

# The Wonderful World of Tech-Writing

By Emma Flowers

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## How the hell did I get here?

I've known I've wanted to write since I was a child.

Six-year-old me had a grand vision for my future filled with handwritten books and literature. I was a rarity as far as children went, maybe even among my classmates at SFASU, but as much as I can paint myself as a shining example, the daunting task of finding a career stood before me like anyone else. Reality called, and twenty-two-year-old me had to pay the bill, literally.

Guided by my childhood dream, I pursued a BFA in creative writing at SFASU and filled my electives with marketing classes. At the beginning of my college career, I didn't know what I wanted to do in terms of a job. Book writing was always my passion, but knowing it wouldn't pay the bills (at least not right away), I had to expand my horizons.

I had two major problems that kept me from the traditional workplace: my flighty tendencies and the terror of being coerced to remain somewhere I don't wish to be. I needed a career that was flexible and asynchronous, something I could do on my own time with the benefits of a normal job to keep me safe.

Sadly, I didn't think such a job existed, but one day I stumbled upon the perfect career for me: Technical Writing.

## What is Technical Writing?

Technical writing is a field that was synonymous with the advancement of the modern age, and wasn't even considered a proper career until 1965, when W.E. Britton defined it in the English Journal, coining the term Technical writing or Tech Writing, a shorthand term you'll see me use throughout. He fought for the advancement of technical writing as a whole, recognizing the shortcomings of engineers and scientists when writing for the masses, stating:

“The primary, (though certainly not the sole) characteristic of technical and scientific writing lies in the effort of the author to convey one meaning... That one meaning must be sharp, clear, precise. (the reader) must not be allowed to interpret a passage in any way but that intended”

-W. Earl Britton (1965)

In short, Technical Writing is simply the art of taking scientific or expert writing and translating it into everyday language. This can take many forms, from brochures, manuals, blogs, instructional guides, ghost writing, or anything that involves writing in a scientific, business, or medical field. It’s a wide net of jobs, but in general, if a job says UX or UI writing, or has writing somewhere in the title, that’s probably what it is.

## What makes a Technical Writer?

Now, not everyone can be a technical writer. Mary Cullen of *Instructional Solutions* states:

“Technical writers play a vital role in information-driven industries. Whether it's creating user manuals, product documentation, or complex reports, their ability to translate complex information into clear, concise content is essential.” -Mary Cullen (2025)

A Technical Writer must have a strong English background, and whilst they’re not required to have a degree (though it’s highly recommended), they must have a deep knowledge of how to write (grammar, syntax, adjectives, etc) but also how to break down complex information and influence their audiences within the angle their employer desires.

They also have to have the patience to, well, sit down and write all day, which takes a very special kind of beast, given that most find it tedious. If you like writing, great! Cullen defines and lays out the daily tasks of a tech writer, which include:

- Researching and gathering information from subject matter experts
- Writing and editing technical documents, including user manuals, training materials, and product specifications
- Ensuring documents meet compliance, style, and quality standards
- Collaborating with cross-functional teams to ensure document accuracy
- Updating existing materials to reflect changes in products or regulations

If you find you love writing, enjoy organization and pattern recognition, and making money, Technical Writing may be right for you!

# The Industry and the Job Itself

Now, I say make money, but how much money is it really? And is it everything in a bag of chips like I promised? Well, this is where we get down to the nitty-gritty of it.

Technical Writing comes in 2 pathways: Salaried and Freelance. Freelancers are largely remote, and Salaried employees can be remote as well, though they are often in the office or hybrid. Salaried positions depend on location; see the graph below:

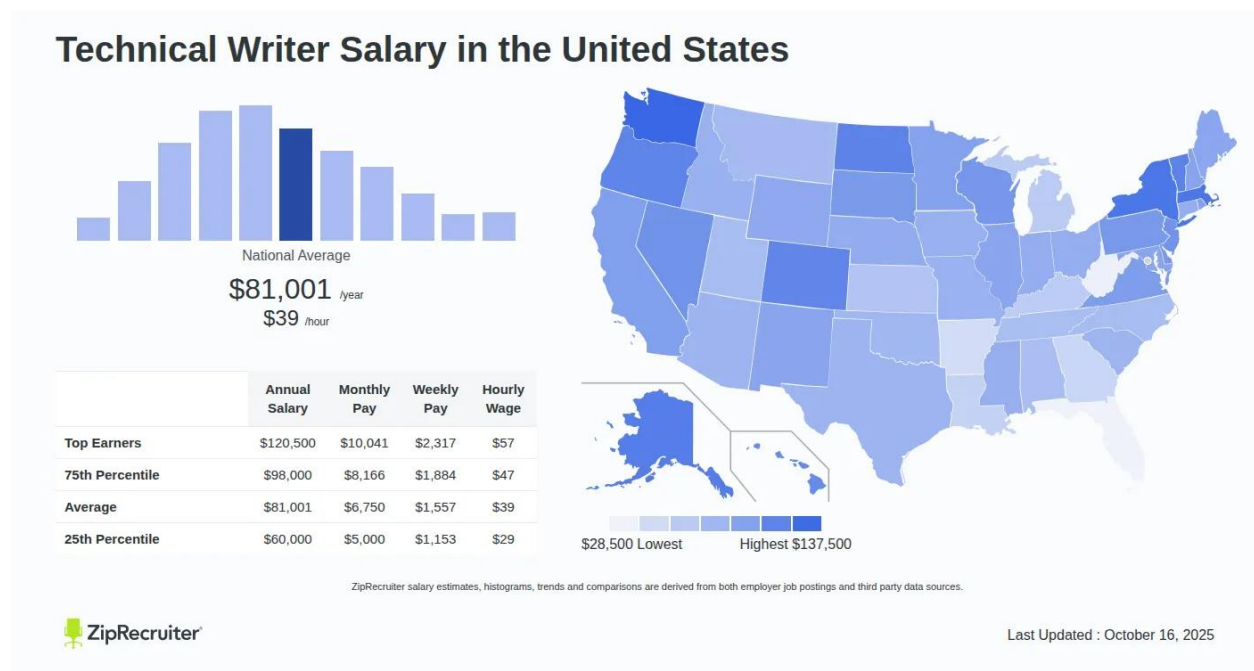


Figure 1. Average annual salary for technical writers in the U.S. (as of October 2025).  
Source: Adapted from ZipRecruiter (2025).

The table above is for salaried writing; however, as “Freelance technical writers often have more flexibility in their rates, but their income can fluctuate based on project availability. On average, a freelance technical writer's salary per hour is between \$35 and \$50, while full-time writers typically receive a stable annual salary based on a technical writer's salary by month.” (Cullen)

People who want more freedom and less oversight tend to favor freelancing, while those who want stability and benefits often choose a salaried position. Both are equally fulfilling and can pay the bills if one puts their mind and their talents forward, but we will give a glance into both, going over what they could look like and what the benefits/drawbacks of both are.

## Salaried Technical Writing

Salaried Technical Writing is very similar to office labor. Salaried writers are typically employed full-time by a company, often as part of a communications, engineering, or UX team. While freelancers juggle multiple clients, salaried writers focus on a single employer's projects, producing manuals, reports, and internal documentation on a consistent schedule and meeting deadlines. Some full-time salaried positions are remote; however, with the sweet spot being hybrid, where you only come in a few days a week.

Salaried writers enjoy predictable pay, benefits, and the chance to grow within a company. They also have access to collaboration and mentorship, which can help new writers sharpen their skills faster. The tradeoff, of course, is flexibility. You work when your employer needs you to, not when inspiration strikes. Those who work online oftentimes find flexibility in their asynchronous schedules, enjoying the benefits of salaried work whilst writing on their own time, able to leave their computers and go out into the world.

But for those who crave structure, a steady paycheck, and the security of long-term employment, salaried technical writing can be just as rewarding as freelancing.

## Freelance Technical Writing

The second and more flexible of the two is Freelance. Although many joke that freelancing is free labor, it's very much not. Josh Fletcher states: "Freelance technical writing is when a technical writer works with clients rather than working full-time at a company to convert technical concepts and information into digestible content."

Almost all freelancers work remotely, using websites like Upwork, Flexjobs, and Fiverr. You'll need a strong portfolio, academic pieces, memo samples, or other freelance work to stock it and accept clients as they come. Most are paid by the project, with many projects averaging about 400\$-2,500\$ or more, though you can choose to be paid by the hour. Most pick a rate based on their speed, able to discuss their preferred payment method with a client ahead of time. You can also choose what type of projects you want to work with, allowing you to quickly specialize your experience, another perk enjoyed by Freelancers.

Sadly, Freelancing doesn't offer health insurance, benefits, or company climbing, although many have made a name for themselves and have rotational contracts within companies they've curried favor with. So, for those who crave Freedom, choice, and money on their own time, Freelancing is right for you!

## Will AI ruin this job?

“Now this all sounds nice and dandy, but what about AI?” I hear you asking, and well, I had similar concerns.

The rise of AI has reshaped the American job landscape, but industry professionals are confident in the security of Technical Writing. Mary Cullen states: “We’ve been hearing talk about the [changing face of journalism](#), but technical writing isn’t going anywhere. Companies will always rely on the written word to communicate, teach, and sell” (Cullen).

AI can write, yes, but it’s a machine that requires a prompt. Unless you know what you’re writing and its purpose to guide the AI into writing it itself, it can not take the place of the human. Given ChatGPT’s famous “hallucinations,” many in the academic world warn against it for collecting research and data, with many college professors pointing to peer-reviewed sources and the classic means of data gathering.

Many writers have adapted to use the newest tool, integrating applications like ChatGPT or Grammarly to edit, proofread read or beta-read quickly. Through my experiments, I find that it can gather cursory information, but crafting new articles is best left to the writer.

## What will you choose?

In the end... It’s a personal choice. Technical writing is a wonderful field, and given the two paths, many find it adaptable and fulfilling, able to push their brains to the max, yet still find the peace to pursue alternative lifestyles.

Personally, I am choosing to freelance until I can secure a salaried position, with the ultimate goal of working in a hybrid/remote setting and freelancing on the side. It’s a simple system, but one that I feel brings me a sense of completion and the freedom to enjoy my time on this beautiful planet. If this article makes you feel as passionate about Technical writing as I am, or simply awakens curiosity, great! I’m glad I could illuminate your path. If not, well, I wish you luck, and I hope you find a career that is satisfactory to you.

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