



A Guide  

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**To Self-Publishing**



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Name

# Table of Contents

An overview of the process	Page 3
Working With an Editor	Page 6
Designing Your Cover	Page 9
Creating a Publishing Co	Page 11
Formatting Your Interior	Page 12
Your Book's ISBN Number	Page 13
Choosing a Distributer	Page 14

## An Overview of the Self-Publishing Process

If you've decided to join the intrepid group of adventurers comprised of writers, dreamers, and entrepreneurs and embark on the journey into self-publishing, congratulations! It takes a very special kind of courage to share your story with the world.

While courage is a key ingredient in the recipe to self-publishing success, other qualities also come into play. Organization is necessary, as it will allow you to keep up with the monthly tax paperwork required by your state and county government. In addition to this, the ability to delegate certain aspects of the self-publishing process to professionals who specialize in that particular area is also helpful. And, last but not least, tenacity plays a key role in continuing to market and advertise your book long after its initial debut. With these 4 qualities in your wheelhouse, you'll be much more likely to grab the attention of your target audience.

The self-publishing process typically begins after writing your entire book and then revising it at least 3 times. This ensures that you've gotten rid of as many grammatical errors and plot holes as you reasonably can. Once you've revised your rough draft, your first step is to hand your manuscript over to a Professional Editor.

### Editing

The editor will usually take about 3-4 weeks pouring over your book in search of grammar mistakes, plot holes, and other discrepancies that you may have overlooked. Once they return your manuscript to you with their notes, you use their notes to make yet another revision of your book.

After the revisions are complete, many writers send their book to several Beta Readers. These are people who enjoy reading and offering honest feedback on a writer's work. You can find these people on Facebook Beta Reader Groups and on websites such as [www.agentqueryconnect.com](http://www.agentqueryconnect.com) and [www.absolutewrite.com](http://www.absolutewrite.com).

## Book Cover

Once your book has been revised according to the response of both your Professional editor and your Beta Readers, you may feel ready to move to the next step in the process- creating a book cover. This requires the expertise of a graphic designer. You can simply google “Graphic Designers for book covers” and a host of professional freelancers will appear in the search results. Choose one whose price and quality suit your needs.

## Set up a Publishing Company

Visit the federal government’s website to find out what paperwork you need to complete to create a small publishing company and obtain an EIN Number. To do this, visit: <https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/launch-your-business/get-federal-state-tax-id-numbers> . Then, visit your state and county website to find out what paperwork is required from each. After completing their paperwork and paying the required fee, set up a business bank account in your company’s name.

## Formatting

Whether you plan to sell your book as a hardcover, eBook, or as both- you will need to collaborate with a professional formatter. These trained artists will ensure that the interior of your book is attractive and easy to read on both smart devices and hard cover versions.

## ISBN Numbers

An ISBN number is a 13-digit number assigned to a book to make it unique and easy to locate within various libraries and bookstores. If you are a U.S. resident you can purchase an ISBN through <http://www.bowker.com>. But, in some cases, you may be able to obtain a free ISBN number for your book. These will be explored in the chapters to follow.

## Choosing a Distributer

Last but not least, you will choose a distributer to help dispense your book to eager fans! At the moment, one of the most popular distribution platforms is amazon.com. If you are publishing an eBook only, their distribution services are

completely free! To set up an account as an amazon author visit:

[https://kdp.amazon.com/en\\_US/](https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/)

All of the steps listed above, will be detailed in the pages to follow.

## Editing

When you've completed the first draft of your manuscript, it may be a good idea to put it on the shelf for at least 2 weeks to give your brain a break. Then, when you've had enough time to come back with a fresh perspective, begin editing your manuscript for plot holes, consistency in story, opportunities to weave thematic elements throughout the book, and to add additional layers of depth/motive to key characters.

### Critique Partners

Once you've completed the second draft of your manuscript, you may feel ready to share it with a couple of people who will provide you with honest feedback. Instead of asking close friends or family members to do this, your best bet is to contact experienced writers and swap stories with them. Experienced writers will be more likely to do what family and close friends may hesitate to do—be completely honest.

These professional writers are called “Critique Partners” or “CP’s.” Partnering up with them means you’ll read their current project and offer feedback in exchange for their reading your manuscript and offering their opinion on what worked and what didn’t.

So where does one find a CP?

There are several ways to locate reliable CP’s, and you have the option of doing so in person or online. If you prefer to meet them in person, a great place to do so is via [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com). Find your state/city and search for “writing groups.” Then join the listed writing group that you think you’ll be most comfortable with. Attend the writer’s group and ask one or two of your fellow writers if they’d like to exchange WIP’s (manuscripts that are called “writings in progress”).

Some find it easier to connect with CP’s online. This can be accomplished by visiting the following websites:

[www.agentqueryconnect.com](http://www.agentqueryconnect.com)

[www.absolutewrite.com](http://www.absolutewrite.com)

[www.critiquemystory.weebly.com](http://www.critiquemystory.weebly.com)

It may be a good idea to have at least 2 CP's read and offer feedback on your manuscript. If you rely on only one CP, this limits you to only one outside perspective. On the other hand, working with 3 or even 4 CP's gives you a broader range of opinions to work with and it can help to put feedback into context. For example, if all 4 CP's agree that your main character is too unlikable, then this may indicate a flaw in character development that you need to address. But if only one CP says they found the Main Character unlikable and the other 3 say they loved the Main Character, you know to ignore that one CP's opinion on this issue.

So, oftentimes the more CP's you work with, the more likely you are to receive valuable advice.

Once you've collected comments and notes from your CP's, it's time to revise your manuscript again, based on their advice.

### Working with a Professional Editor

After revising your manuscript based on the opinions of your CP's, you may choose to send the book through another round of CP's or you may opt on forging ahead to the next step in the literary process- choosing a professional editor.

Some self-published writers think it's alright to skip this step. They assume that because they're good at writing, they are also good at editing. This may be true. But, most of us are *not good at editing our own work*. It's all too easy to miss grammatical mistakes and plot holes.

The writer who doesn't hire an editor is like a dentist who tries to perform their own root canal. We simply cannot see things the way someone with a fresh perspective can. Everyone who writes a book, should have their book edited by a professional.

When it comes to editing, you often get what you pay for. So, even though it may be tempting to hire an editor who charges as little as \$50 to \$100, keep in mind that they will be less likely to return your manuscript with detailed and truly helpful notes. At the moment, most decent editors charge at least \$300 to edit a manuscript of 60k-90k words.

To find the perfect editor for your story, you may want to refer to one of your favorite self-published books and check the “Acknowledgements” section to see who the writer credits for editing their work. Then, google that editor and find their website.

Another way to find an editor is to join a writing group on Facebook and ask other writers for recommendations. Or, you can simply type “Manuscript Editing Services” into your search engine, and check out the results!

Once you find an editor who has a great track record as well as a price or payment plan that suits your budget, send them your work and use the next couple of weeks to get your mind off of your manuscript!

When your editor returns it to you with suggestions and grammatical corrections, it's time to get back to work and re-edit your book!

### Beta Readers

After editing your book with their notes in mind, you'd do well to send it to 2 or more Beta Readers for their opinion. Beta Readers are people who enjoy reading and offering honest feedback on a writer's work. You can find such individuals on Facebook Beta Reader Groups.

When all of your Beta Readers get back to you with their thoughts, it's up to you whether you'd like to revise the book once more based on their opinions or leave it as is.

Whatever you decide, keep in mind that readers will have all sorts of opinions about your book and that's a good thing- one of the purposes of art is to inspire thought and conversation. So, if your book is making people think and discuss their various opinions, then you've accomplished something great!

## Book Cover

After you've revised your book for the last time, you're ready to leave words for pictures... in other words, it's time to choose your book's cover art. The first thing you may want to do is look up book covers that you like and analyze what you like about them. Take detailed notes on what you notice about your taste in book covers. For example, do you like to see the main character's face on the cover, or do you prefer the mystery of a profile picture that doesn't show their entire face? Do you even like covers that feature people? Are you more attracted to covers that feature an object that represents an underlying theme in the book?

In addition to this, it may be helpful to research other book covers in the genre and category of your manuscript. For example, if you write Young Adult Romance, then go to [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and look up other Young Adult Romance titles to see what kinds of book covers are out there. Once again, the purpose of this is to familiarize yourself with what you like and don't like in a book cover.

After making a list of your preferences, visit a website that sells professional photos such as [www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com) or <https://depositphotos.com>. Pour through the photos and choose 2 that you think could work as your book cover. Purchase them.

As a side note, if you are trying to save as much money as possible, check out the site [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com) and choose from the free images offered there. Just keep in mind that these images are *free to the public*, meaning it's likely that other self-published writers have used them as book covers too.

After choosing your favorite 2 photos, it's time to find a graphic designer to gussy up your photos until they're a bright and shiny book cover.

Once again, you'll want to depend on your Facebook writing group or your local writer's meet up for recommendations. And if that doesn't appeal to you, then let Google do the searching for you- type "My Graphic Design Services" into the search bar, and research the listed results.

As you research each graphic designer, take a close look at their portfolio to make sure their skill level and artistry are a good match for your book. And when it comes to pricing, keep in mind that the total cost will vary depending on whether you're publishing an eBook only or both an eBook and a hardcover version. If you plan to publish both, this means the Graphic Designer will do double the work, and will charge more. Typically, the cost of graphic design for cover art falls anywhere between \$100 and \$400.

Once you make contact with a graphic designer of your choice, they'll likely ask you a lot of questions about the type of book you've written, as well as its tone and mood. They'll also want to know what kind of cover you had in mind. Send them images of book covers that you admire and explain why you like them. You'll also want to send them your top 2 favorite photos from depositphotos, Shutterstock, or pixabay and ask them which one they think will work best for your cover.

Once they respond with feedback and let you know how they'd like to approach the cover, you're free to move about the cabin! Actually, now that you have some free time you may want to use it to begin setting up a publishing company for your book...

(As a side note, if the graphic designer gets back to you with a cover that you don't like- be honest and let them know you'd like for them to revisit the design. If you aren't upfront, you'll find yourself stuck with a cover that you don't like, and you *definitely* do not want that to happen.

So, be willing to speak up when it comes to letting your graphic designer know what you like and don't like.)

## Create a Publishing Company

Your next step is to create your own online publishing company. You can set up your business as a sole proprietorship or as an LLC. It's less expensive to operate as a sole proprietorship and many writers choose this option. That said, some choose to operate as an LLC as a way of protecting themselves. For example, if anyone were to sue an LLC, the company itself would bear the brunt of the lawsuit and *not* the owner. On the other hand, if a sole proprietorship is sued, the owner themselves is sued. But lawsuits rarely happen in the world of self-publishing.

### Register with the Federal Government

After choosing to become either a sole proprietorship or an LLC, you need to register your business with the Federal government and request a Tax ID number. To do this, visit: <https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/launch-your-business/get-federal-state-tax-id-numbers>

### Register with your State Government

Next, you'll need to find out what licenses and permits you'll need to be in accordance with state laws. So, visit your state's website to find this information online. Most likely, all you'll need to do is complete 2 forms online and pay a fee of anywhere from \$100-\$300 for a license.

### Register with your County

Next, visit your county's website to find out what licenses and permits (if any) you'll need to purchase to start your own online publishing company.

### Set up a bank account for your company

Last, but not least, set up a bank account solely for your company. Every time a reader purchases one of your books, their money needs to go into *this* account.

## Formatting Your Interior

Once your book has an official publisher (you!), you can ask your graphic designer if s/he can also format the interior of your book based on current guidelines for eBook and hardcover distributors. If the graphic designer does not offer a formatting package, all is not lost! It's likely that they know someone who does. So, ask them to refer you to one of their colleagues. If this fails, return to your Facebook writing group, and put the word out that you need someone to format the interior of your book.

This aspect of the process is important because it will determine whether or not your book is readable. It will also ensure that every page of your book- from its table of contents to its Acknowledgements- are stylish and properly organized.

The cost of formatting often falls between \$100 and \$300.

## ISBN Numbers

An ISBN number is a 13-digit number assigned to a book to make it unique and easy to locate within various libraries and bookstores. If you are a U.S. resident you can purchase an ISBN through <http://www.bowker.com>. But you don't necessarily need to purchase one. In some cases, you may be able to obtain a free ISBN number.

For example, if you choose to distribute your book on a platform like [www.smashwords.com](http://www.smashwords.com), they will offer to provide you with a free ISBN number. For more information on this, visit:

<https://www.smashwords.com/dashboard/ISBNManager>

And, if you'd prefer to go the route of getting a free ISBN, you don't even need to consider this step until you secure a Distributer for your book.

## Choosing a Distributer

Now that your book has been properly formatted and fitted with the perfect cover, you need a place to sell it. Typically, that place will be either [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), [www.smashwords.com](http://www.smashwords.com), or both.

Let's begin with amazon.com. To start the process, you'll need to enroll as a member of their Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) program. To do so, go to: [https://kdp.amazon.com/en\\_US/help/topic/G200635650](https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G200635650)

Once you sign up as a KDP author, you will need to upload your formatted manuscript, book cover, set the price for your book, and link your new bank (business) account information to amazon. Amazon.com will walk you through each of these steps. The entire process takes an hour at most.

After uploading your book, you may have to wait a day or so for it to be approved and appear in amazon's Kindle store.

Your next step may be to distribute your book on [www.smashwords.com](http://www.smashwords.com). Visit their website and sign up as a Smashwords author. Then, upload your formatted manuscript and book cover, set the price for your book, and link your bank (business) account information to your book. Next, choose one of their options regarding ISBN numbers (it may be easiest to simply let them assign a free ISBN number to your book).

Like amazon.com, Smashwords is great about walking writers through each step of the uploading process. And it doesn't take long to upload a book, typically 45 minutes at most.

When your book has been processed, all you have to do is wait for it to appear online. Congratulations on successfully publishing your book!