

Please note that this freelancifesto was written from my perspective for my own sanity. We decided to release it into the world with the hope that my own personal ideas about being freelance will help you forge your own. I encourage you to make one for yourself that aligns with your own lived experience. Peace!

1. In many ways, it is always good to start with the unpleasant stuff, it means the only way is up. So let's start with this - being a creative freelancer is lonely. Especially if you work from home in an empty house. Empty doors framing empty rooms. The days can feel endless, accompanied only by the sounds of the kettle boiling, a pen scraping on a piece of paper and the postman pushing bills through your door. You wander like a ghost. Curl up in bed, watch the birds, do the dishes, answer that email. Maybe you go to the shop, working up the courage up to speak for the first time - *No, I don't need a bag, thanks*. It's hard to keep track on days like these. The long ones. You can't remember what you did, to be honest you don't have any proof that you existed at all...well, apart from the ticks on your to-do list. This is why you should keep always keep a to-do list.
2. Being a lone worker means that your battles are usually your own too. A problem with a contract, a misprint, a Twitter troll, an unreasonable organisation. It can be hard to measure the issue without a colleague to bounce it off beside the water cooler. You go over and over the problem in your mind until it becomes something else entirely. You voice the hypothetical argument in your mind, playing both parts. A kitchen sink drama being played out in your skull and you're good at it so your body reacts like it's actually happening. You get sweaty palms, your face flushes, your cholesterol fizzes in your veins. Have a friend you can call in these moments, or write it all down, don't store it in your body. Do not hit reply until you are calm.
3. You never get invited to Christmas nights out, so you have to organise your own. For authenticity, I usually dress in office attire and winch

someone I probably shouldn't be winching under some plastic mistletoe.

4. A solution to numbers 1- 3 is to build a community for yourself. I live for the days I am amongst other living things, the days I get to say *Good morning*. The days that I am offered a coffee and a biscuit. The days I am told *Thank you* or *Have you thought about doing it this way?* Make sure you have at least some work with others, or a creative freelance career is nothing more than a lot of time pulling your hair out, staring at a wall.
5. Get a paper diary. Trust me the Feng Shui is way better this way. The online ones are a faff. It is your anchor. Do not lose it.
6. The goal posts move silently when you're sleeping. Find a way to celebrate your achievements or they pass you without you noticing.
7. Pay an accountant. Don't do your tax yourself unless you are a Virgo or a psychopath. You will never get that time back.
8. Carve out a routine. This doesn't necessarily mean 5am yoga, followed by meditating on your intentions and a cold shower. If that's what works for you go for it. But just do one thing everyday at the same time.
9. Don't get mad at yourself if you're not a morning person. You're a freelancer so you get to choose what the fuck you want to do with your mornings and lies ins are **GLORIOUS**. Be grateful you're not on someone else's schedule. You can always do extra work in the evening if you have to.
10. Turn off your notifications. Yes, even emails, you are not a firefighter, or a paramedic, you are not on call 24/7.
11. Never feel bad for resting.
12. Leave your house. Go on a walk. If you have work to do, find a cafe. If it requires one - two hours go to a small independent business. If it needs an all dayer find a Costa, they don't give a shit how much you buy or how long you stay. Office space costs a fortune and is usually freezing. Costa (other massive unethical chains are available) gives you a seat, wifi and a cake for so much less.
13. Use libraries if you have one nearby.
14. Bribe yourself to do the things you don't want to do. A glass of wine, a box of chocolates, a cigarette.
15. Buy a printer.

16. Don't teach for the money. Teaching might be the most important thing you ever do. It is an honour. Tread softly because if you don't, you could be the reason people say *Oh, I'm just not a creative person*. If you're going to do it, work at it. Get better. Treat it as part of your practice not a side hustle. Do not make an art hierarchy, there are enough of those. Complement everyone and everything. Take time to build positive relationships. Everyone is entitled to a creative life, you hold a key, don't do it for the sake of it. It's too important.
17. Learn people's names. Even if you have to ask multiple times. It shows you are listening, that you are present.
18. Charge for your travel, your materials and your planning.
19. Don't undervalue yourself. Creative people are so scared of money, they don't feel like they deserve it. You do! It doesn't make you Jeff Bezos to want to be paid. Think more positively about money. It is an energy you can utilise.
20. Invoices are the best thing ever. Make yourself a fancy template with your favourite colours. Getting paid is class. Make it a celebration. Stick on a late fee incase those fuckers fuck you about. Make a spreadsheet to keep track and make the sound of a till opening every time you update the file. Kaaaaching.
21. Be honest when you've done more than what you were paid for. Most organisations won't realise until you tell them. Most are good enough to pay you extra.
22. When working for big organisations always set a high fee. For smaller ones, let them know your standard but if you want to do the work, tell them you are willing to negotiate.
23. Make sure you have a wide circle. Don't be friends with just creative people, it will make you completely out of touch.
24. Do not start relationships with people in the same lane as you, you will just fall in love, make shit art, compete and then destroy each other.
25. Books, movies, art, tv shows are research. Indulge.
26. Mark out creative time for yourself, if you don't, it won't happen. If you're not careful you'll end up exceptionally good at admin and average at your chosen creative practice.
27. Tell organisations about what you need for access, childcare, literacy support, admin support. Don't be ashamed of these things.

Organisations sometimes even have money especially for this kind of thing. Don't be embarrassed, whatever makes you unique, makes you valuable.

28. Ask for help with funding applications. They are fucking tricky. Get someone to proof read it for you. Create a team and don't do it yourself. Know that you are committing to a lot of work for money that might never happen. I wish I had something more useful to say about it but I don't.
29. Lower your expectations to avoid disappointment. You are not owed anything by anyone.
30. Really think about it before you post your successes on social media. It is a dagger to those who haven't been so lucky this week.
31. Buy your friends art, go to their gigs, share their work. It's good art karma.
32. Never judge your self-worth on how well things are going. Do not call yourself bad names when things are sticky and do not put yourself on pedestal when things are going well - you have further to fall.
33. Do not listen to the envy gremlins, they are harmful and dumb. Remember there is room for everyone.
34. Process over product. Process over product. Process over product.
35. If you have a messy house. Don't worry. It will get tidied when the next deadline comes along.
36. Do not label yourself as one thing. You are a creative. You can apply your skills to almost any job. Maybe not a mechanic or lawyer or farmer. But there are plenty of places that your mind can be of use. Do not stick to a lane. Follow the money or the idea or your heart.
37. In a bar, when people ask you what you do just say 'My best'.
38. Move your body.
39. Tea not coffee.
40. Look out of the window.
41. Reflect.
42. Write thank you cards.
43. Answer your phone with your name, even if you know who it is - people respect the shit out of it for some reason.
44. Set an intention before you enter a room.

45. Take up space, make space for others.
46. Listen to criticism, but be your own judge.
47. Take risks.
48. Be like madonna, reinvent yourself every few years.
49. Pressure can be useful but stress is detrimental - it can make you sick. Stress is settled by kindness. So do something radically kind for yourself in those moments.
50. Sometimes it feels like you will never work again, that you have been forgotten, that maybe you'll have to do that teaching conversion degree after all. Never fill the silence with noise for the sake of it. Hold hands with the quiet. It is here to teach you something. Do not fill your silence with noise you do not want, don't be frightened of it. Take it as a signal to rest, prepare, think. Listen to the quiet, it is talking to you, see what it has to say.
51. Fall in love with working. Put yourself in situations that mean you have to problem solve, that challenge your brain, that force you to learn. Put yourself in situations that make you feel like you're on the edge of something dangerous, something amazing.
52. Be okay with failing, it's going to happen a lot.