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WHILE YOU WERE WRITING

While You Were Writing – 10/05/12

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For Freelance Writers the Waiting Is the Hardest Part

By [Carrie Anton](#), under Find Work. Carrie Anton is a full-time freelance writer focusing on health, fitness, and sports. She's been published in Self, Women's Health, Oxygen, and Maximum Fitness

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hen waiting to hear back about a story pitch or writing gig, a freelance writer can be very focused —just not on the right things. Instead of tackling a laundry list of “should-dos,” the writer often opts for constantly refreshing email, calling voicemail for messages, or social media stalking the person holding the answers. Since time is money for all freelance writers, the following list should help the right priorities rise to the top.

Build your online portfolio

“If you build it, they will come,” is not just true in Iowa. Editors and other people offering potential business opportunities want to have a chance to review freelancers’ work before doling out assignments. Having an online presence is the easiest way to do that, and it doesn’t have to cost a lot of money or require hiring a graphic designer. [“How Slick Does Your Portfolio Need to Be?”](#) offers writers some great tips for getting started. And writers shouldn’t forget about finding work through Contently! [John Hazard](#) breaks it down in [“Build a Great Contently Portfolio.”](#)

Keep current

If having an online portfolio is the first step for a freelancer, the next is to keep it updated. Writers should focus on highlighting the best work of their career, while also adding in

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pieces that are recent. While this is often hard to do when a freelancer is always working, a little bit of downtime waiting for a new gig can be the perfect opportunity for updates. For writers who don't have a lot of new work to showcase, blogging is a great way to stay relevant and keep his or her name and words out there. The [Branded Blogging Series](#) is a great place to help writers get off on the "write" foot.

Nip and tuck

As proven in "[Report It Once, Write It 5 Times](#)," an idea with legs can be retooled for a variety of audiences. But for freelancers who have their hearts set on contributing to a "goal" publication, spending some time tailoring a pitch to perfection can have big payoffs. [Freelance Writer Alice Oglethorpe](#), a former Senior Editor at *Shape*, who has since contributed to *Real Simple*, *Shape*, *Whole Living*, and *Better Homes & Gardens* says, "When you come up with an idea for a story, don't just send it out to a bunch of magazines. Figure out the one magazine it would be perfect for and do your research to find out which editor would be best to receive it. Narrowing in and pitching for specific people and titles will up your odds of your pitch getting accepted."



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Write what you love

[Freelance Writer Frank Bures](#) has contributed to such big guns as *Outside*, *Wired*, *Harper's* and *Esquire*, but he has also taken on the low paying gigs when pickings were slim. At both ends of the spectrum, advice Bures received from writer Robert Sullivan helps him with the balancing act.

"[Sullivan's advice] was to have two piles of things you are working on, one for love and one for money. He said if you work on them long enough, they eventually merge into one pile. I've always kept that in mind, and that's how it has more or less panned out. I think a lot of people neglect the love pile, which can turn something you love into a real drag."

For freelancers, who want to start a love pile, "[When to Pursue a Passion Project Without a Paid Deal](#)" is a good place to start.

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