



The Best Daily Schedule for Freelance Writers

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We happy freelancers always sell the writing life to others by pushing the *freedom* aspect.

"You're in control of your schedule!" "You can work whenever you want!" "No one can tell you what to do!"

But what many freelancers don't expect is that **it can actually be overwhelming to have complete control over your schedule.** When you are employed by someone else, there's at least *some* structure. Someone is handing you work and telling you when it needs to be done. You do it, you go home, you're golden. That's actually pretty nice!

However, as a freelancer, it's all up to you. You know there are certain things you should probably be doing, like marketing, networking with other writers and editors, working on your website, and writing your assignments. But how much should you be doing of each thing, and how often? That's what leads to freelancers feeling anxious and blocked.

The good/bad news is that **the best schedule is the schedule that works best for you!** Some of us feel more productive when we know exactly what we are going to do every hour of the day, and others of us bristle at the idea of a regimented schedule and prefer a more free-flowing approach.

But I'm not going to leave you high and dry: Here are five different schedules that work best for different freelance writers depending on your particular work personality. One of these may jump out at you as the perfect solution, or you may need to try all five to determine which is the best freelance writing schedule for you. Or, like me, you may move among the five depending on what's going on in your work and your life.

FREELANCE WRITING SCHEDULE NUMBER ONE: THE ONE-A-DAY

With the One-a-Day schedule, **you focus each day of the week on a different type of action or project.** For example, maybe Mondays and Wednesdays are for marketing, Tuesdays and Thursdays are for working on current assignments, and Fridays are for administrative work. Or Mondays are for social media marketing, Tuesdays are for writing, Wednesdays are for following up on leads, Thursdays are for admin work, and Fridays are for networking with other writers. The categories you choose are up to you!

Of course, there are some tasks that need to be done more frequently; like, you probably want to answer your email at least once a day, and not just all on, say, Friday. You can schedule to-dos like that into small blocks throughout the week as needed, keeping your most productive hours each day dedicated to the main theme.

This is a fairly loose schedule; every day you'll know *in general* what you'll be doing each day. However, the daily themes, like "Marketing," aren't very specific, so you may find yourself floundering. "Okay, it's Wednesday, so that means I'm doing marketing. But what kind of marketing? Should I work on that article pitch, write to a blogger about guest posting for him, or email my old clients to let them know I'm accepting new assignments?"

The trick is to keep a different to-do list for each category, and each week, or at the end of each day, you schedule items from the list into the corresponding days. How will you know which ones to schedule first—like, should you work on your website on Monday or save it for Wednesday, or even put it off to the following Monday? **You know by using your gut to tell you which projects and tasks are the most time-sensitive; which ones you predict you'll have the energy and resources for on a given day; and which will have the most impact on your career.** You know, deep down, which projects should take priority over other ones on any given day!

FREELANCE WRITING SCHEDULE NUMBER TWO: THE BIG PLAN

With The Big Plan, you map out your following week, month, or even year, moving tasks and projects from your to-do list into your schedule as far off into the future as is feasible for you. You might block off two hours on Monday morning for writing a blog post that's due that week, then schedule an hour for email and social media. Then you'll schedule in lunch (don't forget lunch!), and finally block off three hours to prepare for and conduct a client meeting.

You'll fit tasks in wherever they make the most sense for you, taking into consideration non-negotiable obligations like client meetings, and which hours of the day are your most awake and productive. That means every day will look different.

As another example, if you're planning on working on a huge writing project, you can schedule chunks of the project off into the next three months. I'm using The Big Plan schedule right now because I decided to commit to accomplishing certain goals this year, and this schedule is perfect for making sure you stick to the plan. I'm currently working on the Volume Marketing Challenge for Freelance Writers, and I've scheduled chunks of the project into my calendar, such as writing the outlines for the Challenge podcasts, recording the podcasts, developing the worksheets for each Challenge, and marketing the class.

However, they say the best way to make God laugh is to tell him your plans. **So every so often, you'll need to take stock and adjust your schedule as necessary.** For example, you may discover task X doesn't take nearly as much time as you thought it would, so you can shorten the amount of time you allotted to it for the next day. Or maybe an emergency came up and you didn't get to project Y, so you need to squeeze it in later in the week. Or you scheduled adding new samples to your LinkedIn profile for Tuesday at 2pm, but a client emailed asking you for a phone meeting at that same time. (I think you know the client takes precedence over the LinkedIn updates!)

FREELANCE WRITING SCHEDULE NUMBER THREE: THE SET DAILY SCHEDULE

The Set Daily Schedule is where you incorporate distinct blocks of time each day for different categories of projects and action items. The benefit, if you're anything like me, is that you won't become bored doing the same type of work all day long, like *only* marketing on Mondays and *only* writing on Thursdays.

With The Set Daily Schedule, you'll group similar tasks into the same time slot each day, such as

administrative work every day from 8am-9am; writing from 9am-1pm; and marketing from 2pm-4pm. You'll then add these blocks to your schedule on a rolling basis, so every week looks the same.

As with the One-a-Day, you won't know *exactly* what you're doing each hour until you move tasks from your categorized to-do lists to the corresponding blocks of time in your schedule. There's a nice balance of having a fairly strict schedule, but still being open in terms of exactly what you're doing during each time block. And again, you may need to keep an open mind when unexpected, but important, tasks and opportunities arise.

FREELANCE WRITING SCHEDULE NUMBER FOUR: THE DAY JOB JUGGLE

If you're trying to build a freelance career around your 9-to-5 job, you may have no choice but to use the spare minutes of your day to get your writing-related work done. (This also applies if you're a stay-at-home parent who is with your kids all day.)

Many of us don't even notice the chunks of 10, 20, and 30 minutes that often pop up during the day, which we typically waste by surfing Facebook or running off to grab a coffee.

The trick with The Day Job Juggle schedule is to create a big list of everything that needs to be done. You can go even further and divide the list up according to how long you estimate each task will take: 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes, 45 minutes, an hour. Any tasks on your plate that are too long, you can chunk down into more manageable bites. For example, instead of trying to jam building your writer website into a small block of time, divide it into writing your "about me" page, writing your "hire me" page, sourcing photos, brainstorming your tagline, gathering testimonials, working on your design, and so on.

Carry with you everything you need to get work done in those odd windows of open time. Maybe you can dictate part of an article into your phone (which is what I'm doing right now), make a few cold calls from your cell phone during your lunch hour, and work on your website in the evening while your kids are taking their bath. Listen to business development podcasts in the car, bus, or train on your way to and from work. Bring your laptop or a tablet with you everywhere you go, so you can pop it open and get some work done wherever you are.

The downside to The Day Job Juggle is that if you fill every second of the day with work for a long period of time, you can experience burnout. Make sure you still have time to yourself to take a nice

shower, read a book, or see the occasional movie. If you're building a freelance career around a day job, your progress will necessarily be slower than if you were able to work full-time on your freelancing. Don't run yourself into the ground, and don't let yourself get down about your slower progress...it's normal and to be expected!

FREELANCE WRITING SCHEDULE NUMBER FIVE: LINDA'S PATENTED ADHD-STYLE SCHEDULE

This is a hardcore schedule style for those writers who simply can't stand the idea of any sort of regimentation to their day. You went freelance so you wouldn't have to deal with work schedules like you did at your old job, dammit!

The idea behind Linda's Patented ADHD-Style Schedule — I really do have ADHD, so I'm allowed to call it that — is to work on whatever you're most passionate about at any given moment. Create a huge list of what needs to be done and pick and choose from the list depending on your energy, passion level, focus, and available time.

So, for instance, you may take a look at your list and be inspired to work on a query letter, then to follow up on a bunch of pitches you sent out last week, then to update your website, then to work on that assignment that's due on Friday. And that's okay! As long as you're moving forward, you're good.

This schedule actually works well as long as you don't become overwhelmed trying to decide what to do at any given time. **For Linda's Patented ADHD-Style Schedule to work, everything on your to-do list should be important enough that it more or less doesn't matter in which order you complete the task.** Want to add new clips to your website before you follow up on the lead your writer friend gave you? Sure! Of course, if you have an assignment deadline you'll need to meet it...but otherwise just choose the action item that calls to you, get it done, and move on to the next thing.

I've used all five of these freelance writing schedules, and they all work well depending on what my life looks like at the time. **Choose the one that resonates with you now, knowing you can switch if it doesn't work well for you, or if it works well for a while but then something happens in your career that makes the schedule less than ideal.**

Please share this article with your writer friends who may be struggling with their schedule, and also reach out and let me know if you use a schedule type that's not mentioned here. Would love to learn even more about how other writers work!

Your Freelance Writing Success Coach,

Linda Formichelli

P.S. Looking for help breaking into freelance writing -- or making it to the next level? Do yourself a favor and learn from a veteran freelancer with 20 years of experience. (Ahem...that's me.) You can take a look at my Freelance Writing Success Coaching [here](#). Also (yay!), the podcast versions of my articles are [now on iTunes!](#)