



Your First Freelance Profile

How to build an online profile that gets you hired, even with zero reviews.

A Lumaset Foundation guide · Part of the free Safe Online Work series

Who it's for: anyone about to build their first freelance or gig-work profile. **Plain language, no jargon.** A short read you can act on today.

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- 1 Pick one clear niche
- 2 Write a bio that leads with the client's problem
- 3 Build proof before you have reviews
- 4 Make yourself verifiably real
- 5 Avoid the profile habits that invite scams



Who we are

Lumaset Foundation is a nonprofit that helps everyday people stay safe and confident online. We make clear, plain-language lessons about spotting scams and using technology, and we keep everything 100% free, with no account and no catch. We are a registered 501(c)(3) charity based in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Why we made this guide

Millions of Americans now earn some or all of their income freelancing, and most of them started with an empty profile and no reviews, same as you. The freelancers who get hired first aren't always the most skilled; they're the ones whose profile makes a stranger trust them fast. This guide walks you through building that trust, honestly, before you've done a single paid job.

Remember: A client scrolling through profiles decides in seconds whether to keep reading. Every section of your profile has one job: answer “can I trust this person with my project?”

Jump to what you need:

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Pick One Clear Niche (Not “I Can Do Anything”)

What it is. A niche is the one specific problem you solve for one specific kind of client, stated up front, instead of a long list of everything you're able to do.

Why it matters. A wide “I can do anything” profile reads as inexperienced, because real specialists don't need to say they can do everything. Clients search by the problem they have, not by a skill list, and a specific, confident answer beats a broad, vague one almost every time.

Example. “Freelance writer” is forgettable. “I write onboarding emails for small SaaS companies” tells a founder exactly why to click your profile over the next ten.

Do this now

1. Write down the one or two things you're best at, and who typically needs them (a type of business, not “everyone”).
2. Turn that into a one-line headline: “[What you do] for [who you do it for].”
3. If you truly do several unrelated things, pick your strongest one for now. You can always add a second profile or service later.

Learn it free: Our free course [Online Work · Level 1: Finding Legitimate Work Without Getting Burned](#) covers how to choose a starting niche step by step. No account needed.

Write a Bio That Leads With the Client's Problem

What it is. Your bio is the paragraph under your headline. The strongest freelance bios open with the client's problem and your result, not your life story or a list of software you know.

How it works. Clients skim. A bio that opens with “I've always been passionate about...” loses them before the useful part. A bio that opens with what you fix, for whom, and what changes as a result, keeps them reading and builds confidence you understand their situation.

Example. Not: “I'm a hard worker who loves helping people and has always enjoyed writing since I was young.” Instead: “Small business owners hire me to turn a messy website into clear copy that actually gets read. Recent projects: rewrote a landing page that raised sign-ups, and cleaned up an About page a client had been embarrassed to link to for two years.”

Do this now

- 1.** Open with the problem you solve and who has it.
- 2.** Add one or two concrete outcomes, even from practice work (see Page 4).
- 3.** Close with how you work (communication style, turnaround) so a client knows what hiring you feels like.
- 4.** Keep it to a few short paragraphs. Long bios get skimmed, not read.

Learn it free: Practice writing yours in Online Work · Level 1: Finding Legitimate Work Without Getting Burned, free and self-paced.

Build Proof Before You Have Reviews

What it is. “Proof” is anything a stranger can look at that shows your work is real: a portfolio sample, a spec (practice) project, or a testimonial from any work you've done, paid or not.

How it works. Everyone starts with zero platform reviews. Clients know that. What they're actually checking for is evidence, in any form, that you can do the thing you say you can do. You can create that evidence yourself before your first paid job.

Example. A new virtual assistant with no clients built two sample project boards (one for a “small retail shop,” one for a “local nonprofit”) to show exactly how she'd organize a client's week. She linked both in her portfolio and got her first paying client from that alone.

Do this now

- 1.** Create 2–3 sample pieces in your niche, even unpaid — treat them like real client work.
- 2.** Ask anyone you've helped (a friend's small business, a volunteer project, a past coworker) for a short, honest quote about working with you.
- 3.** Put your best 2–3 samples first. A short, strong portfolio beats a long, uneven one.
- 4.** Never claim a result you didn't actually produce. One caught exaggeration ends the trust for good.

Learn it free: More ways to build early proof, free, in Online Work · Level 1: Finding Legitimate Work Without Getting Burned.

Make Yourself Verifiably Real

What it is. Trust signals are the small, checkable details that tell a client, and a platform, that you're a real, findable person, not a throwaway account.

Why it matters. Freelance platforms and serious clients favor profiles that look like a real person stands behind them. A profile with no photo, a vague name, and no completed verification reads as higher-risk, whether or not that's fair, and it costs you real work.

Do this now

1. Use a real, clear photo of your face (not a logo, cartoon, or group photo).
2. Use your real name, and complete every platform ID/verification step offered — this proves you're a real, accountable person, and it's free.
3. Link any professional profile you already have (LinkedIn, a personal site) so a client can cross-check you.
4. Fill in every profile section the platform offers. Empty sections read as an abandoned or fake account.

Remember: Verifying your own identity to the platform is different from ever sharing your Social Security number, bank login, or a copy of your ID with a “client” directly — never do that (see the next page).

Profile Habits That Invite Scams, Not Clients

What it is. A few common profile and early-conversation habits make you a target for job scams instead of real clients.

How it works. Job and freelance-platform scams are a real and growing problem. FTC data shows reports of job and employment-agency scams nearly tripled between 2020 and 2024, with reported losses growing from \$90 million to \$501 million over that period, and scammers now increasingly approach freelancers who look eager and unverified.

Red flags

- A “client” who messages you off-platform immediately, before any real project discussion.
- Anyone who asks you to pay a fee to “unlock,” “process,” or “certify” your profile or an assignment.
- A first message offering a job with no interview, for unusually high pay, for very little described work.
- Any request for your bank login, a copy of your government ID, or a “test check” you're asked to deposit and partly send back.

Do this now

- 1.** Keep early conversations on the platform, where there's a record and dispute protection.
- 2.** A legitimate client never asks you to pay them to work for them.
- 3.** If it feels rushed or too good to be true, slow down and check it with our free course, Spot the Scam · Level 1: Protecting Yourself Online.
- 4.** Report a suspected scam at reportfraud.ftc.gov.

Putting It Together

Your first profile doesn't need to be perfect, it needs to be specific, honest, and complete. In order: one clear niche, a problem-first bio, 2–3 honest proof samples, a real verified identity, and a habit of keeping early conversations safe. That's the whole foundation.

Remember: Every freelancer with a five-star profile today once had zero reviews. The profile is what gets you the job that becomes your first review.

Keep learning, free.

This guide is a start. Our free course **Online Work • Level 1: Finding Legitimate Work Without Getting Burned** walks through choosing a niche, avoiding fake-job traps, and landing your first real client, step by step, at your own pace. We also teach free courses on spotting scams and using technology with confidence.

- **No account. No cost. No catch.** Ever.
- Start anytime at lumoset.org.
- Know someone starting out freelancing? Please share this guide with them.

Want to know what to charge once you land the work? Get our free companion guide, **What to Charge: Pricing Your Online Work**, at lumoset.org.

Sources

Federal Trade Commission, “Paying to get paid: gamified job scams drive record losses,” Data Spotlight, Dec. 2024 (ftc.gov) · FTC, Job Scams — Consumer Advice (consumer.ftc.gov/all-scams/job-scams; reportfraud.ftc.gov).

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