

Freelance reporting incorporates a large area of court reporting including all of the depositions that are done prior to the time of trial. It may also include work comp hearings, city council meetings, board meetings or sworn statements. I have even done something as unique as help out a student who was working on her master's degree and needed help in collecting data when interviewing students for her project. I wrote down and transcribed her interviews. It was really an easy job for me, but she said it would have taken her a really long time to type them herself.

However, most of my time is spent on depositions. A deposition is sworn testimony, just as if it were in a court of law, but it takes place in an attorney's office most of the time. Depositions are usually much more informal than a courtroom. The purpose of a deposition is so that all parties involved can find out what each witness knows and what that person would testify to at the time of trial.

I have worked as a freelance court reporter for more than ten years. Being flexible is a must when working as a freelancer. There are times when you might get called at the last minute for a deposition. On the other hand, there are times when you get the last-minute cancelations as well. One does get used to a constantly-changing schedule. Most freelancers work from home, and that is something that is nice when you have a growing family.

There are a couple of aspects to my personality that I feel have helped me be successful in my freelance career. The first is my gift of gab, as my mother would call it. I have always been able to talk to just about anyone, and finding yourself in a room full of strangers on a daily basis may be uncomfortable for some people, but I can usually find something to chitchat about. Small talk is always nice to put the witness at ease.

The second thing is that I have become assertive. I haven't always been that way, but as a freelancer, I have had to become assertive. What I mean by that is that someone needs to be in charge of the deposition, and as the court reporter, it is my responsibility to produce an accurate transcript. It is my job to be assertive and slow things down if they get out of hand.

There have been many cases that have stuck with me over the years; some that have made me want to cry. Then there are those cases that I do the depositions on and I wonder why they are even doing depositions in the case. But, of course, nobody ever asks my opinion. My job is to write down what they say, not give my opinion.

What I really like about being a freelancer the most is the variation of material on a daily basis. I have learned a little bit about a lot of things. I always say that I have such an amazing job that allows me to continue to learn things all the time. Recently I learned how to make meth, how to make cardboard boxes and all about Dwolla – all in the same week!

One last area I would like to touch on is technology. Keeping up on the ever-changing technology is a must for freelancers and officials alike. Court reporting is no different than any other profession in this regard. It amazes me to think of all of the changes in both hardware and software in the time since I graduated from AIB. But in order to stay competitive, it is a must to stay current.