

Writer

When we think of writers, we often think of famous novelists. Nevertheless, few of the thousands of writers throughout the world produce best-selling fiction. In fact, most writers are unknown to the general public. They write the countless books, articles, newsletters, software manuals, advertisements, and reports people read every day. They write the scripts for movies, TV programs, radio programs, and commercials. They even write jokes for comedians!

Nature of the Work

Writers use words to entertain, explain, persuade, and instruct. There are two general categories of writers: fiction writers and non-fiction writers.

Writers who create works of fiction write such things as novels, short stories, plays, poetry, and/or scripts. Writers who develop non-fiction works write such things as newspaper or magazine articles, textbooks and educational media, technical reports, and advertisements.

Whether a writer creates fiction or non-fiction, he or she is likely to do a great deal of research in public, private, or university libraries. Today, more and more writers are doing their research through on-line computer information centers. A writer can connect his or her computer to the center through a phone line and a computer component called a *modem*. The modem sends and receives information. Writers pay a fee for the information service, for the connecting service, and for the phone bill.

Sometimes writers also need to interview people. To record their conversations and make sure they are accurately taking the information, they use such methods as tape recording, shorthand, and note-taking.

Writers who create material related to a specific field often have a background in that field. For example, a technical writer creating a computer manual will likely have extensive experience with computers and/or a degree in computer science.

After the research and interviews are finished, writers must put together the information they have gathered into notes and outlines. Depending on their personal style, they may

write by hand, tap out their work on a typewriter, or use a state-of-the-art computer. Eventually, their words must be put into a format determined by their client or publisher. No matter what form any writer's finished manuscript takes, it is always typed. Once the working draft of any writer's piece is complete, the writer will go back and edit his or her work.

Fiction writers have the most leeway in their work. They can write about anything they want in any style they want. Non-fiction writers who write for such popular publications as magazines can be very creative in presenting their material. They are usually free to choose what information they want to include in their articles. They may have to work within certain length and style limits, however.

Technical writers must be able to clearly explain their subject, whether it is how to run machinery, repair a television, or apply for a loan. The information must be complete, accurate, and interesting enough to hold a reader's attention. All writers at some time must meet deadlines set by clients, publishers, and editors.

Writers who create advertising copy are called copywriters. Their work is designed to tell people about the products their client is offering. Their words create a desire in the reader or listener to buy the product advertised. The copywriter's work may appear on television, radio, in magazines and newspapers, and on billboards.

Copywriters usually work with a team to create ads. They may be creative, but they may also have to work within a client's strict specifications, often creating a great deal of work under a very tight deadline.

The Entrepreneurial Connection

Independent or *freelance* writers can choose to specialize in one particular area of writing. Or, they can bill themselves as being able to prepare any kind of written material. Freelance writers can create non-fiction material or works of fiction. They may be paid by the hour or by the project. Many freelance writers propose article ideas to magazines and newspapers. When the ideas are accepted, they write the article.

Some writers work as *ghostwriters*, writing books for other people who do not have writing skills. *Ghostwriters* may be paid a flat fee for *ghostwriting*, or they may share in the royalties of a book when it is published. (Royalties are regular payments given to an author; these payments are a percentage of his or her book's sales.)

Copywriters can freelance, too. They may write ads, brochures, or promotional material for small businesses that cannot afford a full-time advertising staff.

Education and Other Requirements

Aptitudes, Abilities, and Transferable Skills

The following aptitudes, abilities, and transferable skills will help you become a writer:

- good communication skills, including a sound grasp of composition, grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling;
- keyboarding and word-processing skills;
- computer skills;
- research skills;
- ability to take criticism and rejection; and
- self-discipline to work alone, meet deadlines, and follow instructions from editors and/or client.

Courses to Take Now

A well-rounded education will help you in this field. Nevertheless, here are some specific courses you should consider.

- *Communications*. Writers need to be able to write, speak, read, and listen well. Take all of the grammar, literature, creative writing, and journalism courses you can. Also consider taking speech and drama.
- *Yearbook and Student Newspaper*. At your school, the chance to write for your yearbook and/or your student newspaper may be offered in conjunction with journalism classes. Or, perhaps you can join either staff as an extra-curricular activity. In any case, being on a school publication staff will give you a good taste of what it's like to gather information accurately, write under deadline, and produce creative material.

- *Typing, Keyboarding, and/or Computer Use*. Learn to type, keyboard, and/or use a word processing system. If you write professionally, you will spend many hours working and reworking your material. Having your work on computer will make it much easier to produce polished drafts.
- *Entrepreneurship and Small Business Ownership/Management*. Entrepreneurship and Small



Business Ownership/Management courses will give you a basic understanding of the aptitudes, abilities, and skills you need to open and run a business.

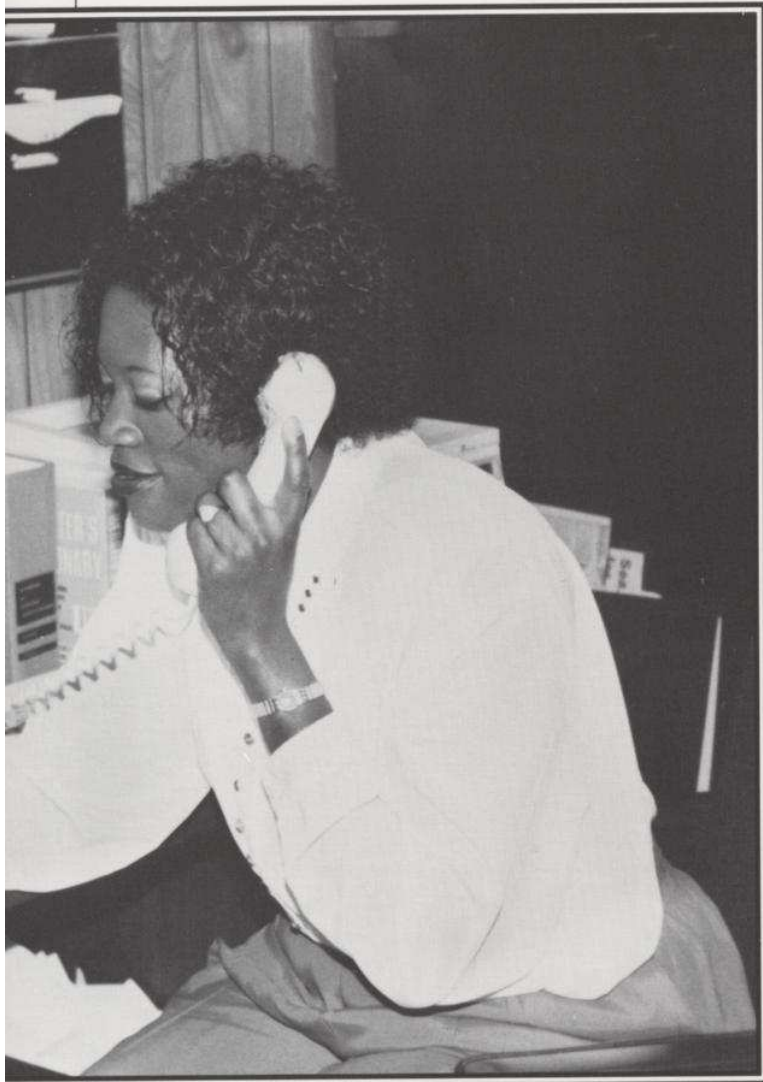
- *Marketing*. Courses will give you a basic knowledge of marketing practices and principles.

Formal Education

Although some writers do get degrees in English, journalism, literature, or history, many

types of writers do not need to have a formal college education. However, attending junior college or college will offer you a broad exposure to such subjects as composition, literature, journalism, and creative writing.

If you plan to go into copywriting, a background in marketing and advertising is very helpful. It will convince employers and clients that you have a basic understanding of business.



Career Path

There is no time like the present to get started writing professionally. Call your local newspaper: perhaps the editor would like articles on local events. Even if you are not paid for these articles, your name or *byline* will probably appear on them. You can use these writing samples to get other jobs.

Also, investigate the internships offered by newspapers or magazines. These unpaid jobs

give you invaluable experience.

Begin your career as an editorial assistant in a newsroom or with a trade, technical, or business publication. There you will learn to proofread, rewrite, and edit copy.

Getting into freelancing may be difficult. Jobs are often hard to find when you first start out. So, many writers start freelancing while working a full-time job. They try to define their *market*—the area in which they want to write. They may continue writing about one field or branch out into other fields. They may never give up their full-time career. Or they may eventually spend so much time writing that writing becomes their career.

Very few people actually make a full-time living writing fiction. It usually takes years of writing for any author to establish himself or herself as a fiction writer. Also consider that once a book is accepted by a publisher, it takes 18 to 24 months before it is actually published. It may take another 12 to 18 months before the writer begins to receive royalties. Thus, fiction writers almost always work a full-time job and write in their free time.

Start-up Considerations

Costs

It is relatively inexpensive to start a freelance writing business. You will need a reliable typewriter, word processor, or personal computer. Costs range from \$200 to \$5,000, depending on what you choose.

Paper, envelopes, stamps, and files are essential. The amount you need will depend on the amount and type of writing you do. But about \$100 to \$150 will get you started.

Eventually, you may have your own letterhead stationery designed and printed. This costs about \$200 to \$500, depending on the type of paper you choose, the color of ink, and the number of pieces you have printed. If you have your letterhead designed by an artist, design fees may cost \$300 or more.

You also need such basic reference books as a dictionary, thesaurus, almanac, atlas, and desk encyclopedia. These should cost no more than \$100 to \$200.

Location

Most freelance writers work at home. You will need a room in which to work undisturbed. It does not have to be elaborate. Humorist Erma

Bombeck claims she set up her typewriter in the bathroom. You may work in a spare bedroom, in the basement, or on the dining room table.

Hours

A writer's day may be long or short, depending on the amount of work he or she has to do. Some writers work only a few hours a day. Others work for as long as 12 hours. Some choose to work late in the evening. Others like to work at dawn. Freelancers can set their own schedules.

Personnel

Writers usually work alone. However, if your work load increases, you may hire proofreaders, typists, or research assistants. You may expect to pay from \$5 to \$15 an hour for these services or more.

Prospects for Success

There is a demand for technical and informational writers. This is especially true in the computer field, where writers are needed to create software manuals and documentation.

Writers are also needed in corporations to produce training materials, video scripts, employee handbooks, and employee newsletters.

Very few people make a living writing scripts and novels because there are so many people who want to do both.

Risks and Rewards

The work load of a freelance writer may vary greatly from month to month. One month he or she may have almost too much work to handle. The next month, there may be nothing.

Many magazines will not pay until an article has been published. This may be anywhere from two months to two years after it is accepted for publication.

Writers may be paid by the job or by the hour. Fees may range from \$5 to \$65 an hour, depending on the type of work. Articles earn from \$25 to \$3,000, averaging \$200 to \$300.

Income can be as low as a few thousand dollars a year for part-time writers. Active, full-time freelancers may earn from \$15,000 to \$75,000 a year. A fiction writer who has a very successful novel may earn many times this, but such cases are rare.

Writing can be stressful. Most writers must meet deadlines. The pay may be low. The competition (especially in larger urban areas) may be intense. And all writers face constant rejection of their work.

But there is a tremendous amount of satisfaction in writing. Writers have the chance to share their ideas, to teach, and to help others.

For Further Information

Entrepreneur's Bookshelf

- *1991 Writer's Market: Where and How to Sell What You Write*, Glenda Tennant Neff, ed. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books.
- *There's a Job for You in: Advertising, Commercial Art, Fashion, Films, Public Relations & Publicity, Publishing, Television & Radio, Travel & Tourism* by Leonard Corwen. New Century Publishers, Inc., 1983.

Writer's Digest and *The Writer* magazines give helpful monthly advice to beginning and experienced writers.

Professional Associations

- National League of American Pen Women
Pen Arts Building
1300 17th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 785-1997
- American Society of Journalists and Authors
1501 Broadway, Suite 302
New York, NY 10036
(212) 997-0947

GLENCOE

Macmillan/McGraw-Hill

Horse Trainer

To a horse trainer, horsin' around is serious business. Horse trainers tame the noble beasts we call horses to do such things as run races, herd cattle, pull carriages, and jump fences.

How do trainers do all this? They develop patience, consistency, a repertoire of training techniques, and, well, a good amount of horse sense!

Nature of the Work

The process of training horses has long been called *breaking*. But that word sounds cruel and unfeeling, so most trainers today prefer the term *training*.

Horse trainers begin a horse's "education" in stages. The first stage is to teach a horse to walk on a lead, which is similar to the dog leash but perhaps a little longer. The second step is to get it used to wearing "tack"—a saddle and bridle. The third step is to actually ride the horse, getting it to respond to knee, rein, and voice commands.

Horses can also be trained to pull a carriage or car, to work in a team, or as part of a pack train. Some horses are trained for racing, jumping, or for a precise method of performing certain movements called *dressage*. Usually, a trainer will specialize in doing one type of training or in getting horses to break such bad habits as kicking, biting, and resisting grooming.

Not all horses act alike. In fact, horses can have quite different personalities which vary with the type of breed. Quarter horses, for example, are sturdily built and bred for working on the range. They generally have stable dispositions and are easy to train. Thoroughbreds, on the other hand, are usually slighter of build. Bred for racing and for such competition as show jumping and dressage, they tend to be high-strung. A trainer working with quarter horses and thoroughbreds would have to vary the intensity and type of training method used for each breed.

Trainers teach horses by repeating lessons over and over. Horses learn to respond to such rewards as a pat on the neck when they do well. When they make mistakes or balk, the trainer corrects them with firm words or, if the trainer is

actually on the horse, with pressure from his or her knees or hands.

Trainers must understand each animal's capabilities and limitations. An animal that is too tired, for example, cannot learn. So the trainer must know when the horse has had enough for the day.

A horse's training should start as early as possible. In fact, trainers start schooling *foals* (horses less than a year old) within the first month after they are born. During this first year, foals spend most of their time getting used to the trainer catching them in the field, learning to cope with other horses, being groomed, and having their feet picked up routinely so they will be used to doing this when it comes time for shoeing. A trainer will also teach the foal to wear a halter, letting a rope drag from it to get the young horse used to the feel of reins.

When a horse is one or two years old, serious training begins. The animal begins to work at the end of a long line called a *lunge line*. With the horse at the end of the lunge, the trainer leads the animal around a ring in a circle. The horse begins to learn the three key gaits: walk, trot, and canter. It also learns to stop on the command "whoa." At this point, training is done to voice commands.

Once a horse is working well on a lunge line, *ground driving* begins. The trainer fits the horse with a leather bridle—a type of headgear that has a metal bit (which goes in the horse's mouth) and reins (which are used to guide the horse). The horse is first allowed to get the feel of the reins on its side and back. Then the trainer walks the horse, guiding it with the reins.

After the horse accepts the bit and the reins, it is saddled and allowed to get used to that. When the time comes for the trainer to get on the horse's back, there should be little problem with mounting the horse if the trainer has worked the horse correctly. Of course, there are always surprises, and trainers can be thrown.

As the trainer rides the horse, he or she gradually teaches it to respond to such commands as hand and knee pressure. At first, verbal commands are given along with physical commands. But the verbal commands may gradually be eliminated.

Piano Tuner

If you love music, you hate sour notes. Yet, all stringed instruments go out of tune when they are played. They go out of tune even when they are *not* played.

Tuning a violin, cello, or guitar is not difficult. Musicians who play these instruments tune them every time they prepare to play them. But the piano is a different story. Most pianos (except concert pianos) are not tuned each time they are played. When they are tuned, the job is done by a professional piano tuner.

Nature of the Work

Pianos have 88 keys and 230 to 250 strings. Striking a single key may cause one string or a set of three strings to vibrate.

When you strike a piano key, a felt-headed *hammer* drops on the strings and bounces back into position. The hammer and the mechanism that works it are collectively called the *action*.

When the flexible piano strings are struck, they vibrate. This produces a tone. The strings run over a *bridge* which is attached to a wooden *soundboard*. The vibrations are carried through the bridge to the soundboard. The soundboard, too, is flexible; it amplifies the tone of the strings.

The strings run from one end of the piano to the other. At one end, the strings are attached to *hitch pins*. These pins connect the strings to a *plate* or *harp* which is bolted to the cast-iron piano frame. If the plate is cracked, the piano will not stay in tune. The stress of the strings will continue to widen the cracks and change the tuning of the piano. If the plate breaks, the instrument becomes useless.

At the opposite end of the piano, the strings are attached to steel *tuning pins*. Tightening the tuning pin raises the pitch of the string. Loosening it lowers the pitch. The tuning pins are set in a piece of wood called a *pinblock*.

The only thing holding the tuning pins in place in the pinblock is friction. The constant tension of the strings on the pins and their vibration loosens the pins. As they unwind, the pitch of the piano strings drops.

The wooden pinblock expands and contracts with changes in temperature or humidity. This changes the amount of friction holding the

tuning pins in place. If the wood dries out, as it does in a heated home in winter, the strings loosen. In damp summers or springs, the wood around the tuning pins tightens. The pitch of the strings goes higher. Naturally, heat and humidity can shrink or swell the soundboard and bridge, too, raising and lowering the bridge and changing the piano's tone.

The strings of the piano also change with time. The strings stretch continually during the first few years after a piano is built or restrung. As the piano gets older, however, the strings relax less and less.

Piano tuners adjust the tone of a piano's strings by tightening or loosening the tuning pins. This is done with a *tuning hammer*. The tuning hammer is really like a wrench. It fits over the end of a tuning pin, allowing the tuner to turn the pin.

A piano will hold its tuning for several weeks or months if it is not played much. However, there are numerous factors that affect a piano's sound. Thus, any piano should be tuned at least twice a year.

Piano tuners do not have to be musical. In fact, they do not even have to play the piano. But they must have a good ear for sound. Vibrating strings create a primary tone and higher, fainter sounds called *overtones* or *harmonics*. If the primary tones and harmonics of a set of two or three strings match, the piano note is pleasant to hear. If they are out of step, the strings make an unpleasant sound when struck.

The piano tuner must match a note's harmonics as well as its primary tone when tuning the strings. They do this by adjusting all the strings in a set so that they vibrate almost exactly the same way.

To establish a note's correct sound, the piano tuner uses a *tuning fork*. This is tuned to a specific pitch. Unlike a vibrating string, it does not produce overtones.

Tuners match the sound of the first string on the piano to the tuning fork. Then they tune all the notes in the octave (eight whole notes) surrounding that first note. Once this first octave, called the *temperament octave*, is tuned, all the other octaves on the piano are tuned to it.

Farmer

In days past, it was thought that all a farmer needed to succeed was the strength of an ox. Times have changed. Today, farmers need the mental agility of a fox, the flexibility of a snake, the patience of a tortoise, and the steady nerves of a leopard. Having a four-year college degree in business or economics does not hurt, either. Although farmers still attend to crops and livestock, much of their success depends on skillful marketing and management.

Nature of the Work

Farmers can raise any number of things from crops such as grain and vegetables; to livestock such as chickens, sheep, pigs, or cattle; to flower and grass seed; to ornamental trees and shrubs.

Crop farmers till the soil to prepare it for planting. They may buy their seed and seedlings. Or they may propagate the crop themselves by taking cuttings, raising seedlings, or harvesting seed.

Fruit growers use a variety of budding and grafting techniques to produce young trees. Based on their knowledge of their crops' demands and the growing conditions in their area, they decide when to plant. They must also decide when to weed, fertilize, spray, and harvest. Planting too soon or waiting too long to harvest can mean the loss of a crop. Many crops need special care. Freezing temperatures, for example, may require farmers to fire smudge pots all night to save an orange crop.

When a farmer's crop is in, the work is not over. Produce must be graded, bunched, and packaged. Then the farmer must decide the best way to sell it: locally at roadside markets, or through brokers who buy crops in bulk for sale at a central market. Growers' cooperatives may sell members' produce through a representative sent to the closest local major market.

Apart from deciding *where* to sell, farmers must decide *when* to sell. This is a crucial decision because market conditions fluctuate. A crop that was in demand last year may bring very little this year.

Farmers must be excellent money managers and record keepers. They must be able to budget

the income from their crops throughout the year. They must maintain good credit so they can get bank loans when they need them.

The Entrepreneurial Connection

For a long time, farmers have symbolized the American ideal of the rugged, hard-working entrepreneur. Although large agribusinesses dominate agriculture, independent farmers are not out of the entrepreneurial farming picture.

There are more than 700,000 small to moderate commercial farms in the United States, producing one-third of our nation's crops and livestock. These farms gross between \$25,000 and \$500,000 per year. Although some are partnerships and some are family-held corporations, most are owned by individuals.

Small farmers do well raising crops that sell for a high market price. Such high-value crops include berries, nursery plants, and herbs.

Some small farmers find a niche or specialty market. They may grow gourmet vegetables for expensive restaurants. Or, they may use organic farming methods and sell their higher-priced produce to health food stores.

Most small farmers raise several crops or several types of livestock. Some rice farmers, for example, raise catfish in their flooded fields. If one crop does poorly, another crop may save the day.

In addition to selling through traditional channels, small farmers may market their wares creatively. Some farmers at roadside stands, for example, sell not only their produce, but also homemade jams, relishes, vinegars, and pickles made from their crops. Herb growers sell herb wreaths, potpourris, and dried herbs. Fruit farms may allow customers to pick their own fruit right from the fields or orchards.

Some farmers engage in *contract farming*. They work directly with *food processors*—companies that can or package produce and meats. The processor provides the plants, young animals, and/or the feed and other supplies the farmer needs. The farmer supplies the land and the labor. This ensures that the farmer will have a