

SELF-PUBLISHING STEP BY STEP

1. Writing Your Manuscript

Begin by drafting your manuscript, focusing on completing the first draft without self-editing. If you notice changes you want to make as you're editing, consider making a checklist of things you wish to change once you begin self-edits and continue writing as if you've already made those changes. This approach allows for a more fluid writing process. Once the draft is complete, take a break before revising to gain a fresh perspective. Consider joining writing groups or workshops for feedback and support during this phase.

2. Self-Editing and Professional Editing

After revising your manuscript, engage in self-editing to refine the content. Subsequently, hire a professional editor to enhance the manuscript's quality. Editing services typically include:

- **Developmental Editing:** Focuses on structure, plot, and character development.
- **Line editing:** Improves the overall clarity, readability, and flow of a text, particularly at the sentence and paragraph level
- **Copyediting:** Addresses grammar, spelling, punctuation, and consistency.
- **Proofreading:** Final review for typos and formatting errors.
- **Manuscript Evaluation:** An editor provides feedback on a manuscript's strengths and weaknesses, offering suggestions for improvement and often including a written report

Professional editing is an investment that can significantly improve your book's readability and professionalism.

3. Formatting Your Book

Proper formatting ensures your book meets industry standards and provides a pleasant reading experience. You can format your book using tools like Microsoft Word, Scrivener, Atticus or specialized software. Alternatively, consider hiring a professional formatter. Amazon KDP offers free templates with pre-set margins and layouts for various trim sizes. [Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing](#)

4. Designing the Cover Art

The fact of the matter is, people judge books by their covers. A well-designed cover is crucial for attracting readers and conveying the essence of your book. Here are six notable cover design services:

1. Miblar

- **Overview:** Miblar offers custom book cover designs tailored to your genre and vision.
- **Key Features:**
 - Unlimited revisions to ensure satisfaction.
 - No prepayment required for certain services.
 - Quick turnaround, with first concepts delivered within 9 business days.
 - Additional services like formatting, branding, and marketing materials.
- **Pricing:**
 - Ebook cover: \$220.
 - Ebook + Print: \$270.
 - Ebook + Promo Materials: \$272.
 - Ebook + Print + Promo Materials: \$315.
- **Website:** miblar.com

2. GetCovers

- **Overview:** GetCovers provides budget-friendly cover designs suitable for various genres.
- **Key Features:**
 - Unlimited revisions and a 100% money-back guarantee.
 - Licensed resources and quick turnaround (4-5 business days).
- **Pricing:**
 - Basic package (ebook cover): \$10.
 - Standard package (ebook + print-ready cover): \$20.
 - Premium package (ebook + print-ready cover with additional stock images): \$35.
- **Website:** getcovers.com

3. Reedsy

- **Overview:** Reedsy connects authors with experienced freelance designers who have worked with major publishers.
- **Key Features:**
 - Access to a curated marketplace of professionals.
 - Designers specialize in various genres and styles.
- **Pricing:**
 - Typically ranges from \$600 to \$900, depending on the project specifics.

- **Website:** reedsy.com

4. 99designs

- **Overview:** 99designs offers a platform where multiple designers submit concepts based on your brief.
- **Key Features:**
 - Design contests allow you to choose from various submissions.
 - One-on-one projects with individual designers are also available.
- **Pricing:**
 - Design contests start at \$299.
- **Website:** 99designs.com

5. Fiverr

- **Overview:** Fiverr hosts a wide range of freelance designers offering services at various price points.
- **Key Features:**
 - Diverse selection of designers with different styles and expertise.
 - Options for custom illustrations, typography, and more.
- **Pricing:**
 - Services start as low as \$5, with premium offerings at higher rates.
- **Website:** fiverr.com

6. BookBaby

- **Overview:** BookBaby provides comprehensive self-publishing services, including professional cover design.
- **Key Features:**
 - Custom cover designs tailored to your book's genre and audience.
 - Additional services like editing, formatting, and distribution.
- **Pricing:**
 - Cover design packages start at \$399.
- **Website:** bookbaby.com

Selecting the right cover design service depends on your budget, genre, and personal preferences. Consider reviewing portfolios and client testimonials to find a designer whose style aligns with your vision.

5. Creating the Copyright Page

The copyright page includes essential information such as the copyright notice, ISBN, edition, and publisher details. As a self-publisher, you are the publisher, so your name or imprint will appear here. Ensure this page complies with standard formatting conventions.

6. Utilizing Templates

Templates can streamline the formatting process. Amazon KDP provides templates that include formatted front matter and chapters with placeholder text. These templates help maintain consistency and save time during the formatting stage. [Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing](#)

7. Polishing the Draft and Proofreading

After formatting, conduct a final proofread to catch any remaining errors. This step ensures your book is polished and ready for publication. Consider printing a proof copy to review the physical layout and make necessary adjustments.

8. Uploading to Self-Publishing Platforms

Selecting the right self-publishing platform is crucial for reaching your target audience and achieving your publishing objectives. Below is a curated list of notable platforms, each offering unique features and benefits:

1. Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP)

- **Overview:** Amazon KDP is one of the most widely used self-publishing platforms, allowing authors to publish eBooks and paperbacks directly to the Amazon marketplace.
- **Key Features:**
 - Access to Amazon's vast global customer base.
 - Royalties of up to 70% for eBooks priced between \$2.99 and \$9.99.
 - Option to enroll in KDP Select for additional promotional opportunities.
- **Considerations:** Enrolling in KDP Select requires exclusivity, meaning you cannot distribute your eBook through other platforms during the enrollment period.

2. Apple Books

- **Overview:** Apple Books allows authors to publish eBooks directly to users of Apple devices, such as iPhones, iPads, and Macs.
- **Key Features:**
 - Flat 70% royalty rate across all price points.
 - Integration with the Apple ecosystem for seamless user experience.
 - Tools for pre-orders, promotional pricing, and analytics.
- **Considerations:** Requires access to a Mac for uploading and managing books through the iTunes Connect platform.

3. Draft2Digital

- **Overview:** Draft2Digital is an aggregator that simplifies the distribution of eBooks to multiple retailers, including Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, and Kobo.
- **Key Features:**
 - Free formatting tools for eBooks.
 - Automated back matter updates across your catalog.
 - Consolidated sales reporting from various retailers.
- **Considerations:** Draft2Digital takes approximately a 10% commission on sales made through their distribution channels.

4. Barnes & Noble Press

- **Overview:** Barnes & Noble Press enables authors to publish eBooks and print books directly to the Barnes & Noble online store.
- **Key Features:**
 - Royalties of up to 70% for eBooks priced above \$0.99.
 - Print-on-demand services for physical books.
 - No upfront costs for publishing.
- **Considerations:** Primarily targets readers in the United States, which may limit international reach.

5. IngramSpark

- **Overview:** IngramSpark offers wide distribution for both eBooks and print books, making them available to bookstores, libraries, and online retailers worldwide.
- **Key Features:**
 - Access to Ingram's extensive global distribution network.
 - Options for hardcover and paperback formats.
 - Print-on-demand services to minimize inventory costs.
- **Considerations:** There are setup fees for publishing, though promotional codes are often available to waive these costs.

6. Kobo Writing Life

- **Overview:** Kobo Writing Life allows authors to publish eBooks directly to Kobo's global eBookstore, reaching readers in over 190 countries.
- **Key Features:**
 - Royalties of up to 70% for eBooks priced between \$2.99 and \$9.99.
 - Integration with OverDrive for library distribution.
 - User-friendly dashboard with real-time sales analytics.
- **Considerations:** Strong presence in Canada, Europe, and Asia, making it ideal for international reach.

7. Google Play Books

- **Overview:** Google Play Books enables authors to publish eBooks to the Google Play Store, accessible on Android devices and through web browsers.
- **Key Features:**
 - Global reach through the Google Play Store.
 - Flexible pricing and promotional tools.
 - Integration with Google's ecosystem for discoverability.
- **Considerations:** The publishing interface can be less intuitive compared to other platforms, and the royalty structure varies by country.

8. PublishDrive

- **Overview:** PublishDrive is an aggregator that distributes eBooks, print books, and audiobooks to numerous retailers and libraries worldwide.
- **Key Features:**
 - Flat monthly subscription fee instead of commission-based pricing.
 - Advanced analytics and sales reporting tools.
 - Marketing tools, including promotional campaigns and review copies.
- **Considerations:** The subscription model may be more cost-effective for authors with higher sales volumes. [KDP Resources & Coaching+1Kindlepreneur+1PublishingState.com](#)

9. Lulu

- **Overview:** Lulu specializes in print-on-demand services, allowing authors to publish and sell print books and calendars through various channels.
- **Key Features:**
 - Wide range of print formats and binding options.
 - Global distribution through retailers and bookstores.
 - No upfront costs; authors earn revenue per sale.
- **Considerations:** Primarily focused on print products, with limited eBook distribution options.

10. Smashwords

- **Overview:** Smashwords is an eBook distributor that allows authors to publish and distribute their work to major retailers and libraries.
- **Key Features:**
 - Distribution to retailers like Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, and Kobo.
 - Free ISBN assignment for eBooks.
 - Marketing tools, including coupons and pre-order options.
- **Considerations:** Smashwords has merged with Draft2Digital, and new authors are encouraged to use Draft2Digital's platform for publishing.

11. BookBaby

- **Overview:** BookBaby offers comprehensive self-publishing services, including editing, design, printing, and distribution for both eBooks and print books.
- **Key Features:**
 - Professional services for book production.
 - Distribution to major retailers and bookstores.
 - Print-on-demand options with various formats.
- **Considerations:** Services are fee-based, with packages starting at higher price points, making it more suitable for authors seeking a full-service experience. [Kindlepreneur](#)

Each platform has its own strengths and considerations. Your choice should align with your specific goals, target audience, and budget. For instance, if maximizing reach is a priority, platforms like Amazon KDP and IngramSpark offer extensive distribution networks. If you prefer a one-stop solution with professional services, BookBaby might be the right fit.

9. Uploading to Book Discovery & Review Platforms

Whether you're preparing for launch or trying to maintain long-term visibility, uploading your book to key review and catalog platforms is essential. These sites help readers discover your work, leave reviews, and follow your author career.

Reader Discovery & Review Platforms

These are places where readers browse, track, and review books—some with strong community or social features.

1. Goodreads

- **Overview:** The largest book platform with millions of users logging and reviewing books.
- **Features:** Author profile, giveaways, reader groups, Q&A sections, review uploads, and "to-read" lists.
- **Best For:** Building visibility, collecting reviews, and engaging with bookish communities.
- [goodreads.com](#)

2. The StoryGraph

- **Overview:** A data-driven Goodreads alternative with customizable filters and mood tracking.
- **Features:** Review system, content warnings, reading stats, Goodreads import.
- **Best For:** Authors targeting detail-oriented, socially conscious readers.
- [thestorygraph.com](#)

3. LibraryThing

- **Overview:** A community of passionate readers and collectors with deep cataloging tools.
- **Features:** Early Reviewers program, reader forums, book giveaways.
- **Best For:** Reaching dedicated readers interested in niche genres and literary fiction.
- librarything.com

4. BookLikes

- **Overview:** A hybrid blogging and book tracking site.
- **Features:** Custom blog, Goodreads sync, review uploads, social sharing.
- **Best For:** Authors who enjoy posting updates or blog-style reviews.
- booklikes.com

5. Bookstr

- **Overview:** A curated content site with a strong media presence.
- **Features:** Author interviews, themed lists, book news.
- **Best For:** Getting featured in articles or boosting media visibility.
- bookstr.com

6. Bookish

- **Overview:** Editorial-style book recommendation engine.
- **Features:** Reading lists, book quizzes, author spotlights.
- **Best For:** Broader exposure via curated lists.
- bookish.com

7. BookCrossing

- **Overview:** A global book-tracking and sharing community.
- **Features:** Physical book release tracking, forums, travel logs.
- **Best For:** Unique promotions using print books.
- bookcrossing.com

8. BookBub

- **Overview:** An influential platform for reader deals and new release notifications.
 - **Features:** Author profile with follower system, promotions, and alerts.
 - **Best For:** Attracting attention during sales and launch weeks.
 - bookbub.com
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ARC Distribution Platforms

Early reviews are crucial. Platforms below help you send Advance Reader Copies (ARCs) and collect feedback from vetted reviewers.

1. NetGalley

- **Overview:** A professional platform for distributing ARCs to librarians, booksellers, educators, and reviewers.
- **Features:** Reviewer analytics, industry reach, automated follow-ups.
- **Best For:** Wide exposure before launch (especially if using a co-op).
- netgalley.com

2. BookSirens

- **Overview:** A curated ARC service for indie authors.
- **Features:** Email review reminders, automated review tracking, and content targeting.
- **Best For:** Reliable, affordable ARC review support.
- booksirens.com

3. BookSprout

- **Overview:** Simple platform to manage ARC teams and review follow-up.
- **Features:** Reviewer tracking, piracy protection, and auto-reminders.
- **Best For:** Authors with smaller ARC teams who need automation.
- booksprout.co

4. BookFunnel

- **Overview:** A secure file delivery tool that lets you manually send ARCs and reader magnets.
- **Features:** Watermarking, expiration dates, email integration, and reader support.
- **Best For:** DIY ARC management with full control and brand customization.
- bookfunnel.com

By combining discovery platforms (like Goodreads, StoryGraph, and BookBub) with ARC services (like BookFunnel and BookSirens), you can maximize exposure, gather early reviews, and build long-term reader trust.

10. Email Marketing & Newsletters

Email marketing is one of the most powerful and direct tools you have as an indie author. Unlike social media, where algorithms decide who sees your content, a newsletter goes straight to your reader's inbox, helping you build trust, loyalty, and long-term engagement.

Start growing your list as early as possible. Ideally, before your first book launches. Offer a **reader magnet**, such as a free short story or a sample chapter, to entice people to subscribe. Include your signup link everywhere: in your bio, on your website, at the back of your book, and in your social media profiles

Why You Need a Newsletter

- **Direct Access to Readers** – Bypass social media noise and land directly in inboxes.
- **Launch Support** – Use your list for ARC signups, cover reveals, and release reminders.
- **Fan Loyalty** – Offer exclusives like sneak peeks, deleted scenes, or special Q&As.
- **Preorder Strategy** – Notify subscribers first, and encourage them to share with friends.

What to Send

- Monthly updates or new release announcements
- Behind-the-scenes content or character insights
- Exclusive giveaways, preorder links, and early access to ARCs
- Cross-promotions with other authors to grow your reach
- Personal notes and stories that build a connection with your audience

Newsletter Platforms

Here are several platforms that offer **free tiers** or generous startup tools suitable for authors:

1. Beehiv

- **Modern and clean interface**, built for creators and indie entrepreneurs.
- Includes built-in referral system, scheduling, and analytics.
- Free tier supports up to 2,500 subscribers.
- Great for authors who want a Substack alternative without platform branding.
- <https://beehiv.com>

2. MailerLite

- Intuitive drag-and-drop editor, automation tools, and beautiful templates.
- Free for up to 1,000 subscribers and 12,000 monthly emails.
- Includes website and landing page builder—ideal for authors without a full website yet.
- GDPR-compliant and great deliverability.
- <https://www.mailerlite.com>

3. Mailchimp

- Well-known and widely used, especially for creatives and businesses.
- Free plan includes 500 subscribers and 1,000 monthly email sends.
- Basic automations, audience tagging, and content scheduling included.

- <https://mailchimp.com>

4. Substack

- Blog-style email platform where subscribers can also read your posts online.
- No subscriber limit; monetization optional.
- Great for serialized storytelling, author updates, or cross-posting with socials.
- <https://substack.com>

5. ConvertKit

- Designed with creators in mind; offers advanced segmenting and automation.
- Free plan supports up to 1,000 subscribers.
Built-in tools for giveaways, reader magnet downloads, and ecommerce.
- <https://convertkit.com>

6. Flodesk (*Not free, but flat fee*)

- Beautiful, minimalist designs; excellent for authors who care about aesthetics.
- Flat monthly fee, unlimited subscribers (no tiered pricing).
- Includes workflows, sales pages, and branding flexibility.
- <https://flodesk.com>

Tips for Using Newsletters Effectively:

- Offer a **reader magnet** (free short story, novella, or bonus content) in exchange for signups.
- Send newsletters **consistently** (monthly or biweekly) without overwhelming readers.
- Use automations to welcome new subscribers with a friendly intro and book links.
- Keep your tone personal, helpful, and on-brand—people stay for *you*, not just your books.

Some authors also use **StoryOrigin** and **BookFunnel** in conjunction with these tools to deliver welcome sequences, reader magnets, and organize newsletter swaps.

12. Attending Conventions and Utilizing Websites

Participate in book fairs, writing conferences, and genre-specific conventions to network and promote your book. Websites like Reedsy and SelfPublishing.com offer resources, professional services, and communities to support your publishing journey. SelfPublishing.com

13. Managing Emails and Personal Assistants

As your author platform grows, managing communications becomes essential. Use email marketing tools like Mailchimp or Beehiv to organize your mailing list and automate campaigns. Consider hiring a virtual assistant to handle administrative tasks, social media management, and customer service, allowing you to focus on writing.

By following these steps, you'll navigate the self-publishing process effectively, from manuscript to market. All that's left is to pour your energy and personality into your efforts! Good Luck!

