

Self-Publishing 101

A guide by Beth Martin

What is Publishing?

Publishing is the act of making a book available to the public.

Traditional Publishing

An author gives their publisher the rights to sell their book. The publisher will then:

- Edit the manuscript
- Make a cover
- Format the book into an ebook, paperback, and/or hardcover
- Produce, store, and distribute copies of the book
- Market
- And more!



Self-Publishing

When self-publishing,
YOU* are the publisher!

*This means that you'll have to do
everything yourself.



Why You Should Self-Publish



- Complete creative control
- Better royalties
- Faster than working with a large publisher

Why you Shouldn't Self-Publish

- You won't have the help of a team behind you.
- It can get expensive.
- Publishing is time-consuming and can take away from your writing.

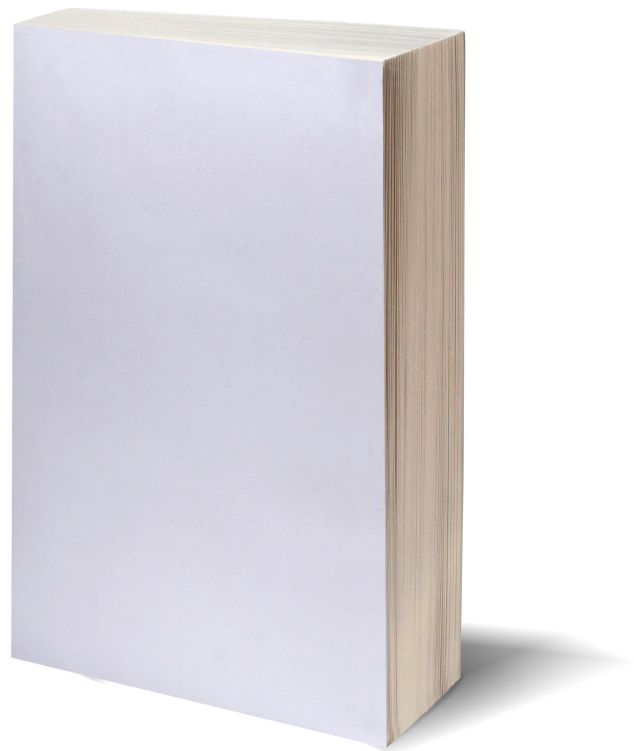


You're in Business!

When you decide to self-publish you are starting a business, so it's important to treat it as such. Invest in making a quality product! Lots of readers enjoy indie books, but no one wants to buy an *amateur* book.

How to Self-Publish

1. Write a book
2. Edit
3. Package
4. Distribute
5. Market



Step 1: Write a Book

Writing a novel is really hard and takes a lot of time, and I don't want to detract from the work involved.

However, pursuing publishing is a whole other beast. Whether you decide to traditionally publish or self-publish, you're in for a lot of work. There are unique challenges to each publishing avenue, but I'm going to keep the scope to just self-publishing for this presentation.

Step 2: Editing

I *highly* recommend working with a professional editor.

There are three common types of editing:

- Developmental (sometime called structural)
 - An alternative is to ask others to 'beta read' and point out inconsistencies and areas which need improvement
- Copy or line edits
- Proofreading

At the very least, invest in a proofread of your manuscript! Freelance editors are pretty easy to find online, or ask a fellow author to recommend one.

Step 3: Packaging



The 'packaging' of a book is the most important aspect of book marketing. In order of importance, this includes

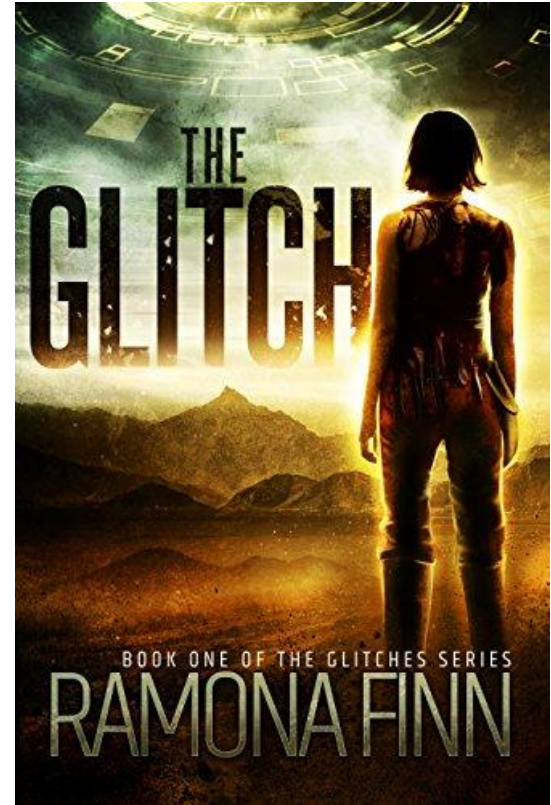
1. Cover
2. Blurb
3. Author Bio
4. Reviews
5. Price (I'll go into detail on this later)
6. Formatting

Cover Design

DO NOT MAKE YOUR OWN COVER! Nothing makes a book look more amateur than a bad cover. Getting a professional cover from a freelance designer can be expensive, but some artists offer pre-made covers at an excellent discount.

A cover needs to:

- Be eye-catching and memorable
- Communicate genre
- Demonstrate the theme of the book



Blurb

The blurb, or description, is the sales copy which will appear on the book's product page and is commonly printed on the back cover of the paperback version. Instead of summarizing the story, the blurb should entice the reader, encouraging them to purchase and read the entire book.

Typically, blurbs are in present tense, use active voice, and get the reader asking questions. They should be longer than an elevator pitch, but no more than 250 words.

Author Bio

Readers want to know more about you, and your author bio is their first look at you—the person.

Your bio should include

- Any writing accolades—best seller, Pulitzer winner, etc
- Expertise—either your writing preferences or your qualifications
- Personality—something about yourself that is relatable

Jenna Moreci has an excellent video on how to write a bio at:

<https://youtu.be/tqW72oev8HY>



Reviews

Readers use book reviews as a gauge of a book's quality before making a purchase. Although books receive organic reviews, the first few reviews are crucial. There are several ways to get reviews.

- Pay a review service like Kirkus.
- Contact book reviewers and book bloggers.
- Ask your followers/fans (but don't ask friends and family) and people who read books like yours for a review.

Review copies of your book should be free. Never ask someone to buy your book *and* review it.

Formatting

Although formatting is definitely something you can do yourself, there's a steep learning curve. Professional formatting is fairly affordable and can save you from some headache.

Formatting: Ebook



For indie authors, the majority of their book sales are ebooks.

The standard format for ebooks is ePub which uses HTML and CSS. If you know how to use styles in Microsoft Word, there is free software which will convert your Word Doc into an ePub file.

Amazon uses a different file format for their ebooks, however, you can upload your book file as a Word Doc or ePub, and they will convert it for you.

Make a Paperback version

This will:

- Make your book more legitimate
- Give a price comparison to make the electronic version feel like a 'deal'
- Provide a physical thing to sell at author signings, conventions, and fairs

Step 4: Distribution

Books are sold in several formats including hardcover, paperback, ebook, and audio.

Although there are several avenues for distributing books, I'll be going over the most common methods for ebooks and paperbacks.

Distributing Ebooks

Amazon accounts for 74% of ebook sales, so they will be the biggest distributor for your book.

Kindle Unlimited is a program where readers pay a monthly subscription fee to read as many books as they want that are enrolled in the program. Authors get paid for each page read under the program. If your ebook is enrolled in Kindle Unlimited, it cannot be for sale on any other platform.

Going Wide refers to making your book available on several online retailers. This can be done by submitting your book to each retailer separately or going through a distributor like Smashwords or Draft2Digital.

Printing Copies

In the past, the only way to get physical copies of your book was to do a print-run of hundreds to thousands of copies which had to be paid for upfront. Then the author would have to find a place to store all these copies and distribute them by themselves.

With Print-on-Demand, when a customer orders a copy of your book, the printer will print just one copy and mail it directly to the customer. The two major POD companies are:

- Ingram
- KDP

Author Copies



POD printers also allow the author to purchase copies of their own books at cost plus shipping. I like to keep a number of books on hand to sell at events and so I can offer signed copies through my website.

A Note on ISBN

Each book sold through retailers is required to have an International Standard Book Number, or ISBN. Bowker is the only company which sells ISBNs in the United States. They have priced the numbers prohibitively high (\$125 for one, \$295 for ten), so I don't recommend purchasing your own.

If you chose Ingram to print your books, you will have to provide your own ISBN.

KDP can provide a free ISBN. However, that number can only be used for printing with KDP and will show "Independently published" as the publisher.

Step 5: Marketing

No one is going to buy your book if they don't know it exists. There are many ways to get the word out about your amazing new book.

- Print out bookmarks or postcards with info for your book and give a bunch to coffee shops or booksellers and hand them out to anyone/everyone.
- Get a table at book fairs and conventions.
- Set up an author signing at a local bookstore.
- Submit a press release to local newspapers.
- Tell everyone you talk to that you're an author!

Online Marketing

There are three major types of online marketing:

- **Social Media:** This includes your author website/blog, twitter, facebook, snapchat, instagram, tumblr, or whatever platform you choose. Social Media marketing is free, but it takes time and dedication to build a following.
- **Promotions:** There are several ebook promotions which will include your book in their newsletters for a fee. These can range from amazing (Bookbub) to scammy.
- **Advertising:** You can also purchase ads for your book. The most effective for ebooks are AMS (Amazon Marketing Services) and Facebook Ads.

Step 6: Get Paid!

The fun part, royalties!

- You get to set the price (or MSRP) for your book.
- Retailers will pay between 45%-70% of the MSRP for each copy they sell—this is your royalty!
 - Amazon pays 60% for KDP POD books and 70% for ebook copies.
- Printing and distribution costs are subtracted from your royalty.
- Most retailers will pay monthly royalties from 30-60 days from after the end of the month.



Pricing your book

It's always best to look at the price of other indie books within the same genre and around the same length as your book to get an idea of what readers expect to pay.

To receive 70% royalties on Amazon, your ebook should be priced between \$2.99-\$9.99. Outside of this range, you will only get 35% per sale.

For paperback copies, royalties range from 45%-60%. However, printing costs are deducted from your royalties. For example: I have a 200-page book which costs \$3.25 to make, sells for \$12.99, and receives a 60% royalty. So for each copy sold, I make $(\$12.99 \times 60\%) - \3.25 which comes to \$4.54.

THE END

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments!

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Learn more about me at:

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