

"By far the best book on working freelance I've ever come across."

Patrick B, Amazon ★★★★★

HOW TO LAUNCH A
FREELANCE
COPYWRITING
BUSINESS



METHOD
WRITING

JULES HORNE

Quick-Start Companion Workbook



Need a quick-start practical roadmap? This companion workbook breaks down freelance business start-up into manageable steps, to help you set up quickly.

Freelancers need to wear different hats. This innovative workbook breaks your business down into three ninja roles: Writer, Marketer and Operations. The three ninja hats will help you focus on the essentials, and lay down solid foundations. Also included: checklists and plenty of space for notes and records. Get both Handbook and Workbook and cut to the chase!

www.method-writing.com

Want to earn a living from your writing? This straight-talking, practical handbook will get you up and running quickly.



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Introduction

This book is perfect for you if you're a creative thinker and writer who wants to earn a good living from your words. I wrote it to help creative writing students, journalists, and other skilled writers who've considered copywriting, but don't know whether it's for them, or how to get started.

It's based on my own experience of starting a successful copywriting business from scratch, without help, advice, or books like this to guide me. In the middle of the Scottish countryside. With skylarks for company. And woefully slow broadband. If I can do it, you can.

This book will help you cut to the chase, and get going quickly.

Note that it assumes you can already *write*. It assumes you're a demon speller and grammar-wrangler. It assumes that one of the following is true:

- * you have a creative writing or English degree or MFA, or
- * you're a journalist looking for another income stream, or
- * you've written as part of your professional life, or
- * your writing has been published in other ways.

If this is you, read on.

Writing for business is a way for skilled writers to earn to earn a good, dependable income. Someone writes all the websites, brochures, and marketing materials out there. Why not you?

In business, the people who write copy often aren't writers. They may be business owners, or an employee who got landed with the job. They probably don't love writing as you do. They're probably less than good at it. In truth, their writing may be letting their business down badly. This is where you come in, with your magic pen and professional writing skills.

Businesses large and small *need* writers. They need them to make a connection with customers, to get the message out about their products, to sell and to survive.

Find that work, and you can make a good living, with work that's home-based and flexible, and fits well with family and creative life.

This book explains how to set up your freelance writing business, including:

- * how to find customers and get paid work
- * how to approach businesses professionally and with confidence
- * how to wrangle money as well as words
- * how to set up your workflow for greater productivity.

You'll also find recommended resources on copywriting and the distinct requirements of writing for business.

About Me

I'm a working writer based in rural Scotland, where there aren't any jobs for writers! So like most of us, I have a portfolio career. Over the years, as well as running my own copywriting business, Texthouse, I've written Edinburgh Fringe First-winning plays, BBC radio drama, fiction, and song lyrics. I also teach on the Open University Creative Writing MA. My background is in languages (a German and French degree at Oxford University), followed by several years as a journalist with the BBC World Service and Swiss Radio International.

I've always wanted to write full-time, and eventually returned home to work freelance. I now balance creative and commercial work to earn an independent living.

Why I Wrote This Book

I wrote this book because it wasn't around when I started out. I'm an ex-journalist and published writer. It should have been easy to figure out how to earn a good living. It took me several years of trial and error.

Why? Because when I started out, books on writing and business were aimed at agencies, marketers and companies with marketing teams. Enterprise training courses were equally hopeless for my needs. They were aimed at larger businesses, and traditional sectors such as manufacturing. Not sole traders looking for specific creative industries advice.

So that's what's in this book. Key takeaways include:

How to adapt your writing skills for business.

Your writing skills are valuable in a business context, but you'll first need some sales and marketing tools and concepts to build on what you already know about the craft of writing.

How to get work.

Creative writing qualifications are unlikely to impress anyone in the business world. You need to reframe your skills for the business context, with evidence that resonates with business people.

How to approach businesses.

Not all businesses need writing services. How do you find those that do? How do you present yourself? How do you demonstrate your value to potential clients?

How to handle money.

Rates vary between companies and sectors. How do you work out what to charge? How do you prepare a quote? Project, day, or hourly basis?

How to market yourself.

You don't need extrovert salesmanship. You do need to show the value of your services. Where do you start? Do you need a leaflet, cards, website?

How To Use This Book

This book is laid out so that you can read it straight through, use it as a reference, or follow it as a course. I suggest you skim-read first, to get a sense of the territory, then dive into the sections closest to your situation.

Don't expect to take in everything at once. Make notes as you go, and read the book again in six months' time. You'll take new insights from your different vantage point.

Don't try to tackle three fronts at once: marketing, admin, and writing. Instead, do a little of each at a time, to keep progress manageable.

Where To Start

- * If you're completely new to copywriting, and want to know whether you might enjoy it, go to **Is It For You?**
- * If you're a journalist or creative writer and want to understand how your skills translate to copywriting, head to **Writing Skills Audit.**
- * If you're in a hurry to get your copywriting business started, zoom to **Kit & Caboodle.**

- * If you already do copywriting, and want ideas to streamline your process and be more productive, head to **Systems and Nuts & Bolts**.
- * If you're ambitious to grow your income or expand, read the section on **Business Growth**.

If you find this helpful and want to share suggestions of your own, I'd love to hear from you! After all, copywriting is evolving all the time, and we're all in this together. You can email me at info@method-writing.com.

Save Time & Money

I wasted a lot of time by not understanding the markets for freelance copywriting, and approaching the wrong kind of business. I also wasted a lot of money because I didn't know the value of my skills, and often charged too little.

This book will save you years of floundering, by including:

- * my mistakes, so you don't make them
- * processes to follow
- * practical advice to suit different writing backgrounds and skills
- * information on how copywriting is changing, and the impact of the internet.

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And Finally

This book is all about empowering writers to develop their own freelance business, and passing on some the resourceful and entrepreneurial skills needed to survive in this fast-changing world. I hope you find it as rewarding as it has been for me, both creatively and financially.

Very best wishes for your independent writing life!

Jules

US quotation style and Oxford commas are used in this book. For downloadable templates and resources, visit www.method-writing.com/

PART I

Creative Writing for Business

Freelance creative writers and journalists make a living in many different ways, including publication, workshops, readings, teaching, and editorial shifts. Freelancers on the creative writing path often support themselves with low-paid flexible work of other kinds.

Copywriting is another way to earn a living as a writer. I'm amazed more writers don't do this! By adapting writing and editing skills you already have, you can:

- * earn more
- * be your own boss
- * meet inspiring people
- * be challenged creatively
- * help others to succeed
- * connect with your community.

You can also control your own workload, work where you like, and choose your hours and clients. Maybe you can only work in the mornings, or need to put in time on your novel? Maybe you want to hot-desk at your local café, library or business hub, or work on

the train or plane? This flexibility is one of the great advantages of copywriting.

Writing for business isn't some kind of panacea. You'll still need to work demanding and sometimes unsocial hours. But it's better paid than creative writing or journalism, and it's on your own terms. This independence alone is tremendously empowering.

What's more, you get to overcome one of the serious perils of the writing life: isolation. Because as a business writer, you're part of your...

Local Business Community

The people who run small businesses are fascinating. I've met an international chocolatier (best copywriting job ever!), an award-winning medicinal herbalist, catwalk knitwear designers, fibre optic lighting engineers. I've also worked for housing associations, timber frame home builders, charities, museums, galleries, a dive tourism company, and murder mystery game designers.

It's been amazing to see the variety of ideas and working lives going on in my community, often under the radar. For me, going behind the scenes and gaining privileged access to intriguing new worlds is a tremendous bonus of copywriting.

I've found people in the small business community to be creative, independent-minded, individualistic, and passionate about their dreams. They they can also be stubborn, obsessive and risk-taking, and often don't fit naturally into office life. They need to be resilient and pick themselves up, time after time. They work their socks off in pursuit of a vision others may not understand.

A lot like writers, in fact. Except that small businesses often have the extra responsibility of employing other people, keeping them in work, sustaining other families and livelihoods.

Small businesses are a vital part of the social fabric, community survival and connection. Copywriting has put me in touch with that, and got me outside the bubble of writing. And I've met enough stories, characters and hidden worlds to keep me creatively inspired for years.

So if your writing background has planted misconceptions about the world of business, it's time for a rethink.

In the next section, you'll find out what copywriting is, whether it's a good fit for you, and how to approach it from different writing backgrounds.

Copywriting & You

What's A Copywriter?

A copywriter is someone who writes for businesses. Your job is to help a business to sell its products and services, by writing effective words that connect with its customers.

When it comes to “selling,” you may be thinking of “hard sell” types of text such as advertising or direct mail marketing letters (the *Reader's Digest* kind). But these aren't the main diet for most jobbing business writers. I don't do that kind of writing myself.

Mostly, as a writer for small businesses, you'll be writing website content, case studies, white papers, newsletters. Short form writing may include product packaging and descriptions. Digital writing forms include SEO (search engine optimized) content, blogs, and social media. For more on this, see **Writing for the Web**.

Explaining what you do

Be warned: people you meet may be unfamiliar with the term “copywriter.” They often think you're something to do with copyright – maybe a kind of patent lawyer. Or a journalist (from “copy editor,” “copy desk”). Once, someone thought I repaired photocopiers.

This is an occupational hazard. If you're dealing with people outside the creative industries, be prepared to use different

terminology. I sometimes call myself a “business writer” or “web/SEO content writer,” depending on the context I’m in.



A Little Etymology

“Copywriter” comes from the mediaeval Latin ***copiare*** (to transcribe) and ***copia*** (abundance). Think of mediaeval scribes writing copious pages of beautiful manuscripts.

“Copy” meaning “a newspaper item” appeared in the mid-1800s.

“Copywriter” in its modern context of advertising and marketing appeared in 1911. But the word still lives on in newsrooms, where a “copy desk” is staffed by a “copy editor” who licks “draft copy” into shape.

Confusingly, journalists write “copy,” but don’t call themselves “copywriters.”

Who Goes in for Copywriting?

There’s no definitive career route into copywriting, and it’s an unregulated profession. People who write for business come from all walks of life: journalism, English degree, creative writing, sales, marketing, advertising, or a business specialism. A quick, unscientific straw poll of professional copywriters I know revealed an English graduate; theology graduate; PR with a background in the diplomatic service; former local government administrator; salesman; marketer; web designer with a local radio background.

Increasingly, you also find copywriters with a business, IT or technical background. Some marketers and web designers also offer copywriting as an add-on service to their core business.

Since copywriting is unregulated, anyone can offer copywriting services. This makes life easy for you. In theory, you can simply hang out your sign, and off you go. But look out for...

Pirates & Buccaneers

Since anyone can set up in business as a copywriter, many non-writers are seduced into doing so, often at unsustainably low rates. This is a similar situation to those friends/nephews/neighbours who moonlight as web designers. Anyone can knock out a website in a couple of hours, right? But anyone wanting professional standards of design, security, build, longevity and impact for their business doesn't go to a neighbour for a freebie.

The tragedy is that clients often don't know the difference. They're often looking for a copywriter because they themselves aren't good with words, and so they can't judge what they're given. This means there are inevitably fraudulent and incompetent copywriters out there. More than once, I've been called in to do a makeover job on substandard work, often riddled with spelling and grammar mistakes, clichés, or factual errors.

Happily, the problems were caught in time by a switched-on designer. But beautiful, high-value products very nearly went out accompanied by poor-quality words for which the client had paid a fortune.

So my plea is: if you don't have excellent writing skills, don't be a copywriter. It's like trying to be a professional dancer with no sense of rhythm. Or a professional accountant who can't add up.

You'll also need a gift for putting yourself in customers' shoes, speaking their language, and forming a strong connection. And if you have shaky spelling or grammar, forget it. A print brochure or signage may cost thousands. If you get the details wrong, you could let down your clients very badly, and cost them sales and reputation.

It's a highly responsible job. You have been warned.

That said, if these responsibilities worry you, you may have exactly the right mindset for copywriting. You'll put in the necessary care and effort to get it right.

Do You Need Specialist Knowledge?

You do need some marketing basics, which are covered in this book. Otherwise, business writing is a broad church, rather like journalism. The job will depend on your specialisms, skills, preferences, and market. There are some specialist areas, such as technical writing. But it's unlikely you'd go there without some background in the relevant industry.

Most copywriters don't start out as specialists. Like journalists, they gather sector and product knowledge as they go along, through research and experience.

This is just as well! Businesses which need copywriting are often in manufacturing, trades, and services – areas typically less familiar to the arts graduates who make up the majority of writers. Industries more closely linked to the arts – publishing, galleries, media, education – are full of other highly literate arts graduates, who may see less need for copywriting services.

So be prepared to get involved in subject areas that aren't your own, and gradually carve out a niche. And in the meantime, mine your existing skills and work background for possible specialisms.

Maybe you have particular experience in retail, technology, or the third sector? Maybe you have a technology park on the doorstep? Maybe you're a journalist and prefer long form writing and interviews? Maybe you're a marketer, or have a specialist sales background?

All these backgrounds can provide a strong starting point, and be developed over time into a USP (unique selling point). I started off writing for anyone in my local area who asked. I eventually narrowed this down, and found clients who are a good fit for my strengths in tourism, textiles, food and drink, games, and technology.

The key to a rewarding business is to match skills and experience to the right opportunities. The more you're known in a given niche, the more word spreads, and the more you can charge. Even if you start wide, be prepared to specialize.

Is It for You?

What makes a good copywriter? Here's a round-up of some helpful personality traits:

Enthusiasm

Don't do it just for the money. People who aren't enthusiastic about a product or service don't make an authentic job of selling it. Your lacklustre writing can sink your client's business.

Responsibility

You need to turn around jobs quickly, efficiently and to deadline, maintain client confidentiality, and be on your client's side. In this arena, you're a business professional, not a creative artist. Business people won't appreciate writer's block or lack of inspiration.

Curiosity

Most writers are interested in how other people and worlds tick. Natural curiosity will help you absorb new information and research quickly.



TV Debunk #1: *Mad Men*

Fantasy world: Glamour, sex, suits, cigarettes and hairspray.

Real world: At your desk, with occasional forays into cold stock rooms and Google Analytics.

Remember: *Mad Men* has as much in common with modern copywriting as *Outlander* with modern Scotland.

Listening

Not all clients are expressive or can articulate their needs well. Sometimes, they can only clarify what they want by talking it through with an outsider – which is often you. A good copywriter is a good listener who is client-focused and asks good questions.

Trust

Confidentiality and a professional manner are a given. Over time, you'll pick up useful business skills, trends and developments. Don't give away business secrets.

Resilience

Client relationships are give-and-take. If you encounter robust feedback and moving goalposts, don't take it personally or get defensive. Your job is to solve your client's problems, and get paid for it.



TV Debunk #2: *Dragon's Den*

Fantasy world: World domination, evil geniuses, mad inventors, crushed dreams.

Real world: At your desk, helping ordinary people to survive.

Remember: Success and failure in *Dragon's Den* don't equate to success and failure in real life.

Respect

Respect business culture by turning up for meetings on time, and hitting deadlines. Your contribution may be part of a workflow leading to a website launch, or a trade show. Mission-critical!

Confidence

You don't need to be an extrovert. You do need to come across as confident in your skills. If you're shy, let your portfolio samples and testimonials speak for you.

Empathy

You need the imagination to put yourself in your client's shoes, and really understand and feel their enthusiasm for the product. Even more importantly, you need to empathize with the customers they want to reach.

Lack of ego

Copywriting isn't about you. Be aware that writing which draws attention to itself too much can sometimes get in the way of customer connection.

Phone skills

Most copywriters do a lot of their work on the phone, or via Skype. You may never meet the client in person. Skype use is particularly common among creative professionals such as web and graphic designers.

Tech skills

A touch of geekiness is an advantage in a culture where you'll work a lot with web-savvy designers and developers. Website (SEO) copywriting in particular calls for some technical understanding.



TV Debunk #3: *The Apprentice*

Fantasy world: Epic blunders, ruthless bullies, and astonishing egos.

Real world: At your desk, helping your local chocolatier/restaurant/kids' clothing start-up/housing association.

Remember: Your business community needs *you*. And would probably run a mile from these guys.

Writing Skills Audit

Fiction, journalism, poetry and scriptwriting are very different writing forms, and some of their associated skills translate more readily to copywriting than others. Here's an overview of some writer profiles, with typical strengths for copywriting, and potential skills gaps.

Creative writing graduate

As a creative writing graduate, you've mastered techniques such as voice, characterization, storytelling and viewpoint. You're also good at coming up with original ideas, and have strong grammar and editing skills.

Watch out for: wordiness, one of the dangers of great verbal fluency; self-consciously clever writing which draws attention to itself rather than the product or service. Try writing to a specific length or space, as journalists do.

Work on: concision, marketing, interviewing.

Fiction writer

As a fiction writer, you're a natural storyteller, and good at writing empathetically from different viewpoints. You're also good at long-form structure, and familiar with techniques such as hooks, reversals, plants and pay-offs.

Watch out for: wordiness – economical expression is crucial; invention, embellishment, and straying from the facts. Try using the marketer's *features and benefits* and the journalist's *who, when, where, why, what, how* to stay on track.

Work on: concision, marketing, interviewing.

Scriptwriter

If you've written for the screen, stage or radio, you're used to collaboration, ruthless feedback and editing, economical expression, and working to tough deadlines. You're also audience-aware, and good at writing spoken register.

Watch out for: spelling and grammar. These aren't such a concern in performed work, but need to be highly accurate in copywriting. Try Grammarly and see whether your editing standards pass muster.

Work on: proofreading, marketing, interviewing.

Poet

If you're a published poet, you excel at precision, economy, and attention to detail, and have a strong grasp of rhythm and metaphor. You're likely to be good at editing others, and collaborating with designers on visual layout.

Watch out for: heightened register and language, which can get in the way of customer connection; sensitivity to robust feedback. Practise shifting viewpoints and putting yourself in the client's and customers' shoes.

Work on: spoken register, marketing, interviewing.

Industry specialist

If you're an industry specialist, you'll have insider expertise, good contacts and awareness of trade magazines, sites and influencers. You may already have sales or marketing experience, and excel at B2B writing.

Watch out for: conflict of interest, business confidentiality; "inside the box" insider thinking; jargon. Be doubly vigilant about blurred lines, trade press contacts, and ethics.

Work on: creative writing techniques, customer viewpoint, journalism ethics.

Journalist

As a journalist, you're trained in a clear, lean writing style, and experienced in research, asking incisive questions, and spotting good story angles. You excel at cutting through complexity, and working to tight deadlines.

Watch out for: conflict of interest, especially if also doing PR, and mixing editorial with marketing work; too much authoritative "telling" vs more evocative, empathetic "showing."

Work on: showing, creative writing techniques, ethics.

IT specialist

As an IT specialist, you're likely to have good industry contacts and insider knowledge, as well as web and SEO skills. This makes you a good fit for B2B, technical writing, and possibly Analytics and digital marketing.

Watch out for: conflict of interest when dealing with industry clients; SEO-led writing, which can sound schematic and unengaging. Try using sensory detail to evoke vivid pictures, and verbatim quotes for authenticity.

Work on: marketing, creative writing techniques, storytelling.

Marketer

As a marketer, you're experienced in business and sales culture, and have a valuable strategic overview. You're skilled at pulling together creative teams, and may have digital marketing skills.

Watch out for: cliché and received ideas about written style; spelling and grammar issues. Try using sensory detail to evoke vivid pictures, and verbatim quotes for authenticity.

Work on: creative writing techniques, storytelling, viewpoint.

What's next?

Decide which kind of writing background is closest to yours. This will give you a clearer idea of your strengths, and where you fit into the copywriting ecology. In the meantime, work on your skills gaps. See **Resources** for recommended reading.

Copywriting in Context

As a typical arts graduate, I went into copywriting without business training, and learned business skills the hard way, through study, practice, trial and error.

It took me years to appreciate that business was a specific discipline with its own valuable concepts. It's useful to study these, as they apply not just to clients' businesses, but also to your own. The main ones are covered in **Business Concepts & Culture**. In the meantime, to set up a context for client businesses and your writing business, it's helpful to understand the...

Business Lifespan

Like people, businesses have a lifespan. They're born, grow, survive, and sometimes die. It's a useful metaphor, as it turns business from an amorphous blob to a set of clearly defined stages, with their own characteristics and challenges.

Knowing how other businesses have tackled these stages will help you to address them quicker. Identify what stage you're at,

then use the suggestions in the rest of the book to get where you want to be. The 5 stages are:

- * raw newbie
- * start-up
- * seasoned pro
- * overworked pro
- * growth business.

The aim is get to “seasoned pro” with minimum fuss, and avoid overshooting into “overworked pro.” If you’re ambitious, you can also investigate what it takes to become a growth business.

Raw newbie

No previous writing experience.

If you’ve never written before, you need to be realistic. Most of the professional copywriters I know have degrees in language, literature, sales or marketing, or are trained journalists, or subject specialists in a technical area. Others get into copywriting via professional blogging. So although it’s possible to learn the art and craft of copywriting through hard work and commitment alone, be aware you’ll be competing with writers who already have those kinds of skills and experience. Can you see yourself in that professional context, interviewing people, meeting clients, turning in great copy to tight deadlines? If so, it’s time to progress to...

Start-up

Entry-level copywriter with professional writing experience in another medium.

You’ve never written any marketing copy before, but you’ve written plenty of other things – fiction, journalism, scripts, blogs, press releases, user manuals. Someone, somewhere, has paid you to write – whether in a previous job, or as a freelance.

This is important. Paid writers in other media have demonstrable and transferable writing skills. If you’ve been paid by someone to

write, you have some credibility and the beginnings of a platform, which will help you to be taken seriously. It also gives you a starting point for testimonials and word of mouth, to start the ball rolling.

Early pro

First jobs under your belt, one or two clients.

Early pro stage means you've done the most difficult thing of all: you've hung out your sign, won your first client, completed your first job, invoiced and received payment. You've made a sale. This is huge. To run a writing business, simply repeat this step many, many times, gaining increasing skills and experience as you go.

If you're completely new to copywriting, this can seem daunting. When I first started out, although I had journalism and other experience, offering writing skills to business felt like a big leap. The difficulty was getting comfortable with my writing skills having a market value. Confident asking for money for something that came naturally. This attitude can get you into trouble! The earlier you start earning what you deserve, the better. For more about this, see ***Handling Money***.

Ideally, you'll want to get you through "early pro" stage as quickly as possible, and onto the next stage: building a work pipeline as a...

Seasoned pro

Regular clients, good word-of-mouth, steady work pipeline.

Seasoned pros come in all shapes and forms, from the part-time writer who freelances for local businesses, to the high-end full-timer with full books and a national reputation.

"Seasoned pro" is the sweet spot. Most freelances fall into this category, and never go beyond it. If you can maintain a manageable work pipeline, and earn plenty to live on, with extra put aside for rainy days, then there's no need to expand. In this stage, you can earn a good living, achieve a decent life-work balance, and enjoy freelance freedom. The nuts and bolts of getting here and staying here are covered in **Part II**.

In the next stage, you may start to feel the strain as an...

Overworked pro

Great word-of-mouth, too many clients, full-to-bursting work pipeline.

Few people survive being an overworked pro for very long. You really don't want to get to the stage where you crack up, and need five weeks off to recover.

It's common, though, for copywriters to experience a "feast or famine" cycle, with periods of full-on grind, interspersed with times when they suddenly find there's no work coming in. This is because when you're working full on to meet a tough deadline, it's hard to keep the other plates spinning.

When I'm *really* under the cosh, admin, general tidying, shopping and eating fall by the wayside. If you're not careful, this can be followed by a massive catch-up, when you discover you've missed an important email with a lovely offer of work. Or a sudden deathly silence, because you haven't done any marketing.

Another "overworked" scenario is for time to fill with small, poorly paid jobs, leaving you unable to take on a big, meaty one. Strategies for dealing with this are covered in ***Day-to-Day Workflow***.

And finally, if you get a taste for greater success, or world domination, you're looking at a...

Growth business

Your business wants to grow beyond just you.

There are many reasons why you may want to grow beyond being a sole trader, including ambition, overwork, a desire for company, and retirement planning. Or you may simply want a villa in the Bahamas (in which case you're probably in the wrong line of work).

A growth business is a new phase of the business life span. Enterprise bodies and funders treat growth businesses differently from sole traders and small start-ups, thanks to the potential for job creation. Growing your business also entails greater risks, which is probably why most writers remain freelance sole traders.

While a growth business is beyond the scope of this book, some specific strategies and considerations are covered in ***Grow Your Business***.

PART II

Kit & Caboodle

Copywriters are the luckiest workers in the world. You need very little equipment to start a business. Just a computer, and phone, and access to the internet.

No massive overhead costs. No stock. No need for an office, landline phone, fast broadband or fancy gadgets. It's the low overhead business *par excellence*. So don't let "kit purchase" or "a room of my own" become an excuse for procrastination.

My advice is to skim this book quickly, then go out and get your first job. If you wait until things are perfect, you'll never get started. Lose your copywriting virginity, see if you like it, get over any money hang-ups, then come back, learn and improve.



To get started right away, head for **Starter Projects** and do **Assignment 1**.

Welcome back! This chapter is about kit and office equipment. You don't need 90% of it to get started, but it's included to give you an overview of technical options and considerations. Here's your basic set-up:

- * computer
- * mobile phone
- * internet.

If you have the budget, consider adding the following:

- * black-and-white laserjet printer
- * second monitor (ideally touchscreen)
- * microphone headset.

As your business grows, consider adding other items further down the line. But don't rush in and buy loads of shiny kit. Weigh up everything against the vital issue of...

Getting Good Value

Most equipment is a wild overspec when you're at this "bootstrap" stage. Be warned that electronic gizmos have a habit of whispering "tax deductible." Don't listen! When deciding whether to buy, develop your business muscles by considering "return on investment" (ROI). In purely financial terms, will it really help? Will it speed up your work, or improve your efficiency and productivity? Will it improve your writing health and well-being?

For my situation, a decent chair, good keyboard and standing desk all make sense, and the investment has paid for itself many times over. But there's no point in paying for – for example – new office furniture, when second-hand bargains are easy to find.

Your situation will be different. Exercise your financial judgement, and don't listen to talking gizmos.

The rest of this section is an overview of my own setup and discoveries over the years.

Hardware

Computer

For preference, I use a laptop. This allows me to be flexible, present to clients using my own kit, and work anywhere: cafes, libraries, on