SIMPLE 12-STEP GUIDE FOR

SELF-PUBLISHING AUTHORS

YOU HAVE FINISHED WRITING YOUR BOOK,

WHAT'S NEXT ?

Welcome to the world of self-publishing!

As a professional Book Cover Designer, I have had the privilege of working closely with numerous talented and aspiring authors on their self-publishing journeys. Over time, I noticed a common thread among many of my clients—they often had similar questions and sought advice on how to navigate the confusing process of self-publishing. In response to their needs, I have created this 12-step guide that would hopefully make this process a bit easier and help authors successfully self-publish their own books.

12-STEP GUIDE

1. REFINE AND EDIT

2. APPLY FORMATTING AND TYPESETTING

3. DESIGN A COVER

4. CHOOSE A PUBLISHING PLATFORM

5. SET THE PRICE FOR YOUR BOOK

6. DETERMINE YOUR ISBN & ISBN BARCODE

7. CREATE YOUR OWN AUTHOR WEBSITE

8. CREATE A MARKETING PLAN

9. PUBLISH YOUR BOOK

10. OBTAIN REVIEWS

11. ENGAGE WITH YOUR READERS

12. CONTINUE TO PROMOTE AND EXPAND

1. REFINE AND EDIT

Once you have completed writing your book, it is crucial to ensure that your manuscript is as close to perfection as possible. Self-published books are notorious for containing avoidable mistakes, such as grammar errors. Fortunately, there are ways to prevent such issues. For instance, you can leverage excellent online tools like *Grammarly* or *ProWritingAid*, which offer automated proofreading and editing assistance. These tools can help you identify and correct grammar, spelling, and structural errors. However, if you want to elevate your book to a whole new level and provide your readers with the best possible experience, it is worth considering hiring professional help to ensure the highest quality outcome. Platforms such as *Reedsy* and *Upwork* are great resources for finding and hiring expert editors and proofreaders who can meticulously review your book and ensure it is in top shape. By investing in professional assistance, you can enhance the overall quality of your book and deliver a polished final product to your readers.

2. APPLY FORMATTING AND TYPESETTING

Proper formatting is the foundation for an enjoyable reading experience, but before you get started with that, decide the final trim size of your book. Most common book sizes are probably *6" by 9"* and *5.5" by 8.5"*,

but most self-publishing platforms offer many other options as well. Even custom sizes can be available – but be warned, they often come with higher price tag. So make sure to research the best trim size for your genre and audience, that would make selling your book as easy as possible.

Once you have settled on a trim size, make sure you get your book properly formatted for digital platforms and printed books. You can use tools like *Kindle Create* or *Vellum* to format your book yourself. Or hire a professional formatter through sites like *Reedsy* to assist you and ensure your book meets industry standards.

3. DESIGN A COVER

They say, *'Don't judge a book by its cover,'* but let's be honest, we all do. A well-designed cover can significantly impact your book's success as it is the the first point of contact for potential readers. A professional book cover tailored to your genre and target audience has the ability to captivate the readers, making them more likely to pick up your book.

There are numerous platforms and cover designers out there, offering book covers across a wide range of budgets and styles. Cover styles can vary greatly, ranging from typography-focused to photo-manipulated, minimalistic to highly illustrated covers. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct thorough research to identify the style that best attracts your target audience.

One thing I strongly advise against is attempting to create your book cover

yourself, unless you possess a solid design background and extensive knowledge of typography and cover formatting. So to achieve that polished and eye-catching cover, it is highly recommended to hire a specialized cover designer who is the perfect fit for you and your book. Doing so can truly make a difference in your book sales.

4. CHOOSE A PUBLISHING PLATFORM

There are several popular online platforms for self-publishing authors so take your time to research and select the one that fits your needs the best. The most popular retail platform is by far *Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP)* and they can also print your book themselves, which is a great advantage over other platforms. But there are also other great retail alternatives such as *Kobo*, *Barnes&Noble Press*, *iBooks*, *Smashwords* or *Draft2Digital*. These platforms are where the readers can go to purchase your book and have it shipped to them.

To take your book to the next level with better print quality consider using aggregators like *IngramSpark*, *Lulu* or *Bookbaby*. These platofrms will print your book on demand and distribute it to the retailers and brick-and-mortar bookstores. They also have more printing options than Amazon, such as hard cover books with and without jackets.

These platforms enable you to have printed copies available without the need for upfront costs or inventory.

5. SET THE PRICE FOR YOUR BOOK

Setting the right price for your self-published book requires careful consideration. Research the pricing of comparable books in your genre and niche to understand the price range that readers are willing to pay. Consider factors such as book length, quality, and the author's reputation. Also make sure to calculate the expenses you incurred in producing the book to ensure you cover your expenses and generate a reasonable profit. Remember that pricing is not a one-time decision. It's essential to regularly evaluate and adjust your book's price based on factors such as reader feedback, market trends, and your own marketing and sales goals. Monitor the impact of your pricing decisions, offer promotional discounts and be open to making adjustments as needed to optimize your book's success in the marketplace.

6. DETERMINE YOUR ISBN & ISBN BARCODE

As a self-publishing author you have two options: either buy the ISBN code yourself or use the ISBN Barcode provided by platforms like *Amazon KDP*, *Smashwords*, *Lulu*, *IngramSpark* (and others) when you're using their services.

Even though it might seem like more hassle, there are many benefits to buying your own ISBN code. It will give you the flexibility to switch

publishing platforms, distribute your book through multiple channels, including brick-and-mortal-stores and provides you with more independence and freedom in managing your publishing career without being tied to a specific platform.

The ISBN can be purchased or assigned by an authorized agency in your country. Once you have the ISBN, you can generate the corresponding ISBN barcode, which is based on the ISBN number.

7. CREATE YOUR OWN AUTHOR WEBSITE

Having your own website as a self-publishing author can be highly beneficial. It can enhance your credibility as an author and provide a professional image to readers, agents, publishers, and potential collaborators. It gives you a platform to showcase your work, bio, and accomplishments, creating a central place for people to learn more about you and your books. Additionally it's also a great place to promote and sell your books directly to readers, increasing your revenue and reducing dependency on third-party platforms.

There are many great website building platforms with pre-made templates such as *Wix*, *Squarespace* and *WordPress*.

8. CREATE A MARKETING PLAN

Developing a comprehensive marketing plan before publishing your book is crucial for its success. As a self-publishing author, it is essential to actively engage in marketing efforts to raise awareness, increase visibility, and capture the attention of your readers. The first step towards a successful marketing campaign is to identify your target audience. Once you have a clear understanding of who should be buying your book, you can employ a range of strategies including leveraging social media platforms, optimizing your author website, pursuing book reviews, and implementing targeted advertising to effectively create awareness and ultimately drive book sales.

9. PUBLISH YOUR BOOK

Once you have established all the steps above, you are now ready to finally publish your book, how exciting is that! Follow the guidelines provided by your chosen publishing platform to upload your manuscript, cover, and other relevant information. Ensure you comply with their formatting requirements to avoid any complications during the publishing process. This is where working with professional interior formatter and cover designer can be very beneficial, since they can ensure that your final files will meet the requirements of your chosen platform.

10. OBTAIN REVIEWS

Now that your book is out you can start obtaining reviews to build credibility and attract potential readers. Start by reaching out to your friends, family and acquaintances to have them read your book and ask them to leave an honest review on online platforms such as *Amazon*, *Goodreads*, or your author website. You can also offer limited number of Advance Review Copies (ARCs) through platforms like *NetGallery* or by directly emailing interested reviewers including book bloggers, influencers, and readers in your target audience.

Positive reviews can greatly influence potential buyers and boost your book's visibility. But be patient and persistent, as getting reviews takes time. Focus on providing a great reading experience to increase the likelihood of positive reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations.

11. ENGAGE WITH YOUR READERS

Engaging with your readers is a valuable way to build a loyal fan base and create lasting connections. Build an email list through your website to encourage readers to subscribe to your newsletter for exclusive updates and offers. Maintain an active presence on social media platforms where your target audience is likely to be. Share updates, behind-the-scenes insights, and relevant content related to your book and writing process. Respond to comments, messages, and mentions from your readers to foster interaction

and build relationships.

Remember that consistency is key when engaging with readers. When interacting with your audience, be authentic, and show appreciation for their support. By nurturing these connections, you can create a dedicated fan base that will eagerly anticipate your future releases and actively promote your work.

12. CONTINUE TO PROMOTE AND EXPAND

Maintain your marketing efforts and continue to promote your book even after its initial release. Explore additional opportunities such as author events, collaborations, guest blogging, or participating in book fairs to expand your readership.

GOOD LUCK
YOU CAN DO IT!

SELF-PUBLISHING TOOLS

DATABASE

DIRECT DISTRIBUTION PLATFORMS

AMAZON KDP

Book options: eBook. Audiobook, Paperback and Hardcover

Cost: Free to publish. Youre royalties can vary anywhere between 35-70%, depending on your book type (eBook or printed book), book price, demographics and other features.

Distribution: Preferably Amazon only, They do have an Expanded Distribution option, but that will take an additional 20% cut from your earnings.

Exclusivity: non-exclusive, you can sell your books on other retailers

ISBN: Included for free or use your own

Other features: They offers various promotional tools, such as Kindle Countdown Deals and Kindle Free Book Promotions. And if you grant Amazon exclusive distribution rights for 90 days, you qualify for the Select program, which gives you even better marketing opportunities..

APPLE BOOKS

Book options: only eBook. Print is not available

Cost: Free to publish. You will earn 70% royalties on all ebook sales, regardless of book price.

Distribution: Apple Books only

Exclusivity: non-exclusive, you can sell your books on other retailers

ISBN: Included for free or use your own

Other features: Apple Books offers promo codes that allow you to share free copies of your book with bloggers or reviewers, and authors who go direct are eligible to be selected for featured placements in the store. Apple also offers an affiliate program to earn extra revenue from each Apple Books sale.

BARNES & NOBLE PRESS

Book options: eBook, Paperback and Hardcover

Cost: Free to publish. You will earn 70% royalties on all ebook sales, regardless of book price.

Distribution: BN.com, where US readers can purchase ebooks or print books. Some authors may also be eligible for distribution to B&N bookstores.

Exclusivity: non-exclusive, you can sell your books on other retailers

ISBN: Provided for free for print books, or provide your own for ebooks or print.

Other features: B&N Press has partnered with other self-publishing services to provide authors support through every stage of their publishing journey. They also have a blog with self-publishing tips and tricks, including tips for making the most of their platform.

GOOGLE PLAY BOOKS

Book options: only eBook. Print is not available

Cost: Free to publish. You will earn 70% royalties on all ebook sales in most regions, regardless of book price.

Distribution: Google Play only

Exclusivity: non-exclusive, you can sell your books on other retailers

ISBN: Not provided. You can add your own ISBN, if desired.

Other features: Google offers promo codes in select countries to give away free copies of your ebooks as well as an affiliate program offering a 7 percent commission on eligible purchases. Going direct can also increase the discoverability of your books via their Google Books Preview Program.

KOBO WRITING LIFE

Book options: only eBook. Print is not available

Cost: Free to publish. You will earn 70% royalties on all ebook sales priced above $2.99 USD

Distribution: Kobo and its partner stores.

Exclusivity: non-exclusive, you can sell your books on other retailers

ISBN: they offer discounted ISBNs to US-based authors.

Other features: Authors can submit for merchandising placements and other promotional opportunities in the Kobo store for new releases and discounted books. Kobo Writing Life also produces a podcast where they share some excellent advice about the self-publishing process. Additionally, Kobo offers a subscription program for readers, Kobo Plus, which is currently available in select countries. Enrollment is Kobo Plus is available to Kobo Writing Life authors and is non-exclusive, so enrolled titles can continue to be sold on other retailers.

AGGREGATORS & DISTRIBUTION SERVICES

INGRAM SPARK

Book options: eBook, Paperback and Hardcover (with optional Dust Jacket)

Cost: One-time setup fee per title ($25—$50) plus printing and shipping costs that vary based on format. IngramSpark's royalties aren't explicitly listed on the site, so you'll need to use its royalty calculator to factor Ingram's share into the cost of distribution.

Distribution: They have an extensive list of ebook and print distribution partners, including international retailers.

ISBN: Included for free or use your own

Other features: IngramSpark is one of the most reliable POD services and is known for producing good-quality, professional-looking books. They are great platform for authors who want to prioritize selling in print or to the widest network of brick-and-mortar stores.

LULU

Book options: eBook, Paperback and Hardcover

Cost: You can estimate what it costs to print with Lulu by using their pricing calculator. To give you a sense of where the pricing will start, a 300 page trade paperback will cost about $8.71 per book.

Distribution: Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Google Play, Ingram, Kobo, Scribd, and more.

ISBN: They provide free ISBN if the book meets certain requirements.

Other features: They're more widely known for their sustainable POD service. Lulu, like some of the other distributors on this list, provides authors the option to sell through the Lulu store and a network of global distribution partners. The Lulu Direct program also allows authors to sell books to their readers via their own websites.

BOOK BABY

Book options: eBook, Paperback and Hardcover (with optional Dust Jacket)

Cost: They don't take royalites, instead they charge upfront fees based on your book's genre, format, and page count. Prices vary but start around $300. The upside of paying upfront is that for any ebook sale made on a retailer in BookBaby's distribution network, you keep 100 percent of your earnings from that retailer. For any eBook sale made through BookBaby's own digital bookstore, BookShop,

BookBaby keeps 15 percent of the sale.

Distribution: Amazon (KDP and KDP Select Publishing), Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Overdrive, Scribd, and more.

ISBN: Costs $49 to get one through BookBaby, but you can also provide your own

Other features: It's known for offering quick turnaround times for book editing and formatting services, as well as an easy-to-use interface when you want to DIY. They also offer advertising services on Facebook, LinkedIn, and other reader-facing platforms.

PUBLISH DRIVE

Book options: eBook only

Cost: They offer monthly or yearly plans, which start at $16.99 per month. These plans change in price depending on the number of books and formats you need to publish.

Distribution: Amazon (KDP and KDP Select Publishing), Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Google Play, Kobo, Overdrive, Scribd, and more.

ISBN: Not provided. You can add your own ISBN,

Other features: PublishDrive is great for established authors looking to reach an international audience. They place a heavy emphasis on simplifying the book distribution process and emphasize a global audience, including in hard-to-reach markets like China. They also offers a number of promotional opportunities on retailers, all of which can be arranged and tracked directly from your PublishDrive account.

BLURB

Book options: Paperback and Hardcover

Cost: It's free to start a project, and you pay to publish your book per number of pages. Prices start at $2.99 for 24 pages plus $0.02 per additional page for a trade book (use Blurb's pricing calculator to estimate the total). Blurb partners with Ingram for distribution, so costs per sale are based on the distribution fees of Ingram and the retailers you're distributing to. Blurb charges no additional royalty fees for sale via Ingrams.

Distribution: Ingram's worldwide distribution network, Kickstarter, and Blurb's own bookstore. Blurb is the only distribution platform to partner with Kickstarter.

ISBN: Included for free if you make your book using Blurb's in-house tools

Other features: Blurb is is great for authors who want to publish image-heavy or design-focused printed works. As well as BookWright and the InDesign plugin, Blurb's design tools include

integration with Adobe Lightroom, for turning photo galleries into books, and an Adobe Photoshop Wall Art plugin for turning photoshop files into wall art.

DRAFT 2 DIGITAL (& SMASHWORDS)

Book options: eBook

Cost: Free to publish. You will earn 90% royalties on all ebook sales, regardless of book price.

Distribution: Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Apple Books, Kobo, Overdrive, Scribd, Tolino, and more.

ISBN: Included for free or use your own

Other features: Draft2Digital provides a list of recommended resources for services outside its scope and a Universal Book Links (UBLs) service that allows you to create a single book link for all readers to buy your book wherever they like to shop. They also help authors with arranging promotions or securing merchandising opportunities on retail sites.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS

GRAMMARLY

Grammarly is an online writing assistance platform that offers a range of tools to help with grammar, spelling, punctuation, style, and clarity. It provides suggestions and corrections to improve your writing.

Price: Free | paid version starts at $12 per month.

PRO WRITING AID

ProWritingAid offers a comprehensive set of writing analysis tools. It allows you to check grammar, style, readability, and more. It also provides detailed reports and suggestions for improvement. It also provides integrations with popular writing platforms, such as Microsoft Word, Google Docs, Scrivener, and more.

Price: Free | paid version starts at $20 per month.

ANTIDOTE

Antidote is a comprehensive writing assistance software. It is primarily designed for the French language, but also suitable for English and is widely used for grammar, spelling, style, and language-related improvements. It integrates with various writing tools, including Microsoft Word, Outlook, and web browsers.

Price: Starts at $59.95 per year.

SCRIVENER 3

Scrivener 3 is a writing software designed to assist authors and writers throughout the writing process, from initial idea generation to organizing and structuring their work. It provides a distraction-free environment and allows you to break down your project into smaller sections. You can import and manage research materials, set writing goals, and customize formatting.

It supports collaboration and offers flexible exporting options. It is available for both Mac and Windows users.

Price: 30-day free trial | paid version starts at $59.99

LANGUAGE TOOL

LanguageTool is an open-source proofreading tool that checks for grammar, spelling, and style errors.

It is not as comprehensive as many of its competitors, but it's a lot cheaper and well- suited for casual everyday writers who are not looking for too much guidance.

Price: Free | paid version starts at $5 per month.

HEMINGWAY EDITOR

Hemingway Editor is a web-based tool that helps improve the readability of your writing. It highlights complex sentences, suggests simpler alternatives, and provides readability scores. The online version is free to use.

Price: Free | paid version is $19.99

GINGER

Ginger is a writing assistance platform that offers grammar, spelling, and punctuation checking features. It verbalizes your writing back for you, allowing you to pick up inconsistencies and flow problems. And it's most impressiove feature is the translation function, which can translate your work into 60 languages! Ginger is available as both a web-based application and a downloadable software for Windows and Mac platforms.

Price: Free | paid version starts at $9.99 per month.

VELLUM

Vellum is a great tool designed specifically for formatting and producing professional looking books for publication. you can import your manuscript and customize various elements such as font styles, chapter headings, drop caps, and page breaks. It allows you to preview how your e-book will look on different devices and ensures that the formatting remains consistent throughout. The downide is that it's available for only Mac users

Price: Free | paid version is $199.99

HIRING FREELANCE PROFESSIONALS

REEDSY

Reedsy is the number1 best platform for any self-publishing author, since it's specifically designed for authors and provides access to a curated community of publishing professionals. You can find editors, designers, formatters, marketers, and other experts who specialize in the publishing industry. Reedsy offers a straightforward process to search for and hire freelancers based on their expertise and project requirements.

UPWORK

Upwork is a large freelancing platform that offers a wide range of professionals, including editors, proofreaders, cover designers, formatters, and marketing experts. You can post your project requirements, review freelancers' profiles and portfolios, and hire individuals based on their skills, experience, and rates.

FREELANCER

Freelancer is a global freelance marketplace where you can find professionals across different industries. It offers a wide range of services related to self-publishing, including editing, proofreading, design, formatting, and marketing. You can post your project, receive bids from freelancers, review their profiles, and choose the right fit for your needs.

GURU

Guru is a platform that connects freelancers with clients across various fields, including self-publishing. It provides a wide range of services, from editing and design to marketing and distribution. You can browse freelancer profiles, review portfolios, and communicate directly with potential hires to discuss project details and negotiate rates.

When using these platforms, it's important to carefully review freelancers' profiles, portfolios, and ratings. Read client reviews and communicate with potential hires to ensure they understand your project requirements and can deliver the quality you expect.

CONGRATULATIONS

publishing a book is a great accomplishment!

Be proud of yourself and let your self-published
masterpiece inspire readers far and wide.