FREELANCING TIPS & TRICKS

This guide is for students that have been offered freelancing jobs, whether a mural for a local school or redesigning a company's website. If you are currently still considering whether to take on a job (especially as a student), you should consider:

How well you think you can balance jobs and schoolwork

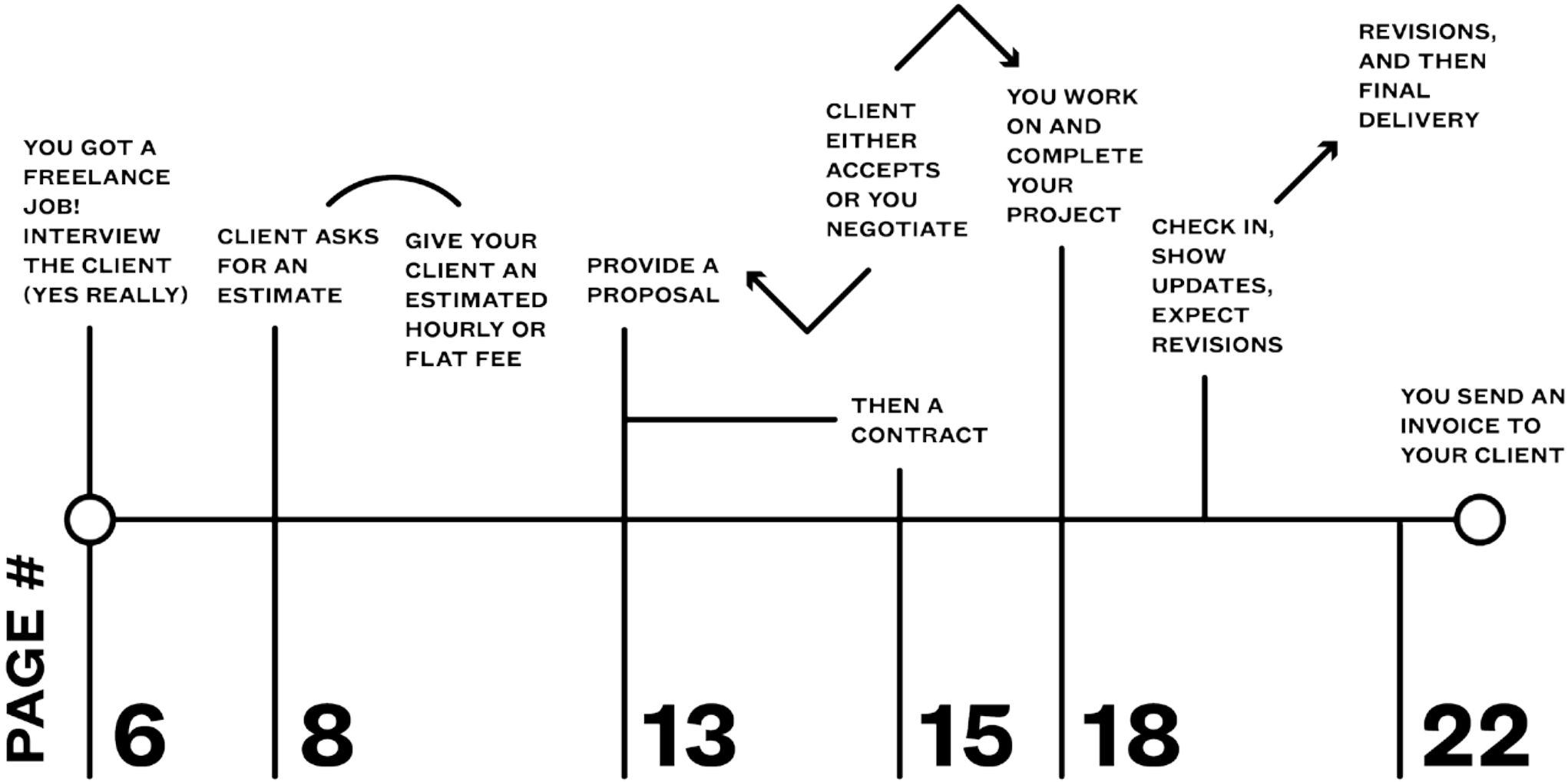
Your schedule

Estimating the expectations and length of the project

Refer to the ever helpful decision matrix provided by the Career Development Center if you're still torn

Also, remember to love yourself!

TIMELINE


YOU GOT A FREELANCE JOB! INTERVIEW THE CLIENT (YES REALLY)
CLIENT ASKS FOR AN ESTIMATE
GIVE YOUR CLIENT AN ESTIMATED HOURLY OR FLAT FEE
PROVIDE A PROPOSAL
CLIENT EITHER ACCEPTS OR YOU NEGOTIATE
THEN A CONTRACT
YOU WORK ON AND COMPLETE YOUR PROJECT
CHECK IN, SHOW UPDATES, EXPECT REVISIONS
REVISIONS, AND THEN FINAL DELIVERY
YOU SEND AN INVOICE TO YOUR CLIENT
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INTERVIEW

It's always good to interview the client before you start on a project. This insures that you two will be on the same page, and that you will have the scope of the project and the direction in which the client wishes to take it in.

GOOD QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What is the scope & scale of the project?
- What is the purpose & who is the audience?
- What is their timeline?
- What is the client's budget?
- Do they have existing content (logos, photos, narrative) or materials you can work with? Have they done research with examples of what they want? If not, suggest they do this (this saves you time, them money).
- Do they plan to re-use your work, publish it, license it?
- Ask them to describe what they want from the project in three adjectives (bold, fun, community, etc.)
- Ask if they would like to have meetings as you work and which method works best: in person, email, etc.

ESTIMATE

Your client will most definitely be asking for an estimate of your pricing. There are a ton of resources for artists that will tackle this problem, but ultimately you must take into account how valuable you believe your time is and when in doubt, try to price on the higher side. Eventually you will be including this information in your proposal, on PAGE 13.

TAKE INTO ACCOUNT:

TIME

- Research
- Ideation
- Meetings
- Refinement
- Organization and archiving after production
- Printing / coding, etc.

SUPPLIES

- Fonts
- All materials used during production (including installation!)
- Scans
- Paper samples
- Flash drives
- Prints
- Research
- Travel / Transportation

THEIR BUDGET

If they have a firm budget you may negotiate how you might scale back the project to fit within these parameters. For example: 2D instead of 3D animation, a smaller mural, or a 2 color print piece instead of full color.

Consider the time limit that the client has as well. If they don't have a lot of time, you can charge more, or add a rush fee.

A BASIC TEMPLATE

FOR CALCULATING AN HOURLY RATE

(Especially after graduation!)

+ add up all your living expenses for a typical month

x multiply that by 12 to get the total for a year

÷ divide your yearly expenses by 750 (freelancers typically have 750 “billable” hours/year)

+ add 25% of that to cover taxes and work expenses ($12k of yearly living expenses requires about $20 an hour)

RESOURCES:

http://www.aiga.org/calculating-a-freelance-rate

Glassdoor.com

Payscale.com

SHOULD YOU CHOOSE HOURLY OR FLAT RATE FEES?

Flat rate challenge: you go over budget and waste time and money

TIP: Build into your contract a certain number of revisions. Have a fee for additional revisions.

Hourly rate challenge: your client anticipates less time than you do

TIP: Check in often with time and progress. Let your client know if you are on schedule or not.

TIME:

Estimate how long the project will take you (consider: research, ideation, meetings, refinement/edits, production)

MONEY:

Estimate how much the project will cost (consider: time, supplies–do you need fonts, prints, research, travel, software, tech, etc.?)

RESOURCES:

freelancersunion.org

http://blog.careerfoundry.com/career-change/pricing-freelancer/

YOUR CLIENT CAN ONLY CHOOSE TWO!

FAST + CHEAP =
Doesn't have to be your best work

GOOD + FAST =
Charge more

GOOD + CHEAP =
Take your time and do this project in between revenue generating projects or homework

PROPOSALS

The goal of a good proposal is to clearly articulate the project to your client and the steps that need to be taken to accomplish the project.

If your client has specifically commissioned you to create work, you can relax a bit! Sometimes a sketch, a mood board and a timeline are all you need.

1. TIMELINE

For the client to get a feel of the project's schedule, you can outline major due dates. This can include when your first draft due for revisions will be sent to them, when final art files are sent, etc.

2. VISUAL AIDS

If your client doesn't already request some form of visual aid (sketch, mood board, examples), ask them what would be most helpful for them to visualize the project. Make sure aids are well documented, clear, and labeled, if needed.

3. PAYMENT

Now that you have a better idea of the project, you can also include a more specific layout of pricing in your proposal. Don't forget to reiterate cancellation or rush fees.

RESOURCES:

https://blog.freelancersunion.org/2014/05/14/guide-freelance-project-proposals/

http://www.aiga.org/proposals/

CONTRACTS

Touch base with your client to discuss all of these matters before sending them a contract. There should be no surprises.

Contracts include project details, your quote, proposed schedule, what-ifs (including a kill fee and late fees), signature and date, and contact info for both sides.

WHAT TYPES OF JOBS REQUIRE A CONTRACT?

Websites

Logos / Brands

Books

Campaigns

Fonts Licenses

Illustrations

Murals

Photographs

Writings

Portraits

ETC!

When in doubt, always get a SIGNED contract.

RESOURCES:

shakelaw.com
(builds contracts for you)

contractmint.com
(contract templates)

Graphic Artists Guild Handbook: Pricing and Ethical Guidelines
(this book can be found at at the Career Development Office)

CONTRACTS INCLUDE:

+ DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES / PROJECT

+ YOUR QUOTE (HOURLY OR FLAT RATE)

+ A PROPOSED SCHEDULE

+ PAYMENT OR FEE SCHEDULE

Would you like the full payment upon delivery?

Or in half deposits?

+ ALL THE "WHAT-IFS" YOU CAN THINK OF

What if they ask for a lot of revisions?

What if they want you to work during holidays?

What if they add more work to the project?

What if you have to cancel the project?

What if they need it finished earlier than expected?

+ INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

+ YOUR SIGNATURE AND DATE

+ CLIENT'S SIGNATURE AND DATE

+ CONTACT INFO FOR YOU & THE CLIENT

+ CHECKS PAYABLE TO WHOM

What if they pay you late?

+ LATE FEE

+ KILL FEE

When the client backs out :-(

+ RUSH FEE

THE PROJECT

Now that you and your client are on the same page, you can start working on your project! It is extremely important to keep a record of the hours you have worked on your project and for what reason, as well as any expenses accrued.

This is to make sure your client knows why they are paying you for a certain amount of hours.

KEEPING TIME

OLD SCHOOL:

Use a stopwatch app. Start when you begin a project, pause for breaks. And finally record on a spreadsheet.

Try: timer-tab.com, Chrome Alarm (chrome extension)

NEW SCHOOL:

Use an app to record your hours, which may also have options for labeling your timestamps or feeding directly to a spreadsheet.

Try: Toggl, RescueTime, or Eternity App

DELIVERY

CONCEPTS / SKETCHES

In the beginning, give a couple of different concepts (~3) so that the client can choose the direction the project goes in.

POLISH IT UP

Once a concept is chosen, polish it up, but don't completely finish it. The client still needs room to make revisions.

REVISIONS

Accept feedback from your client and negotiate revisions. Don't forget to revisit the contract! Depending on what was agreed upon, this may happen multiple times. Charge more if need be.

FINAL DELIVERY

Don't forget to always be on time or early. Remember to close up all lose ends, such as buying licenses for fonts.

GOOD PRACTICE

GOOD TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN YOU SHARE YOUR DOCUMENTS WITH YOUR CLIENT:

Depending on the project, clients will ask to annotate or edit projects (such as publications). A good website to share documents and edits amongst a team is annotatepdf.appspot.com.

Don't forget to package digital files properly as well! Include all fonts and images used in the project. If the project will be printed, include cropmarks and bleed as good practice.

Finally, document! Take the time to take images of the project before you send it off.

INVOICE

You're finally at the invoice! If you've been keeping track of your hours and expenses, this shouldn't be too hard. Thankfully there are a slew of apps, websites, and resources out there that provide free templates.

INVOICES INCLUDE:

+ YOUR AND THE CLIENT'S CONTACT INFO

+ THE TIME YOU SPENT ON EACH ASPECT OF THE PROJECT

+ THE TOTAL AMOUNT (INCLUDING ANY FEES)

+ WHEN THE PAYMENT IS DUE

+ WHAT HAPPENS IF THE CLIENT DOESN'T PAY ON TIME

+ HOW THE CLIENT PAYS YOU (MAILED CHECK, PAYPAL, ETC.)

Also, a nice "thank you" or a request for referral

RESOURCES:

Wave app - connects to bank account, create invoice

Microsoft Word - most text editors will include a basic invoice template

Paypal Invoice

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

MICA

YOU DID IT!

The best clients are repeat clients– they'll refer you!