

Forward

For most, the idea of writing a book seems complicated, and then getting it published sounds expensive and difficult. Actually, it's not! Everyone has the ability to write and publish their book. More importantly, there are ways to do it for free.

You can publish your book for free on Amazon. They will produce it at no cost and sell it through their powerful website for a percentage of royalties. Alternatively, IngramSpark, the largest book publisher in the world, will accept your manuscript, produce and sell your book for a modest fee, and retain a percentage of the profits.

This book guides you through the process step by step, providing detailed explanations that are easy to understand. Who am I to give advice? Fair question. I was a business and contract attorney with years of experience; additionally I have represented authors. I also have a Master of Business Administration degree, which covered in depth, the process of producing and marketing a product. As an author, I have published many books independently and through agents and publishers.

Some of the many issues in this book include the following:

- How do you produce good artwork for the cover if you don't want to spend hundreds of dollars on a professional book designer? The thousands of stamps issued before 1971 are not copyrighted, and their images can be copied and used freely. Similarly, the hundreds of fine paintings in the National Gallery are free. Other methods exist, as well.
- What is the best way to motivate yourself to finish a chapter and then my whole book?

- Do you need to spend money on copyrighting your book? Probably not, as in many cases, your book is automatically copyrighted by law, and independent authors often want to save every penny. There are certain situations, especially in litigation, where copyright is advantageous.
- If you want to self-publish, do you need a free taxpayer identification number (TIN) from the IRS, or can you sell your book without complications on the Internet using just your Social Security number?
- If Amazon is supposed to be so easy to publish my book, why does the website look so intimidating, and what do all those boxes mean?
- To self-publish, should you buy an ISBN, or use the free (and limited) ASIN given by Amazon and IngramSpark?
- Is it necessary to have a website, especially if you only have one or two books to your name? If you want one, how can you build a website for free or at a small cost? What is the best program to use in making a website? What are some of the concerns you face with a website?
- How do you advertise your book, and is advertising all that necessary?
- It also covers things not traditionally in books: being a publisher, Library of Congress number, BISAC codes, e-books, advantages of sole proprietorship, liability as author, copyright infringement, and other topics.

Please consider publishing your book. You will be pleased and proud when you see the finished product, and you can do it. It's a proud moment and a wonderful feeling when your friends and family see your finished product.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to Publication

Do you want the truth, or just empty promises covered in whipped cream, telling you that self-publishing is easy? It is not as easy as it sounds, but neither is it too hard. You can do it—and be proud of the results. It is best accomplished by following a well-laid-out path of someone who has done it (in my case ten times). This book describes all the steps necessary to publish your book. It will answer questions like “How much will it cost?” “Should I use Amazon?” and “Do I need a print book or just an e-book?”

An important question to ask yourself up front is how much money you want to spend. Sure, you can hire experts from ghostwriters to book designers to professional salespeople, but if you devote that amount of money, why self-publish? **At one end of the spectrum, my publisher is paying myself and my coauthor each a six figure advance** on my next book coming out in December 2026, believing it will be on the NY Times bestseller list. (Hopefully it will. We have only submitted three chapters and have to write the rest of the book.) **At the other extreme, one of my self-published books yielded slightly over \$300. Most books fall somewhere in between—at least for me— and many make less than \$3,000.** But writing a book, especially your first book, is more a labor of love and pride than a financial enterprise.

Long story short (as they say), you can do it all yourself at no cost or hire out parts where you need expertise. As they taught me in my

MBA program, play to your strengths and hire to your weaknesses. Here is an outline of the main steps in the process:

1. **Have a finished manuscript.** As you will see in later chapters, unless you are an exceptionally gifted writer (and I was not), you will need help polishing your book into publishable form. To accomplish this task, you will probably need to hire an editor. Or if you are trying to save money, utilize one of the many artificial intelligence programs to proofread your book. You'll find more on this in chapter 2.

A. **Create a marketable book cover.**

The old saying that you can't judge a book by its cover is partially true. However, if your cover doesn't attract the reader to look at your book, you are lost before you begin. Many authors either use the free cover-creation programs offered by Amazon and IngramSpark or hire a professional cover designer. You'll find more on this in chapter 3.

- B. **Add an Index.** Or nonfiction books, I think you need an index for two reasons. First, it helps your readers, which makes your book more salable. Secondly, an index looks more professional. Still, if your nonfiction book sells for \$10 or less, where you are competing with other self-published books, you can get by without an index.

2. **Decide if you want to be a publisher.** If you want to sell your book only on Amazon, you can

publish it there as an author. You use your name, and Amazon pays royalties according to its schedule. However, if you want your book in bookstores or more broadly distributed, you will need to become a publisher. Then you can publish under IngramSpark, which I believe is the largest book publisher in the world.

- A. **Choose a company name and business type.** First you need to choose a name for your publishing business and decide what type of entity it will be. You can be a sole proprietorship, in which case all you have to do is meet your state and county requirements for operating under a fictitious business name. Alternatively, you could form a limited liability company (“LLC”), partnership, or corporation. You’ll find more on this in chapter **4**.

- B. **Obtain an ISBN from Bowker.** If you want to sell in bookstores or anywhere on the web besides Amazon, you usually need an ISBN (International Standard Book Number). You can get free ISBNs from Amazon and IngramSpark, but those free ISBNs may only be used for that medium. For example, an Amazon ISBN is only good on Amazon and cannot be used elsewhere. Alternatively, you can purchase your own ISBN and use it in other places. In the United States, the only company authorized to sell ISBNs is Bowker. You’ll find more on this in chapter **5**.

- C. **Decide if you want to formally copyright your book.** In the United States, you are automatically granted a copyright once you write your book. The copyright is good unless someone challenges it; if that happens, you have to prove its legitimacy. Alternatively, you can obtain a formal copyright from the U.S. Copyright Office for a fee. You'll find more on this in chapter **6**.
- D. **Decide if you want a Library of Congress number.** One advantage of formal copyright is that you can also obtain an LCN from the Library of Congress. You'll find more on this in chapter **6**.
- E. **Get a tax identification number or use your SSN.** If you are publishing your book on Amazon, you can use your own Social Security number (SSN). However, if you want to publish elsewhere or use stores for processing your manuscript or shipping your books, you may want to obtain a free tax identification number (TIN) from the IRS. You'll find more on this in Appendix **A**.
- F. **Set up business accounts.** You will need to use your new publishing business's name for things such as a checking account, a credit card, and arrangements to buy paper, shipping supplies, or other

materials that are now tax-deductible. You'll find more on this in Appendix **A**.

3. **Decide if you want or need a website.** If you are publishing only on Amazon, you can probably get by without a website. However, if you're going to advertise or distribute through bookstores or other media, you will probably find a website to be necessary. Some website hosts have easy-to-build websites that take only a few hours to create using their pre-created template. Others can be more complicated. You can also use a free program like WordPress to create a website that you own independent from your host. I discuss this issue later in the book, but if you a template to create a website on your host's site, they usually own your website. If you move you lose your website and must re-create another one at your new host. It all depends on how much work you want to do on your own and what you want to accomplish. You'll find more on this in chapter **9**.
4. **Amazon and IngramSpark.** Decide if you want on the two major book producers to physically create your book, and if so, which one. Chapter **10**.
5. **Selling to Bookstores.** Are you going to try an sell your books to bookstores. If so, what is your best way of approaching them and how much discount must you generally offer. Chapter **11**.
6. **Decide If You Want to Market Your Book.** Just because your book is on Amazon or available through a company like IngramSpark doesn't mean people will buy it. You have competition, unfortunately, lots

of competing products. Potential readers may never even see your book, let alone evaluate it and decide to buy your masterpiece. The saying “You have to spend money to make money” sadly is as true today in the book business as it was years ago. You must decide if you need to advertise and, if so, what is the most effective way of marketing. You’ll find more on this in chapter **12**.

7. **Creating an eBook.** Should you create an eBook, and if so, how? eBooks have separate formatting and rules separate from printed book, as well as unique programs to convert text into ePub and similar formats. Chapter **13**.
8. **Submitting to Amazon.** If you decide to have Amazon print or sell your book, how do you do so? The process may look confusing at first, but it is relatively easy. Chapter **14**.

As I said, producing a book can be tedious and time-consuming, but it is not hard. I am going to lay out each of the issues in the chapters that follow. When I was an attorney, I charged hundreds of dollars an hour, but now that I’m retired and just an author, you receive my business advice for the price of this book. Please consider publishing your book. You will be pleased and proud when you see the finished product.

What Is It Like to Publish

One your first book comes out, even if it is self-published, there is no feeling as grand as the feeling of accomplishment. But as New York Times bestselling Author, Anne Lamott said in her book, *Bird by Bird*, “I believed, before I sold my first book, that publication would

be instantly and automatically gratifying, and a firming and romantic experience, a hallmark commercial, where one runs in leaks in slow motion across a meadow filled with wild flowers into the arms of acclaim and self-esteem. This did not happen for me.”

In other word, it does not change who you are at a fundamental level. If you couldn't play the piano before you published your book, you likely aren't a pianist now. Still, you do receive admiring praise from your friend who view this as a monumental accomplishment, one which they can only fanaticize.

Chapter 3

Making a Front Cover

The old saying “You can’t judge a book by its cover” is only half true. Potential readers do react strongly to good cover design. Among rows and rows of book covers, yours needs to stand out enough that a shopper is willing to pick it up to give it a more thorough glance. Cover design is the last place to try to save money.

Again, Two Markets

If your book is in the under-\$10 market, I believe you can use one of the free cover-design templates offered by Amazon or Igram-Spark. They are created by professionals, and although your cover may be similar to others, at least it will be professional-looking. As I mentioned in the last chapter, when you are in the over-\$10 market, especially in the \$13–\$20 range, you compete with books from professional publishers. You need a unique cover to attract that second glance.

What Is on the Front Cover

The front cover contains the book title, subtitle (if you have one), author name, main picture or graphic, and background images. The title should be short, no more than two or three words in most cases. You want your title to be catchy or memorable so people can remember it well enough to buy or recommend the book.

In my opinion, the subtitle is where you sell the book. It is your chance to describe what your book is about, hopefully using well-chosen phrases that will show up well in search engine optimization (SEO). If you are not familiar with SEO, Google it, because it is vital in the sale of your book.

Look at book covers on the New York Times best sellers and see how they use pictures. Your name, unless you are a household name or best-selling author, should be smaller; let the title and graphics sell the book.

Images for My Own Books

For several of my books, I needed great graphics and decided to license pictures from the Getty Images, associated with the Getty Museum in California. For my one and only children's book, *How a Poor Student Became the World's Smartest Man: The Story of Albert Einstein*, I licensed pictures for every page. They look entirely professional and really make the book sing. *For Legal Terminology and Usage: For Court Reporters and Paralegals*, I licensed an image only for the cover. This one was from Immagine.

On the other hand, for my five-hundred-page book *Live. Don't Let Cancer Become Your Life: Handle Your Disease and Make Good Medical Decisions*, I took a picture of a house, trees, and sky and used Adobe Photoshop to superimpose it on another photo I took of a rainbow. It made a great combination, was free, and has received many favorable comments as a well-designed cover.

Images on U.S. Stamps

For my Einstein book, to save some money, I took a picture of a 1966 stamp honoring Albert Einstein, blew the image up, and used part of it as my cover picture. U.S. stamps issued before 1971 are not copyrighted and are in the public domain. (Since 1971, the U.S.

Postal Service has copyrighted its images.) There are thousands of great stamps issued before 1971 with pictures of people, places, and events; many are beautifully engraved images.

Images from the National Gallery of Art

The following is from the National Gallery of Art's website: "The National Gallery of Art has an open access policy for images of works of art in our permanent collection, which the Gallery believes to be in the public domain. Images of these works are available for download free of charge for any use, whether commercial or non-commercial. Open Access image downloads are now available directly from the object pages located on this website. Over 50,000 images are available for download, and we will continue to add more images for free access as more works are photographed and as works of art enter the public domain."

Images from Other Museums

I have not researched the subject, but I believe that most of the paintings by the great masters are in the public domain, and you can take and use pictures of them. The problem is that most museums do not allow flash photography within their walls (for good reason), so you would have to either take a flash-free picture in the gallery or license a photo taken by the museum. Further, flash-free photos taken with smartphones usually require some adjustment in a photo-editing program like Photoshop.

Places Selling and Free Images

Google "pictures" and you will find many images available to license for a fee at sites like Shutterstock, Adobe, Getty Images, and many others. Keep searching and you will find an equal number of "royalty-free" images you can use at no cost. Many places have different prices for each image, and their prices also depend on how large the

image is and how you will be using it. All the places I have searched have their prices posted before any purchase, so you can compare and decide what is best for you.

Using Pictures of People

According to the 1,300-page book *The Rights of Publicity and Privacy*, while you may have a right to take someone's photograph, you do not have a right to use it commercially (in a commercial profit-driven book or display). As the book says, "free speech is usually no defense an infringement [lawsuit] to a right of publicity."

Some states, like California, even have specific statutes prohibiting commercial use of a celebrity's photo. However, even that prohibition is not without exceptions. If you need to use someone's picture, seek to license it or contact an attorney to determine its usability.

AI Generated Art

Currently, this is an evolving and uncertain area in the publishing trade because, technically, the copyright office will not issue a copyright for anything created by AI. However, some publishers will still publish your books when the only AI is artwork, and some will not. Amazon currently accepts books with AI-generated drawings, but they request that you indicate this so that they are aware, should they ever decide to reverse their policy. For one of my books, I created all the artwork using AI, then had a local college art student freehand draw the images at a very low cost.

Final Comment

Your book's cover is the last place to try to save money. It is an essential part of your book and needs to be recognized as such. There are many freelance cover designers and numerous articles on selecting a good cover designer and what that service should cost.