

SO YOU'VE ALWAYS LOVED...

writing



YOU'RE SOMEONE WHO TAKES PRIDE IN FINDING THE EXACT WORD FOR A SENTENCE OR COINING THE PERFECT PITHY TURN OF PHRASE. BUT YOU'VE LIKELY ALSO BEEN TOLD, TIME AND AGAIN, THAT THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN MAKE A LIVING WRITING.

MEET 5 WOMEN WHO ACTUALLY TURNED THEIR LOVE OF WRITING INTO A VIABLE CAREER





Copywriter

CHAYA GLATT

Experience 4 YEARS

Average salaries in field

\$60,000–\$100,000+

What I do

When people hear I'm a copywriter, I get a lot of blank stares. So the next thing I say is that I'm in marketing. If they're still giving me a blank stare, I say, "I help people make money," and they're like, "*Cooooool!*"

In a nutshell: Copywriters write the words that sell things.

How I got started

I was working as an early-intervention therapist. Since I'd always liked writing, I wrote the company's blog, and later a brochure for their new sensory gym. The designer saw my text and said, "Wow, this is great! Do you write copy?" I was like, "Yes, I do!" I started taking on more projects, word spread, and it just took off from there, baruch Hashem. Now, I do this full-time.

Hitting the books

I'm naturally good at writing, but that doesn't translate into copywriting unless you educate yourself. You learn by getting your hands dirty and just doing it! Every time I take on a new project, I learn new things: I network, and do a ton of online research. Google is my full-time assistant. Sometimes the most inspiring thing is to look at a really amazing piece of copy and reverse-engineer what you see.

All in a day's work

So we've signed a contract and are ready to go. Say we're working on a website. First, we have an intake interview where we discuss the client's goals: What they want the website to accomplish, their unique selling points, their brand identity. We cover technical details: What services do they offer, what are their prices?

The next step is a *lot* of research. I research their target markets. What interests the people they're selling to? Where do they hang out? What language do they use while talking to each other? There's a lot of psychology in copywriting, it's about connecting with people's emotions to get a desired outcome.

If I'm doing a real estate website, for example, I might Google properties and spend time reading reviews to get an idea of

the language their market uses. When marketing to a group of people you need to talk like them, about things they care about, not like some corporate stuffed shirt. You want them to connect with you and feel like they're your best friend before they even pick up the phone to call you or click that "contact" button.

When the research is done, the strategy is in place, and the client is on board, then I get to the fun part — writing copy! When I'm ready, I send the text to the client. I love client feedback — especially the kind that starts with "Wow!" There are always small changes that need to be made. We typically have three rounds of revisions and then the project moves into the hands of the web designer, who makes it into a real live website.

The first three to four hours of the day are when I have the most focus, so I try to immerse myself in my work and do some uninterrupted writing. Then I probably spend two hours a day on other stuff: billing, answering questions from prospective new clients, scheduling calls with clients, holding client interviews, writing e-mails and proposals, and networking on LinkedIn.

Why I love my job

It's awesome. Yes, it's all about helping the client make money... but there's so much creativity you can activate to make that happen. Sometimes when I'm writing copy, I start laughing out loud. A business is not human, but when you give it a voice, you make it sound human. I'll admit that sometimes when I'm working, I feel like I'm having more fun than I should be allowed to have.

Also, this is a field with a *lot* of growth potential: There are copywriters who make \$30 an hour, and then there are some who make \$9,000 a page.

Memorable moment

I was asked to help write an ad campaign for a company that was creating artisan kishke. Every time I had a call with the design team and we had to discuss the high-end kishke, it was just a matter of time before one of us dissolved into giggles.

You'd make a good copywriter if you

Want to work really hard and are driven and ambitious. It's not something you do because, oh, yeah, I like writing. Becoming a great copywriter takes a lot of effort and focus. It's not like some other jobs where you have your tired days and space out. You have to always be on, and you have to always be excellent. That pressure brings out the best in me. I love to be held accountable, and I love the fact that if I'm not doing an amazing job, my clients will leave or my reputation will suffer. I thrive on that, but some people find it overwhelming, and then it's not a field for them.

You should know

You need to work on your sales skills, since you'll need to sell yourself to potential clients, explaining the value you'll bring, in order to close deals.



Frum fiction writer, editor, and translator

LIBBY LAZEWNIK

Experience 30 YEARS

Average salaries in field

\$25,000–\$50,000

What I do

I write fiction, both short stories and full-length novels. I also translate other people's books, from Hebrew to English.

How I got started

Writing is something I wanted to do ever since I could hold a pen. While I majored in English, I think the most important thing that helped me was reading really good books. That gives you a taste for good literature.

I got my start when I dropped off my very first book, *Shira's Summer*, at Feldheim Publishers. The next day, then editor in chief Yaffa Ganz called me up to say that she loved it and that they wanted to publish it. I was over the moon! After that, they asked for a sequel. That got me hooked on writing — and I've never looked back.

All in a day's work

I'm a morning person. When I wake up, my head is usually popping with ideas, and I do my best writing in the first half of the day. I generally have two or more writing deadlines each week, and I spend part of one morning on each of those projects. Everything else gets squeezed in around those deadlines.

I like to do translating when I need a break from the really creative stuff. It's not as taxing on the brain and the imagination as writing something from scratch.

I've written over 30 books so far, some for teens and others

for adults. Every year or so, I choose some of my favorite short stories and create an anthology out of them.

Why I love my job

I love using my imagination and making up stories. I also enjoy playing with words, which makes editing my own and other people's work fun, too. And I love when people let me know how much they liked or were inspired by something I wrote — that makes all the hard work worthwhile.

Memorable moment

Targum Press initially hired me to help put together the *B.Y. Times* and *Bakers Dozen* series. Together with then editor in chief Miriam Zakon, I'd make up the plots and storyline for each book, and then someone (sometimes me) would write it. Our boss, Rabbi Moshe Dombey z"l, was a wonderful and flexible employer. Sometimes we'd want to take the day off and

go down to the Dead Sea. Rabbi Dombey would say, "As long as you come back with two plots, you can take the day off and get paid for it." And we did! Wallowing in the mud baths or in the salty water of the Dead Sea, we'd throw around ideas for the next couple of books.

You'd make a good writer if

You love words and have a good ear for the "music" of the language. If you choose to write fiction, you'll need a lively imagination, too. A knack for languages is certainly a help for a translator.

Wish I'd known

When I started writing my first book, I worked purely on instinct. I'd sit down at my computer each day, reread what I'd written the day before, and ask myself, "If I were a kid, would I find this entertaining?" If it seemed boring, unclear, or otherwise problematic, I would figure out how to change it. If I had to do it over again, I might have read well-written kids' books to study the techniques that make them work.

Also, one of my early books for adults was rejected by a certain publisher because they felt the readers wouldn't like parts of the book's plot. After I made some changes, the book was later accepted by another publisher. It's so important to know who you're writing for and what they like to read — and then write with them in mind. There's no point writing a book that *you* love, if no one else will enjoy it!

You should know

It's hard to make a living out of creative writing alone. That's why I mix and match: writing, translating, and editing other people's work. Even so, it helps to have a second income in the picture.



No room for writer's block

Unfortunately, I don't have the option of waiting for the muse to visit — deadlines are deadlines. If I'm stuck, I often walk around and let my mind free-associate. The ideas usually come, baruch Hashem. On rare occasions, I'll ask family members for ideas. Even if I don't use the ideas, they help me jump-start my own imagination. And davening *always* helps!



Freelance writer, owner of Successful Freelance Mom

ABBI PERETS

Experience 20 YEARS

Average salaries in field

WITH EXPERIENCE, YOU CAN GET TO \$60,000-75,000 — AND EVEN BREAK \$100,000, WORKING 25-30 HOURS/WEEK



Why I love my job

It's so flexible. I have five kids, and when I first started, every other year I'd be taking time off

to have a baby, for nursing. Also, one of my kids has special needs, and for the first six years of his life we went to therapy 97 days a week. I was always driving and sitting in waiting rooms. I could never have managed all that with an office job! Back then, I was working 15–20 hours a week, making a consistent \$4,000–\$5,000 a month without working all that hard. I was really comfortable there — I never wanted to work eight to ten hours a day.

All in a day's work

I don't like tasks hanging over my head, so I try to get to my home office by no later than eight. When my kids were little, I'd work till one or two — but with breaks to take care of my kids or nurse my baby. The afternoons, when all the kids were home, were for mom stuff. When the kids were smaller, I probably put in about an hour in the evenings after everyone was settled to make sure I'd closed all loops.

Then my son with special needs got leukemia. Adi was diagnosed on Erev Yom Kippur, on a Friday. By Monday, I'd contacted all my clients, returned advance checks, and then that was it — I didn't work for two and a half years.

I don't recommend having a child nearly die on you, it's not a great way to do things, but you get your priorities in place really fast. After Adi got better, I made a lot of changes in my life. Now,

I don't do things that don't bring me joy.

About this time, I discovered the world of e-mail sequences and sales pages. For me, they're ridiculously fun and don't feel like work at all. But if you're not a writer, they can be extremely difficult. That's the recipe for business success: You love it, but it's a pain point for others. Today, I freelance for far fewer hours and make a lot more money than I ever did.

I was also involved with a Facebook group for moms of kids with cancer.

We were fortunate that we lived in Israel and didn't pay for treatment, but many moms in the US weren't that fortunate and were running up enormous medical debt; some lost their homes. There were a lot of moms there who desperately needed to be working, but couldn't be in a normal job. Very



Beating the clock

I *always* hit deadlines, which in the freelance world is fairly rare. When you're the person who hits deadlines, word gets around. People would say, "I need someone I can really count on," and they'd get my name.

What I do

I spent the vast majority of my career writing materials for large companies: white papers, press releases, corporate marketing materials, and internal training materials. Today, I focus on writing e-mail sequences and sales pages for online entrepreneurs.

You know when you go online, and you can enter your e-mail address to get some free cool thing — maybe an amazing recipe, or a checklist about how to decorate your bedroom for four dollars? If the business owner is intelligent, you won't just get that one e-mail: you'll get a series of e-mails directing you to a paid product. I write those e-mails that take you from a randomly interested person to a paid customer.

How I got started

I've always been a writer. From the time I was a kid, writing was something that came easily to me and that I enjoyed.

I got started in 1996 (I'm *really* old), working for a marketing agency in Tel Aviv. I got a lot of experience very quickly, since that was start-up season. I was very happy working there, till I had my first baby and thought, *Uh, this is not going to work*. That was my first and only office job. I quit and became a freelance writer.

I had no clue what I was doing; there were no online courses in the olden days! I researched a lot, pitched a lot, started reading *Writer's Digest* magazine. I wrote parenting articles for a parenting website, and then used those pieces to get in with bigger mags.

When we moved back to the States (we later returned to Israel), I pulled out the Yellow Pages and started cold-calling marketing agencies and design firms, figuring they worked with freelance writers. I called 1,000 companies in a month, and sent out 50–100 e-mails a night, motivated by the fact that I never wanted to work in an office again. It's a numbers game. I got a lot of nos, but if you call enough people, you get some yeses. I did all kinds of really random stuff, because I'd called about a gajillion different companies.

Word gets around, people meet at conferences and swap info. I'd get calls saying, "We need a writer, can you do this?" My response was always, "If it's words, I can do it." Sometimes that meant I didn't get paid enough, since the job would take me longer than it would take someone experienced — but then I'd know how to do it the next time.

informally, I started helping them get jobs, and that's how Successful Freelance Mom was born. I teach moms how to get started and get clients.

By now, I can coach someone into earning a consistent \$2,000 a month with my eyes closed. From there you can easily scale and hit the sweet spot of about \$4,000 a month without making too much effort. You can definitely build this into a six-figure business, but it will take one to two years of consistent work, working a good 25 hours a week.

Memorable moment

I had a couple of phone calls with a new client. During both our initial calls, one of my kids walked in and said something brief, like, here's the keys, or, I'll be back at six. Those minimal interruption happen in office environments, too. But the woman said to me, "That's the second time you've mentioned your children. Do you think you'll be able to handle this?" I said, "You know what, you're right," and ended the project. I don't want to work with a person like that! I didn't choose to become a freelancer to be miserable.

You'd make a good freelance writer if you

Build a business around what you love! Freelance writer is such a big term, and there are so many options. Anything you pick up that has words on it — every piece of mail, every brochure, flier, or cereal box — somebody got paid to write it.

I have students who tell me they're always sending funny e-mails or WhatsApp messages, and I have another student who's built her writing career around her PhD in biochemical engineering. If you like writing, you can make money from it.

To be a freelancer in general you have to be motivated and somewhat organized. There are tools that can help you with organization, and there are skills you can learn, but when you're a freelancer, there's no one to say, "Hey, stop cooking, sit down, and work." You have to be the person who can tell yourself that.

You also have to invest in your education. When you're trying to earn a new skill, you need to pay with time or money. You don't need a college degree, and you don't need to have years of English language or literature studies, but you do have to read a lot and be willing to put the time in to learn new skills. I'm not ashamed of not finishing my degree, but I don't want to mislead people, either — I had a full three years of credits from Brandeis, another two years of credits at Bar-Ilan in undergrad, *plus* about a year of credits toward a master's, but they didn't all fit into the program and I got frustrated and left.

I wish I'd known

How much specializing affects your earnings. I tell people that when they're getting started, it's okay to try a bunch of things, you can make a living that way, but you won't hit five-figure months till you specialize.

GET ^{Your} A CAREER

Over 500 people * have benefited from WayFind's career guidance
Hear what they are saying...

"...Many different career options were discussed and I came out with a thorough understanding of my strengths, capabilities, and passions. It was very professional and catered to my specific needs..."

- Post-Seminary Female

"I left with a very clear plan of action and I am now experiencing success and excitement on my new path..."

- Post-Masters Female

"It was amazing! I feel like I really know where I am heading in my career and college path."

- Post-Seminary Female



CAREERS | EDUCATION | SUPPORT

516-253-1147 | wayfindcareers.com

Follow us on @wayfindcareers

*1:1 career coaching, group workshops, high school seminars



Subsidies through the JCCRP made available by a generous grant from Assemblywoman Stacy Pheffer-Amato & the NYS Office of Children and Family Services



Content writer, educational publisher

ADINA LOVER

Experience 8 YEARS

Average salaries in field

\$40,000-\$75,000



What I do

I work for an educational publisher, where we differentiate content, writing it to multiple reading levels. In a classroom, not all students will be reading at the same level — some will be below level, some above, and some at grade level. Differentiation means that the teacher can offer the same material to everyone. It helps students build stronger literacy skills while allowing weaker students to stay in the classroom so they don't feel different or miss out on crucial information while they're at a reading tutor.

Our materials are part of a software program, so students read our material on the computer. They take an initial test to gauge their reading level, and the program constantly assesses their growth so that it can deliver material at the proper level.

How I got into this

I'd been working as an underwriter in a commercial mortgage company when the recession hit. I began to look for a new job and saw an ad for this position. I've always loved to write, so it really called to me. I had to take a writing test, in which I was given a topic to research and then write about on two different reading levels. I davened very, very hard, and Baruch Hashem, got the job.

All in a day's work

We focus on nonfiction content, writing about high-interest topics from around the world, based mainly on news articles. Once we've selected an article, we write a prototype article at an eighth-grade

reading level. (We use a scale called the Lexile measure to determine reading level, and we select wording using a list of over 10,000 words, ranked by grade level.)

Most news articles assume background knowledge that kids might not have, so we need to add content and clarify. We also fact-check the original articles, which often contain inconsistencies and even errors. Once that article is done, we rewrite the same content to a second-grade level, making sure that the kid reading at that level gets the same core ideas that the eighth-grade reader does. Yes, a lot of content does drop out — a beginning reader won't have the stamina to plow through a 600-word article! — but we keep in key concepts and ideas that the teacher can address in classroom discussion.

We then take those prototypes and level them to 12 reading levels, from pre-reader to college level. Each level also has multiple choice questions — geared to specific educational standards — that allow teachers (and our program's data analytics!) to gauge students' reading comprehension and progress.

Why I love my job

I'm usually working on multiple articles at once, so there's never the boredom of doing the same thing over and over. I love writing, obviously, and I enjoy the research that goes into each article.

I also work from home, which I love. It means that going to a Chumash party isn't a big deal; I can finish my work later. But as with any work-from-home job, you need to be extremely disciplined in getting

the work done. Just because you *can* do your work till 2 a.m. doesn't mean that it's a good idea to stay up till then every night, scrambling to meet deadlines. And working on a team means that I need to submit my work on time, so that I don't hold up the next person.

Memorable moment

When I write the lowest levels, I sometimes try them out on my kids. Sometimes you just don't realize how much or how little a second-grader understands. For example, our word list puts "bored" at the grade four level. I'd always assumed that was inaccurate — I mean, *my* kids complain they're bored at age two! — but when one of my kids was a second-grader, she had a hard time decoding the word in a sentence. As soon as I helped her, she understood it, of course, but had she been on her own, she would've gotten stuck. I've learned not to assume so much, especially when working with beginning readers.

You'd make a good content writer if you

Enjoy writing and researching, and can write clearly and grammatically. If you just want to be a creative writer, this job isn't for you, but if you enjoy working with words and learning new things, this is a great field.

You should know

You're not going to make big bucks working as an employee, unless you can move into a supervisory role. But you'll have the benefit of a steady job with a steady income.



No license

Writing is a craft, so your voice and style will come through. But this isn't creative writing. Here, there's no such thing as bending the rules and poetic license. If you want to teach kids how to read and write, you need to follow the rules.



Technical Writer, owner of WritePoint

PAULA STERN

Experience 25 YEARS

Average salaries in field

\$55,000–\$90,000

Mishpacha

What I do

A technical writer takes technical information so that a product’s intended user can understand it better. Whenever you buy something, it comes with instructions; whether it’s a user guide, installation manual, or video tutorial, a technical writer wrote those instructions.

Typically, we meet with engineers, learn how a product works, then write instructions in a way that the user can understand. The engineer may offer technical information like, “See these buttons? Well, on the other side, they connect to wires and a circuit board,” and he goes on and on about what happens. But as the user, all I care about is what buttons I should press. So I’ll listen to him and say, “That’s nice. What button should the user press?” He’ll start again, and I’ll answer, “Okay, now what does the user have to do?” Technical writers focus on the user, not the product.

How I got started

I landed in Israel in August 1993, with three little kids. That first week, I met somebody who asked, “Can you use a computer? Do you write? Do you need a job?” I’d been there for three days; I needed a refrigerator! But I said yes, and got the job. I’ve been very blessed in my career ever since.

In 1996, I started my company, WritePoint, hiring writers to help when I needed it. Then I thought, “Instead of hiring people who need training, why don’t I train them first and *then* hire them?” And so 14 years ago, we launched a technical writing school.

Today, the starting level has risen so much — you can’t get hired without training or experience.

All in a day’s work

People think technical writing means I sit at my desk and type for eight hours straight, but it’s not like that at all. There’s a lot of interaction. You interface with the marketing department and technical support to understand why the user is using the product and what it does. You’ll meet with managers who review your work, and with engineers to discuss new features or maybe ask about a bug you’ve found.

Every day it would start out and drive, extracting 2,700 liters of water and its way to an army base. On one side of the truck was a big sink where soldiers could wash up; the other side had three showers, and in the back, there was a spout, so soldiers could fill up their water bottles. Once the water was depleted, the truck would drive to the next base, and by then the tanks were refilled.

A technical writer has to *love* hearing about these things.

You’d make a good technical writer if

You’re someone who notices English mistakes, are detail-oriented, and a quick learner — engineers don’t have the patience to teach you something five times!



Tikkun Olam

A prospective student once asked, “Is there *tikkun olam* in technical writing?” I told him, “If you’re looking for *tikkun olam*, go somewhere else.”

Afterward, though, I realized that there’s *tikkun olam* in anything that gives you a comfortable income and allows you to focus on other things too. With technical writing, you have a great job and a great salary — and you also have a life.

You also need to have the right mindset and understand your position in the scope of the product’s development cycle. I had a student, a former gymnast who became religious. She had only a high school diploma, but she took our course and we helped her get a job very quickly. She was very meticulous, detail-oriented, and *very* sweet. Every company she worked for loved her. In contrast, we’ve had other students who assume that because they have an engineering or software development background, they’ll be great technical writers. But their expectations and behaviors (and egos!) were such that companies didn’t enjoy working with them. When meeting with engineers, they’d ask, “Why didn’t you do this?” or try to rewrite the code. Engineers wondered, “Why am I talking code with this person?”

You should know

Technical writing is very different from copywriting. There’s less creativity, for better and for worse. In a way it’s easier. In copywriting, you’re constantly looking for synonyms. Technical writing is the opposite: each word has a clear meaning — select and choose don’t mean the same thing! — and if you use the wrong word you’ll confuse the user.

Why I love my job

I don’t think I realized how much I loved technical writing until I started teaching it. It’s never boring and I’m always learning.