Lesson 3: Preparation - 4 Things To Do Before Starting Your Freelance Career

Before we get to the action-packed section of the guide, there are a few things you should do to prepare yourself for the long hard road ahead.

You can start by following these tips.

#1 Setup A "Rainy Day" Fund

Why am I keep telling you not to quit your day job right away? Because the chances are it might take a couple of weeks or even months before you earn enough money as a freelancer. And you shouldn't depend on it. At least not right away.

You still have to pay your bills, put food on the table, and provide for your family. So, before you quit your job, start saving up some money in case of a "rainy day".

Get a pen and paper and calculate how much it costs to cover your food and bill expenses for 3 months. And start adding money to your rainy day fund until you have that amount.

While you grow your rainy day fund, you can get started on your freelancing work on the side and work on laying down your initial groundwork.

Prepare yourself to face some struggles during this initial phase. It'll be tough, but you can pull it off.

Elon Musk, the billionaire entrepreneur behind Tesla, once put himself to the test to see if has the guts to be successful by living off just $1 dollar per day.

Do you have the guts to accept that same challenge?

#2 Improve Your Communication Skills

One of the most important things you need to master to win your clients with your proposals is the art of communication. This means 3 things.

You must:
- Improve your English writing skills.
- Learn to write better emails.
- And learn how to connect with a client on a personal level.

If you need to polish up on your writing skills, take a course on Udemy or EDx.org to learn proper methods for writing without sounding like a corporate drone.

Writing better emails and proposals is the secret to winning your client's heart. I've included some email templates with this book. Study those templates or customize them a little to use them when writing your own proposals.

#3 Create A Schedule For Freelance Work

As I've been saying over and over again, you don't need to give up your day job to start a freelance career. You just need to set aside a couple of hours (minimum 2 hours) each day to work on your freelance gigs.

Instead of binge-watching Game Of Thrones for two hours, use that time to do your freelance work instead. Or finish what you have to do each day, and just go to sleep 2 hours late.

You won't have to do this for too long. Once you have enough clients, you can safely quit your day job to become a full-time freelancer. Until then, just work your way up 2-hours per day.

#4 What About A Plan-B?

What happens after I quit my day job? What if I fail as a freelancer? Can I go back to my day job again?

Stop right there! Don't even think about a plan-B.

Freelancing works best when you go all-in with everything you've got. That way you'll work harder to achieve your goals because it's the only option you've got.

Don't even think about starting this career with an exit strategy. Be willing to face obstacles, overcome failures, and accept nothing but success.

Develop that mindset and give your freelancing career all you've got from the very first day.

Take Action!

Get started on these 3 things right now!

- Get get an empty jar and start putting away money to safely quit your job and start freelancing full-time.
- Learn to write well. Read books. Take online courses.
- Get a pen and paper and write your daily schedule. Calculate how many hours you can spend on freelancing each day or which activities you can eliminate to make more free time.

Lesson 4: How To Find Your Marketable Skill

Y ou have to be skilled at something to become a successful freelancer. You may think that anyone can do a job like data entry or social media management, but even those jobs require skills like experience in typing, Microsoft Office, and graphic design.

Don't fool yourself if you think you can scam your way to the top. It will never last and it won't be long before you crash and burn.

To build a long-term career, first, find what you're really good at and use it to create your freelance services.

Niche Down, But Find Your Middle Ground

UpWork, the biggest freelancing site on the web, has over 12+ million registered freelancers. And that's just one website.

The competition is fierce on these sites. You have to fight hard to land a job on a platform like UpWork or Freelancer.com. If you insist on using these popular sites, the only way to succeed is to find a smaller niche to offer your services.

UPWORK, THE BIGGEST FREELANCING SITE ON THE WEB, HAS OVER 12 MILLION REGISTERED FREELANCERS. THE COMPETITION IS FIERCE ON THESE SITES.

For example, if you want to offer graphic design services, instead of defining your skill in general as a "graphic designer" choose a niche category like "logo designer" or "infographic designer". This way, you'll have slightly less competition to deal with.

The important thing to remember is to do what you're really good at. For example, as a copywriter, I can handle all types of writing work from website copy to product copy, eBooks and more. But, blogging and article writing is what I'm really good at. I've been focusing my freelance services around this niche and so far it has rewarded me well.

Just remember not to pick a niche that's too small. For example, if you want to find graphic design work and all you can do is design product packaging, then you'll have a tough time landing jobs because there's virtually no market available for product packaging designers in the online freelancing marketplaces.

So, how do you find if your skill is marketable enough to make money?

How To See If Your Skill Is Marketable

There's a simple way you can use to figure out if your skills are marketable enough to make money as a freelancer.

- Go to a popular freelancing website (eg: UpWork, Freelancer.com)
- Search for freelance jobs using keywords related to your skillset (eg: logo design)
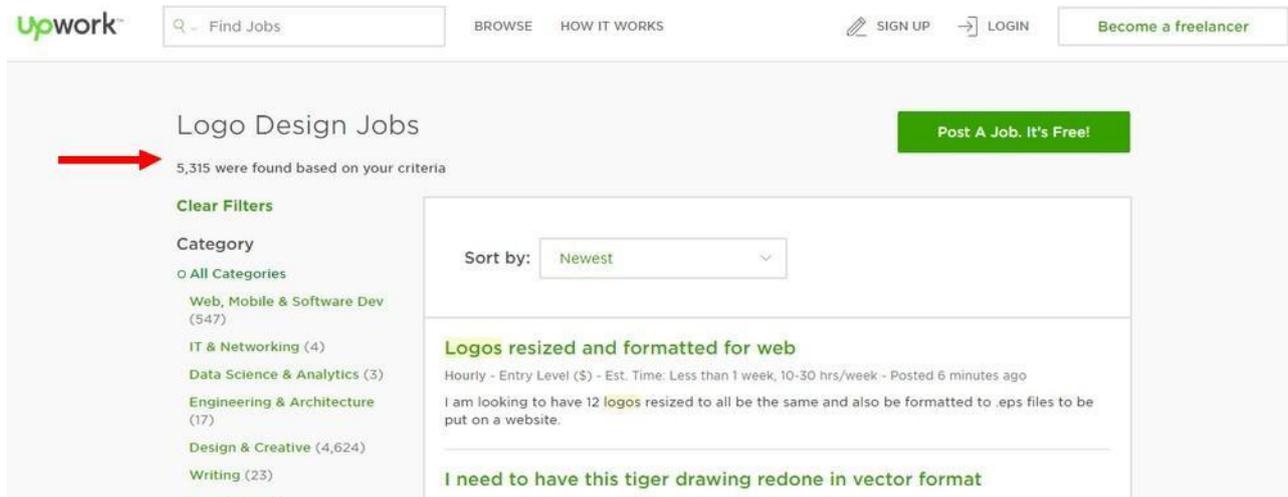
See how many job results come up for your search. If you get at least 500 results for your search, then you have yourself a profitable skill in your hands. Even if it's below 500, you can still make it as a freelancer. But, you'll have to work harder to find clients. My main goal here is to help you get started as easily as possible.

If you want to earn a decent living without having to worry about finding clients at the end of the month, I'd suggest that it's time you work on developing a profitable skill set.

Polish Up Your Skills

When it comes to working online, most of the skills and the experience that you've gathered at your day job or at college may become irrelevant.

I'm not saying that to undermine your knowledge, but things work differently on the Internet. For example, you can't write a blog post the same way you write an essay at college. Blogs use much simpler language with a conversational tone and a technical style article will never get accepted by a blog.

So, polish up your skills before you get started. Follow some online courses to advance your skills or learn new skills from scratch.

There are free and premium sites you can use to learn skills online. Don't hold back on investing in your career.

Here are some of my favorite sites for learning online:

- [Skillshare](#)
- [Udemy](#)
- [edX.org](#)
- [Coursera](#)
- [Treehouse](#)

If you don't have any skills yet, don't worry. You can always learn them. But, it will take some time for you to learn and practice your skills to the level of a professional.

And I hate to tell you that you shouldn't continue the next steps in this book if you don't have any skills to offer as services. So, take some time to practice your art and get back to this book once you're confident of your skills and then follow the next steps.

Take Action!

- Dig down and find out what you're really good at doing or what you would love to do for a living.
- Do some research to see if those skills are profitable.
- Take online courses to polish up your skills.
- Practice your skills daily.

Lesson 5: Start Building Your Reputation

Before I started working online as a freelancer, I spent about a year developing my own blog, FreshInfos.com. I wrote daily for this blog on tech-related topics like latest Apple releases, social media, gaming, and others.

When I joined Elance (now known as UpWork) as a freelancer, I was already a seasoned writer with quite a bit of experience and knowledge of everything that's going on online.

This qualification helped me land 3 out of 5 jobs that I pitched to on Elance. Some contractors even contacted me personally via email to hire me for work outside the platform. Just sending them a link to my blog as proof of my writing skills was enough to get invited to a whole lot of jobs every week.
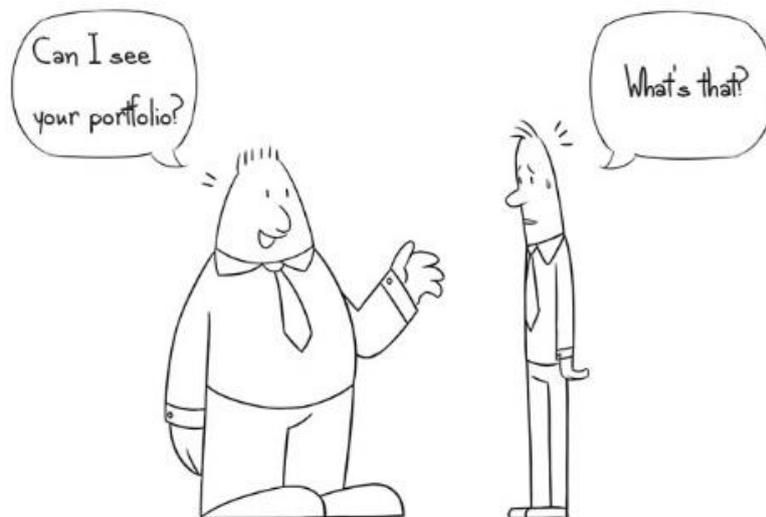
Needless to say, establishing your background and reputation is one of the most crucial factors of finding success as a freelancer.

My website and the experience I gained writing thousands of blog posts certainly helped me land a lot of clients. And you can use the same technique to attract more clients too.

The best part is you don't have to spend years developing your own blog because there are plenty of well-established websites that already allow you to publish your articles for free. This is called guest blogging.

What Is Guest Blogging?

Guest blogging is a strategy you can use to gain free publicity. You write an article on behalf of a website, in return they will publish it for you for free with an author byline with links to your personal website and social media pages.

Here's how the process works:

- You contact a reputable blog that accepts guest posts, like Huffington Post or Entrepreneur.com
- Pitch your idea for a great blog post to publish on their site.
- Once you get their approval, send your article with an author byline explaining what you do and links to your social media profiles.

As a freelancer, you can use guest blogging to get more exposure for your services and also use it as examples of your work.

How It Helps Build Your Reputation

Most freelancers who pitch for jobs on sites like Upwork and Freelancer.com doesn't have any credible experience or proof of their work. This obviously leads to lower success rates and bidding wars.

If you can take the time to at least publish 3 or 4 guest articles on a few reputable websites, you will have an incredible advantage over the rest of the cheap and demeaning freelancers who are just waiting for clients to fall out of the sky.

So the next time when a client asks to see examples of your previous work, you can simply send them a link to your article published on Huffington Post, which will knock their socks off.

Believe it or not, even some of the millionaire entrepreneurs like Richard Branson, Mark Cuban, Bill Gates, and Neil Patel often publish guest posts on popular websites to gain more exposure for their businesses and products.

So why shouldn't you use the same trick to double your earnings?

How to Get Approved by A Great Website

Getting approved by these popular websites is not going to be easy because they receive guest blogging requests from bloggers every day. The trick is to write a pitch focusing on how the blogger can profit from your article and suggest a unique article idea that they can't resist.

More importantly, don't write your email to these sites like a robot. Get personal. Find the name of the person in charge and address them by their first name.

My freshinfos.com website received over a dozen guest blogging requests per week and I ignored most of them because some emails sound too robotic. I could tell that they were just copy-pasting the same email template over and over. As if they have sent the same email to 100 other websites. So, don't make the same mistake.

What About Programmers, Web Designers, And Other Freelancers?

Guest blogging is a great strategy to build reputation and awareness not just for freelance writers, but also for other types of freelancers including designers, coders, and marketers.

There are different kinds of blogs out there, all you have to do is find a blog that's relevant to your industry and submit a blog post.

Also, there are other ways to build your reputation. For example, if you're a web designer, you can design a free website template and release it online to get more exposure.

If you're a graphic designer, you can use a site like Behance to build your portfolio.

If you're a coder, you can contribute to an open-source project on GitHub.

4 Ways To Build Your Online Presence

Even if you haven't got a freelance gig yet, you can start building your reputation right away. In fact, I would highly recommend that you build your online presence before you create a profile on a freelancing site.

Here are a few ways you can do that.

Start A Blog

The easiest way to build a name for yourself is to build your own blog and start writing about the things that promote your work. For example, if you're a web designer, you can write about the HTML frameworks you use for designing websites. Or write case studies on the projects you've worked in the past.

Not only your blog will help you to get discovered by new clients, you can also use it as a proof of experience when you pitch to clients through freelance sites.

You can build a blog for less than $100 using WordPress. Or you can start a blog for free on a platform like Medium.

Get Published On Another Blog

Getting published on an established blog is another great way to build your reputation quickly, especially for freelance copywriters and marketers.

Find a blog that relates to your industry and contact them to ask if they accept guest posts. Pitch your idea and then you can send them your post to publish with your author byline. For example, if you're a freelance graphic designer, you can reach out to a blog like Design Shack to publish a guest post.

Here's a list of over 300 websites that accept guest posts.

Do Free Work

Most veteran freelancers will always advise you against doing free work. But, when starting new, you need to develop proof of work to present to your potential clients as examples of your skills.

Here's a trick I used to build reputation as a web designer when I was promoting my web design agency:

- First, I browsed Google Play and Steam store looking for game and app developers who didn't have a website.
- I sent them an email explaining why they need a website and offering to do it for free.
- A few companies responded back and I made them awesome websites. With my name and link to my personal website on the footer (eg: designed by Roshan Perera).

Then I used those sites in my portfolio to showcase as proof of my skills.

You can use a similar strategy to get your name out there. You don't have to do the jobs on freelance sites for free.

Challenge Yourself

Challenging yourself to do something remarkable and documenting it is another cool way to build a reputation for your work.

A designer named Peter Majarich did the same when he challenged himself to design a movie poster every day for 365 days. As a result, he was featured on multiple design blogs and his work went viral on social networks.

It doesn't take a genius to figure out that he must have gotten a ton of job offers after this incredible challenge.

Don't set limits for yourself by the standards set by others. Find your own unique ways to set yourself apart from the rest. Show how remarkable your work really is and give your clients a reason to hire you instead of the others.

Take Action!

Get started on building reputation for your work. Find a way to make a name for yourself and a way to show off your skills.

- Start a blog. Publish a guest post. Or release a free website template.
- Do a personal challenge or find your own way to stand out from the rest.