compile old work into a portfolio. You may be able to change your past work to feature placeholder content if your past clients own exclusive use of your past projects. Or you may have to create a portfolio from scratch if you don't have past work.

If this sounds like a lot of work, remember that by freelancing, you'll never find yourself in a dead end job with colleagues who have no connections. Instead, you'll be introduced to an entirely new client (or even an entire team of clients) several times a month, rather than on the rare occasions in which you move between jobs in the standard workforce.

You also don't have to worry so much about the influence of your clients: most potential clients will generally trust you if you have a few good numerical ratings. You don't have to worry about whether the clients that hire you can write a glowing recommendation letter or not--your portfolio of work stands on its own.

## Negotiating Rates and Attracting Clients

When you begin, you'll have to be willing to work cheaply. A rate that is below minimum wage for you may be above average to a freelancer in a poorer country, and you will be competing worldwide on the Internet. If you bid on a job, the price you offer your services for should be low, but not too low. Clients are willing to pay a little more than the lowest prices for significantly better work. If you are setting your prices as low as possible, potential clients may be filtering those out, so try raising your prices up a notch.

Once you become more successful, you will be able to rely on satisfied past clients to give you a reasonably steady stream of work. Working with clients that are reliable truly pays off, even if they do not pay as highly as others. You will save plenty of time if you don't have to negotiate or clarify things with a familiar client. Eventually, you may even become savvy enough to make cold calls (or "cold pitches") to new clients.

## Hourly vs. Fixed Rates

Also think about the difference between flat rates and hourly rates. If you are paid a flat rate for your work, you are choosing how much time to spend on a project as you go. If you are running short on time, you can decide at any point that something is "good enough", submit it, and move on to something else.

If you are paid an hourly rate, you will be compensated if something takes longer than you expected, enabling you to produce work of a quality that satisfies you. But you will also have to spend time producing proof of the hours you've worked: you'll be recording your work in a log, taking screenshots, and archiving old versions of your work.

Either way: work systematically, and on a schedule. Figure out exactly how long it takes to do a certain amount of work, and do it quickly yet competently.

## How Often To Apply

You will want to apply to jobs frequently, but not indiscriminately. Don't apply for jobs that you don't have the skills for, but don't second-guess yourself. Apply first, and think about your proposal later--if a job seems within your ability, and after speaking with the client you discover that you don't meet the requirements, you may be assigned a different job that is more fitting.

Keep in mind that some sites may limit the number of jobs that you can apply for per day or per week.

Don't put all of your eggs in one basket: rather than paying for a subscription to gain the privilege of unlimited applications, which you might not use up, sign up for free accounts at multiple sites and apply for a few jobs daily on each site. Allocate a number of jobs that you will apply for each day, and make a routine of picking the best that you see. Don't worry about the "job that got away."

Also remember that the sites that you are using will come and go, and split and merge. eLance and oDesk merged to become Upwork, attracting much controversy. Both were highly acclaimed freelancing sites, and many freelancers were upset that Upwork took a larger cut of their earnings. Nevertheless, Upwork remains a big and trusted name in freelancing, and will be until another more popular site comes along. The bottom line is this: until you establish private contacts, you will depend on sites that restrict how freely you can apply for jobs.

Work with what is available to you, and don't agonize over missed opportunities. Freelancing sites make it easy to find small jobs quickly, and you will soon be interacting with your clients directly.

# Chapter 3 Sites to Join

## One-on-one hiring

One-on-one sites involve you, the freelancer, applying to a job that a client has posted. This model may also allow clients to pick freelancers who don't reply to job postings, but usually, there are more specific sites for that (as we'll see later). Here are a few one-on-one sites.

**Upwork** is a major player, and one of the most widely used sites. It has jobs in a wide variety of categories. It takes a 20% cut of your earnings to start with, which reduces to a 5% to 10% cut if you work with a client repeatedly. There is no lower bound on rates, and rates are vaguely labelled with "dollar signs" rather than exact amounts, so it is hard to guess how much you will make until you contact the client.

Upwork limits the number of jobs you can apply for. This involves "Connects", which are virtual tokens that permit you to bid on a certain number of jobs per month. You are given a certain number of free tokens each month, but if you pay a subscription fee, you will get more tokens.

Despite these restrictions, Upwork provides quite good customer service, even for their free users. You have access to conflict resolution, a unified messaging interface, and you can download Upwork's custom software for tracking your work if you decide to be paid by the hour.

Overall, Upwork is a good site for the beginner, but you will gain work very gradually. It's best to complement it with another site.

**Guru** is an older site with fewer projects, which are larger and better-paying. You can either pay for a membership charge, or have a rather large commission taken from your pay. It's not a great site for beginners, but it is somewhere to invest your time once you become familiar with the freelancing market.

**People Per Hour** is a site based in the United Kingdom that lets you bid on freelancing jobs. It takes a cut of your earnings a little under 20%. The site's name is somewhat misleading, as you are only paid by the hour if someone hand-picks you for a job you didn't apply for. If you are applying for a particular posted job, you are paid a fixed rate. People Per Hour also has some in-person freelancing opportunties in addition to online jobs.

**Reddit.com/r/forhire** and /r/hireawriter are classified ad spaces for freelancers and other workers. The atmosphere is casual and informal. Despite the names, each subreddit has a mix of "job offered" and "job wanted" posts. These subreddits are not very regulated, and since each is community-operated they won't take a cut of your earnings. But you are on your own when resolving conflicts.

**reddit.com/r/slavelabour** On this subredd it there are plenty of easy-to-do low-paying jobs. Literally anything can be posted as long as it doesn't violate the guidelines or break a law. The atmosphere is casual, and while it is possible to make a profile and earn a reputation, the jobs are small enough that many people don't worry about scores or reputations. Although you need to have been a user of Reddit for at least a month to post on the subreddit, there is nothing to stop you from privately messaging a potential client seeking work.

**GeeksPerHr** is a site that is targeted at IT freelancers.

**Dice and Freelancewriting.com** are not freelance sites per se. They are directories and search engines that find and collect freelancing jobs from other job lists (such as Indeed). The former finds IT jobs, and the latter searches for writing jobs.
Smashing Jobs, Probloggers, BloggingPro, and Behance are mixed job lists. Only some postings are freelance jobs, and others are traditional full-time jobs. Generally, you can refine the results to include only freelance jobs.

# Hand-picked freelancers

Not all freelancing sites involve the freelancer seeking a job. In the sites listed below, you simply post an all-purpose portfolio, and clients will hand-pick you based on your work. This saves you time, because you won't have to compile custom portfolios for different clients. But you will have to make sure that your portfolio is thorough and has a lot of content, because you'll never know what a client wants to see.

Note that the one-on-one freelancing site (listed in the previous section) will often let you be hand-picked as well. The sites below exclusively allow clients to hand-pick a worker--you won't be able to search for jobs on these sites.

**Fiverr** is a major player in this model. It takes a 20% cut of your earnings, which is pretty standard. It's often underestimated. Although Fiverr promotes selling your services at five dollars, as you go on you can charge higher rates, and if you start working with clients repeatedly, you will probably be paid more substantial rates. It pays to Paypal in any country that PayPal is available, or by bank transfer and direct deposit in the United States.

**Freelancer.com** is a rare site that takes a cut of your pay based on the estimated value of the project, rather than how much you are making by doing the project. This may work out to a smaller or larger cut compared to other sites--it varies by job.

**Bunny Inc.** offers writing, dubbing, logo, and voiceover work. It has a quality assurance team that ensures you get paid, even if your work is rejected by your client.

**Hubstaff Talent** is a rare service that doesn't take cuts or commissions from your earnings. The user base is small, so there is less competition, but also fewer job postings and fewer categories to work in.

**iFreelance**, like Hubstaff Talent, is another rare site that does not take cuts, but it is also a small site with relatively few members.

**Crew** is a site that works under the competition model. In order to build your profile, you will be placed on a waitlist, so you may not get accepted soon. On the other hand, if or when you are accepted, you will have less competition. There is not a lot of publicly viewable information on the site.

**Envato** is a site that hand-picks freelancers for design, web and mobile development, and animation.

## Competition sites

Other sites may work under a competition model, in which freelancers submit finished products, not proposals, and only one entrant is paid. Although this seems unfair, remember that competition sites often are primarily for design projects, which are easy to repurpose by simply swapping out placeholder content. If your submission doesn't win, you can recycle or "cannibalize" your work and submit it into a similar competition later on. It's a good idea to create a few templates and keep them on hand to save time.

99 Designs is a competition site where you can submit to artistic contests, and it accepts work such as graphics, drawings, and web content. Similar sites include **Crowdspring, DesignCrowd, Design Contest, and 48 Hours Logo.**

## Offline Jobs

If you live in a major city, you may be able to find tasks that you can do offline. This obviously increases the likeliness you'll get a particular job, since you're not competing with remote freelancers. However, the jobs may pay less or be very small jobs (like delivering groceries) and you may want to be more careful about your personal and financial safety. Make sure your social circle knows where you're going and what you're doing.

**NeedTo** is a site that allows you to search for odd jobs that need to be done, and provides a distance from you and a price that the client is willing to pay.

**Craigslist (worldwide) and Gumtree (in the UK)** allow you to find gigs in your local community. If you are in a small town, this may be your only option to find local freelance gigs, but you may have a terrible pick of local jobs, and you may be reimbursed in trades or favors rather than money.

**TaskRabbit and Thumbtack** are sites where you are handpicked to perform a task. These sites have a wide variety of categories. Prior to 2014, TaskRabbit allowed freelancers to search for jobs, but this is no longer an option. You are assigned to jobs. College Labor is a smaller site that hand-picks you for odd jobs and works in the same way.

**Handy, Zaarly, and Porch** are sites similar to TaskRabbit, but they focus on cleaning, housework, repairs, and yardwork. You may have to have professional credentials, but you will be freelancing in the sense that you will not be employed by a company. It is a "hand-picked" site, so you cannot search for jobs.

# Microwork sites

These sites are useful if you have minutes of spare time (rather than entire hours to spare) and don't mind waiting for money to slowly accumulate. You won't have to waste time with applications or portfolios--you just have to do the microtask. There is not much competition or reputation building on microwork sites, because often the jobs require work from multiple people. Often these are tasks such as surveys, studies, referrals, or web site sign-ups. You'll be paid under a dollar for each task, but you'll be doing large volumes of tasks. Basically, you'll be earning some spending money. Sites that operate under this model include **Amazon mTurk, Crowdflower, Clickworker, Onespace, Prolific Academic and Reddit.com/r/signupsforpay**

It's not really worth comparing the minute differences between these sites, as they all work more or less in the same way. The only thing you should take note of is this: no matter how reputable a microwork site is, they are often restricted to users in the United States--and you may not realize this until you try and withdraw your money. Don't assume that you can withdraw your money just because you can create an account and the site is tallying your earnings. Find out what countries the payout system is compatible with before spending time on it.

# Chapter 4 Necessities

## Site-Mediated Payment

The site on which you are looking for work may or may not take a hands-on approach to guaranteeing the transactions between the freelancer and the client. They may provide escrow, acting as a third party that holds payment until both parties resolve a conflict. Even if your client decides they are not satisfied with the final product, they may have to pay you regardless. Keep in mind that the freelancing site may side with the client that hired you--that is, your client may have the right not to pay you if you do not meet deadlines.

## PayPal

If the site does not provide any sort of guaranteed payment or escrow, ask your client to pay in milestones. Not only will you get feedback by keeping your client up to date with each segment of your work, you'll also be getting money faster. Plus, keeping your PayPal account active with transfers of small amounts reduces the likeliness that PayPal will lock it.

If you are on a site with more minimal features, you may be working directly with your client. PayPal is a convenient option, as you can be paid simply by providing a link to your client. It is a good choice for a new freelancer.

**Stripe** is a system like PayPal that takes a small cut of each transaction. Stripe accepts credit and debit cards. However, you need to embed Stripe on a web page you control, so you will need to know a little about web development and security. It's a good choice once you become independent from freelancing sites.

## Contact Addresses

Years ago, you would need nothing more than a phone number, a mailing address, and a fax number for people to be able to contact you. Now, there are countless platforms that people might expect you to be on, and you can sign up for them as they ask you. Nevertheless, there are a few things that you should have.

An email address is a must--make sure it sounds professional. **Gmail** is a good choice. It's trusted enough that it won't get caught in most spam filters, and has a large amount of space for attaching your work. It also has a useful alias function. Include a plus sign in your email address, and you can have virtually unlimited email addresses under one account. (If your address is johndoe@gmail.com, give some people johndoe+design@gmail.com and others johndoe+writing@gmail.com).

Your freelancing site may provide you with a messaging function, but you should also be available on an IRC chat client like **Pidgin.**

You will probably not post your cell phone number online. Instead, make sure to register a **Google Voice or Skype account.** You may not need it, but if someone insists on it, it's better to have a way to talk than to miss a client.

Sign up for social networks at your discretion. It may not be necessary to be on Facebook and Twitter, but if you are on either site, make sure that your public profiles are clean and professional. **LinkedIn** is a social network specifically meant for professionals, and it is useful for managing portfolios and contacts.

## Writing Software

Know what purpose various word processors are for. Use **Microsoft Office** or **LibreOffice** if you are writing for readers. If you are coding, use **Notepad++** or other text editors that recognize and validate your programming language. If you are proofreading, use software like **WinMerge** or **Meld** to compare changes that you make between drafts of files.

## Data Manipulation Software

If you specialize in extracting data, you probably already know how to program a bot, or to extract information from a site that's not accessible to the average person. Or you may be using a web crawler like **WebHTTrack** to download web pages.

However, a lot of data processing simply involves handling plain text in a way that even a beginner can do. Browser addons like iMacros can extract text from pages based on HTML elements or CSS selectors. If you have disorganized data, by using Notepad++ you can record and use macros to automate changes. Essentially, you can click record, and then playback tasks like "cutting and pasting", and tell the computer to do so a certain number of times.

If you are new to data manipulation, consider learning regular expressions, which allow you to use your text editor's "find and replace" function to select text based on a pattern, rather than manually selecting the text over and over.

## Backup and Sync Software

As you produce content for your clients, and begin to take on several projects at once, you will want to organize your work in a way that's easily retrievable.

Backup or sync software ensures that your content isn't deleted or accidentally overwritten. You can simply backup to a USB drive or secondary hard drive or to cloud storage. Some software will compress the data in a format that only it can read, so avoid those. You only really need a program that can be scheduled to copy several files and folders without your input.

Generally, the software will let you preview what it will do, and will present you with a table of file transfers. This is easy to understand at a glance thanks to an arrow pointing from the source column to the destination column.

Here are a few useful pieces of software:

**Dropbox** is an easy backup solution for beginners. As soon as you save a file into the Dropbox folder, those files are uploaded to the cloud, and Dropbox will automatically keep older versions that you can access by logging in online.

**Synktron** lets you sync files to hard drives and USB drives, and its restore function is prominently displayed and easy to find. It's a good choice for local backup (as opposed to cloud backup), and it has plenty of features.

**GoodSync** supports backing up files to an external drive as well as to a cloud drive (including Google Drive) or web space (via FTP). Syncovery is a similar piece of software. Either are good options if you want to schedule online backups.

**Rsync** is a slightly more complex tool that you can use if you know how to use a command prompt. It has countless features and is a de-facto standard for syncing on UNIX systems. For the beginner, there are various graphical frontends that make it easier to use.

# Revision Control Software

Slightly different is revision control software. Basically, if you create several drafts, you want to make sure that you're always editing the most recent one. If you are simply composing a document or spreadsheet, the easiest thing to do is to use a web application like Google Docs to always have access to the most recent draft of your project wherever you go. You can revert to previous versions from the file menu. LibreOffice has the ability to save versions of a document as well, but it is not enabled by default and is a little confusing to use. Microsoft Office no longer has this function.

Version control software will look at a timestamp or other content in files in several folders, bring to the forefront the most recent one, and archive the older ones.   In theory, it's simple to do all this manually, by deleting or moving old files once you're done with them. But it becomes more complicated for large projects--if you are designing a web site, each project will have several files across several subfolders. It would take a long time to open each file to see if it has changed.

**Mercurial** and **Git** provide this function, but are complicated to use without visual frontends: try **TortoiseHg, SourceTree, EasyMercurial, and Cycligen Git Tool** if you're not familiar. You'll be able to branch and merge your work with just a few clicks, and see everything in a "family tree"-style timeline.

# Afterword

This guide introuced you to freelancing. Hopefully, you know a little more about the niche markets that you can freelance in, and the various sites you can be hired on. Depending on your preference, you can seek jobs based on your skills, let employers hand-pick you based on your past work, compete to have your work selected, or beat the competition by freelancing locally. Make sure you're easily reachable, and sign up for a payment service that makes it easy for people to hire you.

Make it easy for clients to discover you, but don't feel that you owe every spare moment to the freelancing market. Remember to start slowly, decide how many potential clients you'll approach over a given period of time, and choose sites that operate on a model that fits your life's schedule. Sign up for more than one site, so that you get a sense of what works for you, and try out plenty of software, and decide what saves you the most time and organizes your work most effectively.