

HOW TO MAKE A LIVING AS A WRITER

A Guide for Liberal Arts Majors

By Laura Schaefer

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Hi. Welcome to my guidebook. I'm glad you're here.

When I was a freelance writer struggling to pay bills, I saw a social media post from an individual in my field who was regularly and consistently earning over \$150,000 per year. He said something to this effect: it had come to his attention that a lot of writers struggled to earn a decent living and he'd be happy to share how he'd figured it out.

Um, YES PLEASE.

I eagerly sent him a message, willing to pay any fee he wanted to charge just to talk to him for twenty minutes. *I needed those secrets.* I'd been spinning my wheels for years by then.

He never replied. It was so frustrating. Many years passed.



Eventually, I figured it out—how to earn good money as a writer—mainly through trial and error.

So many errors.

I did not have good information when I started in this field.

I made a lot of mistakes. One of which, of course, was failing to pester that original social media poster a few more times. I am a polite Midwestern female and take it from me, a humble and unassuming personality can cause some problems when it comes to getting ahead professionally.

Fortunately, my personality also comes with marketable gifts, which is true of most of our challenges. It's all in how you tell the story. For now, it's time to focus. *You can do this.* You can earn real money as a writer and I mean soon.

This book is my attempt to light the path for you with better information than I had when I began, so many years ago, poking at the beast called MAKING A LIVING AS A CREATIVE.

Writing is a special skill, a great way to earn a living, and I want to see you succeed.

Let's get started!

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A word on the title

I almost called this book HOW TO EARN \$100,000 AS A WRITER YOUR FIRST YEAR OUT OF SCHOOL. You know, clickbait. But then I got a little shy about it and went with the more subdued version you see above. You get to decide for *yourself* how much “a living” will be, and that’s as it should be. The amount you need to earn in one year to be comfortable—and to have enough resources to invest back into your operation so it can grow—depends on where you live and a dozen other factors that are none of my business.

That being said, I want you to understand deep in your bones that you *can* earn a comfortable income as a freelance writer and do it immediately after graduating from college. And it may indeed mean six figures!

Let’s talk it through. A lot of writers at every level get irritated by the phrase “six-figure income.” It’s such an arbitrary and overused marker of success. However, I believe it is possible to earn well over \$100,000 doing what we do and that, to me, is exciting. It is okay to give yourself some ambitious benchmarks and big goals...even ones that feel out of reach at this moment.

I believe the implicit promise in my title. Can you actually earn a living as a self-employed writer in the year after you graduate from college?

Yes.

Is it *likely*? That depends on you.

Will it be easy? Probably not, but you’ll find your own unique and joyful way to do it. This guidebook is simply a collection of thoughts and tips from someone who has made a creative solopreneur career work for more than two decades. You won’t agree with everything I share here, and that is fine. Effective writers have to first be good thinkers. So, *THINK*. Be critical and chart your own course.

Planning and practice

Earning a nice living as a self-employed writer will (for sure) require planning and practice. Ideally, you'll start the steps in this book two years before you actually set out to make writing your full-time gig. (If you are a college sophomore or junior now, yay! Your timing is great.)

If you're already out of school and focusing on this project with more time in your day, I believe you can do the planning and ramping up part in one 12-month span of time and the actual six-figure earning the following year. As you roll with this advice, please keep whatever job you currently have. I, for example, worked as a bartender for many years at a locally owned restaurant in Madison, Wisconsin. It kept me sane, around other lovely human beings, and able to take some risks because I had steady tip money coming in.

The project of becoming a high-earning writer will not work if you feel desperate.

If you need this path to pan out to survive or ensure your dependents survive, stop reading right now. Go get something employment-wise that is more solid and reliable and *then* work these steps on the side. Thank you.

Also, I want to acknowledge here at the beginning of this guidebook that there are as many reasons to write and to become a writer as there are individuals. This particular book focuses on writing as a *job*, something you will do to earn money. Real money. Money you will be able to use to buy a vehicle without a loan or even a cute house. That said, I very much value all different kinds of writing goals and purposes. I personally have found writing to be emotionally healing, cathartic, an expression of my gooey artistic soul, and just plain fun. If you'd rather leave writing in these categories and earn money doing something else, I get it. But this book isn't for you.

I missed a lot of opportunities because I didn't grow up knowing any writers and was too afraid to ask for help.

What kind of writing are we talking about here?

This is a guide for growing your writing skills and charging others actual cash money to write for them. Some would call this “copywriting,” “technical writing,” “sales writing,” “ghostwriting,” or “speechwriting,” and that is fine. This ebook will cover more than just one or two categories. There are a lot of different kinds of writing projects you can do that will pay you solid fees, and I didn’t know about most of them when I was 19 or 22 or even 32. I want to open your eyes, reader, because earning a healthy living as a writer is a great feeling.

Yes, you can make a living as a self-employed creative who refuses to ever, ever, ever wear something called “business casual.” You can earn enough to pay your bills in a hoodie and yoga pants.

I put this book together because I am nearly 43 years old and it took me almost 20 years to get my head straight about how to hone my skills and market my services with the correct energy and verve. I missed a lot of opportunities because I didn’t grow up knowing any writers and was too afraid to ask for help. I’m writing this book for my past self as she absolutely needed some ideas from an ambitious—yet empathetic—goofball. Which is exactly what I am. I hope you find it helpful.

A love letter to liberal arts majors

Do you have a somewhat vague plan to go to graduate school one day? Awesome. Welcome.

Have you taken classes in at least eight different departments in your university's College of Letters and Science? Wonderful! You are my people. The more unfocused and random your course selections have been thus far, the better. You'll make a great writer because we're nothing if not random and unfocused.

Kidding. Kind of.

Not to confuse you, but I *also* love a liberal arts major who is studying something extremely specific. You know how to focus and you're willing to go deep on a topic. We can work with that!

Are you a high-achieving student with great grades who cannot decide what profession to pursue? Is it driving you bonkers? I see you. You are skeptical about law school and too afraid of bodily fluids to pursue medicine. Engineers and computer science people annoy you. I get it. (You envy their confidence.)

You are smart, but you'd rather not have to prove it by passing organic chemistry or calculus, thanks.

You're introverted, so you feel weird about calling attention to yourself by "networking." Hi!

My random post-secondary education

I entered the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1997 with very little idea of what to study. You might be asking yourself why I attended college at all, and that is more than fair. The answer is that I've always been bookish, the "class brain," so it did make sense.

Classrooms and libraries and bookstores were my *domain*. Everywhere else scared me. The problem back then was I didn't know becoming a writer or author was a thing one could actually, you know, *do*. Instead, I figured I'd get a job as some sort of editor in the publishing business. The issue here was I lived in the Midwest, and most of the publishing business at that

time was conducted in New York. I was terrified of New York. And I couldn't afford to live there anyway. So.

While all my uncertainty about the future was swirling, I did do one thing right. I pursued a BA degree in Communication Arts, both because the courses in the major appealed to me and because I knew I could get this degree yet enjoy plenty of room in my schedule to take a completely strange and scattered assortment of unrelated subjects. I also thought the major sounded vaguely business-y and could conceivably lead to some job offers one day. (It did, but none of them were appealing.)

The best thing about the major is it left space and time for exploration. Here is a partial list of the classes I took, in no particular order:

- Astronomy, Spanish, Statistics, Psychology
- Sociology, Philosophy, Rhetoric
- Nutrition, Self-defense (I needed a P.E. credit), Introduction to Buddhism
- Accounting (business minor alert), Roman Archaeology, Persuasion
- English lit, American lit, Interpersonal communication
- Introduction to film studies, Women's studies, History of science
- American history, 1945 to present, 20th-century American history

What was I even doing? I HAD NO IDEA. It was great! (I did not think it was great at the time.)

I love liberal arts majors. I don't feel you are getting enough respect. It's not easy to study things that won't obviously pay off, but I believe that doing so has value. Spending time in college expanding your curiosity and learning how to think critically? YES.

The only thing I would've done differently back in the day is taken a few courses in the journalism school. If your school offers creative writing or copywriting classes, take them. I didn't hit upon the idea of becoming a writer until after I graduated and it was too late for me to take a few more useful courses during the day and flex my writing muscles in advance of trying to attract paying assignments. Whoops.

Fortunately, I did write for my school newspaper, so I was soon on my way to fame and glory! (HAHAHAHAHA...not so much. But I did make slow and steady progress, which is what you're going to do.)

Step 1: Make the decision. (Or, why doing this is a good idea)

When I say “doing this,” what I mean is believing in the title of this book and making the decision to turn a writing career into a reality for yourself.

When I was young, I was too afraid to set big goals regarding my work. I didn’t want to be disappointed or feel foolish. I didn’t know any other self-employed writers in my medium-sized college town, and that was a real problem.

I thought I was special just for *trying* to earn my keep as a freelance writer. I thought I was pretty cool. (And, let’s be real, I was.)

But trying isn’t enough, because by only going half in instead of all in I caused a lot of pain for myself. A lot of waiting. Hoping. Wishing for an entirely different life instead of the perfectly serviceable one I had. If you want more insight into this issue, I recommend checking out Leslie Odom Jr.’s book *Failing Up*. There’s always something more you can do, and setting a big goal is the first thing.

By only going half in instead of all in I caused a lot of pain for myself.

Today, I believe in going for it 5,000% with regard to your writing career. This means a lot of things, and it’s going to be a little different for each person. Here are a few examples:

- Humbling yourself and asking for help when the going gets rough
- Investing in growing your skills with both time and money
- Exploring every niche that is interesting to you and then focusing on one or two
- Proclaiming your big goals to peers who are also looking to do huge things
- Doing your research—everything you need to learn is available online or at the library
- Getting up and working when everyone else you know is hungover or just hanging out
- Apologizing when you make mistakes and refusing to quit or hide afterward
- Being accountable for the parts of being self-employed you likely won’t enjoy, such as shopping for health insurance and figuring out your taxes
- Seeking out experts in your field when you don’t have the answer
- Refusing to settle for “good enough” or “barely scraping by”

If you are feeling apathetic or inclined toward inaction because the state of the world is in tatters or because you've recently experienced a setback, I understand. Feel your feelings. Journal, talk to a friend, dance, cry, go for an epic walk. But despite everything, I think it is also okay to go for it professionally. As the renowned filmmaker and memoirist Sarah Polley recently put it, "Run towards the danger." She made this advice her book title! I loved it.

Is writing dangerous? It can certainly feel like it sometimes.

Earning a comfortable living as a writer is doable and I believe just thinking about it will improve your future. Don't mock a big goal. Instead, make a plan, chunk it down, and go after it! Then buy yourself something nice—and donate to a cause you believe in—because you deserve to see something tangible and great that only happened as a result of your dedication to building a real business. That's what you're doing, by the way. You'll start out as a sole proprietor of your writing business at first. Then, you'll file to be an LLC to protect yourself. Finally, when your accountant tells you to, you'll become an LLC that files taxes as an S Corp. But don't worry about any of that quite yet. Just know, for now, that you are on an entrepreneurial path.

It's unwise to do what I did in my early twenties, which was basically to *dabble* in freelance writing for many years. I spent the bulk of my time chasing sad job leads on Craigslist instead of making a deliberate plan or building a real vision.

(Hint: the best clients will not advertise that they need you. They probably don't even realize they need you.)

The best clients will not advertise that they need you. They probably don't even realize they need you.

Treat your decision to become a professional writer who owns a business with as much respect as you'd treat a choice to become a veterinarian or an accountant. Because getting good at writing will take just as long as getting good at performing surgery.

Don't dabble, half try, and say, "Well, I gave it a shot."

I told myself so many lies instead of just setting a big goal and attacking it deliberately. Here is a collection of some of them. Notice they all have one thing in common: each gave me a reason to never fully show up, commit, step into my power, and take the reins of my life in hand. A lot of these notions are rooted in a wish I had to escape because life is hard and escape sounds nice sometimes, right?

- *My small freelance income will just be a bonus once I meet and marry someone with a real job.*
- *Something I write one of these days will be such a runaway bestseller that I'll be able to quit as soon as those royalties roll in. (Or, even if I don't quit, I'll have a publisher telling me what to do, which would be nice. SOMEONE TELL ME WHAT TO DO!)*
- *I'm just doing this freelance writing thing for now while I figure out what I really want to do. Clearly, I am destined for greatness and this isn't it, so something will naturally change.*
- *One of these freelance jobs will lead to a full-time job offer and then I can take it and stop worrying.*
- *I'll go back to graduate school, obviously, because I am a bookish nerd. (Returning to college is fine, but not if you're doing it to get away from something...like responsibility.)*

Developing a transferable skill that you can take with you wherever you go is smart. Writing is something you can do for as little as one hour per day if you are working another job or responsible for caregiving in your family. It is something you can do anywhere. It is something you can do with very little upfront or overhead cost, although we are going to discuss this issue later on in the book as you will need to spend money eventually to improve your equipment and work with a mentor.

Forging a path for yourself as an in-demand freelance writer or content expert is a way to have your own back no matter what.

Get good at something. Get *great* at something. Develop a skill that AI cannot handle (yet).

Figure out a way to be persuasive or charming or surprising in your writing and you'll always have a way to take care of both yourself and the people you love who may someday be depending on you.

Make the decision.

Not only to become a writer, but to become an outstanding, highly paid writer.

Boom. (That was a mic drop. Although now that I think about it, I have to pick it up again because we're just getting started. Oops.)

Step 2: Get some skills

If you read nothing else in this guidebook, please read this chapter.

Doctors go to medical school, lawyers go to law school, and writers need to go to writer's school. If you're going to get paid, you have to help other human beings solve their communication problems. You won't be able to do that unless you invest some major time and effort into becoming an effective writer.

What the heck is an effective writer? I believe a good writer offers content that, depending on the context, offers some or all of the following qualities: It is clear, concise, and grammatically correct. Or, it is surprising, funny, and full of personality. It is playful. It is unique. Your sentence length varies; you make weird and interesting analogies. (Good writing is like porn...because you know it when you see it! If you're awake now, you're welcome.) It is *not* repetitive. It isn't boring.

The good news is tuition can be free for writer's school if you design your curriculum yourself. More good news: quality writing is very subjective. You get to decide for yourself if you're good at it, and you better decide that you are if you want to get anywhere with this career path. Let go of your fear of being a bad writer, and try stuff!

It's okay to fail, but you have to be bold and keep writing to get better.

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Here are some signs you are a good writer or will be:

- You seek and get feedback on your writing.
- When you get negative feedback, you're able to hear it or read it without losing your shit. Instead, you can take criticism and use it to become better. Again, you're willing to seek *out* constructive criticism from peers, beta readers, roommates, teachers, editors, project managers, or coaches/mentors like me.
- You are willing to write *a lot* to improve, as in most days of the week. You're not afraid to look at a blank screen and put something silly on it just to get started. In fact, this is the main problem your clients will want you to solve for them: the blank screen.

- You notice quality writing when you read it (in books, articles, website copy, etc.) and can explain *what* you like about it or *why* it moved you.
- Your local librarian or bookseller recognizes you. Nerd.
- You genuinely love to read, and the idea of devoting your life to writing sounds pretty good. (This is important... this career won't work for you if the prospect of churning out several pages per day of content feels like being sentenced to endure never-ending term paper assignments.)

All of these things can be true and you might still be a pretty poor writer. I was, for a long time! That's okay, you're just getting started. Chances are good, if you are a student right now, that your writing is academic, which means it is dry and boring. Your sentences are long and convoluted because you are trying to prove you are smart.

Relax. I bet your texts to your friends aren't boring. So, there is hope for you.

Some techniques for getting better at writing:

1. **Take writing classes.** This can be done in a formal way, by taking journalism courses at your university if you're still enrolled. Or it can be informal, as in taking courses online via Skill Share, Coursera, MasterClass, etc. You can also take classes from your local library, community college, whatever. It doesn't matter. The point is that you're open to learn and you need more tools. So, go get 'em!
2. **Keep a small notebook or use your Notes app** on your phone to record interesting phrases, analogies, or ideas as you encounter them in regular life. Writers are vampires who use the lifeblood of everyone around them. Start collecting! It's your job. (The point is just to get your brain working and notice words and phrases that make it spark.)
3. **Read.** I'm going to repeat this constantly. If you don't love to read, what are you doing here? Go get a job like a regular adult human.
4. **Do the thing.** Offer to write content for people for free or cheap. DO IT NOW. Does someone in your family run any kind of business or volunteer for any kind of organization? Offer to do their newsletter, respond to their emails, post on their social media channels, or write their website copy. There is no shame in writing for free or for a low fee for a limited time so you have some space to make mistakes and learn. If it goes well, be sure to save your work. Future clients will need to see samples.

5. **Learn from others.** There are so many great books about writing. There are also helpful YouTube Channels and podcasts. Watch, listen, take notes, apply. I loved learning from David Sedaris about how to revise (MasterClass), Malcolm Gladwell about how to organize ideas (also MasterClass), and writing coach Ed Gandia about how to make money (High-Income Business Writing podcast).
6. **Go to events.** There are many, many writing workshops both online and in person. I know they cost money, but the skills and relationships you develop at these things are worth it. I did not do enough of this when I was in college or directly after graduation, and it was a big mistake.

I'm sure you get the idea. Writers...write. A lot. Part of your job now is just to be aware of all the different kinds of written content there happens to be in the world. You can be paid to write the copy on product packaging or websites. You can be paid to write scripts for online videos. You can be paid to write social media posts or long sales pages. If you figure out a way to write copy that consistently sells a product or service, go do it. Stop reading this guidebook and do it! You're already there.

Upwork and Fiverr

Platforms like Upwork, Fiverr, and FreeUp are good places to get experience. Go ahead and take some low-paying assignments to refine your skills on these platforms. Figure out what you like and what you hate. If you work quickly and consistently enough, you can earn real money at this time. I don't recommend these places for more experienced writers, but you're not there yet. Dive in. Block out times during your week when you can devote yourself to studying these platforms to find out how you can best participate and then do it.

A huge part of becoming a well-paid writer one day is deeply knowing yourself.

As you do so, however, take notes for yourself. Notice what you like and don't like. Figure out what your red flags are when it comes to a type of assignment or a type of personality you don't want to deal with again. Take note of what you're exceptionally good at when it comes to content creation. Keep your clips and build your portfolio. This part is important because a huge part of becoming a well-paid writer one day is deeply knowing yourself. You need to understand how you work best, when, and under what conditions. You need to deeply "get" why certain assignments sing for you and flow easily, while others feel like

doom. You won't be able to sustain a writing career in the long term until you get to a place where it feels consistently good.

Ask for honest feedback from the people who hired you and use it to become a better writer. Low-paying assignments are part of your education; they are not really part of your ultimate job.

Be careful about doing too much work for free, however. If you do agree to write something for free, that's fine as long as you have a good reason for doing so. You're always positioning yourself and your value in the market and in your own mind. So be clear about your reasons if you choose to work for free or cheap for longer than a year or two while you're in training.

Finally, *try a lot of different kinds of writing*. Just because something pays decently and you don't hate it doesn't mean it should be your niche for the next ten years. Until work feels joyful to you most of the time, you're still in writing school.

This brings us to our next topic.

Step 3: Wake up to all of the different kinds of writing that pay

If you are like me and still read Twitter from time to time, you'll eventually learn that writing articles for magazines or even websites does not pay like it used to. It's a super common thing to see writers bemoan the fact that Jo March (the beloved *Little Women* character) was paid \$100 over 150 years ago for some piece she wrote in the novel. This keeps coming up because writers are routinely paid that same small amount today, despite a century and a half of inflation...and they are NOT HAPPY about it. Rightly so.

Responding to calls for submission is generally not a good way to make money as a writer.

In fact, responding to any kind of call or job posting for a writer isn't always the best way to make money as a writer. You need to find the opportunities others aren't really seeing and eventually attract clients to you organically because you happen to be excellent at solving one kind of specific problem. In my case, I am great at writing lighthearted, joyful short books and ebooks for cool and creative humans. Like this one! I'm also very speedy and easy to work with, so I get a lot of fun assignments and repeat clients. None of these are ever posted on a job site like Indeed.

Trying to write articles for some publication willing to pay you five cents a word? No.

Writing movie scripts or entire novels on spec? Please think carefully about this. Writing with no contract is such a huge time commitment and risky use of your talent unless you have solid income from other kinds of writing. "On spec," of course, is another way of saying "for free." Advice-wise, I have no leg to stand on here as I wrote many, many books on spec and it did ultimately work out okay for me. In addition to earning a living as a freelance writer, I've also published several middle-grade novels including *The Teashop Girls*...which I wrote on spec. (Insert blushing emoji.)

Getting comfortably stuck

Taking on a writing project that pays \$25/hour? Sure, to get some experience. But in the long-term? No. It's not enough.

I got myself trapped in a kind of writing that paid fairly poorly—but to my mind at the time, decently—for many years: curriculum writing. I

If you ever feel stuck or frustrated, it's a sign you need to change the kind of writing you're doing.

was a straight-A student who loved to learn and research just about anything, so the idea of producing k-12 scaffolded educational materials appealed to me...and I liked that the project work was remote and fairly consistent. But the per-hour rate for my efforts topped out at around \$32, and that's not enough to support an entire family. Especially if you're being paid as a 1099 freelancer, which means you'll have to pay self-employment taxes yourself and receive no healthcare benefits, retirement benefits, or paid time off when you are sick. If any of this is confusing to you, google it. Self-employment taxes in particular are a real thing, an expensive thing, and you need to be aware of them now.

To thrive long-term as a solopreneur, you'll need to push your rate above \$100/hour. If reading that makes you mad, just be glad you're hearing it from someone besides your parents.

I didn't understand that I needed to write content for businesses of all sizes that had a real marketing budget. I thought I needed to write for magazines and publishers, so that is what I did...and it kept my annual income lower than I wanted it to be for a long time.

Before we move on, however, I want to take a moment to express my genuine gratitude to the educational publishing editors who sent work my way when I so needed it. Honestly, I was lucky to have those assignments and that income when I did. It took a long time for me to see a fuller landscape of opportunity for writers, but that is okay.

It's why I now feel qualified to nudge you, dear reader, to look around a little more.

To thrive long-term as a solopreneur, you'll need to push your rate above \$100/hour.

To make better money sooner, you'll need to:

1. Stop charging clients by the hour and start charging by the word or by the project. That way, as you get faster and more skilled, you are rewarded instead of penalized.
2. Figure out a writing niche that you enjoy and that actually pays well without requiring you to constantly pitch or hustle to survive.

Diversify your skills

Look into the following kinds of content creation and strategy and try them while you're still a student and the stakes are fairly low:

- Copywriting
- Email writing
- Infographic creation
- Video creation or strategy
- White papers
- Technical writing
- Ghostwriting
- Scriptwriting (not movies, promo videos)
- Sales page writing
- Ad writing
- Newsletter writing
- Social media management
- Website copywriting/blog writing

It's not for me to decide or even guess what you will like best. Try them all! Just be sure you don't settle early on for one small piece of the overall pie. I didn't understand the entire freelance writing landscape.

If you ever feel stuck or frustrated, it's a sign you need to change the kind of writing you're doing.

My situation eventually got better because someone I was connected to on LinkedIn (more on this soon) reached out to me. He was working for a digital marketing agency that handled content for a lot of big manufacturing and tech companies and needed some blog posts edited. I said yes, and my eyes were opened. The editing turned into writing, and I learned that so many companies needed things written—not just publishers. Duh.

I used that experience to slowly move toward book and ebook ghostwriting, a type of work that pays well and makes me happy.

Figure this out earlier in your career than I did: all businesses of all sizes need things written. Most of them will hire big or established marketing agencies, yes. But not all. Start with the people you already know and ask if they need things written.

You might be surprised to hear, "Yes!"

Step 4: Decide what you believe

This chapter will be short, but it's important. Your capacity to earn money is directly tied to what you believe about yourself, as in your sense of self-worth and your general notion of what is possible for you in the world. If your attitude and beliefs waver, your income will be low or extremely variable. If they are strong, your income will be high and consistent.

It is worth it, then, to address your beliefs and your emotional and mental health issues no matter how long it takes. Better to deal with your personal challenges (including big T and little t trauma in your background) now and go on to enjoy decades of higher earnings and full-hearted participation in this messy life than to ignore your "stuff" and accept decades of struggle, hiding, and avoidance.

Your income depends on what you believe about yourself and what you think it possible.

So, what does it look like to believe in yourself?

This is different for each person. But anything that comes up when you resist telling a client your rate or talking about money at all? Anything that makes you want to run and hide and put a pillow over your head and not talk to people or send them an invoice or follow up on an overdue one? That is something you'll need to explore. These questions go to your overall professionalism and you'll probably need to work on it. No one is born with an innate ability to "be professional." It's something you have to practice and improve over time.

If you're not confident or assured in the arena of work or business, that is okay. You can get better at it. Journal on your fears and consider talking about this stuff with a trusted adult to get to the bottom of it. If you're buying into old stories about who you are and those stories do not include you being a person who deserves income, respect, and self-sufficiency, get curious.

- What have you been told?
- Who do you think should be taking care of you?

What if the answer is...you?

If this feels unfair, I gently ask why. What do you believe about yourself and your worth in the marketplace of work and ideas? Some people believe money is beneath them or inherently corrupt. Some people believe they are caregivers by nature, so they shouldn't have to participate in the economy. Some people believe they can't make money because they have a health issue. No judgment here...I'm just inviting you to think it over and then see what help or information you could gather based on what you answer.

What do you believe about your ability to deliver a service of value to other human beings? Figure it out. Get therapy. Get a coach. Get a workbook.

If you cannot afford to hire help, I hear you. There may be options available through your school or via community services. At one point, I got therapy for \$20/hour because I received it from counselors at the local university who were still in training. At another point, I sought out online therapy because it was a bit more affordable than in-person sessions.

Be bold about your need for help and ask, ask, ask until you find it.

If you're talking to someone new and marveling at their self-assurance or energy, interrogate your thoughts about them. Is that person *really* all that different than you? Or have they just fully gone for it regardless of the pain, embarrassment, and setbacks? Have they fully focused, made mistakes, learned, and improved? Have they been willing to suffer, to be tired, to be bored and confused, and then decide *not* to be confused...all to grow?

Have they paid for help? Have they been willing to ask for something and hear no for an answer over and over? Have they been willing to feel quite a bit of pain? To lose?

Figure out what is holding you back when it comes to charging more for your skillset. And then intentionally dismantle whatever you find in your search.

Change the thinking that is holding you back

I believed, for many years, that I wasn't as good or as valuable as others in our economy because I wasn't A) an engineer, B) naturally good at business/sales, or C) good at computer stuff. (Those are the three ways I thought people earned money: by being engineers, sales savants, or computer scientists.)

What a sad, limited, inaccurate view of the world.

My skills, empathy, sense of humor, and charmingly odd personality are extremely valuable. But I didn't see it because I bought into the "starving artist" narrative—the one that held that creatives deserve it when they suffer. Bullshit. Creatives make the world worth living in.

You are amazing, too.

And we both deserve lots-o-dollars for it.

But first, we have to get comfortable asking for—rather, demanding—them.

Learn to tell your own story

The summer I turned 20, I worked for Disney as part of its College Program. Students from all over the country and the world travel to Orlando, Florida each year to participate in this internship. I drove down from Wisconsin and had a job at the Wilderness Lodge, one of Disney's on-property resorts.

There were parts of it that were fun and parts of it that were drudgery. I bring this experience up now for one specific reason: I was the only person (that I'm aware of) during that short three-month window of time 23 years ago who got in my car and drove to the closet town over to get...

Wait for it...

A library card.

Yup. I was such a huge reader that I *needed* a library card from the local branch in Kissimmee. So, I got one. I specifically remember reading *About a Boy* by Nick Hornby and *Bridget Jones' Diary* by Helen Fielding that summer. Other students were partying and going to the beach, and I was reading, reading, reading.

(Okay, I partied and went to the beach, too. A lot. I also worked a little bit. Sometimes. As little as possible.)

Isn't this a fun little detail from the life of Laura Schaefer? If you are looking to become a self-employed writer in the near future, reflect on your own experiences and mine them for stories you can tell that showcase how you were absolutely *born* to be a writer. Use these details and tales to help potential clients get to know you. Own your story. Share your story. Do it over and over.

Connect with people by being super-honest about exactly who you are and why you do what you do.

If you make this a habit, you'll find others who "get" you and want to work with you. I wish I had learned this lesson sooner.

I'm a weirdo.

But I really love myself and my quirks, I own all of it, and now that I do, the world feels open and available to me. Not all of it, of course. Just the opportunities that are genuinely aligned with me and my goofy, creative, bookish energy.

The same thing can happen to you. So, dig in. What makes you tick? Who ARE you? Tell us via social media, via your website, on YouTube, or at events. Or, simply tell one person at a time; that's fine.

Let people know you and invite them in.

This is how a lasting career as a creative professional is built.

Step 5: Get more experience and improve your writing

Now that you're getting serious, it's time to gather more experience. If you are currently a senior in college, it is also the time to charge more money for your services. You are ramping up and starting to focus on the kinds of writing you actually like doing.

There are a few different ways to get moving on this step:

1. **Start pitching publications.** This isn't a good way to make a lot of money, but it is a good way to collect clips/bylined links for the website you are about to build for yourself.
2. **Write for student publications or clubs.** A corollary to this idea is to write for any publication associated with your school or university, including the alumni magazine or newsletter or your student union's blog. Yes, they still exist.
3. **Lean in harder to Upwork.** Start to focus on the two or three kinds of writing you enjoy the most. See if you can land bigger or better assignments. Yes, I know you are still dealing with your coursework. But still.
4. **Start telling everyone in your life about your writing business.** You need experience and they want to help you. This is where friends, friends of friends, parents, aunts, friends of your parents, and anyone else you can think of can help by throwing work your way. Do you know anyone in marketing? Talk to them. Even if they have no assignments for you, they might be willing to shed some light on how their organization works with contractors or freelancers. That's valuable insight and will lead you to sell your skills more effectively later on.
5. **Proactively research who does the marketing for small businesses in your community.** If you're already familiar with a business or organization, simply ask. If not, you can sometimes find this information on their website. Ask the marketing director if they ever hire freelance writers. There was a study done recently that showed artists are much more likely to succeed if they showed their work to hundreds of galleries instead of just one or two. It's tempting to feel as if your success is based on "the right connection" or "who you know," because that is true. But keep in mind you can continuously shift the odds in your favor by reaching out to new people!

Attract better clients with a high-quality website

Build a website using Wix, Squarespace, or WordPress, and be clear about what you offer in terms of services. If you'd like local clients to start, use your city as a keyword in your copy. Post your clips and write an engaging About Me section. Notice other writers' websites and follow their models. Post a professional photo of yourself; not a selfie.

What is your superpower as a writer? Are you fast? Do you understand the jargon in one particular area? It's okay if it's not technical. Perhaps you loved to play the flute as a kid and a teen, so now you enjoy writing website copy for private music teachers. Cool! Say that. Be specific. Or, perhaps you are really into boating or beauty products. It's a big world and it is okay to focus on just one part of it.

Though the header above says "high-quality" do not get too hung up on this step. You need a website and it is okay if it is rather basic to start. Look at five other websites, use templates, and get it done. Don't spend months and months trying to make it perfect.

Work for a digital marketing agency

A great way to get a lot of writing experience very quickly is to cold email advertising or digital marketing agencies. You can start with the ones in your area, but you don't have to. They all need writers, especially fast and reliable ones. They'll take a chance on you. Of course, you may have to cold email 50 of these firms first and you may only hear back from two. But that's fine. Just make sure your cold email is interesting. Say why you are special and why they should give you a try. Be charming! A fair starting rate for a new writer is \$0.10/word or \$30/hour.

If you do a bad job, you will live and you will learn. So, go for it!

Pay attention to other writers

There are so many insightful podcasts and other resources out there offering advice to writers. You'll absorb actionable ideas from them if you make it a point to reach out or tune in.

- [Bizzy Coy](#) on Twitter is a favorite of mine...sign up for her newsletter.
- I also like [Ed Gandia](#), a writing coach with a strong podcast and lots of free resources on his website.
- Look to [Jennie Nash](#), a talented author who trains others to be book coaches.
- Use your podcast app and search for copywriters, ghostwriters, or freelance writers to see what comes up. I like Stefan Georgi's podcast [The Road to a Billion](#).

One of the biggest sources of work is other writers. This happens when they refer projects to you that aren't in their area of interest or because they have too much other work and lack capacity. You can offer to be a sub-contractor for more experienced copywriters by letting them know you'll do background research or complete other writing-related tasks that they may not enjoy. This model is a great way to learn, particularly if the writers you meet are willing to share their wisdom with you.

Use better tools

Just because you are a professional writer does not mean you won't make mistakes. Cut down on typos and missing words by using [Grammarly](#). It's a great tool! There is a free tier and a paid tier; you can decide which level you require. Otter.ai is a wonderful app for transcribing phone calls or voice memos. It's not 100% accurate, but it's not bad. There is a free tier and a paid tier for this tool as well. Try it out and see what you think!

Other good tools include QuickBooks for invoicing and bookkeeping, Google Calendar for keeping track of your schedule, and Calendly for inviting clients to meet with you. I personally enjoy using Google Docs to collaborate with others on long-form projects and Adobe for sharing contract agreements and inviting clients to sign them electronically. Paypal, Zelle, and Bill.com are good for collecting payments.

It's also time, as you are getting more and more serious about your writing work, to spend a little cash and upgrade your equipment. Purchase a reliable computer, an ergonomic desk chair, and possibly a tablet as well. Keep all of your receipts for tax purposes.

Create standard templates

Depending on your writing niche, you'll likely need a standard template in Word, Google Docs, PDF or another platform of your choice for the following items:

- Project brief: this is a document that summarizes what the client wants
- Collaboration proposal: this is a document that outlines the scope of work, project timeline, fees, and call notes for a particular project
- A contract: this is the agreement that both parties will sign that is legally binding. I paid a local lawyer here in Florida \$750 to create mine; you can start by using an online template and adjusting it to fit your needs

Either reach out to other writers in your network to learn what they use for these items or create your own templates using online guides.

Improve your process by asking better questions

This guidebook is agnostic as far as the kind of writing you'll be paid to do, but most writing has a few core elements in common. Spend more time answering the following questions and your work will improve:

1. **Who is the audience?** My advice is to encourage your clients to get *very specific* about the people they are trying to reach. Age? Gender? Geographic location? Interests? Problems?
2. **What is the goal of this content?** Are you writing to entertain? Educate? Sell a product? Change the conversation? Be sure you know what you're doing before you start. The client should be very clear about what they need to you accomplish with a certain piece or type of copy. If they're unclear on what they are trying to do or why they're hiring you, it will be difficult—maybe even impossible—to deliver useful content.
3. **How will we define and measure success?** Perhaps the content needs to go viral for the client to be happy. It's better to know this ahead of time. Vague notions of what will make your client feel good are not great. Ask them to define success and to be very specific about whether they need to see certain metrics.
4. **What will make this engagement a win-win?** Think long-term, and create a strong relationship with each client. *Do what you say you're going to do.* Be clear about

what you need from the client to be happy and encourage your clients to be clear about what they need from you as well.

5. **How can I go above and beyond?** This won't always be possible, but if there is a way to do a little extra, go for it. Surprise and impress your clients.

Ask for feedback and testimonials

The best way to improve your work is to ask for constructive criticism and feedback. If all you hear is positivity, fabulous! Ask for a recommendation on LinkedIn or for a general testimonial you can place on your website.

Data is your friend. Ask your clients how you can improve and most will tell you what's on their minds.

Read

Are you still reading for fun? I hope so!

Step 6: Build your network

All writing work will flow to you from other human beings you meet either in real life or online. I've rarely gotten jobs from in-person networking, but it has happened from time to time. You'll need to decide for yourself how you best want to meet new people and tell them about what you do. Start with the communities you're already part of and go from there. I am *not* a big fan of "sliding into DMs" to try to attract clients, but people definitely do it. YMMV.

Here are some better ideas:

- **In-person events:** Your neighborhood or city likely has many opportunities for small business people to meet up and share what they do. This may occur at a local co-working space, young professionals' organization, or via a volunteer group.
 - If you're extroverted, you'll do great! If you're introverted like me, these events can be tough. But they won't kill you and the more you participate, the easier it will become.
 - Try a few different options and see where you feel most comfortable. When I first moved to the Orlando area in 2015, I attended a weekly lunch for local solopreneurs at a coworking space and it was so helpful. I met friends and got a few different writing assignments this way.
- **LinkedIn:** This social media platform is *the* place to be for creative service providers. I'd even go so far as to say you should pay for their premium service for a few months and post content every day. Be sure to connect with everyone you know and ask your clients to leave testimonials for you upon each project completion.
 - Participate in conversations by commenting on others' posts and invest real time in writing a thoughtful summary for your own profile. Get feedback from others and constantly refine it until it pops.
 - I've gotten more work through LinkedIn than any other way. It's awesome.
 - If you're thinking about starting a blog, cross-post your content here. You can even start a newsletter on LinkedIn and it's a good way to distinguish yourself.
- **Other social media channels:** You're probably on TikTok and Instagram, so why not use them to attract some work? Be clear about who you are, what you do, and what sets you apart. This is a chance to showcase your creativity and winning personality. Announce that you are available and explain how people should contact you.

- **Email:** If you haven't already, it's a savvy idea to build an email list. Remember, you cannot spam people. They need to opt-in to receive your messages. I know everyone says email is dead, but I don't see it that way. Set a goal for yourself to email five, ten, or even twenty new people adjacent to your existing network per day. Tailor your message for each one and keep things authentic and real. You'll hear back from more folks than you probably expect, and even if they can't hire you for anything right now, they may keep you in mind for the future. Think of this as planting seeds.
- **Clubs and organizations:** If you have been hiding in your apartment, it's probably time to go have some fun out in the world. The communities you're naturally drawn to participate in can eventually lead to paid work. The key is to continuously expand the circle of people you know and be open with everyone about what you do. Let opportunities come to you organically and remember that work will flow to you via relationships you build.

Step 7: Do your chores

If you choose to work for yourself rather than getting a regular full-time W-2 job, there are a few extra chores you'll need to take care of. Don't be intimidated; you can handle this stuff.

Income Taxes

First, it's important to understand that you won't be issued a tidy tax form in January every year that tells the government exactly what you earned in total, so you'll need to keep track of your income and expenses yourself. Some clients will send you 1099 forms that show what they paid you over the course of one year; others will not. You need to report your total income from all sources regardless of what individual clients submit to the IRS.

I recommend working with an accountant or professional tax preparer right from the beginning. This will cost you several hundred dollars per year as a sole proprietor, but they'll help you avoid mistakes. They will also help you set up a system for paying quarterly income tax estimates (yes, this is a thing...start saving at least 25% of your income now) and plan for the future.

To find a good tax preparer, ask your parents or another respected relative who they use or seek out a recommendation from your university advisor or small business center. If you don't like your person, switch. This is an important relationship and you should be able to call or email them throughout the year with your questions or concerns. Do not get behind on your taxes. Take care of your business and do it right.

Once you've achieved a year or two of solid income as a sole proprietor, you'll want to file your business as an LLC in your state to protect your assets. Talk to your accountant about when to do this. Eventually, you'll file federal taxes as an S Corp, but the details of when to do so are beyond the scope of this guidebook.

Expenses

Keep track of what you spend on anything related to your writing business. This includes your computer or other equipment, subscriptions to publications you need for reference or continuing education, fees to attend workshops, professional organization membership fees, office rent, coworking space membership dues, LinkedIn Premium service fees, website hosting fees, coaching fees, books, paper, postage, etc.

I am a big fan of keeping expenses as low as possible at first, but don't be as extreme as I was about it. If you refuse to spend any money to grow, you won't grow.

Insurance

You'll need to purchase your own health insurance after age 26 (or earlier if you're not on your parents' plan). I recommend using Healthcare.gov or working with a local broker who can find the best plan for your particular situation and needs.

Retirement

Please read a little bit about the beauty of compound interest and start planning for retirement early. The best method I've found is a "set it and forget it" model whereby I invest the same amount in the stock market every single month and never sell. My nest egg has grown very nicely and this cushion has allowed me to qualify for mortgages three separate times despite otherwise being a pretty risky bet.

Work with a financial planner in your area who was referred to you by someone you trust. Ask a lot of questions—it's your money and you deserve to understand exactly what is happening with it and what fees you'll have to pay. I'm not a fan of crypto or anything that is confusing or super-volatile, but you do you.

Clean your apartment

If I traveled back in time to age 21, the first thing I'd probably do after buying stock in Apple is clean my apartment. You need a nice workspace. I know this seems beside the point, but it's really not. If you have too many disruptive roommates to work at home, you can skip this step and get some work done at the library or local coworking space.

Make a smoothie

All the income you'll earn as a writer is a direct function of your ability to think clearly. Give your brain better nutrients so it can do excellent work day in and day out. Make a smoothie every morning with a banana, some frozen berries, kale or spinach, kombucha, and oat milk. Chase it with a multivitamin, some fish oil or probiotics, and a long walk or run. Your synapses and microbiome will thank you.

Step 8: Learn from your mistakes

Being your own boss isn't easy. Sure, you can take a day off when you want to...but you're also personally accountable to your clients when you turn in work they don't like.

It will happen.

Someone will be unhappy with your efforts, or you'll make another kind of mistake (such as sending the wrong version of a document or failing to do the right kind of research). This is an important moment in your business. It's not the end of the world, I promise. Most people are reasonable and if they are unhappy, you are experiencing a chance to learn and improve your skills either as a writer or as a project manager.

Do not let one mistake, one failure, or one unhappy client end your desire to grow your business.

Take responsibility for the mistake or the miscommunication. Explain that you are committed to fixing the problem. Listen to their feedback, ask a lot of questions, and do a better job on your second attempt using what you've learned from these notes. If it's a case in which no matter what you offer to do to fix things, the person you're trying to serve is displeased, you'll need to let them go as a client, move on, and perhaps even issue a refund. (This would only be true in very extreme cases; my standard contract, for example, states *no refunds*.)

The main point is you will survive.

Do not let one mistake, one failure, or one unhappy client end your desire to grow your business. Your thoughts matter a lot when things get difficult. An unhelpful thought is something like, "I'm a fraud. I'm an imposter. I should quit now."

Helpful thoughts when things go wrong:

- *It feels bad to get this negative feedback today, but in a year or five, I won't remember this at all.*
- *I can learn from this situation and from this challenging person.*
- *I made a mistake, but I can fix it. I am human.*
- *I will collect more information and do a better job next time.*
- *Every business owner has tough clients; I'm no different.*

- *Dealing with this situation is making me better at my job.*
- *Running my own show is a privilege and right now I'm really earning it!*

If you're having a tough time, don't be afraid to ask for help or support from colleagues or other freelancers. This is why it's valuable to connect with writers or creative solopreneurs via social media and/or in your local community. They'll be able to offer you consolation or specific advice.

I am a member of the [Association of Ghostwriters](#) and we often talk to one another about difficult clients or unusual circumstances. It helps so much to know we are not alone.

When nothing is happening

This is when you'll want to give up on your goal to become a full-time sought-after writer. I've been here many times and it is hard. Telling everyone you are a writer and then experiencing weeks or months in which you have no assignments or jobs is very difficult. These are the times when you'll need to manage your mind and cultivate trust that things will improve.

Here are some steps that have helped me during fallow periods:

1. Spend an hour or two prospecting for work. This means posting to social media, sending out a set number of cold emails, or reaching out to people you've worked with in the past. But don't kill yourself here. Contrary to common advice, you don't need to put in a full 8-hour day trying to find work. Mind your energy and keep it light.
2. Work on your own creative writing. Sometimes writing your own stuff (fiction, personal essays, poetry, etc.) is the only thing you can do. And that's fine! Try to enjoy it.
3. Move your body. When work isn't going your way, go play tennis with a friend, go for a run, or take a yoga class. In my experience, things feel less dire after you've taken the time to work up a sweat.
4. Change your scenery. If you can, travel to a different part of town or visit a state park. Changing up your visual inputs can loosen new ideas and just make you feel better when it seems like nothing will.

Step 9: Attract better clients

Once you've completed one or two years of planning and training, it's time to start *earning*. You are ready to shine. A good rate to shoot for as a self-employed writer is, as I mentioned previously, \$100/hour. That said, I prefer to charge by the word (\$1/word) or by the project. I charge less, for example, if it's a project for a client I've worked with previously and therefore trust them to be kind and straightforward in our dealings.



This chapter is called “Attract better clients,” because this is the key to earning a consistently high income as a writer. You need a stable base of reliable clients with a solid budget for your services. I'm not sure what that will look like for you—it depends a lot on the type of writing you choose to do—but again, it's likely to consist of businesses, associations, or organizations instead of individuals or publications.

Be sure that all of your branding, as they say, positions you as a premium service provider. Keep track of the results you achieve for your clients and don't be shy about sharing those results. If your copy sells products, tell people! If your content goes viral, mention it. If your clients love you because you're an awesome person, be clear that your winning personality is part of the package.

Focus on one or two main offerings

Being a high-earning writer is easier to do once you get very clear about who you are and who you serve. Hone your offerings; don't try to write everything for everybody. If you're excellent at writing nonfiction books, stick to nonfiction books. If you love product descriptions, stick to product descriptions. Do you have a great method for knocking out a white paper in a week? Excellent! Stick to it.

Make yourself the go-to for one particular niche and you'll have more luck and higher earnings than if you bid on every project. It helps a lot if your niche is specialized, meaning not just anyone can succeed in it without some training.

Write down your policies and red flags

You teach others how to treat you. If you'd prefer not to work on weekends, make that a policy. If you'd prefer your clients not text you after business hours, make it a policy and let them know about it. Then stop responding to text messages that come in at 8 p.m.

Red flags are those little signs that an assignment won't go as well as you hope. One of my red flags, for example, is a potential client who has worked with a ghostwriter before and has had a poor result. I'm careful with these situations because chances are good that this person won't like my work, either. (Most ghostwriters operate in a similar manner.)

Another red flag for me is a client who has endured a very traumatic circumstance in their life and wants to write about it before working with a therapist or counselor first to fully process it. This can be challenging because it's tough to write about something with grace, reflection, or humor when you're still grieving or angry about it.

Hone your offerings; don't try to write everything for everybody.

These are, of course, extremely specific examples and yours will be different. But I encourage you to be reflective and to listen to your gut instincts as you grow your writing business. Being choosy about the work you do will ultimately serve you very well.

Set goals around content quantity and new connections

The more you write, the more you'll get paid. Increase your capacity. Next, be consistent about making new connections with people who can benefit from your services, both in person and online. Do this in your own way, but be sure to do it. You can set a goal to send ten tailored emails to new contacts per day or attend one networking event per month.

Decide for yourself how you'll intentionally tell more people about your services and then keep growing those relationships over time. Sometimes creative careers feel as if they're out of our control. But there are so many factors you can control, and introducing yourself to more people each week is a big one.

Raise your rates

If you reach a point where you are too busy, it is time to raise your rates. A lot of online business coaches loudly proclaim you should double your fee, but I think that's a bit extreme. Nudge it up slowly by 10% or perhaps 20%. Set aside time each year you are in business to reflect on what is working well for you and what is not working well. This is a good time to raise your rates. Don't be afraid to fire clients who are not a good fit.

It may be hard to believe, but there are a lot of people and businesses out there who are willing to pay good money for skilled writers. Do not fall into scarcity thinking. You deserve to be paid well. If someone wants to negotiate a little bit, that is fine. But if they're pushing you hard for a big discount, walk away. I'll do one small free sample for a client, but if they want more freebies than I'm comfortable with providing, I'm gone.

Be consistent

The best thing you can do for your writing business is to continue to focus on what you do best and be consistent. Stick to a regular work schedule and be intentional about devoting time to marketing your services even when it feels as if you have no capacity. The biggest mistake I made over the years was that I would get very busy and stop marketing. Then, when I finished my projects, I'd have nothing new lined up. It was very sink or swim, and made me feel panicked. It's tough to keep things consistent, but if you make it a goal, you'll do better than I did.

Keep reading

You're still reading, right?

Step 10: Get a mentor

I did not understand how to attract a mentor when I was a young writer. I thought mentors somehow magically appeared out of the blue to the worthy. It turns out they do not, particularly when you are a solopreneur who is naturally introverted and reserved, leaving your apartment only to get food and occasionally jog around the block.

I wish someone had said, “It’s easy, Laura. You have to pay for mentorship!”

Paying for expert advice is *the* shortcut. This is true regardless of whether you’re trying to make it as a writer, an illustrator, a real estate investor, or anything else. Lack of knowledge about your industry is just a given when you start out, so you need to spend quite a bit of time learning what is up. Sure, you can and should read books and listen to podcasts to learn how people *really* earn a living in your field. But actual conversations with people who are really doing it *right now*? Priceless!

As a self-employed person, you generally have to pay for mentorship if you want regular guidance or new ideas.

If you find a writer, creative professional, or solopreneur you admire, ask them if they’ll do a one-off coaching call with you. A fair rate for this service is about \$250/hour and is completely worth the fee as you can learn more in one hour talking to an expert who has “been there, done that” than you can learn in an entire year of personal trial and error. If you don’t particularly care which expert you speak to, put out a general call:

“I’m looking for a writing mentor and I’m willing to pay. Who should I speak to?”

I am available to coach, guide, and answer your questions about earning a living as a writer long-term; send an email to me at ljsch22@gmail.com and we will schedule a Zoom or a phone call. I’ll get you on the right track in one to three sessions.

Conclusion

I'm so happy to be a self-employed writer. While the uncertainty of this career path has been stressful at times, I relish controlling the shape of my day. I love the work itself. And I've met some amazing people...both other writers and my thoroughly interesting clients.

Working as a writer is a great way to earn a nice living and build a good life. You can live anywhere and get to know yourself at the deepest level. Being a writer has given me the chance to pursue my own natural curiosity and continue to be my weird self without too many constraints. I highly encourage it!

If you think this might be the lifestyle for you, go for it.

I'm rooting for you!

Summary points

- If your path through college has been a little unfocused, you might be a writer!
- If there is still time, take more writing-centric or journalistic courses
- Consider writing for your student newspaper or another campus website
- Make a strong decision to go for it; don't waste time *trying* to become a writer
- Set big goals for yourself around quantity, quality, and connection
- Proclaim you will get extremely good at writing; stop hiding and hoping
- Focus on education, mentorship, and gathering feedback
- Constantly improve your skills
- Raise your rates



About the Author

Laura Schaefer is the author of A Long Way from Home, The Teashop Girls, The Secret Ingredient, and Littler Women: A Modern Retelling. Born and raised in Wisconsin, Laura currently lives in Windermere, Florida with her husband and daughter, where she enjoys visiting theme parks and watching rocket launches from her front yard.

Information about my ghostwriting services:

My mission is to serve you, my client.

After we've talked at length and I've come to understand you, there are hours and days where it's just me in front of my screen. I use every tool at my disposal, research skills, empathy, humor, a well-chosen quote, experience with chapter organization and rhythm, and my intellect to convey your ideas.

Your book should have a central idea that is both simple and clear. It must be elegantly written, meaning the chapters flow in a pleasing way, with a clean structure and a conversational tone.

Your book must offer the reader total clarity. There are no extra words or unnecessary jargon. Finally, your book should be stimulating. It evokes emotion and curiosity. It guides readers to the heart of key moments of transformation, both in your own life and in the lives and careers of your clients. More than anything else, your book exists to serve and uplift others. Ready to get started?

I create paradigm-shifting full-length books and shorter ebook [Story Packets](#) like this one with executive coaches, artists, designers, founders, keynote speakers, therapists, influencers, health experts, thought leaders, and celebrities. If you are currently building your coaching or consulting business, I'd love to talk. To learn more about my process, please visit lauraschaeferwriter.com/faq or email me at ljsch22@gmail.com.

I believe in stories. I believe in the power of a book to change minds and societies.

I believe in ideas. Tell me yours.