

Get published the easy way?

Notes on self-publishing for independent authors



A DAISY EDITORIAL GUIDE FOR AUTHORS

Self-publishing checklist

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Self-publishing is becoming increasingly popular, and it is often a good option for independent authors. Why go through all the hassle of finding a publisher when you can do it yourself by just hitting 'upload', right? Well, of course it's not that easy; but it can be straightforward, if you think about all the practicalities first.

The actual mechanics of self-publishing is the easy bit. You choose your outlet, fill in all the details asked for and upload your finished file(s), then let your printer or ebook outlet do the rest to make it available to buy. What new authors (or those new to self-publishing) often forget is the **long list of other tasks** that go into **preparing** and **selling** your book. These are the 'hidden' jobs that traditional publishers do behind the scenes. They include the many suggested improvements and corrected errors that you don't (usually) see in a traditionally published book, because that's all been sorted out by an editor before hitting the publish button.

If you're self-publishing, you're going to have to step up to the mark and take on all these other jobs too. You're not just a writer any more – you're a one-person publisher.

Self-publishing checklist

Here's a list of some things that independent writers need to think about.

Format

If you are going for paper print copies you will need to decide on a trim size before your book design and layout can be started. What size will your book be? This will be influenced by, for example, which company is going to print it, where it will be distributed, what's normal for the genre, as well as personal preference.

Tip: *Have a look at some books on your bookshelf or in a book store, find a size you like and physically measure it. Check it's appropriate for your genre and that your printer of choice offers that trim size.*

Print on demand

With modern printing set-ups you have the great advantage of being able to order and print as little as one book at a time. However, for print books you will need to invest in a proper interior layout design, otherwise your book won't look professional. Remember the design cost is the same whether you print 2 books or 2000, so factor it into your overall cost calculations.

ebooks

If you want to sell ebooks only then you don't need a full interior page design as you do with paper print (unless you want a fixed page layout rather than reflowable), but you **do** need your ebook to be properly formatted for your chosen distribution outlet. Research the different options carefully and choose what's best for you. There are different requirements for Kindle, for example, than for other outlets such as iBooks or Smashwords.

Tip: *Don't skimp on paying for a properly formatted ebook or you risk it looking terrible. Hire someone who knows the design requirements.*

Cover design

It will always pay to get your book cover professionally designed. Remember that potential buyers will probably spend less than a second looking at your listing before moving on, and if your cover doesn't draw readers in you're not going to get sales. You need to make an immediate impression!

For print books you will need a full cover design made in the correct template for your chosen printer. For ebooks you will need a front cover image.

Tip: *Use a professional cover designer (for print AND ebooks). You only have a second or two to grab readers' attention.*

Blurb

You need to write a short summary (blurb) to capture the essence of your book for the cover and also to add to your online listing details when you submit your book.

ISBN

You will need an ISBN for each format of your book, eg one for hard copy print, one for Kindle, one for audiobook. You can buy your own numbers (in the UK) from [Nielsen](#). You are better to do this yourself than use ISBNs allocated by the likes of Amazon, IngramSpark or Lulu, especially if you intend to publish more books in the future.

Publisher name

Remember that you are the publisher of your book, so to avoid it screaming 'I'm self-published!' you should think about an appropriate publisher name. Choose something that you can use with any future titles too. It's a good idea to check whether the domain name for your idea has already been taken. If not, it's a good name and you should probably register the domain in case you want a website, even if that's in the future.

Tip: *When choosing a publisher name, check whether a related domain name is available. If so, register it now, even if you won't be setting up a website just yet.*

Price

What's a reasonable retail price for your book once you've taken into account all the costs? Is it worth offering a promotional price for a short time or joining a scheme such as Amazon's KDP Select, where you agree only to publish via Kindle in return for bigger royalties? Do some research on writers' forums into what has worked for other authors.

Categories

When you list your book for sale you will have to choose the most appropriate book categories. You can find a list of industry-standard categories on the [BISG website](#). Depending on which outlet you use, you may be given different choices.

Marketing and distribution

How will you get sales? If you are self-publishing then it's basically up to you! Have you thought about marketing materials (flyers, posters, getting reviews etc)? Do you need a book website? How can you use social media? Can you promote via local bookshops?

***Tip:** Your book won't sell itself. If you don't want the graft of marketing it yourself (and that can take a LOT of time and effort), you will need to factor in the cost of paying someone else to do it for you.*

Are you prepared to deal with book orders yourself or do you want one of the big companies to handle this for you? Are you happy just to sell online or do you want your book in bricks and mortar shops? Your decisions will determine which distribution deal you should sign up for, and therefore will affect the profits you make.

Before signing up with a printing or distribution company, you need to understand all the implications of the different options for royalties. What's right for you will depend on how much of the behind-the-scenes work you want to do yourself and what you want the printing and distribution company to do. Again, writers' groups, forums and support organisations are your friend. And research, research, research...

But wait a minute...

There's no point in having a whizzy book cover and cool-looking interior design, all your social media accounts set up, a date fixed to speak to your local book group, and all the rest, if you've not yet got the text right. If your actual writing doesn't flow well or is full of grammar mistakes and typos, you'll soon pile up the bad reviews.

A crucial EARLY step in the self-publishing process is to **find out what editorial help you need** (and even the best writers need some). Therefore you should also factor in the cost of a professional editor and/or proofreader. You can't afford not to!

***Tip:** Professional editing and proofreading is not expensive in the grand scheme of things. NOT making that investment may cost you dear.*

Further help

Some useful links to help you plan your self-publishing journey.

- sfep.org.uk/directory

Free-to-search directory of experienced proofreaders and copy-editors (and other book-related skills).

- allianceindependentauthors.org

Advice, resources and a supportive community for independent authors.

- societyofauthors.org

Trade union for all types of writers, especially useful for legal advice.

- ingramspark.com

Print-on-demand and ebook publishing.

And finally

On the next page is a self-publishing checklist for you to 'cut out and keep'.

Good luck!



SELF-PUBLISHING CHECKLIST

EDIT

What editorial help do you need?

ADMIN

Format | size | ISBN | publisher name

DESIGN

Find the right professionals

LAYOUT

Interior pages | cover | blurb

PROOF

Check after layout, and check again!

MARKETING

How? Where? Who?

SALES

Price | royalties | distribution deals