Break Into Blog Writing

Lesson One: Is Blog Writing Right for Me?

Writing articles for blogs is one of the most rewarding and well-paying jobs you can get as a freelance writer. When you find the right blog, you'll be able to creatively contribute your unique voice, share your work with a community of readers, and be paid nicely for it.

I write for three blogs regularly and several others occasionally. These jobs make up a good portion of my monthly income, and many writers make a living on article writing alone. It can be one of the most lucrative flavors of freelance writing.

In this course, I'll break down exactly how to break into blog writing and show you how to get long-term jobs writing articles. I'll share with you the exact process I used to get my blogging gigs, and by the end of the course, you'll be armed with the knowledge you need to make it writing articles for online publications.

But before you start, you need to answer a tough question: Is blog writing for you?

This course isn't for everyone. Writing for blogs requires a certain style of writing and a long-term commitment. It can also be rather tiring at times, requiring extensive research and editing. Not every freelance writer will thrive writing articles.

With that in mind, this lesson is dedicated to helping you decide if blog writing is for you. I'll go over some common responsibilities and duties and talk about what it's like to write articles for a living.

Craft Responsibilities

In addition to writing articles, blog writing involves a good bit of research. With some publications, the writer gets sent assignments, while with others, the writer is responsible for submitting ideas. Either way, the writer has to do research to either understand a certain topic/angle more thoroughly or discover new information about familiar topics.

This type of research can be boiled down to "Google skills" (or "Google-fu," as some call it), but these are advanced Google skills. You need to know how to navigate all corners of the Internet using little-known search techniques, and you need to be able to find the right information no matter how long it takes. Sometimes, this means using endless synonyms for keywords until you find a source you can appropriate for the article at hand.

That said, the research process generally isn't too taxing. With some topics, it tends to be tricky, especially if there's not a lot of information out there on the subject. You'd think that for how big the Internet is, everything would be covered in detail, but surprisingly that's not the case.

Of equal importance is the ability to write in the style of the publication's target demographic. And if you write for multiple blogs, you'll have to master multiple writing voices. This is particularly tricky because it takes a lot of observation and practice. You must first observe other publications in the niche, and you also have to observe how people in the target demographic talk. If they use a lot of slang, it's wise to include some in your articles for that specific publication.

For most publications, it won't take too long for any writer to get used to the style used. Naturally, it's best to write on topics you're familiar with, as it's extremely difficult for almost anyone to learn about a whole new world on the spot. In terms of the actual craft

responsibilities, usually the writer just needs to write and do some research, but there are often instances that require heavy research and analysis.

Administrative Responsibilities

There are two types of blog teams: interactively interdependent and independently interdependent. Naturally, all teams are interdependent, but these two styles are different enough to warrant a mention.

Interactively interdependent teams often work closely together, using group meetings and check-ins. This resembles most in-person workplaces, though the communication is conducted digitally. Writers report to editors and may spend extensive time editing the work together before publication. Writers may also be required to communicate with other team members, such as designers. This type of team is more common in large-scale blogs with massive readerships.

On the other hand, independently interdependent teams are best thought of as a machine made up of several parts that all work more or less on their own. Writers write the articles and submit them to an editor who edits and publishes the work. This is the more common type of blog team structure. Here, a writer may never communicate to anyone besides an editor, and the process is 99% self-directed.

Of course, there are many types of teams that fall somewhere in between, but these are two of the most common types. In both cases, the primary type of administrative responsibilities a writer takes on is communication with an editor or editorial staff.

There are also some tasks commonly assigned to writers that don't strictly fall into the area of the craft of writing, though they do concern the article creation process itself.

Often, writers are tasked with finding images for the articles. Some sites require royalty-free photos, making the search more challenging. Sometimes, writers will only need to find a main image, but sometimes, writers have to find media to implement alongside the text. This includes infographics, videos, slideshows, graphs, and other types of media.

Other times, writers are required to implement SEO into the articles. SEO (search engine optimization) is an extensive topic that isn't too important right now, though there are multiple guides available using a quick Google search. In short, many blogs require writers to implement certain keywords within the article. This can affect the writing process at times, especially if the keywords are a bit unnatural. Be careful of any blog that wants keyword stuffing (i.e. they want you to use the keyword at every chance you get). This practice is frowned upon by Google, but more importantly, it usually forces you to write poorly.

Is it for you?

Hopefully this has given you a fairly thorough idea of what it's like to be a blog writer. It's not for everyone, but it is perfect for some.

If you're on the fence, I'd suggest going through a few days of this course and perhaps writing a practice article. If you feel good about it, keep going. If you can tell you won't like it, then stop and put your focus elsewhere.

The two most important qualities for a blog writer are self-directedness/self-motivation and task management skills. Even in interactively interdependent teams, writers are still often left on their own to write and research. It's crucial to be able to organize your projects well so you have enough time to write and do research for each article.

If you thrive on consistent feedback and guidance, blog writing may not be for you. But if you can self-motivate yourself and enjoy the article format, give it a shot.

If you decide to continue, then prepare yourself for an in-depth look at blog writing. The goal of this course is to give you the knowledge you need to confidently approach a blog and become a contributor.

Over the next couple of days, we'll discuss how to find blogs to write for and what the initial pitching process looks like.

If you haven't done so yet, feel free to introduce yourself in the comments! We're a small group for this course, and you can chime in and participate as you wish.