

Freelance Goldmine

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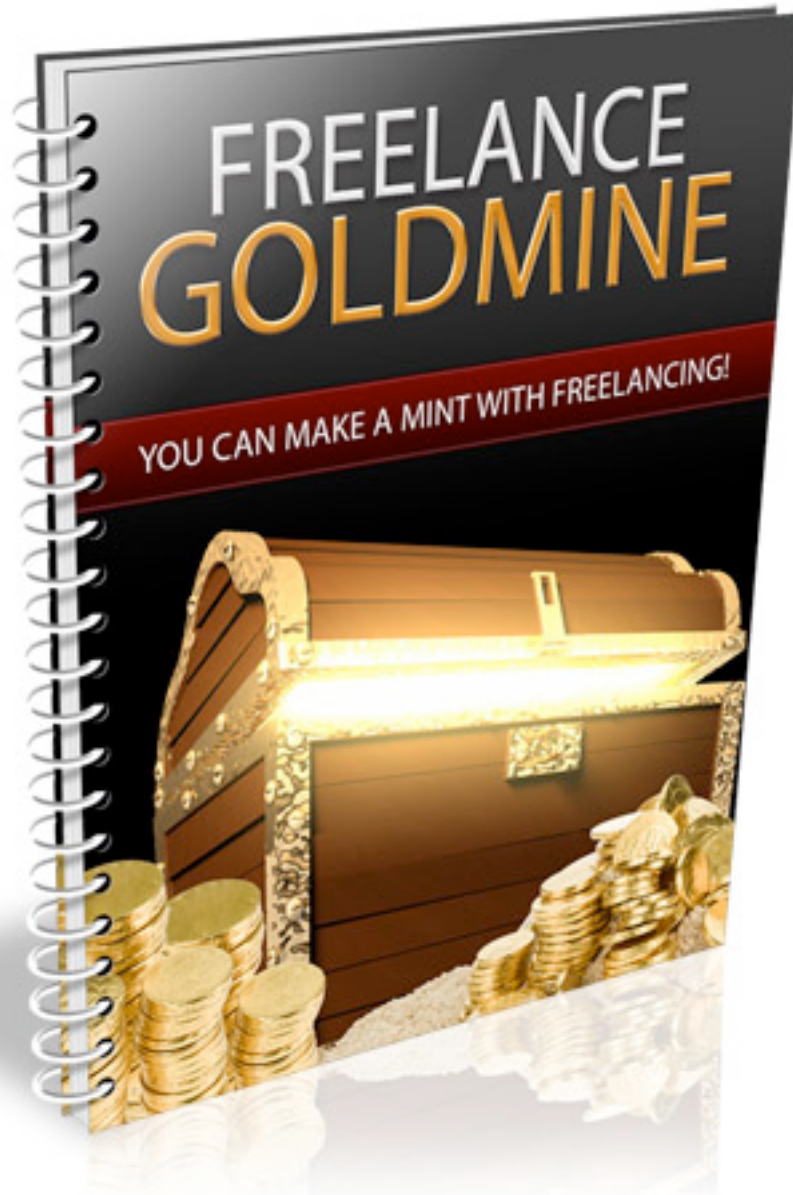


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Introduction To Freelance Goldmine

The Internet has opened up opportunities for writers giving them increased access and exposure to clients and projects. The idea of being able to work from home, writing reports, ebooks, guides, tutorials and sales pages is appealing to many, especially when writing was a primary hobby, or something that they have done for many years before the Internet existed.

You can work as much or as little as you like depending on financial and lifestyle goals. There are few costs in setting up a freelance writing business and it is easy to do requiring few resources, other than a internet enabled computer or laptop.

However, writers need to work exceptionally hard, producing new content regularly, sometimes spending hours on end completing projects just to make a decent living. As with lots of things the more you put in the more you will get out.

Daily activities excluding writing include regularly checking emails and responding to clients messages, bidding on projects posted on freelance sites such as Elance as well as updating websites, blogs, records and accounts.

So now that you know what is required of professional freelance writers, let's get into the meat & potatoes of this report, how to start a successful freelance career!

Getting Started

Your office should be fully equipped with high speed internet as well as a decent word processing software such as word. Records should be kept of projects completed and regular clients and especially on finances as accounting is very important for those who are self employed.

You're Rates

Your rates are the minimum you can accept for a given amount of work. Working out your rates is vital as time is important to a writer and if you want to make the most of your time spent writing you don't want to be working for too little.

Work out what kind of yearly/monthly income you would like to achieve writing then work out how much time you can actually spend writing, that's just writing not bidding checking emails or anything else.

Next work out how much you can physically write in a set amount of time remember to include not just typing time but time spent researching and selling and grammar checking and reading though etc. Be realistic can you really write 5,000 words a day?

Now you have these to figures you should be able to work out your rate. Divide your monthly or yearly figure by the amount of time you can actually spend writing. For example \$1000 a month divided by 5 days a week 8 hours a day equals

$1000/160=\$6.25$ an hour or per 625 words per hour based on writing 5000 words a day. That's \$50 for a days work. Remember to include in your calculations any expenses you have i.e. site membership or commission fees as well as fees to transfer money imposed by sites such as pay pal.

Obviously project amounts will vary considerably but your rate gives you a baseline as under that figure the project isn't profitable, and not worth spending your time on if you wish to reach your necessary monthly target.

Creating a steady flow of projects is important as too many all at once and you won't be able to complete them all in time. Bidding on a large number of projects the day or two before you are about to finish your current work should win you a project in time.

At first you may find it difficult to get work as you will not yet have a rating or much experience to attract clients to your bid so go as low as possible to build up your ratings and win projects initially then as your ratings increase so can your bids.

Create a website

There are many sites which allow you to create a free website, freewebs.com is a good one. However if you want your own domain and website starting from scratch rather than one of these, I recommend posting a project for a website designer on Rentacoder once you have brought a domain name.

Choosing a domain is an important choice, think about what people will type into a search engine when looking for a writer however it is unlikely you will receive

much work by way of the website as there are so many similar, the websites main function is as a place where you can direct potential clients and showcase your work.

What to include on your website:

- Create a portfolio – this is a showcase of your best work and where you will direct potential clients. Don't include the whole of any one document and try to cover as broad a variety of topics, formats and styles as you can.
- Tell potential clients about you and your skills – clients are more likely to pick you the more they know about you. You don't have to include every detail but do include past experience, writing skills and qualification and details of any particularly good past projects and also your current ratings on various writing sites of which you are a member.
- Include a good picture this allows clients to see who they are talking to and helps establish a working relationship.
- Include contact details - give clients a variety of ways to contact you and make sure you reply promptly to even the smallest query, checking e-mails etc several times a day.

Finding Work

Join as many freelance sites as possible to give yourself access to the largest number of potential clients. The first step upon registering is to create a profile.

Creating a profile is how you advertise yourself on freelance sites. Include your skills and qualifications and past experience as a writer. If allowed include a link to your website. Include a picture it's a fact that freelancers who upload a picture onto their profile get more projects than those without.

Your profile can also contain past projects you have completed through the site as well as ratings from past clients so it is important to do your best to keep clients happy as a bad rating can damage your chances of winning bids on that site. You have no control over this section usually and so potential clients can see the good as well as the bad ratings and comments.

Each writing site works in a different way and has a slightly different way of operating some make money by charging you a % of the fee you are paid when you win and complete a project through the site, others have membership fees though none of the sites I mention have compulsory fee membership i.e. they are free to join but you are limited to the number of bids you can place, membership gives unlimited bidding and or other advantages. Others charge to contact the client or bid on a project.

I recommend testing out a site thoroughly before signing up for any membership deals and initially signing up for the shortest time possible so if things don't work out you haven't spent a large amount of money. Once you have a good idea of

the level of income a site can provide and have been registered for a few months you might want to sign up for longer to take advantages the benefits it affords.

Some freelancing sites to try:

<http://www.elance.com>

<http://www.getafreelancer.com>

<http://www.rentacoder.com>

<http://www.odesk.com>

A better way to get work is on the various internet marketing forums. These forums are full of successful marketers who need services like these! It can be pretty hard to find a good, reliable freelancer, so they'll be more than willing to give you a chance. You can also get slightly better prices than you can on the freelance sites.

Some forums to try:

<http://www.warriorforum.com>

<http://www.sitepoint.com>

<http://www.digitalpoint.com>

- Additional sources of income

There are also many additional sources of income for Internet writers, these include:

- Reviewing, there are many companies and sites who will pay for reviews of virtually any types of product.
- Surveys, your opinion is valuable and there are many sites which will send you questionnaires via e-mail and pay you for each one you complete.
- Blogging, a monetized blog updated regularly can bring in a fair amount of money if it's popular.
- Proof reading, people pay to have their work spell and grammar checked by a person rather than a computer.
- Translation – A good option if you are fluent in more than one language.
- Link building, many companies will pay for you to create links to their websites online and it doesn't involve any difficult or complex skills.

Top Freelance Hot Spots

Bizreef.co.uk

Bizreef.co.uk is a good site with a large number of projects in a variety of categories writing, photography, websites, programming, graphic design, video and audio, translation and business and marketing. When you register you can set up a profile in any or all of these categories.

They are a new company that got up and running this year and already has 25,000+ providers signed up. They run on a system very similar to Elance. You list your services and you can wait for people to find you or you can bid on projects. They seem to lean more towards buyers seeking out service providers and if they can't find any then they can open a project and wait for bids to come in.

When a client adds a project they select how many bids they wish to receive usually 5 although can vary. Writers are charged a small fee to contact the client and enter negotiations with them, usually between 1 and £2. This fee increases each time someone bids so it's an advantage to be quick and be the first to bid.

This is the only fee you pay however there is no guarantee that the client will choose you or even any of the writers who bid.

There may also be a charge if fees are escrowed and the project is completed through the site, though once you have paid to contact the client the payments can be done offsite to avoid this fee though you will not be able to rate each other or have the security of escrowing funds.

You can see the ratings of the client (if they have been previously rated) and profiles and ratings of competitors who bid on the same project as you but not the details of their own negotiations with the client.

Go for projects with the fewest number of competitors, get in early to get the lowest fee and make sure the client has a rating as they are most likely to follow through and actually employ someone. Avoid projects which ask for quotes or

provide limited or sketchy information. This will give you the best possible chance of making a success of this site.

Constant Content

Registration like other sites is free and allows you to create a profile or profiles under the section writing, illustrations or photography. <http://www.Constant-content.com> is unlike other writing sites in that clients post their project specifications and writers post a sample of the work they have done to fit that clients requirements.

The client then chooses between the samples and buys the completed document or not, they are under no obligation.

Obviously doing the work with no guarantee that it will be brought is risky but if it isn't sold then it can be brought by clients looking through the sites database which is how most work is sold on this site.

You get to decide the price your willing to sell it for and weather you want to sell it repeatedly as a usage only piece or sell it once for the full rights. It is well worth placing any unsold or additional work on this site as it may just sell.

Constant content does take commission on all work sold on the site. You can become an affiliate, refer writers, and earn 20% of their earnings. Constant-Content takes this right out of their cut.

Guidelines on submission of work are strict and absolutely no spelling or grammar mistakes are allowed. Work is carefully screened upon submission

which can take up to 3 days but usually less than one and work is often rejected if not of a high enough quality. Make sure you follow all their guidelines when submitting an article.

You can click Help and read the comprehensive Writer's Guidelines and FAQ. Also under the help section you will find Writer Tutorials and Forums. These are key in your earning success on Constant Content.

Elnance

Elnance, a freelance community that has been running for a few years is one of the leading freelancing platforms. Elnance works on a bidding system where providers bid on projects. As a service provider, you will need to build a profile which will include your experience, skills and portfolio.

You not only have to create a profile but pass a test in order to be able to place bids. This ensures the quality of freelance writers on the site. From this point on you can go out and look for work.

Clients may also ask you to bid on projects that they have open. If your bid is selected you accept it you can contact the buyer to discuss the project details and start working. Elnance seems to get this right, they have just implemented a system that lets you chat/talk by phone with your client.

Buyers pay for services rendered through the Elnance Payment System from where they will be available for withdrawal. Depending on where you are in the world, you can withdraw payments via Automated Clearing House, cheque or wire transfer.

There are fees associated with using their services. There is a monthly membership fee which is dependant on the membership plan you choose to use and the services you provide. These fees range from \$11/month to \$199/month.

There are four membership plans which include Courtesy, Limited, Professional and Select. The higher the plan you choose, the more access you have to membership benefits and a higher monthly bid allotment.

If you exceed your monthly bid allotment you are charged \$1.50 per additional bid. They also charge a project fee which is a percentage of the transactions and ranges from 6.75% to 8.75%.

As a 1st level member you are able to bid in many very low budget projects (from \$10 to \$150). Now, buyers for that kind of projects usually post projects on Elance just to figure out how much they should negotiate with a brick and mortar seller (not Elance sellers). Projects are either closed before the scheduled date or are declared as "bidding not met my expectations".

Getafreelancer

A site for freelancers of a wide range of professions, there are plenty of projects here for writers. As with other site it is free to register but commission is waived if you pay a monthly \$12 to become a gold member which is a good deal if you find yourself doing regular work for this site. Rentacoder boasts a 92.49% repeat customer rate.

The site works on a bidding system; The Buyer posts the project and the Providers then bid on how much they will charge to do the work. The currency on this site is US dollars and the lowest amount in which you can bid for work is \$30.

The lowest bidder doesn't necessarily win the project, when you bid you have the opportunity to tell the buyer why you are the person who should be awarded the project. I have won projects in the past being the highest bidder. It depends what the buyer is looking for.

Once you have completed your project you will want to be paid and there are a few payment methods available; Paypal, Moneybookers and a new system whereby you can apply for a GAF debit card and have your payments credited to it.

There is also the option to be paid directly by your buyer, therefore bypassing the site's payment processors. Only the providers pay a fee, usually about 10% and debited from your onsite balance.

At the end of the Project and once payment has been made, both parties have the opportunity to leave feedback for each other.

Guru

Guru.com like other freelance sites allows you to register and create profiles for free however unless you pay membership you get about 1 bid per month and can't bid on the vast majority of projects which are only open to paying members.

There are two types of membership business and individual and you can pay these monthly or annually for a discount. Membership does offer you access to hundreds of clients and potential products.

When it comes to freelancing, Guru.com is the self-proclaimed world's largest marketplace for freelance talent. If you're a programmer, hardware administrator, lawyer, graphic design, web developer, writer, fashion designer, accountant, salesman, or business consultant, Guru is a place where you can go, register for an account, and apply for open jobs in many different fields.

Unfortunately, the site is not as good as it may seem at first glance. In my experience, Guru.com is almost entirely populated by what I call "empty contracts." What that means is that while the job may seem like one you have a chance at picking up, most of the time the potential employer doesn't have any intention of actually awarding the contract.

Almost every listing is either designed to get a free estimate on what something would cost or to get an idea of what type of person the client needs to hire to do the work.

There are several different levels of freelance contractor, Basic, Guru, and Guru Vendor. Each level has various restrictions on it.

Helium

A site dedicated solely to writers they offer lots of help and advice. Clients advertise in the market place where a lot like constant_content in that you submit sample of your work to client the downside is there is no database if the work is

not selected. On the plus side you can always submit and sell any work not selected on constant_content.

Helium.com is a website that allows you to write anything you want to about a topic. They have a lot of topics you can select from or you can make up your own. They have a rating system where you compare two articles written on the same subject to determine which a better article is.

Helium is a large growing community of over 2 million members and is similar to MyLot or Associated Content. They pay you on the basis of how many views your article receives, so on average that is about 1 cent per page view... so if you have 1000 page views (not hard to get) then you will have yourself a nice \$10.00 note :)

Rentacoder

Primarily for freelance programmers and coders writing projects are nether the less abundant on this site if hard to find at first, look under copyrighting or proofreading. 95,538 buyers and 209,418 sellers (coders): computer programmers, ghostwrites, web designers.

The sting is that Rentacoder.com charges one of the highest commission fees among the sites I used. You will have to pay 15% of your earnings. Well, in some occasions you will pay “only” 12.5% (this happens on one-to-one private projects).

- Very good protection against fraudulent buyers. Their escrow system makes you 100% secured

- Excellent support, they will always listen to your needs
- Excellent rating system
- Cool top-coders competition giving you more exposure - once you become a "top coder" of course
- Malicious rating protection - you can ask for arbitration if you are not happy with the rating you have received
- Ability to publicly rebut a bad rating
- Very strict on the timings - you can lose the payment if you don't meet the deadline
- You have to submit weekly reports on projects which are over \$150
- No need to pay subscription.
- You can't see other bids but yours. No more "*I can do it for 3\$ in 0 days*". Only the number of bids that have been made is visible.
- You can compete for free.
- Many payment options: Pay pal, Wire transfer, etc.

Alternative Money-Making Options

There are many other ways to make money as a freelancer than just with traditional marketplaces and securing projects through forums and communities.

Here are other ways to get started:

Business writing - Generally speaking, the more “business” oriented the writing (corporate newsletters, brochures, proofreading, etc), the more money you can make.

Newsletters - Small companies, large companies, fan clubs, and community organizations often have internal or subscriber-based newsletters. Do you have the software or writing chops to actually put one together for them?

Web sites - Of course, many have gone from dead-tree newsletters to web sites. Web sites are easier to put together than you think. Web-site creating software is plentiful (some of the better ones are Adobe PageMill and Microsoft FrontPage).

Knowing a little HTML helps too (tons of books available at Barnes and Noble or Borders - including the “Dummies” and “Idiots” series and a great book by Elizabeth Castro titled “HTML 4 For The World Wide Web”).

Brochures and Manuals - All companies, even small ones, have brochures, flyers, and other marketing materials that have to be created and edited.

When I did sales for a major media company a few years ago, I also volunteered to put some marketing materials together because they didn’t have anyone in-house who did it. This is often the case. You might not be able to do it for

Microsoft or Hewlett-Packard, but you can find local companies (ah, there's that word again, "local" - don't overlook all the opportunities in your area for extra income) who need help. I was once offered \$1000 to rewrite the employee manual for a restaurant that once employed me. Who do you know that might need help? Maybe a friend knows a friend who owns a business?

Greeting cards - Yes, somebody has to write those poems and funny remarks you see when you open up those cards. And the companies are more open to freelancers than you might think.

Resumes - This can be a great way to make extra money on the side. With resume and desktop publishing software so plentiful, making great resumes and cover letters for others is actually pretty easy. If you're not sure of how chronological and functional resumes are put together, there are literally hundreds of books on resumes and dozens of web sites that will show you the way. Job-seekers don't have to spend hundreds of dollars (like my roommate just did) for some big-time company to do their resume. You can do it too.

Editing, Copyediting, and Proofreading - Not everyone can write and edit. Since writing is all around us, text, text everywhere, we take it for granted. We think everyone knows how to write, knows how to edit, is sure that the stuff they've written is grammatically correct and makes sense and the words are spelled correctly. That's not always the case.

Small businesses often need help with editing and proofreading (including ads, if you think you can think of some great ad ideas for them). Also don't overlook magazines and newsletters. Many editors look for freelance or temporary help when it comes to editing or proofreading.

Sites to check out: Mediabistro (<http://www.mediabistro.com>), and Newsjobs.net (<http://www.newsjobs.net/usa/>).

Op-Ed Pieces - Newspapers are always looking for people to write op-ed (opinion-editorial) pieces on various topics. Start with your local paper. Many don't pay (though some do), but I'm a firm believer in writing for free, especially when you are first starting out, or even later when you want to get something published. It's a great way to get clips, get your name out there, and put some impressive credits in your portfolio.

Check the editorial pages or the masthead of the newspaper for a contact name. Many want to see the whole piece, though a few might want you to query first.

Become an online community leader - There are many online communities, sites where people who share the same interests get together to share information, chat, exchange information and links, learn new things about a particular topic (health, computers, music, movies, sex, politics, the latest episode of "Battlestar Galactica," etc).

Many online communities don't pay, but three of the top sites pay regularly and are worth checking out:

About (<http://www.about.com>), recently bought my media giant Primedia, is one of the most visited sites on the web. Community leaders share a percentage of the ad revenue generated by the site, which right now is between \$100-500 a month, sometimes more. But hurry! Topics that need to be covered are going VERY quickly.

Suite101 (<http://www.suite101.com>) is a similar site, jam-packed with great info, though it doesn't pay as well (\$25 if you update weekly, less if you do it every other week or monthly). But being a less-visited site, they have more topics

available right now. Terrashare (<http://www.terrashare.com>) takes a slightly different track, telling their community leaders they will give them their own web site for free, and the more visitors you get to visit your section/site, the more money you make.

To make more money from your writing, start to think a little differently. Sure, getting a regular syndicated column in 100 newspapers or writing a best-selling novel are great goals. In the meantime, make sure you can pay the rent. You might have to take other work at the same time to make ends meet, but with a little flexibility, you can still call yourself a writer, learn the ropes, and be a few steps closer to the writing career you want to have.

-Specialization

Specializing in a favorite topic or style allows you to build up a reputation as an expert in a particular area and command higher prices for your work however you don't want to limit too much the types of work you can do especially when starting out when you will need to take every project going.

It is often wise when you have developed a specialization that you create a separate portfolio for this work and make a special effort to regularly research and keep up to date with the subject. This will allow you to create articles etc on your specialist topics much faster as there should be little or no research needed, meaning you can not only make more per article but produce more articles in a given amount of time.

Styles you can specialize in are diverse include and letters, news, cv or resumes, blog entries, website content and books, novels, reports and technical writing. Base your specialization on your interests and skills. You will be doing the

majority of your work on your specialization so it has to be something you really enjoy.

Think carefully about your market when deciding on your specialization, investigate the type of projects available and see if the market is there for your specialization.

-Ghostwriting

Ghostwriting is where you agree to give the client the credit for the work you have done, often handing over the copyright as well. This gives the client full rights to use and profit from the work as they want and even put their name to it. Some clients will give the author credit for ghostwritten work.

Ghostwriting can also involve you publishing work under a name, which isn't your own.

The division of work between the ghostwriter and the credited author varies a great deal. In some cases, the ghostwriter is hired to polish and edit a rough draft or a mostly-completed manuscript. In this case, the outline, ideas and much of the language in the finished book or article are those of the credited author.

In other cases, a ghostwriter does most of the writing, using concepts and stories provided by the credited author. In this case, a ghostwriter will do extensive research on the credited author or their subject area of expertise.

It is rare for a ghostwriter to prepare a book or article with *no* input from the credited author; at a minimum, the credited author usually jots down a basic

framework of ideas at the outset or provides comments on the ghostwriter's final draft.

For an autobiography, a ghostwriter will interview the credited author, their colleagues, and family members, and find interviews, articles, and video footage about the credited author or their work.

For other types of non-fiction books or articles, a ghostwriter will interview the credited author and review previous speeches, articles, and interviews with the credited author, to assimilate their arguments and points of view.

Ghostwriters are hired for numerous reasons. In many cases, celebrities or public figures do not have the time, discipline, or writing skills to write and research a several-hundred page autobiography or "how-to" book.

Even if a celebrity or public figure has the writing skills to pen a short article, they may not know how to structure and edit a several-hundred page book so that it is captivating and well-paced. In other cases, publishers use ghostwriters to increase the number of books that can be published each year under the name of well-known, highly marketable authors.

Ghostwriters will often spend from several months to a full year researching, writing, and editing non-fiction works for a client, and they are paid either per page, with a flat fee, or a percentage of the royalties of the sales, or some combination thereof.

Having an article ghostwritten can cost "\$4 per word and more depending on the complexity" of the article. Literary agent Madeleine Morel states that the average ghostwriter's advance for work for major publishers is "between \$30,000 and \$100,000". In 2001, the *New York Times* stated that the fee that the ghostwriter

for Hillary Clinton's memoirs will receive is probably about \$500,000" of her book's \$8 million advance, which "is near the top of flat fees paid to collaborators."

According to Ghostwriters Ink, a professional ghostwriting service, this flat-fee is usually closer to an average of \$12,000 to \$28,000 per book. By hiring the ghostwriter for this negotiated price, the client ultimately keeps all advances and post-publishing royalties and profits for themselves.

In Canada, The Writers' Union has established a minimum fee schedule for ghostwriting. The total minimum fee for a 200-300 page book is \$25,000, paid at various stages of the drafting of the book. Research fees are an extra charge on top of this minimum fee.

Sometimes the ghostwriter will receive partial credit on a book, signified by the phrase "with..." or "as told to..." on the cover. Credit for the ghostwriter may also be provided as a "thanks" in a foreword or introduction. For non-fiction books, the ghostwriter may be credited as a "contributor" or a "research assistant". In other cases, the ghostwriter receives no official credit for writing a book or article; in cases where the credited author or the publisher or both wish to conceal the ghostwriter's role, the ghostwriter may be asked to sign a nondisclosure contract that forbids them from revealing their ghostwriting role.

-Translation

If you are completely fluent in writing in more than one language you can also take on projects translating internet or other content into different languages.

Make sure you include in your profile the languages you are fully fluent in.

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