

Course Synopsis

Module 1 – Introduction

We begin the course by discussing what copywriting is and the aims it seeks to achieve. The module reveals the broad range of copywriting work, and discusses the skills and aptitudes required to be a successful copywriter. We examine the earning potential for copywriters, and the ‘tools of the trade’ you will require. We introduce you to your Swipe File, explaining what this is and why you need it, and provide some content you can use to start your own. The module concludes with a preview of the rest of the course and some advice on how best to approach your studies.

Module 2 – Advertising and Copywriting

In this module we provide an introduction to advertising. We examine the so-called marketing mix, the combination of factors by which companies attempt to generate profits, and see how advertising fits in to this. We go on to look at a number of fundamental copywriting principles, including the all-important acronym AIDA, ‘selling the sizzle’, writing ‘You copy’ versus ‘We copy’, and the WAYS principle (Write As You Speak). We also discuss the Customer-Focus Ratio, a simple formula you can use to calculate whether an advertisement is sufficiently focused on the reader. All of these concepts and more are explained in full in this module.

Module 3 – Advertisement Writing

In this module we focus on advertisement writing: the ‘bread-and-butter’ work for copywriters. We look at the importance of following a brief, and discuss matters such as research, positioning and demographics, all of which are crucial to producing copy that meets your client’s requirements. We examine a copywriter’s legal and moral obligations, and go on to look at classified advertising – the most basic type of advertising of all. We move on to consider display advertising, and look at ways words can be combined with images and other graphic devices. The module concludes with a mini-glossary of advertising terms.

Module 4 – Sales Letters and Direct Mail

In this module we turn our attention to a very common source of work for copywriters – creating sales letters. We look at how the AIDA principle can be applied to writing a sales letter, and provide a complete sample sales letter, with an analysis of how it works and ways it could be improved. The module discusses sales letter style, and sets out some hints and tips for writing better sales letters. Finally, we look at the role of sales letters in direct mail, and discuss some of the other items used in direct mail a copywriter may be asked to produce.

Module 5 – Public Relations Writing

In this module we look at another steady earning opportunity for copywriters, public relations (PR) writing. We look at what is meant by PR and how it differs from advertising – and, very importantly, we set out the major differences between PR style and advertising style. We explain how to write a press release, the single most common job for a PR copywriter. We go on to consider advertorials, and also look at other types of PR writing copywriters may be asked to perform: brochures, newsletters, leaflets, and so on. PR writing offers almost limitless opportunities for copywriters. This module gives you all the tools and knowledge you need to succeed in this field.

Module 6 – Writing for Online Markets

As well as making it far easier for freelance copywriters to work from home, the Internet has opened up a huge range of opportunities for them. In this module we set out the basic principles of writing for the World Wide Web. As it’s helpful for copywriters to know a bit about how web pages are created, we include a section on essential HTML (the programming language in which web pages are created). We explain how to write, edit and update a web page, and also look at the art of writing commercial emails and ezines (electronic magazines). There is a particular demand for copywriters who can produce effective website sales pages, so we look at this in some detail, comparing and contrasting them with printed sales letters. We also explain SEO (search engine optimization) copywriting, another task online copywriters are often asked to perform. The module concludes with a look at blogging and micro-blogging, two more web-based tasks that can offer steady earning opportunities for copywriters.

Module 7 – Setting Yourself Up in Business

In this module we focus on the business side of working as a freelance copywriter. We explain the different types of business organisation – sole trader, partnership and limited company – and set out the pros and cons of each. We also examine the benefits and drawbacks of working from home. The module discusses your business letterhead and ‘image’. It also looks at Income Tax, National Insurance and VAT, topics anyone running a business of their own needs to know about. Setting fees and producing invoices is covered, as is setting up a basic system for financial record-keeping. Finally, we discuss other people who may be able to help you with your business – some for a fee, others free of charge.

Module 8 – Marketing Your Copywriting Service

All your copywriting knowledge and skills will be of little benefit if you can’t get clients. So in this module we look at the best ways to find clients for your copywriting business. We look at the two main types of client for copywriters, businesses and agencies, and explain the differences between them. We provide a short explanation of what advertising agencies are, and why they may need freelancers. The module discusses how to apply for work, and how you may be able to overcome the ‘no experience’ problem when you are first setting out. We provide a model letter of application you can adapt for selling your copywriting services, and provide some recommendations for preparing a portfolio to impress potential clients. Finally, the module discusses setting up your own web page to promote your copywriting service.

Module 9 – Reviewing and Polishing Your Work

Returning to actual copywriting, this module looks at how you can improve your skills. We examine ways of getting feedback about your work, emphasising the importance of building a good working relationship with your clients and encouraging constructive criticism. The module reveals a range of idea-generating techniques that can boost your creativity (and productivity). We look at the art of working with graphic designers, and offer a selection of further tips, including advice from the world’s top copywriters. The module concludes by setting out some useful online and off-line resources for improving your copywriting skills.

Module 10 – Taking it Further

In the final module of the course, we look at how you can build your client base, and how to obtain higher-paid work. We look at the pros and cons of specialising, and examine the art of copywriting for TV and radio – the highest paid and probably most glamorous of all copywriting assignments. The module also discusses two more specialised areas, recruitment copywriting and writing for charities and voluntary organisations. We talk about the power of networking for copywriters, and how you can apply it to your advantage. The module concludes with our closing tips and advice on establishing yourself as a successful, well-paid, professional copywriter.