Transcript: Episode 10: Freelance Blogging with Sarah Gilliland

[Introductory Music]

Dr. C: The writing at work podcast gives you a peek behind the professional writing curtain, interviewing people in a variety of fields about the writing they do at work. I'm your host, Dr. Clayson. Let's talk about writing.

[Introductory Music ends]

Today we're talking with Sarah Gilliland. Sarah is a freelance writer and online influencer. She maintains her own website, Sarah in the Suburbs, and contributes to other online publications like Traveling Mom, Birmingham Mom's Blog, TODAY Parents, and The Beach is Calling, a Gulf Shores/Orange Beach Tourism blog. Sarah graduated from Auburn University in 2008 with a BS in Apparel Merchandising, and she lives in the suburbs of Birmingham, Alabama with her husband, an IT developer, and six-year-old twin daughters. Sarah had so much to share that her interview will be in two parts! Be sure to check back next week for more insight on getting into freelance blogging. But for now, let's get to it! Let's talk about writing.

[Begin interview.]

Dr. C: Welcome to the show, Sarah!

SG: Thank you so much for having me; I'm glad to be here.

Dr. C: Great! So, let's start with, can you tell me a little bit about the work that you do.

SG: Well, my number one job right now in my life is to be at home with my kids; I'm a stay at home mom. However, in the last couple of years, I have really wanted to help contribute financially to my family as well, and I have picked up some freelance writing gigs, so I would consider myself a freelance writer as opposed to a traditional journalist. Most of my work is done in the online field, in my personal blog and a couple of other travel websites that I write for.

Dr. C: Okay, cool. Can you tell me a little bit about the different, all those different sites that you write for?

SG: Sure. Okay, so, my personal blog, obviously, is going to be mostly stories about my life, my family, things that I have learned being a mom, raising my kids. Funny stories about that. Those always seem to do really well on my site because they're relatable. But I also like to give tips. My family, we love to travel, so I will go somewhere and then I'll come back and write about it and tell other people, hey, like, if I made a mistake, I'll be like, I made this mistake; learn from me. ((laughs)) So that's, but it's real personal; it's really all about me and my family there. I write for Travelling Mom, which is a travel website, which is comprised of about seventy writers, and there are people like me who have young kids, there are people who are empty nesters, there are people who have teenagers, there are grandmothers that write for this site, and, so. My flavor on that site, or, I guess, I don't know if “flavor” is the right word, but. My personality on that
site, I focus on, I'm the “twins” traveling mom. So, I write what it's like to travel with children who are multiples, because when you travel with kids that are the same age and the same gender (I have two girls), so, you think they're going to be interested in certain things, but they're actually not interested in the exact same things. So that makes traveling with them different. When we do go to places like Disney World or Six Flags or somewhere, you kind of have to cater differently. So that writing style is a little bit different because I view it from the lens of what it's like to have two kids that are the same age, whereas a friend of mine who's got, she has got five kids, bless her heart, they're all girls, and she... I think the oldest one may be thirteen-ish, and the youngest one is five, so she's got a bunch of ages to deal with, too. So her writing style is very different from mine because she's got lots of kids. And I also freelance write for the Birmingham Moms Blog, which is a local blogging resource for moms. And that is more about local events and activities, mom parenting advice, and again, it's personal stories, but lots more people read that, I think, than my personal blog, so I don't try to get too personal on that one. You just have to kind of. You have to kind of balance how much you want to put out on the internet about yourself. (laughs)

Dr. C: (laughing) For sure, for sure.

SG: So, I think that's about it. There's a couple of things that I do every once in a while, one-offs, um. I've written a couple of articles about the beach for Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Tourism, but that's, that's not really a regular gig, so to speak. But anyway. That's why I say I'm a freelance writer because I've got my hands in all these different writing pots. (laughs)

Dr. C: Yeah, absolutely. To kind of build on that, what kinds of things do you write for these websites? And, when you're thinking about this, kind of, talk to us about how often do you write those things, and who reads the things that you write, as well.

SG: Well, I am writing just about every day. I'm very fortunate that my girls are old enough to be in school during the day from 7:45 – 2:45, so I have a great chunk of my day where I can spend writing. And I try to do, I have this weird thing, where I go in spurts, and I will sit down for four or five hours at a time and just write-write-write-write-write, um. Which is nice, because, every Friday I treat myself to like an hour or two of Netflix (laughs)—

Dr. C: Yes!

SG: --Because I'm like, I've worked all week, I need a break! (laughs)

Dr. C: Exactly.

SG: So, I, when I sit down and write, I try to think about, for my personal blog, I try to think about things that are timely. Right now, we're in the midst of fall, well, fall-ish. It's ninety degrees outside where I live, so, not really fall¹. But. (laughs)

Dr. C: (laughs)

SG: You know what I mean. People are thinking, people are pining for fall where I live, so I sit down and think about, what would be something that I would want to read right now. What am I googling on the internet right now. Well, I'm thinking about where the best pumpkin patches in my area to take my kids. I'm thinking about any sort of crafts or activities that we can do that are

¹ This episode was recorded in September 2017.
entertaining and you know, fall-ish. Also thinking about Halloween costumes at this point, so, when I sit down to write, I think about what story I would want to read. Is it going to be, do I want to read a funny story about a DIY disaster gone wrong, um. Because sometimes those are great, I mean, you know, people, when they read blogs, they think, oh, they’re just all telling me how to do stuff and how to live my life, but sometimes the funniest ones that I read are ones that are like, “I tried to do the Pinterest Mom thing, and it was a total fail. Commiserate with me in my failure.” So. (laughs) And I mean, no, that’s me, too. A lot of times I have these aspirations I get on Pinterest, and I’m like, “Let me do this project with the kids” and then it blows up in my face, and then I’m like, “Well, you know. It was fun, but—I’m not taking pictures and I’m not writing about this on the blog; I’ll just tell you guys that I failed.” Kind of story, so. So that, I think, more personally, for me, when I’m writing for my personal blog. Now, for the travel blogs, you have to, you also have to think seasonally, but you kind of also have to think ahead, so right now, for traveling mom, I’m thinking about Thanksgiving and Christmas already. Thinking about places people are going to want to travel during the winter season. So, thinking about ski resorts, thinking about... Europe is real big at Christmas time, so thinking about European vacations, dreaming about, if you had a, you know, one of my favorite things to do is to, “If you had an unlimited budget, where would you go?” kind of stories. So. Those are great fun. And for the, for the Birmingham Mom’s blog, that one is a little bit different in terms of, they don’t really. I mean, it’s mostly a parenting website with resources for local moms to find out when things are happening, and you know, how to get the best deal on your zoo membership, kind of thing, all that kind of stuff. But, um. They’re a little bit more free-flowing, which, some months, I’m really glad for, because then I can just write about whatever I want, but other months, I’m like, I wish you would just assign me a topic like a traditional editor so that I don’t have to think up something to write. (laughs)

Dr. C: Right (laughs)

SG: But, so, I would say that most of the articles that I write, no matter which site it’s for, whether it’s my personal one, or Travelling Mom, or Birmingham Moms Blog, um, it’s going to be moms, parents. I do have occasionally... I have about, I think I have ninety percent readership is female for my blog, which makes sense, because I’m a woman. Um. And then I have about ten percent male readership, which is very interesting to me. So, apparently, there are some guys out there that think I’m awesome and funny, maybe. (laughs)

Dr. C: (laughs)

SG: I don’t know, or maybe they just like my pictures. I don’t know. Whatever. Whatever it is, I’m glad that they’re reading. But it’s mostly going to be moms, especially with young children that are the same age as my girls. Because. You know, it’s fun to read about people who have teenagers, and I think, oh, that’s not me yet, and then I’m like, “Oh, wait, that’ll be me one day, maybe I need to like bookmark this and come back to it later.” But yeah, so it’s mostly moms, and moms of young kids who read my work.

Dr. C: Okay, cool. You touched on this a little bit a second ago, but can you describe a typical day at your office?

SG: Well, my office is at home, which is fantastic. As we are having this podcast interview, I am in sweatpants and a tee-shirt, so, yay.

Dr. C: Awesome. Exactly. (laughs)
SG: ((laughs)) I, you know, I know people, well, I don’t want to say “everybody,” but there’s a lot of bad press, so to speak, out there for people like me, who call themselves “bloggers” or “influencers” or whatever term you want to use. I don’t care. I’m not offended. I’m really happy and secure with my position in life, and it really does not bother me in the least if you want to call me, you know, whatever. But, there is bad press out there about like, “Oh, they’re just lazy, they don’t do anything, they, you know, they sit around at home and watch TV all day, and all this stuff,” and, I mean, yeah, I admitted to you that like on Fridays I do like to occasionally binge in some Netflix, because I try to spend most of my time working during the week. If I’m not working on my blog or on another website article, I am volunteering at my kids’ school or volunteering with my church, or you know, I’ll meet my husband for lunch occasionally, which is awesome, because, when the kids were younger, we couldn’t do that, so.

Dr. C: Right!

SG: Right, so. Yeah, you’ve got to take time for things in your life that are personal and important to you.

Dr. C: Exactly.

SG: So, if I’m in the office, I am sitting at my computer, writing, and sometimes I have music on. I have to put my phone away, and I have to make sure that I log out of Facebook ((laughs))

Dr. C: ((laughing)) Mm-hmm.

SG: Otherwise, I’ll get distracted. And I feel like that can happen in a traditional office setting, too. And, so, I do miss that sometimes about being in a traditional office, is that, I was not as easily distracted. I was able to sit at my desk and get my work done. And then at home, you know, you’re like, “Oh, I need to, oh, I forgot to put the laundry in the dryer,” or, “Oh, look, I just got a notification on Facebook, let me see what that’s about, and then, two hours later, you’re like, “Oh, shoot.”

Dr. C: ((laughs)) Right!

SG: ((laughs)) So, you have to be a little bit more disciplined when you do work from home. But I will say, being able to be in sweatpants and a tee-shirt is phenomenal. I do like not having to get dressed every day. ((laughs))

Dr. C: Uh, absolutely. Uh, I kind of, do a little bit of both; some days I’m here on campus in the office, and some days I’m working on research stuff at home, and, uh, yeah. PJ pants. That’s where it’s at. ((laughs))

SG: It really is. And you now, I feel like, for me, I’m much more productive, because if I’m in an office setting, and I, I don’t know, I don’t want to say I’m bored, but, you know, sometimes you’re really busy, and when you get there, until it’s time to leave, you don’t leave your desk, essentially. You’re busy. But then, every now and then, you’ve got stuff where you’re like, “Oh, I’m done,” and it’s eleven a.m., and I’ve got like five more, six more hours of my day, what am I going to do? At home, I can, I can find stuff to do. I’m not just going to sit around and wait for inspiration to strike. I will, you know, take a break for a minute, walk around outside, come back in. I feel like that’s the way, maybe our society is going though, because I feel like I’m more productive when I can be at home and not have to report to an office or get up really, or. I have to get up early anyway and take my kids to school, but if I was to sleep in and have like a nine to
six or a nine to seven, office hours, you know. I don’t know. I just feel like I’m more productive sometimes when I get to do that.

Dr. C: Oh, yeah, no. There are, some of my research has been in working from home versus being all together in the office; I’ve done a little bit of research into that, and it’s, it’s definitely, it has been and continues to be a really big debate about, like, well, where are people most productive. And I think the short answer is that it, you know, it depends on the person, but. It depends on the type of work you’re doing, it depends on the work atmosphere, but I know, I do also find, you know, if, that’s one reason I like to do a lot of my research writing at home, is because I feel like I can focus myself, more, yeah, I don’t know, I can focus myself better when I’m at home and, you know, there aren’t colleagues to chat with and, and—

SG: And you’re comfortable. You’re in your home, and you’re comfortable. And I think that’s the thing, is that, if I’m at a desk, I don’t know, I get, I mean, I get both sides. Like, sometimes I need to be at a desk, sitting, working. Having that structure. But then other times, it would be really nice if I could just sit on my couch, or sit outside on my porch and type on my laptop, and just enjoy the day.

Dr. C: Oh, exactly! And that’s one thing that interests me about people’s writing habits is, is, is there a pattern of when you feel like, okay, this is a project that I need to sit at the table for or I need to sit at the desk for, and have all of my, you know, stuff spread around me, or, this is a project that I can sit on the, the couch, you know, with my laptop. Do you have a good sense of what those different types of projects are? Or does it really just depend on maybe something else entirely.

SG: Hmm. That is a good question. You know, I feel like it depends on, well, for me, it depends on the, first of all, when things are due. So, the, I don’t know, what’s the word I’m looking for, the pace of the project. If I have, if I get, um, usually I get to pick topics for my articles, for the other websites. Obviously for my own blog, I can write about whatever I want to. But for the other ones, sometimes I get assigned topics, and other times, I get to choose based on seasonal or sponsorship or whatever we’ve got going on the other websites. But so, if I get assigned a topic, and I really like it, and I’m feeling really passionate about it, it doesn’t matter where I am. I can knock that bad boy out in probably an hour and a half. Because I just sit down and just start writing. And then, for me, my process is to write-write-write-write-write, and then I go back in and edit later. So it’s kind of like, I have this word vomit for two hours (laughs), whatever I think is pertinent to the topic, and then I kind of go back and format and edit and do that kind of stuff you have to do, because web writing is very different than journalistic writing that’s going to end up in print. So, we can talk about that in a minute, I don’t want to go down that rabbit hole too much, but back to the question about where to write. So, if I like what I’m writing, I can bang that out and it doesn’t matter where I am. I can be at a desk, I can be outside. I can. Sometimes I will dictate stuff on my phone. I will start just talking and letting it kind of take notes for me, and then I’ll go back and form, you know, better sentences. Because it’s, I like to, I appreciate having technology at my fingertips when inspiration strikes so I don’t forget, like, “Oh, that would be a good thing to put in that article, let me type that out real quick or voice text it or whatever.” Now
if it’s something that I’ve been assigned that I don’t really like, ((laughs)) and there’s not really a
due date, they’re just kind of like, “Oh, whenever you get it done,” like, I have to sit at a desk for
that one. Because otherwise, I will sit outside, or I’ll go to Starbucks with my laptop and get
distracted by all the people watching that can be done ((laughs)), um. Or I’ll, you know, be
sitting on my couch doing it, and then I’ll be like, “Oh, I wonder what’s on the news,” and then I’ll
be flipping channels for an hour, you know. So, I have to, if it’s a topic that’s not really
something that I’m passionate about, I will have to really sit down and sequester myself away
and get, get focused on it. I had to do that a lot in school when it was English writing paper time,
and it was, ((laughing)) I’m the worst procrastinator about final papers, and it’d be due the night,
the next day or whatever, and so the night before I’d be holed up in my parents’ office on Word,
furiously typing away.

Dr. C: ((laughing)) Uh-huh. Um. Oh yeah, okay, so cool. Um. So, let’s actually jump back to the
comment you just made about how web writing is different from journalistic writing and print
writing. Can you say more about that?

SG: Well, I’ve never been a journalist. But I do read newspapers and magazines. So, one of the
biggest thing that’s different that I can point out, or well, that any person, lay person could point
out right away that reads magazines or newspapers versus online media is, um, there aren’t
nearly as many pictures within the article itself. Now, you will have like a spread in a magazine
where the article is on one page, and then a picture of the celebrity or whatever is on the other
page. But the two don’t coincide. The person that wrote the article did not take the pictures.
Annie Leibovitz does not take pic—or, does not write articles for Vanity Fair. She takes pictures,
but she doesn’t write the articles. So that’s different. Because for my personal blog, and all the
websites that I freelance for, it is my responsibility to either, a.) take the pictures myself, or b.)
borrow them from a colleague who doesn’t mind letting me use the photos and giving them
credit within the article. Um. And then also, I have to write the article, too. And then, after I’ve
written the article, I have to format it for the web, which is very different than print. Print, it’s kind
of like a textbook or a novel, you just, you just read it. There’s not, you can put headings in
there, you can put chapters, if you’re writing that much, to divide, um, I guess, this part of the
story from that part of the story. But with the website, you have to format it for a thing called
SEO, which is “search engine optimization.” Because the goal of any website, whether it’s, you
know, NBC.com or my, my blog, sarahinthesuburbs.com, the goal is for people to find your
content and click on it. Because the way I make money, if it’s not through sponsored posts or
products that brands or other companies send to me to write about, I make money through ad
revenue. Which, I try not to, I don’t have any popup ads, I hate those things ((laughs)) on
websites. A lot of people make money from that so they do it, but I just, I personally don’t like it,
so I’m not going to do it. So, all my ads are either in my posts or on my sidebar or at the bottom
near my footer. Um. And when people come to my website, and they’re clicking around and
they’re reading the articles, and if they happen to click on an ad, that’s fantastic, but I still, I can
get ad revenue, even if you don’t click on an ad. It’s just by viewing the ad on the page that you
are reading my article on. So, when I format my writing for SEO, search engine optimization, it
helps boost my article, whatever it is, within the Google Search. So, if I, like I just recently wrote
an article yesterday about Birmingham area pumpkin patches and festivals for families to
attend. And my key word for that article was, “Birmingham area pumpkin patches and festivals.”
Because when I google that, I want my article to be one of the first ones to show up. You want
your articles to be on the first page of Google. Because it shows, or, it has shown in research
done by Google, that people will click to the second, and maybe the third page of a search,
before they just give up and search for a different topic. So, if you’re not within the first, really the first two pages is what your goal is. If you’re not within the first two pages of the Google Search, people aren’t going to find you. And it’s also good for, when you share your articles on social media, if you use those kind of key terms on Facebook, on Pinterest, on Twitter, when people are searching for that topic, they can find your writing there as well. So, um, that’s one of the biggest ways that it’s different. I don’t have to pick a keyword or optimize it in any way, shape, or form for print media, but I do have to do a little bit of extra work for web writing.

Dr. C: Yeah! And can you tell us a little bit more about how you use those keywords?

SG: Well, okay, so. ((laughs)) This is real technical, so I hope this makes sense to anybody that’s listening to it, but, um, when you are going to write an article, so we’ll just use the one I recently wrote, because that’s the one that’s fresh in my mind at the moment, Birmingham area pumpkin patches and festivals. I put that in a tool that I have on my website called Yoast, and it helps me by giving me hints like, “You haven’t used this keyword enough!” So, one of the things that’s going to help boost me up in my Google traffic is to use the keyword a few times in the post. So, within the writing itself. So, within a paragraph I need to say, “Keep on reading to find out which Birmingham area pumpkin patches and festivals are the best.” Or, “which ones I’ve been to and I like,” or something like that. At various times throughout the article, I need to say, “Birmingham area pumpkin patches and festivals.”

Dr. C: ((laughs)) Okay.

SG: ((laughs)) I don’t have to say it all together, but I need to use those words at some point so that the Yoast tool can pick up on those keywords. Also have to use it in headings because the headings are, everything’s, in 2017, and beyond, everything is optimized for mobile. More people are reading the news, they’re watching the news, they’re listening to the news, like this podcast, they’re listening, watching, and reading on their phones, or tablets. Mobile devices. It’s very, I don’t want to say rare, but it’s increasingly rare to have people read your articles on a desktop. Laptops, eh, kind of in there with tablets and mobile phones. And so, you really want to make sure that whatever you’re writing. Again, this is different from journalistic writing. There are some really great articles in, you know, the New Yorker, and Vanity Fair, and other great publications like that, that are long. That are like, two or three pages long, and the type is really little, so I’m like, those are way over, like a thousand words, those are incredible. You know, this person was really, they did a great interview, or they were really in depth with whatever they were studying to write the article that they wrote. You can’t really do that with web. At least not with my content. I know there are some websites out there that will say, “Oh, you need to write between a thousand and three thousand words because people won’t waste their time if it’s anything less. Well ((laughs)), I don’t think so, for me, and for my audience, because my audience, like I said earlier, are moms of young kids. And if they’re reading an article, they’re probably reading it in carpool line on their phone, or they’re waiting in a doctor’s office, and they’re just looking through Facebook, and so they want to, you know, pick up something real quick and read it. They, you’re, my goal is to have 800 words or less, a little, always more than three or four hundred, but between 400 and 800 is where the sweet spot is for me. And I put a lot of short sentences. A lot of simple sentences. ((laughs)) And a lot of headings in between. Because most people also, not only are they quickly reading, um, a lot of people are scanning.

Dr. C: Yeah.
SG: They want to get the gist of your article, without actually having to read every single word that you wrote. Which, it sounds discouraging, but it’s really not. Because you still want to put everything you can into the articles that you write. Because every now and then you get somebody who does read every single word, and they’ll write you back and say, “Did you know that you were grammatically incorrect here and here,” and it’s like,

Dr. C: Thanks.

SG: Well, I mean, I’m like, uuuuggggghhh, like, I’m silently making that, like, the Britney Spears eyeroll face, like, uuuuggghhh,

Dr. C: ((laughs)) Right!!

SG: But, at the same time, “Thank you for noticing,” because you at least took the time to read my article, whereas everybody else seems to be just scanning it and going past. But, you know, so. It’s not to say don’t put your time and effort into it. But also, you have to know that people are scanning. So, you really want to get to the point. You don’t want it to be too long. You want to use a lot of headings. And I’ll go ahead and tell you this since this is a writing podcast. One of the things that I’ve struggled with, that I’ve never really been good at ((laughs)) is passive voice. That’s a big no-no in online writing. They really want you to be an authority on whatever subject it is you’re writing about. And so, you’ve got to steer away from passive voice. You definitely want to share, for me, I want to share my experiences. So you want to use a lot of “I did this,” “I did that,” “You should do this and that.” You just want to say what you did and get people excited about it and maybe they’ll, like if it’s a travel article that I’ve written, maybe they’ll want to book a cruise for their family next time. But you don’t, you’ve got to stay away from the passive voice. And that’s been something that’s really been eye opening to me. I didn’t realize I did that a lot, until I started having to work on it, and fixed it.

Dr. C: ((laughs)) Right. Cool! So, you were just talking about, you’ve been telling us about how you use the tool Yoast. Which I’ve heard of but didn’t know a whole, whole lot about. So, thank you for that, that’s very cool.

G: ((laughs)) You’re welcome.

Dr. C: Can you tell us more about what kinds of tools you use to do your writing?

SG: Well, I use a website called Grammarly, because every now and then, I second guess myself. I’m a perfectionist, and I really, really, really don’t like to put content out there that has spelling or grammatical mistakes. It’s just, when people write me and they say, “Oh did you know that you said this and this, or you’re missing a period there, or you should have used a semicolon there,” I’m like “AAAUUUUUGGGAHHH!” Like, it bugs me that somebody had to point that out. I get real embarrassed. So, Grammarly is a site I found, well, I didn’t find it. A couple of years ago, I went to a blogging conference, and someone talked about a website called Grammarly, and I was like, “Oh, this is an amazingly free tool where you can put your writing into it,” paragraphs. I try to just do paragraphs at a time, so I’m not like, overwhelmed with the amount—I could put my entire 800-word article in there, but then I would have a hard time ((laughs))

Dr. C: Oh, yeah.
SG: You know, checking through it. So, I just do a paragraph at a time if I’m not sure. But it’s a great way to make sure that you’re grammatically correct, that your spelling is correct. Yeah. Just, those are the two things that really, really bug me about my writing ((laughs)), if I’m not sure about something. So, I use that. Um. I write on a Wordpress-based website. My sweet husband is an IT professional for a major bank in the Southeast. And he does code all day long. So, he created my custom site, but it’s through Wordpress. So, if that makes any sense. So, a long time ago, when blogs first got started, I’m sure you’re familiar, and maybe—I don’t know how young the people are that listen to your podcast, but, if they’re too young they probably don’t know this, but back in the day, everybody used to have a, you know, “suchandsuchblog.blogspot.com.” Well, now everybody wants to have their own site, so you have, mine is sarahinthesuburbs.com, instead of .wordpress.com. But even though it’s not .wordpress.com, I still use a Wordpress site because it is one of the best, I guess, tools. I guess you would consider it a tool. Tool to use to have a blog-type website. I don’t know, you know, Today.com or Parenting.com or some other websites that are other news-type media outlets. I don’t know what they use. Theirs are very different. Because they have blog components, but they also have news components. So that’s different. Mine is strictly just, pictures and writing and every now and then, I’ll embed a Youtube video, but. ((laughs)) So, those are probably the main ones I use, and then, you know, when I’m out and about, if I’m not, if I don’t want to type or dictate on my phone, I just use good old pen and paper, man, sometimes you can’t beat those caveman tools to write stuff down ((laughs)).

Dr. C: ((laughs)) Right?! I’m right there with you. I have a notebook that I carry with me basically everywhere I go. So, I’m with you.

SG: Yeah. Yeah.

Dr. C: Yeah, very cool. Um. Just a comment on Wordpress. I know that it is, um, I’ve had some experience with Wordpress as well; that’s where I have my site, my ePortfolio site; it’s where I host this podcast site, it’s, and I really do like it. Because it, it does make, you know, if you want to add a page, it’s easy to do. If you want to add a blog post, it’s easy to do, and there are a lot of options for, you know, they offer a lot of free options, which is one reason why I recommend them to students,

SG: Yeah.

Dr. C: Because you, you can pay for the “Sarahinthesuburbs.com”

SG: Uh-huh.

Dr. C: Or the “Ashleyclayson.com,” but you don’t have to. You know, you can hold onto that Wordpress site. And that’s a thing that I think that, you know, if you’re a student, you’re trying to get something started, people aren’t going to, you know, give you too many funny looks about. So, I think that’s, that’s totally fine.

SG: Oh, absolutely. When you’re first getting started, uh. I would highly recommend not investing too much into it. Until you think you really want to make it a job. When I first started blogging, it was literally like an online journal about, “Hey, my kids rolled over today! Hey, they sat up today!” Nobody wanted to read that but my parents. ((laughs))

Dr. C: ((laughs))
SG: So, it was okay for me to have, you know, I think I called it like, some weird, I don’t even know. It was really embarrassing, like, “TheSuburbanMom.blogspot.com” or something like that. It was a really embarr—you know, back in the day, if you dig through my archives ((laughs)), don’t do it, but if you did, um you will find some old stuff that I used to write, and I’m like, “Man, I have come a long way!” But now, like, now it’s my job, and I do make an income from it. So, it’s okay for me to invest in that site. And it does help that I have a husband who does all the IT back-end stuff, ‘cause that can get pricey, but if you’re, if you’re first starting out, and you’re not really sure that you want to make it a full-time job, and you’re just, you just want to, you know, test the waters, definitely go with the, the free version of the Wordpress site. And get used to it first.

Dr. C: Yeah. Get in there and see what kind of options it offers you, and then it does offer, um, you know different levels for, okay, I can, you know, pay this much and I’ll get these extra features and things like that. So.

SG: Right.

Dr. C: Yeah, and I know other, I’m not as familiar with other platforms as well, but I think Wix is very similar. Um. There are options for having your own domain name. Um. Which, if you don’t know, that’s the, the “sarahinthesuburbs.com” or the

SG: Mm-hmm.

Dr. C: “ashleyclayson.com”

SG: Your web address. ((laughs))

Dr. C: Yeah! Your web address! Exactly. So, you can pay for that or not, and then you, there are other, you know, different levels where if you want, you know, to add this fancy thing to your site, you can pay extra for that and stuff like that. So, you know, there are a lot of different options, but I definitely like what you’re saying about, “yeah, try it out first.” You know, try the free version first and make sure that it’s a thing that you want to, want to stick with and pursue before, ((laughs)) you know, investing a ton of money into, for sure.

SG: Right. ((laughs))

Dr. C: For sure.

[End of interview.]

Dr. C: And that’s it for part one of my interview with Sarah Gilliland. Be sure to check back next week for more from Sarah on freelance blogging. Thanks so much for listening to the show! Don’t forget, if you like what you’re hearing, you can support us at patreon.com/writingatwork or ko-fi.com/writing at work. For show notes or transcripts, check out our website at writingatworkpodcast.wordpress.com. Questions? Want to suggest a podcast topic or an interviewee? Email us at writingatworkpodcast@gmail.com. Find us on Facebook at Facebook.com/writingatwork. Subscribe, rate, and review us on iTunes, Stitcher, or wherever you find your podcast love. And until next week, keep on writing.