Freelancing for Beginners

Find your first online client on Upwork, Fiverr and beyond — without falling for scams.

Honest note: nobody can promise how much you will earn. Results depend on your effort, skills, time and luck. Never pay anyone who "guarantees" income.

1. Choose a skill you can deliver this month

Skill	Free way to learn
Writing / editing	Write 3 sample articles on Google Docs
Graphic design	Canva tutorials on YouTube
Data entry & Excel	Google Sheets practice files
Virtual assistance	See the Virtual Assistant guide
Social media management	Run a page for a friend's business
Transcription	Practise typing at 40+ words per minute

2. Build proof before you apply

- Make 3 portfolio samples. They can be practice work — just do not claim they were paid jobs.
- Put them in a free Google Drive folder or Canva page with a clean link.
- Ask 1 or 2 local businesses to let you do a small job; ask for a short honest review.

3. Profiles that win

- Clear, smiling photo of you (real name, real ID — platforms verify you).
- Title that says the result: "Canva designer for small business posters and social media".
- Overview: who you help, what you deliver, how fast, and one sample link.
- Start with fair prices to get your first 3 reviews, then raise them.

4. Upwork vs Fiverr

	Upwork	Fiverr
How it works	You send proposals to job posts	Buyers find your "gig" and order
Cost to you	Connects to apply + a service fee on earnings	Free to list; Fiverr keeps 20% of each order
Good for	Writing, VA, admin, design, tech	Design, writing, voice-over, small fixed tasks
Tip	Apply early to fresh jobs with a short custom proposal	Clear gig image, 3 packages, fast delivery

5. A proposal that gets replies

"Hi [name], I read your post about [their problem]. I can [result] by [how]. Here is a similar sample: [link]. I can deliver by [day]. Quick question: [one smart question about the job]."

6. Getting paid

Upwork and Fiverr pay out to Payoneer, PayPal or a bank. See the "Get Paid from Abroad" guide for fees and moving money to M-Pesa.

7. Red flags — walk away

- Any "client" who asks you to pay for training, software or registration first.
- Requests to move off the platform before the first payment.
- Buying or renting someone else's account — this breaks platform rules, accounts get closed and money is lost.
- Cheques or "overpayments" where you must send money back.