

MODULE #2: PITCHING YOURSELF TO PUBLICATIONS AND CLIENTS ... CONFIDENTLY

IN THIS MODULE:

We'll be tackling how to write pitches and win work, whether that's from magazines and websites, or from responding to job ads (or emails from potential clients contacting you directly).

Welcome to the second module of Freelance Confidence, where we'll be taking a look at how to pitch yourself to publications and clients.

Getting a steady stream of work is almost always a challenge for new freelancers. It takes time to build up connections with editors and freelancing clients, and it also takes time to build your reputation with them so that you become their "go to" freelancer.

When I first started freelancing in early 2008, I stumbled into it by writing free guest posts for a couple of blogs that offered to hire me. The world of content writing / freelance blogging was a lot less competitive back then! But even so, I had to directly reach out and apply for other freelancing gigs.

Whether you sent out loads of applications to land your first clients or you got offered some work out of the blue, you need to know how to find more freelancing clients so you can keep making money consistently.

The three key ways in which freelancers get work are:

1. By pitching ideas to publications (usually magazines or websites)
2. By responding to freelancing job ads
3. By having prospective clients get in touch

In this module, we're going to cover concrete examples of what you can write when emailing a client or publication.

Pitching Magazines and Websites

When you're looking for potential freelancing outlets, a great place to begin is with magazines and websites that you already read. Some of these will only use staff writers, but others will be open to pieces from freelancers.

You can often find out by looking in the front of the magazine or on their website: look for a submissions editor listed in the magazine, or for editorial contacts for different sections of the magazine. You might well also find a "write for us" or "submission guidelines" section on the website.

If you want to write for a website, then a good sign that they use freelancers is seeing a wide range of different bylines. Again, you can look for a "write for us" or similar page.

It's important to note that some magazines and websites only open up to freelance pitches during a short submissions window, like Craft Your Content:



The screenshot shows the top of the Craft Your Content website. The logo is a red circle with a white checkmark, followed by the text 'Craft Your Content' in a red, cursive font. To the right, there are navigation links for 'SERVICES', 'ARTICLES', and 'ABOUT'. Below the navigation is a photograph of a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. The main heading reads 'Write for Us Here at CYC'. A large red-bordered box contains the following text: 'We are currently closed to submissions until **January 2023**. If you would like to be notified when submissions reopen, make sure you are signed up for our weekly newsletter: [The Writing Rundown](#) (bonus: you'll learn lots about the craft of writing, mindset, and what we're reading!)'. Below this box, a bolded instruction reads: 'Please read through all the guidelines to learn how to submit a piece that has a better chance of acceptance.'

Before we jump into the guidelines and details for submitting to Craft Your Content, we're gonna be honest with you.

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This is to prevent these publications from having to deal with an ongoing flood of pitches all year round. If your favourite publication is closed to pitches currently, note in your calendar when their submission window opens.

Tip: If you've written for a publication previously, their submissions window normally doesn't apply to you. Craft Your Content have published a number of my posts in the past, and they're always happy for me to send a new pitch.

Finding Publications That Take Freelance Submissions

If you've already submitted articles to your favourite magazines or website, or if none of the publications you read are ones that take freelance submissions, it's time to seek out more opportunities.

Plenty of freelance writing websites publish lists of magazines and websites that accept freelance pitches. Try:

[Find Freelance Writing Jobs](#) (Make a Living Writing) – if you scroll down that page a little, you'll find a list of publications split up into categories like break-in markets, better-paying markets, and markets in specific niches.

[50 High-Paying Sites That Pay You to Write](#) (Elna Cain) – this list is split into different niches and, where possible, lets you know the pay rates. Some of these pay really well, others are much more entry-level.

[100 Websites that Pay Writers](#) (Freelance Writing Jobs) – this list doesn't give pay rates for all the different publications, only for some of them – so you may find that those without a rate don't pay as much as you'd hope.

[Get Paid to Write Articles: 17 Magazines That Pay \\$500 or More](#) (The Write Life) – as well as checking out this round-up, you'll want to take a look at some of The Write Life's other lists of paying markets. Note that these magazines are primarily American.

[These 70+ Publications Pay \\$1 A Word \(And They're Looking For Writers\)](#) (The International Freelancer) This handy round-up of magazines and websites includes pay details for the various publications. Note: The editors' content details may not be up to date, as the list was created in 2017.

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Writing a Great Pitch for the Magazine or Website

Once you've chosen a magazine or website to target, it's time to write a clear and confident pitch.

This can be really tough, especially if it's the first time you've pitched an editor ... or if you're simply not feeling terribly confident. It's easy to end up second-guessing every word, and spending hours on a pitch that should have taken minutes.

Here are a few basic rules of thumb for almost any freelancing pitch you write:

- **Do include brief, relevant details about your writing experience or your credentials relating to your topic.** For instance, you could mention other publications you've written for, or you could say that you've worked in the industry you're writing about for 10 years.
- **Don't give too much biographical detail.** Editors don't need or want your life story (unless you're writing a personal/biographical essay – and even then, you want to keep your pitch short and to the point).
- **Do include links to at least a couple of samples of your writing.** Again, keep this brief. The title and link (along with the name of the publication if the editor is likely to have heard of it) should be enough.
- **Don't forget to pitch an actual idea!** Some freelancers make the mistake of writing something like "I'd love to write about anything you want" – and while that might well be true, it's not particularly useful for the editor. You need to have a clear, specific idea that's highly tailored to the publication.
- **Do make sure the idea is one that you can do justice to.** There's no point pitching an article on "X Industry Insiders Spill Secrets You've Never Heard About [Big Name in Your Industry]" if you have no access to said industry insiders.

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Example Pitch to a [Website/Magazine] Editor

Here's an example of one of my own successful pitches from my second year of freelancing. I wanted to include an early one to show how you don't necessarily need years of freelancing experience to land an article with a reputable magazine.

Dear [Editor],

Would you be interested in an article for Writers' Forum encouraging would-be writers to stop reading about writing, and to start writing?

This would be aimed at beginning/unpublished writers. It would discuss the problem that many new writers have of reading endless "how to" writing books, doing lots of research, talking about writing, but rarely putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and actually writing.

I would include quotes from authors about how they deal with the temptation to put off writing in this way, and would provide a box of quick tips for getting out of the reading trap and getting on with writing. I would also look at the psychology behind why new writers are often tempted to try to "learn" without "doing". I know a number of life/career coaches who could supply quotes on this.

This would be a one page (1,000 word) piece.

I am a non-fiction freelance writer for a number of large websites, including feature writing and copywriting. My fiction experience includes two short story competition prizes from Writing Magazine and a short story acceptance from My Weekly. I am currently studying for an MA in creative writing at Goldsmiths college.

Many thanks for your time and consideration,

Ali Hale

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You can tell this was a long time ago because I was writing under my maiden name and I was still studying for my Masters. It feels like a lifetime ago now!

If I was re-doing the pitch today, I think I'd cut it down a bit: reading it back today, it comes across as rather wordy. But even though it wasn't perfect, it did the job and landed me a piece in Writers' Forum.

What to Expect After Pitching a Magazine or Website

So you've sent off your pitch and now you're waiting nervously to see what happens next. If this is your first time pitching a publication, rather than replying to a job ad, you might not be too sure what to expect.

The potential outcomes from your pitch are:

No Response At All

This is, understandably, disappointing. After waiting for weeks, you eventually conclude that the website or magazine isn't going to even reply.

Try not to take this personally. Some publications are swamped with pitches and have tiny editorial teams.

Equally, don't give up hope too soon. It might well take six weeks or more for your pitch to be reviewed.

Rejection of Your Idea

Another disappointing result: the editor didn't like your idea – or they've got something too similar in the works already.

If you came across as a competent and articulate writer, the editor may well invite you to send other ideas. Do take them up on this! You could quickly see yourself moving on to a much more positive outcome.

Request for a Detailed Outline

The editor might be interested in your idea, but want more detail. They may ask you to send a more detailed outline before they decide whether or not they want to take the piece.

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This might be because you're a new writer to them, or because your idea wasn't very fleshed out in your pitch. It could also happen when you've written for them before, but they want to be sure your article won't have too much overlap with something else they've published (or are publishing soon).

Asking for the Whole Piece

The ideal outcome! Your editor loves your idea and they want you to write the whole piece. At this point, you'll often be given a style guide that lets you know the house style for the publication. Try to stick to this as closely as possible.

If your editor decides against the piece after seeing it, you *might* be paid a "kill fee" – this is more common with larger, traditional magazines than with websites.

After Writing Your First Piece for a Magazine or Website

Assuming that the editor found you easy to work with (which means meeting deadlines and being a generally pleasant and accommodating person!) – they'll likely be more than happy to receive further pitches from you in the future.

You don't want to inundate the editor with pitches. Personally, I'd wait until the first piece has been published and (hopefully) met with a good reception from readers. Then, email the editor to let them know how much you enjoyed writing for them – and pitch a new idea.

This can easily lead to a steady stream of work where you're writing several pieces a year (or even several each month) for the publication. Do this for a few different websites or magazines, and you'll have a steady freelancing income.

Responding to Freelancing Job Ads

Here's a typical freelance writing job ad (from the ProBlogger jobs board):



[Start Here](#) [Blog](#) [Podcasts](#) [Ebooks](#) [Resources](#) [Jobs](#) [Courses](#)

[View Jobs](#) [Post a Job](#) [About](#) [Testimonials](#) [FAQs](#) [Applying Safely Online](#) [Candidate](#)

Freelance writer for authority coffee website

Sip Coffee

Published: September 26, 2022

Location Anywhere

Work can be done remotely

Job Type Freelance

Category Blog / Article Writing

Company Type Small Business

DESCRIPTION

Do you consider yourself a coffee expert? Do you know the difference between anaerobic and honey processed coffee? Do your friends regularly come to you as their first port of call for all things brewing related? And do you love writing and blogging?

If you answered yes to these questions, then read on.

When you respond to a job ad, that's a form of pitch too.

However, it's rare in this case that you'll be pitching an idea. Instead, you're pitching yourself as – normally – a regular writer for the client.

(Most freelancing jobs will be advertising for ongoing content needs, rather than for a single one-off post or project.)

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Let's take a detailed look at how to respond to a freelancing job ad.

First, Decide Whether The Gig Will Work for You

Whenever you see a freelancing job ad, you need to decide whether or not you actually want to apply.

This might sound obvious – but it's easy to feel a bit desperate as a new freelancer. If you're keen for work, *any* work, then you might end up applying as fast as possible to as many job ads as possible.

Instead, it's better to slow down, and to send out fewer applications to the jobs that you're genuinely interested in (and a good fit for).

You also need to make sure you have what the gig is asking for. If they're asking for 3+ years of writing experience and you only started freelancing a month ago, then you're unlikely to land the job.

Similarly, if the gig requires you to be based in a specific country and you're not, then they won't hire you.

Don't waste your time applying to gigs where you don't meet the requirements. It's a waste of your time. There will be plenty of gigs that are a better fit for you.

Writing Your Freelance Job Application

Clients who are advertising for freelance writers will get a *lot* of applications.

That's why it's really important that you follow their instructions. If you leave out something that they've requested, then they might simply ignore your application – they may not have time to email you back and request missing information.

In fact, not following certain instructions could result in your application not being seen at all. For example, some clients will automatically flag applications in their email account based on the subject line. So if you're told to use a specific subject line for your email – or even to include a certain word, phrase, or number in the subject line – then it's really important to do so.

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You'll often be asked to include:

- **Your freelancing rate.** This should normally be given in (American) dollars per word (e.g. \$0.10/word) unless the client asks for something different.
- **Links to samples of your writing.** Don't attach the samples to your email unless the client requests that. Instead, it's normal to include links to where your samples can be found online. Make sure this is a direct link to your article, not a link to the homepage of a website.
- **Information about you.** Keep it brief and be specific. Focus on anything that makes you a great candidate for this job. If there are specific requirements (like "3 years of experience" or "experience writing about digital marketing") then make it clear that you meet those requirements.

In my experience, it's rare to be asked for a resume (CV) for freelancing jobs.

Sometimes, you'll be asked to apply for a job by email. It's become more and more common, however, for the applications to be done through an online form. This is easier in many ways as it means you won't accidentally leave out any information that's requested.

What to Expect After Applying for a Freelancing Gig

You've applied for a freelancing gig that looks great – and you're impatiently refreshing your inbox to see whether your potential client has responded yet.

There are a few possible outcomes when you apply for freelancing jobs.

You Don't Hear Anything for a Couple of Weeks

It may well take a couple of weeks (or more) for the client to go through applications. Personally, I've found that clients advertising for freelancers tend to respond faster than publications that are open to submissions – but it's still unlikely that you'll hear back within a day or two.

You Don't Ever Hear Anything Back

When I've applied for freelancing gigs and not got them, I don't think I've ever received a rejection email. I've just been met with silence! This can be

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frustrating, but I try to remind myself that the client is probably inundated with submissions and they may simply not have the time or energy to reply to everyone.

You're Offered a Paid Trial

While some gigs will accept you outright, especially if you have a great track record and some impressive samples, many will take you on for an initial blog post or small piece of work. You'll normally be paid straight after completing this (though this can vary depending on the client's setup) – for future work, you'll typically be paid monthly.

Important: Don't agree to a free trial. Your samples should be enough to show the client that you can write well. Some unscrupulous website owners advertise for freelancers just to get free articles written by hopeful applicants.

You're Offered a Different Type of Work

This might seem a little odd, but it's happened to me a couple of times! Sometimes, you'll apply for a gig only to be offered a slightly different freelance role with that company. That could mean writing about a different topic or doing a different style of writing.

I found this happened with companies who had multiple websites on different topics, or companies that provide writing or SEO services to a bunch of their own clients.

After Writing Your First Piece for Your New Client

You've turned in your first blog post, newsletter, article, or whatever you're writing for your client – and good news, they liked it!

Usually, your client will start sending you a steady stream of work at this point. If they're a little slow to do so, it's worth dropping them an email to let them know that you're available and happy to take on whatever pieces they have going.

In a few cases, clients might want you to come up with your own ideas, or to outline ideas and run the outlines past them. (I've found this is less common than in the past, though, as more and more websites have editorial teams

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planning out their content and SEO experts writing outlines or briefs.) I charge extra if I'm asked to write outlines.

Replying to Clients Who Contact You

At some stage on your freelancing journey, you'll start to have clients email you or fill in your website's contact form to ask about hiring you.

This is always a happy moment: you've got a new client who's keen to work with you, without having to spend ages sending out job applications and pitches.

However, it's easy to end up being so delighted that you take the client on without a second thought – which can be a mistake.

We'll get onto how to reply to clients in a moment, but first, it's important to ask yourself whether you actually want to work with the client.

Is This the Right Client for You?

There could be all sorts of reasons why a client isn't a great fit for you. In my experience, the most common ones are:

- The client wants you to write about something that will take a lot of research, admin, phone calls, or search engine optimization ... basically, anything that you don't like to do!
- The client wants you to write about topics that you find ethically problematic. For instance, perhaps you're a vegan and a BBQ website gets in touch, or you're a Democrat and a Republican publication invites you to write for them.
- The pay rate is lower than you want. It's sometimes worth taking on a *slightly* lower-paying client, especially if that work might (a) enhance your portfolio or (b) become better paid in the future. But if you normally target gigs that pay \$0.10/word or more and the client is

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offering \$0.06 or \$0.07/word, that's likely too low to make the opportunity worth your while.

- There are already warning signs that the client may be hard to work with. Perhaps in their initial email, they complain that all the freelancers they've worked with before have been a nightmare. Or maybe they're asking you about editing and their email is riddled with spelling and grammatical mistakes – and you know it's going to take far longer than usual to edit their writing.

Responding to the Client's Email

Assuming you do want to work with the client, here's how to respond to them.

First, aim to get back to them promptly. You don't need to reply instantly, but try to respond within a couple of working days. Otherwise, they may assume you're not interested – and they might hire someone else.

Before you provide a quote or agree to their suggested pay rate, make sure you get a clear idea of what the work involves. If you're asked to quote a flat rate for "a blog post", for instance, find out how long they want the posts to be and ask to see an example of the type of thing they have in mind.

Be friendly in your email. You don't need to come across as very formal – unless you get the impression that this is what the client wants. You can normally take your cue from how they email you.

Set expectations early on about how you work. For instance, if the client asks for your phone number and you don't like to take unexpected calls, ask them for a good time to set up a Zoom meeting so that they can have your undivided attention.

If you find that you're getting a lot of client enquiries, you might want to create a bank of saved replies for common questions so that you don't end up typing out the same answers over and over again.

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An Example Response to a New Client Getting in Touch

If you've never had a client email out of the blue before, you might be curious to see how the process works. Here's one example from my own inbox.

Hi Ali,

I'm [NAME], seeking a writer to create sales content for a long-term project. (Not writing about sales, but writing with a goal of selling. You're getting this email because I found good examples you wrote on the web.) The job is to write blog posts for a SaaS website. The pay is \$0.20 per word.

Let me know if you're interested, or if you know anyone who might be.

If you don't want to receive future emails like this, you can reply "stop" and I'll mark you as "don't contact."

Kind regards,

[NAME]

I wrote back four days later (oops). The pay rate sounded good to me, but I wanted to know a bit more about the project before committing.

Hi [NAME],

Please excuse the slow reply (hectic few days here). Sure, I'd love to hear some more details about your project.

Cheers,

Ali

No worries at all, Ali, and thank you for getting back to me.

The work is for [WEBSITE URL]. I'm currently rewriting their website, and they'd like a blog and several landing pages written. They like the style of my

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writing for [WEBSITE URL], which I learned by reading Copyblogger articles. Your work there is a good representation of the voice we're shooting for.

I'd like to assign a first piece this week. They need a large amount of content over the next few months. Would you be interested in doing an assignment this week (or next, if your schedule this week is already full?)

Something to note from that email is that my work on Copyblogger was all quite a few years back. This shows how powerful guest posting can be – bringing in a well-paying client after several years.

Hey [name],

Awesome, that sounds great to me. I should be able to squeeze a piece this week, feel free to send the assignment details whenever you're ready.

I have some time opening up in my schedule over the next few months so no problem taking on some content longer-term, too. Looking forward to working with you.

Cheers,

Ali

Yes, I wrote “squeeze a piece” where I meant to write “squeeze in a piece”. I'd recommend more careful proofreading! This absolutely didn't cost me the job, so please don't agonise over little typos if you make a similar mistake.

I'm still working with this client, though on a different project, a year later.

How the Assignments Work

For each module, you have an assignment to carry out. Obviously you don't *have* to do it – this isn't school! – but you'll get the most out of the course if you work through the assignments along the way.

Each assignment has a suggested length (e.g. 30 minutes) to give you a rough idea of how long it's likely to take, if you do it in full. Don't worry if you only have a little bit of time to spare: even 10 minutes is well worth doing.

ASSIGNMENT

(40 minutes)

Your assignment this week is in three parts:

#1: Take a look at the ProBlogger jobs board or the Freelance Writing Gigs website. Look through several recent jobs to see what sort of things they require. If none of them suit you, have a look at one of the lists of publications that take freelance contributions.

#2: Draft an application to one of those jobs or a pitch to one of those publications. You're welcome to share it in the [Aliventures Club Facebook group](#) if you'd like some help and feedback. It's a private group, so only members will see what you've written!

#3: If you want to apply for the job or send in that idea, go ahead and send the pitch. 😊

Module #2: Further Reading

All of the further reading is optional, but if you want to find out more about something we've covered, it's highly recommended.

[I'm An Editor And Here's What I Want From Your Freelance Pitch](#), Robyn Vinter, Journo Resources

This insightful article by Robyn Vinter shares exactly what she looks for in a pitch – and, crucially, what doesn't work. There are lots of useful tips here, including advice on pitching multiple ideas at once.

[37 Beginner-Friendly Ways to Find Freelance Writing Jobs](#), Kevin J. Duncan, Smart Blogger

This in-depth article includes plenty of advice on pitching, along with some neat tips for finding writing jobs that you might not have thought of – like taking a look at the websites of successful freelancers and finding out who they work for. You definitely don't need to follow *all* the tips on this list: just one or two of them could bring in more than enough work for you.

[10 Tips to Help You Land a Job as a Freelance Blogger](#), Darren Rowse, ProBlogger

Many of these tips apply to any type of freelancing, but there are also some blogger-specific tips – like demonstrating knowledge of WordPress and other blogging tools. This article is aimed at total beginners and it's a good read if you're new to applying for freelancing gigs online.

What's Coming Up Next:

Well done on reaching the end of the second module. Remember, if you have questions at any point, please do pop into the Aliventures Club Facebook group. It's a really friendly place.

[facebook.com/groups/aliventuresclub](https://www.facebook.com/groups/aliventuresclub)

If it's something you'd prefer to discuss privately, or if you're having a technical issue with the course, the best way to get in touch is to email me at ali@aliventures.com.

Here's what you'll find in Module 3:

MODULE 3:

In the next module, we'll be taking a look at how to keep everything organized as a freelancer. We'll cover tracking your pitches and applications, and we'll take a look at how you can keep a list of all the work you do so you can invoice for it correctly and easily.

We'll also look at ways to stay on top of everything when you've got lots of different tasks – and lots of different deadlines! – for several clients at once.