

From Finished Manuscript to Published Book

A practical step-by-step checklist to help you move through the self-publishing process with confidence - without missing the important details.

How to use this checklist

Work through each stage in order, ticking items off as you go. Not every book will require every task, but this gives you a strong publishing framework for both ebook and print editions.

1. Finalise Your Manuscript

- ☐ Complete your final manuscript draft.
- ☐ Review the overall structure, flow and chapter order.
- ☐ Complete developmental or substantive edits where needed.
- ☐ Proofread carefully for spelling, grammar and consistency.
- ☐ Check names, dates, facts, links and references.
- ☐ Remove comments, tracked changes and editing notes.
- ☐ Confirm the final book title and subtitle.
- ☐ Save a clean master copy of your finished manuscript.

Quick tip: Keep an untouched master file before formatting. It gives you a clean version to return to if anything goes wrong later.

2. Prepare Your Book for Publication

- ☐ Choose the formats you plan to publish: ebook, paperback and/or hardcover.
- ☐ Format the manuscript for each chosen format.
- ☐ Check chapter headings, page breaks, spacing and paragraph styles.
- ☐ Add your title page and copyright page.
- ☐ Add front matter such as a dedication, contents page or introduction where appropriate.
- ☐ Add back matter such as an author bio, other books, resources and reader call-to-action.
- ☐ Check all hyperlinks in the ebook edition.
- ☐ Review the formatted book on multiple screen sizes or in a previewer.

Quick tip: Your back matter is valuable marketing space. Give readers one clear next step, such as joining your email list or discovering another book.

3. Create Your Cover

- ☐ Confirm the final title, subtitle and author name exactly as they will appear on the listing.
- ☐ Create or commission a professional cover appropriate for your genre or topic.
- ☐ Check that the title remains readable at thumbnail size.
- ☐ Prepare the correct ebook cover dimensions.
- ☐ Prepare a full print wrap for paperback or hardcover if required.
- ☐ Confirm trim size, page count and spine width before finalising the print cover.
- ☐ Proofread every word on the cover and spine.

Quick tip: Before approving your cover, compare it beside bestselling books in your category. It should fit reader expectations while still being distinctive.

4. Prepare Your Publishing Metadata

- ☐ Write your book description or sales copy.
- ☐ Research relevant reader search terms and keywords.
- ☐ Choose the most appropriate categories for your book.
- ☐ Confirm your author or pen name.
- ☐ Decide whether you will use a free platform ISBN or purchase your own where applicable.
- ☐ Prepare your author biography.
- ☐ Prepare any editorial reviews, endorsements or other permitted marketing copy.
- ☐ Keep your metadata in one document so it is easy to reuse across platforms.

Quick tip: Think like a reader when choosing keywords: use phrases they might actually type when searching for a book like yours.

5. Set Up Your Publishing Account

- ☐ Create or review your publishing platform account.
- ☐ Confirm your legal, tax and payment information is correct.
- ☐ Add or update your author/publisher details.
- ☐ Check your bank account details for royalty payments.
- ☐ Review the platform's current content and publishing requirements.
- ☐ Decide which territories and distribution options you want to select.

Quick tip: Publishing dashboards and requirements change over time. Check the platform's current guidance before submitting your book.

6. Upload Your Book

- ☐ Create a new book title in your publishing dashboard.

- ☐ Enter the title, subtitle, series and edition information accurately.
- ☐ Add your author/contributor details.
- ☐ Paste in your book description.
- ☐ Enter your keywords and categories.
- ☐ Upload the formatted manuscript file.
- ☐ Upload the correct cover file.
- ☐ Select publishing rights and territories.
- ☐ Choose pricing and royalty options.
- ☐ Save your draft before moving to the final review.

Quick tip: Copy metadata from your prepared master document rather than retyping it. This reduces errors and keeps listings consistent.

7. Proof the Book Before Publishing

- ☐ Use the platform previewer to check every page.
- ☐ Check the table of contents and ebook navigation.
- ☐ Look for unexpected blank pages or awkward page breaks.
- ☐ Check margins, headers, footers and page numbers in print editions.
- ☐ Check images, tables and graphics for clarity and positioning.
- ☐ Confirm the cover is positioned correctly.
- ☐ Order a physical proof copy for print editions when possible.
- ☐ Make any corrections and upload revised files before approval.

Quick tip: Do not rush this stage. A proof copy often reveals formatting or cover issues that are easy to miss on screen.

8. Prepare for Launch

- ☐ Choose your publication or launch date.
- ☐ Create or update your author website or book page.
- ☐ Prepare your launch emails and social media content.
- ☐ Create simple promotional graphics or book mockups.
- ☐ Prepare an advance reader or review strategy that follows platform rules.
- ☐ Make sure your email list has a clear link to the book.
- ☐ Prepare links for the marketplaces where the book will be available.
- ☐ Create a simple plan for the first 7-30 days after launch.

Quick tip: You do not need an elaborate launch. Focus on making the book easy to discover, easy to understand and easy to buy.

9. Publish and Check Your Listing

- ☐ Submit the book for publication.
- ☐ Check the live product page once it becomes available.
- ☐ Confirm the title, subtitle, cover, description and author name display correctly.
- ☐ Check ebook and print formats are linked where applicable.
- ☐ Test purchase links.
- ☐ Review the book's categories and pricing.
- ☐ Update your website and social profiles with the live book link.

Quick tip: Save screenshots of your live listing and note the publication date, pricing and categories for your records.

10. After Publication

- ☐ Monitor early reviews and reader feedback without responding defensively.
- ☐ Track sales and advertising results if you are running promotions.
- ☐ Continue sharing useful content related to your book's topic or genre.
- ☐ Invite readers to join your email list.
- ☐ Review your description, keywords and categories periodically.
- ☐ Keep your manuscript and cover source files safely backed up.
- ☐ Record lessons from the launch while they are still fresh.
- ☐ Start planning how this book connects to your next book, resource or offer.

Quick tip: Publishing is not the finish line. A strong backlist, reader relationships and consistent visibility can keep a book selling long after launch.

Your Publishing Notes

Use this space for dates, platform details, links, ISBNs, pricing decisions or anything you want to remember for your next book.

Keep moving forward.

Self-publishing involves many small decisions, but you do not need to master everything at once. Work through the process one stage at a time, check the details carefully, and keep building on what you learn with each book.

Created by Aspire2Publish - practical guidance and resources for aspiring authors.