

Start freelancing in **30 days**

A step-by-step guide for Aussies who are ready to set up their business and start earning money (the right way)

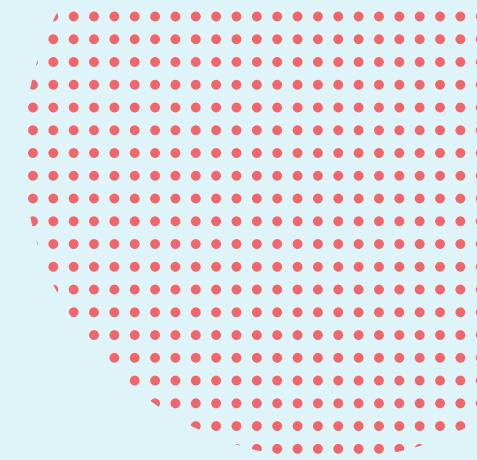
Part 3 » Finding your first clients

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Introduction

How to use this guide



“ My business is ready to go.
Now how do I find my first clients? ”

If you've finished the first two guides in this series, then your business is all set up and you're prepared to maximise your freelancer finances. That only leaves one question:

How do you find your first clients?

And once you find those clients, how do you go about charging them and earning some income?

In this guide, we'll show you some of the most common and effective ways freelancers find their first clients. Then we'll walk you through the best practices for invoicing them and getting paid.

This guide series is all about helping you get your freelance business off the ground. We recommend reading all three of the guides in order to get the most out of the series:

Part 1 » [Setting up your freelance business](#)

Part 2 » [Preparing your finances for freelance success](#)

Part 3 » [Finding your first clients](#)



This guide will show you how to:

- ✓ Design a digital home for your business
- ✓ Use word-of-mouth marketing to find clients
- ✓ Develop your initial marketing strategy
- ✓ Identify your first customers
- ✓ Build an effective pitch for your first clients
- ✓ Send invoices and get paid

Ready to get started?

Let's start finding your very first clients.

– *The Rounded team*



Hey! Before you get started...

We recommend all freelancers begin this process with a tax accountant in their corner. These professionals can make sure you are ticking all the right boxes as you make your way through this guide.

[How to find the right tax accountant](#) →

Create a digital home for your business

Build a public-facing home for your business



Chapter Checklist

Est. time to complete: 1 week–6 months

- Learn about best practices for setting up a marketing home base
- Decide where you will drive leads for your business
- Start building your unique home base

When you start getting your first leads (people who say they're interested in your products or services), they will expect more information about you and your business. That's why it's important to set up somewhere you can refer people to show them you are trustworthy and know your stuff.

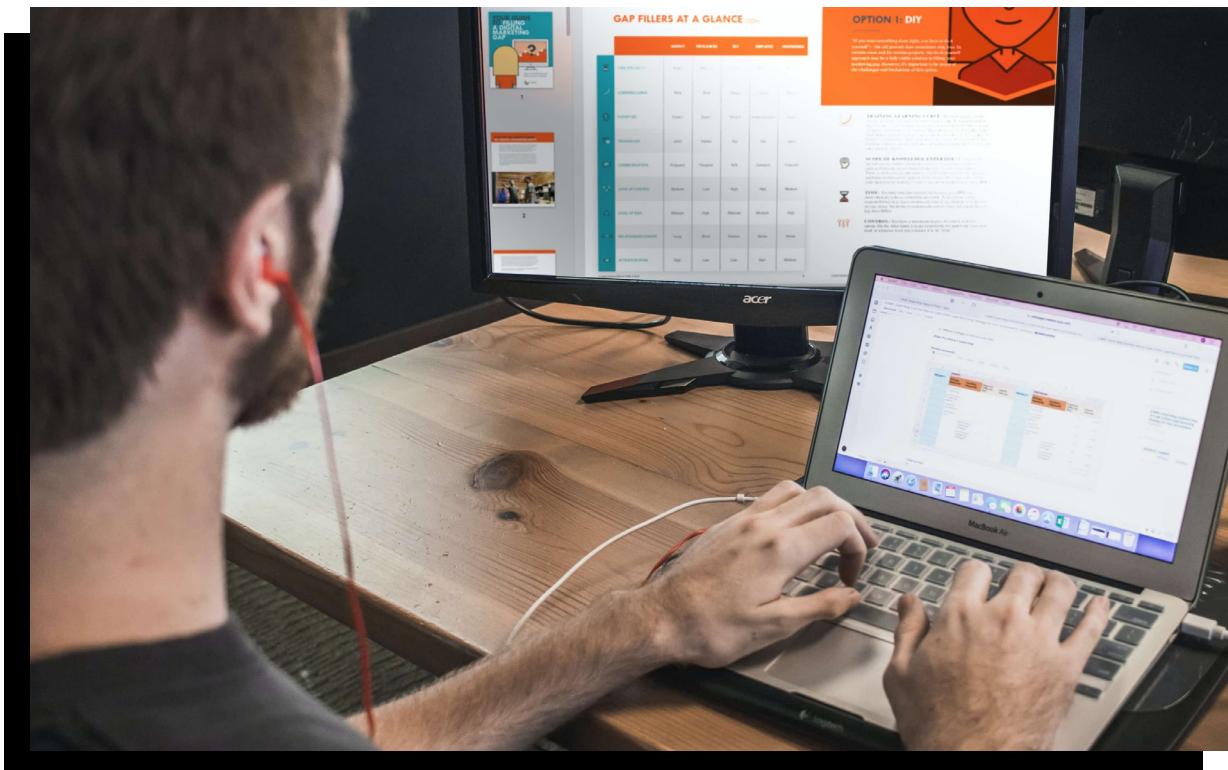
You can think of this as your "marketing home base" — the core of your marketing strategy, where you'll drive leads and convert them into paying customers.

There are three basic choices you have when building a digital home for your business. You don't need all three of them right away, but you'll need at least one of them to start.



Option 1

Building a freelancer website



The most obvious choice is to build a website for your business. This might seem like a lot of work, especially if you've never built a website before.

Fortunately, it's gotten a lot easier (and more affordable) to build a simple website for yourself. You can check out some of these sites to get started:

- [Wix.com](#)
- [Wordpress.com](#)
- [Weebly.com](#)
- [Webnode.com](#)
- [Squarespace.com](#)
- [Simplesite.com](#)

We have a full blog that walks you through exactly what should be included, with lots of examples from successful freelancers to support you.

How to build a freelancer website

[Read the full article →](#)



Option 2

Creating a digital portfolio

If a website seems like too much work right now, you can still make an impact on potential leads by creating a digital portfolio showcasing your work.

Where you host this portfolio depends largely on what services you offer. A digital photographer, for example, might be best hosting their portfolio on Instagram, while a copywriter might use LinkedIn or Medium. (More on that below.)

But if you would prefer to just create a simple, single-page digital portfolio, you can try using some of these tools:

- [Adobe Portfolio](#)
- [Krop](#)
- [Fabrik](#)
- [Cargo](#)

How to make a freelancer portfolio (with examples!)

Read the full article →



The Freelancer's Portfolio Checklist

Does your portfolio...

- Showcase work with **your** name attached to it
- Make it easy for the user to click through your work
- Give context for your work (when it was completed, results, etc.)
- Stay up to date with your most recent work
- Display contact details prominently

Option 3

Use social media as your home base

If social media is going to be a core part of your marketing strategy, then setting up a home base on one or two platforms, at least for now, makes sense. If you choose this option, make sure you optimise your profile so it clearly describes what you do and how to contact you.

Not sure which platform to choose?

Here are some recommendations:



- Visual artists
- Photographers
- Videographers
- Book authors
- Graphic designers
- Product sellers



- Writers
- Marketing specialists
- Coaches/consultants
- B2B businesses
- Web developers



- Online sellers
- Caterers
- Event planners
- Photographers



- Videographers/filmmakers
- Musicians
- Sound engineers and DJs
- Actors and performers
- Coaches and counsellors

Remember that right now, your home base doesn't need to be perfect! You will continue to improve and expand the digital home for your business.

For now, focus on getting something live that you are happy with, so you can start building a more robust marketing strategy.

Mastering word-of-mouth marketing

- Learn why word-of-mouth marketing is so popular among freelancers
- Use the word-of-mouth marketing template
- Find out how to follow up for greater impact

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Mastering word-of-mouth marketing

Use this method to find your first clients

Chapter Checklist

- Learn about the most popular methods of finding clients
- Make a list of contacts to reach out to
- Use the template to spread the word about your business

Word-of-mouth marketing, also known as referral marketing, is by far the most popular method for finding leads among Australian freelancers.

In fact, in a 2019 Freelance Jungle survey, the top 4 sources freelancers used to source work all had to do with some form of referral:

How do you currently source work? Choose all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Client referral	75.80%	429
Peer referral	60.95%	345
Old boss, old colleagues or previous industry network	46.64%	264
Friend/family referral	41.17%	233
Participating in Facebook groups &/or online forums	39.75%	225
Organic social media (such as your pages & channels etc)	26.86%	152
Face to face networking events	24.38%	138
Organic SEO on my website &/or blog	22.97%	130
Through digital/marketing/advertising agencies	14.13%	80
Cold calling & cold emailing	12.19%	69
Other social media advertising forms (LinkedIn, Twitter etc)	12.19%	69
Facebook advertising	11.66%	66
Searching standard job websites (Seek, CareerOne etc)	11.13%	63
Pro-bono work/volunteering	10.42%	59
Via paid professional memberships with job boards attached	10.07%	57

Answer Choices	Responses	Count
By presenting at events	9.01%	51
Bidding for jobs online (e.g.: eLance, Freelancer, Upwork, Fivrr etc)	8.30%	47
Working at co-working joints & similar	7.60%	43
Other (please specify)	5.83%	33
Instagram advertising	5.65%	32
Posting or answering Gumtree or similar free ads	4.59%	26
Checking out specialised sites in my field (e.g.: Clearview, JobsinHR, Jobzilla etc)	4.24%	24
Via employment agencies	3.53%	20
Paying for my own advertising online (e.g.: AdWords, banner ads etc)	2.65%	15
Public relations (paid or unpaid)	2.12%	12
Leaflet drops, postcards at cafes & similar print materials	1.94%	11
Entering competitions	1.41%	8
Pay for space in print magazines, newspapers	0.71%	4
BNI or similar	0.71%	4
Answered		566
Skipped		0

Source: Australian Freelance Market Survey 2019, Freelance Jungle





First-year freelancers can easily take advantage of this marketing tactic, simply by **telling lots of people** about your business.

Old work colleagues, friends, and family — it's worth reaching out to anyone you think might be interested to learn about your career move. Especially if those people might have connections to your target customers.

Some of these folks may become your first clients, but the real goal here is to spread the word as far and wide about your business as you can; you want your contacts to tell *their* contacts about you.

Once you have a list of people you want to reach out to, you can use the template on the following page to send them emails or messages on social media. Feel free to edit it so it matches your own voice.

Some people might get back to you right away, but don't get discouraged if some people don't respond. You'll have a much better response rate if you develop a healthy habit of following up with people.

After two or three days, send a follow-up email to anyone who hasn't responded yet—something as simple as, "Hey! Just wanted to make sure you got my last email. I hope you'll keep my business in mind if you find anyone who needs..."

There's a good chance that this strategy alone will start bringing in clients. But eventually, you'll want to have more ways to market your business, to keep the income flowing in between referrals.



Word-of-Mouth Marketing: Outreach Template

Hello _____,

I hope you are well.

I'm reaching out to let you know that I've made an exciting move in my professional life. I recently started my own freelance business, **[business name here]!**

I'm going to be offering **[overview of your services]** to **[description of your ideal client]**. My goal is to help my clients **[how you bring value]**.

I really enjoyed the time we spent **[working/volunteering together]**. I'd love the chance to work with you again, if you ever need my help.

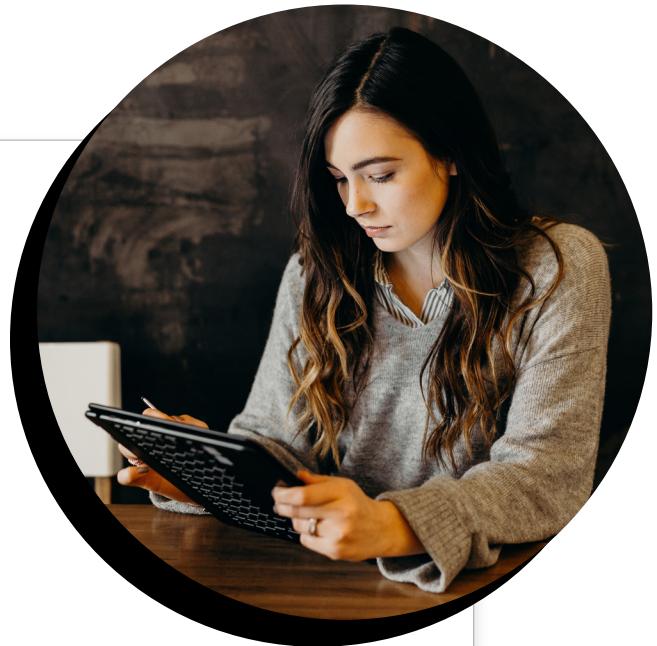
Or perhaps there is someone in your network who might need these kinds of services?

If so, I'd love to meet them, or you can pass on my contact details to them:

[Insert contact details and link to your website/portfolio/social pages]

Thanks!

- **[Your name]**



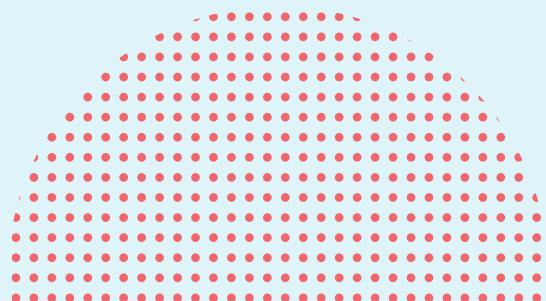
Building your first marketing strategy

- Learn about the different marketing channels
- Weigh the pros and cons of each option
- Design a marketing plan for your business

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Building your marketing first strategy

Choose the right channels for success



Chapter Checklist

Est. time to complete: 1 day–1 week

- Read through the tips for building a marketing strategy
- Review and select the channels you want to use
- Use the template to make a one-year plan

Word-of-mouth marketing will help bring in your first clients, and as your network grows, referrals will come through more and more often.

But relying on only one method of marketing your business is a risky game. A good marketing strategy will make use of several different methods for finding and enticing new leads.

On the next page, we run through some of the most popular marketing methods for freelancers, but before you start planning, here are a few things to consider.





5 tips for building your freelancer marketing strategy

**Tip
1**

Choose one or two channels to start

It's best to have several different methods for finding new leads, but you still need time to run your business! It's better to do one or two marketing channels well, rather than spread yourself thin across too many.

**Tip
2**

Go where your customers are

Your marketing efforts will be most successful if you use the same channels that your customers are already using. Think about which social media platforms, digital publications, and content formats are likely to resonate most with your target audience, and build your strategy around those.

**Tip
3**

Focus on the channels you enjoy most

It's easy to put your marketing on the back burner, especially if you find it boring or difficult. In addition to going where your customers are, stick to the marketing methods you find most enjoyable, and keeping your pipeline full will be a lot easier.

**Tip
4**

Don't be afraid to experiment & change tactics

Marketing your business is all about trying different methods to see what works. If one method of marketing isn't working after a few months, or you find yourself dreading it, switch things up and try something new.

**Tip
5**

Make time to do marketing every week

Your first year as a freelancer will require a lot of marketing if you want to hit your financial goals. It's wise to block off time in your calendar to focus on your marketing efforts — try dedicating one day a week just for marketing, or an hour a day for starters.



Top marketing channels for freelancers

Social Media Marketing



How does it work?

Use social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or Instagram to showcase your knowledge and skills, attract new customers, and build out your referral network.

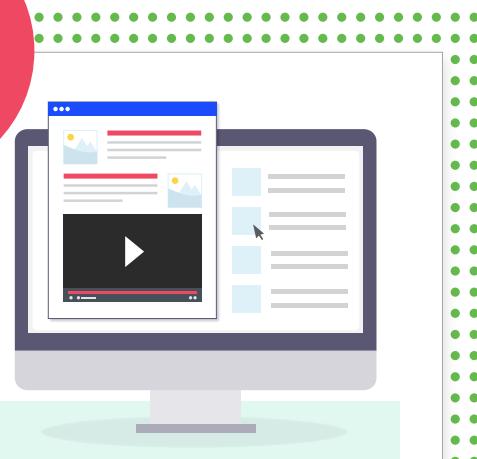
How to get started?

- Research which platforms are most popular among your audience
- Optimise your profiles on the platforms you choose
- Follow and engage with people in your industry/niche
- Frequently post useful, educational information to demonstrate your skills

Further reading:

- Mastering LinkedIn as a freelancer (Part 1, Part 2, Part 3)
- 8 Instagram marketing strategies for freelancers

Content Marketing



How does it work?

Content marketing involves creating online content (like blogs, infographics, videos, etc.) to promote your skills and bring on new customers. The content you create can be hosted on your marketing home base, and repurposed across social media channels, in your email marketing, or anywhere else your audience might be looking.

How to get started?

- Think about what kind of content your target audience would find most useful
- Look at other freelancer websites to see how they are using content
- Start writing, creating, and publishing content of your own, adjusting your topics as you get feedback

Further reading:

- SEO and content marketing strategies for freelancers
- How to use case studies to market your business



Partnership & Affiliate Marketing



How does it work?

You can find clients by partnering with other businesses and individuals who have the same or a similar audience to yours. This might mean offering discounts or referral codes to people in your network, teaming up with agencies, or partnering with influencers on social media.

How to get started?

- Use social media and Google to find individuals you may want to start partnering with
- Attend networking events that attract individuals who you can collaborate with
- Start reaching out and building relationships with people who match your style and audience

Further reading:

- Upcoming article

Email Marketing



How does it work?

Build a loyal group of followers and promote your skills, knowledge, and services through regular email mailouts. This works particularly well for people who offer courses or educational services.

How to get started?

- Choose an email marketing platform (like ConvertKit, MailChimp, or ActiveCampaign)
- Subscribe to other freelancers or business owners who are targeting a similar audience for inspiration
- Begin crafting email content and using assets/giveaways to grow your audience

Once you get into the groove of marketing your business, your network will expand and you'll have more leads coming your way. But the battle isn't over yet — you still need to convert those leads into paying customers.

Turning leads into clients

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- Learn how to write pitches that convert customers
- Discover how to set prices that match your value
- See how to create and send high-conversion quotes

Turning leads into clients

Crafting pitches and converting your first customers

Chapter Checklist

Est. time to complete: 1 day–1 week

- Learn how to qualify leads before pitching to them
- Follow the guide to creating a compelling pitch
- Send your first proposals and quotes

Thanks to your marketing efforts, you will soon have leads coming to you inquiring about your services, pricing, and availability.

Or perhaps you've identified some people or businesses that you want to work with, and you're wondering how to approach them.

Remember that the people you're targeting may already be receiving lots of pitches every week. Or if they've approached you first, they might be shopping around and comparing you to other freelancers.



So how do you demonstrate to your leads that you are the best option for their financial investment? Follow these steps, and you'll be far more likely to convert leads into customers and start seeing your revenue grow.

How to improve your pitch strike rate and bring in more clients

Read the full article →

Step 1

Qualify the leads

Not every new lead will be a good fit for your services. Before you put in too much time or effort, you'll need to get the answers to these questions:

- Is this lead looking for the specific services I offer?
- Is this lead serious about hiring more, or are they just "tire kickers"?
- Does this lead have enough budget to make it worth my time?
- Does this client seem like they'd be pleasant to work with?

To get this information, try one of these two qualifying strategies:



Introductory calls

Offer your leads a free 20–30 minute consultation call to start. You can use this time to assess whether they are a good fit, tell them more about your services, and show them your personality.



Forms for leads

Sending your leads a form with some of these questions will help you separate out the real potential. In addition to gathering basic information like their name and contact info, you can ask them which services they are interested in and even a rough estimate of how much budget they are looking to spend.



Step 2

Do your research and offer value

Once you've determined that the lead is a good fit for your business, the next step is to show them that you're not only interested, but that you're ready to bring value to the table.

First, spend time reviewing the lead's website and social media profiles, so you have a deep understanding of who they are and what they need. Spend time reviewing the information you've gathered from your initial call or the form they filled out.

Go over the information you gathered to craft a pitch and quote that cuts through the noise and gives them a taste of the value you offer.

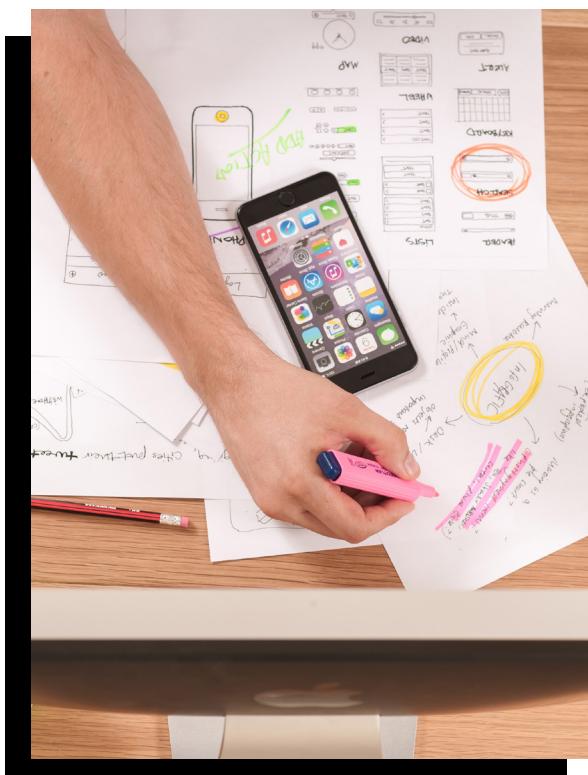
Step 3

Put together a **value-centric proposal**

When you're ready to send over a proposal, don't just submit a list of your services with the price tags attached. Instead, show the client that you've done your homework and are ready to bring them the value they desire.

Case studies and examples from your portfolio are a good start, but you'll have a much higher chance of converting customers if you offer something more specific and enticing.

There are many ways to do this, and a lot of it will depend on your business and what the lead is after. But here are a few examples to help steer you in the right direction.



Example 1 | Copywriter

Review the client's website and find a few areas where you think copy can be improved. Politely point these out, and explain the types of changes you would make and why.



Example 2 | Business Coach

Follow up from your initial consultation with a review of your notes, and three top-level pieces of advice you'd give to help your target grow their business.



Example 3 | Web designer

Send examples of three or four websites that have similar styles and features, giving your client an idea of the direction you'd want to take with their website.



Step 4

Sending over a clear quote



PixPix Design and Photography

Sarah Johnson
854 Baker St Wellington, NZ
NZBN 1579641357982

Tax Invoice

To Don Taco Taqueria

Number	54033
Issued	29 Mar, 2019
Due	5 Apr, 2019

Complete company starter package including branding, stationery website development and photography

Description	Quantity	Rate	Total
Branding and stationery design	1	\$2,300.00	\$800.00
Website design and development	67 hours	\$75.00/h	\$5,025.00
Email templates	17 hours	\$75.00/h	\$1,275.00
Team photo shoot and editing	3 days	\$700.00/d	\$2,100.00
		Total	\$9,200.00

Payment details

Please make payments to:
Bank no: 93732823
Acc: 39230294

Thanks for your business I look forward to working with you in the future.

Pay online by credit card



After you've drafted up the proposal, you can put together a quote that clearly shows the prices for each service you want to provide.

If you're a Rounded user, sending clear, customized quotes is simple. You can create a template featuring your own branding, and even convert the quote into an invoice after a client agrees.

How to set the right prices for your freelance business

[Read the full article →](#)



Step 5

Following up and negotiating

In some cases, your leads will love your proposal and quote so much that they'll hire you right away. But not every case will be so easy. If your client doesn't respond within two or three business days, send them a polite email asking if they have any questions or want to hop on a call to discuss the quote.

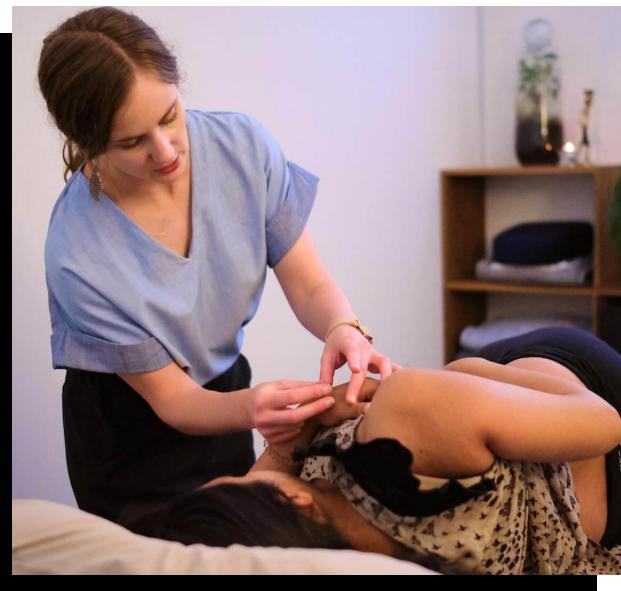
It's not uncommon for clients to want to negotiate pricing. While it's important to stand your ground on your fair pricing, there are some ways you can still convert clients who want to negotiate.

Building in wiggle room

When sending over a quote, consider adding a bit of cushion to the pricing to help ease negotiations. For example, perhaps you may include a \$500 initial consulting fee in your first quote, but you're prepared to waive it if the client pushes back.

One price or many?

Experiment with offering your clients one single price, or a range of price options (like Gold/Silver/Bronze options). You may have more success offering a single price that shows you are confident in your services, or your customers may feel less like negotiating if they have a range to choose from.



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Sending your first invoices

- Learn what needs to be required on your first invoice
- See how Rounded makes invoicing easy
- Send your first invoice and get paid!

Sending your first invoices

Get ready to start getting paid



Chapter Checklist

Est. time to complete: 1–2 hours

- Review the checklist for what to include on your invoices
- Learn about Rounded automated invoicing for freelancers
- Send out your first invoice and get paid!

Congratulations! All of that hard work marketing and pitching has paid off, and you have someone who is ready to hire you.

Now it's time to think about the best part of being a freelancer — getting paid!

Invoicing your clients can be a little tricky at first, because there are certain elements that must be included. If you're a Rounded user, all of this information will automatically be included on your invoice. If not, here's a checklist you can use when sending your first invoice.

Checklist: What to put on your invoices

- Your name and/or business name
- The words "Tax Invoice" if you are charging GST
- Business address
- Australian Business Number
- Email address for contact purposes
- Invoice number and date
- Due date for client payment
- Brief description of work completed
- Your prices (flat rate/per item/hourly)
- Payment methods for the client
- Personal notes (to explain your terms or just say thanks!)



Rounded makes it easy to get paid



Pixel Furnace

Sarah Johansson
Pixel Furnace
7 Smith St, Sydney, 2000
0447 294 383
sarah@pixelfurnace.com.au
598 393 202 135

DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
Initial concept research and planning	3.7 Hours ▾
First draft sketches	6.5 Hours ▾

Customisable to match your branding



Overdue invoice reminder emails

- Turn off reminders for this invoice
- Send reminders to all invoice email recipients ⓘ
- Select client contacts to receive a reminder

Save

Cancel

Send auto-reminders to get paid on time

Recurring invoice for Burning Pixels

[Schedule settings](#)

[Email template](#)

Recurring Invoice type

Create and send invoice automatically

Invoice payment terms

14 days

Start sending from

1 Nov, 21

Send invoice

Monthly

Send until

Until stopped

Automatically send recurring invoices



Online invoice payments

Accept credit card payments via Stripe

Accept payments via PayPal

Done

Cancel

Multiple options make it easy for clients to pay. Funds are deposited directly to your connected account

Start sending invoices now



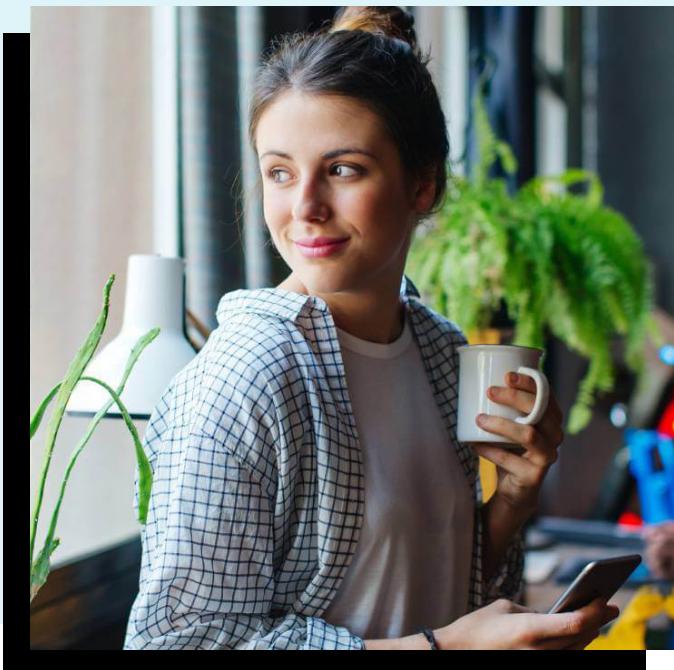
For more guidance

The ATO has the most up-to-date information about what to include on your invoices. Check out these links for more info:

ATO advice on business invoices

ATO advice on tax invoices

On the road to freelance success



Congratulations! If you've followed our guidance in this guide, you've got a reason to celebrate. The steps you've taken in these early stages will be paying off for years to come.

While it's impossible to predict what will become of the business you've started, one thing is for sure — you are already laying the groundwork for what will be a very successful career as a freelancer.

Over the coming months and years, you'll be growing your business. You'll bring on new and exciting clients, discover processes and ways of working that make your job easier, and make new connections with others who have followed the same path as you.

The team at Rounded will be here as you grow your business as well. If you haven't yet, come sign up for a free 14-day trial and see why so many Australian freelancers use Rounded to manage their finances.

[Start your free trial](#)



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