



# 3 STEPS

## to SELF-PUBLISHING

All the essential information you need  
to go from manuscript to marketplace



## Self-publishing simplified

### How to use this guide

BookBaby has helped thousands of authors self-publish books of every genre, in dozens of languages, and in every trim size and binding style. We've helped authors overcome every imaginable obstacle, and our team of professionals has the expertise to find a solution to any problem. But the best defense is a good offense, and this guide will help you navigate the self-publishing waters on your way to a successful publish and book launch.

Here's what our experience taught us.

### You need to take 3 steps:

- ① Finish your book
- ② Prepare your book for publishing
- ③ Collaborate with BookBaby to develop your book publishing plan

# STEP ①

## Finish your book

### IN THIS SECTION:

Professional editing is a must for your book  
What kind of editing does your book need?  
Promote then publish  
Finish your book in six months

## Editing is a must

The last words in your book might be “The End,” but your book isn’t finished until it’s been edited.

It’s an accepted fact: Getting your book edited is a must if your goal is to succeed in the publishing marketplace.

Your book is worth the investment of a professional editor, and here’s why:

- Editing = higher sales.
- BookBaby’s self-publishing survey interviewed 850 authors who earned significant royalties on their latest books. Over 70% of them had their books edited by a professional.

### Here are five reasons why a professional editor will improve your book — guaranteed

#### 1. Editing can turn a good book into a great read

Editing is like housework — it goes unnoticed unless it’s not done. Professional editing is an indispensable part of a novel’s journey to publication. Editing can transform your writing, get readers talking, reach the ears of professional publishers, and catch the eye of movie producers. A professional editor will make sure your reader remembers the dazzling plot and characterization — not your grammatical errors.

#### 2. Editors give honest, objective feedback

Lots of authors ask friends and beta readers to look at their work. While any feedback is welcome and can help improve the manuscript, friends tend to give positive encouragement. They can gloss over shortcomings to avoid offending you. Professional editors, on the other

hand, are experienced at giving criticism. They are systematic and thorough, covering not only familiar issues of grammar and punctuation, but also matters of style, pacing, dialogue, plot twists, and fact-checking. Above all, the feedback they give is honest and objective. Crafting a polished, captivating book that could become tomorrow's bestseller takes teamwork.

### **3. Editors work together with authors**

It's the editor's job to be honest with the author when suggesting improvements, all while respecting the author's message, meaning, tone, and style. Both the author and the editor have a shared interest in producing a work that gets — and keeps — the reader's attention. What's more, if an author so wishes, an experienced editor can also suggest ways to take the book in a direction that might better attract the eye of a publisher or agent.

### **4. An editor is a sounding board**

Authors often pour their deepest feelings, and even secrets, into their books. And, for that reason, they are often cautious about who reads their early drafts. In such cases, authors can benefit from the impartial opinion of an editor. An editor takes a bird's eye view, identifies the elements that work and those that don't, and suggests the necessary changes. While editors often get to know authors well through the editing process — especially in the case of developmental editing — they are not concerned with your private life.

### **5. Editing is a professional skill**

It can be tempting to ask a friend to edit your book — someone who is not an editor but who is good with language and is prepared to do the job for little or no cost. The issue is that you often get what you pay for. Editing is a profession like any other. It's an editor's job to help you produce a work that will keep your readers engaged and transport them to a place only found in a great book.

## **What kind of editing does your book need?**

From proofreading to line editing, here are the three main types of editing:

### **1. Proofreading**

This is a final check of a previously edited book. Proofreading is intended to pick up the final typos and spelling mistakes and to correct inconsistencies. In almost every case, the book has already gone through other more comprehensive forms of editing, and proofreading is a simple final check before publishing.

## 2. Copy editing

Copy editing is a word-by-word edit that addresses grammar, word usage, and consistency issues. Copy editors will check for typos and spelling errors, along with the correction of grammatical, linguistic, and syntactical errors. They will also pay particular attention to punctuation.

## 3. Line editing

Line editing is a more intensive structural edit that focuses on the finer aspects of language such as the flow of ideas, transitional elements, tone, and style. Line editors make sentences crisper and tighter by fixing redundancy and verbosity without a full rewrite. Line editors will look at the manuscript using a holistic methodology with a review of key aspects: the narrative, vocabulary, structure, characterization, style, and development.

## Promote then publish

### Develop a lifetime book marketing plan

Now, more than ever, readers are literally judging your book by its cover. With more than 80% of book sales happening online, your cover design is a tipping point.

This is a summary of BookBaby's *Promote Then Publish* guide, which is available [here](#).

To reach the widest possible audience with your writing, marketing is a necessary part of the equation. And it's not just a matter of how you market your book, but when. When asked to agree/disagree with the statement, "The marketing of a book should begin before the book is finished," 81% of high-earning authors agreed. Self-published authors need to develop a lifetime marketing plan.

### Visualize your audience

A good first step is to visualize the potential audience for your books. This should spur you to think about your potential readers. Book marketing is a way to engage and become part of the communities that will embrace your work.

### Three key elements of early-stage book marketing

Based on research conducted within our author community, we identified three key steps you should take during the early stages of the marketing of your book.

## **1. Work on SEO from the get-go**

While local bookstores play an integral role in bookselling, consider that nearly 80% of book sales happen online. Search engine optimization (SEO) plays an important role in selling books.

The words you use to describe your book in its metadata will serve as guideposts for readers to discover your book online. Optimizing your book marketing for search engines is just a matter of taking a structured approach to describing your book in a way that will help it be discovered by readers.

The key items to think about and refine are your book's long description, the short description, and your author bio.

## **2. Establish your online presence**

The goal of building an online presence is to develop contacts and build relationships. Commenting on blog posts and joining writer forums can be a good way to join ongoing conversations and establish yourself. Create an author website, start a blog, sell directly to readers through the BookBaby Bookshop, and maintain an active social media persona.

## **3. Start building your network early**

It's never too early to begin reviewing your personal and professional networks for fans who might be willing to spread the word about your book. How you build your network will be determined by what your ambitions are.

Establish an email list, send a monthly newsletter, and stay connected. Once you've built a list of contacts, it's important to actively engage.

Keep on marketing!

Publishing a book isn't just an event — it's the first milestone on a journey without an end. You're in this for a lifetime!

## **Finish your book in six months**

Can you get your book to market in six months? You can if you follow this plan! Here's how to get your manuscript finished and published quickly.

### **Month One/Two: Finish and self-edit your manuscript**

The first step is to finish writing your book. Stay loyal to a writing schedule in which you write and make progress every single day. Within a few weeks, you should be done with your first

draft, but that doesn't mean you're done writing. Next comes the rewriting. This is where you kill your darlings and shave down the prose so only that which is essential to the story remains. Buckle down and create a tight version of your manuscript which can serve as the foundation for what comes next.

### **Month Two: Hand your manuscript to a professional editor**

Finding a professional editor requires an investment, but it's worth having a professional take a critical look at every sentence, word, and syllable. At BookBaby, we tell every writer the same thing: edit or regret it. Keep in mind that a professional editor will need two to three weeks to do a thorough job.

### **Month Three: Editing is complete**

Your next step is to peruse your manuscript to affirm that you agree with the changes your editor has made. This is important, so take your time. Some authors accept all the changes and rush through this process blindly. Don't do that! This is your book and you get the final say.

### **Month Three/Four: Book production and planning**

As you approach the fourth month, you should have an edited manuscript ready to go. Now it's time to make a professional-looking product. The easiest way to do that is to partner with a full-service company like BookBaby. We'll help you complete the essential next steps to turn your manuscript into a beautiful book, including:

#### **Cover design**

The cover of your book is of the utmost importance. It's the first thing potential readers see when they come across your book, so you want to make your first impression count. It pays to hire a [professional cover designer](#) to ensure that your book looks like the real deal.

#### **Promotion plan**

How are you going to inform the world of your book's existence? Savvy authors know that good promotion starts early — long before your book enters the marketplace. Will you go big and hire a publicist? Solicit book reviews? Use social media ads? Or will you simply start small by announcing your book to your family and friends? Now is the time to begin jotting down all of your ideas for promoting your book and the reasons why readers will enjoy reading it.

#### **Publishing plan**

This is also the time to decide how, exactly, you're going to deliver your book to the world. Are you going to offer printed books? Will you also create eBooks? Partnering with aggregators who can handle [distribution](#) for you — on a global scale — is a great way to distribute your work.



When you choose to work with BookBaby, the first step is a consultation – whether it’s a friendly call or a Zoom meeting – with one of our experienced Publishing Specialists, to collaborate on the creation of your unique publishing plan. We’re with you every step of the way.

Once we’ve agreed on the plan, our team of seasoned publishing professionals rolls up their sleeves and gets to work, bringing your manuscript to life.

You provide your manuscript, and our team of publishing experts handles everything, ensuring your book is produced to the highest standards. You retain full rights to your work, and you always have the final say during each step of the process — satisfaction guaranteed.

### **Month Five/Six: Pre-sale**

Now’s the time to put things into motion. The first step? Pre-sale. If you’re distributing your book online, that means you need to set up a pre-sale period for your book within all the various online marketplaces and retail stores you’re utilizing. This, arguably, is the most important part of your book launch. Remember that publishing a book is just the beginning of your journey. The more time and effort you put into launching your book, the longer its lifespan in terms of finding new readers.

### **Month Six: Release date and book launch!**

Now your book is available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Apple Books, and all the distributors and retailers you’re partnering with. Congratulations!

Remember, publishing your book is a wonderful accomplishment. It lasts forever and can be enjoyed by readers for years to come.

Now that your book is available for sale to readers, the real fun of bookselling begins. It’s a joyous adventure to tell the world about your book and hear from readers who enjoyed reading it.

Printed books are arguably more social, as they’re easily loaned or passed along to friends and family. When a book is purchased digitally, it can only be read by the one account on whatever platform it’s been bought on. Ink-and-paper books have endless potential to circulate. Making printed books the best way for you to promote your book on the go.

Here’s how we propose you put [100 printed books to use](#).



## STEP ②

# Prepare your book for publishing

### IN THIS SECTION:

Why is book cover design so important?  
Book formatting: why your book needs it  
Don't have a cover designer?  
Prepping your print and eBook files

### Create a beautiful book from the inside out

Now that you've finished with your content, you need to make sure your book looks as good as it reads. Ask yourself:

- Will your cover design stand out in the crowded marketplace?
- How about inside the cover? Interior formatting turns your manuscript into an engaging book.
- Are your digital files properly prepared for print and eBook production?

These finishing details transform a good book into a bestseller!

## Why is book cover design so important?

An online book buyer will spend less than a second scanning a single cover image during the average browsing session. How will your book stand up to this near-instant buying decision?

Book covers aren't just important to authors in hopes of gaining sales. They're important to readers, too. According to Deloitte's research paper, Technology, Media & Telecommunications Predictions, "A key value of printed books appears to be their cover. Covers have been shown to not only drive sales but also send a message to those around you about what you are reading and what kind of person you are. As has been noted, 'the act of reading a book in public conveys important information to other readers.'"

A great cover design can also speak to fans of a genre and tell a little (or a lot) about the style of writing and the genre your book fits into. Here's a gallery of some of the standout book covers designed by the [professional cover designers](#) at BookBaby:



## Book formatting: why your book needs it

What makes a book a book? It starts with words. Lots of them. Tens of thousands usually. Or pictures. Or both.

You have to have a cover — and a back cover if it's a printed book. But beyond that, well, it gets a little hazy. Should you create a Table of Contents or a Title page or The Foreword?



For a book designer like BookBaby's Becky Rodriguez-Smith, what goes into a book is dozens of different things, large and small, that comprise the finished product. "What we do is turn a double-spaced manuscript, given to us in a Word document, into a real book," says Becky. "And when I say 'real book,' I mean we make it look professional and it can be compared to any other on the shelf of a bookstore. You can look at it, open it, feel it, and it looks like it was done by a major publishing company."

That professional look is usually accomplished by a service called book formatting. But what exactly is book formatting? Let's ask the expert. "Actually it's hard to explain sometimes to clients what they really get from it, especially brand-new authors," says our professional book designer,

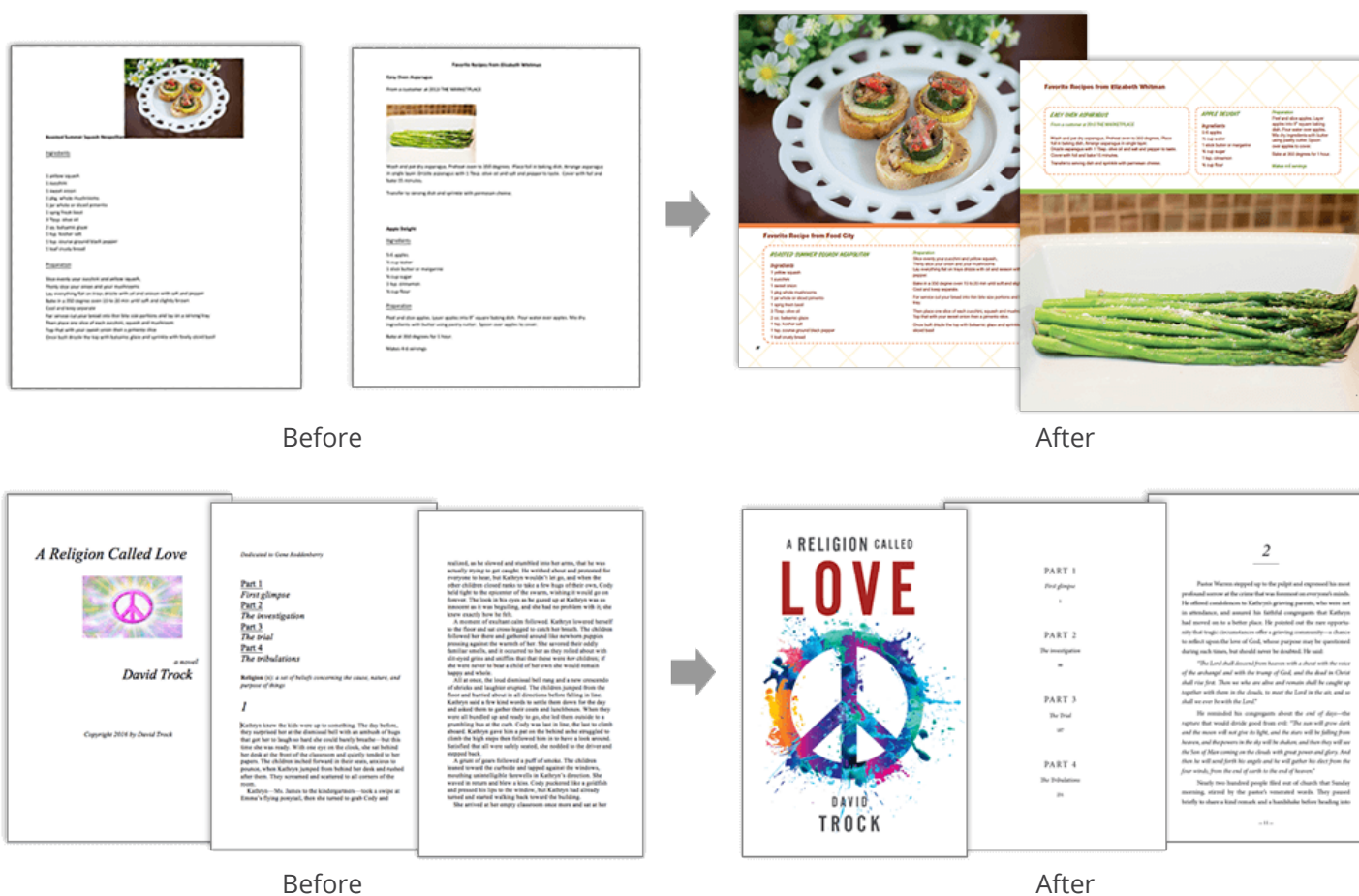
Becky. “But once they see the finished product and see the difference in appearance, it’s very easy to understand. It might not seem like much is happening, like applying a different style to chapter heads, designing copyright pages, and maybe running headers and footers. But it’s all those design details that really make a book a book!”

Once formatted, BookBaby designers send the author a PDF proof for review. This gives the author a chance to make corrections and provide comments to improve the final product. “We’re not formatting in Word or using any kind of template,” explains Becky. “We use design software developed specifically to produce beautiful-looking books.”

“The designers here at BookBaby have been around for a while. This is what we do, and we want authors to trust us to create a beautiful book. We’re not going to put something out there that doesn’t make them look great!”

“We’ve learned over the years and through experience what is going to grab the attention of readers and keep them engaged.”

## Here are some examples of how our book design team has transformed books for our clients:



## Don't have a cover designer?

Cover design influences a purchasing decision, so yours must be strong. Finding the right designer for your cover is a crucial step in your success story.

Before you pick a designer at random and shell out a few hundred dollars, consider the following:

### How can I find the right designer?

Designers frequently list their services on freelance marketplaces. Once you've found a candidate or two, look through their portfolios. Do you like the work they've done? Do they have a solid number of titles under their belt? Are the other covers in their arsenal in the same or similar genre to yours? Can you draft a contract and agree to a price point that you're comfortable with?

You can make it easy on yourself and go with BookBaby's [professional cover designers](#). We have a great team of experienced book designers who are ready to create something beautiful for you. Our book cover design rivals the works produced by the "Big 5" publishing houses.

“The most significant difference between working with Simon & Schuster and BookBaby was the amount of control I had over the project. With Simon & Schuster, they insisted on the final right of editing and made changes to my manuscript without my input. At BookBaby, I had a say in every aspect, including cover design.”

**Christopher Schildt**

Author, *An American Christmas Carol*

### Genre matters

A book designer with experience in mystery novels is going to know how to make your book look like it fits within that genre. That's crucial, since mystery readers are going to look at your cover for a split second and decide immediately whether or not it looks like a book for them. That doesn't mean the same designer will be adept at designing a memoir or nonfiction cover that suits your title.

### Do the process in reverse

Check titles in your genre to see if they've listed the cover artist and reach out to the ones



whose designs you like. If there's no listing, try messaging the author directly. Self-published authors typically want to help — especially if it means they get to talk about their books.

### **Does the designer have the right skills?**

Just because someone can make a lovely poster for a piano recital, it doesn't mean they're going to make an impactful book cover. Book cover design is a niche with rules, format requirements, and genre-specific needs. A book designer will know this.

### **Will you own the rights to the design?**

In all creative industries, discussing ownership and rights upfront is critical. There are authors who have published their books — with covers they paid for — only to have the designer demand they take it down.

It helps to have your own contracts prepared in advance so you have a starting point for negotiations. Include the expected timeline, rate, and terms for the cover design. This means stating the date the cover will be completed, how much you'll pay for it, how many revisions you're entitled to, what happens if the contract is terminated, and who owns the rights to the finished work.

### **Working with a designer should be a collaboration**

It's your job to give your designer the broad strokes of what you want in your cover design, and it's their job to deliver. But this doesn't mean a designer can read your mind. Provide covers that inspire you. Send them a Pinterest board, a video montage, a bunch of paint chips with poetry on them — whatever it is that you feel best communicates the look you want for your book cover.

And then, talk it through. Be clear and thorough. Answer questions. Ask for changes on first or second drafts and know that it's okay to walk away if the relationship begins to head south. If a designer isn't giving you what you're looking for, or if after two revisions the cover still isn't right, it's okay for you to cancel your contract. You can find another designer but you can't buy a second chance at impressing your readers.

## **Prepping your print and eBook files**

### **Preparing your print files**

Why should you print your book with BookBaby? We're a book-printing company staffed by professionals utilizing the world's best digital book printing and binding equipment.

While every individual book project is different, the results are always the same:

- Eye-popping colors
- Crisp and even ink coverage
- Consistent print on quality paper stocks
- Sturdy, tight book binding

Every successful printing project begins with the work we do with authors' digital book files. Our experienced prepress technicians check every detail of the printing file to ensure a quality job.

You can give our experienced team a head start on the process by learning a few of the key elements. Download our free guide, [How to Prepare Graphics Files For Book Printing](#). When you follow the simple guidelines explained within, you'll guarantee your files are up to spec and simplify the work we need to do to prepare your book for production. That can save time and money on your project.

### **Preparing your eBook files**

Successful self-published authors know that eBooks are an essential format to gain new readers.

How do you create eBooks? You can take your chance with free services that (allegedly) convert documents into eBook formats, or you can come to BookBaby and get the highest-quality eBook conversion services in the business. Our experienced prepress technicians create every kind of digital book file and perform dozens of quality checks on every book, including an evaluation on all the popular eReaders.

You can help us create your eBooks by downloading our free PDF guide, [How To Prepare Your eBook Files](#). Our instructions are easy to understand and will help your project go smoothly and on-schedule.

Producing digital books is a technical exercise best left to the experts. When you choose to publish your book with BookBaby, our team of digital book conversion specialists will do all the coding, conversion, and testing work for you. All you have to do is supply your book, and we do the rest (just like a major publishing house).

## STEP ③

# Collaborate with BookBaby to develop your book publishing plan

### In this section:

- Print On Demand (POD) distribution
- Direct-to-reader sales
- Advertising your book

## Print On Demand (POD) distribution

Print On Demand (POD) is a game-changer for self-published authors who seek the widest distribution possible.

With POD, books are printed and shipped directly to readers or retailers on demand (when an order is placed). This technology allows self-published authors to sell printed books via online bookstores worldwide without upfront printing costs or inventory storage burdens. As technology has advanced, it has eliminated the need for large, offset print runs, allowing millions of indie authors to produce their work in print at a fraction of the cost.

To have your print books put into POD distribution:

**1. Your book files need to be prepared in a print-ready format.** This is usually a formatted PDF, not a Word document or eBook. To make sure your book files are prepared to your specifications, it's always best to have copies printed first. We recommend printing at least 25 copies so that the printing machines can be optimized and fine-tuned for producing your books on-demand in the future. Plus, you're going to need these physical copies for use at signings, local bookstores, and all your other sales and promotion endeavors.

**2. You'll need to reach the market via a capable POD distributor.** At BookBaby, we offer the most extensive global POD distribution program in the industry.



# HOW PRINT ON DEMAND WORKS

The cost-effective way to print and ship your book directly to readers.



## Made to order

Your book files are prepared and formatted for printed book production.



## On the big stage

Your book is listed on the world's biggest websites, like Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Powell's, Books-A-Million, and many more.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Amazon alone isn't enough; your book should be listed in as many retail sites as possible to allow readers to discover your book. You can also list your book on direct-to-reader sites such as Bookshop..



## In search of you

The reader discovers and orders your book.

Or more commonly, as research shows, they buy from a link sent out from an author's email, tweet, post, or advertisement.



## Order up

The retailer's site sends a message to the print-on-demand distributor and orders your book. The printer receives the order, prints, binds, and packages the book.



## Reader's mailbox

The book is shipped to the retailer's warehouse, or they may stock a supply of your books if sales warrant it. The retailer ships the book to the reader.



## Profit

The retailer pays the print-on-demand distributor a percentage of the selling price. The print-on-demand distributor passes along the net sales revenue to you. Cha-ching!

You can earn the best royalties in the industry when you sell directly to readers through BookBaby's Bookshop.

## Direct-to-reader sales

Make more money and get paid faster when you sell directly to your readers

[BookBaby Bookshop](#) is the world's most author-friendly bookstore. With Bookshop, it's incredibly easy (and lucrative) for authors to sell their books directly to their eager readers. Authors using BookBaby for their retail distribution also receive a free e-commerce page.

### **BookShop offers three important advantages to independent authors:**

- 1. You get paid more** — a lot more. BookBaby authors earn 85% in royalties on eBooks sold through their custom Bookshop page. That compares with rates of 30-70% selling through Amazon. Audiobooks earn 75% in royalties through Bookshop, while you'll only get 25-40% selling on Audible. For POD titles, Bookshop sales earn authors a guaranteed 50% in royalties, which is much more than the 8-15% earned on Amazon.
- 2. You get paid fast.** Amazon and other retailers hold onto your royalties for 90-120 days. When you sell on Bookshop, BookBaby credits your account typically 7-10 days after your reader buys your title.
- 3. Your printed book never goes out of stock.** The biggest challenge with most POD programs is that Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and other retailers must have your book on hand in their gigantic warehouse systems in order to show the book in stock on their websites. That's never a problem with Bookshop. Your printed title is available 24/7, 365 days a year because your readers are buying directly from the printer!

## Advertising your book

Want to grow your audience? Make digital advertising a part of your marketing plan.

If you want your book to reach as many readers as possible, book marketing and promotion should be a priority. To create an effective marketing and promotion strategy, you need to be where your ideal audience is and then you need to pique their interest and encourage them to read your book.

BookBaby can [help you advertise](#) through two major marketing channels where authors are seeing success in promoting their books: social media advertising and digital display advertising.

## Social media advertising

Advertising via social media platforms can be a powerful tool for self-published authors looking to promote their books and build readership.

The goal is to tap into these huge user bases with targeted ad campaigns, but advertising on any of these platforms can be challenging if you don't have experience with social networks. Consider putting the experts from BookBaby to work to create a professional ad campaign that targets readers on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn who are likely to have interest in your book.

## Digital display advertising

Your secret weapon in the quest for new readers might be through display ads. BookBaby uses the Google Display Network to advertise your book online. Thanks to versatile targeting options, it's an easy and effective way to advertise to readers in your genre.

The process works just the same as social media ads, and includes ad development, design, and reporting. This service specifically places display ads that promote your book on the websites most likely to be visited by your potential readers.

## Now you're ready to publish!

We've covered the three important steps on the road to self-publishing. Now that you've read this guide, you're armed with all the essential information you need to take your book from manuscript to the marketplace.

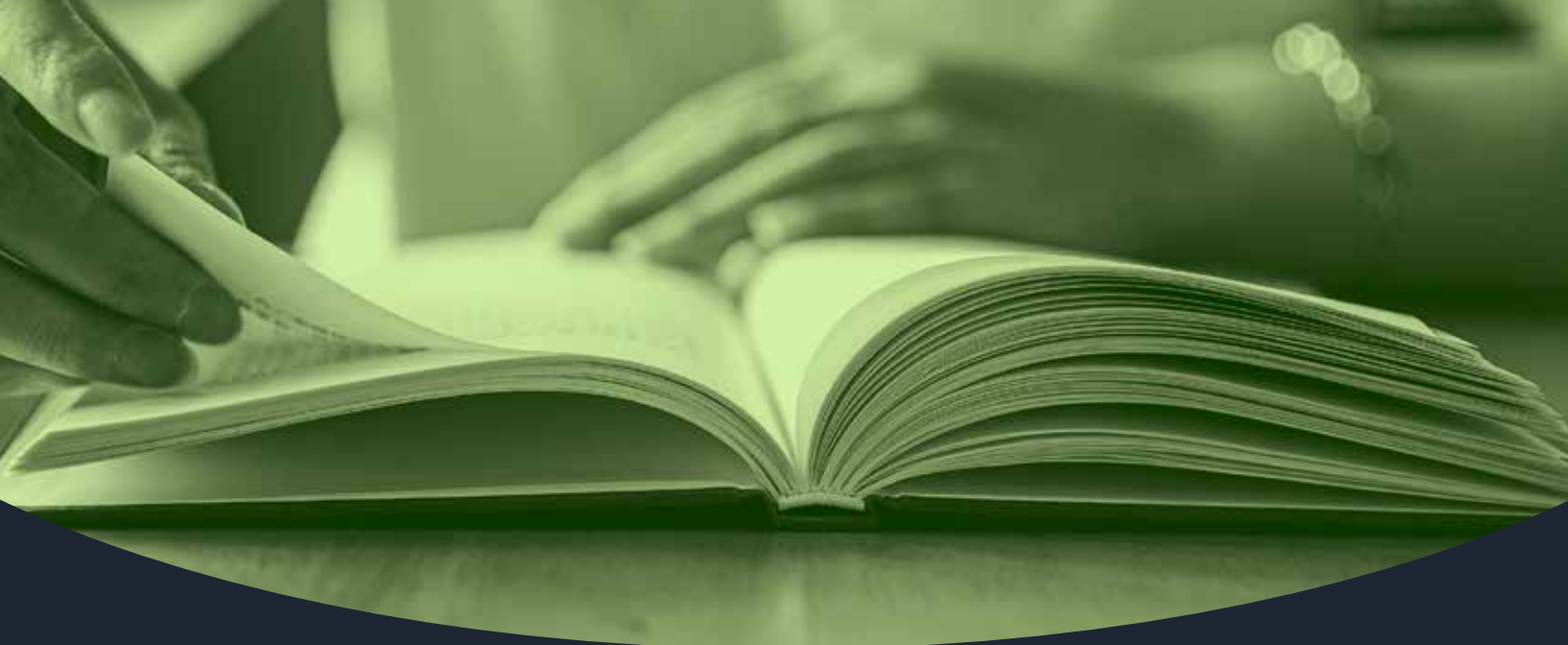
Remember, self-publishing doesn't mean you doing it yourself. The friendly and knowledgeable publishing experts at BookBaby are ready to assist you. Let's get your book project started today!

**1-877-961-6878**

[info@bookbaby.com](mailto:info@bookbaby.com)



If your manuscript is finished and you're ready to publish now, please [schedule an appointment](#) with our Publishing Specialists. Together we will build the perfect publishing plan for your book.



[bookbaby.com](https://bookbaby.com)

### **Sales and general questions:**

Phone: 1-877-961-6878 Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET (Option 1)

Email: [info@bookbaby.com](mailto:info@bookbaby.com)

Please note that emails received after 4 p.m. ET may not be responded to the same business day.

### **Post-sales and production:**

Phone: 1-877-961-6878 Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET (Option 2)

Email: [support@bookbaby.com](mailto:support@bookbaby.com)

Please note that emails received after 4 p.m. ET may not be responded to the same business day.

### **eBook and Print On Demand distribution:**

Phone: 1-877-961-6878 Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET (Option 3)

Email: [distribution@bookbaby.com](mailto:distribution@bookbaby.com)

Please note that emails received after 4 p.m. ET may not be responded to the same business day.

All testimonials are from actual clients.

Check out our Trustpilot page: [bookbaby.com/reviews](https://bookbaby.com/reviews)