

# The Occupational Outlook for “Editors,” “Technical Writers,” and “Writers and Authors”

From the *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012–13 Edition*.

Compiled by the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics.

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

# Editors

## Summary



Editors plan, coordinate, and revise material for publication.

Quick Facts: Editors	
<b>2010 Median Pay</b>	\$51,470 per year \$24.75 per hour
<b>Entry-Level Education</b>	Bachelor's degree
<b>Work Experience in a Related Occupation</b>	1 to 5 years
<b>On-the-job Training</b>	None
<b>Number of Jobs, 2010</b>	127,200
<b>Job Outlook, 2010-20</b>	1% (Little or no change)
<b>Employment Change, 2010-20</b>	800

### [What Editors Do](#)

Editors plan, review, and revise content for publication.

### [Work Environment](#)

Editors usually work in offices, but advances in technology now allow some editors to work wherever they have a computer. Because most editors have strict production deadlines, the work can be stressful and sometimes tiring. More than half of all editors work in the publishing industry. Most work full time.

### [How to Become an Editor](#)

A college degree is generally required for someone to be an editor. Proficiency with computers and communications

## Pay

The median annual wage of editors was \$51,470 in May 2010.

## Job Outlook

Employment of editors is expected to experience little or no change from 2010 to 2020 as print media continue to face strong pressure from online publications. Strong competition is expected for salaried editing jobs because many people want to work in the media industry.

## Similar Occupations

Compare the job duties, education, job growth, and pay of editors with similar occupations.

## O\*NET

O\*NET provides comprehensive information on key characteristics of workers and occupations.

## Contacts for More Information

Learn more about editors by contacting these additional resources.

## **What Editors Do**

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Editors constantly work under pressure to meet deadlines.

Editors plan, review, and revise content for publication. An editor's responsibilities vary with the employer and the type and level of editorial position.

## **Duties**

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Editors typically do the following:

- Read content and correct for errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar
- Rewrite copy to make it easier for people to understand
- Verify facts, using standard reference sources
- Evaluate submissions from writers to decide what to publish
- Work with writers to help their ideas and stories succeed
- Plan the content of publications according to the publication's style and editorial policy
- Develop story and content ideas while being mindful of the audience
- Allocate space for the text, photos, and illustrations that make up a story

- Approve final versions submitted by staff

Editors plan, coordinate, and revise material for publication in books, newspapers, magazines, or websites. Editors review story ideas and decide what material will appeal most to readers. They also review and edit drafts of books and articles, offer comments to improve the product, and suggest titles and headlines. In smaller organizations, a single editor may perform all of the editorial duties or share them with only a few other people.

The following are examples of types of editors:

**Copy editors** review copy for errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling and check the copy for readability, style, and agreement with editorial policy. They suggest revisions, such as changing words and rearranging sentences and paragraphs to improve clarity or accuracy. They also may carry out research, confirm sources for writers, and verify facts, dates, and statistics. In addition, they may arrange page layouts of articles, photographs, and advertising.

**Publication assistants** who work for book-publishing houses may read and evaluate manuscripts submitted by freelance writers, proofread uncorrected proofs, and answer questions about published material. Assistants on small newspapers or in smaller media markets may compile articles available from wire services or the Internet, answer phones, and proofread articles.

**Executive editors** oversee assistant editors and generally have the final say about what stories are published and how they are covered. Executive editors typically hire writers, reporters, and other employees. They also plan budgets and negotiate contracts with freelance writers, sometimes called “stringers” in the news industry. Although many executive editors work for newspaper publishers, some work for television broadcasters, magazines, or advertising and public relations firms.

**Assistant editors** have responsibility for a particular subject, such as local news, international news, feature stories, or sports. Most assistant editors work for newspaper publishers, television broadcasters, magazines, book publishers, or advertising and public relations firms.

**Managing editors** typically work for magazines, newspaper publishers, and television broadcasters, and are responsible for the daily operation of a news department.

## Work Environment

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Editors usually work full time in offices.

Editors held about 127,200 jobs in 2010. The industries that employed the most editors in 2010 were:

Newspaper, periodical, book, and directory publishers	45%
Religious, grantmaking, civic, professional, and similar organizations	9
Professional, scientific, and technical services	6
Colleges, universities, and professional schools; state, local, and private	4

Editors work mainly in offices, but advances in technology allow some editors to work wherever they have a computer. They often use desktop or electronic publishing software, scanners, and other electronic communications equipment to produce their material.

Jobs are somewhat concentrated in major media and entertainment markets—Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, DC—but improved communications and Internet capabilities now allow editors to work from a greater variety of locations.

## Work Schedules

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Editors' schedules generally are determined by the production schedule and the type of editorial position. Most salaried editors work in busy offices much of the time and have to deal with production deadline pressures and the stresses of ensuring that the information they publish is accurate. As a result, editors often work long hours, especially at those times leading up to a publication deadline, which can be daily or even more frequently when an editor is editing material for the Internet or for a live broadcast.

Overseeing and coordinating multiple writing projects simultaneously is common among editors and may lead to stress, fatigue, or other chronic problems. Freelance editors face the added pressures of finding work on an ongoing basis and continually adjusting to new work environments.

Most editors work full time.

## How to Become an Editor

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A college degree is typically required for someone to be an editor.

A college degree is typically required for someone to be an editor. Proficiency with computers and communications equipment also is necessary.

## Education and Training

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Employers generally prefer candidates with a bachelor's degree in communications, journalism, or English. Those with other backgrounds who can show strong writing skills also may find jobs as editors. Editors who deal with specific subject matter may need experience related to that field. Fashion editors, for example, may need expertise in fashion that they get through formal training or work experience.

The ability to use computers and communications equipment is necessary for editors to stay in touch with writers and other editors and to work on the increasingly important online side of a publication. Familiarity with electronic publishing, graphics, Web design, and multimedia production is important as well, because more and more material is being read online.

## Work Experience

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Editors can gain experience by working on their high school and college newspapers, or for magazines, radio and television stations, advertising and publishing companies, or not-for-profit organizations. Magazines and newspapers also have internships for students. Interns may write stories, conduct research and interviews, and gain general publishing experience.

Many editors start off as writers or reporters. For more information, see the profiles on [writers and authors](#) and [reporters, correspondents, and broadcast news analysts](#). Those who are particularly skilled at identifying good stories, recognizing writing talent, and interacting with writers may be interested in editing jobs.

## Advancement

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Except for copy editors, most editors hold management positions and must make decisions related to running a business. For them, advancement generally means moving up the corporate ladder or to publications with larger circulation or greater prestige. Copy editors may move into original writing or substantive editing positions or become freelancers.

## Important Qualities

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**Creativity.** Editors must be creative, be curious, and have knowledge in a broad range of topics. Some editors must regularly come up with interesting story ideas and attention-grabbing headlines.

**Decision-making skills.** Editors must decide if certain stories are ethical or if there is enough evidence to report them.

**Detail oriented.** One of an editor's main tasks is to make sure that material is free of error and matches the style of a publication.

**Interpersonal skills.** In working with writers, editors must have tact and the ability to guide and encourage them in their work.

**Language skills.** Editors must ensure that all written content has correct grammar, punctuation, and syntax. As a result, strong language skills are essential for an editor.

**Writing skills.** Editors should enjoy writing and must be excellent writers overall. They must have good knowledge of grammar and punctuation rules and be able to express ideas clearly and logically.

## Pay

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Editors	
Median annual wages, May 2010	
Editors	\$51,470
Media and Communication Workers	\$49,060

**Total, All Occupations**

**\$33,840**

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics

The median annual wage of editors was \$51,470 in May 2010. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$28,880, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$96,800.

Editors' schedules generally are determined by the production schedule and the type of editorial position. Most salaried editors work in busy offices much of the time and have to deal with production deadline pressures and the stresses of ensuring that the information they publish is accurate. As a result, editors often work long hours, especially at those times leading up to a publication deadline, which can be daily or even more frequently when an editor is editing material for the Internet or for a live broadcast.

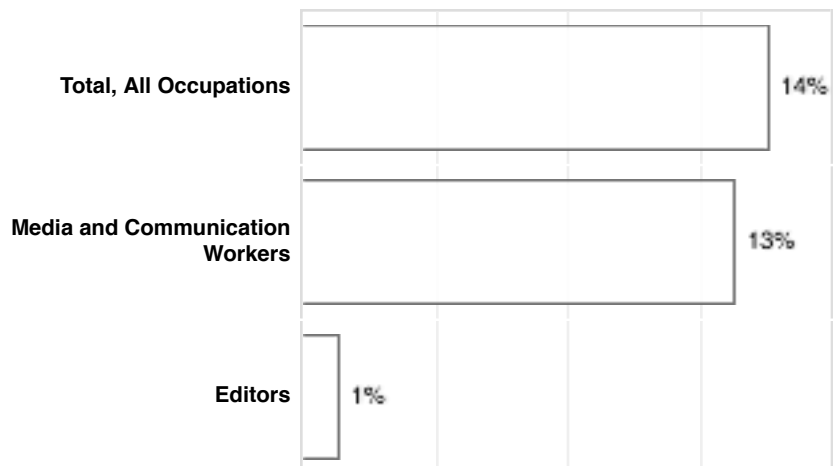
Overseeing and coordinating multiple writing projects simultaneously is common among editors and may lead to stress, fatigue, or other chronic problems. Freelance editors face the added pressures of finding work on an ongoing basis and continually adjusting to new work environments.

Most editors work full time.

## Job Outlook

### Editors

Percent change in employment, projected 2010-20



Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

Employment of editors is expected to experience little or no change from 2010 to 2020 as print media continue to face strong pressure from online publications. Despite some job growth for editors in online media, the number of traditional editing jobs in print newspapers and magazines is declining and will temper overall employment growth.

## Job Prospects

Competition for jobs with established newspapers and magazines will be particularly strong because the publishing industry is projected to decline in employment. Editors who have adapted to online media and are comfortable writing for and working with a variety of electronic and digital tools should have an advantage in finding work. Some job openings will arise as workers retire, transfer to other occupations, or leave the labor force. Although the way in which people consume media is changing, editors will continue to add value by reviewing and revising drafts and keeping the style and voice of a publication consistent.





### Employment projections data for editors, 2010-20





Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2010	Projected Employment, 2020	Change, 2010-20		Employment by Industry
				Percent	Numeric	
Editors	27-3041	127,200	128,000	1	800	<a href="#">[XLS]</a>

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

## Similar Occupations

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of editors.

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION 	2010 MEDIAN PAY 
	<a href="#">Announcers</a>	Announcers present music, news, and sports and may provide commentary or interview guests about these topics or other important events. Some act as a master of ceremonies (emcee) or disc jockey (DJ) at weddings, parties, or clubs.	<a href="#">See How to Become One</a>	\$27,010
	<a href="#">Reporters, Correspondents, and Broadcast News Analysts</a>	Reporters, correspondents, and broadcast news analysts inform the public about news and events happening internationally, nationally, and locally. They report the news for newspapers, magazines, websites, television, and radio.	Bachelor's degree	\$36,000

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION 	2010 MEDIAN PAY 
	<a href="#"><u>Technical Writers</u></a>	Technical writers, also called technical communicators, produce instruction manuals and other supporting documents to communicate complex and technical information more easily. They also develop, gather, and disseminate technical information among customers, designers, and manufacturers.	Bachelor's degree	\$63,280
	<a href="#"><u>Writers and Authors</u></a>	Writers and authors develop original written content for advertisements, books, magazines, movie and television scripts, songs, and online publications.	Bachelor's degree	\$55,420

## Contacts for More Information

For more information about editors, visit

[American Copy Editors Society](#)

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[www.bls.gov/ooh](http://www.bls.gov/ooh) | Telephone: 1-202-691-5700 | [Contact OOH](#)

# Technical Writers

## Summary



Technical writers communicate technical information through charts and manuals.

Quick Facts: Technical Writers	
<b>2010 Median Pay</b>	\$63,280 per year \$30.42 per hour
<b>Entry-Level Education</b>	Bachelor's degree
<b>Work Experience in a Related Occupation</b>	1 to 5 years
<b>On-the-job Training</b>	Short-term on-the-job training
<b>Number of Jobs, 2010</b>	49,500
<b>Job Outlook, 2010-20</b>	17% (About as fast as average)
<b>Employment Change, 2010-20</b>	8,500

### What Technical Writers Do

Technical writers, also called technical communicators, produce instruction manuals and other supporting documents to communicate complex and technical information more easily. They also develop, gather, and disseminate technical information among customers, designers, and manufacturers.

### Work Environment

Most technical writers work full time in offices. Although technical writers work in a variety of industries, they are concentrated in the computer and engineering industries.

### How to Become a Technical Writer

A college degree is usually required for a position as a technical writer. In addition, experience with a technical subject, such as computer science, Web design, or engineering, is important.

### Pay

The median annual wage of technical writers was \$63,280 in May 2010.

## **Job Outlook**

Employment of technical writers is expected to grow 17 percent from 2010 to 2020, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Job opportunities, especially for applicants with technical skills, are expected to be good.

## **Similar Occupations**

Compare the job duties, education, job growth, and pay of technical writers with similar occupations.

## **O\*NET**

O\*NET provides comprehensive information on key characteristics of workers and occupations.

## **Contacts for More Information**

Learn more about technical writers by contacting these additional resources.

## **What Technical Writers Do**

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Technical writers often create diagrams in order to show users how a product works.

Technical writers, also called technical communicators, produce instruction manuals and other supporting documents to communicate complex and technical information more easily. They also develop, gather, and disseminate technical information among customers, designers, and manufacturers.

## **Duties**

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Technical writers typically do the following:

- Determine the needs of end users of technical documentation
- Study product samples and talk with product designers and developers
- Work with technical staff to make products easier to use, and thus need fewer instructions
- Organize and write supporting documents for products
- Select photographs, drawings, diagrams, and charts that increase users' understanding
- Get usability feedback from customers, designers, and manufacturers
- Revise documents as new issues arise

Technical writers create operating instructions, how-to manuals, assembly instructions, and “frequently asked questions” pages to help technical support staff, consumers, and other users within a company or an industry. After a product is released, technical writers also may work with product liability specialists and customer service managers to improve the end-user experience through product design changes.

Technical writers often work with engineers, scientists, computer specialists, and software developers to manage the flow of information among project workgroups during development and testing. Therefore, technical writers must be able to understand complex information and communicate the information to people with diverse professional backgrounds.

Applying their knowledge of the user of the product, technical writers may serve as part of a team conducting usability studies to help improve the design of a product that is in the prototype stage. Technical writers may conduct research on their topics through personal observation, library and Internet research, and discussions with technical specialists.

Increasingly, technical information is being delivered online, and technical writers are using the interactive technologies of the Web to blend text, graphics, multidimensional images, sound, and video.

## Work Environment

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Technical writers usually work full time in offices.

Technical writers held about 49,500 jobs in 2010. The following industries employed the most technical writers in 2010:

Computer systems design and related services	17%
Architectural, engineering, and related services	7
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	7
Software publishers	5
Scientific research and development services	4

Most technical writers work in offices. They routinely work with engineers and other technology professionals to manage the flow of information throughout an organization. Although most technical writers are employed directly by the companies that use their services, some work on a freelance basis and get paid per assignment. Either they are self-employed, or they work for a technical consulting firm and are given specific short-term or recurring assignments, such as writing about a new product or coordinating the work and communication among different offices to keep a project on track. Technical writing jobs are usually concentrated in locations with information technology or scientific and technical research companies, such as California and Texas.

## Work Schedules

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Technical writers may be expected to work evenings and weekends to coordinate with those in other time zones or to meet deadlines. Most work full time.

## How to Become a Technical Writer

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Some technical writers work on a freelance basis.

A college degree is usually required for a position as a technical writer. In addition, experience with a technical subject, such as computer science, Web design, or engineering, is important.

## **Education**

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Employers generally prefer candidates with a bachelor's degree in journalism, English, or communications. Many technical writing jobs require both a degree and knowledge in a specialized field, such as engineering, computer science, or medicine. Web design experience also is helpful because of the growing use of online technical documentation.

## **Work Experience**

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Some technical writers begin their careers not as writers, but as specialists or research assistants in a technical field. By developing technical communication skills, they eventually assume primary responsibilities for technical writing. In small firms, beginning technical writers may work on projects right away; in larger companies with more standard procedures, beginners may observe experienced technical writers and interact with specialists before being assigned projects.

Prospects for advancement generally include working on more complex projects, leading or training junior staff, and getting enough work to succeed as a freelancer.

## **Training**

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Many technical writers need short-term on-the-job training to adapt to a different style of writing.

## **Important Qualities**

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**Communication skills.** Technical writers must be able to take complex, technical information and translate it for colleagues and consumers who have nontechnical backgrounds.

**Detail oriented.** Technical writers create detailed instructions for others to follow. As a result, they must be detailed and precise at every step for the instructions to be useful.

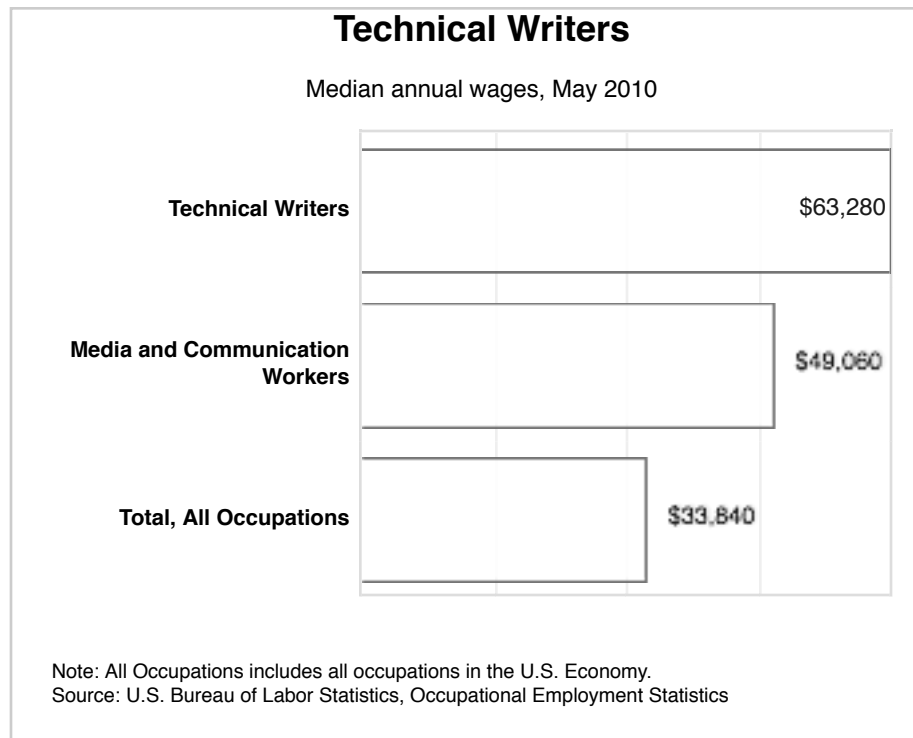
**Imagination.** Technical writers must be able to think about a procedure or product in the way that a person without technical experience would think about it.

**Teamwork.** Technical writers must be able to work well with others. They are almost always part of a team: with other writers; with designers, editors, and illustrators; and with the technical people whose information they are explaining.

**Technical skills.** Technical writers must be able to understand and then explain highly technical information. Many technical writers need a background in engineering or computer science in order to do this.

**Writing skills.** Technical communicators must have excellent writing skills to be able to explain technical information clearly.

## Pay



The median annual wage of technical writers was \$63,280 in May 2010. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$37,160, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$100,910.

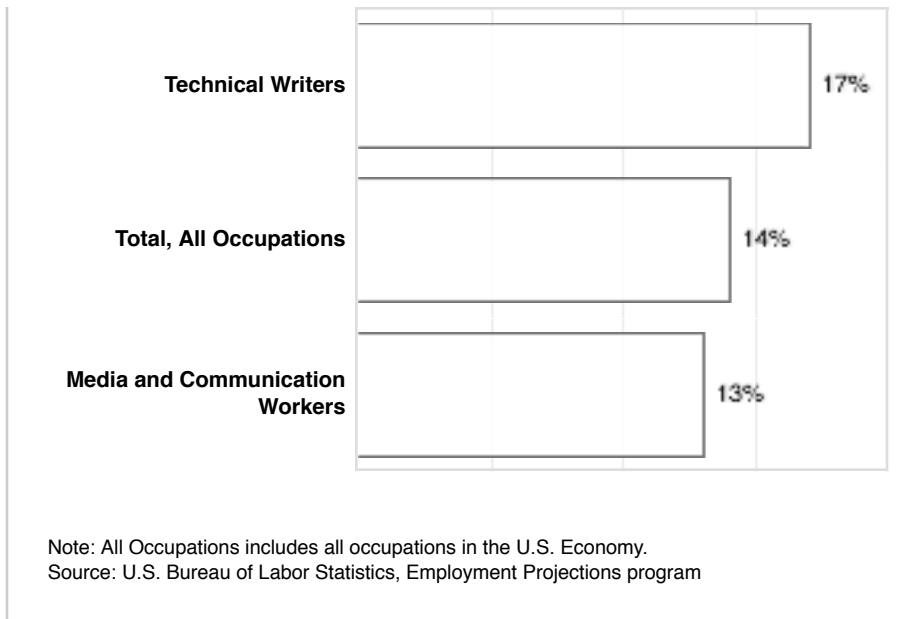
Median annual wages in the industries employing the largest numbers of technical writers in May 2010 were:

Software publishers	\$76,410
Computer systems design and related services	66,860
Scientific research and development services	64,890
Architectural, engineering, and related services	62,350
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	62,290

Technical writers may be expected to work evenings and weekends to coordinate with those in other time zones or to meet deadlines. Most work full time.

## Job Outlook





Employment of technical writers is expected to grow 17 percent from 2010 to 2020, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Employment growth will be driven by the continuing expansion of scientific and technical products and by growth in Web-based product support. Growth and change in the high-technology and electronics industries will result in a greater need for those who can write instruction manuals and communicate information clearly to users.

Professional, scientific, and technical services firms will continue to grow rapidly and should be a good source of new jobs even as the occupation finds acceptance in a broader range of industries, including data processing, hosting, and related services.

## Job Prospects

Job opportunities, especially for applicants with technical skills, are expected to be good. The growing reliance on technologically sophisticated products in the home and the workplace and the increasing complexity of medical and scientific information needed for daily living will create many new job opportunities for technical writers. In addition to job openings stemming from employment growth, some openings will arise as experienced workers retire, transfer to other occupations, or leave the labor force. However, there will be competition among freelance technical writers.

### Employment projections data for technical writers, 2010-20








Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2010	Projected Employment, 2020	Change, 2010-20		Employment by Industry
				Percent	Numeric	
Technical Writers	27-3042	49,500	58,000	17	8,500	<a href="#">[XLS]</a>

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

## Similar Occupations

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of technical writers.

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION	2010 MEDIAN PAY
	<a href="#">Computer Hardware Engineers</a>	Computer hardware engineers research, design, develop, and test computer equipment such as	Bachelor's degree	\$98,810

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION 	2010 MEDIAN PAY 
	<a href="#"><u>Computer Programmers</u></a>	chips, circuit boards, or routers. By solving complex problems in computer hardware, these engineers create rapid advances in computer technology.  Computer programmers write code to create software programs. They turn the program designs created by software developers and engineers into instructions that a computer can follow.	Bachelor's degree	\$71,380
	<a href="#"><u>Editors</u></a>	Editors plan, review, and revise content for publication.	Bachelor's degree	\$51,470
	<a href="#"><u>Interpreters and Translators</u></a>	Interpreters and translators convert information from one language to another. Interpreters work in spoken or sign language, translators in written language.	Bachelor's degree	\$43,300
	<a href="#"><u>Public Relations Managers and Specialists</u></a>	Public relations managers and specialists create and maintain a favorable public image for their employer or client. They write material for media releases, plan and direct public relations programs, and raise funds for their organizations.	Bachelor's degree	\$57,550
	<a href="#"><u>Writers and Authors</u></a>	Writers and authors develop original written content for advertisements, books, magazines, movie and television scripts, songs, and online publications.	Bachelor's degree	\$55,420

## Contacts for More Information

For more information about technical writers, visit

[Society for Technical Communication](#)

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Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012-13 Edition*, Technical Writers, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/technical-writers.htm> (visited *January 07, 2013*).

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# Writers and Authors

## Summary



Writers and authors develop original written material.

### Quick Facts: Writers and Authors

<b>2010 Median Pay</b>	\$55,420 per year \$26.64 per hour
<b>Entry-Level Education</b>	Bachelor's degree
<b>Work Experience in a Related Occupation</b>	None
<b>On-the-job Training</b>	Long-term on-the-job training
<b>Number of Jobs, 2010</b>	145,900
<b>Job Outlook, 2010-20</b>	6% (Slower than average)
<b>Employment Change, 2010-20</b>	9,500

### [What Writers and Authors Do](#)

Writers and authors develop original written content for advertisements, books, magazines, movie and television scripts, songs, and online publications.

### [Work Environment](#)

Writers and authors work in an office, at home, or wherever else they have access to a computer. Most writers and authors work full time. However, self-employed and freelance writers usually work part time or have variable schedules.

### [How to Become a Writer or Author](#)

A college degree is generally required for a salaried position as a writer or an author. Proficiency with computers and

assignments. Excellent writing skills are essential.

### Pay

The median annual wage of writers and authors was \$55,420 in May 2010.

### Job Outlook

Employment of writers and authors is projected to grow 6 percent from 2010 to 2020, slower than the average for all occupations. Strong competition is expected for salaried writing jobs because many people are attracted to this occupation.

### Similar Occupations

Compare the job duties, education, job growth, and pay of writers and authors with similar occupations.

### O\*NET

O\*NET provides comprehensive information on key characteristics of workers and occupations.

### Contacts for More Information

Learn more about writers and authors by contacting these additional resources.

## What Writers and Authors Do

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Writers and authors perform research in order to give their stories authentic detail.

Writers and authors develop original written content for advertisements, books, magazines, movie and television scripts, songs, and online publications.

### Duties

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Writers and authors typically do the following:

- Choose subject matter that interests readers
- Write fiction or nonfiction through scripts, novels, and biographies

- Conduct research to get factual information and authentic detail
- Write advertising copy for use by newspapers, magazines, broadcasts, and the Internet
- Present drafts to editors and clients for feedback
- Work with editors and clients to shape the material so it can be published

Writers and authors develop original written material, namely, stories and advertisements, for books, magazines, and online publications.

Writers must establish their credibility with editors and readers through strong research and the use of appropriate sources and citations. Writers and authors select the material they want to use and then convey the information to readers. With help from editors, they may revise or rewrite sections, searching for the best organization and the most appropriate phrasing. For more information, see the profile on [editors](#).

An increasing number of writers are *freelance writers*—that is, they are self-employed and make their living by selling their written content to book and magazine publishers; news organizations; advertising agencies; and movie, theater, and television producers. Many freelance writers are hired to complete specific short-term or recurring assignments, such as writing a newspaper column, contributing to a series of articles in a magazine, or producing an organization’s newsletter.

An increasing number of writers are producing material that is published directly online in videos and on blogs.

The following are types of writers and authors:

**Copywriters** prepare advertisements to promote the sale of a good or service. They often work with a client to produce advertising themes, jingles, and slogans.

**Biographers** write a thorough account of a person’s life. They gather information from interviews and research about the person to accurately portray important events in that person’s life.

**Novelists** write books of fiction, creating characters and plots that may be imaginary or may be based on real events.

**Songwriters** compose music and lyrics for songs. They may write and perform their own songs or sell their work to a music publisher. They sometimes work with a client to produce advertising themes, jingles, and slogans and may be involved in marketing the product or service.

**Playwrights** write scripts for theatrical productions. They produce lines for actors to say, stage direction for actors to follow, and ideas for theatrical set design.

**Screenwriters** create scripts for movies and television. They may produce original stories, characters, and dialogue or turn a book into a movie or television script. Some may produce content for radio broadcasts and other types of performance.

## Work Environment

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Writers and authors work in an office or wherever they have a computer.

Writers and authors held about 145,900 jobs in 2010. About 68 percent were self-employed.

The industries that employed the most writers and authors in 2010 were:

Religious, grantmaking, civic, professional, and similar organizations	6%
Newspaper, periodical, book, and directory publishers	5
Advertising, public relations, and related services	4
Motion picture and video industries	2
Radio and television broadcasting	2

Writers and authors work in an office, at home, or wherever else they have access to a computer.

Jobs are somewhat concentrated in major media and entertainment markets—Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, DC—but improved communications and Internet capabilities allow writers and authors to work from almost anywhere. Many prefer to work outside these cities and travel regularly to meet with publishers and clients and to do research or conduct in-person interviews.

## Work Schedules

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About 26 percent of writers and authors work part time. Some writers keep regular office hours, either to stay in contact with sources and editors or to set up a writing routine, but many writers set their own hours. Freelance writers are paid per assignment; therefore, they work any number of hours necessary to meet a deadline. As a result, writers must be willing to work nights and weekends to produce something acceptable to an editor or client. Although many freelance writers enjoy running their own businesses and the advantages of working flexible hours, most routinely face the pressures of juggling multiple projects or continually looking for new work.

## How to Become a Writer or Author

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Freelance writers may have to manage multiple assignments simultaneously.

A college degree is generally required for a salaried position as a writer or author. Proficiency with computers and communications equipment is necessary for staying in touch with sources, editors, and other writers while working on assignments.

## **Education and Training**

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A bachelor's degree is typically needed for a salaried job as a writer. Because writing skills are essential in this occupation, many employers like to hire people who have a degree in English, journalism, or communications. Writers and authors need time to polish their craft through on-the-job training before their work is ready for publication.

Those with other backgrounds who demonstrate strong writing skills also may find jobs as writers. Writers who want to write about a particular topic may need formal training or experience related to that topic.

Because many writers today prepare material directly for the Internet, they should be knowledgeable about graphic design, page layout, and multimedia software.

## **Work Experience**

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Writers can get job experience by working for high school and college newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, advertising and publishing companies, or not-for-profit organizations. College theater and music programs offer playwrights and songwriters an opportunity to have their work performed. Many magazines and newspapers also have internships for students. Interns may write stories, conduct research and interviews, and gain general publishing experience.

In addition, Internet blogs can provide writing experience to anyone with access to the Internet. Some of this writing may lead to paid assignments regardless of education, because the quality of writing, the unique perspective, and the size of the potential audience are the greatest determinants of success for a piece of writing. Online publications require knowledge of computer software and editing tools that are used to combine text with graphics, audio, video, and animation.

## **Advancement**

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Writers and authors generally advance by building a reputation, taking on more complex writing assignments, and getting published in more prestigious markets and publications. Having previously published work that was well received and maintaining a track record of meeting deadlines are important for advancement. Writing for smaller businesses, local newspapers, advertising agencies, and not-for-profit organizations allows beginning writers and authors to start taking credit for their work immediately. However, opportunities for advancement within these organizations may be limited because they either do not have enough regular work or do not need more advanced writing.

Many editors begin work as writers. Those who are particularly skilled at identifying stories, correcting writing style, and interacting with writers may be interested in editing jobs.

## **Important Qualities**

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**Creativity.** Writers and authors must be able to develop new and interesting plots, characters, or ideas so they can come up with new stories.

**Determination.** Writers and authors sometimes work on projects that take years to complete. Freelance writers who are paid per assignment must demonstrate persistence and personal drive.

**Persuasion.** Writers, especially those in advertising, must be able to persuade others to feel a certain way about a good or service.

**Social perceptiveness.** Writers and authors must understand how readers react to certain ideas in order to connect with their audience.

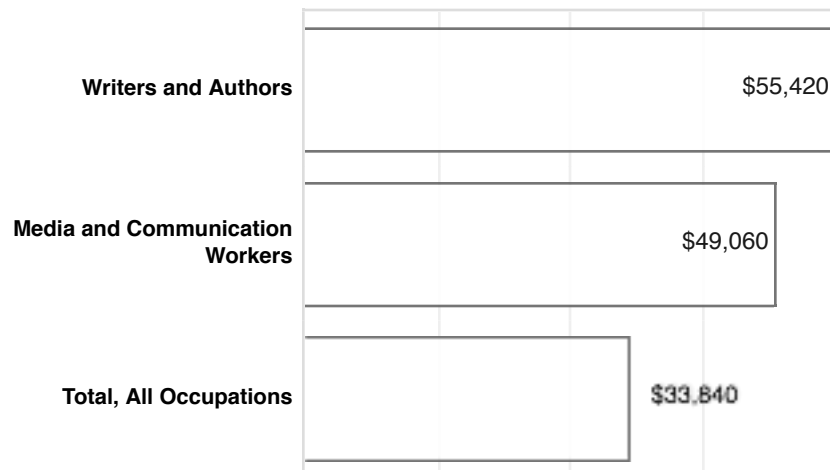
**Writing skills.** Writers and authors must be able to write effectively in order to convey feeling and emotion and communicate with readers.

## **Pay**

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## Writers and Authors

Median annual wages, May 2010



Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics

The median annual wage of writers and authors was \$55,420 in May 2010. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$28,610, and the top 10 percent earned more than \$109,440.

Median annual wages in the industries employing the largest numbers of writers and authors in May 2010 were:

Advertising, public relations, and related services	\$62,260
Motion picture and video industries	62,000
Radio and television broadcasting	53,400
Religious, grantmaking, civic, professional, and similar organizations	52,750
Newspaper, periodical, book, and directory publishers	47,230

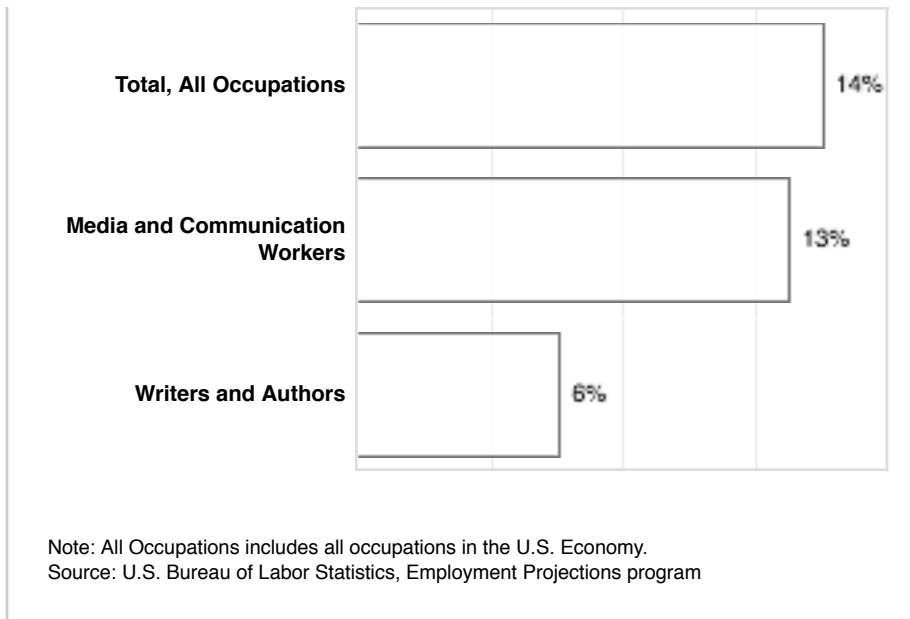
Freelance writers earn income from their articles, books, and, less commonly, television and movie scripts. Although most freelance writers work on an individual project basis for multiple publishers, many support themselves with income derived from other sources. Freelancers generally have to provide for their own health insurance and pension, unless they receive coverage from another job.

About 26 percent of writers and authors work part time. Some writers keep regular office hours, either to stay in contact with sources and editors or to set up a writing routine, but many writers set their own hours. Freelance writers are paid per assignment; therefore, they work any number of hours necessary to meet a deadline. As a result, writers must be willing to work nights and weekends to produce something that is acceptable to an editor or client. Although many freelance writers enjoy running their own businesses and the advantages of working flexible hours, most routinely face the pressures of juggling multiple projects or continually looking for new work.

## Job Outlook

### Writers and Authors

Percent change in employment, projected 2010-20



Employment of writers and authors is projected to grow 6 percent from 2010 to 2020, slower than the average for all occupations. Despite slower-than-average employment growth, online publications and services are growing in number and sophistication, spurring demand for writers and authors with Web and multimedia experience. Some experienced writers should find work in the public relations departments of corporations and nonprofit organizations. Others will likely find freelance work for newspaper, magazine, or journal publishers, and some will write books.

## Job Prospects

Strong competition is expected, given that many people are attracted to this occupation. Competition for jobs with established newspapers and magazines will be particularly strong because the publishing industry is projected to become smaller. Writers and authors who have adapted to online media and are comfortable writing for and working with a variety of electronic and digital tools should have an advantage in finding work. The declining costs of self-publishing, the growing popularity of electronic books, and the increasing number of readers of electronic books will allow many freelancer writers to get their work published. Some job openings will arise as experienced workers retire, transfer to other occupations, or leave the labor force.

### Employment projections data for writers and authors, 2010-20







Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2010	Projected Employment, 2020	Change, 2010-20		Employment by Industry
				Percent	Numeric	
Writers and Authors	27-3043	145,900	155,400	6	9,500	<a href="#">[XLS]</a>

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

## Similar Occupations

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of writers and authors.

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION	2010 MEDIAN PAY
	<a href="#">Editors</a>	Editors plan, review, and revise content for publication.	Bachelor's degree	\$51,470

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION 	2010 MEDIAN PAY 
	<a href="#"><u>Reporters, Correspondents, and Broadcast News Analysts</u></a>	Reporters, correspondents, and broadcast news analysts inform the public about news and events happening internationally, nationally, and locally. They report the news for newspapers, magazines, websites, television, and radio.	Bachelor's degree	\$36,000
	<a href="#"><u>Public Relations Managers and Specialists</u></a>	Public relations managers and specialists create and maintain a favorable public image for their employer or client. They write material for media releases, plan and direct public relations programs, and raise funds for their organizations.	Bachelor's degree	\$57,550
	<a href="#"><u>Announcers</u></a>	Announcers present music, news, and sports and may provide commentary or interview guests about these topics or other important events. Some act as a master of ceremonies (emcee) or disc jockey (DJ) at weddings, parties, or clubs.	<a href="#"><u>See How to Become One</u></a>	\$27,010
	<a href="#"><u>Technical Writers</u></a>	Technical writers, also called technical communicators, produce instruction manuals and other supporting documents to communicate complex and technical information more easily. They also develop, gather, and disseminate technical information among customers, designers, and manufacturers.	Bachelor's degree	\$63,280

## Contacts for More Information

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For more information about writers and authors, visit

[American Society of Journalists and Authors](#)

[Association of Writers and Writing Programs](#)

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