

**The Definitive
Rate Card
For Australian
Copywriters**

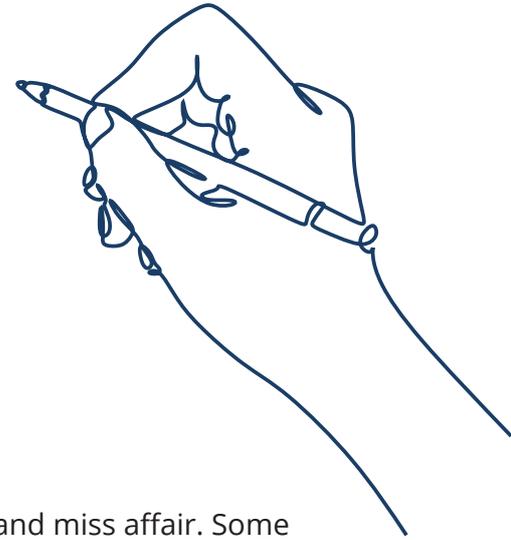
Bonus Guide:
How to
get paid what
you're worth!



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The ultimate guide to charging for your work and getting paid what you're worth



Introduction

Charging the right fee for your copywriting services can be a hit and miss affair. Some people charge thousands and have no trouble finding clients. Others charge a pittance and can't get a sale.

What's the difference?

Here's the truth - it's not *what* you charge, it's *how* you charge. Sure, your hourly rate or project fee is hugely important and can determine if you get the job or not. But it's how that fee is *framed* that makes all the difference. That's why I wrote this guide - to help you understand the myriad factors that go into creating a successful copywriting quote.

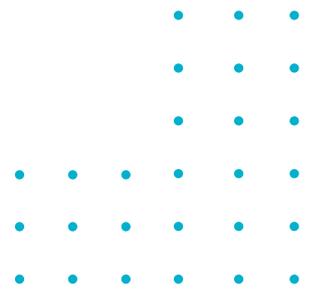
Here are the top 7 questions I get asked the most (and the corresponding answers) based on my 30 years' experience in the industry. This ebook also contains a comprehensive rate card for a wide range of copywriting projects.

I've worked on some really big projects - the launch of Optus in Australia, and massive roll-outs of campaigns for clients like Apple, BHP and others. I've also worked on little projects like postcards, fliers and one-page websites. No matter what quoting issue you have, I've probably faced it myself. I've condensed all that experience here and it's yours for the taking.

This is my frank, no-nonsense, practical guide to charging for your copywriting work. I hope you find it helpful.

Let's get started.

Bernadette Schwerdt
Founder, CopySchool.com
Head Copywriting Tutor, AWC



1 How should I charge for my copywriting work?

The top four ways to charge for your copywriting work

There are four main ways to charge for your work. Here are the pros and cons of each.

a) By the word:

This is when you quote a fee for each word you write, you complete a word count at the end and tally it up. Journalists and feature writers often charge by the word and that's a standard protocol in their industry, but for copywriting, I don't recommend it.

For example, imagine writing a great billboard that has just three words on it ("Just Do It", comes to mind). It gets seen by millions and generates billions in sales and the poor schmuck copywriter gets paid a \$1 per word; a grand total of \$3 bucks. Can you see why charging by the word is not a good idea?

However, charging by the word can work very well if you are writing long form content. For example, if you are writing a 40,000-word book or ebook for a client, charging by the word is an easily understandable (and lucrative) format for charging.

b) By the hour:

As the name suggests, you quote for a number of hours, multiply it by your hourly rate and that's your fee. This is not a good way to charge either.

Why? Because it flags to the client how long you take and how much you charge per hour. This makes it super easy for them to compare you to others and gives them ammunition to beat you down on price.

It's also bad because if you're trading time for money, you can theoretically only earn 8 – 10 hours of income per day. That caps your daily earnings, which is not good. If you can nail the copy in less time than what you quote, that's great, but it still pegs your value to your hourly rate, which will always limit your earnings.

Having said that, there is merit in working out how much per hour **you would like to earn** so that when you do quote, you can set a goal for how many hours it will take you to write that copy.

If you go over that, you know you're spending too much time on the work and you have to either work more quickly, or not be as pedantic about the work you create. When you're starting out, you need some yardstick for how to quote on a job and knowing what you think you're worth is part of that.

A final note about charging by the hour:

Hourly rate:

Keep in mind that an hourly rate doesn't tell the client how long the job will take or how much the total project will cost. To do that you need to tell them how many hours the job will take you.

That's a trial and error process and you need to get some real work – paid or unpaid – to work out how long it takes you to write something.

c) By the project:

This is usually a fixed price for the entire project. The price covers everything you do to bring the job to completion. If you spend more time on the job than you quote for, tough luck. However, if you work faster than what your quote estimated, you win!

This is generally the best pricing model as it means you get paid for the value you offer, not for the time you put in.

It also gives the client a full indication of the total job fee, whereas the hourly rate only indicates what you charge for your time.



d) By retainer

A retainer agreement is a fixed fee that the client pays you each month for an agreed volume of work. You do the work and bill your client that fixed fee every single month. It's a nice model for copywriters who don't want to prospect for clients all the time, and want some idea of what income they will earn each month. It's also efficient as you get to know the client well, so you don't need to do all the on-boarding and research that accompanies a new client. The workload may fluctuate each month, but overall it should even out. Keep tabs on the work you do so that you don't find yourself having to deliver vast reams of work in one month to make up for the past few quieter months.

Is there an 'award rate' or 'industry standard' for copywriting?

Unlike other industries, there is no industry standard, or 'award' rate. Having said that, many clients I speak to have a 'price range' in their head as to what is an approximate/appropriate amount to pay for a copywriter. If you frame the fee correctly you can charge a lot more for your services. To give you a starting point, we've created a comprehensive rate card to help you get started.

So what should you charge?

Charge what you feel comfortable charging. Some copywriters charge the top rate from the get-go because they're confident in their ability to deliver. Others feel uncomfortable charging top dollar until they have had more experience. Only you can know what feels right for you.



How to charge for your work

Don't know what to charge? Check out your level of confidence and competence, and find out what to charge for your next project.

The 3 levels of confidence and competence: Choose your own rate card adventure!

Level of confidence	Starting out:	Feeling good:	Confident:
Self-belief:	"I don't feel confident. I don't want to put myself under pressure yet. I've written maybe 1-5 pieces."	"I feel nervous but excited. I know I can do it. I've written 5-15 pieces for friends, clients and work."	"I am a confident copywriter and have written 15+ pieces for friends, clients and work. I'm ready to rock."
"Starting out"	If you charge at the 'starting out' rate, you can rest assured that the client has no leg to stand on if they say, "Whoa! That's too much." If they do, tell them "That's a bargain and it's at the lower end of the pay scale as far as the industry is concerned...so pay up, buddy!" Well, maybe not that last bit. And maybe not that aggressively. But you get the idea.		
"Feeling good"	If you charge the feeling 'good rate', you can feel confident that this is what clients are paying for similar creative services e.g. graphic designer, a web designer, a video editor etc. If they say they can get a lower fee, tell them that you know it's about average for the industry and that you offer a quality service for a fair price. If they still complain and say that they can get it done overseas for five cents, best to part ways then and there. Some clients are not worth having and the sooner you can find that out, the better.		
"Confident"	If you charge the 'confident' rate, great! Go for it! If you really want to charge at the higher end of this scale, consider upskilling and offering SEO copywriting services. Clients will pay a premium for this service. (I have a whole course dedicated to SEO copywriting that will show you exactly how to become a skilled SEO copywriter.)		

Remember! There is no accepted industry standard that you need to abide by when charging for your work. The rates on the following page are average and do not include GST.

The Definitive Copywriting Rate Card

Project:	"Starting out"	"Feeling good"	"Confident"
Hourly rate	\$40 - \$70	\$70 - \$150	\$150 - \$250
Daily rate	\$200 - \$400	\$400 - \$800	\$800 - \$2500
Blog (700 words)	\$150 - \$300	\$300 - \$700	\$700 - \$1000
SEO Blog¹ (700 words)	Add 20% - 30% to Blog fee	Add 20% - 30% to Blog fee	Add 20% - 30% to Blog fee
Email newsletter (500 words)	\$150 - \$200	\$200 - \$500	\$500 - \$800
Web copy (300 words per page)	\$100 - \$150	\$150 - \$250	\$250 - \$500
SEO Title and Description Tags (per set)	\$20 - \$30	\$30 - \$40	\$40 - \$50
Product Page (SEO'd)² (500 words)	\$200 - \$400	\$400 - 700	\$700 - \$1000
2-page A4 flyer (500 words)	\$100 - \$200	\$200 - \$400	\$400 - \$700
Video script (*2 minutes)	\$300 - \$400	\$400 - \$600	\$600 - \$1000
Media release (500 words)	\$100 - \$300	\$300 - \$500	\$500 - \$1000
Real estate listings³ (300 words) (on-site visit)	\$100 - \$200	\$200 - \$300	\$300 - \$400
Real estate listings³ (300 words) (off-site visit)	\$50 - \$110	\$110 - \$170	\$170 - \$220
LinkedIn Profile (new)	\$300 - \$400	\$400 - \$700	\$700 - \$1000
LinkedIn Profile (revamp)	\$200 - \$300	\$300 - \$600	\$600 - \$900
Product Description - short (50 - 100 words)	Allow 30 mins x hourly rate		
Product Description - long (200 - 300 words)	Allow 60 minutes x hourly rate		
Facebook Advertisement	\$50 - \$70	\$70 - \$150	\$150 - \$500

Pro tip:

Try to charge in blocks of 5 or 10 to make best use of your time. Eg 5 blogs, 5 web pages, 5 email newsletters

¹ This fee assumes you did the keyword research for the client. If they do the research for you, and provide keywords, refer to the Blog project fee.

² A product page is a page that contains text related to a particular product. It could be headphones for JB Hi Fi or a pair of shoes for Nike. SEO'd means you have written copy based on some keywords you have researched for the client or the client has given you.

³ An on-site visit is when you visit the property in person, and provide copy for the website, brochure and newspaper.

⁴ An off-site visit is when you view the property online, and provide copy for the website, brochure and newspaper.

2 How much time should I spend on a copywriting job?

This concept is based on the old “swings and roundabouts” principle. Accept that occasionally you will under-quote and have to work extra time without getting paid.

On the flip side, there will (hopefully) be times when you ‘over-quote’ and the job gets done in record time and you can sit back and relax.

What’s important is that when you press “SEND” and wave goodbye to your quote as it hurtles off into the ether and over to your client, you need to be HAPPY with the amount you have charged.

Why?

Because if you know before you even send the quote that you’re going to resent doing it for that fee, then when the quote gets approved, you’re going to loathe doing that job from start to finish.

Yes, at the start, you’ll have to work for less than what you deserve whilst you learn your craft, but once you get going and feel more confident, only quote a fee that you are happy with, or you will spend your days feeling ripped off and annoyed at how cheaply they got you.

Should I work for free to get experience and confidence?

When starting out, take any job that comes along, paid or unpaid. Why? Because it gives you experience, a chance to develop your portfolio, and a gauge for how long things take to write.

I remember writing for free for ages when I started out and was happy for the experience. That’s a good model to work with as it takes the pressure off having to deliver brilliant work. But remember, sooner or later, you need to charge for your work. Keep in mind that the work you do will probably be far better than what the client could have ever produced, so value your skill set. Not everyone can do what you do.



3 How can I maximise my earnings as a copywriter?

I really want to emphasise here that it's not about *what* you charge, it's about *how* you charge. There's a whole body of work around the psychology of selling, price anchoring, values-based selling, upselling/cross selling etc.

Whether you like it or not, pricing is deeply linked to your sense of value i.e. how much value you think you offer, and how much value your potential clients think they're getting.

Many students I work with don't value what they offer. By enrolling in one of our courses, I help you identify the expertise you bring to a job, and then I give you the confidence and the tools to leverage that value so you can maximise your earnings.

a) Write what you know

When you start out, try to approach industries you already know. If you've been a teacher, then target schools or suppliers to schools like stationery suppliers or uniform providers. They'll value your knowledge of how schools work and who to contact.

Maybe you've been a lawyer, an architect or a financial planner. Why not target your old firms or their competitors? They'll always prefer to hire a copywriter with a background in their sector because you understand the jargon and know what clients want. Once you get known for being a specialist in your sector, the work will start to flow.

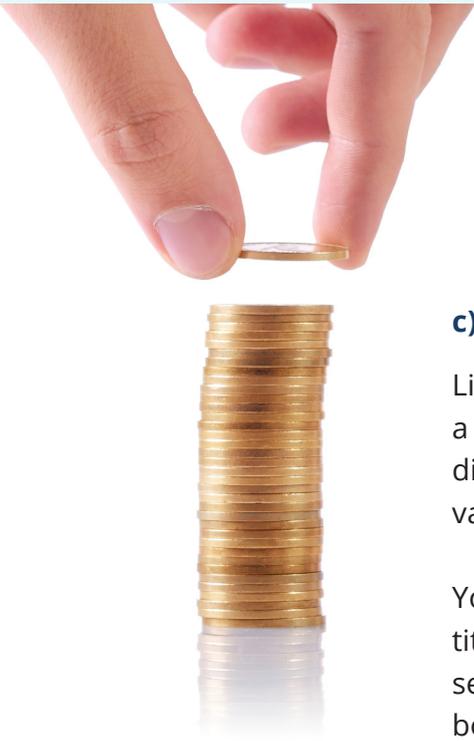
Even better, target the Associations of these industries. With one well-placed blog in their Association journal, you're reaching hundreds, maybe thousands of potential clients. And don't think you have to focus on that industry forever. Just use it to get started and then branch out into other areas of more interest to you.

b) Track your time

It's really easy to lose track of time when writing, so make a note in your diary, on a time tracking app like TimeCamp.com, or on a time sheet so you know what you spent.

It should never come to this, but if the client does want to see how you spent your time, you can show them those diary notes.

It's up to YOU to learn how long tasks take you, and to manage your own time. Sometimes, you're ahead. Sometimes, you're behind. I believe tracking your time can help you stay ahead more often than not.



c) Don't discount. Add value

Like most people, clients often want something for nothing, or just a feeling that they got something others didn't. So, if they ask for a discount, say, "I don't discount, but what I can do is offer you some extra value that is worth more than the discount you're asking for."

You then offer to write them an extra blog, a cheat sheet or a set of SEO title tags – easy stuff that won't take too long. Put a value on this added service so they know what it's worth e.g. "You'll receive over \$1497 in bonuses simply by choosing me as your copywriter".

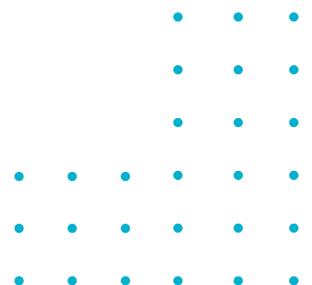
d) Get paid for the tasks you have to do anyway

In addition to being paid your basic copywriting fee, you have lots of other ways to get paid for your services.

For example, it's not uncommon for savvy copywriters to get paid for all these activities AND their copywriting work:

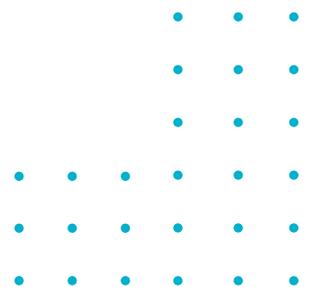
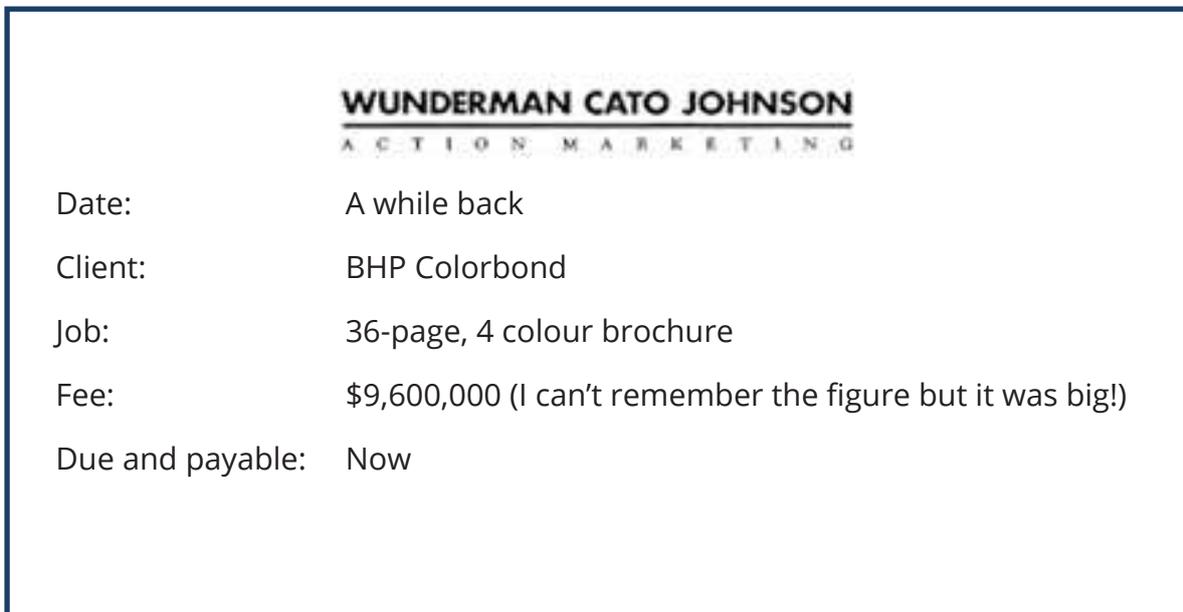
- for chatting to clients
- for creative briefing time
- a website audit
- for graphic design and web development (even if you don't offer it as a service).

It's all in the way you frame your conversations with the client. (Our courses have done-for-you scripts on how you can cold call, upsell, cross-sell and much more.)



4 How can I make my quotes look more professional?

I learned a very valuable lesson early on in my career. I was a young and green account executive at the advertising agency, Wunderman Cato Johnson. I put a quote together to write and produce a large-scale brochure for BHP. I can't recall the exact figure we quoted but I can still see the quote layout in my mind's eye now, all these years later. This is what it looked like:



Here's what happened:

I sent this quote to my boss, David for his approval and he looked at me and said, "Bernie, Bernie, Bernie, we NEVER send quotes like this."

"Why not?" I asked.

He said, "Imagine getting a one-line summary for a quote this big. How would you feel? Would that feel like you're getting good value? That it was worth it?"

"No", I said meekly.

"Exactly", he said. "In short, when you quote, you need to expand on what you're doing for the client so they can see the value in what you do".

"You mean like 'padding out the quote' or 'puffing up the price'?" I asked.

"No, no, no", he said.

"But isn't that what we do in advertising?" I asked.

"Bernie, Bernie, Bernie, who taught you that?"

"You did, David."

"Oh right," he said sheepishly.

"Look," he said. "That's accurate to some extent but the truth is, copywriting is much more than writing, and that needs to be reflected in the quote. You need to add some line items to the quote that reflect the true nature of the work we copywriters do. These help the client feel they are getting good value. And it reflects the value of our expertise too."

He wrote down some of the line items, I used them in my quote, and it worked. The client approved the job. The brochure got made. The client was happy. We were happy. Everyone won.

I have never forgotten that conversation and found it very instructive, so here's a few of the line items he gave me. You can use them too.

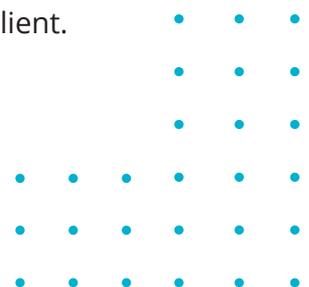
How to demonstrate value and get paid for your expertise:

Pick and choose the words that resonate with the work you do and add them to your quote:

- Concept development
- Creative development
- Competitive research
- Market analysis
- Copywriting - first draft
- Copywriting - second draft
- Copywriting - third draft
- Revision discussions with client
- Proofing
- Briefing phone calls
- Project administration
- Competitive audit
- Website audit
- Brand audit
- Content audit
- SEO Content audit
- SEO Report
- SEO Analysis
- Keyword Analysis Report
- Organic Tracking Report

The words you write are the final product of a lot of other activities so make sure the client understands the depth of expertise that is required to complete the job.

Here's a sample invoice you can use as a reference point for billing your client.



SAMPLE INVOICE FORMAT

INVOICE

FROM:

Whiz Bang Copywriting

Brenda Brown
PO Box 00, Essendon Fields, VIC 3040
Brenda@whizbangcopywriting.com

INVOICE #: 012345

DUE DATE: 7 Days

ABN: 98 765 432 198

TO:

Rodney's Removalists

Rodney Smith
13 Some Road, Wantirna, VIC 3152
info@rodneysremovalists.com.au

Qty	DESCRIPTION	Unit cost	Amount
5	SEO blogs (1000 words per blog)	\$500 per blog	\$ 2500
5	SEO title / description tags	\$40 per set	\$ 200
4	Web pages (300 words per page)	\$250 per page	\$ 1000
3	Emails ('Welcome sequence')	\$500 per email	\$ 1500
2	Video script x 2 minutes	\$400 per script	\$ 800
1	LinkedIn Profile (revamp)	\$800	\$ 800
SUBTOTAL			\$ 6800
TAX RATE			0.00%
GST TOTAL			\$ -
OTHER			\$ -
TOTAL			\$ 6800

PAYMENT DETAILS:

BSB: 000-000, Account: 1234 5678,
Name: Bank Account Name
Please note: Not registered for GST so not included.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR BUSINESS!

This template has been created by the Australian Writers' Centre and Copy School for exclusive use by our students.

You may use this for personal purpose. You cannot distribute, share or sell this in any way.

The sample invoice only applies when not charging GST. If you do charge GST, check with your accountant to ensure you ensure your invoices comply with the relevant regulations

5 What clients should I work with?

a) Should I accept work from clients in industries I don't like or understand?

Some jobs are better than others. Writing copy to promote a fashion event, your favourite football club, a music festival – fun.

Writing copy to sell insurance, financial planning, SMSF – not so much fun. For me, anyway, because these jobs require a lot of research, understanding and finesse to get right. But if I take these clients on, they generally pay well. Why? Because I charge 'danger money' for jobs that I know are going to take a long time or be complex.

What's 'danger money'?

If you know that some industries leave you cold and take you ages to research and understand, and the work has to be meticulously accurate, either decline to do the work or charge a premium (also known as "Danger Money") for the job. Your butt is on the line and you need to deliver. That is why you need to charge a premium.

I don't mind doing complex, detailed work but I do like to be paid for the effort and time I put in, and the value I give back. (Think about it – if you're writing an IPO prospectus for a \$300 million fintech start-up, surely they can pay a premium for the document to be written well.)

b) Should I work with clients I don't like or find morally objectionable?

If you know a client is going to be hell to work with, apply the premium to that job too. I can't bear working with hard, difficult people – that's why I love being a copywriter! You only have to work with people you like and respect. (Unless the sheriff is at your door and they're taking away your furniture. In that case, you'd better toughen up sunshine, dig deep and get to work. We can't be too precious if the mortgage needs to be paid and the kids need feeding.)

What about working with clients who represent industries you don't respect? Well, if the sheriff is still at your door and you've been asked to write a 1000-page website for a company or industry that conflicts with your moral or ethical framework, then you need to make a decision. What's most important to you - the money or the job? Is the 'squeeze worth the juice' so to speak. Only you can decide that.

c) Should I take out professional indemnity insurance?

In my work, I get the client to sign off on everything and the wording I put in the T's and C's is very clear that THEY are responsible for whatever copy ends up in the public domain. I would recommend you insert a clause to that effect in your Terms and Conditions.

If you are working with councils or government departments, they will insist you have insurance coverage (like professional indemnity and/or public liability) or you won't be considered at all. If that happens, take out insurance for the duration of the project and then cancel it when the job is finished. Get a quote, shop around and ask for the best deal.

6 How can I quote if the client doesn't know what they want written?

Here's a tip. Get a haircut. No, don't. That's just a bad joke.

Here's a real tip.

Don't move a muscle until you get the word count!

Clients often want something written without really knowing *what* they want written. But they still want a quote. Tricky. I don't play that game anymore. I either encourage them to nominate a word count or page count (even if it's ballpark), or I don't quote.

Why? Because I cannot quote for a job that has no beginning, middle or end.

It makes sense, doesn't it? How can you quote for a web writing job if you don't know how many pages you're writing, or how many words are needed per page?

Case study:

I had a client recently who wanted a research report written. I had to summarise a 50-page report and condense it. I asked, 'how long would you like the report to be?'. They didn't know. After much faffing around, I suggested it be 15 pages and I'd quote on that. They agreed. Job done. Brilliant.

Sometimes you just need to pick a figure (word count, page count etc.) and commit to that. We live in an imprecise world and there's merit in just making a decision, running with it and seeing how it goes.

PS: Longer is easier to write, and you can charge more, so if you get the option, opt for the long version.





How much is too much?

Be careful about totalling your quote and thinking, 'That's crazy! No one will pay that!'

Yes, that may be true but if that's what the job takes, that's what it takes. If you still think it's too much, you can do three things:

1. Assess if the quote is a realistic reflection of how long the job would take - if not, drop the fee so it does reflect what you think is appropriate. You can't charge the client for your education and coffee breaks.
2. Assess the client you are working with - are they a small business, council, corporate, not for profit - can they afford it?
3. Assess how valuable this piece is to them and how much it could bring in for them (see earlier comment re IPO and the prospectus).

At first, your copywriting quotes will result from a lot of guesswork. As you gain more experience, the quote will become more accurate.

NB: If all your quotes are accepted without query, you're probably charging too little. If all are being rejected, you're probably charging too much.

Rush rate:

If the client needs it 'yesterday' (in less than 48 hours), don't hesitate to charge an additional 25%.

7 How do I get started as a copywriter?

Copywriting is one of the most exciting, varied and well-paid creative occupations you can find, and you don't need much to get started. A computer, your brain and a desire to make a living from something you love.

The good news is copywriting as an industry is growing, the demand for copywriters has never been greater, and the ability to work across borders without leaving home has never been more possible.

To get started, you need confidence, some templates and structures to help you write quickly, and maybe some guidance and mentoring along the way to keep you excited, motivated and inspired.

Check out the pathway to success on the next page.



Your pathway to becoming a highly paid copywriter

Copywriting for profit

If you're looking to dip your toe into the exciting world of copywriting, **Copywriting for profit** is the perfect starting point. You'll learn how to write copy for every medium (web, email, print, social, video, fliers and more). You'll leave the course with formula for how to write copy for any client and any product or service.



Get paid to write

Get paid to write teaches you everything you need to launch your copywriting business – how to structure it, find clients, invoice, charge for your work, overcome Impostor Syndrome and much more. It's a marketing kit in-a-box that will help you build your confidence, avoid rookie errors and start earning great money.



SEO copywriting

The **SEO copywriting** course gives you the fundamentals of how to write search optimized copy for websites. You'll learn about the on- and off-page factors that determine a Google ranking, how to write conversion copy, understand meta-tags and much more. Best of all, you'll be able to charge a premium for your work.



Deluxe pack

Want all three courses? Kick off your new career with a bang and take advantage of our Deluxe Package offer and save over \$700. You'll gain access to our three flagship courses, Copywriting for Profit, Get paid to Write and SEO copywriting. You'll have everything you need to get started and can hit the ground running.

LinkedIn for copywriters

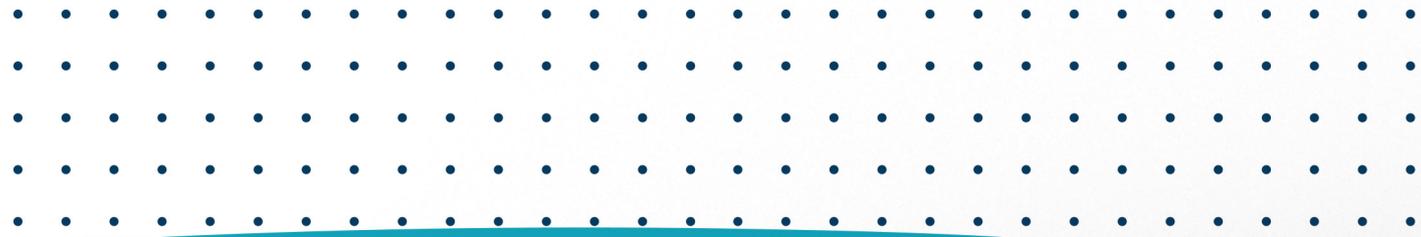
Take a deep dive into the world of LinkedIn with our **LinkedIn for copywriters** course. You'll learn how to fully navigate the platform so you can use it with confidence. You'll learn how to use it to attract clients, build a database of high paying clients, and master the art of creating and sharing content to build your brand.

Email marketing and copywriting

Our **Email marketing and copywriting** course is for those who use email but would like to learn how to use it strategically. You'll learn how to write email campaigns, create funnels, design opt-ins, by-pass the spam filters, write copy for B2B, B2C, services and ecommerce and become a confident email marketer.

Copy Club:

Want to join a community of like-minded copywriters? Join Copy Club, Australia's most vibrant club for emerging and experienced copywriters. You'll get feedback on your work, answers to all your burning questions, access to our Learning Hub filled with hundreds of templates and training videos, live 'Ask Me Anything' sessions and more.



Copy School

The Australian School of Copywriting has helped over 10,000 students turn their passion for words into profit. Our courses are online, instantly accessible and come with a 100% money back guarantee. All our students receive personal mentoring, one-to-one access with a qualified copywriting coach and access to our extensive network of contacts, suppliers, job opportunities, internships and much more.

We look forward to helping you launch your copywriting career.

copschool.com

