

THE BOOK DESIGNER *presents*

10 Things You Need to Know About Self- Publishing

Joel Friedlander



***Don't Make These 10 Common
Self-Publishing Mistakes!***

Introduction

Are you thinking about turning your work in progress into a work in print? Or maybe you're realizing you can publish straight to e-books with little cost or risk.

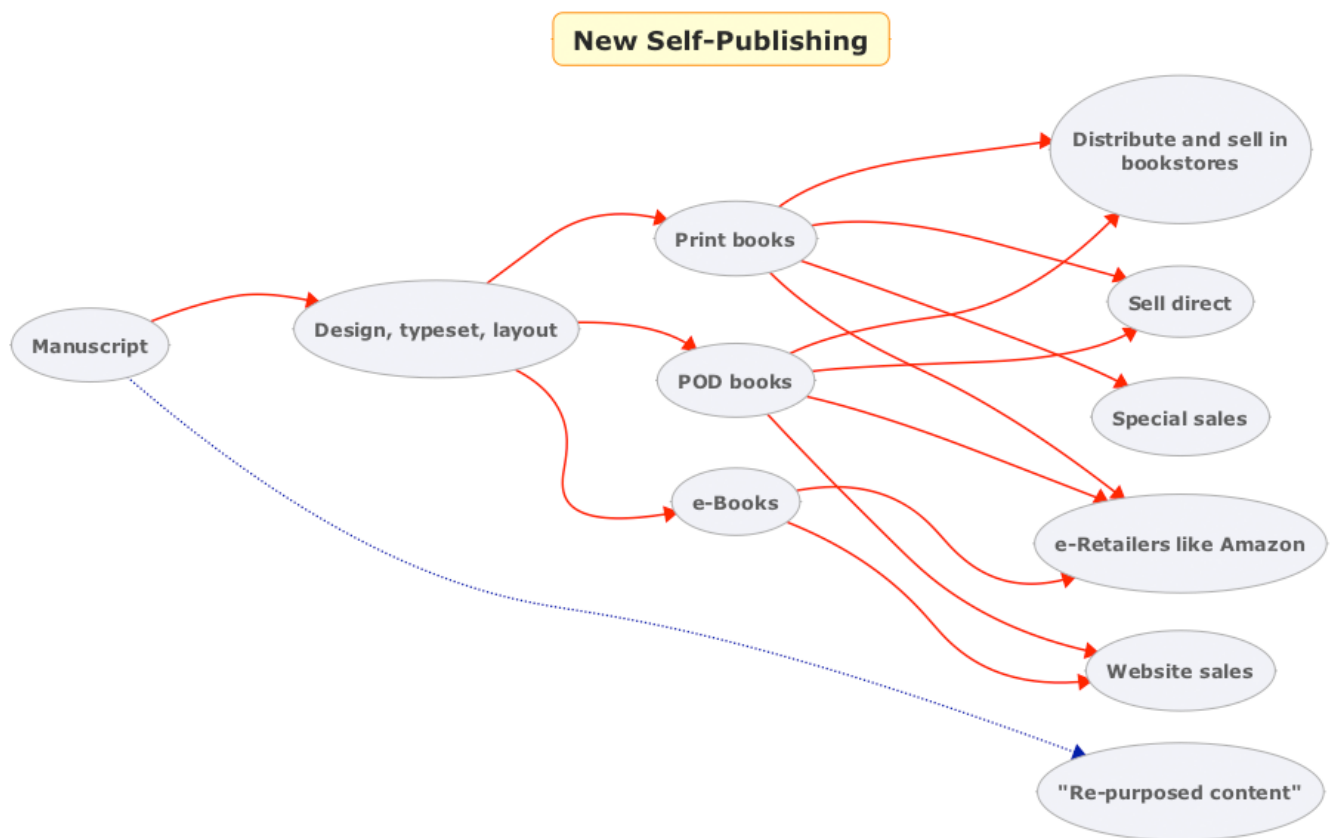
But while a lot of publishing has become more available, that doesn't mean it's become any easier or less confusing. In fact, there are some good reasons it's actually harder today to figure out how to publish your book than it's been in the past.

Take a look at this chart, which shows how books were traditionally self-published.



Very similar to traditional publishing, we polished our manuscripts, went through a design and production process that took some time, printed a bunch of books at a short-run book printer, and then used the available channels to sell our books. It took a lot of creativity and drive, and thousands of dollars, but we did it.

Let's look at what this process looks like now, on the next page:



This new world of self-publishing looks like an out-of-control spaghetti party, doesn't it? There are so many new options since the introduction of print on demand (POD) and e-books, so many new ways to find an audience, and so many choices you face when you try to come up with a strategy that will get you to your goals.

That's where this guide will help. It's got lots of real-world tips so you can begin to position, publish and promote your self-published book. (And avoid a whole bunch of mistakes along the way.)

So let's get started!

1: Start Building Your Author Platform Today

Set up or assess social media / author platform presence and responsiveness

The biggest asset authors have today is **social media**.

You might wonder why the very first tip I have to share is about social media, and not about book publishing, cover design, which font to use or something more focused on books.

But the reality in today's world of indie publishing is that you need to create a way for your book to stand out from the tens of thousands of other books being published. You need to find the readers who will support your publishing, create excitement for when the book comes out and, hopefully, build a community that will be with you for years to come.

The best way to do that today is social media. Why? Think of all the things social media gives us that we just didn't have before:

- a quick way to build a community of like-minded people
- easy tools for publishing our ideas, our stories
- simple methods for carrying on conversations that build trust and interactiveness

Almost every new tool on the internet now arrives with a social component, and sites built around social interaction and the follow/following, status update model are incredibly popular.



On [Facebook](#) you can interact, build a fan page, announce new events about your books and promotion and post photos and links to supporting media.

On [Twitter](#) you can gather a following of people in your niche, interact with thought leaders, participate in #chats and other discussions and drive traffic to your own site.

On [Goodreads](#) you can participate in a book-loving community, get information on author events, share your own reading adventures with other readers and build a community of your own.

On [Google+](#) you can post longer articles, create all kinds of private or semi-private circles to share and collaborate, and use the quick video conferencing for fan interaction events or virtual meetings with research subjects or staff.

On [LinkedIn](#) you can participate in discussions, ask questions, run your own groups and build a large network of business professionals in your specialty. Gaining a reputation and following on LinkedIn is extremely valuable.

On [YouTube](#) you can post videos with tips, answers to common questions, book trailers, walkthroughs and just about anything else you can think of. Gather subscribers and stay in touch with regular updates.

Your **blog** is the center of your social media universe, where you put out new ideas, run surveys, interact with commenters, offer more interaction with an opt-in, and keep a schedule of author events and promotional appearances.

Twitter for self-publishers

[Twitter](#) is one of the best places to research topics, find who the influential people in your field are, and to make connections with readers and experts from all over the world.

The articles linked to every day in the publishing field would provide quite an education in themselves.

But lots of authors are hesitant to get involved with Twitter because it seems strange and incomprehensible.

Here's a resource that can help. It's a list of 61 people on Twitter who have terrific and useful content they pass along.

What's great about this is that you can follow all of them at once, with just a keystroke.

Log into your Twitter account, then go to this link and simply follow the whole Twitter List at once:

[Twitter Self-Publishing List](#)

2: Your Book Needs to be Edited

Evaluate your manuscript and hire a freelance editor to get it ready for publication.

You can't get far with a book that hasn't been edited.

Getting your manuscript properly edited before you go any farther is just good sense. There's nothing that will sink your chances faster than publishing a book that's full of errors, typos, lack of continuity, factual mistakes, or other obvious signs it still needs work.

Even if you have a small or very very small budget, you can find a way to get the book edited. Now, some books will only need a light read through and correction, but others may require much more remedial work.

That's okay. Let me tell you something. These books are going to be around for a long, long time. Even though self-publishing is exciting, and you probably can't wait to see your baby up for sale and getting rave reviews, you need to take the time to make sure it's right first.

There are lots of ways to find editors willing to give you a sample of what they would do with your book, or give you an idea of how much it will cost to do the editing you need. Don't be bashful, this is an important part of getting published, and it's one the publishers used to do for you.

Check out the resources that will help you find an editor and let's move along.

Finding an Editor doesn't have to be impossible, it just takes a bit of research

Websites of editors' associations allow you to search on keywords to zero in on people experienced in your field.

Ask authors about their experience with editors, and whether they would recommend someone they worked with.

Identify 2 or 3 editors and phone or email to talk about your book, schedule, and their fees.

Send a few pages for a sample edit, which should be free. Use the same sample for each editor for a direct comparison.

Start with these:

[Editorial Freelancers Association](#)

[Bay Area Editor's Forum](#)

[Editors' Association of Canada](#)

[San Diego Professional Editors Network](#)

3: Decide Which Parts You'll Do Yourself

Go through the differences and decide where your strengths are, which selects your path.

You need to know at the start if you're **DIY** or **Pro-Team**.

This decision is a big one for lots of people. Let's face it, the book you've been dreaming about looks like the latest Stephanie Meyer, doesn't it? Well, here's the problem. If you want a book that looks like it was produced by professionals, you're going to have to hire those professionals to create the book for you.

It's just not possible to acquire all those editorial, design, typography and cover creation skills in the next few weeks so you can do it yourself. That's why this is such a big decision, because it will affect lots of other things you'll be doing later on.

Four people will be really important if this is the way you want to go: editor, cover designer, book layout artist, and marketing consultant. The first three will get your book where it should be, the last is the one who can tell you what that book ought to look like, and how it should be priced.

I'm not saying you can't do any of this yourself, because I don't know what talents and experience you bring to the table, do I? That's what you'll have to decide.

But keep in mind that if you want your book to take you some places—like TV appearances, bookstore signings, top speaking gigs—you're going to need a book that looks as good as anyone else's book. And that means finding the people who can do it with you.

Are you **DIY** or **Pro-Team**?

Making this decision will have lots of effects, so consider wisely.

You might do part of the book design and production, and rely on a pro designer for the rest.

The best way to use a limited budget is to prioritize. The first priority is to hire an editor. The next would be to find a professional cover designer.

Bringing on these two professionals will immediately put your book in the very top tier of self-published books. It's how you can give your book the best chance for success right from the beginning.

When your publishing goals require a "professional" looking book, you'll need to budget for those expenses.

Keep in mind these are one-time-only costs, and can be looked at as more of an investment in the asset you are building (your book).

4: Get to Know Your Readers

How can you find the people who will buy your book? By researching them.

Want to sell books? It helps to know who buys them.

Okay, I know you want to be an author, and that authors write what they need to write, the “stories that must be told” or to advance the passion that drove them to start thinking about writing that book in the first place.

But when you become a self-publisher, you have to be able to switch hats between the creative artist (author) and the businessperson (publisher). That’s where reader research comes in.

For many authors it isn’t very difficult to know who the readers are, because the author is part of the same market. What I mean is that you might be an avid reader of historical romances and be an author of historical romances. In this case “you are the market” and the challenge will be to see the whole market through the eyes of a prospective reader.

In other cases you may not be the market, and it’s up to you to find out as much as you can about your potential readers. For instance:

- Where do they hang out?
- What other books do they buy on this topic?
- Who are the people with the biggest audience?
- Are there active blogs or other communities where your topics are being discussed?



How can you put this into action today? Here are some quick tips:

- 1 Google the subject of your topic followed by the word “**forum**.” For instance, if you’re writing a book about pizza baking, google “baking forums” and check out the resulting sites for discussions and groups where your prospects congregate.
- 2 Find the most active and highest-traffic blogs in your field. For many browsers you can install a plugin that will show you statistics about the blogs you’re visiting. For instance, I use a plugin for Google’s Chrome browser called [SEO for Chrome](#) that will show the Google page rank and Alexa rank for any website. Although you can’t rely totally on these tools, they give you a good idea of the relative influence (page rank) or traffic (Alexa rank) of the site in question.
- 3 Check the **Amazon top 100** bestsellers for your category. Between examining the books themselves and locating the authors’ websites or blogs, there’s a treasure trove of information available this way.
- 4 Get a copy of Brian Clark’s free SEO report, [How to Create Compelling Content that Ranks Well in Search Engines](#). *(affiliate)*

Start keeping track in a spreadsheet, a binder or some other way of these sites and your notes on them. This will be incredibly useful to you as you move forward with your book.

Readers: They’ll be with you for a long time

Your author blog is the best place to bring readers to interact with you.

A blog has lots of other advantages, too. You can use it to:

- » Ask for an opt-in to your mail list
- » Engage in conversation in your blog’s comments area
- » Release new material for works in progress
- » Create search-engine friendly articles to draw traffic
- » Run surveys or contests for your readers
- » Track where your visitors come from

You’ll find your author blog will become the hub of your online book marketing activities.

5: Print Books and/or e-Books?

Some books are better in print, others e-book, lots are good in both.

What is a book anyway? Hard to tell these days.

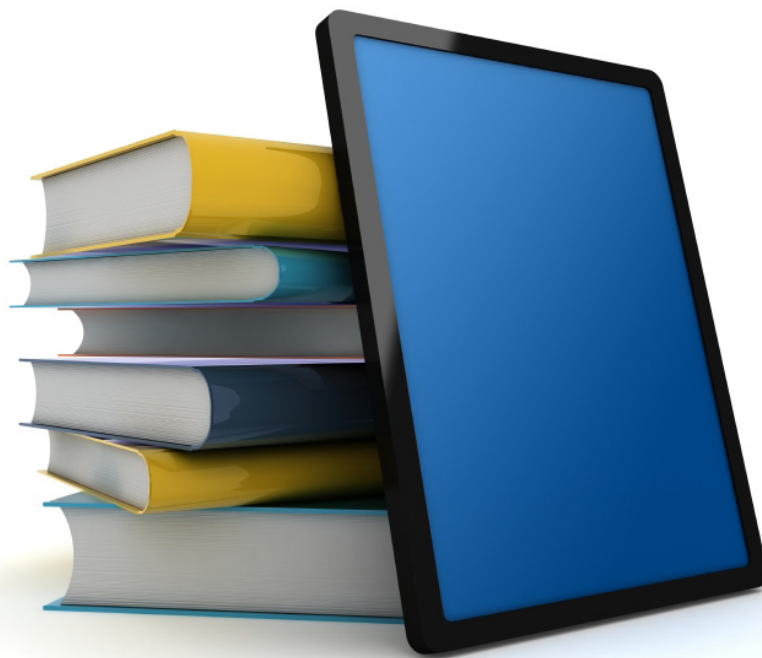
When you know what kind of book you're going to publish, and you know something about the readers who will buy it, it's time to figure out the best way to publish the book, and here you've got some great options.

- For instance, lots of novelists are now publishing straight to **e-books**. This is a great strategy when you're starting out because you can get feedback from the market on your work. It requires very little time or expense to publish this way, and you can do almost all the work yourself.
- You'll still need an edited manuscript and some kind of graphic as a JPG for the "cover" of your book. But once you've got those, you can upload your book and be on sale on the **Kindle** or **Nook** platform in a matter of hours. The controls in both places will also help you determine the best price for your book, since it's quite easy to change the price.
- But let's say your book is a non-fiction "**how-to**" book on a pretty popular subject. You'll probably want to publish the book as an e-book but also as a print book.
- With **instructional** material, lots of people like to have the book they are studying next to them on their desk or table, as a reference, to make notes in, to highlight for later study. If you know your readers and their habits, you won't want to omit this from your plan.



- In some cases these print books can be produced by digital printing and **print on demand** distribution. The terrific advantage to this option is that you don't have to put up thousands of dollars in advance and store and ship lots of books from your home or office. The books are printed one at a time in response to orders, so every book is paid for before it's printed, and you never have inventory you have to worry about.
- But if your book is **heavily illustrated**, like a photography book, or a book of fine art, you're going to need to find an offset printer who can produce the quality of book you need at a price you can afford.

Working your way through all these options can be confusing if you don't know anything about printing or book production. These options range from doing everything yourself to projects on which you'll need some expert assistance to get the best job and the most profit from your book.



6: Understand ISBNs

The pros and cons of getting your own ISBNs and how to set yourself up as a publisher.

Do you really need to spend \$bucks on **ISBNs**?

Well, this is going to be an easy one. You don't have to be confused about ISBN and how it's used.

Let's start with the basics. ISBN stands for International Standard Book Number. It's an international system of identifying books that asks you to assign a different unique identifier to each separate edition of your book.

For instance, if you print a paperback and also a hardcover of your book, that's two different editions. Having a unique ISBN for each will assure that people looking for the paperback don't find the hardcover by mistake. Make sense?

So how many formats are you likely to encounter?

- **Paperback** is one format. Even if the paperback is printed at more than one printer, assuming each version is exactly the same, it's only one edition and only needs one ISBN.
- **Hardcover** is one format and needs its own ISBN.
- **e-Books** can be three different formats, so if you issue your book in one or more of these, each one will require its own ISBN:
 - **Kindle** (although Amazon doesn't require it, you can assign an ISBN to your Kindle edition)

ISBN and what you need to know

The funny thing about ISBNs is that you can get one for nothing, or you can pay \$125 for one, and that can sometimes be the better deal.

Strange as it sounds, the "free" ISBNs offered by many print on demand vendors and publisher services companies can cause problems for you if you want to switch to a different printer.

The free ISBN will always identify the company that issued it as the publisher of record, not you.

If you decide to set up your own publishing company to publish your book, it's a good idea to get your own ISBNs from **Bowker**.

You can easily use 3 ISBNs on one book in 3 editions, so buying 10 for \$250 is an investment in your publishing future. Here's the link:

[Bowker's ISBN Portal](#)

- **ePub**, the format used by Nook, iBooks, and almost all other e-book readers
- **PDF**, the fixed-format Adobe version that's used for lots of instructional e-books, manuals and art books

So if you published a book called "Pizza Dough Magic" and issued a paperback, a hardcover, a Kindle, an ePub and a PDF version you would need 5 separate and unique ISBNs, one for each version. Your copyright page might look something like this (although this is a pretty unlikely scenario):

Hardcover: ISBN 978-0-1234567-0-1
Trade paper: ISBN 978-0-1234567-1-2
Kindle: ISBN 978-0-1234567-2-3
ePub: ISBN 978-0-1234567-3-4
PDF: ISBN 978-0-1234567-4-5

On the other hand, if you want to publish a book and you don't plan to sell it anywhere, or if you only plan to sell it yourself, by hand at gatherings or at the back of the room when you do a personal presentation, or if your book is just intended for family members, you don't need an ISBN at all. Isn't that interesting?

You can get ISBNs from **Bowker**, the company that issues all ISBNs in the U.S. If you live in a different country, you'll need to find out who issues the ISBNs there. Here, just head over to myidentifiers.com. Ten ISBNs there will cost you \$250, but you'll also be able to set up your record as a publisher, and this data is used for the Books in Print database. You want to be in there.

By the way, the **barcode** you see on the back of books is simply a scannable version of the ISBN. These barcodes can be supplied by your printer, or you can get your own at a low cost from lots of vendors. I use [Barcodegraphics](http://Barcodegraphics.com), where a Bookland/EAN barcode (that's the kind you want) will cost you \$10 and be emailed to you in just a couple of minutes.



7: Create a Budget

Look at costs for your kind of publishing to get an idea what you'll need to spend.

A lot of people get into self-publishing thinking they won't have to spend anything at all, but that's really not the case. I don't want you to be disappointed, but it is going to cost something to get your book into print. At the low end you can expect to at least pay for proof copies of a print on demand book and the shipping fee to get them to you. But most authors going into this are going to pay more, and some will spend substantially more to get their book just the way they want it.

Doing everything yourself and not worrying about whether your book looks professional or not, you can get away for under \$100 and get 5 copies of your book in the bargain. But if you want to publish a book that's been edited, laid out the way a book should look, and get a cover on it that will stand a chance of competing in the marketplace with all those books from big publishers, you're going to have to budget \$3,000 to \$5,000. And if you print offset, want to hire marketing or publicity help, or hire a high-end "book doctor" you could be looking at ten times that much.

The important thing to remember is that you're in charge. As long as your goals line up with your budget, or you can crowdsource the money you'll need for your book (like from [kickstarter.com](https://www.kickstarter.com)) you're good to go. That leads us to the next question.

What will it all Cost?

There are a lot of variables that will determine what it costs to publish your book.

At one end is the DIY e-book author who uploads their own file only to Kindle and spends nothing.

At the other end are authors who want a professional-looking book, and plan to print a few thousand copies to start.

In trying to determine costs, use these guidelines:

DIY self-publishing will cost from \$0 to \$240 including copies of a print on demand book.

Online Marketing self-publishers can expect to spend between \$1,950 and \$4,250.

Competitive self-publishers might budget \$16,000 and up to get the job done.

For a complete rundown of these costs, check this link:

[What does self-publishing cost: a preview](#)

8: About Subsidy “Publishers”

Making sense of the offers of different kinds of self-publishing companies

In reality, many people who want to publish, who could actually be helped by publishing, simply don't want to do it themselves. They don't want to take on all the work and cost of setting up a publishing company, hiring contractors, learning about distribution and fulfillment.

They don't actually want to be publishers at all. They just want the book in print.

And so they go looking for someone who can help them. That's when they find the ads, which are everywhere, for **subsidy publishers**.

These companies offer to publish and sell your book, and offer lots of fancy “packages” that include all kinds of editorial, production and marketing services.

And these ads play on people's deepest aspirations and the very human desire for expression.

But all is not as it seems. Here's a comment I received from an author:

I made a critical mistake using [*big arm of mega-subsidy publisher*] to assist in my self-publishing. Although the internet is full of warnings, the sales representative assured me that all those complaints were a thing of the past. Wrong. Calls go unanswered, emails are not responded to and my book, which is already on various book selling websites as available, is being held hostage with no where to turn to. Despite assurances that I was to get dozens of copies of my book, I can't get one unless I pay retail.

Subsidy Authors' Bill of Rights

1. The right to be treated with respect, honesty and transparency.
2. The right to maintain control of my publication and decisions on formatting, design and editing.
3. The right to know, and talk to, whoever is editing or designing my book.
4. The right to know the retail price of my book before signing a contract.
5. The right to a fair and true wholesale price on books I buy.
6. The right to all the native application files and other elements (exclusive of copyright-protected fonts) created to produce the book, promptly and completely at my request.
7. The right to cancel my contract without penalty if you fail to live up to deadlines or other contractual obligations.
8. The right to receive an honest effort to market my book without inflated costs, if I choose one of your 'marketing packages.'
9. The right to a complete and open accounting of the expenses and income associated with my book, including any contribution by the publisher.
10. The right to have the rights to my work returned to me without penalty at my request.

I won't go into every single abuse that can be perpetrated by these companies. But please, understand one thing if nothing else:

Subsidy publishers make money from selling services to authors, not from selling books to book buyers.

There are probably lots of small companies out there who do all the things I think a subsidy publisher should do. And their clients are lucky to find them. But let's face it, these small companies cannot compete with the giants of subsidy publishing.

My advice? Know exactly what you are paying for, and don't sign anything until you've talked to other authors who have used the service, and done some research on the company and their policies.

Researching Subsidy Publishers

Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America: [Vanity and Subsidy Publishers](#)

Preditors & Editors: [A guide to publishers and publishing services](#)

Writer Beware: [Two-Thumbs Down List](#)

Absolute Write: [Beware, Recommendations & Background Checks](#)

Pete Masterson: [How the scam works](#)

Writing-World.com: [Moira Allen: The Price of Vanity](#)

Ivan Hoffman: [Subsidy Publishing Agreement](#)

Fern Reiss: [5 Things Your Subsidy Publisher Won't Tell You](#)

9: You Need a Good Cover

Don't neglect the cover of your book, it's the most important selling tool you have.

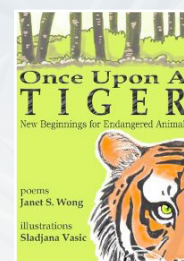
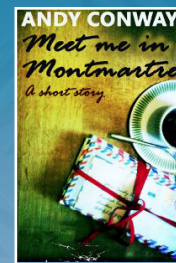
Your book cover represents your book to the world.

For most authors, this is going to mean that you have to hire someone to create a really good cover for your book. Most authors, after all, aren't trained graphic artists, and even graphic artists need to have experience to know the best ways to make your book cover like a magnet that pulls readers in.

More tips on book and e-book covers:

- Check other covers in your genre or on the same subject to see what's selling well, and how readers identify books belonging to this group.
- If you decide to do your own book cover design, make sure you know which fonts are supposed to be used large—like for titles—and which are only meant for text.
- Keep your cover simple. Many self-published book covers are ruined by authors who are trying to cram too much from the book onto the cover.
- Reduce your designs down to the size they will be on the search results page at e-retailers like Amazon. Can you still make out what it is? Can you read the important parts?
- If you are creating both a print book and an e-book, remember their covers don't have to be identical. Use the branding from the print book but simplify the cover if necessary for the e-book.
- Look at lots of good book covers to see how the artists managed to create them.

Book Covers



These covers are all recent winners of a monthly e-book cover design award. You can see over 300 covers, many with comments on the designs, here:

[e-Book Cover Design Awards](#)

10: Marketing Your Book

How to get attention for your book.

Time to get out front and spread the word. Hey, you're probably exhausted from all the work getting your books and e-books ready to go and on the market. Good news! Now the real work starts—marketing those books.

Over the years authors have found many creative ways to bring attention to their books, and you can do the same. For instance, you can use all these resources and methods to get your book in front of readers, and this is just a partial list:

Free book marketing activities:

- Posting articles to your author blog
- Holding a book signing at a local store
- Connecting with fans on your Facebook fan page
- Sending notes and specials through your Twitter account
- Establishing a Google+ network
- Notifying your LinkedIn connections
- Communicating with your email list
- Writing guest posts for other blogs
- Contributing articles to offline periodicals
- Sending out press releases
- Doing a review mailing
- Connecting with book bloggers
- Going on a virtual blog tour
- Establishing a community on Goodreads



Book Marketing You Pay For:

- Entering your book in competitions
- Using targeted traffic from pay per click
- Buying ad space on high-traffic blogs
- Sending out paid press releases for better distribution
- Running contests on your blog or through social media

All your marketing communications should be aimed at interesting people in the subject matter of your book. This is much more effective than asking people to “buy my book” or “LIKE my book’s Facebook page.”

It also makes your marketing much more enjoyable, since now you’re simply communicating the passion that made you write the book in the first place, and that should be fun, don’t you think?

Experienced book marketers will tell you that in the end, we don’t know what works and what doesn’t when it comes down to getting people to buy books. Like movies, the ones that do really well are mostly sold by word of mouth. One person loves the book so much they have to tell all their friends, and this kind of marketing simply cannot be bought.

Your job then, is to get your book in front of as many “eyeballs” as possible to get as many people as possible to read, enjoy and refer the book.

But here’s the secret to book marketing: write the best book you can. Nothing else will be nearly as important to selling books than this, and with a really good book your marketing is half done already.

Oops! This report wouldn’t be complete if I didn’t mention the many ways self-publishers screw up. So next up are the top 10 mistakes that self-publishers make, and how to avoid them.





Don't re-use ISBNs

Once you've assigned an ISBN to a book, that assignment lasts forever. The connection between the ISBN and the rest of the information for the book spreads throughout databases that hold book information. All these systems assume that an ISBN identifies only one book: that's why it's called a unique identifier. If your ISBN was ever listed anywhere, it's a bad idea to use it again, so just don't do it.

[ISBN 101 for Self-Publishers](#)



Don't quote books or lyrics or use photos or artwork without permission

Copyright protects both our writing and the creative output of others. Just as you wouldn't want someone to borrow your car, you don't want to use someone else's (intellectual) property without their permission. Many authors will give permission if you just ask. But there's another reason to avoid this—money. You could be in for a nasty surprise when the owner of a song requests you either pay them a hefty fee or destroy all the books you printed since you didn't have permission. Just hiring an intellectual property lawyer to help you can kill the profit from your book. So just don't do it.

[What Every Writer Ought to Know about Fair Use and Copyright](#)



Don't use graphics for print just because they look good on your screen

I know this one is a little confusing, but photos that look really great on screen only have to have 72 pieces of picture information (pixels) per inch of display space. But to print properly, the same file that looks so great on your screen needs 300 pixels per inch (ppi). So if you try to put your 72 ppi photo in your book, one of two things will happen: either the printer will reject your file (that's the better outcome) or they will go ahead and print the book and you'll have fuzzy, pixelated pictures in it. You can get help figuring this out from your book designer, or read these articles to better understand this challenge:

[Using Photos in Your Book: Understanding Print Resolution](#)
[Preparing Black & White Photos for Your Book](#)



Don't use bad, inappropriate or non-embeddable fonts

When you go into Microsoft Word or whatever word processor you're using to do your book, you see that whole dropdown list of fonts that comes installed with your computer or came with the program. "Great!" you think, "I'll just use these for my book cover and my book." But here's the bad news. Sometimes these font collections contain some designs that are inappropriate for books, which don't set properly or which can't be embedded into a reproduction-quality PDF, which is what you're going to have to give your book printer. Here again you might need a little help figuring out what are good fonts to use, and why you won't get a very good effect if you just use Times New Roman and Arial for everything. Check out some of these articles on fonts for books and book covers to create attractive books.

[5 Favorite Fonts for Interior Book Design](#)

[5 Great Fonts for Book Covers](#)



Don't use a subsidy publisher if you want to sell books

Look, I'm aware of the attraction of the subsidy publishers. Many writers just want to write, they don't want to get involved with stuff like ISBNs and distribution discounts and POD contracts and hiring freelancers. What if you didn't have to? What if you could just turn your manuscript over, to some nice people who would take care of everything? People whose ads and promotions spoke to you because they seemed to acknowledge the drives behind your own writing? The problem is if you want to do more than just produce a book. Like if you want to sell them. Because books from subsidy publishers are tough to sell. You don't control of the pricing, and the services you'll be sold are of dubious quality and very expensive. If you're lucky you'll end up with a decent book, but it may be completely unsaleable because the retail price is too high, or because booksellers recognize the subsidy publishers' output and simply don't buy them.

[The Subsidy Author's Bill of Rights](#)



Don't put odd-numbered pages on the left

If you walk over to your bookshelf right now and start pulling books off, you'll soon find that there are no books there that have the odd-numbered pages on the left. And if you think about it, page 1 (whether it has a page number on it or not) has to be the first page in the book, doesn't it? And that's always a right-hand page. For the same reasons, don't leave any right-hand pages blank. It's fine to have left-hand pages blank, and if they are blank they should really be blank: nothing on them at all. But right-hand pages? Never.

[Book Design to Sell: 5 Book Interior Page Layout Mistakes to Avoid](#)



Don't publish without a plan to market and sell your books

If you spend some time thinking about who will buy your book, which retailers will sell it, and how you plan to reach those two groups, you won't end up with lots of books and no idea what to do with them. This is stuff you should be brainstorming before you ever order any books. After all, what you find out might make a big difference in what you put in the book, how the book is packaged, what you charge for the book, and how you deliver it. So you do need to know this beforehand if at all possible.

[Basics of Book Marketing for the Beginning Self-Publisher, Part 1, Part 2, Part 3](#)



Don't publish a book that hasn't been edited

Just don't do it. There are lots of ways to get help with editing your book. You may think that no one will notice that you haven't had a professional editor go over the manuscript, but you'll be surprised. It's the first thing that book reviewers, bookstore buyers and other publishing people will notice. It's a sign the author didn't care enough about their own work to treat it well before launching it into the world. Give yourself and your book the best chance of success. Get someone to edit the book before you go to press.

[What Every Self-Publisher Ought to Know about Editing](#)



Don't create a confusing, illegible or unfathomable cover design

Okay, so your protagonist visits twelve mystic sites in the course of your book, gathering clues or important artifacts at each stop. So of course you want to put symbols of all those places on the cover because they're like, important, right? Wrong. Many self-published book covers are sunk by their author's desire to embody all the symbolism on the book's cover, but it rarely works out well. Particularly if you're an amateur, keep your cover simple. One graphic that expresses the tone of the book, strong and legible type for the title, and check to see how it looks when you make it the size of a postage stamp.

[3 Ways Self-Publishers Fail at Cover Design](#)



Don't ignore the conventions of how books are made

For instance, don't put page numbers or running heads on blank pages or on your title page or half-title pages. Don't put running heads on chapter- or part-opening pages.

When you set up the text for your book, don't set your text flush left and rag right throughout the book. You might think it looks better, but almost all books should be set with justified margins.

When it comes to paragraphs, use either an indent at the beginning of your text paragraphs or an extra space between them, but don't use both.

Many formatting questions can be answered by a close look at the books on your bookshelf, since most of them were produced by book professionals and trade publishers, and these designers know how important it is to follow the conventions that have been established for a long time. Readers expect a book to look a certain way,

[Self-Publishing Basics: 5 Layout Mistakes that Make You Look Unprofessional](#)



Joel Friedlander's **Self-Publishing Roadmap** is the top online coaching course for writers who want to get serious about self-publishing. It's a comprehensive course delivered in a series of modules that lead participants through the entire publishing process, from beginning to end.

Through video instruction accompanied by downloadable tutorials, checklists, action tasks and supporting material, participants earn what amounts to a "degree" in self-publishing, ready to take their books straight to market.

Whether you want to do print publishing, use print on demand distribution, or plan to go straight to e-books, this course will explain your options and help you work your way through the sometimes confusing maze that is book publishing today.

There's nothing else like it. If you would like to take your own publishing to the next level, or if you want to finally understand how all the pieces of the publishing puzzle fit together to create great books that people really want to buy, click this link now to make certain you're notified the next time the course is offered.

[Yes, let me know when the Self-Publishing Roadmap will be offered again.](#)

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Beautiful, Industry-Standard

BOOK DESIGN TEMPLATES FOR MICROSOFT WORD

Now you can quickly and easily create beautiful books right in the software you already own and know how to use—Microsoft Word. Built to industry-standard specifications, our template designs will make your book stand out, without all those newbie mistakes. And they are handcrafted by an award-winning book designer.

(InDesign templates coming soon)



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