

Boost Your Income by Learning
How to Estimate, Negotiate, and Set Fees

GHOSTWRITERS, WHAT SHOULD YOU CHARGE?



MARCIA LAYTON TURNER

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Marcia Layton Turner

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Table of Contents

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Introduction 1

Part I: What Should You Charge? 3

Part II: What Does the Client Want to Pay? 11

Part III: Negotiating an Agreement 17

Appendix 21

Resources 23

About the Author 25

Introduction



What information separates six-figure ghostwriters from those struggling to get by? Knowing what to charge. Or, more specifically, knowing what fee will be profitable for them for the work to be done.

To make more money, there are some aspects of pricing and ghostwriting that you need to understand. Once you've mastered this, you'll be a much stronger negotiator and a wealthier writer.

How Much Can You Earn?

If you write for *Every Day with Rachael Ray*, you know the standard fee is as much as \$4/word. At *Entrepreneur*, the rate is closer to \$1/word. Trade journals pay as little as \$.10 a word and as much as \$1.50 or more. The point is, magazine writers generally know in advance what a particular publication pays its writers for their work, or at least have an idea of the pay range. The same is generally true of newspapers and websites. Corporate clients can be an unknown but you can often quickly get a general sense of their budget or willingness to pay the going rate.

Ghostwriting, however, is a completely different ball game. Because each project is unique, what you can earn can vary wildly.

The good news is that you set your own rate. Unlike at Magazine XYZ, which dictates rates that you can decide to take or leave, ghostwriting rates are set by the writers bidding on a project. Depending on the task, such as article writing, blog

post creation, or book drafting, you may quote a per-word, per-hour, per-post, per-page, or per project fee. That's up to you.

"I'd love to say we get ghostwriting budgets of \$50,000–70,000 [for books] consistently, but that's not what we are seeing. The range is typically anywhere from \$7,000–\$35,000. What is consistent is the prospective client's need for education about the ghostwriting process and why it is inherently valuable. While they know they can't write it, they don't understand why it should cost so much. In almost every conversation we have with a prospect, we talk about the different experience levels of professional writers. A new writer will charge less. A veteran writer will charge more. We then let them determine the experience level of writer they want working on their project based on what they can afford."

—LEAH NICHOLSON, *production manager*,
Jenkins Group, Inc., www.bookpublishing.com

Some ghostwriters (but not many) charge as much as \$300,000 to guide a would-be author from concept to proposal to outline to writing, editing, and polishing. There are plenty of ghostwriters earning a six-figure income. Others choose to bill less than 10% of that fee for the same work and are constantly busy. What *you* charge is completely up to you. You can set your fees high and work sporadically or set them low and be busy 24/7. Your call. That's the good news.

The bad news is that it can be hard to tell what a fair rate is. There are no published guides for you to point to, only discussions amongst friends about what so-and-so charges and the budget for an available project posted for members on an association website.

The fact that there are no hard-and-fast rules about what a fair fee is for ghostwriting projects is why the question, "What would you charge for . . . ?" is the scariest question a ghostwriter can be asked.

The reason it's such a scary question is that we often don't know off the top of our head what a reasonable fee would be. The risk is that if you throw out a number that is too high, the prospect may continue looking for a less expensive professional. And if you quote a number that seems reasonable but is too low, you could be banging your head against a wall for months as you try to please a client who jumped at your bargain-basement quote. So what should you do?

It all starts with gathering information—about your finances and your potential client's.

Part I: What Should You Charge?

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What you want to charge and what your client wants to pay may be very close from the outset or you may be worlds apart. Before you talk money, however, it's helpful to know what you need to earn and have a general sense of what other ghostwriters at your level typically charge for such projects.

Beginning a discussion about money with an understanding of what is reasonable and fair puts you in a strong position. That doesn't mean you'll win every project you bid on, nor that you want to. Clients hoping to pay \$1,000 for a 30,000-word memoir need to be educated that that fee is insufficient. But when they ask what a fair fee would be, you need to be prepared to answer.

That is what this first section is all about—determining what your rate is.

Determining what you should be charging as a ghostwriter begins with a self-assessment. How much do you need to earn to survive, at a minimum, and what do you want to earn?

What Do You Need to Earn?

The first thing to do in setting your ghostwriting rate is to determine how much you need to be paid. How much do you need to earn on a project to pay your bills and have some left over? That requires some calculation, which only you can do.

Ghostwriters, What Should You Charge?

You need to find out how much money you need to receive each month from clients in order to pay all your bills. This is an important question that you should stop and ask yourself. Knowing what your monthly expenses are can help you determine your break-even point—the amount of money you need to earn to cover your basic expenses. While you certainly want to earn more than this, knowing what it costs to live can help you set financial goals.

So take a few minutes to jot down your current expenses, on a monthly basis:

Mortgage or Rent	\$ _____
Car Payment	\$ _____
Parking Fees	\$ _____
Groceries	\$ _____
Insurance	
(Health, Home, Car)	\$ _____
Phone	\$ _____
Utilities	
(Heat, Water, Cable)	\$ _____
Internet	\$ _____
Clothing	\$ _____
Entertainment	\$ _____
Other Expenses	\$ _____
TOTAL:	\$ _____

Divide by how many hours are in a typical month (usually around 160) =
\$ _____

This is your minimum hourly rate—the rate you need to be paid for 160 hours to cover all your expenses. Now, since few of us are able to bill a full 40 hours a week, you should also divide by, say, half that, or 80 hours, to see what you need to earn if you can only find work to occupy you for 20 hours a week. These are important numbers to know.

Rate working 20 hours/week = \$ _____

Calculating your minimum hourly rate is a smart first step, to be sure you don't work hard for several weeks and only then discover that you *still* can't make your mortgage payment.

I'm not saying that the hourly rate you've calculated is what you should quote clients—not at all—only that you need to charge more than this amount to earn

any profit. This is your break-even point, or the point at which your expenses are covered, but nothing more.

So, for example, if you need to earn \$35/hour working 20 hours a week to cover your monthly expenses, or around \$700/week, when a client wants you to bid on ghostwriting a speech that will take 40–50 hours, you know you need to earn at least \$1,400–1,750 to break even. You'll want to charge more than that to be sure you are profitable.

Now is that the right fee? A reasonable fee? That also depends on you and your background.

“Pricing and fee-setting is an inexact process, but I've tried to establish some parameters to ensure the projects I take on are worth my time. For smaller projects, I try to approach pricing more as a freelance writer, using \$1/word as my typical minimum. Granted, I'll go a little lower in special circumstances, but not much. I also consider how long the work will take me, in addition to word count, to factor in how much I can earn per hour even at a lower per-word rate. When quoting ghosted books, I use \$200–250/page as my general guideline. Of course, I'll come down a little if the research has all been done and the files can be simply handed over and I can get started. And I'll go higher if additional work like research and interviews are needed. I also expect to be paid more in exchange for not identifying me as a project contributor; anonymity costs more money.”

—JEFF WUORIO, *finance and business writer at www.jeffwuorio.com*

What Do You Want to Earn?

While knowing what you need to earn to pay your bills is essential, another number to crunch is how much you'd like to make. If you just determined how much you need to make per hour, or per month, to get by, this number is more aspirational.

So what would you like to make each year? In Dan Kennedy's *No B.S. Time Management for Entrepreneurs*, he lays out a fairly simple exercise for calculating the hourly rate you need to charge to hit your target revenue goal. It looks something like this:

What is your annual income goal? \$_____

Ghostwriters, What Should You Charge?

Multiply that by 1.8 for taxes and other costs = \$_____

Divide that number by 220, which is the number of work days in a year =
\$_____/day

Divide by 8 hours of work/day = \$_____/hour

And if you assume only one-third of your time is productive, multiply that hourly rate by 3 = \$_____

That is the amount you need to earn per hour to hit your target. That is what your time is worth and what you should use when estimating your fee for potential clients. Of course, this assumes that this number is higher than the first number you calculated—the number you *need* to earn to live.

Keep in mind that these numbers are starting points for you to use. If you are a relatively new ghostwriter, charging \$250/hour—while it may help you attain your annual revenue goal—may not actually be a fair fee for the work your prospect needs done.

“First, I set out to estimate how many hours a project will take. It’s not easy, but you get better at it over time. I ask a lot of questions about where the information/data will come from, how available the client will be to read and give me feedback, who will be involved in the review and acceptance process and all the deadlines involved.

I also try to get a sense of how high maintenance a client will be. Is he/she readily available or will I spend days trying to get past a gatekeeper? Is the client motivated and wanting to get right down to work? Is the client very emotionally attached to the project or does he/she treat it like a business deal? These are elements that commonly factor in the total hours estimate.

After estimating the hours, I then add 15%. It always takes more hours than I think.

Then, using my hourly rate and the estimate, I come up with a project price. (Rate x Hours = Project Price) Some ghosts like to bill hourly. I find that doesn’t work for me. I feel like my client doesn’t settle in to work with me and instead is always watching the meter. But other writers like the hourly process because it protects them from overruns. Either way works.”

—ELLEN NEUBORNE, a New York-based ghostwriter and editor,
<http://www.publishersmarketplace.com/members/Eneuborne/>

What Is a Fair Fee?

There is no one “right fee.” A fee that is right for one ghostwriter may be way too low for another, and vice versa. There are a number of considerations to keep in mind as you try to come up with a fee that is fair to both you and your prospective client. Because, after all, you both need to be happy with the amount—if one is not, the project is unlikely to ever be finished.

So what should you weigh as you start to zero in on a fair fee for a project?

- **How familiar you are with the subject at-hand.** The more of an expert you are, the less research you will need to do to get up-to-speed and the more the client should be prepared to pay you for your expertise. This should also result in your being able to do the work faster than another ghostwriter, which can yield a higher hourly rate for you. And since most clients prefer to work with experts, your expertise should enable you to charge a premium.
- **How busy you are already.** If your schedule is nearly full at the moment, adding another project to your schedule may require a rush charge, or a surcharge. Conversely, if you have time on your hands and are looking for your next client, you may be more flexible rate-wise.
- **How quickly the project needs to be completed.** In general, speed requires more money. When clients are in a rush, they need to expect to pay more for you to put aside what you already have on your calendar, or to squeeze their work in.
- **How much hand-holding the client may need.** Using your interactions thus far as a guide, consider how frequently the client will want to have phone discussions, or in-person meetings if you are local. If you anticipate having to spend a couple of hours each week updating the client, or interacting with others on their team, you need to factor that into your price. A needy client is fine as long as you are being paid for all that additional attention they desire.

Ghostwriters, What Should You Charge?

- **How well you get along with the client.** While this is a completely subjective factor, whether you like your prospective client matters—it matters a lot. Depending on the project at-hand, you’re going to spend many hours working with and communicating with your client. Will you look forward to that? Or does your stomach clench at the thought of having to deal with him? Since there are situations when you may not have the luxury of turning a project down, at least bump your rate up for those individuals whom you don’t particularly want to work with.
- **What other expenses will you incur?** Most ghostwriting work is done at your desk using a phone or email as information sources. If a project will require travel, you will need to build in a charge for that time into your quote, even if the actual costs of travel will be paid separately. If you anticipate recording calls and having them transcribed, you’ll want to request a budget for transcripts or build those costs into your quote. If you’ll need to hire someone to do research on-site somewhere else, that, too, needs to be factored in.
- **Will you receive cover credit?** Ghostwritten books that identify the writer on the cover, usually with an “and” or “with,” are valuable to the ghostwriter and, therefore, the client may ask for a reduction in fee for that benefit. Decide whether that matters to you before you begin negotiating. Offering anonymity justifies asking for a higher fee.
- **Will you receive royalties?** Despite the fact that the majority of books never earn out their advance, meaning they never pay royalties, some clients offer a royalty split as part of the deal. Many ghostwriters view such an offer as a type of bonus that could occur if the book sells well, but since you have no control over the marketing and promotion of it, you may decide not to include the possibility of a royalty in your compensation package.

- **What you have previously charged.** Past experience should guide you and help you assess how the current project you are bidding on compares to similar projects you have previously completed. If you charged \$20,000 to write a 20,000-word book from scratch last year, the fee you charge this year should be at or above that amount, depending on the other factors above. You may have discovered that \$20,000 was far too low for all the work to be done, for example, and that \$40,000 would have been more appropriate, or, conversely, that when writing about a topic you know well, \$20,000 generates a lucrative hourly rate.

Each project is unique so there may be factors beyond this list that you'll need to consider, but this is a good starting point.

“Sometimes it is hard to say no to a prospective client. All ghosts prefer (require) a steady flow of work and income. That’s why most of us have accepted, at one time or another, an assignment with a small budget. In my experience that scenario has mostly created back-breaking workloads and diminished returns. Yet I know writers who have gambled and won. What’s your karma?

In my experience, low-paying jobs provide one important lesson: cheapskate clients will rarely appreciate the effort, talent and resourcefulness of their ghost: Me. You.”

—DOUGLAS GLENN CLARK, *ghostwriter at www.exclusiveghost.com*

What Is the Market Rate?

Before you set your standard rate and quote a project fee, do a little research to find out what others in your area and niche are charging. You may want to charge \$250/hour, but will you price yourself out of the market? Conversely, will asking for \$35/hour make you appear to be a novice? Gathering information about what others are charging helps you determine what is the right amount for you to charge. There are a number of ways to do this:

- **Ask your colleagues.** Create a new post on an online discussion forum at organizations like the American Society of Journalists

Ghostwriters, What Should You Charge?

and Authors (ASJA) or the Association of Ghostwriters (AOG), or on writer websites like Freelance Success or in LinkedIn groups, and ask what writers believe the going rate is for various types of projects.

- **Check ASJA's Paycheck service** (if you are a member), in which members report what they were paid for their work—from teaching college courses to editing manuscripts to ghost-writing books.
- **Ask agents and editors.** People who routinely hire writers know what ghostwriters have recently been paid for projects. Ask for a ballpark, or a range of what they have heard ghosts have been paid, and for what kind of project.
- **Call around.** Even if your friends and fellow writers don't respond to online discussions, pick up the phone or send them a personal email asking for some advice about what you should charge.

Of course, what you need or want to charge may have little in common with what the client wants to pay, so your next step is to find out as much as you possibly can about your prospective client and their budget for the work at-hand.

Part II: What Does the Client Want to Pay?

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The short answer to this question, of course, is “as little as possible.” Many clients know they need a ghostwriter in order to produce the book they want or need but do not know what it costs to retain a professional ghostwriter, nor do they necessarily see the value that a ghostwriter brings. So do not be surprised or offended if a client admits she wanted to only spend \$2,000 to have her 80,000-word memoir drafted; she doesn’t know what the going rate is.

Your goal should be to discover what the client expects or hopes to pay as quickly as possible, while educating him or her about the going rate. It’s a dance that helps you assess whether there is a fit between what they need done, what they want to pay, and what you want to earn as a professional.

Once you have determined what your standard rate is for ghostwriting, it is time to learn as much as you can about what your prospective client wants to pay. The best way to do that is to try and get the client to throw out a number.

What Is Your Budget?

Although many clients don’t want to share what their budget is or what they were hoping to pay you, in case it is higher than what you would have charged, you want that information for the exact same reasons—you don’t want to quote a fee that is too

high (thereby reducing your chances of getting the project) or too low (in which case, you're leaving money on the table you could have earned). So the best approach is to push for more information rather than throw out your own estimates. Try and gather some input about what the potential client perceives as a reasonable fee.

Some ways to phrase inquiring questions include:

- What do you typically pay for jobs like this?
- What were you expecting to pay?
- What do you think this project is worth?
- What have you paid in the past for similar projects?
- What do you have budgeted for this work?

While the question may be uncomfortable, especially if the client has already asked you for a number, the fact is that you are in a stronger negotiating position if you can get the client to share more information with you. If they are reluctant, you can explain:

"I can work with just about any budget, but it helps me to know what you had hoped to spend so that I can determine what's possible given that amount of money. I don't want to propose researching, writing, editing, and proofing your entire book if you really only have enough for editing. That's useful to know up front and helps me brainstorm with you how to make the most of how much money you do have to spend."

If you approach the conversation collaboratively—explaining that you want to help the client get the most bang for their buck—you may be able to get them to reveal a number. Mind you, it may not be the actual number they are willing to spend but at least it's a starting point for you to explain what can be accomplished for that amount. And you can work from there.

"First off, I always try to get a sense for the client's budget if at all possible. For example, recently I was bidding on a book for a book packager. The book involved working with three coauthors (so I expected there to be quite a bit of back and forth, trying to serve three masters), and I wanted to give a bid that was fair but in line with what others might ask for. I asked the book packager what types of fees it typically paid for books, and was told \$25,000 to \$50,000. Using that figure and estimating how

much time the book would take (nine to twelve months, per the packager), I bid \$45,000. I didn't get the job, but I know the ghostwriter who did—and she bid \$45,000, so at least I know my bid was reasonable.”

—KELLY JAMES-ENGER, *Ghostwriter and author of Goodbye Byline, Hello Big Bucks: Make Money Ghostwriting Books, Articles, Blogs, and More*, Second Edition

Given what you've been told about the scope of the project, you might have been thinking that you would charge, say, \$50,000, but if the client tells you up front that they only have \$25,000 to spend, you can craft a proposal that matches that stated budget. So maybe instead of research, writing, and editing, you'll propose only writing and one round of edits—anything more costs extra. But keep in mind that once they see what they will get for that amount, it may be possible for them to find some extra money to cover the other services they recognize they will need from you, like another round of edits, for example, or proofreading, or gathering permissions from interviewees.

In any negotiation, it is always best to get the other party to share as much information as possible, including what they might be willing to pay you. If you can learn that, you will be a step ahead in determining a fair fee and getting started on the project.

However, there are some clients who will refuse to share this information, believing it puts them at a disadvantage. In that case, you'll need to come up with your own number based on all the information you gather and then back it up with your own facts.

“For that reason I now abide by one rule: Do not try to convert a lowballer into a player. A wannabe “author” who believes a ghost will willingly write a 400-page book for \$5,000 will never comprehend that such a project may actually require somewhere in the range of \$20,000 to \$40,000.”

—DOUGLAS GLENN CLARK, *ghostwriter at www.exclusiveghost.com*

Quoting the work

There are many ways to slice and dice a project, and just as many ways to come up with a price. You could quote a range within which you expect the total project fee to fall, a fee with a not-to-exceed figure, a per-hour rate, a per-finished-minute rate,

or a per-page rate, to name a few approaches. Here are some pros and cons associated with each pricing strategy to keep in mind:

Pricing Method	Pros	Cons
Flat Fee	Can be more profitable if you are confident of your estimate of how long the work will take to complete. You also know from the outset what you expect to earn.	Unless you are <i>sure</i> you can do the work within the time you have allotted for it, or have set strict limits, you can lose money. Scope-creep, or the ever-expanding project, is also more common when payment is decided up front like this.
Hourly Rate	Charging by the hour ensures that you are paid for all the time you spend on a client's project.	There is less profit potential beyond what you've built into your hourly rate and if you spend more time than the client expected on the project, they can be displeased.
Per-Page	If you work quickly, being paid per page can be profitable. If the client sets the desired page-count, you also know from the start what you'll earn.	Some pages are liable to need more work than others and you will still be paid the set amount, no matter how difficult the work. Depending on how fast you work, you can lose money this way.
Not-to-Exceed Amount	If you quote a price range with a cap, or not-to-exceed figure, you have some flexibility built-in while still having a general idea of the project's value to you.	If you have underestimated the work to be done, you can lose money or you will need to re-negotiate to cover additional work you didn't anticipate or that the client asked for.

Of course, quoting any amount requires a good sense of what the work will entail, what it's worth to the client, and how long it will take for you to provide. Time becomes an important piece of information here.

Estimating How Long the Work Will Take

No matter what your fee-setting strategy is—flat fee, per page, per word, per hour, per day, whatever—since time is your inventory, you need to be careful that you are selling it at a profitable rate.

If you are being asked to bid on ghostwriting a set of 10 blog posts of about 500 words each, and you've done this before, you probably have a good sense of how long those posts will take you to create. If you can do them in about an hour, then this is approximately a 10-hour project. To give yourself some leeway, in case one or two of the posts requires extra research or more edits, you might quote a range of, say, 12–15 hours, at your “standard hourly rate.” But if you haven't worked with this client before and have no idea how many rounds of edits will be typical, it is always smart to increase your estimate by 15–25% to be sure you don't lose money on unending revisions.

“I'm skilled at underestimating how much time a project will take. With that in mind, after I've done all of the calculations to get the most accurate estimate possible, I add 25% to it to get a solid estimate. Testing this approach with time-tracking software has shown me that this method generates a fee that does reflect the actual amount of time the project will take.”

—SANDRA BECKWITH, ghostwriter, author, and book marketing coach,
<http://buildbookbuzz.com>

However, if you don't have a good sense of how long something will take, here are a couple of ways to come up with a time estimate:

- **Look at page count.** If you've been asked to edit a client's manuscript, to “get it into shape” for publication, you'll definitely want to see it before you offer a price quote. This will tell you how long it is—how many pages there are. Based on your experience and how dense the page is word-wise, can you edit

Ghostwriters, What Should You Charge?

each page in 15 minutes, do you think? In 30 minutes? If you can guess how long each page will take, do the math and offer a range.

- **Time yourself.** To be more precise, especially with editing, you could see how long it takes to edit 3–5 pages by actually starting to edit them. Alternatively, give yourself an hour and see how many pages you can get done. The figure you come up with is likely to be much closer to a realistic estimate of the time required than eyeballing the total number of pages.

Over time, you will likely move away from quoting a fee based solely on time, but using such a figure as a starting point helps ensure you are at least paid for the time you invest in the project.

Part III: Negotiating an Agreement

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There is almost always some degree of negotiating to be done to iron out an agreement for a ghostwriter's services. Even when money has been agreed upon, there are still issues surrounding process, availability, responsibility, liability, deadline, credit, and payment structure to be finalized.

Before starting to negotiate, think about your best-case scenario—what the ideal agreement might include. And think about what you can't or won't give up. Then start discussing how you and your new client can work together so that you both get all that you want—that should be your goal.

The best time to begin negotiating about a project is as soon as you are introduced to a potential client. A good negotiator is always gathering information, and that's what you should aim to do.

When Does the Negotiating Begin?

The negotiations begin as soon as you pick up the phone to take a call from a prospect, or when you open an introductory email to hear about a potential opportunity. In fact, you should always be negotiating.

So during that introductory conversation, learn as much as you can about the project that needs to be completed. What does it consist of, what kind of background

material does the client have to give you, how long does what you are writing need to be, who else is a participant or decision-maker, how will the information be conveyed to you—phone meetings, email, FedEx, or in-person interviews, what is the desired completion date, and what is the budget?

Some writers are uncomfortable bringing up money too quickly, fearing that the client will think that is all they are concerned about. So they delay that conversation until they have invested several hours preparing to do the work and only then discover that the client does not have enough money.

A better approach is to have “the talk” as soon as possible. Once you understand the scope of the project you need to confirm that the person you are speaking with has the financial resources to proceed. If they don’t, you don’t want to waste any of your time pursuing the opportunity.

“A potential client who won’t give you an idea of budget is a red flag for me. If he says, ‘Well, I’m not sure,’ I’ll say something like, ‘for a book proposal, I typically charge between \$5,000 and \$8,000 depending on the project and the author’s involvement.’ That gives the client an idea of what to expect. My bid itself will still depend on my estimate of the time a project will take, using a \$100/hour rate as the base. (So, I should spend no more than 50 hours total on a book proposal that pays me \$5,000.)”

—**KELLY JAMES-ENGER**, *ghostwriter and author of Goodbye Byline, Hello Big Bucks: Make Money Ghostwriting Books, Articles, Blogs, and More*, Second Edition

How to Get the Most Money

Use the hourly rate you set early on as a baseline. As the client’s demands increase, so, too, should your fee.

So if you were hired to write a 40,000-word book and agreed on a fee of \$55,000, when the client asks you to “write a few blog posts too,” recognize that the blog posts are a completely new project, and you should provide a separate quote for that. Your response? “I’ll get you a quote for that by tomorrow morning!”

Or if you wrote 10 blog posts and were responsible for providing one round of edits, for a total of \$1,500, being asked to also get approval from the sources quoted would require more money—but you need to tell the client. You could say something like, “I would be happy to run the posts back by all the sources you wanted me to

include. That will take me 2–3 more hours and cost \$200–300. Should I get started?” That gives the client the option to hand that work over to someone on staff and avoid the additional fee, or to realize that your bill will be for \$1,700–1,800 and not \$1,500.

Likewise, as the budget shrinks, so should your workload. If you had proposed to ghostwrite five articles of 750 words at \$1/word (for a total of \$3,750) and the client then tells you his budget is \$3,000 and not the \$3,750 you quoted, there are a number of ways to find common ground. Here are a few solutions:

- Reduce the number of articles to be written to four, which would result in a fee of \$3,000 exactly
- Shrink the length of each of the five article to 600 words, so that you would write a total of 3,000 words at \$1/word and still charge \$3,000
- Ask the client to outline each article and provide sources, to reduce the amount of time you have to invest in writing them
- If the schedule for completion is aggressive, agree to do the work but ask for more time.

There are always elements of a project you can eliminate from your task list. The key is to immediately alert the client that something needs to be taken off and to ask for their help in deciding which it will be.

Helping Clients Prioritize

Years ago I learned an important lesson that I try and share with clients, albeit subtly, whenever I can. The lesson was that clients can have *two* of the following three things:

- Quality
- Price
- Speed

So if the client insists on quality, she’ll have to either pay more for speed or pay less and not expect to have the work done quickly. Similarly, demanding a low price means the client will either have to give up quality or speed.

Ghostwriters, What Should You Charge?

“Some advice I will give is that you shouldn’t sell yourself cheap or you will find yourself doing it regularly, earning considerably less than you deserve.”

—JEFF WUORIO, *finance and business writer at www.jeffwuorio.com*

When a client truly wants to hire a ghostwriter, there is almost always some role that you can play in that project. It may not be what the client initially proposed, or what you had expected, but if you can convince a potential client of the value you bring to a project, most will work hard to involve you in some way.

Appendix



This chart of common editorial rates is from The Editorial Freelancers Association (www.the-efa.org), which is a terrific organization for freelance writers and editors. However, a quick survey of Association of Ghostwriters (AOG) members suggests these rates are lower than what the typical AOG member charges. That said, these figures may be a useful starting point in setting your own rates.

Type of Work	Estimated Pace	Range of Fees
Editing		
Editing, basic copyediting	5–10 ms pgs/hr	\$30–40/hr
Editing, heavy copyediting	2–5 ms pgs/hr	\$40–50/hr
Editing, website copyediting		\$40–50/hr
Editing, developmental	1–5 pgs/hr	\$45–55/hr
Editing, substantive or line	1–6 ms pgs/hr	\$40–60/hr
Fact Checking		
		\$30–40/hr
Indexing		
	8–20 pr pg/hr	\$35–65/hr \$5.50–12/per indiv pg

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Type of Work	Estimated Pace	Range of Fees
Layout		
Layout, books	6–10 pgs/hr	\$45–85/hr
Layout, newsletters	1–4 pgs/hr	\$40–100/hr
Layout, websites		\$16–20/pg
Manuscript Evaluation		
		\$45–55/hr
Permissions		
		\$40–50/hr
Project Management		
		\$9–30/per pg; \$40–90/hr
Proofreading		
	9–13 ms pgs/hr	\$30–35/hr
Researching		
		\$40–75/hr
Transcribing		
	variable	\$3–5/pg
Translating		
	300–500 wds/hr	\$40–50/hr
Web Design		
		\$50–75/hr
Writing		
	1–3 ms pgs/hr	
Writing, fiction		\$40–50/hr; 20¢–25¢/wd
Writing, ghostwriting		\$50–60/hr; 26¢–50¢/wd
Writing, grants/proposals/ sales/PR		\$50–60/hr; 30¢–95¢/wd
Writing, journalism		\$40–50/hr; 26¢–50¢/wd
Writing, medical		\$60–70/hr; 80¢–95¢/wd
Writing, non-specified		\$40–100/hr; 20¢–\$2/wd
Writing, technical/trade		\$50–60/hr; 45¢–55¢/wd

RESOURCES

Books

James-Enger, Kelly. *Goodbye Byline, Hello Big Bucks: Make money ghostwriting books, articles, blogs and more* (2nd edition). Improvise Press, 2013.

Lewis, Laurie. *Freelance Fee Setting: Quick Guide for When a Client Demands a Price NOW*. Amazon Digital Services, 2012.

Lewis, Laurie. *What to Charge: 3 Pricing strategies for freelancers and consultants*. Outskirts Press, 2011.

Shenson, Howard. *The Contract and Fee-Setting Guide for Consultants and Professionals*. Wiley, 1990.

Weiss, Alan. *Value-Based Fees: How to charge—and get—what you're worth*. Amazon Digital Services, 2008.

Organizations

The Authors Guild – authorsguild.org

American Society of Journalists and Authors – asja.org

Association of Ghostwriters – associationofghostwriters.org

Editorial Freelancers Association – the-efa.org

National Association of Memoir Writers – namw.org

National Writers Union – nwu.org

Websites

Freelance Success – freelancesuccess.com

The Freelance Writers Den – freelancewritersden.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marcia Layton Turner is a professional ghostwriter who has anonymously written close to a dozen non-fiction business books for her clients. She has also authored or co-authored another 20-odd non-fiction books on topics ranging from entrepreneurship to marketing to etsy, vision boards, real estate, and writing, with a few corporate histories as well.

Turner has been ghostwriting for more than 15 years and has partnered with CEOs, entrepreneurs, CMOs, COOs, firm principals, and executive directors to tell their stories.

She earns as much as \$100,000 for her services by using many of the fee-setting and negotiation strategies covered in this book.

Turner founded the Association of Ghostwriters (AOG) in 2010 in order to raise awareness of how ghostwriters can assist would-be authors in producing their books. Members include some of the nation's foremost ghostwriters.

For more information about the AOG, visit www.associationofghostwriters.org. For more information about Turner, visit www.marcialaytonturner.com.