



What is Freelance Work? A Guide to Freelancing

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Whether you want to be your own boss, test drive a new career, or have a side hustle that focuses on your passion project, freelancing can be the way to go. And, if you decide to pursue freelance work, [you wouldn't be alone](#).

In 2019, an [MBO Partners' survey](#) found that **nearly 41.1 million Americans identified themselves as freelancers**, whether it was a few hours a month or a full-time arrangement. To break that down a little further, nearly 15 million workers claimed to be part-time freelancers, and 12.4 million called themselves full-time freelancers!

With these kinds of numbers, it's imperative to [prepare yourself to freelance](#) and freelance well. Use this guide to understand what freelancing is, how to find companies and jobs hiring, and the characteristics needed to succeed as a freelancer.

Note:

FlexJobs is the longtime leader in helping job seekers find the highest-quality remote, work-from-home, hybrid, and flexible jobs. You can [sign up for premium-level access](#) to our database of hand-screened [online job](#) listings, as well as job search and career webinars, and many other great resources! Learn today how [FlexJobs can empower your job search](#)!

The Complete Guide to Freelancing

What Is Freelancing? Definition and Meaning

Essentially, a **freelance job is one where a person works for themselves, rather than for a company**. While freelancers do take on contract work for companies and organizations, they are ultimately self-employed.

Freelancers are responsible for all sorts of things that traditional employees are not, such as setting their work hours, keeping track of time spent on different projects, billing clients, and paying their own employment and business taxes. Freelancers are not considered “employees” by the companies they work for, but rather “contractors.”

What Is a Freelancer? More Ways to Say “Freelancer”

When you’re searching for [freelance jobs](#), there are a number of different terms to be aware of. These can help you find freelance job openings, and they’re also useful when [describing yourself and the work you do](#) to potential clients.

- **Contract work:** Jobs where you’re a temporary contract worker, rather than a permanent employee.
- **Contract job:** Same as contract work.
- **Independent contractor:** Another common way to say freelancer, but your work terms are specified by a contract with another company or individual.
- **1099:** Refers to the IRS form an independent contractor fills out, [form 1099-MISC](#), and is often used to describe the job (“This is a 1099 contract role”).
- **Contract consultant:** Someone who is hired for [temporary consultations](#) for specific issues within a company.
- **Contract-to-hire:** A job that begins as a freelance, independent contractor position but has the potential to become a regular employee position if things go well.

How to Find Freelance Work

Focusing on [companies that are known to hire freelancers](#) can be a great way to start your search for freelance work.

For example, these employers have posted the most freelance openings on FlexJobs:

1. [Kforce](#)
2. [Kelly](#)
3. [Ajilon](#)
4. [Accounting Principals](#)
5. [Randstad](#)
6. [Robert Half International](#)
7. [Stride, Inc.](#)
8. [Solomon Page](#)
9. [Dahl Consulting](#)
10. [Cactus Communications](#)

Most Common Freelance Career Fields

As you can see from the freelance job listings on FlexJobs, **a variety of companies, organizations, and government agencies hire freelancers**. You’ll find work in almost every career imaginable, and the freelance jobs vary from small, temporary projects to long-term, full-time projects.

These are the fields that hire the most freelancers:

1. [Accounting & Finance](#)
2. [Administrative](#)
3. [Writing](#)
4. [Customer Service](#)
5. [Bilingual](#)
6. [Computer & IT](#)
7. [Medical & Health](#)
8. [Editing](#)
9. [HR & Recruiting](#)

10. [Education & Training](#)

Pros and Cons of Freelancing

Every job has [pros and cons, and freelancing](#) is no different. Being aware of the challenges can ensure you're prepared for them.

Pros of Freelancing

Having control over your workload, the clients you work with, and your income is a significant benefit of freelancing. When you freelance, you're in the driver's seat. You determine what jobs to take on, which clients you want to work for, and [your pay rate](#). Depending on your level of expertise, it's possible to work part-time hours but make full-time pay.

Flexibility and remote work are also a perk. Most of the time, working on freelance projects will involve working at your [home office](#) during the hours you choose. You'll absolutely have deadlines to meet, but you will decide when and where you work.

Cons of Freelancing

With the ultimate in control comes additional responsibilities. As a freelancer, you are a business owner, and you need to [stay on top of taxes, invoices, payments received, finding your own health insurance](#), and buying every piece of software and technology you need to complete your work.

[Feast or famine syndrome](#) is another real downside to freelancing. Some months you'll be full to the brim with work, while the next month may be a ghost town. You may be relying on a consistent contract with one client, only to find they suddenly don't need you anymore. Freelancing requires **good money management and constant sourcing of new clients**.

Traits and Characteristics Needed as a Freelancer

There are a few qualities you should possess to set yourself up for freelance success. While not an all-encompassing list, these essential characteristics will give you an idea of where to focus.

Discipline

No boss is watching you out of the corner of their eye and colleagues aren't there to judge you when you spend an hour online shopping instead of working. Self-discipline is necessary to stay on track.

Persistence

Persistence is always important, but even more so when you're just [getting started as a freelancer](#) and trying to track down work.

Resilience

There's one word you'll hear more than anything as a freelancer: no. [Rejection is the name of the game](#), and you're going to need to let it roll off your back.

Organization

You're responsible for a lot of different tasks. It's up to you to keep track of your income and expenses, promptly reply to client emails, [stay on top of your deadlines](#), keep your files sorted, and make sure your workload is streamlined.

Proactive

You don't necessarily need to be outgoing in the traditional sense, but you do need to be a little aggressive to [land new clients](#). If you want to grow your business, you're going to have to be comfortable [networking and approaching strangers](#), whether you're doing it in person or digitally.

Communicative

Being a freelancer involves *a lot* of communication. You need to be willing to have the hard conversations—like [negotiating a higher rate](#) or [breaking up with a client](#)—and handle them tactfully and professionally. There's no boss or other colleague to take care of that dirty work for you.



Ready to Become a Freelancer?

Finding freelance work doesn't have to be complicated. FlexJobs partners with thousands of companies—ranging from Fortune 500 to small businesses—to offer freelance gigs, full-time jobs, and part-time [jobs in more than 50 job categories](#).

And FlexJobs members get full access to this database every day! Take the tour and learn more about how FlexJobs can help you enhance your freelance career.

Tour FlexJobs Now

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