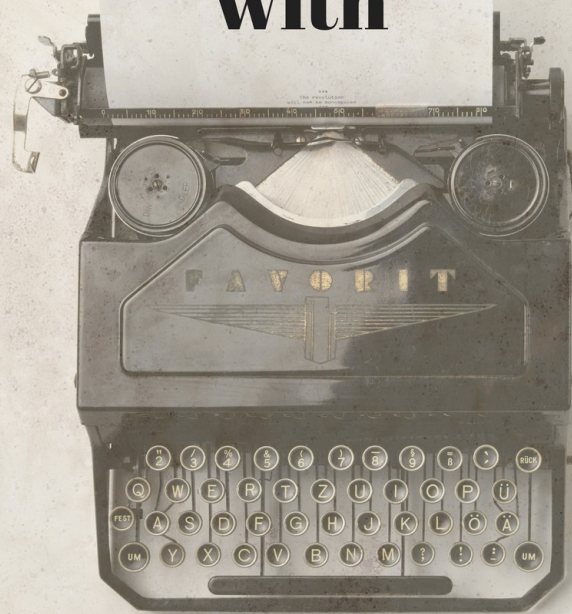


How to ^{Get} Not Overwhelmed with



Indie Publishing

Rachael Ritchey

This booklet is made available
for free, compiled from a series
of blog posts I started in 2016.

Beware the typos! I haven't done
any heavy editing.

Some info might be out of date,
but most of it is a great
springboard for where to get
started.

Thanks to Susan Hughes for letting me interview her about editing! I hope you find
the contents within helpful, and if you have any questions, you can find me at
<https://www.rachaelritchey.com> . Happy Publishing! – Rachael Ritchey

* This PDF version was compiled August 1st, 2018

Chapter 1

HOW TO NOT GET OVERWHELMED WITH INDIE PUBLISHING



In the indie publishing world it doesn't take much to feel overwhelmed, and for some this means giving up before ever truly starting. It doesn't matter if you've barely written a page of your book or have finished it (even going so far as to have it edited and uploaded to your preferred publishing avenue), there always seems to be more to do! I'm here to encourage you to keep at it regardless of where on the journey you find yourself.

Whenever I feel overwhelmed with a new stage of writing or publishing my work I break it down into smaller, more manageable chunks, which sounds easy enough but can occasionally be a difficult thing to accomplish.

For today, here's a first step to not getting overwhelmed:

- If you haven't done it yet, write down your motivation/goal/desired outcome for writing and publishing a book. What do you want to accomplish? Questions to ask yourself:
 - Is it to know I'm capable?
 - Is it to share a story with/about my family and/or friends?
 - Do I want to do this professionally or as a hobby?
 - Is it just for me?
 - Do I want to make an ebook only?
 - Do I want print books only?
 - Do I want to make ebook and print books?
 - Do I want strangers to buy and read my books?

Once you've figured out your overall goal then you can start breaking it down into smaller steps to accomplish little by little.

If your plan involves publishing your work there is only one ~~should possibly do it~~ ~~maybe if you want to~~ *must* item I will give you: for indie publishing, never ever be the

only editor of your own book, even for proofing! You will miss things every time, guaranteed (that is unless you are a super wordinator from the planet Wordus Perfectus).

You might have off-the-charts grammar and spelling skills, are known to edit for your friends, and/or work with the written word on a daily basis, but even you may fall prey to the *-duh-duh-duhhhhh-*invisible error! Of course, it's only invisible to us, while to our dear readers it can be a glaring, blaring zit on the beautiful face of our story. There's a certain acceptable margin for error, but like mice if there's one there's always more. And let's face it, for most of us it's actually really helpful to have at least one extra pair of eyes read our work before presenting it to the world.

In my previous post, [Beta What? Why Indie Authors Don't Live in a Vacuum](#), there is some helpful information on getting into writing groups and finding readers who will critique and help you improve your work before publishing. While beta readers can often offer a lot of assistance in catching typos, spelling, and grammar, it is still important to find someone who has a devoted understanding of the written word to help polish your prose. So as not to overwhelm you today I'll be putting together a post about the different types of editing services and get some links to the ones I previously researched available to you, too. But today is all about setting your goal!

When I first started writing in earnest I had no goal in mind except to get the story out of my head and onto the paper (and screen). I was so secretive about it I didn't even tell my family I was writing a novel for over a month. It was 'just for me' at that point, but it didn't stay that way. Morphing goals is fine! But don't get overwhelmed by the big picture.

Think of breaking your goal down like taking bites of food. There is the old adage, never bite off more than you can chew, and that applies here. It doesn't mean don't have a goal as big as the largest round of cheese in the world, but it does mean, don't try to finish it off in one bite.

Or maybe you can identify with this foodie example. Pet peeve of mine: chewing with the mouth open (and this includes gum, people!). Okay, so what's the analogy here? When one of my kids takes a huge bite he can't close his mouth, and inevitably food is falling back out into a mash of mush and messed up confusion, he's choking on it, or he's getting in trouble with Mom for chewing with his mouth open. None are pretty pictures.

What I'm saying is fairly straightforward: look at your writing/publishing (plate) and cut the publishing process (lasagna) into bite size pieces that aren't going to (fall out and make a mess, or worse) choke you!

If you're struggling I want to help. So, today just start by writing down your overall goal for writing and publishing. Once you've got that figured out then we can talk bits and pieces.

We'll discuss more about the process of self-publishing, what all those little bits and pieces look like. And together I hope we can accomplish some amazing indie authoring goals!

What is your publishing goal?

Chapter 2

BREAKING IT DOWN



If you've decided to publish for more than yourself or a select few of your family members, then the information we'll be sharing in the series will be helpful to you in ensuring you don't become overwhelmed by the plethora of information available.

Prior to the following steps, an indie author should already have started an author social media platform (i.e. [blog](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Goodreads](#), [Pinterest](#), [Google+](#), [Tumblr](#), etc), built a reasonably sized [beta reader community](#), and at least begun the search for a professional editor, which this last one we will discuss in great detail in the next article.

I'm not a lawyer, and there are legal aspects to publishing of which I cannot give you advice. I will tell you that it's wise to read all the fine print where you are able, and if something was made by someone else, always verify that it is free to use, or determine the requirements for use (attribution, purchase, etc).

In our series on How to Not Get Overwhelmed we'll focus on:

EDITOR/EDITING CONSIDERATION

- Do you need an editor? Well, I think so. I will talk about why, and I'll also have some help on the subject from my own fantastic editor who is not only well-versed in the ins and outs of editing but has a great grasp on fleshing out author voice as well as teaching her clients how to become better writers.

BOOK COVER DESIGN

- Do it yourself or pay for a professional. There are options!

THE BACK COVER SYNOPSIS & AUTHOR BIO

- Every book needs these features.

COPYRIGHT (US)

- If you wrote it, it's yours and is automatically copyrighted material, but there are some benefits to obtaining an official copyright through copyright.gov

PAPER & EBOOK PUBLISHING PLATFORMS (MAINLY US)

- There are several options available, but the most popular by far are companies like [Createspace](https://createspace.com), [IngramSpark](https://ingramspark.com), & [Lulu](https://lulu.com) for paperback and ebook, but then also [Smashwords](https://smashwords.com) and [Kindle Direct](https://kindledirect.com) for ebooks. These are the options we will focus on.

ISBN (AND BARCODE (US))

- All books require a number to track through sales channels. [ISBNs](https://www.isbn.org) are not needed for most ebook publishing as places like Smashwords and KDP will supply their own special number at no charge. Each version of a book (e.g. ebook, paperback, hardbound) will require its own number.

EBOOK FORMATTING

- Options abound for assistance with formatting as well, from DIY to publishing platform pro packages to independent professional offerings.

PAPERBACK AND HARDBOUND FORMATTING

- The same goes for these formats, and some also include templates to make formatting for print less complicated.

UPLOADING YOUR BOOK TO ONE OR VARIOUS PLATFORMS

- There are all kinds of options for categorizing your book, title and author info, places for synopsis, pricing, distribution, etc.

MARKETING STRATEGIES

- This one is my least strong area, but I've learned some great stuff that will at least help you as you start out. There are so many ways to market and build

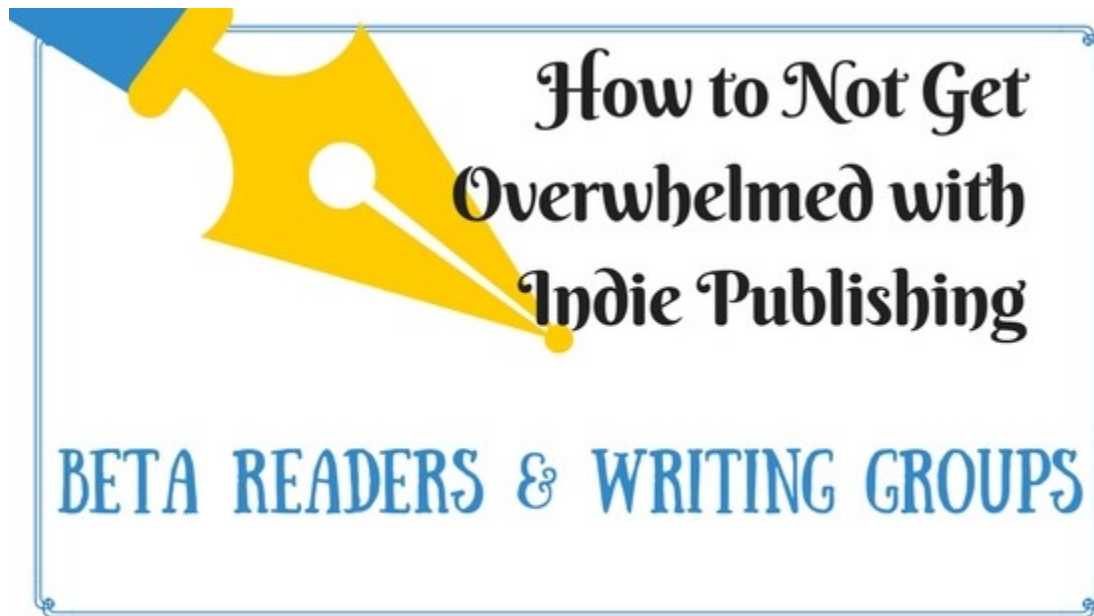
your audience. You should start this now by taking the time to have a social media presence. Don't discount it.

The items in the above list will be broken down into more detail in each article as we come to it.

Would you say this is looking a little less intimidating or more so? If there was one area of indie publishing you would want help with, what would it be?

Chapter 3

BETA READERS AND WRITER GROUPS



As a writer, just starting out and afraid to tell anyone I was writing, I couldn't imagine having anyone look at the title let alone the very essence of the story I had so painstakingly laid upon the altar of paper. I could have easily been living in a vacuum of space, a gap in reality if you will.

But my writing was this offering of a part of my soul, and the thought of having someone make comment on the secrets I'd wrenched from the hidden places of my mind sent shivers of fear coursing through me. (can anyone say 'a little melodramatic' here?) I loathed the idea that I'd be judged unworthy based on the imperfection of not my words but my heart. There was this impossible idea of separating myself from my work, and I resisted having anyone read what I'd written.

It took a lot of reading, researching, and talking about it to finally accept that if I wanted to move forward with this infinitesimal dream of publishing it would be in my and my story's best interest to have people read it and then, in return, give me a piece of them: their thoughts, feelings, and suggestions about my work.

BETA READERS:

CHECKING THE PULSE OF YOUR STORY TO MAKE SURE IT'S ALIVE & WELL

If you are just starting out and wondering what to do, this is the best place to take the next step. Get beta readers. Find a group (or construct your own) to read and

comment on your work. It will be painful at times, but there are moments of shared laughter and such beautiful encouragement, too. You are free to accept or reject anything that your betas share with you, but often you will find that their insights open your eyes to things you might never have considered.

WHERE TO FIND BETA READERS:

- Writing groups: In person or online, they can be great places to make connections for beta reading. This gives you opportunity to learn by experience as, in turn, you beta read for others. But bear in mind that in this setting you are likely to receive much more constructive assistance (or criticism) because of the combined experience of other writers helping each other improve at a craft they all love.
- Readers: I think it's wise to also find beta readers who are just that. They approach stories from a different angle and will round out your feedback.
- Readers can be found in your circles:
 - family
 - friends
 - acquaintances
 - strangers from across the world
 - The internet, and especially the blogging community, are full of people who love to read

[The Write Life](#) has a great post on ideas for finding writing groups, which is a perfect launching point for locating a variety of beta readers, too. Keep in mind that beta reading is for when your story is written but you need to know if the story will hold up with your audience. It also gives you the opportunity for basic proofing. The good part of writing groups is you can have both critique in-process and after it's complete.

[Goodreads](#) has an extensive searchability and offers many beta reader groups for you to choose from. Just enter "Beta Reader Group" into the search bar and choose the option "Groups." Here's an example with more than 7000 members: [Beta Reader Group on Goodreads](#).

I love having friends beta read, too, but I would suggest if you have friends read you make sure they are the kind who will be totally honest with you about their thoughts and opinions. It's nice to hear you're the best author in the world, but nice doesn't equal helpful or accurate. haha

IF WE PLAN TO PUBLISH OUR WORK BUT NEVER HAVE ANYONE READ IT
BEFOREHAND WE RISK PUTTING LESS THAN OUR VERY BEST OUT THERE, AND
THAT WOULD BE A CRYIN' SHAME!

We don't live in a bubble as a writer. We write what we want, but we make sure if we want people to read our stuff that it will resonate with our audience. Beta reading is a great way to protect us writers from the vacuum and help keep our stories from disappearing into the void.

Over the next couple of months, I'll be putting together a series of posts that will focus on the often-overwhelming task of indie publishing. There is so much information out there, and it can be intimidating to start out when you know next to nothing about what is involved in publishing. Or, it can send you running the other way.

Don't give up! You've got this, and I'm here to help however I can. Now, go forth and find your beta readers!

Chapter 4

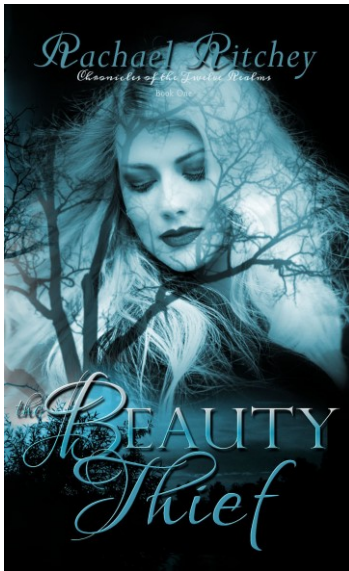
EDITORS AND EDITING



I hadn't really planned to cover editing in the *How to Not Get Overwhelmed with Indie Publishing* series—except to say that as far as I'm concerned, editing is a must—but a question arose that I didn't want to gloss over.

Trust me when I say I know that editing can seem like a lofty, unattainable expense for an indie author, and I don't want to tell you how to go about getting your editing done, but at the very least I do think it's essential to have someone else read your work to correct grammar, spelling, typos, and punctuation. The human brain has this amazing ability to autocorrect errors it has already encountered, so no matter how many times you read something, you could still miss it. My goal with this article is to give you my thoughts, insight, and information all pertaining to the role of editing in indie publishing.

I've also invited editor [Susan Hughes](#) to answer a few questions in regard to what editing services are exactly and the benefit to writers. Susan earned her BA in English Lit from University of Houston which served her well as an educator for 29 years, and she is a member of the [Editorial Freelancers Association](#) as well as [American Copy Editors Assn](#). She was gracious enough to say yes when I asked for her help, and if you can engage an editor of her caliber, I think you'll be pleased you spent the time and money finding her or him.



When I first started writing *The Beauty Thief*, I didn't plan on having an editor and thought I could get away with just the wonderful help of some friends and maybe a couple strangers, but I did a lot of research that convinced me otherwise. I spent a considerable amount of time contemplating the self-published books I'd read and been dissatisfied with, the ones that really drove me to finally follow my longtime inclination to write my own stories. But I didn't want to add to—or perpetuate—this false generalization that indie published books were second class or that indie authors didn't care about what they were putting on the market.

Beta readers and writers groups can go a looong way in helping alleviate these issues, but I also feel that finding a good editor and being able to afford the services will offer writers that extra bit of support and polish. I want indie authors to not be overwhelmed by the false idea that it can't happen.

As a writer who wants to publish, consider the idea that, sadly, indie authors in general have gotten a bum rap for producing sub-par books. This is why—especially for new authors—editing, revising, beta reading, more revising, more beta reading, and again, at the very least, a thorough proofreading by an experienced second person are essential for indie authors to do before they ever get to the point of publishing.

I SEE IT THIS WAY . . .

I am not only representing myself, but I am representing every other indie author out there who works their butt off to produce quality work and have it recognized as such.

If indies are diligent about getting trustworthy and honest feedback through beta readers and writing groups prior to publishing, I think it seriously cuts down on the amount and type of editing we choose but choose one we should.

I've heard the arguments for and against editing, and I side on the part of authors doing everything they can to improve at their chosen craft while also realizing we are not supermen who can leap tall tales in a single bound.

GET AN EDIT, WHATEVER KIND, WITH WHATEVER HELP YOU ARE ABLE.

Derek Murphy of creativindie.com had this to say in a comment following his article linked on [Alliance of Independent Authors](#), from Self-Publishing Advice, [Who Needs Editors](#):

I think they [writers] get enough positive encouragement and support already; I think what they really need is somebody telling them why their books are failing and how they can write better ones that earn money. There are soooo many failed and frustrated authors out there. Getting a good editor is not the solution to that problem. Writing a better story that readers love is the solution (and if authors do that, they should absolutely pay for a great editor – but maybe after they've given it to beta readers who love it).

I read Derek's article and a majority of the comments on it, and it has convinced me further of the need to get great feedback from several sources. The big issue was the cost of editing services and how many of us cannot afford the huge expense, a conundrum with which I have struggled too.

If you are wanting to make the effort to both get an editor and publish your work:

- you want to put your best foot forward
- you need to grow a thick skin to handle tough feedback
- you need to learn to discern the good from the bad
- you want and need to find an editor that you jive with, not just someone with whom you make a professional connection because of the perceived necessity of an author-editor relationship. If it requires getting to know editors a little more personally, then by all means find every way possible to do it.

To help bring some perspective I'll compare finding an editor with finding an agent for those who go the traditional route. It's next to impossible to find an agent who will give you the time of day if you haven't done your research first. In today's traditional publishing market, you are essentially required to look up everything you can about the agent you are contacting BEFORE you contact them (and most people end up contacting more than a few).

You find out what they've edited and figure out what is most comparable to your story. Then there's the question of their editing preference, what social media they use, their length of time as an agent, who they work with and have worked with before, any reviews or comments made about them as agents by other writers or publishers, and so on.

In the same way one searches diligently for the right agent to approach one should vet editors to ensure they will be a worthwhile fit for not only your genre and editing needs but your personality. You need to be able to talk openly and honestly with your

editor. Do not waste money or time on editing if you haven't first established a confidence in the editor, that they understand your end goals and style, because not all editors are equal to the task of meeting your specific needs.

SAVE UP WHAT YOU CAN FOR AN EDIT, DON'T PAY FOR WHAT YOU DON'T NEED OR WANT, GET YOUR BETAS, AND DO YOUR BEST.

Now without further ado, I really want you to meet my editor, Susan Hughes, who continues to hone her own craft and help authors be the best they can be. I posed some questions to her, and she's going to help with the logistics of getting an editor and what types of editing are most often available.

- If a new author is looking for an editor, where is a good place to start?

Thanks for inviting me to be part of this great series, Rachael! Writers definitely want to do their homework when selecting an editor. If you're part of a writers' group or have blog buddies or writer friends on social media sites, ask around for referrals. If not, there are many other great options. I'm a member of the Editorial Freelancers Association, home to many editors. Writers can check their website for more information at <http://www.the-efa.org/>. Another good place to find high-quality editors is at Reedsy. Their website is <https://reedsy.com/>.

- When choosing an editor, what are some of the services or other things an author should expect? Should authors only solicit the services of editors who are willing to give a free sample of their work?

Great question. I would definitely be wary of any editor who does not offer to do a free sample edit for you. After all, you wouldn't buy a car without taking it out for a test drive, right? As an editor, I want to see the level of writing skills the prospective client has in order to gauge the level of editing needed and the amount of time required for the job. The sample edit allows me to do that while showing writers exactly what I can do to help them. Every editor has their own style, and you want to find one that will be easy for you to understand.

Expect the editor to provide references who can be contacted for more information. It's helpful if they have a website you can go to for information

about rates, procedures, etc. I (and many others) offer a written contract and invoicing upon request, so don't hesitate to ask for those.

Another important thing to look for in an editor is someone who is willing to communicate with you promptly and in a friendly manner. You're going to hand your manuscript off to someone you've probably never met, and you're bound to have lots and lots of questions. You want to know that your questions and concerns will be addressed promptly, and you definitely deserve to know how the edit is progressing.

Be sure to ask the editor what kind of post-editing services they offer.
Are they going to be available during the revision process? Does their fee include a full or partial second read-through?

- Essentially, what are the different levels/types of editing services available through professional editors, and what do they each entail?

This is so important, Rachael. I have many clients who come to me for what they think is just a proofread, only to find that the manuscript needs a complete overhaul.

There are 3 basic types of editing. What follows is a brief description of each:

- *Substantive/Developmental Editing: This includes a look at the manuscript as a whole – its structure, organization, consistency, etc. The editor might suggest the removal/addition/rewriting of sentences, paragraphs, and even chapters.*
- *Copy editing (line editing): This is what most writers expect when it comes to editing. Grammar, spelling, word usage, repetition, and style are addressed, among other things.*
- *Proofreading: Proofreading is the final step in the writing process. This is light editing to catch stray errors prior to publication. No changes will be made to sentence structure or the story itself.*

There are some editors who only do one type of editing. Others offer all three, separately or as a package. And there are proofreaders who provide only that

service. If you're not sure what your manuscript needs, ask your prospective editor.

- Since editing is one of the biggest expenses of publishing, what might be some options for people who are on a limited to non-existent budget?

Yes, editing is expensive. But self-publishing a book without having it edited is costly, too. In some ways, it may be even more costly. You certainly can't put a price on your reputation as an author.

As you do your research, you'll find a wide range of fees for editing. Some editors charge an hourly rate. Others charge by the word or the page or the project. I charge an hourly rate and use my free sample to help determine the charge. I use the EFA's rate chart as a guide. You can find it here: <https://www.the-efa.org/res/rates.php>.

That being said, if money is tight, you will want to start saving now. Many editors offer payment plans or are willing to let you pay in installments. I schedule edits up to a year in advance and have clients who send me payments of \$50 (or less) at a time. Just don't expect to get your edited manuscript back until you've paid in full. A Kickstarter campaign is a great idea, too. Rachael can fill you in on how to do that.

Again, do your homework. The cheapest editor isn't necessarily the best. Neither is the most expensive editor. Find a couple of editors you think will be a good match and then consider the cost of each.

- What do you see as the most important reason for having one's manuscript edited?

You only get one chance to make that first impression with your book, so it needs to be the best it can be. And while you might have a slew of smart, talented friends, family, and beta readers to comb through your manuscript for errors, you need a professional who is objective, thorough, and meticulous – someone who doesn't have to worry about stepping on your toes or hurting your feelings when giving an honest critique of your work.

Writers work from the heart. Your story is yours; the characters become a part of you, and it is difficult to separate yourself from them. An editor works from the head, with no emotional connection to the story or its characters (though I admit I do become invested in some of them before the edit ends). When you put the two together, you have the best of both worlds . . . and your readers will thank you for it.

If you think of something you'd like to add, please do!

A big thank you and Texas-size hug to Rachael for this opportunity. I'd love to connect with you and am always available to answer questions regarding editing, social media marketing, and the self-publishing industry in general.

Visit my website: www.myindependenteditor.com

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/hughesedits4u>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MyIndependentEditor>

A big thanks to Susan Hughes for taking the time to help us out with her expertise and offer of further assistance!

Chapter 5

COVER DESIGN



Since there's a lot that goes in to this process, today we're going to discuss something that falls during and/or after you've written your story, started acquiring beta readers, begun your marketing strategy by getting involved on social media, and let's not forget retained editing assistance.

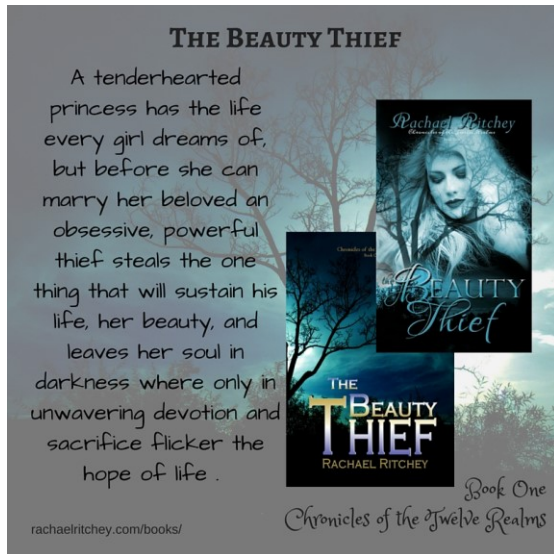
If you are not writing just for yourself or select family members and plan to publish to the public at large, then all of these things we're discussing are important to keep in mind.

I had no idea where to begin when it came time to publish my first book. I had read things here and there, but until I'd finished the book and sent it off to my editor I'd not given a thought to anything outside designing my cover. But I think this is a good point in the journey to start thinking about and even commissioning your cover.

Cover design can be complicated, and an indie author would be wise not to take it lightly. I wholeheartedly agree with the research I did back when I first began that says a cover shouldn't be thrown together or look like a bunch of cut and paste photo-shopping pics. The good news is there are many options for cover design at many different price levels, ranging from DIY free to PRO \$500 ish. I think the median cost of most covers tends to fall around \$250 to \$300, but don't be discouraged as there are several websites that offer premade covers between \$50 and \$100.

DIY BOOK COVER DESIGN

I happen to enjoy photography as well as art and regularly utilize my photo manipulation program to play with both. I have used Corel PaintShop Pro X4 (they are on X8 now), but there are many programs that do similar photo and design work such as Adobe InDesign & PhotoShop, Magix photo design, GIMP, etc. In fact, I've known a few authors who've made their own very tasteful book covers using [Canva](https://www.canva.com/), which is a free online design program for making things from covers to memes and advertisements and everything in between.



A caveat to using Canva or similar photo websites is I don't know the legal logistics of using their photos, free or otherwise, for a book that you'll be selling. I am in no way a lawyer and cannot give you advice on legal matters. I do know your responsibilities with using photos that belong to someone else can range from giving the owner of the photo credit on your copyright page to sharing the book sales profits. Read the fine print before using anyone else's photography or designs!

While considering my final course of action in regard to how I would procure a cover for my first book I also spent a good amount of time looking at the covers of other successful books in my chosen genre. I wanted to have a cohesive design but not be a carbon copy of every other cover in the YA genre. The trends change rather quickly, so it's good to have your finger on the pulse of what is eye-catching.

When I was still writing my first book I started playing with ideas for the cover, and it morphed into many things before I settled on a simple design that I felt could carry complimentary elements throughout the series. None of these designs, up until the last one, were completely finalized and many were just great practice for using different features of PaintShop Pro.

I didn't start out planning to write a series but came to that conclusion as ideas for the various characters in the book began to unfold in my imagination, stories I wanted to pursue. There was also an overarching/series plot that developed in *The Beauty Thief* that would be sure to give the books a sense of cohesion. The logical step was a series, which is now underway, and with any series it's good to have a continuity of design elements.

If you are going to design your own cover I do not recommend using the free templates offered through various publishing platforms. For example, Createspace has a limited capability with their free template design features. These lack the changeability of professional styling. The only books I could see benefiting from their templates are non-fiction within limited categories of interest. If you are thinking of going the free template route, I would definitely choose Canva's free book cover design platform which is pretty simple to use and offers a lot more flexibility with design elements and fonts, etc.

If nothing else, ask me for help designing your cover! I do enjoy PaintShop, and soon I'll be teaching myself the ins and outs of Adobe InDesign. And for some great advice on what not to do when you DIY, check out this article from [BookBub: 9 Book Cover Mistakes to Avoid](#).

* 5/12/16 I forgot to add any info about the importance of color in book cover design, so here is a link to an additional bit of info on my blog, just in case: [The Importance of Color in Book Cover Design](#)

PROFESSIONAL BOOK COVER DESIGN

If you are not comfortable designing your own cover, or prefer to have a great professional design there are several options to help you in this regard. I've enjoyed seeing many of the covers offered by

- [Damonza](#),
- [99designs.com](#),
- [fiverr.com](#), and so on.
- One designer gal that caught my attention on Facebook with her whimsical covers was [Amalia Chitulescu](#).
- And this short list only scratches the surface of what's available!

[The Book Designer](#) is a great website, offering extensive information on everything related to book design and publishing. The site is pretty easy to navigate, too. One of my favorite things The Book Designer offers in relation to book covers is a monthly cover design contest that not only chooses winning covers but even gives some helpful feedback on what works and doesn't work in a book cover.

For more on Pro Book Cover Design options, Joanna Penn has this great article featuring a long list of designers and websites from which to choose: <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/bookcoverdesign/>. Two very helpful links from her article I will highlight here:

- “15 Hard Lessons From My 99Designs Competition” by Bryan Collins
 - <http://www.thecreativepenn.com/2013/10/20/book-cover-design-ms-word/>
- “How to Make Your Own Free Book Cover in MS Word” by Derek Murphy.
 - <http://www.thecreativepenn.com/2013/10/20/book-cover-design-ms-word/>

TRENDS IN GENRE MATTER

Advice that will always be helpful when it comes to the designing of your cover is pay attention to your niche market. It's more important that your cover fit in with other books in the same category, implying that whoever is searching out that type of book will know it belongs.

- Spend time on Amazon searching the top books in your genre.
- Search using keywords that describe similar elements found within your story.
- Pay attention to the styles of covers for various genres. Something that works for a straight up Action/Suspense book won't necessarily work for one that is Science Fiction with action and suspense elements.
- Browse your local book stores to see what's hot. If it's in the stores on the shelves then the covers have come from reliable research on current trends, though this is no guarantee of their awesomeness.

One other thing I will mention today is just because a book was published through the traditional route doesn't mean it will have a great cover. It's amazing to me what passes as a good cover, and I particularly hate when the cover is so on trend but off topic that while I read I'm distractedly thinking, *“Really? What does this cover have to do with the book?”* For some inexplicable reason that sort of incongruity always makes me feel a little like I've been deceived. But the good news is the cover doesn't have to tell the story of the book as long as it has the feel, or elemental values, of the genre from which it comes.

So what do you think? Are you ready to tackle the next step in indie publishing? What questions do you have about cover design? I'm all ears (which means I'm listening)!

Chapter 6

BACK COVER BIO & SYNOPSIS



While I feel this is the simplest approach, you do not necessarily need to follow the steps exactly as we've laid them out. It is perfectly acceptable to handle each step in a different variation, whatever you find the least overwhelming.

Today's subject goes along with what we discussed previously, cover design, and is an essential part of your book publishing! Even if you are only designing for online ebooks, you'll still need to have an author bio and book synopsis (a.k.a. back cover copy or blurb, although this has two meanings, which we'll discuss the other meaning later in this article).

The most ideal length of a back cover copy should be about 150 – 200 words. This may seem low, but it is an appropriate length to fit well on the back of a book as well as long enough to provide a great marketing teaser to the story itself.

BOOK SYNOPSIS

The synopsis on the back of your book should be an overview of the story that gives enough info to raise curiosity without giving away the whole thing. It should also not be so obscure that it causes more head-scratching than the desire to read on.

While it's true that 150 words doesn't seem like much, that's actually just enough to tell what you need without losing the potential reader's interest. There are some basic elements that should be included:

- Main characters names and who they are
- A basic idea of the setting (place, era, world, etc)
- A hint/question related to the plot to draw the reader in
- *Remember:* this is the big picture for the whole book, not a place to outline the plot, so keep focused on the idea of the overall story, not necessarily the specific details.

I've chosen two examples of popular. You can see that they are a little different, but they have the same elements.

15th Affair by James Patterson & Maxine Paetro. Amystery thriller (139 words):

Detective Lindsay Boxer chases an elusive suspect...her husband.

*As she settles into motherhood and a happy marriage, Lindsay Boxer thinks she has found domestic bliss. But when a **beautiful, alluring** blonde woman with links to the CIA disappears from the scene of a **brutal** murder at a downtown **luxury** hotel, Lindsay's life begins to **unravel**. Before she can track down the woman for questioning, a plane crash **plunges** San Francisco into **chaos** and Lindsay's husband Joe **vanishes**.*

*The deeper she digs, the more Lindsay suspects that Joe **shares a secret past** with the **mystery** blonde. **Thrown into a tailspin** and questioning everything she thought she knew, Lindsay turns to the Women's Murder Club for help as she tries to uncover the truth. Filled with **pulse-pounding international intrigue**, 15TH AFFAIR proves that **all is fair in love, war, and espionage**.*

The Selection by Kiera Cass. A young adult fantasy romance novel (137 words):

*For thirty-five girls, the Selection is the **chance of a lifetime**. The opportunity to **escape** the life laid out for them since birth. To be **swept up** in a world of **glittering** gowns and **priceless** jewels. To live in a palace and compete for the heart of **gorgeous** Prince Maxon.*

*But for America Singer, being Selected is a **nightmare**. It means **turning her back on** her secret love with Aspen, who is a caste below her. Leaving her home to enter a **fierce competition** for a crown she doesn't want. Living in a palace that is constantly threatened by violent rebel attacks.*

*Then America meets Prince Maxon. Gradually, she starts to question all the plans she's made for herself—and realizes that the **life she's always dreamed of** may not compare to a **future she never imagined**.*

THINGS TO NOTICE:

- The words in bold. I added this emphasis to highlight the use of power words: words that convey emotion, are evocative and relate to the genre.
- The text is not all in one large chunk. It is best to split the back cover synopsis into 2-4 paragraphs. In general, the first one or two parts will introduce the characters and the setting. The next section will give the main idea, problem, mystery, etc. of the story.
- Blurbs do not require you to use complete sentences, especially when you are conveying feelings of urgency or suspense.
- End with a lack of resolution, a question, an opening to the “what if” of the story like you see in the second example. This lets you know where the story might go but doesn't tell you the actual events or what the finale will be.

HELPFUL ARTICLES

- Better Novel Project: [Deconstructing Back Cover Copy by Christine Frazier](#)
- Joanna Penn: [How to Write Back Blurb for Your Book](#)
- Jane Friedman: [Writing Your Book's Back Cover Copy by Jessi Rita Hoffman](#)
- The Book Designer: [7 Secrets to Writing Persuasive Back Cover Sales Copy by Casey Demchak](#)
- Marilyn Byerly: [How to Write a Blurb \(Back Cover Copy\)](#)

What I tend to do when I write a synopsis is I write something longer then pare it down by replacing weak words with those evocative ones we talked about just a bit ago. I look for anything that appears redundant or that doesn't convey emotion to the audience. My blurbs tend to run between 150 and 200 words.

The Beauty Thief by Rachael Ritchey. YA low fantasy fiction (173 words)

The Twelve Realms exist in peace, where for the beautiful and kind-hearted Princess Caityn life is perfect. Even her betrothal is to the man she loves, High Prince Theiandar. She is surrounded by loving family and is protected from all harm. That is, until a masterful thief invades Caityn's unspoiled world.

Dark and looming in the shadows lurks this thief of forgotten lore, full of archaic secrets and a magic hidden in the distance of time. His purpose and power is long forgotten, but his desire is alive and strong, ready to steal the one thing which sustains his life: true beauty. Princess Caityn's beauty embodies all he has ever coveted, and before it can be tainted he plans to steal every last ounce.

Prince Theiandar's love for Caityn is constant, but it will take much more than his tenacious will to save her. When faced with insurmountable odds and a heart devoid of the smallest hope, Caityn's faith is extinguished, for with the full moon's zenith comes the sealing of her fate.

This isn't the blurb that is on the book, but I've learned a lot since then and even more since I wrote this one. I like to think this is an improvement over the original. My real goal is to get my blurbs to between 150 – 170 words.

We should continue to work on perfecting blurbs because a great cover and blurb are essential to our success, where the tantalizing synopsis on the awesome cover are the first things people will look at when they consider reading and purchasing our books.

GAINING FEEDBACK ON YOUR BLURB

A great way to procure pre-publishing research on the effectiveness of your story blurb is to post it on your blog with a nice poll. This allows potential readers, friends, and strangers to vote yes or no on the blurb or even various aspects of it. Leave it open to comments, and you will be amazed at the constructive feedback you'll receive from helpful and creative readers. (WordPress makes it easy to add polls with their link to Poll Daddy. It's available through admin.)

ENDORSEMENT BLURB: *We mentioned earlier that when talking about a "book blurb" there are two meanings, the one we've been using throughout this article (back cover synopsis/copy) and the other: a short, often one*

sentence endorsement for the book from someone whose name would be favorably recognized by the potential readers of your genre.

The goal is to gain one or several such blurbs for your cover copy during pre-publication from readers who would receive advanced copies. But blurbs from well-known voices in the writing world can be difficult to obtain. Generally, it's something like this bit of praise from Stephen King for Justin Cronin's *The Passage*: "Read this book and the ordinary world disappears."

Don't forget: Difficult does not mean impossible.

If you're still curious about this sort of blurb, here is an informative article from NPR that might tickle your fancy: "The Curious Case of the Blurb (and Why It Exists)" by Colin Dwyer. <https://www.npr.org/2015/09/27/429723002/forget-the-book-have-you-read-this-irresistible-story-on-blurbs>

AUTHOR BIO

I think we've covered more than enough great info on writing back cover copy/synopsis/blurbs, so let's move on to that amazing author bio. Can I just say I hate writing these? As if it's not hard enough to write an eye-catching blurb, now we gotta talk ourselves up without coming across pompous.

But don't worry, you can do it!

Here's the skinny on your author bio:

- Keep it short. I recommend, for your book cover, it shouldn't be longer than about 100 – 150 words. The one I use for this series is 83 words.
- Write it in third person but keep the voice of it personable as well as similar to your genre mood (or have someone else who knows you well write it about you! Maybe just give them the main details to include and let them at it).
- Be brief with your history and, if possible, make it pertinent to whatever you are writing.
- Include any big literary awards, prizes, etc. you might have received, but don't beat us over the head with it. We're just establishing credibility, not tooting our own horns here.

- Anything relevant career, education, or experience-wise.

I appreciate this article on BookBaby, which the above rules—with a healthy dose of my own experience—basically come from: “How to Write a Great Author Bio that Will Connect With Readers by Chris Robley” <https://blog.bookbaby.com/2014/03/how-to-write-a-great-author-bio/>. There’s a ton more info about various kinds and uses of bios jam-packed into it, too.

Here is a helpful post on Createspace’s forums: “Tips for Writing Your Author Bio by Richard Ridley” <https://forumscreatespace.com/en/community/docs/DOC-1871>.

And as a final source for examples, here is an article from BookBub: “Writing Your Author Bio? Here are 10 Great Examples” by Diana Urban <https://insights.bookbub.com/great-author-bio-examples/>.

Some of you are like me and have no amazing credentials to add to your bio. Don’t let that get you down. Your bio doesn’t have to sound like a roster of awe-inducing bona fides, which in all honesty can sound like that pompous guy we want to avoid being. What you should focus on when writing your bio is to be authentically you and giving readers a reason to think you are an author that they can connect with when they open the pages of your beautiful book.

One thing I notice that’s hard for a lot of authors is posting a picture of themselves. Trust me, I get it. I am not photogenic at all, and it takes about 1,000 pictures altogether to find one I can be happy with to put on display for the world to see. But I’m telling you now that people want to see your face. There is something in us as human beings that longs to see other human beings. Readers will connect with you, get a better sense of you, and likely build more trust in you when they can put a face to the name. Come out of your shell, my writer friend, and show us your face!

Between your book cover synopsis and your author bio, you will have an amazing back book cover. If you’ve got questions, please ask! I’ll do my very best to answer anything you need help with when it comes to indie publishing your work, making it the very best it can be.

Chapter 7

COPYRIGHT



Today's topic is Copyright. We'll be focusing on US, though, because that's where I live. It will be purely informational since copyright involves law, and I do not give legal advice.

Here's the © copyright symbol.

Here are the codes for various uses of the copyright symbol:

Copyright Symbol		
Copyright Symbol	Type	Number
©	Copyright Alt Code	0169
©	Copyright Unicode	©
©	Copyright Html	©
©	Sound Recording Copyright Unicode	℗

https://www.alt-codes.net/copyright_alt_code.php

Here's the definition of Copyright from Merriam-Webster:

"the exclusive legal right to reproduce, publish, sell, or distribute the matter and form of something (as a literary, musical, or artistic work)"

- US Copyright office: <https://www.copyright.gov/>
- FAQ page: <https://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/index.html>
- Copyright Basics: <https://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ01.pdf>

The biggest questions I had when I first started my search were: "When is my work officially copyright protected?" and "Do I have to register to be protected?"

The FAQ answers both questions and then some. Your original work is copyrighted the moment you write it and you have the protection of copyright, but if in the US you need to go to court over infringement then you'll want to consider the relatively low cost of registering, as outlined at the Copyright Basics link above and excerpted here:

Copyright Registration

In general, copyright registration is a legal formality intended to make a public record of the basic facts of a particular copyright. However, registration is not a condition of copyright protection. Even though registration is not a requirement for protection, the copyright law provides several inducements or advantages to encourage copyright owners to make registration. Among these advantages are the following:

- *Registration establishes a public record of the copyright claim.*
- *Before an infringement suit may be filed in court, registration is necessary for works of U.S. origin.*
- *If made before or within five years of publication, registration will establish prima facie evidence in court of the validity of the copyright and of the facts stated in the certificate.*
- *If registration is made within three months after publication of the work or prior to an infringement of the work, statutory damages and attorney's fees will be available to the copyright owner in court actions. Otherwise, only an award of actual damages and profits is available to the copyright owner.*

- *Registration allows the owner of the copyright to record the registration with the U.S. Customs Service for protection against the importation of infringing copies. For additional information, go to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection website at www.cbp.gov/.*

Registration may be made at any time within the life of the copyright. Unlike the law before 1978, when a work has been registered in unpublished form, it is not necessary to make another registration when the work becomes published, although the copyright owner may register the published edition, if desired. Copyright Basics: <https://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ01.pdf>

Copyright fact sheets of particular interest:

Books/Manuscripts/Speeches: <https://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl109.pdf>

International: <https://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl100.pdf>

Pseudonym: <https://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl101.pdf>

From the copyright.gov website, here's the basic legalese of what copyright protects:

Copyright protection subsists, in accordance with this title, in original works of authorship fixed in any tangible medium of expression, now known or later developed, from which they can be perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated, either directly or with the aid of a machine or device. Works of authorship include the following categories:

- (1) literary works;*
 - (2) musical works, including any accompanying words;*
 - (3) dramatic works, including any accompanying music;*
 - (4) pantomimes and choreographic works;*
 - (5) pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works;*
 - (6) motion pictures and other audiovisual works;*
 - (7) sound recordings; and*
 - (8) architectural works.*
- (b) In no case does copyright protection for an original work of authorship extend to any idea, procedure, process, system, method of operation, concept, principle, or discovery, regardless of the form in which it is described, explained, illustrated, or embodied in such work.*

The short of it: a) If it's your original, written down work it's copyrighted; b) the stuff that might have inspired your writing isn't covered; c) you can register at any time, but if not done within three months of publication you lose certain coverage/reimbursements for infringements, and if not registered by the five-year mark it loses its strongest legal credibility: prima facie (admissibility in court that needs no other fact checking unless rebutted); e) you cannot take a claim of infringement to court until your original work has been registered (here's a link on Quora with a good explanation for this last one).

If you're interested you can follow US Copyright Office on Twitter!

It doesn't hurt to have your unpublished and published works registered with the US Copyright Office. Remuneration for damages is much more likely when you have the official records to back up your claims.

I hope this information has been helpful. Depending on what country you live in you have different copyright laws. Be sure to check out your local government agency website to gain a better understanding of copyright law!

And remember, I'm not a lawyer. Nothing I have said here constitutes legal advice. I'm providing this only as I understand it, and to hopefully take some of the edge off figuring it all out. Seek the advice of a lawyer for all legal matters.

Next, we'll look at publishing platforms.

Chapter 8

PUBLISHING PLATFORMS



Today's topic is publishing platforms. These apply to most countries for accessibility as far as I know, but since most of my research has been about my own publishing, some of the info I share may only be useful to US authors.

MAIN TYPES OF BOOK FORMATS

- **ebook**
 - epub
 - mobi
 - pdf; etc.
- **paperback**
 - varying sizes
 - I prefer 5.25 x 8 or 5.5 x 8
- **hardbound**
 - varying sizes
 - I prefer 6x9

Depending on how you plan to make your book available you will have various options or combinations of platforms from which to launch your books. This list does not include vanity, small, or large presses. It includes ebook and print on demand (POD) book services where you are not paying them a bundle service to edit, format,

and publish your book for you and you retain all your rights. I think BookBaby is the only one that truly verges on vanity press status, but only just.

Self-Publishing Platforms

Here is a non-exhaustive list (some info is out of date) by order of personal preference:

*CREATESPACE (POD PAPERBACK)

<https://wwwcreatespace.com/>

- A Free service, but they do offer paid services for cover design, editing, formatting, etc.
- The website is not 100% user-friendly, but it's pretty easy to familiarize yourself with it.
- Books can be distributed to many retailers or just Amazon & Createspace depending on which ISBN and distribution channels you choose.
- Lots of choices for design and formatting, not to mention helpful templates to make sure your book is perfect. In fact, I prefer to use their interior templates to standardize the interiors I create for IngramSpark.
- Uploads PDF files (can be complicated if you have trouble converting files to PDF)
- I DO NOT recommend using their pre-made cover templates. Design your own or pay to have one made.
- Books purchased by retailers are non-returnable which adds a limitation to distribution, but this is true of almost all POD services.

*INGRAMSPARK (POD PAPERBACK, HARDBOUND, EBOOK)

<https://www.ingramspark.com/>

- \$12/yrly fee (waived for Alliance of Independent Authors members)
- \$49 set up fee (\$25 for ebook, unless included w/print book, then free)
- \$25/ea corrections to interior or exterior formatting of paperback and hardbound and ebook
- In my opinion ebook is better to sell directly through free services like Smashwords, KDP, & Nook.

- Ingram lets you set up with distribution so that retailers can make returns on any unsold product which is the clincher if you want to sell your print books in retail stores like Barnes and Noble.
- I prefer IngramSpark for the sheer fact that my books can be purchased by major book retailers and libraries, but the return on investment hasn't yet panned out after just over a year, so we'll see if it ends up being worth it.
- For an extra fee (\$60 per book) you can have your title added to one of several promotional catalogs.

As an extra note, IngramSpark is connected to Lightning Source which also handles book printing and ebooks, but with different allowances for book pricing, royalties, retailer discount, etc. Because I'm just starting out I went with IngramSpark, but I'm finding there might be benefits to using Lightning Source instead if one has a solid marketing plan in place. Let us know if you've got info on the benefits of one over the other.

AMAZON KINDLE DIRECT PUBLISHING KDP (ONLY KINDLE (MOBI) EBOOK TO AMAZON) *AND NOW PRINT!

<https://kdp.amazon.com/>

- Free and fairly easy.
- Free ASIN (Amazon Sales Identification Number)
- Check out <https://kdp.amazon.com/help?topicId=A2GF0UFHIYG9VQ> for supported formats and it will also give info on how to set up which file type you use.
- If you are selling your ebooks on Amazon, this is a "Must Set Up" publishing platform.

In fact, if you decided to only sell on Amazon, then sign up for KDP and join their Select program. Unless you plan to sell your book outside Kindle it's actually going to give you the highest returns on investment if it's the ONLY distribution channel you plan on selling in, but if you use any other publishing services then you can't sign up for Select.

***SMASHWORDS (EPUB, MOBI, PDF, ETC EBOOKS TO VARIOUS RETAILERS)**

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

- Free & slightly complicated if you want to have your books in their Premium Catalog of distribution to Nook, Apple, Amazon, Kobo, etc.
- Free ISBN
- Free ebook conversion to formats (e.g. epub, mobi, pdf, rtf, html)

- You'll want the *Style Guide* <http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/52>, which is a step-by-step free ebook that walks you through formatting a Word Doc to fit within their required parameters. Start here at their [How to Publish on Smashwords](#) page. You can download the Style guide from there.
- cool thing: they also publish ebooks for libraries and offer you the option of setting up a separate price just for libraries.

BARNES & NOBLE NOOK PRESS (EPUB/NOOK BOOK)

<https://www.nookpress.com/>

(There is a paper/hardbound book print service, too, but not for professional books to which you want an ISBN connected unless you buy your own barcodes, which we'll talk about with ISBNs next time)

- Like Smashwords, it's free to set up and you get the best returns from nook book sales if you set up directly through BN, but it only works for Nook sales.
- It's pretty easy to use, and if I remember correctly, you can correct format issues from your Word doc or PDF file (can't recall which) within the browser app.

LULU (POD PAPERBACK, HARDBOUND, EBOOK IN EPUB OR PDF)

<https://www.lulu.com/>

- I don't use Lulu, though their prices are comparable to Createspace for POD.
- Their book sizes are limited, and after looking at the "US Trade" size of 6×9 in person I can tell you that it doesn't look professional compared to other paperback books on the market. That size better fits a hardbound book, so I recommend 5.25×8 (my personal choice) or 5.5 x 8.5 max.
- I feel like I have more freedom with Createspace, though Lulu looks very simple and clean, almost pretty in the presentation.
- You'll have to check out their website for more info.

BOOKBABY (POD PAPERBACK, EBOOK TO VARIOUS RETAILERS)

<https://www.bookbaby.com/>

- I chose Smashwords over Bookbaby mostly because I'd actually heard of Smashwords before finding it. I've checked into BookBaby since then, and the only thing I might find appealing about their services is that with their ebook package deal at \$149 they guarantee "premium listings on Goodreads,

Noisetrade, BookDaily, and Publish” & free reviews from “. . . Reader’s Favorite, Story Cartel, and more.”

- Bookbaby also requires a ISBN for your ebook (\$29 through them or supply your own) where other ebook publishing platforms like Smashwords & KDP do not.
- images in your ebook cost extra (e.g. 4 images costs \$8), and I’m not sure about paperback costs.
- That adds up like this: \$149 (basically covers conversion to ebook & promo) + \$2/image + ISBN + \$249 Basic Cover Design (if you want their help, and more for pro design).

I guess the only thing I’d say is if you go with Bookbaby is pay attention to all the little hidden added fees, like if you need to do a correction to a sentence after it’s been sent for formatting that’s an extra charge.

But if you’re curious, here’s a great article (old info as the price as gone up \$50) from Alli Self-Publishing Advice by Giacomo Giammateo: “Is BookBaby or Smashwords Best for Self-Publishers?” <http://selfpublishingadvice.org/bookbaby-or-smashwords-best/>

BLURB (POD PAPERBACK, HARDBOUND, EBOOK)

<http://www.blurb.com/>

- Similar to Lulu in offerings, but maybe a little more limited. Their site reminds me of looking at Barnes & Noble’s book printing service they offer for simple printing (click the link for BN Nook Press above to see what I mean).
- It’s nice that they have a special plug-in for use with Adobe InDesign which makes formatting your paperback/hardbound books for Blurb a simple transition, and they also accept pdf files as well as use their own special formatting program: Bookwright.
- A Basic \$9.99 ebook conversion fee and they seem mostly focused on Amazon Kindle and Apple iBooks but also cover other Android device use and computers.

**I’ve put in bold the ones I use*

This info only scratches the surface, but I hope it gives you a place to start. If you have questions, let me know. And remember, you might only choose one of these or a combination. I’m sure I’ve even missed some of the other publishing platforms out

there, but I also purposely avoided mentioning any that hover into the realm of vanity press. BookBaby comes close because of their fees, but I put them in a similar category to IngramSpark/Lightning Source (IS/LSI) when it comes to that because their higher startup fee includes promotional assistance where IS/LSI doesn't but has a lower set up fee.

MORE RESOURCES:

- Derek Murphy CreativIndie YouTube Video: "Createspace, Lulu, or IngramSpark(Lightning Source)" <https://youtu.be/FzfDuYuzxck> He makes some really great points in this video.
 - I like IngramSpark, and it's a lot easier to get your books into BN and major retailers (even the indie stores) for signings, etc if you use them, but that may be something you want to wait to do until you feel more established
- "Ingram Spark vs CreateSpace for Self-publishing Print Books"
<http://selfpublishingadvice.org/watchdog-ingram-spark-vs-createspace-for-self-publishing-print-books/> (a couple years old, but still relevant and helpful info here)
- "Advice: Book Production & Distribution"
<http://selfpublishingadvice.org/book-production-and-distribution-advice/> (Alli archive, Self-Publishing advice)
- I'm just going to recommend you make your way over to Alli's blog: <http://selfpublishingadvice.org/> and check out all the helpful how-to articles there.

When you combine this week's lesson on platforms with the info that we've covered thus far in the series you might find that most of the free options will be in line with what you've already done to make your book amazing.

The one thing I will say for BookBaby about paying for their service is the promotional aspect and supposed guaranteed reviews might be worth the cost. Cost in indie publishing is always an issue, though. Since I've not used their service, I would love to hear from someone who has. Did you like it? Was it helpful? Do you only use BookBaby?

If you have already published your first book, or several, what has been your best experience? Which platform(s) do you use?

Also, would it be helpful to walk through the actual steps involved in using any of the platforms I utilize for publishing?

Thanks for sticking around! I hope this series continues to be useful.

Chapter 9

ISBNs



Here in the US, we have to buy our ISBNs (International Standard Book Numbers). In some countries you do not, like Canada. The information I give will mainly apply to US book publishing.

ISBNs have been around for quite a while. In fact, before the system went international it was started by W. H. Smith, at the time the largest book retailer in Great Britain, implementing the SBN (Standard Booking Numbering) system back in 1967. It was such a useful categorization system that more than 150 countries participate in the ISBN system that followed.

You can purchase a single ISBN or sets of them in various amounts through Bowker at <https://www.myidentifiers.com/>.

The price for

- one ISBN is currently \$125.00
- but if you buy 10 it's \$295
- or \$575 for 100 ISBNs
- or there are larger packages depending on your needs
- You will need a separate ISBN for **every** format type of your book(s):
 - one for paperback, one for hardbound, one for ebook, one for audiobook, etc.

Ebook ISBNs are not usually required as most digital distributors supply their own unique coding numbers like Kindle Direct Publishing (ASIN) and Smashwords.

If once you've published you want to change the trim size or number of pages in the book, you will then need another new ISBN for each format.

HERE'S WHAT BOWKER SAYS ABOUT ISBNs:

- *ISBNs are the global standard for identifying titles*
- *Each version of a book, print or digital, requires its own ISBN. Be sure to purchase enough for your needs*
- *Most retailers require ISBNs to track book inventory*
- *Buying an ISBN improves the chances your book will be found*

If you live in a jurisdiction for ISBNs outside the US, I encourage you to visit the International ISBN Agency <https://www.isbn-international.org/> to find out about getting ISBNs where you live.

BARCODES

Another aspect to consider is barcodes associated with your ISBN. From personal experience I have not bought the barcodes through Bowker as both Createspace and IngramSpark automatically generate the barcodes for you, thereby avoiding any mishaps. But when I did look into publishing through Barnes & Noble's print-on-demand service they did not provide the barcode, so that is a service you would need to have one for. For more info on barcodes visit Bowker's FAQ

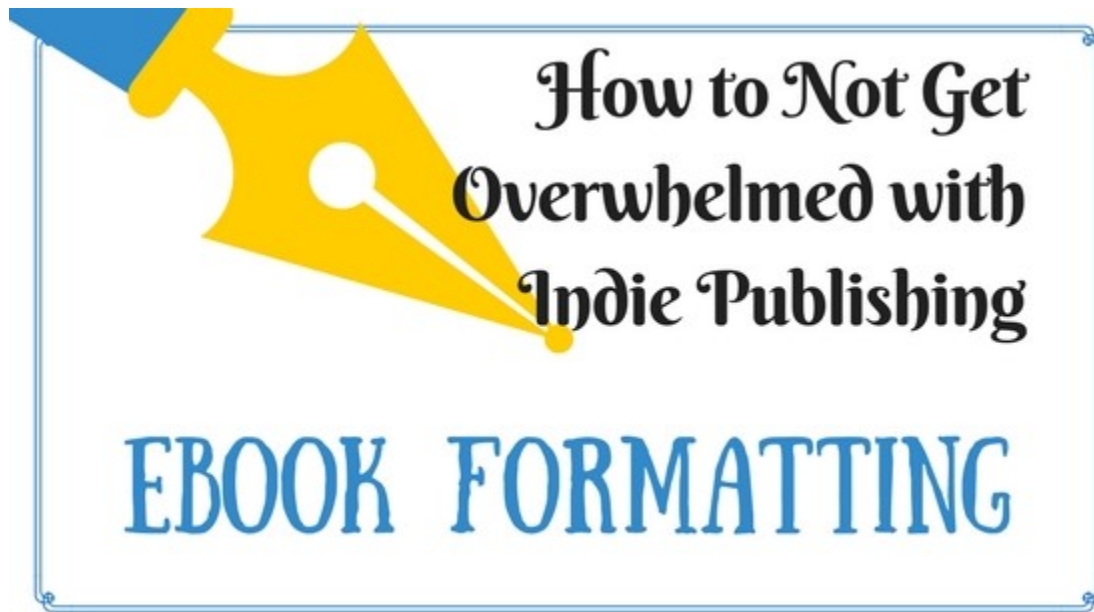
<https://www.myidentifiers.com/help/barcodes#faq1> .

Just to wrap it all up, ISBNs are fairly simple and straightforward, and by this point in your publishing journey you are already good at setting up new accounts and creating crazy passwords, which you will want to do at myidentifiers.com (Bowker), too. This step can be accomplished anywhere along your journey. I'd say the sooner the better so you're prepared, but you can get the ISBN last and still be good. It is really only a necessity when it's time to publish in print and audio (of course, audio might be handled like ebooks, but I've not taken that plunge yet, so I don't know for sure!).

Congrats on making it this far into your publishing adventure. Don't lose heart. I know it can be overwhelming, but if you take it step-by-step, in small, manageable chunks, I know you will be successful!

Chapter 10

EBOOK FORMATTING



At the start of this series I explained that indie publishing can feel overwhelming, and the fear of the unknown can be debilitating. What we hope to accomplish with this series is to eliminate that fear by doing the one thing that will make publishing on your own palatable: break the process down into manageable pieces. That's how we keep from getting overwhelmed with the whole process. Sounds a lot like writing a novel, doesn't it!

We're getting into more technical aspects of indie publishing and this next bit is no different. The very thought of formatting for e-book can feel insurmountable, but you don't have to wallow in the intimidation. You have options. There are several services available—people who are more than willing to format your books for you—or you can tackle the work yourself if you so desire.

There are different requirements and formats when choosing the hire-a-formatter or do-it-yourself options, so it really helps to narrow down which platform(s) you'll be e-book publishing through first.

Some paper/POD (print-on-demand) services offer to format your e-book based off your print book (e.g. Createspace – Kindle Only & Ingramspark), but this might not be the best option if you want to add special links, etc. I'll talk a little more about this today.

Another time we'll cover print formatting, which is almost an entirely different beast. I'm going to focus on what I use, but keep in mind that there are other ways to do

it that might work better for you. A simple search of the internet can offer you thousands of options, really, so don't feel trapped by my limited knowledge or expertise. We all have the opportunity to learn something new, and this system just works best for me.

PROGRAMS THAT CAN HELP YOU FORMAT

I happen to appreciate Scrivener's "compile" feature for formatting to various e-book file types (e.g. .epub, .mobi, .pdf), but it does present limitations on things like adding pictures. If you are making a picture book, Scrivener is not the best option for you. If you want some software that might help you with that, I'd suggest InDesign by Adobe <https://helpx.adobe.com/indesign/how-to/what-is-indesign.html>.

MORE INFO ON SCRIVENER:

<https://www.literatureandlatte.com/scrivener.php>

- \$40 pays for the software (and includes free updates as they come, at this time)
- Can be loaded on two devices for that one price
- You can test the software for 30 days (non-consecutive) for free
- It's like a window and file organizational and writing tool all combined into one
- Available on PC and Apple products
- produced by a company called [Literature & Latte](#), started by a guy who just had some writerly ambitions and found a process that worked for him then shared it with the rest of us.

Bestselling author and writer guru Joanna Penn offers some great insights on the program: "8 Ways Scrivener Will Help You Become A Proficient Writer Overnight" <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2014/03/25/scrivener-proficient-writer/>

MORE ON INDESIGN

- Currently available for purchase only on a monthly basis through [Adobe's Creative Cloud](#) at varying prices from \$9.99 (photography only, and only available when signed up for annually) to \$79.98/mo for access to all apps.
- The prices are much higher monthly when you do not sign up for the "annual" plan and wish to go just monthly.
- I found some old versions of the software you can just purchase outright on Amazon, but that is minimally available and the cost is over \$145 in most cases.

Here's an article from trusted resource The Book Designer on why using InDesign is so great for authors: "Authors: Why You Should Be Writing in Adobe InDesign" <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2011/08/authors-why-you-should-be-writing-in-adobe-indesign/>

Mac Users Only: I've recently heard of a service/software for formatting called Vellum, which sounds really interesting and you might want to check out further. Here is an article, again, from Joanna Penn about her experience with Vellum: "Why I've Moved from Scivener to Vellum for Formatting E-Books"

<http://www.thecreativepenn.com/2016/10/20/vellum/>

THE MOST COMMON OPTION FOR FORMATTING THROUGH E-BOOK PUBLISHING PLATFORMS

But aside from buying special software to format your e-books for you, there is good ol' Microsoft Word to rely on. In fact, both [Kindle](#) (for .mobi files) and [Smashwords](#) (for all file formats), plus others all rely on Word documents and .pdf formatted files from Word .docs to make e-book files. There's no extra cost for doing it this way either. If you have [Word](#) or even [Open Office](#), you can make .pdf files that can be uploaded to these sites.

Visit your publishing platform choice(s) for instructions on how to format for each service:

- Kindle <https://kdp.amazon.com/help?topicId=A17W8UM0MMSQX6>
- Smashwords https://www.smashwords.com/about/how_to_publish_on_smashwords
- Nook Press* <https://www.nookpress.com/support>
- Lulu* <http://connect.lulu.com/t5/eBook-Formatting-Publishing/eBook-Creator-Guide/ta-p/109443>
- BookBaby* <http://blog.bookbaby.com/2014/05/how-to-format-your-ebook/>

**I have never utilized this service for these features*

PRINT-ON-DEMAND (POD) SERVICES AND WHY YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER FORMATTING YOUR E-BOOK SEPARATELY

Print on Demand publishing platforms like Createspace and Ingramspark are great, because if you are stressed about formatting your own e-book and you've already gone to all the trouble to format a print version, they can take what you've got from your uploaded .doc or .pdf file and create an .epub and/or .mobi file from that to use for e-book sales. The biggest drawback is that this sometimes limits your e-book design

because not all files translate equally. It's most difficult when using special header fonts and pictures in your print book. Instead, you might want to format a different file following the specified format directions from the other e-book publishing platforms.

To add to that, you don't get to control the front or back matter of the book where you can add links to important things like your website, your social media, and any freebies you might want to offer readers!

E-books are great for this because you can add links throughout your text if you really want to, but the most important places are the front and back. A lot of great indie authors are sure to include a link at the beginning to free stuff they might have. And the back is great for adding links to all your social media as well as an easy way to access the next book in your series or to sign up for your e-newsletter where they can learn all about your next book.

THE BIGGEST AND MOST COMMON INSTRUCTIONS FOR GOOD FORMATTING

For both print and e-book formatting, these are some basics to pay attention to that will really take out the headache of fixing issues later, but this is especially important for ebook:

1. USE STYLES to set up your Chapter Heads; Subtitles; Italics; Bold; Indents; No Indents; Centering Text; Normal text; etc.
 - a. Within each style you can adjust Paragraph settings for indents, spacing, etc, and Text settings.
 - b. Use the indent feature in Margins (or on the ruler) to set your indent—whenever you press ENTER—to .25" or .3"
 - i. I will say that in order to have good indents when compiling a .mobi file through Scrivener that I like to use the 1/2" margin setting because it automatically corrects to a smaller indent
 - c. SERIOUSLY: Avoid TAB at all costs.
2. Standard e-book fonts are Georgia and Garamond.
 - a. Some e-readers are capable of using other fonts, but if they aren't they'll translate all your fonts to this anyway. Make sure you don't use a font that the various e-readers don't recognize, otherwise your readers will get weird blobs and blocks in place of the words (thank goodness tech keeps getting better, though!)

3. You do not need any special gutters or margins in ebook, neither do you need to double space between lines, but make sure you check out your chosen platform's specific requirements for margins.
4. DO NOT double space between paragraphs, but DO indent new paragraphs. This isn't a blog post you're writing. 😊
5. Page breaks are awesome between chapters, even in an e-book, but your standard Word "page break" is not the answer. Instead, go to: "PAGE LAYOUT">"Breaks">"Next Page" which will actually break the book up into sections that can then have varied headers (i.e. no header on the first page of a new chapter).
6. You do not need headers or footers, but you can add a header with your title or author name that adds a nice element for readers to remember what they're looking at.
7. NO page numbers, since most e-readers are adjustable and will not reflect your .doc's page count.
8. If I've missed any big, helpful stuff please share it to help fellow authors make awesome books that compete beautifully in the public market.

HIRING SOMEONE ELSE TO DO THE LEGWORK

Most e-book publishing platforms offer their own service or have listings of people who do provide e-book formatting services, so make sure you utilize the links I've shared throughout this article to locate their offerings. Not all services are prices or created equal. It would be a good idea to find out what e-books your service provider has done in the past and make sure their skills match what you need. The costs are quite variable, as with most assistance in the indie publishing world.

I offer [e-book and print formatting services](#) for very reasonable prices as I've started doing it for others on a semi-pro/hobbyist basis.

And for other great options, I'll once again cite the trustworthy Joanna Penn for more advice: [Book Formatting for E-Book & Print](#) – Joanna Penn offers a very useful list for you to start with!

And as always, if you have any questions or need any help, please ask! If I don't know the answer, I'll be sure to help you find the expert who does.

Here is a video I made on how to setup your book for publishing through Createspace: <https://youtu.be/4Lqcxfltv1c> , and if you have questions about the following topics I haven't yet covered, feel free to ask on that stuff too!

Things Still to Cover:

formatting paperback and hardbound; uploading for publication, marketing strategies,

