

# Diana Kelly

## 15 Freelance Writing Tips for Beginners

### GETTING STARTED

**Create business cards** and order at least 100. It can be simple but it gives anyone you meet a way of getting in contact with you. 'Diana Kelly. Freelance Writer. [Diana@DianaKelly.com](mailto:Diana@DianaKelly.com)' (If you've started a website, include that, too. [www.DianaKelly.com](http://www.DianaKelly.com))

**Launch a portfolio** or website so clients can find you. Consider starting with Squarespace, Wordpress, or GoDaddy for simple templates to choose from. (I used GoDaddy templates to create this website in a few hours: <http://getstartedfreelancewriting.com/>)

**Think about what you want to write about.** Jot down your interests and hobbies, what you're good at, what people seek your help with, and the types of books, websites, and magazines you read. Use these as starting points for what you should write about.

### WRITING FOR PRINT MAGAZINES

**Visit a bookstore** that sells a variety of magazines and study those in the genre you want to write for. You'll find there are a lot of magazines you never heard of that could be a starting point to pitch. You'll likely have better luck getting published in a smaller print magazine than a popular, national consumer magazine.

**Take notes.** When studying a print magazine, make note of the publishing company, editors' names in the front of the magazine, as well as if they use columnists or include other writers' names in the magazine. That's a sign they use freelancers. The other details will help you determine the correct editor to pitch and help find their email address.

**Read media websites** like Mediabistro.com's Revolving Door, *The New York Post's* Media section, and Adage.com to know when media companies and some editors are moving around.

**Study two recent issues.** Read at least two past issues of the magazine so you can get a sense of the voice, tone, and section categories.

**Think ahead.** Look for a magazine's media kit online to learn about their "closing dates," meaning when all content and images need to be approved and the magazine goes to the printer. For example, *Shape* magazine "closes" their December issue on 9/25, so if you want to pitch them holiday ideas for a December issue, you should be emailing a print editor those pitches in the summer.

### WRITING FOR WEBSITES

**Pitch online ideas two weeks to a month or two ahead.** Websites generate a ton of content and often publish ideas that are timelier so send article ideas that are relevant to their audiences in the coming weeks.

**Look to social media for ideas.** As a former social media editor national magazines, I know that social media often influences brainstorming meetings and assignments. Follow the brands you want to pitch on social and create ideas based on what's working.

**Use site search to make sure an idea doesn't exist.** Before you send off your idea to an editor, use Google to make sure the article hasn't been written already. For example, if your idea had something to do with "Foods for Belly Fat"

and you were going to pitch MuscleandFitness.com, I'd type "foods for belly fat site:muscleandfitness.com" in [Google and review these results](#).

**Use the subject line as your article pitch.** Write something like "Editorial Pitch: XX POSSIBLE STORY TITLE" in the subject line. This will let the editor know you're not a publicist and you spent time thinking of a story title that their readers would click on.

## **BUSINESS**

**Ask for more, or less.** When you get an assignment from an editor, if the rate is lower than you expected and you still want to write the article for them, consider asking for a bit more money, a longer time to work on it, or if they can lower the word count or number of sources.

**Don't forget taxes.** Set aside at least 25 percent of the assignment money you're earning for taxes later. You might not owe that much, but you'll be glad you have it set aside if you do.

**Keep track of write-offs.** Depending on how much money you make freelance writing, you might be able to write off a portion of your phone bill, Internet expenses, office supplies, and more. I used envelopes for receipts, an Excel document to stay organized, and one credit card for business expenses. Discuss write offs and taxes with an accountant.

*Like these Freelance Writing Tips? I have a ton more for beginners and experienced writers in my Freelance Writing Online Course, "[Get Paid to Write: Become a Freelance Writer](#)" on Teachable.*

*Sign up for it today! (There's even a 30-day money-back guarantee.)*

**Send questions, thoughts, suggestions or comments to me: [Diana@DianaKelly.com](mailto:Diana@DianaKelly.com).**

*Diana Kelly*