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**How to Break Into Writing for Newspapers**

**By Linda C. Allardice**

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Besides waking up with a morning coffee, millions of us wake every day to blaring newspaper headlines about police gunning down a suspect, or a fire that leaves a family of four homeless, or a city council that wants to make it illegal to dump computer monitors in the landfill.

The stories can be exciting, tragic, informative, even amusing. And being the reporter who gathers the information or covers the scene of emergency incidents must be a thrill.

As a freelance writer you may have considered trying your hand at newspaper reporting, but maybe you have little or no journalism classes in your background.

Don't let that stop you.

Break into the newspaper business by becoming a stringer - a freelance reporter who is paid by the story. Weekly and daily newspapers are always on the lookout for stringers. It's economical for them and it frees up their staff reporters to handle the bigger stories.

What kind of work can you expect as a stringer? I've been stringing for 18 years covering news in the suburbs such as town council, school board, planning board and zoning board meetings. Stringers are also used to cover the local entertainment fare, high school and college sports, and feature stories.

The pay for stringers varies with the size of the newspaper. The basic rate is about \$35 per story, but can go as high as \$200 or more, depending on the work involved and if the paper also wants you to take photographs.

So how do you get started?

Check the newspaper or newspapers in the area. Read through the publications and see what stories are missing. Has a new department store opened recently, but you didn't find a story about it in the paper? Did your property tax bill suddenly skyrocket, but you read nothing about this coming down the pike?

Don't think nothing happens in the suburbs. I've covered town council meetings where police were called in to escort troublemakers out of the meeting hall. I've covered meetings where the debate escalated to a point where a council member stood and called her colleagues a "bunch of sleezebags."

Next, get some ideas together for stories. Find out if there are some community events approaching. Attend a town council or Board of Selectmen's meeting and see what issues your community or a nearby community is facing. Will there be a new traffic light downtown? Is the discount store that's been in business for generations going to close permanently? Are there going to be new regulations for

your weekly trash pick-up?

Once you have some ideas, call the newspaper you're interested in and ask for the editor. Hint: get the editor's name from the newspaper and ask for him or her by name. Introduce yourself and let the editor know you are interested in stringing for the paper and that you have some ideas for stories you'd like to present.

Editors know stringers start out with little or no experience, so don't be embarrassed to say you've never written for a newspaper if indeed you haven't. If you hear the editor start to hedge, offer to do one story for no pay - nothing big, maybe a 300-word piece on a local fund-raising event.

Some newspapers allow their stringers to write their stories in the newsroom. Some do not. If you happen to string for a paper that does not, you can submit your stories by modem or email.

Newspapers count on content to attract advertisers - their bread and butter. And while staffers may get

to cover murders, fires, and accidents, it's the stringer who often covers the news that is the most informative to the community.

And stringers are often the next in line to be considered when a staff position becomes available.

Editor of Footnotes, a free newsletter for freelance writers with articles, paying markets, freelance jobs, conference listings, online courses and more. Go to <http://www.oscweb.com/footnotes>

### **The Fact About Newspapers Advertising**

**By David Bell**

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Newspapers advertising is an age-old advertising medium that has been used for literally a hundred years. This method is still one of the most under-rated methods of earning a big income in today's economy. Newspapers advertising is a well proved medium if you know what you are doing.

It is extremely easy to place ads (once you know the right source), and the income potential is truly enormous. Did you know that if you earned a mere \$5 profit with just one newspaper ad, then you could made yourself a Fortune!

Newspapers advertising can be very profitable. Let's say you're selling an information product which costs a total of \$5 both to produce and to ship to the customer. Let's further assume that the ad costs \$25. Your total expense is \$30. If your ad brings in \$35, then you have just made a small \$5 profit! Not impressed? How is this a "fortune"? Assuming you make that same kind of profit in similar newspapers, the "power of multiplication" will EXPLODE your profits! Place that same \$25 ad in just 10 newspapers, and your profit is \$50. Place it in 100 newspapers, and your profit is \$500. 1000 newspapers means \$5000. Are you beginning to see the POWER of multiplication? If you can place 1000 ads per week, your income could hit \$20,000 per month, or \$240,000 per YEAR! This is NOT a secret. THOUSANDS of people are utilizing this power each and every day! If YOU have a product that you can sell by placing simple ads, then YOU should be using the Power of Multiplication right NOW!

A WORD OF CAUTION: Never ever "roll out" a newspapers advertising campaign without first testing your ad in a smaller (cheaper) market. We've heard far too many failures from people who 'thought' they had a great money making ad, and went in for the 'kill!' That is, they rushed in and spent \$2000 on an ad campaign, only to find out later that the ad bombed. Instead, start out small. Be cheap, and be cautious. You can run an effective test campaign for about a hundred dollars. This is a great way to test the waters and protect your ad budget. Once you've made even a VERY small profit, use the power of multiplication to roll that small money into big bucks!

David Bell is Manager, Online Marketing, at <http://www.wspromotion.com/> , a leading Search Engine Optimization services firm and Advertising Agency.



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