

# Free Tools for Writers, Bloggers and Solopreneurs

By Karen Banes

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3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

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While many of these sites may offer excellent paid products and services, I cannot endorse many of them as I haven't used them. That's because I love a freebie and often only use the product, service or software that's available for free. On that note, let's get started with introducing you to the many free tools you can use to run your business as a freelance writer, blogger or solopreneur.

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# Free Writing Tools

## Open Office

If you're looking for a free alternative to Microsoft Office to use for word processing, spreadsheets and presentations, the best one I've found is Open Office. It does most of what Word does and many people actually find it easier/more intuitive to use. Download it free at [OpenOffice.org](http://OpenOffice.org).

## The Sage

This is a very useful dictionary and thesaurus to help with writing and editing your content. It provides not only definitions and synonyms, but also usage examples, and a pronunciation guide. Get it from [SequencePublishing.com/TheSage](http://SequencePublishing.com/TheSage).

## Ginger Grammar Checker

We all have (and sometimes over-rely on) spell check and the basic grammar check that comes with Microsoft Word and other word processing programs.

The free Ginger software system takes things a step further with a more thorough check of both grammar and spelling. I still advise careful proofreading, preferably by a professional, but this tool can help weed out the worst grammar mistakes and save you time, especially if you're not a native English speaker or you know grammar is your weak point.

You do get a limited number of corrections with the free version, so if you're writing a book, it won't work for you. If you're writing a weekly blog post, for example, it's perfect. Nothing bad happens if you overrun the free limit. You'll get an on-screen message asking if you want to upgrade to the paid version, which you can close and ignore. You can get Ginger as a browser extension or download for Android devices from [GingerSoftware.com](http://GingerSoftware.com).

## Cliché Finder

Even if your spelling and grammar are spot-on and you've used your thesaurus and dictionary to check meanings and choose the perfect word, your writing can still be ruined by clichés and repetitive phrases.

Cliché finder scans your text and highlights those tired, overused phrases that turn readers off. You can use this tool online. Simply copy and paste your text and click 'Find Clichés'. Here's the site: [Cliché.TheInfo.org](http://Cliché.TheInfo.org)

## **The Title Generator**

I use the [Tweak Your Biz Title Generator](#) to generate a ton of new ideas for my articles and blog posts. Simply take your main topic idea, let the tool know whether it's a noun or a verb and within seconds it will generate a list of headlines/titles you can use for online content, newsletter subject lines, and even book titles.

It's fully automated (obviously) and not a fail-safe tool. In fact, some of the titles it produces are hilariously nonsensical. But it does come up with some great possibilities, especially for big 'pillar-content' type post titles for your own blog, or to pitch to potential editors and clients. Find the free online tool at [TweakYourBiz.com/tools/title-generator](http://TweakYourBiz.com/tools/title-generator).

## **Topical Brainstorm**

This online tool is similar to the title generator above, but with a couple of added features. It also takes a keyword or topic and 'brainstorms' it to present you with a list of ideas.

It breaks the projected titles down into groups using emotive and intriguing words like 'secrets' 'mistakes' and even 'love and sex'. Again, it's not foolproof. Not every headline will make sense, but it's a cool idea sparker. Find it at [OnlineSales.co.uk/tool/tools/topical-brainstorm.php](http://OnlineSales.co.uk/tool/tools/topical-brainstorm.php).

## **The Co-schedule Headline Analyzer**

This is another [free online tool](#) that I've started to use on every headline I write, whether it's for my own blog, my content creation clients or my freelance writing pitches. I've also started using it to test out future book titles.

You put your headline in, and click 'Analyze Now'. You'll get a grade for your headline (you'll want to aim for a B+ at least, if not an A). You can keep tweaking it to improve. The analyzer will let you know how many power words you've used and how many emotional words, as well as whether your headline is the right length. Find it here: [Coschedule.com/headline-analyzer](http://Coschedule.com/headline-analyzer).

## **Evernote**

Evernote is my number one free app for helping me organize my writing and blogging projects. You can download it to your PC and sync across all other devices. It enables you to organize your writing, blogging and other business projects, putting your notes, research, images, and web clips for each article, book or business project all in one place.

Evernote is available as a free download which is all I've ever needed. You can get it at [Evernote.com](http://Evernote.com). An alternative that some people just love

is [WorkFlowy](#). It also helps with note-taking, list-making, brainstorming and planning, and it's a little simpler and more intuitive, so give it a try if Evernote doesn't work for you.

# Free Productivity Tools

If you're a natural at using your time efficiently, never get distracted and can focus for hours at a time, you can skip this section. But for most of us, employing a few free productivity tools can increase our output, lower our frustration and have a huge impact on how much we achieve each day (and you probably don't need me to tell you what a significant cumulative effect that has over a year).

## **Focus Booster**

This handy little download helps with time management and productivity. It's based on the Pomodoro technique which involves working in short, focused sessions to achieve maximum efficiency. The technique is based on the theory that we work best in short bursts with lots of breaks, enabling us to stay mentally alert over longer periods of time.

We could easily just decide to work in 25 minute bursts and take five minutes off every half hour, but the advantage of a Focus Booster is it reminds us to do it, and encourages us to utilize our break and get back to work, leading to increased productivity over time. Only the starter version is free, so make sure that's the one you grab. It has a limited number of Pomodoro sessions each month, but is great for trying out the technique to see if it works for you. Try this app out at [FocusBoosterApp.com/download](http://FocusBoosterApp.com/download).

## **StayFocusd**

Spending too much time on email, Facebook and other social media sites? [StayFocusd](#) is a Google Chrome extension that increases your productivity by limiting the time you spend surfing, checking email and socializing online.

You choose which sites to block and how much, if any, time you're allowed to spend on them. This is such a useful tool because most of us genuinely don't realize how much time we spend in aimless surfing, especially once we hit our favorite social media sites. We may need to access these sites for work, but anyone who has got chatting or commenting on social media or followed links to other sites to 'just check it out' knows that an hour can easily pass before we realize we've got no work done yet today – at all.

## **Tick Tock Timer**

Anyone can set a timer and challenge themselves to do a certain task in a certain time, but if you don't have a timer to hand, you can use this simple,



online, digital timer. You can even use their ‘What have you done?’ page to share how you used the timer to help you get your stuff done today. It’s available at [TickTockTimer.com](http://TickTockTimer.com).

### **Digital Calendars**

We all need an online calendar to keep us aware of our deadlines and commitments. I like the free [Google Calendar](#), which is shareable with family, friends and colleagues, and will email you to remind you what needs to get done when. If you have a Google account, you already have access to Google calendar. Sync it with your phone to carry your digital schedule with you at all times.

While the Google Calendar is enough to keep me organized, there are some other options that might suit your situation better. The [Cozi](#) app and website, for example, works well for busy families who need to coordinate lots of information and commitments. It also now has a Google Calendar import function.

### **Eye Defender**

Eye Defender is an app that can improve long term productivity by reducing short-term eye strain. Many of us find our eyes are suffering as a result of too long spent in front of screens. Eye defender reminds you to take breaks and even encourages you to do a few exercises to relieve eye strain. Experts recommend screen breaks every 20 minutes for optimum eye health, but you can set it to whatever intervals you feel you benefit most from. Download from [Eyedefender.en.softonic.com](http://Eyedefender.en.softonic.com).

### **Work Rave**

This app is similar to Eye Defender but this one focuses on trying to help you avoid Repetitive Strain Injury. Again, you can set it to remind you to take regular breaks at the time interval of your choosing, and this one suggests simple exercises for your back and shoulders as well as your eyes. Use in conjunction with Eye Defender or pick one depending on your priorities. Download at [WorkRave.com](http://WorkRave.com).

### **Slay Your Goals guide**

A free 10-step guide to help you prioritize, organize and ultimately ‘slay’ your goals. There is a paid Slay Your Goals planner and online course as well. That’s not the one your looking for. The free downloadable guide is at this link: [Slay Your Goals Guide](#).

## **Habit Tracker**

This is another free download in PDF format. It helps you track your habits to improve productivity over time and form new, better, more productive habits. It's printable so you can keep a hard copy in front of you as a daily visual reminder. Get the free download here: [Free Habit Tracker](#).

# Free Courses and Trainings

## **5 Ways to 10x Your Business in the Next 90 Days**

This is an online multi-part video training aimed specifically at coaches. If you're running a coaching program, online or off, you'll probably benefit from this training. It covers how to get and keep new clients, how to grow your list of prospective customers, and how to create high ticket items that bring in substantial revenue. Sign up for the free training at [Coachglue.com/programs/10x-your-business](https://Coachglue.com/programs/10x-your-business).

## **Intentional Blogging**

If you're a new blogger, or you're having trouble building your blogging career, you may like this free, 12 part, online course from freelance writer, author and professional blogger Jeff Goins. Jeff describes this course as:

“A free email course for bloggers to help them improve their craft and find their tribe. Newbies and veterans alike tell me this simple, 12-step series has been extremely helpful to them.”

Sign up for your 12 free lessons at [GoinsWriter.com/free-blogging-lessons](https://GoinsWriter.com/free-blogging-lessons).

## **Content Marketing Tutorial**

One of the best free tutorials I've found online to help you plan your content marketing as a blogger or other online solopreneur. Includes the two things most people get wrong with content marketing, and covers creating, planning, distributing and repurposing your content for best results. Also, although there's the option to sign up and download the information (which may be more convenient for most of us) it's also possible to study the whole 9-part tutorial online. Check it out at this link: [TheSavvySolopreneur.net/content-tutorial](https://TheSavvySolopreneur.net/content-tutorial).

## **Make Your First Affiliate Sale**

If you're just starting out in affiliate marketing, this free 5-day email course will help you craft a successful affiliate marketing strategy from the beginning, and learn how to make passive income with your blog or website. Get the details at [TheSavvySolopreneur.net/free-course](https://TheSavvySolopreneur.net/free-course).

## **Goalslayer Masterclass**

This is a free online masterclass that takes place live the first week of every month. It covers basic goal setting and productivity strategies and teaches a simple 6-step process to achieve more of what you're aiming for. It only takes

about an hour and a half out of your month, and the live format enables you to ask questions and get feedback live online.

While it gives good general advice for reaching any goal, it's primarily aimed at bloggers, freelancers and other online business owners. Sign up for the next one here: [Monthly Goalslayer Masterclass](#).

### **Creative Pathfinder Foundation Course**

The creative Pathfinder course from [Lateral Action](#) does exactly what it says it will. It helps creative entrepreneurs go beyond creativity to find a path that is profitable as well as creatively satisfying. It's a six month course delivering a weekly email on a specific topic, along with a downloadable worksheet, and links to other resources and information on the topic.

The course is taught by Mark McGuinness, a creative coach with over 15 years' experience of working with creative entrepreneurs. I took it at a time when I was starting to think that being a writer and paying the bills were perhaps not compatible goals, and it helped me see how I could, with some tweaks, continue to do what I love and make money doing it. Download the course at [LateralAction.com/freecourse](#).

### **Managing Shiny Object Syndrome**

This webinar is an offering from Kelly McCausey at [Love People and Make Money](#). Kelly is a coach and mentor for solopreneurs and specializes in helping online business owners focus in on a strong, profitable business model.

As Kelly puts it, she has developed a way to manage all the sparkly ideas, products & strategies that come her way, and turn them into things that can make money in her online business. Sign up for the free training video [here](#).

### **Proofread Anywhere**

If you love reading and love correcting other people's grammar, this one is definitely for you. A free online workshop you can sign up for at any time that will explain how a proofreading business can be your ticket to a freedom based lifestyle that allows you to work from anywhere. Includes general information on proofreading as a career and reveals the easiest way to attract your ideal proofreading clients. You can put your name down for this free on-demand video workshop at [TheSavvySolopreneur.net/proofread-anywhere](#).

### **Virtual Assistant Training**

If you're considering being a virtual assistant (which is a great option as a solopreneur) [VA Networking](#) offers free training videos, worksheets, checklists

and other resources to get you started, including a free forum to get advice and feedback as you build your virtual assistant business. Check out all the resources available here: [TheSavvySolopreneur.net/va-network](http://TheSavvySolopreneur.net/va-network).

# Free Blogging Tools

You probably already know that you can create, and even earn money from, a free blog, so I'd like to focus mainly on getting free content for your blog and other free tools you can use to monetize your blog. If you're new to blogging, though, I'll just mention my favorite free blogging platforms to get you started.

## **Blogger**

Blogger is a cool platform for a free blog as it's owned by Google and therefore (no surprises here) Google rather likes it. Blogger blogs get indexed by Google quickly and if you're looking to get your individual posts ranked for a particular key phrase or question, this platform is a good bet.

Blogger allows and encourages monetization through Google AdSense (again, no surprises there) and there's plenty of versatility to include affiliate links or links to your own products as well. This means you can make a small profit from your free blog quite quickly.

I use Blogger for my niche topic blogs to test the water. If you later want to migrate to a paid platform you can. It's a bit of a pain, but moving blogs always is. If you want to keep your free Blogger blog, but give it a domain name you can simply buy a cheap domain name from somewhere like [GoDaddy.com](http://GoDaddy.com) (for as little as \$10 a year) and apply that to your blog. You can create your free blog at [Blogger.com](http://Blogger.com).

## **Wordpress**

Wordpress.com is another free platform for bloggers. Not to be confused with Wordpress.org, which will require you to pay for hosting and a domain name. Using the free Wordpress.com platform may make life easier if you later want to migrate to the paid Wordpress platform, (which is generally considered to be the best and most versatile blogging platform overall). You can check out the features of the site and see if it might work for you at [Wordpress.com](http://Wordpress.com)

## **Weebly**

[Weebly](http://Weebly) is a lesser known, but extremely user-friendly free service that allows you to create a website and add one or more blogs to it. It's great if you want a site that looks like a website, but has the versatility to include a blog as well. I use it to host my writer's website, which I want to look like a professional static website, but I'm able to include my [book blog](#) (where I announce my own book news, interview other authors and post book reviews) right there on the

site.

Weebly provides a completely free service with an offer to upgrade if you feel you need more features. For example, I decided to go with a .com domain name ([KarenBanes.com](http://KarenBanes.com) as opposed to KarenBanes.weebly.com) while still using the free Weebly hosting, and it cost less than \$3.00 a month. Find more details at [Weebly.com](http://Weebly.com).

### **Medium**

I'm including Medium here as it allows for an experience very similar to blogging on your own blog, but potentially with a much wider audience. The main disadvantage is that you don't own even a slice of the Medium platform, so it's not the same as having your own site or blog. But you do control your content there, so it's a great place to build an audience, promote your work and get new subscribers on your mailing list. You can repost your own blog posts there for wider exposure as well, and there's even a chance to earn money directly from the platform, via their partnership program. Check out the platform at [Medium.com](http://Medium.com).

# Free Content

Many bloggers and other online business owners don't realise you can get ready-made, pre-written free content to use in your newsletters, on your blog or on other content platforms. Always check the rights included with free content. There may be some restrictions as to where you're allowed to post it, or how it can be customized.

## Free PLR Articles

PLR refers to non-exclusive content you buy (or in some cases obtain for free) to use on your blog. If you have no idea what PLR is or how to use it (there are some rules and guidelines) start by grabbing this free report about [How To Use PLR on Your Blog](#).

This will explain how to use PLR and how to avoid the problems associated with placing duplicate content (which PLR essentially is) on your site.

Good PLR can cost a lot of money, but you can get the occasional free offer as well. At the time of writing, you can get an introductory package of free articles from [Content Shortcuts](#), for example, and there's a whole list of free PLR in different niches being offered over at [All Private Label PLR](#) (just scroll down the home page to see the links under the heading 'Free PLR'). I also recommend signing up with [EasyPLR.com](#) and [White Label Perks PLR](#). These sites only offer paid packages on their websites, but as a subscriber, I've been offered free PLR packages from both these sites before in their monthly emails.

## More free content

You can also get free ready-to-use content by using article directories. This sometimes takes a little time to sift through the articles and find the high quality ones you actually want to use, but once you find some good article providers you can use several of their articles, as they'll tend to be fairly consistent. My recommendations:

[EzineArticles.com](#) for the sheer volume of content available, and different topics covered (you'll find something for almost any niche on here).

[LadyPens.com](#) is a smaller site, but I've found the content to be consistently higher quality than most other sites.

What's even better than getting free content that attracts visitors to your blog? Getting free content that attracts visitors and is already set up to make you money. You can do this by adding content to your site that has been written by someone else, who allows you to put your own affiliate link in the content.



These articles are usually written by the original producers of an ebook or information product (which is good as they tend to be better quality than some of the content available on the article sites). You simply have to sign up for the affiliate program, publish the free content and swap the links already in the content for your own affiliate links, meaning that if readers click through that link and end up buying a product, you get paid a commission. Most article directories do NOT let you do this. You have to keep all links intact. The site I've found is best for finding this type of content it [FreeAffiliateArticles.com](http://FreeAffiliateArticles.com)

It's also worth checking the affiliate section of any affiliate programs you sign up for. They'll often have ready-to-use articles and blog posts that affiliates can use on their blogs and in their newsletters to promote their products.

### **Media Rooms and Press Pages**

Another place to look for free, high-quality, non-exclusive content is on the websites of authors and other bloggers. Authors in particular often have a page on their sites called 'Media Room', 'Press Page' or something similar. On this page you'll sometimes find non-exclusive guest posts, interviews, quotes, images or videos you can re-publish on your blog.

An added advantage is that if you then let the author know you used content from their media room on your blog, they'll often share it with their own fans, networks and social media followers, driving traffic to your blog.

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# Free Social Media Tools

You don't need me to tell you social media is free and a useful way to promote your business and market your products and services. You also don't need me to tell you which social media platforms to use, because everyone has different goals and preferences. Whether you're into [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Pinterest](#), [Instagram](#) or something else, what you need is a range of free tools to get the most out of your social media activity.

## **Recurpost**

[Recurpost](#) is my new personal favorite for social media scheduling and management. You can manage several social media profiles (including the big ones such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn) all from one dashboard, with lots of cool features, even with the free version. Others may love [TweetDeck](#), or [Buffer](#), and it's up to you which one you feel most comfortable with, but Recurpost offers the best overall experience for me. It's very similar to the (expensive) paid platform, Meet Edgar. I only know this because I have clients who have paid me to schedule some of their social media through Meet Edgar, and given me access to their account to do so. Recurpost does a slightly more limited, but still adequate job for free

There are paid upgrades with Recurpost, but I'm still using the free version and it does everything I need it to do. Sign up at [Recurpost.com](#).

## **Sumo**

[Sumo](#) is a free social sharing plugin for Wordpress. I appreciate that not everyone uses Wordpress to run their site or blog, but if you do, the free version of Sumo is a must. It has a few useful features but I love it as it provides an easy way to add (and customize) social sharing buttons, including the ones that float down the side of all your webpages and make readers significantly more likely to remember to share your content! There's a paid version too, but I'm still finding the free version sufficient. Find out more [here](#).

## **Click To Tweet**

[Click To Tweet](#) is a handy tool to encourage more shares on Twitter. You can use the website for free, and easily generate a link that - when others click on it - will take them straight to a pre-written (by you) Tweet that they can post direct to their own Twitter stream.

If you're blogging with WordPress you can also use the free Click To Tweet Plugin to embed cute little "Tweetables" in your blog posts. Find out more

[here](#), or search for it in your plugins are in your WordPress dashboard.

### **Inside Instagram Authority**

This free online course is one of the best I've found for Instagram newbies, teaching you how to set up your account, attract potential customers and grow your business using the power of the free social app. Covers exactly how to promote your product and services without annoying your followers, how to position yourself as an authority figure in your niche and how to monetize your Instagram account. Details here: [TheSavvySolopreneur.net/instagram-course](https://TheSavvySolopreneur.net/instagram-course).

### **21 Ways To Get Clients From Instagram**

Aimed at coaches, this free download from [Coachglue](#) can be easily adapted by anyone looking to get clients from Instagram, whether you're a freelancer, blogger, author, affiliate marketer or any other type of solopreneur. Get your download here: [TheSavvySolopreneur.net/get-more-clients](https://TheSavvySolopreneur.net/get-more-clients).

# Free Autoresponders

If you're running a blog and collecting email addresses from subscribers so you can send out a newsletter, or market products and services to them you'll need an autoresponder or email management system. Usually you'll have to pay for this service, and it's one of the few things I actually think it's worth spending money on.

I've used a few good paid autoresponders both personally and while working for clients, including the excellent [Aweber](#) and [Get Response](#). There's no comparison between these and the free autoresponders I've used, but you may find that a free one works for you, depending on your needs, objectives and subscriber numbers.

## **Mailchimp**

[Mailchimp](#) is an autoresponder that offers a free service for clients with less than 2000 subscribers (across as many lists as you want). There is no advertising within emails, just a very unobtrusive MailChimp badge in the footers of your email, and you can send up to 12,000 emails a month.

If your list grows to more than 2000 subscribers, you will have to start paying, but many bloggers and solopreneurs would say that's a great problem to have. It's hard to grow a list that big and if you do, you're probably making money selling products and services to your subscribers.

In my personal experience this is definitely your best bet if you're just starting out, and most people like it enough to stay with it, even if the size of their list outgrows the service. Find out more at [Mailchimp.com](#).

## **MailerLite**

I rarely suggest my readers try a tool I haven't personally used, but a couple of bloggers in my networks are currently using the free version of MailerLite and loving it, so I'm going to give it a mention, with the caveat that it's not a personal recommendation, as I haven't yet tried it. The free version is good for up to 1000 subscribers and apparently it has most of the features of other paid autoresponders. Get it here: [MailerLite.com/signup](#)

## **Listwire**

[Listwire](#) is unusual in that it is a genuinely free Autoresponder, with some pretty fancy features. It has no limitations on the number of subscribers you can add or lists you can run. Listwire's owner has publicly proclaimed that he is

committed to keeping the service free, with no plans to make it a paid service now or in the future.

It does, however, have advertising within your emails, and that can be a problem. I didn't get great click-through rates while using this service and it may have been because I was losing click-outs to the other (advertising) links within my emails. It could equally well have been that I was pretty new to email marketing when I was using it and maybe I wasn't writing compelling enough sales copy, so it's still a service worth consideration if you need a permanently free service with similar features and reliability to the paid options. Find out more at [Listwire.com](http://Listwire.com).

## Free images and graphics

If you're blogging, writing online articles, creating information products and online content, and running social media campaigns, you need images. Images help your content get noticed and shared, especially with so many image based social media and sharing sites such as Pinterest and Instagram becoming more and more popular.

### Free stock photos

In an image sharing, picture pinning, photo posting online culture, it's easy to forget you can't just grab any old image from any old website and use it as your needs dictate. If you're using images online and don't want to pay for them you have to find sources that allow a creative commons license and then abide by any restrictions (such as including an image credit) the copyright holder imposes. There are a few very good sites I use to find free images.

[FreeDigitalPhotos.net](http://FreeDigitalPhotos.net) is a site that allows unlimited free downloads and has a good range of high quality stock photos. They do insist on an image credit so you will need to include a line on your blog or site that states where the image was from, with a link to the source. There are clear instructions on the site as to the correct way to attribute an image.

[Morguefile.com](http://Morguefile.com) is a particularly useful free stock photo site, as it allows free use of most of its photos, meaning you can use them in more versatile ways than most stock photos. Most pics on Morgue File allow you to adapt the work, which means you can use them to add text and create those highly liked and

shared pictures with quotes overlaid on them that are all over the internet. They also don't require a credit so you can use them on social media without worrying about how and where to put the link to the image source. It's still courteous to include a credit if convenient, for example, if you use them on your blog. Always check the license for individual images to make sure exactly how you're allowed to use them.

I also love [Creative Market](#). This is a paid stock photo site, BUT when you sign up they send you links to free images, graphics, and other goodies every month. I've been on their list for a few months now and have downloaded all the freebies, without any hard upsell to buy more (though I admit I've bought some of the paid photos because they're just gorgeous for when you want something a bit special – even I spend money on my business sometimes). Sign up for the freebies here: [CreativeMarket.com/free-goods](https://creativemarket.com/free-goods).

### **Free Stock Photo Packages**

While I love the sites above to search for free images, I also love receiving them in my inbox. There are a few stock photo sites that allow you to access a free image library when you subscribe to their newsletter, AND send you a few extra free images each month. You don't get to choose these images, obviously, but they are usually fairly generic, so most bloggers and solopreneurs can find a use for them. The big advantage of course, is that they are only free to a very limited amount of people, so you won't be posting the same images as every other blogger or social marketer out there. You'll find a few sites that follow this model. The sites I personally subscribe to, and love, are [Ivory Mix](#), [Styled Stock](#), [SheBold](#), and [PixiStock](#).

### **Image Creation Tools**

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but sometimes you want to create or edit an image to say exactly what you need it to. The following free tools provide some really simple ways to create unique images to illustrate your written work and share as marketing tools.

#### **Canva**

This user-friendly image editing site has a basic free version. I only occasionally use the paid elements and you can do so on a pay-as-you-go basis, spending as little as \$1 at a time if you want to use a premium image or graphic. I use Canva almost every day, and have only bought a \$1 once or twice when I needed a cover for an info-product. You use this tool online, and will need to

create a free account, but then all your images will be stored in your account, allowing you to make templates for all your blog and social media graphics. It's at [Canva.com](https://www.canva.com).

### **Infogr.am**

Infographics are another eye catching way to share images and information on social media. Use [infogr.am](https://infogr.am) to create your own. You can add charts, maps, quotes, images and text. Brand the infographic by including your website address and use it to drive traffic to your site or blog.

### **Wordle**

[Wordle.net](https://www.wordle.net) provides a quick, easy way to make word clouds out of any piece of text. You can work with this tool online. Simply submit a piece of text and it will create a cool image showing the words in the text, with the most frequently used words displayed in bigger sizes. You can adjust arrangements and colors. These images can be very eye catching and a great way to illustrate written content. Try the tool out at [Wordle.net](https://www.wordle.net).

# Free Cloud Storage

As you create and acquire more content you'll need somewhere to store it all so you can access it in the event of a technical problem such as a hard drive crash. You'll also often want to be able to access documents from different devices, allowing you to be productive while you're out and about, traveling or working away from your home office. I have a few favorite cloud storage options that allow you to store a reasonable amount for free.

## **Dropbox**

[Dropbox](#) allows you to back up all your documents and work in progress, access it from different devices and share it with colleagues if necessary. They're fairly generous with the amount of space they give you for free and you can earn more by referring friends or using Dropbox to share documents. If you need to upgrade to the paid version, it's fairly well-priced too, but the free version is enough for most individuals, even if you're running a freelance business or blog. Sign up for a free account at [Dropbox.com](#).

## **Google Drive**

[Google Drive](#) allows you to upload documents or folders and access them from anywhere, with the added advantage that you can create a link to share with anyone you choose. This is a good place to put those freebies you want to direct readers or subscribers to if you don't want to host them on your own site, or if you want to have an option in case of technical difficulties with your site. You can also share documents publicly on google drive so it's a good place to put marketing materials such as PDFs of your pillar posts or cheat sheets and checklists. If you already have a Google account, you already have cloud storage via Google drive. Go to [Drive.google.com](#) to access it.

## **iCloud and OneDrive**

I've put them together because they have something in common. They're only free if you're already a customer of the company that provides them: Apple in the case of iCloud, or Microsoft in the case of OneDrive. However, most internet users are a customer of one or the other (I'm a customer of both!) so they're just here to remind you that if you have an Apple product (and therefore an Apple ID) or a Microsoft product (such as Office) you probably have a lot of 'free' storage included in your contract.



## Free Photo Storage

For unlimited free photo storage online, you can use or a site like [Shutterfly](#), [JustCloud](#) or [MyShoebox](#), or simply create an account at one of the main online sharing sites like [Flickr](#) or [Instagram](#).

This article gives a good round-up of the top 20 photo storage and sharing sites on the web, including how much storage you get for free:

<http://web.appstorm.net/roundups/media-roundups/top-20-photo-storage-and-sharing-sites/>

## Free ebooks and reports

Most of the reports below do not require you to sign up with your email address. They are direct links, so simply click the link, then hit the download button or Ctrl + S on your keyboard. I've included direct links as well in case you need to copy or type them into your browser.

### [The Secret To Making Money With Your Blog](#)

A useful report with advice from several top bloggers, detailing exactly how they're monetizing their blogs, which income streams work best for them and what doesn't.

They discuss affiliate marketing, information products, online courses, live events, sponsored posts, google AdSense, CPA campaigns, Continuity programs, product recommendations/reviews, and list building.

Direct

link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B062shwwp1MVX210aTNGQ1IybTQ/editusp=sharing>

### [How To Get One-Way Links To Your Blog](#)

Experts tell you how they build quality incoming links (sometimes thousands of them) to their sites and blogs. Strategies covered include article marketing, guest posting and interviews, and are all things you can do for free if you're willing to put the time and effort in.

This report includes links to further information, including a definition of link-building, what every blogger or website owner needs to do before starting

their link-building strategy and a useful Q&A section.

Direct

link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B062shwwp1MVRVdYZjBwbHZhMnM/usp=sharing>

### [Outsourcing Your Online Business Tasks - When to and How To](#)

As a new freelance writer, blogger or solopreneur, you'll likely be doing everything yourself, but it won't be long before you feel the need to outsource some tasks to save time and ensure that things outside your areas of expertise are done properly. I love learning new things and expanding my skill set, but there are some things I just have to outsource, from designing book covers to some of the content creation for my niche blogs.

In this short report, successful bloggers and marketers talk about when to outsource, what tasks to outsource and how to do it.

Direct link: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/191819684/Outsourcing-Your-Online-Business-Tasks-When-to-and-How-To>

### [How to use PLR in Your Online Business](#)

I mentioned this report earlier in this book, but thought I'd mention it again as I really want you to grab it if you think you might ever use PLR content to grow your blog or online business. I didn't understand the power of PLR content for a long time. I'm a writer and I love writing. Why would I buy in stuff written by other people? Then I read this report and took advantage of a couple of free introductory PLR packages I was offered from Easy PLR.com.

I realized how versatile this content could be, and how much time I could save, particularly when it came to creating content for my blogs, allowing me to concentrate on writing books, magazine articles and other things that earned much more money. I started to buy in small amounts of PLR to use on my niche blogs about [natural health](#) and [online business](#).

This report covers a lot of ground, including the pros and cons of PLR, how to use it and where to get it.

Direct link: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/191821417/How-to-Use-PLR-in-Your-Online-Business>

### [Ways To Improve Your Productivity On The Go](#)

One of the huge advantages to freelancing or running an online business is that you really can do it from anywhere in the world. This report contains interviews with successful business owners who discuss their favorite apps to use in order to run their businesses while they travel and enjoy the amazing

lifestyle being a solopreneur can offer.

It claims to be about running your business and staying productive anywhere using iPhone and iPad apps, so it's super useful if you're a fan of Apple products, but many of the apps discussed are available for all Smartphones and Android devices.

Direct

link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B062shwwp1MVQTI4UVYtajFPLXc/edit?usp=sharing>

### **Free ebooks and reports with sign-up**

There are free opt-in gifts all over the internet so I'm only going to include a few of the best here.

#### **Seven Steps To Clarity as a Solopreneur**

Yes, this is the free printable workbook over at my blog [The Savvy Solopreneur](#). If you follow me online you probably already have it, but if not, go get it. It's here: [TheSavvySolopreneur.net/free-resources](http://TheSavvySolopreneur.net/free-resources).

#### **Freelance Writing Markets That Pay Writers**

Yes, another one of my own creations, so many of my followers already have a copy, but if you don't, grab my list of paying markets for freelance writers here: [KarenBanes.com/free-gifts](http://KarenBanes.com/free-gifts).

#### **Charge What You're Worth (and stop resenting your clients)**

This report from Coachglue.com is aimed at coaches, but could apply to many freelancers and solopreneurs. A great download if you need to up your prices and your game. Download here: [Coachglue.com/programs/charging-worth](http://Coachglue.com/programs/charging-worth).

#### **21 Ways to get clients with Instagram**

I mentioned this under social media resources, but I'm mentioning it here too, just because it fits (and in case you missed it earlier). Also from CoachGlue, this was an eye-opener for me. I'm new to Instagram and was surprised to find how easy it is to put things in place to help find new clients over there. Download at [Coachglue.com/programs/instagram](http://Coachglue.com/programs/instagram).

**Free-ebooks.net**

This is a site where you can create a free account and download up to five free ebooks a month. They are all genres, but there are a lot about blogging, freelancing and online business. There's a paid option if you want unlimited downloads and different formats, but there's no hard sell. I've been a member of this site for years and never even received an email suggesting I upgrade. Sign up at [Free-ebooks.net](http://Free-ebooks.net).

# Miscellaneous freebies

## **Contently**

Contently.com is a site that allows you to easily create a professional looking online portfolio. Check out mine at this link:

<https://karenbanes.contently.com/>

If you're freelance writing and guest blogging, and have a lot of content all around the web, you can pull together a nice visual display of your articles and posts all in one place.

You submit the url of your piece, Contently checks that you wrote it (so you can only use work where you have a byline, using your real name) and adds it to your page. You can then use this portfolio when pitching for work or guest posting opportunities. You can also link it to your website and social media profiles so potential clients can find you if they like the look of your portfolio.

Go to [Contently.com](https://Contently.com) and when it asks if you are a company or journalist, click journalist to start creating your portfolio.

## **New Client Kit**

This is a set of 17 forms and letters that you can download and customize to help you onboard new clients and deal with problems that might arise in your business. It's another one from CoachGlue (they have a lot of freebies) and is aimed at coaches, but I've adapted some of these to use with my content creation clients. You might be able to adapt them to your business, whatever you do, and if you're a coach, you definitely need them. Get them here: [Coachglue.com/programs/free-new-client-kit](https://Coachglue.com/programs/free-new-client-kit).

## **About Me**

[About me](https://About.me) provides a simple page so you can display a short bio and all your social media profiles, websites and blogs together. It can be a useful page to send people to so they can choose to connect with you in the places that are most relevant to them, or that they are most active in. Get your free page at [About.me](https://About.me).

## **Square**

Square provides a free smart phone app that enables you to accept credit card payments, allowing you to sell your products and services at live events. It's free to sign up and has a reasonable transaction fee. It's currently only available in the US, Canada and Japan, but if you live outside those countries, keep an eye on it, as I expect it will slowly become available worldwide. See if

this is something that could be useful to you at [Squareup.com](https://squareup.com).

### **File converters**

I have to convert a lot of files from Word to PDF, and occasionally from Word to Mobi. I use <https://www.freepdfconvert.com/> to convert to PDF, and <http://www.online-convert.com/> to convert to Mobi. Both are free.

Hint: If you have a lot of files to convert and want to do it all for free, plan ahead. The free converter lets you convert one file per hour, before you have to sign up.

### **Before you go - use your freebies wisely**

I hope you've enjoyed browsing the free resources I've shared with you. If you don't know where to start, just access or download one at a time and learn how to use it in a way that benefits you. A hard drive full of software and reports you don't use won't help you. Get accustomed to using one tool before you start learning about the next.

Thanks for reading. If you'd like to hear about new releases, free promotions, special offers and discounts on my books you can sign up to either one of my email lists at either one of my two main sites:

I serve freelance writers here: [KarenBanes.com](http://KarenBanes.com)

And I provide a wealth of information, tips and tools for solopreneurs of all kinds here:

[TheSavvySolopreneur.net](http://TheSavvySolopreneur.net)

### **One more thing...**

Good reviews can be a crucial ingredient in the success of any book. If you found this book useful, please consider leaving a review at the online retailer you purchased it from, even if it's only one or two sentences long. It makes all the difference and would be very much appreciated. You can use these links to leave a review:

[Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

[Amazon UK](http://Amazon UK)

[Amazon Canada](http://Amazon Canada)

[Amazon Australia](http://Amazon Australia)

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# About The Author

Karen Banes is a freelance writer, author, blogger and solopreneur. Connect with her at her website [KarenBanes.com](http://KarenBanes.com), or her blog for solopreneurs, [TheSavvySolopreneur.net](http://TheSavvySolopreneur.net), where she's happy to answer questions, share tips and help other freelancers and solopreneurs. Or follow her on [Medium](https://www.medium.com/@karenbanes) for her thoughts on a broader range of topics like productivity, creativity and personal growth.

You can also connect with her on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/karenbanes), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/karenbanes), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/karenbanes) or [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com/karenbanes), where she shares useful information on writing, freelancing, blogging, and online business and shares lots of free resources and information.

## **More books by Karen Banes:**

[How To Start Your Freelance Writing Career From Scratch: No money, no contacts, no problem](#)

[52 Tips For Freelance Writers: A guide to simplifying and organizing your freelance writing life](#)

[Ten Commandments for the Thriving Writer: Enjoying and Embracing the Freelance Writing Life](#)

Please turn the page to read the first chapter of [Ten Commandments for the Thriving Writer: Enjoying and Embracing the Freelance Writing Life](#).



# Free Bonus Chapter: Ten Commandments For the Thriving Writer

## **Write about What You Love**

Writers are constantly told to write about what they know. This is good advice. It cuts down on research time and gives your writing both authority and authenticity. I'm writing this book because I know a lot about the freelance writing life. I also love being a freelance writer, so sharing my knowledge on this subject is enjoyable for me. Writing about what you know is an important part of building a freelance writing career. Writing about what you love is an important part of building a career (and life) you enjoy.

Often, if you love something you'll know a lot about it, but this doesn't always work the other way round. Many of us know a lot about our jobs, but we don't necessarily enjoy doing them.

It's a sad irony that someone who hates her job (and wants to leave it for the freelance writing life) often ends up using her expertise to write about the industry she used to work in. So she has progressed from doing what she hates, to writing about what she hates.

It's never a bad idea to use your professional knowledge, contacts and background to land a few freelance writing gigs, but if you're going to enjoy the freedom of the freelancing life, why not build a writing specialty around the topics you love.

Here's how:

### **List what you love**

Make a list of everything you love, like, or enjoy doing. Include topics, people, places, activities, hobbies or causes. Throw your favorite books and films on the list. Put a chore you like doing or a store you love shopping at, or your favorite breed of dog on there. Everything you love goes on your list. You don't have to write about all of these topics, but every single one of them can be a springboard to a writing project you might enjoy.

### **Brainstorm ideas around your topics**

Take the five topics that grab your attention right now and list several ideas for articles, books, blog posts, or fictional stories that would involve writing about them. Don't worry too much about whether you truly have the expertise to write on these topics. Researching something you love is fun.

If you can't immediately think of an idea on a specific topic, combine two random ones and go with that. I recently did this exercise and ended up with a combination of 'travel' and 'Harry Potter'. I wrote an article about great places for Harry Potter fans to visit in Britain. Keep this list of topics handy and repeat the process every week, once a month, or whenever you need new ideas. If this works as well for you as it does for me, you'll have many more ideas than you can ever use. File them all somewhere safe and never have writers' block again.

### **Find markets for your topics**

Producing great pieces of writing is one thing. Getting them in front of readers is the next step. You need markets to sell your writing to, or a platform to publish through so you can reach potential readers.

There are surprisingly few topics that have no market. If you come up with a topic and search for it online, it's unlikely your search engine will return the increasingly rare response "there are no matches for this search term". There are niche publications and websites on almost any topic you can imagine, especially if you broaden your search term to find a market that addresses the general area you want to write in. If you find a site or publication covering your topic, but not the sub-topic you want to write about, they are a good potential market. You can even pitch an idea for a series of articles or regular column on your sub-topic.

If you're serious about your freelance writing career, I strongly recommend you invest in a good directory of freelance markets such as [The Writer's Market](#) by Robert Lee Brewer or the [Writers' & Artists' Yearbook](#) by Martina Cole. They're great items to put on your holiday wish list.

You can also use free online market databases to find freelance writing markets for your topics, such as [WritingforDollars.com](#) and [FundsforWriters.com](#).

### **Bonus tip:**

Search for businesses that sell a service or product related to your topic. Check out their website and see what the content is like. If they publish blog posts or editorial content, it may be worth pitching some ideas. If they don't, it may be worth pitching the idea that you could start a blog or supply some editorial articles for them. Pick small businesses that seem to be doing OK, but could benefit from more exposure. That way they're more likely to have a both a budget for your services, and a need for them.

### **Consider creating a community around your topics**

If there really isn't much of a market for your topic you may have hit on a gap in the market. Possibly, you really are so wacky that you're interested in something no-one else on the planet wants to read about. Statistically speaking, though, there are probably others who share your interest.

Consider creating a blog, content management site, newsletter, forum, or other online community around your topic. You can always test the water with a free blog and some social media activity to see if you attract readers and followers. Blogging and building a social media following around a niche topic is rarely wasted. You can always re-package your content into a book or course and market it via social media. More on that in the next chapter.

You can download the full ebook [Ten Commandments for the Thriving Writer: Enjoying and Embracing the Freelance Writing Life](http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00H7GAPZA/) here: <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00H7GAPZA/>

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**Before you go...**

If you're reading the Kindle edition of this ebook, when you turn the page you'll get the chance to rate this book and share it with your friends via social media. If you've enjoyed it, please take a moment to do either one (or both). Many thanks.

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