

The Pressbooks Guide to Self-Publishing,  
2nd Edition



# The Pressbooks Guide to Self-Publishing, 2nd Edition

How to get your book in print and ebook  
stores for \$100

Edited by Elizabeth Mays

Pressbooks  
Montreal

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# Introduction: How a Manuscript Becomes a Book

You have a manuscript. Now you want to turn it into a book—a tangible, formatted piece of media that readers across the world can read and enjoy in print or on their devices.

There are five main things that go into creating a book:

1. **Writing:** getting your words down
2. **Editing:** polishing those words
3. **Production:** turning your words into “real” books: ebooks, print books and covers (<— we can help!)
4. **Selling:** getting your book into stores
5. **Marketing:** (trying to) get people to buy your book

This free download will demystify each of these steps to make a book and show you how to use Pressbooks — the shortest, most affordable path from manuscript to book.

It will also show you what to do with your book files once you produce them.

# Traditional Publishing vs. Self-Publishing

Today, there are two ways to take your work from manuscript to book:

1. Find a publisher.  
OR
2. Become a publisher. (Much easier than it used to be.)

## Traditional Publishing

There are perks to having your book published the old-fashioned way. If you're working with a traditional publisher, professionals will do all the work for you: editing, production, design and cover. And books produced by conventional publishing houses are more likely to find a place in brick-and-mortar bookstores. But the chances of landing a conventional publisher are low, with or without an agent.

Perhaps the most well-known self-published author, Hugh Howey<sup>1</sup>, collects data on the self-publishing industry. He recently wrote that 98% of manuscripts submitted to agents never get published<sup>2</sup> at all.

1. <http://www.hughhowey.com/>

2. <http://www.hughhowey.com/the-state-of-self-publishing/>

Even if you land a major publisher, the royalties and advances aren't as lucrative as they used to be, the process can take one to two years and you may be asked to make significant revisions (many of which you won't agree with). Once your masterpiece is released, the publishing house will do some marketing and promotion for you, but they'll still expect you to participate in that as the face of your book. And they'll put constraints on what you can do to promote your book in terms of marketing, pricing, limited-time promotions and giveaways.

For all this effort, few published writers make enough from their writing to make it their life.

The Guardian<sup>3</sup> recently reported on a UK survey that found only 11.5% of professional authors earned a living solely from writing, a number that was especially discouraging when compared to the 2005 percentage, 40%.

In July 2014, an Author Earnings report<sup>4</sup> found that “self-published authors earn more in royalties than Big 5 [publishing house] authors combined.”

## Self-Publishing

Self-publishing means wearing more hats—not only as a writer, but also as distributor and marketer of your work. And it doesn't come with the luxury of a professional editor and production staff. But that increased responsibility translates into more control over your manuscript, as well as the ability to connect directly to your readership.

Platforms like Kindle Direct Publishing, Smashwords, Kobo, CreateSpace and IngramSpark now enable individual authors to publish their books independently, without the blessing of traditional gatekeepers like agents and publishers, or even the need for inter-

3. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/jul/11/traditional-publishing-fair-sustainable-society-of-authors>

4. <http://authorearnings.com/report/july-2014-author-earnings-report/>

mediary author services companies to help them navigate the process.

These ebook and print-on-demand venues let you distribute your book and reach a large niche audience for little to no up-front cost (except for the time it takes you to write the book).

You get to publish your book, just as you want it. And the time to publication can be days, not years.

You can also make changes easily, own your audience and communicate directly with your readers.

Furthermore, as a self-publisher, you set your own price, garner much higher per-book royalties and enjoy complete flexibility in how you market your book — from free giveaways, to promotional discounts and other strategies.

## Becoming Your Own Publisher

The rest of this publication is for those who want to self-publish.

The good news is: If you want to take the reins and get your work out to readers now, that's easy, instantaneous and virtually free.

New platforms (including Pressbooks!) enable today's writers to instantly convert their book to the right file types for publication in print in online bookstores such as Amazon (using print-on-demand) and ebook stores (such as Kindle), removing the expenses that used to be associated with self-publishing. In addition to bypassing agents and publishers, you no longer need to hire a programmer or graphic designer to format your ebook and print book.

In fact, it's now possible to publish your book in all the major ebookstores **and** in print for as little as \$99.

This guide to self-publishing will demystify that process, so you

can create your own book and publish it quickly, easily and affordably.

We will cover:

- The publishing process
- Writing and editing
- Book files and terminology
- Producing your book files for ebook and print-on-demand outputs
- Sourcing your cover files
- Testing your book files
- Other things you will need to get your book into stores
- Distribution
- Pricing and royalties
- Book marketing strategies

We'll also talk about:

- How much all this costs
- How Pressbooks can help

OK.

*Let's make a book!*



[PART I]

## Writing and Editing

**“The first draft of anything is sh\*t.”**

*–Ernest Hemingway*

**“It is perfectly okay to write garbage—as long as you edit brilliantly.”**

*–C. J. Cherryh*



[1]

# Writing and Editing Your Book

## Writing

This may be the one place we can't help. We can't write your bestseller for you, and we haven't discovered a cure for writer's block—though we can bring you some inspiration from other writers.

**“A word after a word after a word is power.”**

— *Margaret Atwood*

**“There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed.”**

— *Ernest Hemingway*

**“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”**

— *Maya Angelou*

**“This is how you do it: you sit down at the keyboard and you put one word after another until its done. It's that easy, and that hard.”**

— *Neil Gaiman*

**“I hate writing, I love having written.”**

— *Dorothy Parker*

**“You can’t wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club.”**

— *Jack London*

Of course, there are organizations who can help you grow as a writer.

One of these is our partner **GrubStreet**. GrubStreet is one of the nation’s leading creative writing centers. GrubStreet offers more than 600 classes and events each year for writers of all walks and also provides manuscript consultations. You can check out their workshops and offerings at [grubstreet.org](http://grubstreet.org).

Sometimes the best help with writing comes in the form of an editor.

## Editing

Editing is part of what turns a manuscript into a book.

Traditionally, publishers took on the critical role of editing.

If you are self-publishing, an external editor is not necessary, but is highly recommended.

Some of you reading this may be writers, editors and journalists by trade. If so, you’re lucky because you may be able to sculpt your own book and do a considerable amount of self-editing. You may even have colleagues you can draw on for another set of eyes. That said, we think even professional writers can benefit from having their book edited by an objective professional.

Publishing houses involve different types of editors at different stages in the editing process. So you’ll need someone who can play all these roles:

- **Developmental editors**, best brought onboard in the early stages, help you shape and structure the work as a whole.
- **Line editors** go line by line through your manuscript, finessing the writing, voice and content. This type of editing involves (re)writing.
- **Copy editors** fix grammatical issues and remedy errors and inconsistencies.
- **Style editors** make the text conform to the accepted style of its genre—such as APA, Chicago, MLA, AP or others. This round of edits addresses stylistic elements such as capitalization, preferred spellings, punctuation, references and footnote formatting.
- **Proofreaders** deploy a close eye to catch and correct typos, misspellings and potentially embarrassing mistakes.

As you can see, editing a book-length tome can be a lengthy, nuanced and subjective process. Choose a service that offers the type of editing you need, at a straightforward price and timeline.

We recommend Bubblecow<sup>1</sup> for their upfront pricing, easy-to-understand process and quick turnaround.

Learn more about how to hire a book editor<sup>2</sup> in this interview with editor Gary Smailes, founder of Bubblecow.

1. <http://bubblecow.com/>

2. <http://pressbooks.com/blog/how-to-hire-an-editor/>



[PART II]

## Production

**“Of all the things which man can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful, and worthy are the things we call books.”**

**— *Thomas Carlyle***



[2]

## Create a Book: Terminology & Elements

Most writers aren't book designers. And even most book designers don't know much about making ebooks. So, in the process of getting from manuscript to book, one of the biggest challenges writers face is: producing ebook files and designed book files ready to go to the printer. This is where Pressbooks can help.

Just a few years ago, creating those book files was a laborious and expensive process. Designing books for print required complicated software (usually InDesign), and ebooks — well ... ebooks are *xHTML and CSS wrapped up in a container file, with strict requirements for metadata and ...* you get the picture. Ebooks are complicated. So, in the old days, if you didn't know how to use InDesign, and you didn't know how to code xHTML, you would have to hire an ebook developer to make your ebook and a designer to create your book for print.

Pressbooks changes all that. Pressbooks is easy-to-use writing software that makes the files you need. It's built with a simple and familiar interface (for anyone who has ever blogged), and Pressbooks will instantly apply a professional design for your print files, generate all the code and design you need for a professional

ebook, optimized to look good in all different ebookstores (including Kindle, Apple, Kobo, Nook, Google Play and others). Pressbooks does the work of producing professional book files for you — so that you can focus on what you are good at: writing and (hopefully) marketing your book.

Pressbooks lets you write a book online, then take the files you export from Pressbooks and upload them directly into the bookstores.

Pressbooks exports three main types of files—PDF, EPUB and MOBI—for three different end uses.

## Print Book File Specifications

To make a print book, you need a designed PDF file called an “interior file.”

PDF interior files look like ... “books”: title page, page numbers, chapter headings, etc.

Before Pressbooks, a graphic designer would need to build the interior file for a print book.

Pressbooks.com produces beautiful print book files automatically for you — without you having to learn anything about book design, or hiring a designer.

Pressbooks offers dozens of design layouts, known as themes, to choose from. You’ll find options suitable for any genre of book, from horror to romance to academic research.

Best of all, it adapts the book layout to the trim size you specify. If you change your mind about that trim size, Pressbooks changes the layout instantly and automatically reflows your text— something you previously would have needed a designer to do.

## Ebook File Specifications

Ebooks are special files used in ebook reading devices (such as a Kindle or iPhone). There are two (main) kinds of ebooks:

- **MOBI:** the file format used by Amazon Kindle
- **EPUB:** the file format used by Apple's iBooks, Kobo, Nook, Google and just about every other ebook platform.

When ebook publishing was in its infancy, MOBI was the only file format accepted for publication in the Kindle store. Now, Kindle Direct Publishing will convert other types of files for you—even PDFs, Word docs and EPUB files. However, converting files from one type to another can introduce funky formatting and errors, the result being your book can look amateurish, or downright terrible, on many devices. Which is why it's best to use a professionally-designed MOBI file, such as the files that Pressbooks generates.

EPUB files are the format for ebooks in almost all non-Amazon ebookstores. Some stores may allow you to submit in different formats — including Word — but then you are at the mercy of an automatic conversion process, which is likely to mash your book up in ways you won't be happy with. We suggest submitting well-formatted EPUB files. This will give your book the best chance of looking good on all different ereaders.

Pressbooks.com was invented to make it easy for anyone to produce the professional PDF, MOBI and EPUB files that are necessary to get from an unformatted manuscript to a publishable print or ebook.

## Cover Specifications

Ebooks and print books have different cover file requirements.

## Ebook Covers

Different ebook stores have different specifications for cover files. We've found the safest set of specifications are: a single JPG file, with a 1:1.5 aspect ratio, and a maximum file-size of 2MB.

## Print Covers

Print covers are PDF files, sized according to the trim size dimensions and page length of your book. A print cover consists of three parts: front cover, back cover and spine, which are all in one design.

You can produce your book covers using Pressbooks' cover generator (in PDF+EBOOK Pro books), or you can commission a professional. We'll give some tips in the chapters to come.

[3]

## How to Make a Book: Interior Files

### Producing Your Book

Formatting is the hardest technical part of creating a book nowadays—and at Pressbooks, we’ve made it simple to give your book a professional layout, for print and all major ebook retailers.

The Pressbooks book writing software instantly generates elegant book files suitable for all of the major bookstores; offers dozens of professionally designed layouts; and also features a user-friendly online writing and organizational interface that you can access anywhere inspiration strikes. You can sign up for an account at [Pressbooks.com](https://pressbooks.com) and begin building your book for free. When finished, export print and ebook versions of your book for only \$99.

Here what’s involved in creating your book file using Pressbooks:

1. Go to [Pressbooks.com](https://pressbooks.com) and create an account.
2. Add your book information (title, author, description, copyright, etc.) in the Book Info section. This boosts your

book's discoverability in the various ebookstores' search mechanisms.

3. Add your content by writing directly in the Pressbooks interface, or import your text from Word, Open Office or your blog. You can drag and drop to rearrange chapters, and edit your text using a visual or code editor.
4. Choose and apply a look for your book from dozens of free themes.
5. Export your book to PDF, EPUB and MOBI formats.

Then download your files and distribute them where you would like.

Want more information on each of these steps? Read on.

## Sign Up

Create a Pressbooks account and choose a web address (or URL) for your book. Note that this URL can't be changed later, but it can be masked if you'd like to forward a domain you own.

## Add Your Book Information

Click on Dashboard / Book Info and add in info such as title, subtitle, author, book category, copyright information and description.

## Add Content / Import Your Manuscript Into Pressbooks

There are several ways to get your manuscript into the Pressbooks platform.

- **Import From Your Blog:**<sup>1</sup> Pressbooks lets you go blog to book, importing content from your website or blog. First, export your content from your WordPress blog onto your desktop. Then in Pressbooks, go to Tools / Import and upload that file. Once your content imports, skim through it to see

1. <http://guide.pressbooks.com/chapter/import-from-wordpress/>

that the text flowed into Pressbooks correctly—you may need to do a quick cleanup.

- **Copy-paste From ... Just About Anything:** One of the safest ways to get your book into Pressbooks is to copy-paste chapter by chapter, from whatever your original source: Word, PDF, Open Office, Pages, or a website. Pressbooks will often clean up “bad” styling when copy-pasting, but you always want to check your exports for strange styling that might need to be fixed. Here’s a quick video on the easiest way to import your text<sup>2</sup> into Pressbooks.
- **Import an Existing Manuscript From Word:**<sup>3</sup> It’s easy to import your book into Pressbooks from Word or other word processing applications. When you do, remember that ebooks are like websites, and if you have a heavily formatted file to start with ... it’s going to cause problems. Invisible code from Word or other software may cause formatting problems on the Web, in ebooks, and in PDF. To Import from Word, go to Tools and click Import. Tell Pressbooks you’re importing a Word file. Pressbooks will do its best to clean the text and strip out bad code, though you’ll need to go through each chapter and apply styles to clean up elements that may not have transmitted perfectly. (Tip: Keep your Word formatting to a minimum, and use the styles menu in Word to format your manuscript before importing—as opposed to the formatting menu—and your formatting will translate better with less cleanup.)
- **Write Directly in Pressbooks:**<sup>4</sup> Pressbooks is not only a great writing tool, it also helps structure your text and research. You can organize your text into parts and chapters, make chapters public or private, and choose which chapters to ultimately export.

2. <http://bit.ly/word-intro>

3. <http://guide.pressbooks.com/chapter/import-from-word-docx/>

4. <http://guide.pressbooks.com/chapter/writing-directly-in-pressbooks/>

## Add Images to Your Book

Images add another layer of complexity to designing ebooks. But Pressbooks takes care of all the code for you, automatically formatting your images to render appropriately on the various e-readers.

For print, you want larger images, so they don't come out pixelated.

If exporting for print, make sure your images are at least 500kb to 1MB.

For ebooks, you'll want to downsize your images: large ebook files can lead to slower downloads and, in some ebookstores, "delivery fees" that cut into your royalties. Pressbooks can automatically compress your images for ebook output if you click this preference in the Ebook Theme Options.

Currently Pressbooks does not enable audio or video file inclusion for ebook formats. But you can always add a screenshot, and link to the video hosted on Youtube or other hosting services. Similarly, you can link to music files on the web.

## Choose a Layout and Design

Formatting your manuscript is as simple as applying a "theme." When you do so, Pressbooks will apply that theme's "styles" universally to your headings, paragraph formatting and other elements throughout your book, giving you a consistent and elegant design.

To apply a theme, go to your Dashboard and click on Appearance and Themes on the left-side menu. Select one of the dozens of available themes. Click on a theme to preview how it will look when applied to your book. But note that there are differences between what your book will look like in web preview, versus PDF, versus EPUB and MOBI. Your best bet is to select a theme, export

your book and take a look at the files to make sure you are happy with that theme.

To further customize certain elements of your theme, you can visit the Appearance / Theme Options page and change settings for chapter numbers, the table of contents, paragraph behavior, page size and a few other things.

Here are the options you can specify:

### Ebook Options

- Paragraph style (whether indented or line spaced)
- Image compression (Pressbooks can compress your images to reduce the size of your book file and with it, “delivery” fees the bookstores will charge you.)

### PDF Options (for print)

- Trim size (corresponds to the trim size you will choose for your book in the print-on-demand stores)
- Paragraph style (as above)
- Table of contents style (Pressbooks can create a one- or two-level TOC.)
- Stylistic options for footnotes
- How to handle hyphens, widows and orphans
- Whether to include crop marks (sometimes required by print or print-on-demand publishers)

### Global Options

- Whether or not to display chapter numbers
- Table of contents style across both ebook and print version

- Whether or not to display your copyright notice (You can add or edit this in Book Info.)

The two most critical options to specify are whether you prefer indented paragraphs or spacing between paragraphs, as well as your trim size under the PDF Options menu if you are going to do a printed book.

All of these options can be easily changed at anytime.

## Prepare and Export Your Final Book Files

Before you publish, you'll want to upgrade your book to remove Pressbooks' promotional watermarks. It's \$19.99 to remove these from the ebook files and \$99 to remove from both the ebook and the PDF files. Use the Upgrade button on the left-side menu.

### Exporting Your Files

Now you can export your publication-ready files for the ebookstores and print-on-demand markets. Click on Export on the left-side menu, then Export Your Book.

Download the PDF (for print), EPUB (for iBooks, Kobo, Nook, etc.) and MOBI (for Kindle) files to your desktop. These are the files you will upload into the bookstores.

[4]

## Create a Book: Cover

People will judge the quality of your book by its cover. So it's important to create a professional-looking cover that will attract readers and appeal to your intended audience.

This can be done for free, though we think this is one place it's worth investing a few bucks into professional design services.

### Cover Design 101

You'll need to understand a few basics to commission a usable cover.

### Ebook Cover Design

Remember that your reader will see your cover as a tiny thumbnail when they're deciding whether or not to purchase your book. You'll want big, clear fonts to be sure the text is readable.

You may need to give your designer specs for the cover file, and these vary from bookstore to bookstore. Check the websites of the bookstores where you'll be publishing for the latest information.

Ebook cover specifications can include:

- **Type of File:** JPG is the safest file format for ebook covers.
- **File Size:** Often there will be a limit in megabytes to your file upload—or a delivery charge subtracted from royalties based on the size of your overall book file, cover included. We recommend a maximum cover file size of 2MB.
- **Aspect Ratio:** We recommend a 1:1.5 aspect ratio.
- **Size of Image:** Even if the aspect ratio is the same in several bookstores, the recommended overall size of the image can vary. Smashwords recommends 1600 x 2400 pixels, while KDP recommends 3200 x 4800.
- **Minimum Width:** A 1400-pixel minimum width is common to ebookstores.

### Print-on-Demand Cover Design

Covers are more complicated to design for print than ebooks, because:

- Print book cover files include the back cover, front cover and spine.
- The dimensions of every book cover are calculated based on how many pages there are in your book and the trim size you've chosen.
- Cover files can be big due to the design quality and resolution needed for print, but they need to be compressed in various ways and prepared for a certain type of printing.

For these reasons we recommend having your cover professionally designed, or using the Pressbooks cover generator feature, which will automatically create a cover that meets these complex industry specifications.

## Sourcing a Cover

Here are five ways to get a professional-looking cover, two that are free, and three at very low price points.

### Use the Pressbooks Cover Generator (Free in PDF+EBOOK Pro Books)

Pressbooks' PDF+EBOOK Pro plans now come with a cover generator feature that you can use to create both ebook and print book covers that meet the aforementioned industry specifications.

### Other Tools to Create Your Own Cover (Free)

CreateSpace offers a free cover creator<sup>1</sup> that you can use to create your own cover for print-on-demand. Kindle offers a similar cover creator for ebooks<sup>2</sup>.

The DIY graphic design tool Canva<sup>3</sup> will let you create good-looking ebook covers easily for free, or as little as \$1.

### Use a Service Like Fiverr (Starting at \$5, plus “tip” and add-ons)

Fiverr<sup>4</sup> and similar marketplaces let creatives offer their services for a low price—in this case, “\$5,” though usually buyers purchase add-ons and upgrades such as different versions or formats of the file and revisions. They also tip for a job well done. The control of what you spend is in your hands. If you don't like a designer's product, you've lost little and can try another from the pool. Spec-ing out what you want is the secret to getting the design you're envisioning.

1. <https://www.createspace.com/Tools/CoverCreator.jsp>

2. <http://bit.ly/kindlecovercreator>

3. <https://www.canva.com/>

4. <https://www.fiverr.com/>

### **Barter With a Colleague (Variable)**

If you know a graphic designer, consider commissioning them to design your cover. You may even be able to trade them your writing services in kind to keep out-of-pocket costs low.

### **Hire a Professional Cover Designer (Variable)**

Things to look for when you hire a professional: Ask if they'll provide both print and ebook covers and how many revisions you will be able to make. Also, if possible, you want to keep the raw files. That way, if you have changes later, you won't have to have someone start from scratch—they can simply edit minor things (which will save you money). Make sure they will design the cover according to your printer's specs, which can vary. One designer we recommend is Kate McDonnell. Contact Kate<sup>5</sup>.

5. [katemcdo@gmail.com](mailto:katemcdo@gmail.com)

[5]

## Testing Your Ebook File

Here is a well-known and painful “secret”: ebooks look different on all ebook platforms, and getting them to look good on all of them is hard work, especially if you don’t use a tool like Pressbooks.

Even though Pressbooks ebooks are optimized to look good everywhere, it’s always wise to test your exported ebooks before submitting them to the ebook stores to see what they will look like to readers *just in case* any funky formatting has crept in.

The following tools are free and will let you see what your book will look like on a variety of devices:

- **EPUBReader (for Firefox)**<sup>1</sup>

EPUBReader is a Firefox add-on. Once it’s installed, you can click on an epub file link and it will open in EPUBReader. If things look OK in EPUBReader, it’s a good sign that they *should* look OK elsewhere.

*How to use it:* Click on an EPUB link in Firefox, it’ll open automatically in EPUBReader.

- **Adobe Digital Editions**<sup>2</sup>

1. <https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/epubreader/>

ADE is Adobe's free desktop EPUB reader, which will tell you roughly how different systems that use Adobe's rendering engine will interpret your EPUBs. Adobe's rendering engine powers Kobo, Nook and Sony, though none of them renders things exactly as ADE does.

*How to use it:* Browse for your file on your desktop, and select "Open With" -> ADE.

- **Kindle Previewer**<sup>3</sup>

Kindle Previewer converts your EPUB to Amazon format, and it also shows you what your files will look like on all the different Kindle platforms (Kindle Fire, Kindle Touch, Kindle DX, Kindle iPad, Kindle iPhone, Kindle).

*How to use it:* Open Kindle Previewer, then File->Open->select your EPUB.

- **iBooks (for iPad/iPod/iPhone)**

iBooks is Apple's built-in ebook reading app.

*How to use it:* The easiest way to check your EPUB is to email the file to yourself, and then click on the file from your iOS device. Your device will ask you what program you'd like to open it in.

- **Kobo**<sup>4</sup> (for iPad/iPod/iPhone)

Kobo is another common ebook reader, and it's worth checking out how things look on it.

*How to use it:* If you have Kobo installed on your iPhone/iPad, then easiest way to check your EPUB is to email the file to yourself, and then click on the file from your iOS device. Your device will ask you what program you'd like to open it in. Choose Kobo.

- **Dropbox**<sup>5</sup>

Dropbox is a great tool to let you access files from multiple devices — drop your EPUB file into a folder in dropbox, then you can access it from your iPad, iPhone, Android tablet or

2. <http://www.adobe.com/products/digital-editions/download.html>

3. <http://bit.ly/kdppreviewer>

4. <http://kobo.com>

5. <http://dropbox.com>

phone.

*How to use it:* Download Dropbox on your computer and all your devices, and make an “EPUB Testing” folder, where you can drop your files.

- **Epub Validator**

Our last stop is usually EPUB Validator, which is an online tool from IDPF that will “validate” your EPUB — to make sure that the file conforms to the EPUB specifications. EPUB check errors can be obscure, but if something is wrong there, chances are you’ll have problems getting your EPUB into retailers.

*How to use it:* Go to: <http://validator.idpf.org/> and upload your file.



[PART III]

# Distribution and Marketing

**“I am fatally attracted to all bookstores.”**  
— *Lewis Buzbee*

**“Talent is cheaper than table salt. What separates the talented individual from the successful one is a lot of hard work.”**  
– *Stephen King*



[6]

## Other Things You Need to Make Your Own Book: Optional ISBNs, etc.

### Other Things You Need to Publish

In most cases, to get your book into stores, you'll sign up for a seller account and fill out information online in a process that will require you to upload most or all of the following items:

- Your book files (PDF for print-on-demand; MOBI for Kindle and EPUB for iBooks, Kobo, Nook, etc.–Pressbooks produces all these files for you.)
- Cover files
- Book description (include relevant search terms)
- Author information (your bio, adapted as relevant to this book)
- Banking and tax information (The bookstores need it to pay you.)

- ISBN (optional in many cases)

## Book Upload Tips

Pressbooks produces all the book files you will need to upload. Just download them to your desktop then upload them into the bookstores.

Check the cover specifications for your intended bookstore. You may need to resize your file before uploading it.

When you write your book description, be sure to include keywords people might use to search for similar books because this book description will become part of the metadata the stores search when helping readers find books like yours.

People may search for books by you as the author. For readers who don't know of you yet, give them an idea why you're an authoritative source in your author bio.

Many bookstores will deposit royalties directly into your bank account and will report the income they pay you in royalties from your book sales to the appropriate tax authority. They will need your banking information to compensate you and your tax identification for reporting purposes.

ISBNs are optional in some of the most popular bookstores.

## What Are ISBNs?

The ISBN, or International Standard Book Number, is a unique identifier given to your book, and to each format of it (ebook, print, et al.). It helps the publishing industry track sales in bookstores around the world.

## Do you Need an ISBN? And Do You Want One?

The answer is maybe.

You are not required to purchase an ISBN to publish in most of the ebookstores.

Apple, Kindle, Nook Press and some others do not require an ISBN. Kobo does.

You don't need an ISBN to publish on the Smashwords platform, but if they are distributing your book to iBooks and other retailers, you will. In this instance, Smashwords will provide a free ISBNs (with them listed as the publisher).

Createspace requires an ISBN but will also give you a free one (again, with them listed as the publisher). Kindle Direct Publishing will give you a free "Amazon Standard Identification Number" that is similar to an ISBN.

An ISBN *is* usually required to publish in print and print-on-demand venues. (One exception: The Pressbooks printing program does not require an ISBN.)

### Where to Buy an ISBN (if You Want One)

Despite the fact it's not required, many writers will want to make their book look more professional by obtaining their own ISBN. There are several places to procure an ISBN affordably:

- You can buy ISBNs on the cheap from distribution companies who buy them in bulk. Some affordable resellers sell them for as low as \$19.99. The downside? They'll be listed as the publisher of your book. Would they ever assert that right? Probably not.
- If you use a distributor, they will usually sell you an ISBN.
- CreateSpace also sells a \$10 ISBN that lets you list yourself, company or imprint as publisher, but you can only use that ISBN within CreateSpace. If you publish elsewhere, you'll need to purchase a second ISBN.
- Inside the U.S., you can buy your ISBN directly from

Bowker.com at isbn.org for \$125 apiece or buy in bulk, 10 for \$295. You'll own the number(s) and be listed on the record as the publisher.

- Outside the U.S., you can purchase a number from the International ISBN Agency at <https://www.isbn-international.org/>.

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# Distributing Your Book to Ebookstore and Print-on-Demand Channels

## Almost There

You've written your book. You've edited your book. You've produced your files. You've got a "book" now! But it's not a book until people can buy it.

You can get your ebooks into most of the ebook and print-on-demand stores yourself.

Or, you can get a distributor to do it for you (more on this later).

## Where You Want to Be—Ebook Stores

There are five big ebook stores you want to be in:

- **Kindle** (<- it's easy to publish here yourself)
- **Kobo** (<- it's easy to publish here yourself)

- **Nook Press:** (<- it's easy to publish here yourself)
- **Google Play:** (<- it's a bit harder to publish here)
- **Apple iBooks** (<- it's a pain in the butt to publish here)

## Print-on-Demand Venues

Print-on-demand (POD) technology means you can print one copy of a book economically, rather than buying a quantity of hundreds up front and then reselling them.

With POD, you can sell your book in online stores (such as Amazon). When someone buys your book, the book is printed and shipped directly to the buyer, without you doing anything.

This means that it is just as easy to publish a print book as it is to publish in ebook stores.

There are two good places to sell your POD book:

- **CreateSpace** (Amazon-owned, but recently started offering distribution into other online bookstores; free)
- **IngramSpark** (distributes in Amazon and everywhere else, produces hardcover books in print-on-demand and will handle your ebook distribution too; \$49 setup fee)

## Get Your Book Into Bookstores

Once you're finished writing a book, there are two ways to publish it in the bookstores. You can upload your files into the ebook stores manually yourself. Or you can pay a third party to publish your book in a set of ebook stores for you.

It's cheapest (free in most cases) to go through the time and effort to submit your files directly to the bookstores instead of paying an intermediary.

There are also many advantages to uploading your book directly to bookstores yourself:

- DIY distribution to nearly all the ebook stores is free and relatively simple.
- You won't be paying someone an additional cut of your book sales, on top of the percentage the retailer takes.
- You'll get direct and instant access to your sales reports.
- You'll get paid faster. For instance, KDP pays you each time you have a sale. If you upload your book directly, you won't to wait for your royalties to pass through another company before they get to you.
- One of the best things about self-publishing is the ability to change a manuscript immediately if you find an error or typo, for example, or if you need to add new material or an update. Changes are much easier and faster (and free!) when you don't have to go through a third party.

You can submit your book to the major bookstores at the links below.

### Ebookstores

- Kindle Direct Publishing: <https://kdp.amazon.com/>
- Kobo Writing Life: <http://www.kobo.com/writinglife>
- Leafless: <http://leafless.co>
- Google Play: <https://play.google.com/books/publish/>
- Nook Press: <https://www.nookpress.com>

### Print-on-Demand

- CreateSpace: <https://www.createspace.com/>
- IngramSpark: <https://www.ingramspark.com>

In each case, you'll need to sign up for an account, then go through a guided process on a publishing dashboard to upload your book files.

To get your book in most of these stores, you will need the following items on hand:

- Your book files (PDF for print-on-demand, MOBI for Kindle, EPUB for others)
- Your book cover files (ebook and/or print)
- Your book information (description, author, category, etc.)
- Your banking information (used for tax-reporting purposes and for royalty deposits)
- ISBN (optional for ebooks)

### Step-by-Step Guides to Publishing in Popular Bookstores

Need more details? We've created step-by-step guides to publishing in each of the major stores.

You can access those guides at the links below:

- Kindle:  
<http://guide.pressbooks.com/chapter/getting-your-book-into-ebook-stores-kindle/>
- Kobo:  
<http://guide.pressbooks.com/chapter/getting-your-book-into-ebook-stores-kobo/>
- Google Play and Nook:  
<http://guide.pressbooks.com/chapter/get-your-book-into-the-nook-and-google-book-stores/>
- CreateSpace:  
<http://guide.pressbooks.com/chapter/getting-your-book-into-print-on-demand-publishers-createspace/>
- IngramSpark:

<http://guide.pressbooks.com/chapter/getting-your-book-into-print-on-demand-publishers-ingramspark/>

Getting your book into the Apple store is a little more complex. If being in iBooks is a priority, you may wish to consider a distributor.

## Book Distributors

Plenty of companies will handle distribution for you and get your book published in most or all of the ebookstores for a fee or a percentage of royalties.

Some of the main distributors are:

- **Smashwords** (royalties vary, distributes to most bookstores including Apple, but generally not to Amazon<sup>1</sup>)
- **IngramSpark** (costs \$49 + a percent of sales; one advantage is that they do ebooks and print-on-demand, as well as hardcover print-on-demand)

1. Smashwords distributes a few select books to Amazon. Your book must have made over \$2,000 at their other retailers first to be considered.

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## Pricing and Royalty Information

### Pricing at the Bookstores

As a self-publisher, when you make your own book and distribute it yourself, you have the freedom to price your book however you'd like. However, the price point you set may have a direct impact on how many people buy it. Royalties at each of the bookstores are complex, based on how you price your book. Some bookstores take different royalties when your book is sold in certain countries or charge a fee deducted from your royalties based on your book's megabyte file size.

You can find the most current pricing and royalty information for each of the major bookstores at the links below.

- [Kindle](#)<sup>1</sup>
- [Kobo](#)<sup>2</sup>
- [Google Play](#)<sup>3</sup>
- [Nook Press](#)<sup>4</sup> (Click on “How Much Will I Get Paid?”)

1. <http://bit.ly/kdppricingandroyalties>

2. <http://bit.ly/kobopricingandroyalties>

3. <http://bit.ly/GPlaypricingandroyalties>

4. <http://bit.ly/nookpricingandroyalties>

- Apple: Apple's royalty information is only accessible from inside the publishing interface once you've signed up. As of press time, they take 30%.
- CreateSpace<sup>5</sup>
- IngramSpark<sup>6</sup>

## Pricing Your Ebook

What's the best price for your ebook? Recent research<sup>7</sup> by Smashwords suggested a literal answer: \$3.99.

But there are many complex factors to consider—do readers need your book? Are you already a known author? At what price point will they take a chance on a book they haven't heard of? Or make an impulse buy? How much did you invest in producing your book and how many copies do you expect to sell?

You'll have to weigh these unknowns and decide for yourself.

The great thing is, if you discover a price point isn't optimal, as a self-publisher, you can change it easily by going into the dashboard of your ebookstore(s).

5. <http://bit.ly/cspricingandroyalties>

6. <https://ingramspark.com/Portal/CostsandRevenue>

7. <http://bit.ly/bestebookprice>

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# Book Marketing and Author Branding

If you've gotten this far, you've learned about the "easy" parts of publishing. The hard part is getting people to read your book! This chapter will give you some (very brief) pointers on how to approach marketing and selling your book.

## Book Marketing Resources

Once it's in bookstores, you can market your book in numerous ways.

Here are a few of the strategies self-published authors have employed successfully to promote their books:

- Email marketing
- Author website and/or blog
- Social media strategy
- Search, SEO and metadata
- Reviewers / rankings

- In-person events such as book signings and book fairs
- Press coverage
- Build a brand blogging
- Pre-sales / pre-marketing / crowdfunding

### **Build and Communicate With Your Mailing List**

You'll want to build an opt-in list as you build your audience. One way to do this is to give away a free download of one of your books on your website in exchange for capturing email addresses from a potentially interested readership. You can then use an email marketing platform such as MailChimp to keep that audience apprised of upcoming book releases, author events and promotions—in hopes they buy more of your books.

### **Create and Update Your Author Website**

Having a website, preferably one with the ability to blog, will help you build your brand as an author and enable you to market new and future books. Affordable, easy-to-use platforms such as WordPress, Wix and Squarespace allow you to create and maintain a website yourself, without having to hire a developer.

### **Leverage Social Media**

Have you set up your author handle on the most widely used social media platforms? Even before your book is out, you can send out excerpts and teasers to build followers. Once published, use social to send people to buy the book in stores and post information you think might be useful to your niche audience. Don't underestimate the power of paid social either to help you connect with the right audience. Low-cost ads on social platforms like Facebook will let you target the exact demographics of readers who would be interested in your book.

## Optimize Metadata for Search

One of the best ways to market your book is to make sure people find it when they search the bookstores for books on similar topics. To do this, you'll need to include relevant search terms in your title and subtitle, which are part of your book's "metadata." This is what's known as search engine optimization, which means including terms people would search for to find books in your genre. Also, specify the most appropriate BISAC<sup>1</sup> subject heading for your book so it gets categorized correctly. If people are searching by category, it gives your book more chance of being found in their search.

## Solicit (Positive) Reviewers and Ratings

Just as best-selling books get more prominent display on bookstore shelves, books with higher sales and more and better reviews are seen by more potential buyers because they rise higher in relevant searches. Grossly simplified, online bookstores determine which books are popular using algorithms that take into account both sales and reviews. So even before you publish, reach out to potential readers who might review and rate your book in hopes of boosting its visibility.

## Plan a Road Show

Even though your book is now far easier to purchase online with just one click than in decades past, that doesn't mean you can upload it onto the Internet and expect for it to be found. Don't neglect the ways authors have long connected with prospective readers in person at book signings, book fairs and more. Plan speaking engagements that will attract potentially interested readers, coordinate book signings at local bookstores or niche events, and attend book fairs and conferences where your book might find a following.

1. <https://www.bisg.org/complete-bisac-subject-headings-2013-edition>

## Obtain Media Coverage

Let relevant media outlets know of your book release and events through press releases and advisories that have a local, timely or novel angle. The resulting coverage may help you reach a wider audience.

## Build Your Brand Blogging

Blog on your own site to establish yourself as an authority in your book's subject matter. As you're building an audience for your own work, reach out to sites that cover similar subjects and offer to be a guest blogger or an expert interviewee for them. That way, you reach an existing audience and broaden your own.

## Pre-sell Your Book

Today, it's easy to pre-sell and pre-market your book. New startups like Unbound<sup>2</sup> and others let you market, crowdfund and take orders for your literary work before you even publish it. Kindle now lets you pre-sell your book too.

## Consult the Experts

Don't limit yourself to these ideas. Check out what a few prolific experts on self-publishing and marketing have to say. These are a few of our favorites:

- Jane Friedman <http://janefriedman.com/blog/>
- Hugh Howey <http://www.hughhowey.com/>
- Joanna Penn <http://www.thecreativepenn.com/>
- James Altucher <http://www.jamesaltucher.com/>
- Carla King <http://selfpubbootcamp.com/>
- Chris Brogan <http://chrisbrogan.com/>

2. <http://unbound.co.uk/>

- Emily Craven <http://ebookrevolution.com.au/>

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# Cost of Self-Publishing

## So How Much Does All this Cost?

### Just the Essentials

**Writing:** free (if you do it!)

**Ebook conversion (using Pressbooks):** \$19.99/title, one-time fee, unlimited exports

**PDF book file production (using Pressbooks):** \$99/title, one-time fee, unlimited exports

**Ebook and Print book covers (using Pressbooks):** Free to make (if you have the \$99 package above)

**Publishing and selling ebooks direct:** Free (minus % of sales to retailer)

**Publishing and selling print books direct:** Manufacturing fee per book sold, plus % to retailer

**Marketing:** Your sweat & tears

### Extras You May Wish to Invest In

**Editing:** Average around \$7.50/page (~\$1,500-2,000/regular novel)

**Cover:** From \$5 to \$2,500 (we recommend spending \$100-200 if

you hire a professional)

**Your own ISBN:** ISBN...\$19-\$125 per book format

**Distributor for ebooks:** Varies—usually a percentage of sales

**Distributor for print books:** Varies—IngramSpark will charge you a \$49 setup fee and takes a percentage of sales)

Nowadays, the biggest cost of publishing should be your time — and the most difficult part of getting your book published today should be writing it.

We hope this handbook has demystified the rest of the self-publishing process for you.

Now, you just have to write the book.

# Conclusion

If you're planning to self-publish, it means you'll need to take on the aspects that publishers used to handle: editing, formatting ebook and print files, distribution and marketing.

Here at Pressbooks, we make the most out-of-reach part of that process — making beautiful ebooks and print books — easy and affordable for everyone.

Inspired? Get started making your book today at [pressbooks.com](http://pressbooks.com) or send us questions at [support@pressbooks.com](mailto:support@pressbooks.com).

You can also check out our Pressbooks user guide<sup>1</sup> and video tutorials on YouTube<sup>2</sup>. We also do webinars and training presentations that take writers through the self-publishing process. If you'd like to request a session for your organization, email [support@pressbooks.com](mailto:support@pressbooks.com).

And if this guide helped you, we hope you'll share it with friends and colleagues.

1. <http://guide.pressbooks.com/>

2. <https://www.youtube.com/user/pressbooks>

# About Pressbooks

This book is published by Pressbooks.com.

Want to stay in the know about book publishing? Like us on Facebook<sup>1</sup> and follow us on LinkedIn<sup>2</sup> and Twitter<sup>3</sup>.

1. <https://www.facebook.com/pressbooks2>
2. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/book-oven>
3. <https://twitter.com/pressbooks>

# Other Resources

This book is really meant as a brief overview of the self-publishing process, and if you are diving in, you are sure to have more questions.

Here are some more detailed resources to help you along:

## Pressbooks

**Pressbooks User Guide**<sup>1</sup>. A more detailed guide to the technical ins and outs of Pressbooks.

**Pressbooks Youtube Channel**<sup>2</sup>. A host of short how-to video tutorials for using Pressbooks.

## Beyond Pressbooks

**Author Earnings**<sup>3</sup> This site “for authors, by authors” tracks statistics about the self-publishing and publishing industry.

**Bibliocrunch**<sup>4</sup> Bibliocrunch is one of the best places to connect with a variety of trusted publishing professionals—editors,

1. <http://guide.pressbooks.com/>

2. <https://www.youtube.com/user/pressbooks>

3. <http://authorearnings.com/>

4. <http://bibliocrunch.com/>

designers, marketers and more—who can help bring your project to fruition. In particular, we recommend their new ebook, *A Self-Publishing Guide for NaNoWriMo writers*.

**Bubblecow**<sup>5</sup> This editing company has straightforward rates and offers both developmental editing and proofreading for writers who are self-publishing.

**The Creative Penn podcast**<sup>6</sup> Joanna Penn is a best-selling self-published author who offers resources for authors on her website, in her podcast and in her books.

**Futurebook**<sup>7</sup> Futurebook sends out frequent and interesting news about digital publishing. Connected to *The Bookseller*, which covers the business of the book industry.

**GrubStreet**<sup>8</sup> GrubStreet offers courses and events that will help you improve as a creative writer.

**How to Make a Book Slideshow**<sup>9</sup> We've produced a slideshow snapshot to the steps involved in making a book. There's also a narrated video version<sup>10</sup> on our YouTube channel.

**Jane Friedman**<sup>11</sup> The former publisher and editorial director of *Writer's Digest*, Jane Friedman is a world-renowned authority on publishing and writing. Her blog is packed full of useful resources and insights.

**Outthink Group**<sup>12</sup> The author marketing services company has worked with high-profile clients including perhaps the best-known self-published author Hugh Howey. The website offers a book on author marketing as well as occasional courses and coaching.

5. <http://bubblecow.com/>

6. <http://www.thecreativepenn.com/podcasts/>

7. <http://www.thebookseller.com/futurebook>

8. <https://grubstreet.org/>

9. <http://www.slideshare.net/mackinaw/howtomakeabook-pressbooks>

10. <http://bit.ly/self-pub-video>

11. <http://janefriedman.com/blog/>

12. <http://outthinkgroup.com/>

**Self-Publishing Boot Camp by Carla King**<sup>13</sup> Carla King is a well-known self-published author who offers an almost overwhelming series of educational resources on her blog including books, workshops, blogs and guides, as well as coaching and author services. Check out the new 3rd edition of her Self-Publishing Boot Camp Guide for Authors book.

**Self-Publishing Review**<sup>14</sup> Good reviews are essential to your book's discoverability in the book stores. Self-Publishing Review offers reviews as well as title and description optimization and promotional services to assist with your successful book launch.

**Unbound**<sup>15</sup> On this site, authors can compete for crowdfunding and support in order to get their books published.

13. <http://selfpubbootcamp.com/>

14. <http://www.selfpublishingreview.com/>

15. <http://unbound.co.uk/>

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**Pressbooks.com**<sup>1</sup>

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or

Twitter: [@pressbooks](https://twitter.com/pressbooks)

1. <http://pressbooks.com/>

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