



# Ultimate Guide to Self- Publishing

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## The Self-Publishing Checklist

So you've written a book or are in the process - congrats! It's a fun-backslash-painful process. Along the way with your writing journey, you have to make the choice: do you try to get traditionally published, or do you self-publish?

You used to only have one option, but thanks to the internet, self-publishing is now available to anyone. No more needing to beg for a literary agent, wait years for a publisher to sign you, get paid next-to-nothing, and have to do everything for yourself anyway.

I jest, there are definite upsides to traditional publishing, but it's not for everyone. I tried the traditional route myself oh, 10+ years ago, but when I wrote my latest book, I decided against that route since a, I prefer having more control, and b, have more experience with the online sphere (thanks to having built an online business since then).

You may feel the same way, or have your own reasons for self-publishing. Whatever they may be, this article is going to cover the list of what you'll need to work on to self-publish your novel once you've got your manuscript written. Onward!

**This is broken down into 4 stages. They are:**

1. **Edit your book** (a whole lot of editing!)
2. **Format your book** (for all of the different places)
3. **Publish your book** (woo you're published!)
4. **Market your book** (otherwise no one will read it)

### **Self-Publish Your Book Stage 1: Edit Your Book**

Once you've written your manuscript, you now have to edit it. Over and over again! You can do deep-dive editing and change up the story in a big way, and you'll end with basic editing of spelling/punctuation/grammar (called proofreading).

In this stage, you'll start yourself with self-editing. If you can afford it, hiring someone to edit your book can be really helpful. **But if you can't, don't feel like that is a reason to stop yourself from self-publishing!** That's actually a complaint I have with the industry in general keeping it from being more diverse, but I won't go into that rant right now.

You can also **recruit people to be your alpha and beta readers.**

Alpha readers are the people who read your manuscript before you've done all of your own editing, and this can be helpful for those

early major rewrites. Beta readers get your manuscript once you've done all of your editing.

Alpha and beta readers can be helpful for finding mistakes that you miss. You can pay for them, but most people do it free. Social media can be an excellent place to find people to be your alpha and beta readers (Facebook groups and the Instagram and Twitter writing communities can be super helpful for this).

### **To do:**

- Self-edit
- Hire an editor (optional)
- Have one round of alpha readers
- Have one round of beta readers
- Proofread

## **Self-Publish Your Book Stage 2: Format Your Book**

Once your novel is all edited, it's time to put it together to be published. When you're self-publishing, the number one place to concern yourself with is **Amazon**. They have the market cornered!

Thankfully, it is much, much easier to self-publish on Amazon now than it used to be (I remember trying early on and the grueling formatting process was real). If you have a PC or Mac, you can

download Kindle Create and use that to format your manuscript for Amazon.

I actually didn't do this though! (since I used a Chromebook) It's so simple now that you can just create a Word doc with the regular formatting (using either Microsoft Word, which is now online for free, or Google Docs, which is what I used). Download as a .doc or .docx file.

Include your hyperlinked table of contents (so your ebook will include that) and make sure to add a copyright page and title page. You may want to also add an author/about the author page, and you can include links to your website/blog, social media, newsletter signups, or whatever else you want.

**You'll also want to consider making your manuscript available with Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Apple Books, and Google Play.** You can use your Word file for Barnes & Noble and Kobo (you upload right to them just like with Amazon). For Apple Books, you either need a Mac to upload, or need to use a service that will do it for you (Draft2Digital is probably most common now). I don't have a Mac and had issues with the services so I just skipped Apple.

For Google Play, you'll need a PDF file. I actually uploaded my Word doc to Draft2Digital and created a PDF file in there that I uploaded to Google Play. That seemed to work well (and it's free to do).

This is for an ebook; for a print book, you can choose either Amazon or Barnes & Noble. In that case, you'll want to make sure to get copies before you make it publicly available so you can make sure everything is printed properly.

This utilizes print-on-demand, so they print the books as they are bought by customers. You don't have to get anything printed and shipped yourself (that part is nice!).

I used Amazon to self-publish my book in paperback. It was remarkably easy! I used the same PDF file from Draft2Digital, and it worked perfectly. Again, do make sure to get proof copies (it was about \$5 and change + shipping for 1 proof copy from Amazon).

The other thing you'll need to do during this stage is **get your book cover**. You can make it yourself, but that may not be the best idea if you're not a graphic designer or artist. Book covers are really difficult to get right. I tried hiring people at first but wasn't happy with it, so made my own, which wound up looking okay for the e-book version, but wasn't going to work for the print version. Two more attempts, and I finally found someone on Fiverr I was happy with.

You can hire book cover designers inexpensively though (Fiverr has a bunch, there's also 99designs [they can be more expensive than Fiverr], and there are actually many freelancers you can find and get good cover options for \$50-300 - do a search on social media for designers; the cover I went with only cost around \$80, but I paid as low as \$60 and as high as \$220).

While you're in this stage, you'll also want to do one thing that's part of your marketing: **getting advance readers**. Advance readers get a copy of your manuscript before it's published, and in exchange for getting the free book, they agree to leave a review as soon as it's published (usually on either Amazon or Goodreads since these are the places you really need reviews).

Many people are flaky, and they'll agree to do it but won't actually read your book or leave a review, so make sure to **recruit at least double the amount of advance readers as reviews you want** (so if you want 15 reviews, recruit at least 30 readers).

### **To do:**

- Format your .doc files
- Have a cover designed
- Format your .pdf file
- Get advance copies (if doing print)



- Recruit advance readers

### **Self-Publish Your Book Stage 3: Publish Your Book**

Now the exciting part, publishing your book! Once you have your files all formatted, your cover designed, and your advance readers lined up, you're ready to hit publish.

This generally takes a few hours once you actually do hit the buttons on each site (Google Play took a couple of weeks for me though; they claim that isn't supposed to be the case anymore but that was for me in 2020, and again when I updated book 1 in 2021).

You can choose to do a **preorder period**, and this is a good way to build up your sales right off of the bat. I hear you should go for at least a 14 day preorder period on Amazon, with 30 days being the optimum time.

When you list your book, you'll need to have a **description** for your book (have 2, one shorter and one longer, since each place has a different maximum character limit), some info about yourself (**your bio** - keep it short), a **picture** of yourself (headshot - doesn't have to be professional but probably shouldn't be one of you chugging beer in college unless your book is about chugging beer in college), and **keywords** (have a list of 10 ready in order of priority).

You'll also want to choose the **categories** your book will be listed under. For most of them, it's the standard BISAC (which stands for 'Book Industry Standards and Communications', and is just the basic genres you see), and you choose 2.

Amazon is where it gets tricky, because they have about ten zillion categories beyond BISAC (okay maybe not exactly ten zillion, but close). When you add your book, they autogenerate which categories for your book based on your title, description, and importantly, your keywords.

The ones they choose may not be the ones you want to be listed under, so you have to request the specific categories you want. For example, my book is Arthurian fantasy, and that was not automatically chosen, so I had to request it.

Kindlepreneur has a whole article on choosing your Amazon categories and how to request specific ones that I absolutely recommend reading (it's what I used!) **HERE**.

### **To do:**

- Write one short and one long description for your book
- Write a short bio
- Have a picture of yourself ready
- Make a list of 10 keywords for your book

- Make a list of the Amazon categories you want to be listed
- Have a preorder period on Amazon

## **Self-Publish Your Book Stage 4: Market Your Book**

Once your book is published, it needs to be marketed, otherwise no one will know it exists! Gone are the days when you could just publish a book on Amazon and make thousands of sales just from their search. There's too much competition now for that, so you also need to do marketing.

There are so many different ways you can market your book now thanks to the internet, and you don't even have to leave your house.

Some ways you can market your book are:

- Put together a virtual book tour or hire a virtual book tour company to do it for you
- Do readings of your book on your social media accounts
- Get interviewed by book bloggers
- Be a guest on a podcast
- Create a video book trailer

Marketing your book doesn't just stop at launch day or week though. You have to keep marketing it over and over again. Keep striving to

get more eyeballs on your work, and trying to get more people to read what you write so they become a part of your fan base.

**To do:**

- Make a list of the different ways you want to market your book (aim for at least 3)

**And that's it! Here's the full list in order:**

- Self-edit
- Hire an editor (optional)
- Have one round of alpha readers
- Have one round of beta readers
- Proofread
- Format your .doc files
- Have a cover designed
- Format your .pdf file
- Get advance copies (if doing print)
- Recruit advance readers
- Write one short and one long description for your book
- Write a short bio
- Have a picture of yourself ready
- Make a list of 10 keywords for your book
- Make a list of the Amazon categories you want to be listed

- Have a preorder period on Amazon
- Make a list of the different ways you want to market your book  
(aim for at least 3)

**Good luck on your self-publishing journey!**

## How to Fund Your Indie Author Career

If you're embarking on the self-publishing adventure, one bit of reality that new authors need to accept is that you won't be making millions right away (or maybe ever). You may not even be making hundreds! Especially in the beginning when you need to build your audience and profile.

That means that most of us still keep the day job (granted, most don't have a day job as strange as mine!), and selling our books is the side thing. And for many, not making any money at all can be a deterrent to trying in the first place (can't waste time when there are bills to pay!).

If you want to keep your writing career afloat for as long as possible to give yourself a better chance of success at some point, you have to start thinking about ways you can fund your indie author career outside of selling your books. Thanks to the internet, there are a ton of ways you can do this!

### **1. Sell Physical Products to Fund Your Writing Career**

There are a few different physical products you can try selling to fund your indie author career. One is selling **merchandise** (merch! Who needs the extra syllables?).

Thanks to print-on-demand companies, you can sign up with places like Redbubble or Society6 and they'll create the products and ship it out to buyers for you. All you have to do is come up with the designs and upload to your shop on their site, and they give you a percentage of each sale.

It's kind of like self-publishing with Amazon, except you usually make a lot more from the sale of a product (since they're usually more expensive).

Clothing (especially t-shirts), housewares, and art prints are probably the most common and most bought. You can promote your merch on your website, blog, social media, and email list, but the sites have massive followings themselves, so you also have a chance of being found by people right on the site.

You can create designs that tie into your writing career, for writers themselves, or even tying into your books or characters.

Another physical product option that makes a lot of sense for authors is what's called **low content books**. Low content books are essentially books that have a repetition of information (think of like a

journal or some sort of planner or organizer), and/or that are small (like coloring books).

You go through the same motions as with self-publishing your novels and upload your low content book to a place like Amazon, who will print the books as they're bought. You generally do want to keep this print-only (they usually don't work as well with digital).

Since low content books don't require a lot of content (hence the name), they are very easy to put together (you spend months or years writing your novel, but a low content book should only take you days, maybe a week or two).

You can do a search for low content book ideas and find a ton out there (I recommend using Pinterest to find ideas too!).

Another great physical product option is to create **subscription boxes**. This one is definitely more work than merch or low content books, but it can be a lot of fun and produce a great return (since they are more expensive, you create them regularly, and once someone gets one once, they're more likely to get one again and again, so you can make a lot from subscription boxes when you get it right).



There are soooo many book boxes out there too, so this is quite popular with book lovers!

You will need to find the items to include in your box (usually a minimum of 3 for a small box, up to 15-20 for really large ones). You'll have to work it out with the creators/sellers of those products to get a bulk order and negotiate the price (you should pay less, think wholesale pricing). You'll need to come up with themes for your boxes, and determine how often you'll do a new box (most are either monthly or quarterly).

One great thing about subscription boxes for a writer is you can include your own writing! You can add your books (even greater if you add signed copies of your books), and this can expose more readers to you, and hopefully hook them on your writing.

You can sign up with a company like Cratejoy or Subbly, and you'll send in your stuff and they'll handle the subscription itself (getting your money) and shipping it out to subscribers. If you're willing to handle that yourself, you will pocket more of the money (just be aware of the time and cost!).

Also note that with subscription boxes, I swear, the box itself goes further than anything else in appealing to people! I mean, the

literally actual physical box it comes in. So you'll want to get that design right (don't be fast or cheap on your box design!).

## **2. Use Advertising & Affiliate Marketing to Fund Your Indie Author Career**

Another way you can fund your writing career is using ads and affiliate marketing. This can be a good option if you have a blog on your author website and are getting steady traffic.

**Ads** are completely, totally passive for you and pretty much as easy as it comes. You sign up for an ad network, add the codes where you want them on your website or blog, and it runs on its own. They don't produce much income if you don't get a lot of traffic, so this may be something to consider once you're getting at least 50,000 pageviews to your website/blog. The top ad companies these days are AdThrive and Mediavine.

With **affiliate marketing**, you sign up for an affiliate program like Amazon Associates and then get links with your own little code in it for tracking. You can share that link on your website or blog (some also allow you to share on social media), and you make a percentage of any sale made through that link. Some of my posts have affiliate links!

There are lots of affiliate programs out there you can sign up for, you have to be approved with many though, and there can be minimum requirements (like for your website traffic). The upside with affiliate marketing is you don't have to create any products yourself.

Affiliate marketing does *\*really\** well in some niches (like parenting and recreation). In the writing sphere, I see it used mostly in book reviews, and the reviewer links to the book being reviewed. This is pretty easy, but you generally make a teeny tiny amount from book sales through affiliate links, so you might want to come up with other ways.

### **3. Use Social Media to Fund Your Indie Author Career**

A third way you can fund your writing career is using your social media. Ever heard of an influencer? You can become one!

A **social media influencer** is someone with a large following on social media. You can use that following to make money! People can pay you to mention/endorse their product or service, or they could even sponsor your post or video.

This seems to be most focused on **Instagram and Youtube**, so if your main social media platform is either of those, this is an option that you can consider. Instagram influencer is like a whole big business now, and lots of IG folks are being paid to promote. Youtube

channels are seen as like, TV programs of yore, and more and more you're seeing sponsored videos.

In addition, on Instagram you can add affiliate links or promo codes to your bio that your following can use (and you make a little from the sales; you can use this on Youtube in the descriptions), and on Youtube, you can turn on ads when you get to 1,000 followers and 4,000 watch hours (Youtube ads seem to make an average of about \$1/100 views depending on the audience).

Making money from your social media accounts does usually require you to have a following of at least 10,000 though, which can take some time to acquire. But, if you follow my advice of just focusing on one social platform at a time, you can do that a lot faster.

The upside to becoming an influencer is anyone can do it, it requires no money from you, and you don't have to create any products yourself. You do need a larger following though, and one that is really engaged.

#### **4. Use Virtual Summits to Fund Your Indie Author Career**

Another way you can fund your writing career is using **virtual summits**. With a virtual summit, you gather together a group of

“experts” (usually 10-20) to talk about a specific topic, and each expert talks about something related to the topic.

You can do the videos live or recorded, and people sign up to watch them for a set period of time (usually 3-7 days), and if they want to retain access to the videos permanently, they have to pay (usually \$27-97).

Virtual summits are a great way to expand your audience since all of the experts can promote the summit to their own audiences (and when people sign up, they get added to your email list).

You can focus on any topic you want (in the writing world, this may be topics like editing your book, marketing your book, how to land an agent or publisher, social media for authors, how to self-publish, etc.).

Virtual summits can generate a LOT of new email subscribers for you in a short period of time (usually hundreds to thousands in a week or two). And, they can generate a good amount of revenue for you as well since they tend to have a good conversion rate (you can easily make \$10,000+ per summit).

The problem with virtual summits? They are a crazy amount of work! If you want to put one together, give yourself a good 6 months, make

sure you're prepared for the tech stuff, get everything together for your experts, have the funnel set up, and on and on.

If you don't have a lot of time, this likely isn't an option for you. But if you do have the time and are willing to do all of the work, it can have some of the biggest returns of any option listed here!

## 5. Offer Services to Fund Your Indie Author Career

A fifth way you can fund your writing career is to **offer services**. What is something you're really good at doing? Are you great at proofreading, copywriting, editing, book cover design? Offer that as a service to fellow writers!

You can offer to write book reviews, help authors format their books for self-publishing, work with authors as they go through the self-publishing process, set up promotions for them, and on and on.

You can also act as a manager, managing their social media accounts (or specific ones) or email accounts (are you good at customer service?).

You can help authors put together their email newsletters, set up their email newsletter service provider, set up their website or blog, or write for their blog.

The great thing about offering a service is you don't really need to set anything up and can start right away. The downside is it will take up some of your time, but you can dedicate a specific amount of time to it and stick to that so you're not eating up your time for writing (or anything else).

Think of it as kind of like a second part-time job (but one where you set your own hours and get paid better!).

## **6. Create Digital/Online Content to Fund Your Indie Author Career**

For another idea, you can create **digital/online content** to fund your writing career. What kind of online content? There are a lot of options, but an **online course** is probably first and foremost.

If you have some sort of expertise or something you're good at and know a lot about, instead of offering it as a service, you can offer it as a course. If you don't have the time to offer it as a service, or if you get so many people interested but can't work with them all, an online course might be for you.

You can use a platform like Teachable or Thinkific to host your course and corral your students, and you can create the content in any way you'd like (written, videos, audio), and include whatever you

want (worksheets, cheat sheets, checklists, quizzes, a place for discussion).

If you don't want to go through creating an online course, you can create other digital products that are smaller, like **worksheets, printables, and swipe files**. These can be a lot less work, and you can sell them using a platform like Gumroad, SendOwl, or E-junkie who distributes the files for you to buyers.

Online courses run the gamut in cost, but they're usually going to be in the \$50-250 range in this sphere. Digital products can also run the gamut, but they're usually in the \$10-50 range.

You do need your own audience to market your online content to, so you do need to generate website traffic, get social media followers, and most importantly, **build an email list**.

An email list is critical when it comes to selling your own digital content. You need them to offer your content to and make regular sales (or make sales when you launch).

## **7. Use Patreon to Fund Your Indie Author Career**

Patreon is another idea you can try to fund your writing career. Patreon is basically a subscription people sign up for, and you determine the amount they pay each month and what your tiers will



be (people in different tiers get different stuff, and the more they pay, the more they get). It's as low as \$1 (but average is probably \$5-10).

I've seen a lot of writers use Patreon to fund their writing careers, and you can use your actual writing! Give your patrons early access and sneak peeks, and exclusive stories, articles, and books. This is also a great way to build a connection with your readers and keep them constantly engaged with your work.

It can take a while to build up your patrons, and Patreon is kind of notorious for payout issues (though they seem to have moved through that in recent times). But, what is nice is that it's regular (like a paycheck).

## **8. Use Kickstarter to Fund Your Indie Author Career**

Okay, so this one is a little left of center and isn't something you'll be able to use like the other ideas, but I thought it was one I should throw out there! Lots of creatives use Kickstarter to fund their projects, so you could use it to fund the writing of your book.

This is likely something that you won't have much success with unless you already have an audience (so you probably need to have at least one book already published), and you shouldn't take advantage of people so you may want to cap how much you ask

for (whereas with everything else on this list, you can pretty much treat them like a job and make as much as you want). Just an idea!

**And there you have it! 8 ways to fund your indie author career (well it was more like 14 probably but who's counting?). Good luck fellow writer!**

## How to Write a Book Description for a Fiction Novel

If you're interested in self-publishing your book, one thing you'll need to do is write a book description for it.

What should you include in your book description? How long should it be? What voice should you use? These are all questions you may ask yourself when you go to write it.

It doesn't have to be complex, but it is important. Your title, cover, and description are usually the 3 things that someone bases a decision to buy your book on.

### What to Include in Your Fiction Book Description

You know that your book description needs to include what your book is about. It has to be done in a concise way though, and this is what trips up a lot of writers! (we're wordy people)

At a minimum, for a fiction novel, you'll want your book description to include:

- who the main characters are
- what the main plot is
- what the main stakes are

We don't need to know about side characters or subplots - we need to know the true core of the story!

Something that can help is crafting your 'elevator pitch'. If you were talking to someone in an elevator and only had a minute to describe your book, what would you say? What would convince them they should read your book? There are so many books out there for them to choose from, so why yours?

You usually want to start with a headline. This is one or two lines at the very beginning of your book description. Your headline has to have some sort of hook. This may involve something with the story, or it may involve something from a review or some sort of accolade. Then go into the summary.

Try starting with a summary of your book that's say, one or two or three pages. Then look at what you would focus on if you were pitching someone in an elevator. You can't use it all, so what is most important? Then go from there.

Outside of the summary, sometimes it can help to include snippets of a review or any kind of social proof. Social proof shows people that others have read it and like it, and humans are social animals, so we're more attracted to something that other people recommend!

Gather reviews from anywhere you can, and take one line from 1-4 of them (choose the ones by someone known, if you have any). If your book, or you for your writing, have won any awards, you can mention that (by (blank)-Award winner John Doe . . .). If you have any impressive writing credentials, you can include that (you wrote for a fancy publication, you worked with a successful writer, you sold a million copies of another book, etc.).

These may not be possible for you if this is your first book and you have no experience in the writing world, but if you do have any reviews, awards, or credentials, add them in!

So it's pretty much going to go:

- Headline (with hook; focused on the story or use a part of a review/accolade)
- Summary (say 2-5 short paragraphs)
- Reviews/Awards/Credentials

### **Book Description Length by Publisher**

Once you have your main book description written, congrats! But you're not done! If you're self-publishing, you need to adjust your book description by length for each publisher (because oooooof course they all have different requirements - just can't make it easy!).

As of December 2020, the limits by the top publishers are:

- Amazon: 4,000 characters
- Barnes & Noble: 2,000 characters for the standard description, 5,000 characters for the long description
- Kobo: 4,000 characters
- Google Play: 4,000 characters

I haven't published on Apple Books and haven't been able to find the maximum, but there is a minimum of 50 characters.

So, you'll basically want a short description under 2,000 characters, and a long description under 4,000 characters. If you have those two lengths, you're pretty much set for any publisher.

### **Book Description Tips:**

The first tip is to write multiple book descriptions. I don't mean for the different places you'll use it like I already mentioned, but I mean actually writing it completely differently when you're first writing your description. The first one you write will probably suck, so don't just scribble something and be off with it!

Try to write at least 3 (really at least 5-20, but you can start with 3). Choose a different place to start and end, different descriptors, different main points to focus on. This helps you see which is best,

and you may end up taking parts of different ones and putting them together to make your book description.

The second tip is to try to look at your book description as both a summary AND an ad. You'll see many try to tell you it's one or the other, but really, it's both!

It's a summary because you need to tell potential readers what's in the thing. Without that knowledge, they won't go for it. It's an ad because you're trying to convince people to buy. But it can't only be an ad, otherwise you just sound like a used car salesman.

You have to try balancing both. Make sure it gives the important points in your book, but also gives people a reason to buy. What is it for them?

So there you have it - good luck writing your book description!

## How to Write Your Author Bio

As an author, part of your marketing means you'll need to provide a bio. This may be for Amazon and other publishers (if you're self-publishing), or for interviews, guest posts, social media, and any other marketing you may do for your book.

As writers, we usually hate talking about ourselves! We write about other people, not ourselves. So, writing an author bio can be a little stressful for us. But it doesn't have to be!

Now, I am going to be honest - author bios don't really matter when it comes to people buying your books very much. I can't remember ever wanting to read the author bio before trying out a new book, and I almost never read them online. It's just one of those things you have to do as part of your marketing.

### **What to Include in Your Author Bio**

Your author bio is a short introduction to you and your writing story. Think of it kinda like an online dating profile - but instead of Mr./Ms. Right, you're looking for Mr./Ms. Reader!



You'll want to keep your author bio short (most publishers don't let you write too much anyway), so it's 1 or 2 short paragraphs, 4-8 lines of text, 150 words max. The good news is, that's nice and short!

You'll want to include your:

- Name (duh; or your pen name if you're not using your actual name for your writing)
- A sentence or two for your credentials or biggest writing accomplishments (writing work you've done, people you've worked with or who mentored you, awards you've won, etc.)
- A little personality or something personal to you (how you got started writing, an odd/funny fact about you, etc.)
- Where you reside

If you have no credentials, then you can strike that one from the list and focus more on personality, especially what got you started writing or something about your writing journey.

An odd/funny fact helps someone who reads it to see you as a human (and not a robot AI writer), and where you reside - I can't explain why that is always included in author bios but it is, both online and in physical books. Maybe so readers can find us and yell at us in person?

## Different Types of Author Bios You Need

Your standard author bio is going to be used when you're self-publishing your books on their pages. But you'll also need author bios for when you're going to:

- Write a guest article
- Get interviewed on TV/radio/online/magazines
- Use social media platforms

Each of these is going to be a little different. You may get more space for a longer bio with guest articles, but it's probably not going to be much longer than the bio you use to self-publish. It may be a little shorter with interviews.

Social media is the shortest since you can only include a little bio somewhere in your profile, and with some, you may not have an author bio at all (like Pinterest). A 1 or 2 line bio is all you'll get and need for social media.

## 10 Ways to Market Your Self-Published Book

When you're an indie author, one of the daunting tasks on your long list of things to get done is to market your book. You don't have a publisher to do it for you, and most people can't afford to hire someone to do it for them. Time to DIY!

Heck, even if you have a publisher, they often only promote for you when it's a big book or you're already established (so you've already done the work for them - seriously, why are they making themselves unnecessary??). Learning different ways to promote your book, even if you're traditionally published, is something you probably have to deal with as well.

### 1. Use Social Media to Promote Your Book

Using social media to promote your book is really the easiest way to do it. It costs no money, anyone can open up a social media account and start getting followers, and use that account to promote your book.

BUT it's not as easy as that, right? (nothing ever is!) **You do need to focus on building up your social media account as much as you can.** This means being really engaged and researching the best ways to get the right followers for you.

One tip: **Stick to one of the big 4 social media platforms** - Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, or Twitter. They're established and will still be around for some years to come, and you don't want to waste your time building an audience on a platform that might disappear in 5 years (and takes your followers with them!).

Also try to stick to just one platform so you can devote your energy to that one and build it up without being scattered. You can still open up accounts on the other platforms just to make sure you have your handle, but only build up one at a time, otherwise it will take forever to have a strong following (unless you don't have a job, then you can spend as much time as you want on social media!).

On your social media account, you'll want to **get consistent with what you're posting** (so think about creating a content schedule to make it easy on you). You will want to talk about your writing, **HOWEVER, you don't want to ONLY talk about your writing.** I've seen social media accounts where it's just one post after another saying in some fashion, *Buy my book!*, and it's just not going to work.

Share content that potential followers and readers will benefit from, will interest them, or will at least entertain them. Try to only promote your book 10-30% of the time.

One last thing to remember is your social media accounts for your writing career are NOT personal accounts. This means you need to be mindful of what you're posting on them.

You can't just throw up whatever you want, complain about the pizza you ordered at 2AM, go into detail about the weird fetish your ex had (unless maybe you're writing erotic novels), or any of the crazy mumbo jumbo that people put out on social media. You need separate personal accounts for that!

## **2. Use Your Author Website to Promote Your Book**

Another way to promote your book is on your **author website**. Unlike with social media, it's totally okay to center your author website around your book - that's what it's there for!

This does mean you need to create an author website, but it's really easy these days to do it thanks to the abundance of WYSIWYG editors (what you see is what you get - very easy drag and drop website builders).

Squarespace is great if you're on the artistic side and want something that is really beautiful. It is a little pricier and has a little more of a learning curve, so it may not be for you if you're easily confused by tech stuff.

For the easily confused, Wix is your best bet. It's super simple, and pretty inexpensive for a personal website.

If you're tech savvy, Wordpress is the standard for all the big websites. But you really do need to be tech savvy! As long as you are, this is usually the cheapest option (since Wordpress itself is free, and you can use a host for a few bucks monthly and a free theme to build the site).

On your author website, you need your **home page** (and can link to your books there), an **about page** (about you, and can also link to your books), a **contact page** (just to generally contact you), and **pages for your books**.

Think of the pages for your books like sales pages on any other website. They don't have to be as "salesy", but the same general rules apply.

You will need to work on **driving traffic to your website** (otherwise it's kinda useless). **SEO** is your long-term traffic strategy game, while **Pinterest** is the one who kicks in traffic faster. I advocate for using both so you can get traffic going sooner with Pinterest but keep it coming with SEO!

You may want to consider having a **blog** on your author site. It's debatable whether you need it or not, but it does help with

generating traffic since there is more on your site to be able to drive traffic to.

### 3. Use Your Email List to Promote Your Book

A third way to promote your book is to your email list. Starting an email list is considered one of the most important things to do for any online business, and you usually don't have a real business until you have a solid email list.

For writers, your email list can be important (it's usually where your biggest fans are), but it doesn't seem to follow the exact same rules. For example, with a general online business, you often don't get much traction until you get to at least 5,000 subscribers, and don't see a big boost until you get to 10,000 subscribers, but it seems to be a lot less for writers.

You can have a strong list in the 2-3,000 range. This may be because books are so much less expensive than the usual online offerings for online entrepreneurs, so you don't have to work as hard to sell them to your list.

To start creating an email list, you do need to come up with an **optin offer** (something someone gets for free in exchange for signing up), **promote that offer** (on social media and Pinterest to start), and **get in the groove with email content** (try to send emails regularly, at least

once every two weeks, and come up with a content strategy for what you'll cover in your emails, much like with social media).

You can send your email list updates on your writing, promotions for your books, sneak peeks and early access to new writing, and so, so, so much more. Think about who you're targeting as a reader and what they would be interested in hearing from you.

When you're going to release a new book, you can tease this out with your email list. Start preparing them well in advance of when it's coming by sharing snippets, spoilers, character profiles, giveaways, reviews - whatever you can come up with!

#### **4. Use ARC Reviews to Promote Your Book**

Another option for promoting your book is using **ARC reviews**. ARC stands for advance reader copy. You recruit people to read your book before you launch it, and they agree to leave a review in exchange for getting the book free.

Many sites place a lot of importance on how many reviews you have, and this is especially the case with Amazon, who is pretty much the king when it comes to self-publishing. You need reviews, otherwise Amazon won't give much juice at all to your book when people are searching on its site.



You want to try and get as many reviews as possible, but this can be difficult when you're first starting, so don't worry about a big number right away. Many of the people you recruit won't even bother to do it (sometimes most of them!) so you want to crowd together way more people than reviews you want (so if you want 10 reviews, make sure to get at least 20 people).

This also helps your books to look more professional and less indie, which is good when someone is interested in your book and checks out your reviews.

**You don't have to worry about every review being 5 stars either;**

Amazon apparently only really penalizes you with bad reviews if they average under 3 stars. So as long as your reviewers are giving you at least 3 stars on average, you're alright! And, having all 5 star reviews just looks scammy anyway. Think about it - when you see nothing but 5 star reviews, you assume they're fake, don't you?

Try to recruit your advance readers at least a month in advance of your book being released so they have time to read it. Coordinate with them to make it easier on them to leave the review on or around your launch date.

You can use friends and family and have them help you find people; you can also use your social media followers, and this is a very common way people get advance readers.

## **5. Create a Book Trailer to Promote Your Book**

Creating a book trailer can be a fun, creative way to promote your book. If you're not interested in doing it yourself, you can hire someone for under \$100 to do it for you using Fiverr.

It can be fun to do it yourself though, and you can do it totally free:

- use free stock video footage and clips from Pixabay or Pexels
- use free stock music clips from Pixabay
- record your own voiceover yourself with a free app on your phone or use a free text-to-speech online digital voice generator
- combine it all for free using something like Kapwing video maker or Clipchamp

You can then put the video trailer on your website or blog and upload to your social media accounts. It can really help you stand out!

## **6. Do Readings to Promote Your Book**

A staple for promoting your book is to do a reading. In the days before COVID, this usually meant going to a bookstore and reading your book before a crowd. Now, **you can turn to doing it virtually** instead - and in your pajamas!

You can try to partner up with some bookstores (big box or local independent ones) and coordinate an online reading for your book on their website, promoted to their audience, or on their social media accounts.

You could just do it yourself on your own website or social media accounts as well. If you have an email list, make sure to let them know!

If you're not comfortable doing readings yourself, you could instead hire someone else to read your work for you. You can hire a voice actor (lots on Fiverr), and share the audio with your audience on social media or with your email list, or put it up on your site.

If possible, you could connect with a local acting group and have them do a table reading, or even re-enact a scene from your book that you can share!

## **7. Do a Virtual Book Tour to Promote Your Book**

Conventional book tours, like readings of your books, are something that isn't possible at the moment thanks to COVID, but have been a standard for promoting your book, especially once you're more established as an author. But, that doesn't mean you can't replicate it to a degree with a **virtual book tour!**

You can connect with bookstores for readings, as mentioned, and go live on your social media accounts. You can work with radio shows, podcasts, and TV programs or Youtube channels to be interviewed. You can come up with themes for what to focus on each time, do chats and Q&A's with people who watch/listen, do games and giveaways, and whatever else you can come up with - be creative!

If you don't want to do it yourself and can pay for someone to do it for you, you can search for virtual book tour companies (rates seem to be in the \$150-400 range).

## **8. Get Local Publicity to Promote Your Book**

Using local sources is an option that is generally overlooked for promoting your book, but it can help, especially for physical books sales. This is another one that may not be as possible for now, but you can still reach out to **local radio stations, newspapers, magazines, and public access programs** to see if they'd be open to

interviewing you, doing a feature on you or your book, or reviewing your book.

Another local option is your **local library**. You can coordinate a reading there or work to give them free copies of your books so they can loan them out.

If you know of any **little free libraries** in your area or near you, you can pop in and add your books to any you find. If you know people who have a little free library near them, send them copies of your books and have them add the books to the little free library. You can find locations for little free libraries **HERE** (and if none are near you, consider starting one yourself!).

## **9. Work With Others to Promote Your Book**

Working with others can be a great way to promote your book since you're getting exposed to another audience. This is super helpful if you don't have much of an audience yourself yet.

**You can partner up with another author on social media**, and the two of you can promote one another's writing, you can be interviewed by them or you can interview them, you can host a live together, or you can read each other's books. Lots of options for

how to work with someone on social media, and that's not even touching on influencers (but that's not free).

Outside of social media, you can connect with someone to have them promote you to their email list. This can be difficult to achieve if you don't have a good email list yourself though. **Roundups and virtual summits** can take care of that.

With a roundup, you can write an article for your blog where you ask a bunch of "experts" to answer a question, and you share all of their answers together in one article. You can then send the links for the article to everyone who is included in it, and they are likely to share it with their audience as well. This can be a really easy way to start building connections.

With a virtual summit, you get together a group of people (on average, 10-20) that have experience and expertise to talk about a specific topic. You can interview them on their chosen subject (related to the topic), and this can be done live online or it can be recorded videos that are released at certain times.

People sign up for the summit, they can watch the videos for a certain amount of time (usually 3-7 days), and then it goes away unless they purchase the videos (usually for \$27-97).

There are two awesome reasons to do a virtual summit, and one is that your experts are going to promote the heck out of the summit since they're going to be featured. If you have an email list of 2,000 subscribers and a social media following of 5,000, that's alright, but nothing very large by itself, certainly nothing impressive. If you gather together 15 people who have the same following on average, that's potential exposure to 30,000 email subscribers and 75,000 social media followers - now THAT is impressive! Plus, you usually work it out with your summit participants that when someone signs up to watch/listen to the summit, they get added to YOUR email list - which can easily mean increasing your email list by thousands in a week or two.

The second awesome reason is the fact you can monetize the summit. As mentioned, people only get access for a brief period of time, and then have to pay for the videos to get permanent access. This is pretty standard for any virtual summit, and you can see a pretty good conversion rate (number of participants who buy the videos) of 5%+. So if you have 10,000 people sign up to watch/listen, and you offer the videos for \$37, that's \$18,500 (500 people x \$37). This is one potential way of funding your writing career!

The hard part of virtual summits is they are a lot of work and planning (you'll usually want to give yourself a good 6 months to plan and get experts and have everything set up).

And lastly - **bloggers!** There are zillions of bloggers out there (okay not zillions, but close!), and they're all looking for content. You can approach a book blogger, another author who has a blog, or a blogger whose topic connects with your writing in some way (like if your main character is an expert gardener - you can try gardening bloggers).

A note on this: **BE PROFESSIONAL!** Even if the blogger isn't that big, I can guarantee that they get tons of people asking them to post on their blog. I can't tell you how many emails I get for my day job blog from people begging to write for my blog (and I've rejected almost all of them).

Most of the time, the emails are generic (so don't be generic, make sure you sound like you've actually read their blog, don't use a template email, and address them by name), and read like a 14-year-old wrote them (avoid emojis, please use spell check, and practice proper grammar - you're a writer, so write like one!). Just avoiding those two things makes you rise above the pack.



Have a pitch ready to go that will fit well with their blog, and adhere to whatever guidelines they have or set for you. If you can't make a deadline, don't bother (you're just wasting their time and yours). Make it easy for them to say yes, and less work for them to do is one way to do that.

Oh and I forgot one more but it's blogger-adjacent: **podcasts!** Podcasts are growing fast in popularity, and just like bloggers, they are on the hunt for content. In the case of a podcast, you'd likely be interviewed, and this can be a great way of promoting yourself and your book.

## 10. Use Paid Ads to Promote Your Book

Finally, there are paid ads you can use to promote your book.

**Facebook ads** are the dominant ones these days, but for books, you can also try out **Amazon ads** (since you're likely selling your book on Amazon).

Ads can be tricky if you're not savvy with marketing and copy. I'm decent myself but still struggle with Facebook ads! So I honestly recommend using ads if you can hire a professional to do it for you (unless you're really good at this yourself).

What ads might be better for is actually promoting your **optin offers** to get people to sign up for your email list. If you're a total beginner

with building your audience, with no traffic yet to your author website or blog, no email list, and a tiny social media following, this can be a good thing to try.

**So, there you have it! 10 ways for you to promote your book, especially as an indie author. Good luck getting your book out there!**

## How to Create a Street Team for Your Writing

Marketing your book can be overwhelming and lonely. When you're self-publishing, you're a one-person wrecking crew tackling every job attached to this publishing thing as possible. There is one thing you can do to help with your marketing though - build a street team!

With a street team, you have other people around you to help you get your book out there, whether they're people you know in person or the people you connect with online. Having a great street team can go a long way toward getting your book off of the ground fast.

### **What is an Author Street Team?**

An author street team is a group of people who help get the word out there about your book(s). When you publish a new book, your street team helps to promote your book by talking with their friends and family about it, putting it out on social media, commenting on articles and interviews you do, leaving reviews when your book is available, and on and on.

Your street team also acts as a little support group for your writing. As you're writing, they can help cheer you on, and as you publish a new book, they help you move forward quickly so you're not

stagnant and pessimistic. If you're a self-published author or thinking of self-publishing, you absolutely need a street team to make it work!

### **How do I recruit people for my street team?**

You can start with the **people you know personally** who are interested in your writing, so your friends and family, or groups you belong to/participate in. If they hate your genre, then they may not be the best person to join though! Make sure they really like what you write so they'll be more likely to participate.

Then recruit people online - the internet gives you access to billions of people! Use your **social media** accounts to recruit people to your street team by putting out a casting call and having people volunteer, or reach out directly to people you've interacted with online to ask them to be on your street team.

**Online forums and groups** can also be a great place to recruit people to your street team. If you participate in any online forums or groups (especially Facebook groups), you can put it out there you're looking for street team members.

You can also ask your **beta readers** to join your street team, and they would be much more likely to want to be on it. You can flip that too,

by the way, and recruit some of your street team members to become beta readers!

If you have an **email list**, you can ask people on your email list to become members of your street team. They are also more likely to want to become members since they're already on your email list.

If you know anyone who has a wide audience (especially online), either personally (like a big social media following) or professionally (through their work, but make sure that work is at least somewhat relevant), target them. You want your street team members to reach as many people as possible.

You'll want to **treat your street team like royalty**. They're your personal cheerleaders, so they deserve it! You can give them early previews of your books, signed copies, do giveaways just for them where they can win free stuff, have group chats, or whatever else you can think of to reward them for being on your street team and saying, Thank you!

There is no limit to how many people you have on your street team. It could just be 3 people, or 3 thousand! (though 3,000 might be a little challenging to manage, so ideally, you'll probably want a street team under 100 people; be realistic about how many people you can manage)

## Organize Your Street Team

Once you have a street team built up, you'll want to keep them organized. If you have an email list, create a separate list just of your street team members so you can email them updates (say monthly) and instructions (once you're publishing a book).

If you don't have an email list yet, then open an account for free with Mailchimp and use it just for contacting your street team (so you don't have to email 50 people separately!).

**Make sure your street team members are aware of what exactly you expect from them and want them to do.** When you're publishing a book, outline different ways they can get the word out both in person and online so they have options depending on what they're capable of doing.

Some things you can ask your street team members to do when you have a new book out are:

- Leave a review (you can specify where if you have a preference)
- Comment on a guest article
- Call in to a radio or podcast interview
- Share guest articles or interviews

- Buy magazines or newspapers featuring you or share a link to the feature online
- Mention and link to your profile or book on any of their social media accounts
- Mention and link to your book with their email list (if their work is at least somewhat relevant)
- Recommend your book for their book club
- Add your book to their local Little Free Library

**These are just a few ideas - you can get creative, and even ask your street team for more ideas!**

## Common Writer Questions: How Much Should You Write Daily, How Long Should a Book Be, and How Long Should It Take to Write a Book?

These are 3 very common questions people have when they start writing, so let's review them! We'll start with **how much you should write daily**.

The short answer is, it depends on your own schedule! Some writers only write 100 to 200 words daily, or 15 minutes each day, while others can write 10,000 words daily, or spend entire days writing.

Let's review some of the factors that go into how much you can write daily.

### **The Biggest Factor on How Much You Can Write Daily: Your Own Life and Schedule**

Let's face it, life gets in the way pretty often, so most of us can't dedicate our whole day to writing unless you have no job and no one to take care of. If that's you - lucky you! (now I'll throw myself in the street!)



But most of us have to work to pay the bills, and have other people to take care of, whether they are children, parents, spouses, partners, extended family, or a litter of dogs (I choose dogs!).

This means you should write as much as you can squeeze in, and not feel badly about it if that's not much. I like the idea of NaNoWriMo because it brings more energy and enthusiasm for writing and storytelling, but writing 50,000 words per month is woefully unrealistic for someone with 2 jobs, 3 kids, an aging parent, and a partridge in a pear tree (well, maybe not that last one).

If you can only find 10 minutes to write, then take it. If you can set aside several hours to write, go for it. Whatever works with your life and schedule. Just don't use the excuse that you're busy to keep you from writing. Heck if it's just 10 words, write it!

## **4 Ways to Write Daily:**

### **1. Develop a Writing Routine**

One thing that can really help you to write every day is to create a writing routine. Humans are creatures of habit, so creating a writing routine helps make writing a habit for you.

This may mean dedicating a certain part of your home to writing only, throwing on the same sweatshirt every time you write, writing at

the same time of day each day, listening to the same music whenever you write, using the same essential oils each time you write, having the same snack before you write, doing the same yoga poses before you write, practicing some meditation before you write - the possibilities are endless, and you can do whatever suits you.

Developing a routine helps you to write every day, and writing consistently is going to be more important for most writers than forcing yourself to write gigantic words counts sporadically.

## **2. Be More Productive**

Technology can help you to stay more focused and clean up your work. Some to try are [Scrivener](#), [Evernote](#), [Plotter](#), [FocusWriter](#), [ProWritingAid](#), and [Grammarly](#).

It also helps to be more productive in your daily life. Look around at where you can cut some of the lazy fat.

Also, I know some people are natural pantsers, but you may want to at least try to have a rough outline with main points for your book. Not having that makes you more likely to get stuck and not write anything for a while.

## **3. Set a Deadline**

Some people work better under pressure, and if you're one of them, considering setting a deadline to finish your book by. This can help motivate you to keep writing daily, even when you really want to curl up in bed.

Having a deadline can help you to move faster through scenes so you're not obsessing over every little detail for 3 weeks.

If you set a deadline, make sure to also set a reward for yourself once you meet it. This serves as extra motivation to get done on time!

But do try to make the deadline realistic for you. Don't set yourself up to fail. It's okay if it takes you a year or two to complete one novel.

#### **4. Experiment**

Keep trying out different ways to make yourself write. If you try certain apps, websites, programs, or techniques and don't like them, toss 'em and continue to move on until you find what works for you.

What works for one person won't work for the other, so keep trying until you find what motivates you to come up with new words daily.

Try out writing different word count lengths and different periods of time, and see which works best for you. It may be just 100 words each day, but that's okay as long as you keep doing it.

### **Don't be surprised if how much you write daily changes!**

It would be nice if, once we figured out how much we can write daily and keep up with, we were able to stay with that permanently. But of course, this may change over time!

I used to be able to write 8,000 to 10,000 words per day in my young years, but got that down to 2,000 to 3,000 words daily after a few years. I was expecting to write around that much when I started writing my current work in progress, but I struggled mightily.

I have more work now, more to deal with family, and just not enough time to write that much. After experimenting, I found shooting for 500 words each day to be just right for me for a while.

### **The point is - just write!**

Don't worry about how much you should write daily. There is no specific rule telling you how much to write. No one will kick you out of the writer's club based on how much you write each day.

It's different for everyone, and being hard on yourself for not maintaining NaNoWriMo all year (or even during November) isn't going to make you write more. If anything, it'll just make you sour on writing.

### **Make writing an enjoyable journey and write wherever it takes you :)**

Now we'll cover **how long a book should be by word count and page length**. Since it depends on what type of writing you're doing and what genre you're writing for. I'll say the *average* book length is in the 80,000 to 90,000 word count range, with a page length of 300-something.

But, this is considering all adult novels, fiction, not children's books, middle grade or teen fiction, or nonfiction (which really runs the gamut).

To get a clearer picture of how long your book should be by word count and page length, let's break it down!

First, we need to consider what exactly you're writing - is it really a novel, or something else? You've probably heard of short stories and novellas, but you might be surprised to know there are way more types than that!

Let's review some of them and what word count and page length is associated with them.

### **Short Stories: 10,000 Words, 50 Pages**

We're all familiar with **short stories** (you probably had to write some for school), and these are the shortest length. Usually when published as a book, they're published as a collection of short stories rather than individually. They may be published individually in magazines or online.

Within the short story genre also falls **Flash Fiction**, which has a word count of up to 1,000 words, though some say up to 1,500 words. This is only a few pages in page length.

Nestled under Flash Fiction is:

**Sudden Fiction:** Word Count of 750

**Microfiction** (also known as Drabble): Word Count of 100 - 300

**Minisaga** (also known as Dribble): Word Count of 50

And there's even Twitterature! (the length of a tweet on Twitter, obvi).

One would think that because short stories are short they're easier, but I think most writers would say the opposite. It's suuuuper hard to

tell a good story in such a small space, so kudos to all of the short story (and their subgenres) writers out there!

### **Novelettes: 10,000-20,000 Words, 50-100 Pages**

Coming after short stories are **novelettes**. These are essentially short novellas. Since novelettes are shorter, they tend to be more concise with what they describe and don't focus on too many different parts. This is a singular focus kind of story.

Novelettes can be great if you're a short story writer who isn't looking into writing a big novel, but would like to expand on a certain character or scene.

### **Novellas: 20,000-40,000 Words, 100-150 Pages**

Next up are **novellas**, which are essentially shorter novels. They tend to have more development than novelettes, but less complexity than a novel.

Novellas can be published on their own, and are a great option if you're a fiction writer who has a hard time getting to full book length.

### **Novels: 40,000+ Words, 150+ Pages**

This is where the rubber meets the road! To have a **novel**, your book has to be 40,000 words or longer (which translates to around 150 pages for page length). The average novel is around 80,000 to 90,000 words.

Next we can break down novel length by genre, since 40,000 words is only going to be okay for like, 1 or 2 of them!

### **Word Count & Page Length by Genre:**

**Romance:** This tends to be a shorter genre, and you can go as low as the 40,000 word count up to 100,000 words. If you've perused the romance titles on Amazon, you'll usually find most are in the 55,000 to 75,000 word range (or the 200 to 250 page length range). This seems to be a genre where readers prefer you keep it short!

**Young Adult:** Standard young adult fiction is usually going to be between 75,000 and 90,000 words (page length of 300 to 350 pages). But this can vary by the subgenre it is (like sci-fi/fantasy, which is often longer and can easily put a YA book over 100,000 words). Since this is for younger readers, you usually want to stay away from the higher end for length.



**Suspense (crime, horror, thriller, mystery):** This genre can be about the same as young adult for length, especially since this is a genre where you often see series (instead of standalones, or even a shorter series like a trilogy). Readers will often prefer shorter works for a series that ends up being 10 or 20 books long.

**Adult Fiction:** For standard adult fiction, it's going to be around 80,000 to 100,000 for your word count. You generally don't want to go too far below or above that since readers expect it to be around this length.

**Sci-fi/Fantasy:** This is one of the longer genres! Standard SF/F will usually have a bare minimum of an 80,000 word count, and many are in the 90,000 to 110,000 word count. Epic fantasies can easily run 200,000 words (and seem to be getting longer in recent times). Readers of this genre usually don't mind the long lengths.

**Historical Fiction:** This is the other long genre! Readers of this genre don't mind the long length either (and often expect it). You can easily go over 100,000 words with historical fiction.

**Children's Books:** Children's books can vary depending on the age of the children you're targeting. For smaller children, it can be 10,000 to 15,000 words. For slightly older kids (called middle grade, 8-12

years old), it can be 35,000 to 55,000 words, and for teens, it can be around 55,000 words.

**Nonfiction Books:** Nonfiction is pretty much all over the place since lots of different books fall in this category, like history books and memoirs, novelty books and cookbooks, and on and on. Best thing to do is check out how long books on the same subject as yours are.

Now, why does word count and page length matter? Word count and page length are important for two reasons. One, you generally want to have an acceptable word count and page length for your story type and genre. Going against this may bring you challenges with getting readers.

Two, going against this can also bring you challenges with getting a literary agent or publisher. They want to know that you're a serious writer who can do your job by the book (pun intended). There are thousands competing for their time, so don't give them an easy no.

When you're submitting to agents and publishers, make sure you review their guidelines or requirements (some may say how long they want your book to be). Don't waste their time or your own if your book doesn't meet their requirements.

But, if you're going to self-publish, you have no gatekeepers to get through, and are free to publish whatever length of book you want.

HOWEVER (the fancy but), keep in mind that you're still vying for the same readers as the publishers are, and readers have their own expectations. If you go *\*too\** far against what is standard for what you're writing, this might be problematic trying to get people to actually read it. So, you can break the rules, but do it mindfully and purposefully.

Finally, let's focus on **how long it should take you to write a book**. If you haven't written a book before and are thinking of doing it now (or have started), you may wonder how long it should take you to write a book. But the answer is simple - it takes you as long as it takes you!

Everyone has a different approach to their writing, and will take a different amount of time. You don't have to force yourself to be faster.

The average is going to be a few months to write your first draft. Some may take a year or more though, and that's okay.

Then you have to consider your following drafts after you've edited, which can be numerous and add more time to the process.

The exact amount of time it takes you is going to depend a lot on how much you can dedicate daily to your writing. If you can't dedicate much time to it on a daily basis, then you need to be realistic about how long it's going to take you to finish.

Is it better to be a fast writer? It's not better or worse, it's just the way you write. Some writers can write massive amounts in short periods of time, and some writers can only write a tiny bit at a time. There's no one way you should be.

How much writers write daily varies widely, anywhere from just 100 words daily to 10,000. Consistency is more important than writing giant chunks of words at once. Write regularly, and you'll finish your book eventually, whether that's a month or a few years.

You may wonder if being a slower writer makes you a bad writer. Of course not! Some books are pretty large and going to take forever to write anyway (hello epic fantasy). And if you've got a job, a family, and other responsibilities to deal with, you're only going to be able to write so much anyway.

Some people are just slow writers, even when they have lots of time to write. That's okay too. That's your process, and again, consistency is more important than anything else.

## Ways to Write Your Book Faster:

If you want to maybe write your book a little faster, there are a few things you can do to try and improve your speed. First, **consider writing your book in a different way from how you have**. If you've been typing on a computer, try writing by hand or dictating on your phone/computer. Writing in a different way can unleash some of your creative juices and give you fresh energy.

Second, **have a solid outline before you write** so you know exactly what you're going to write when you do. Most who take a long time to write (and it's not a time constraint issue), fall in the pantsier category, and don't plan what they're going to write first.

This slows you down considerably since you're just winging it. If you don't want to plot the entire book all at once, you can just plot one scene or chapter at a time so you at least know what you're writing at the moment.

Third, **remove distractions**. Distractions are a writer's worst enemy! Turn off your phone, log out of your social media accounts and email, and if you've got a door to close, close it. Some writers benefit from some noise, so if that's you, leave on the TV or some music, but keep it soft (or maybe use a white noise machine).

If you can't get your own space away from those you live with to write, try headphones, or maybe try writing in the middle of the night when everyone else is asleep, or get up before everyone else to write in the morning.

Fourth, **don't obsess over daily word count**. You know how when you're trying to fall asleep, but the more you obsess about falling asleep, the more awake you are? It's kind of like that. The more you obsess about hitting a certain word count, the more pressure you put on yourself to write, and the harder it can become.

Lots of writers cave under pressure like that. Heck, lots of creatives cave under pressure like that! Being creative needs some room to roam, to ebb and flow, and forcing it usually doesn't work. So, don't stress about it.

**Ultimately, think about the times when you have written the most, and what those times have in common.** Was it writing at a certain time of day? In a certain room or spot? Before or after doing a specific activity? When you were in a certain kind of mood? What gets each of us to write more will vary, so thinking about the times when you wrote more can tell you what works best for you.

## Bonus: How to Create a Book Bible

When you're writing a book, you need to keep track of every little detail of the world you're creating. This is especially the case if you're writing a series, and may reference something from book 1 waaaay down the line. Don't count on just your memory (unless you're one of those photographic memory people! But does that work for words and thoughts? Hmm . . .).

**To solve this, you can create a book bible (also called a story bible, or series bible).** A book bible helps you keep track of every detail so you're not scrambling trying to remember something minor. Writing takes a long time to do, so you don't want to waste any of that precious time searching for a tiny detail you forgot!

### What is a Book Bible?

A book bible is basically just something where you keep all of the details of your book. Everything about your characters, your locations, your world - the whole nine!

Your book bible helps keep you consistent, and keeps all of your characters, locations, and storylines weaved together more easily. If you're writing fantasy, you'll also want to pay special attention to

your magic system and stick with the rules, and a book bible makes it easier for you to remember what all the rules are.

You do want to try and keep your book bible easy to sort through, otherwise there's not much point in doing it if you can't find anything! You might create sections for characters, locations, certain periods of time, certain scenes, etc. You can alphabetize (I do that for my characters). And if it's a series, you can make distinctions between which book in the series certain details pop up.

Just how detailed you get is your call though. You can include extra information that isn't included in the book to build certain aspects of your book up in your mind as you write it, or just stick with bullet points. Whatever works for you!

### **What Should I Use to Create a Book Bible?**

You can use whatever you'd like to create your book bible. Some writers prefer to use their computer and set up folders and documents in Word or Google Docs, or use something like Scrivener. If you are more of an audio person, you can take audio notes on your computer or phone and save them in organized folders.

Many writers prefer to do something physical and tangible, so you can buy a journal, notebook, organizer, or create an organizer with



a binder, paper, dividers, and sticky notes. You can get cutesy and make it fun and bright, if you're the crafty type. Some scrapbooking materials can work well and help you organize. But it can be basic if you're not crafty or just don't have the time.

## What Should I Include in My Book Bible?

There are a few key points you should include in your story bible.

They are:

1. Characters
2. Locations
3. Geography
4. Culture
5. Magic rules

Let's break each down!

For **characters**, you may include:

- Their full name
- Their physical description
- Their race/ethnic background
- Age (and maybe birth date if you want to get really specific)
- Their family history
- If important, their romantic relationship history (romance is a common fantasy subplot so you probably need to think of this!)

- Their job
- Their hobbies
- Their main personality traits
- Think about things like: what their voice sounds like, do they have an accent, and anything particular for them (is there a certain word they say a lot, a nervous tic they have, or specific ways they react in specific situations?)
- Their best and worst traits
- When and how they were introduced to the story
- Their important relationships (non romantic)
- If they're magical, what they are and/or what abilities they have

Now, you don't need all of this information for all of your characters, just your main characters and the group just below them. For everyone else, you may just need their name, occupation, where they're introduced, or how they fit in exactly.

Also, if you're focusing on a family in your story, I would recommend you create a family tree so you can easily keep track of how they're all related.

**Locations** means all of the locations where your characters interact and scenes take place. Pay special attention to the locations where the characters are repeatedly. Include:

- Where this location is
- If a home, who owns it and lives there
- Main description and anything that stands out
- If it's only used once or twice, where in the series it's used

**Geography** focuses on the actual landscape. This is going to matter if you're creating a fantasy world that isn't of this world. When that's the case, you'll want to create a map of your world. This can be really useful! Don't worry about it being perfect, and just make sure it has the towns, an idea of the terrain, and of the climate/weather.

If you're writing a fantasy book or series that isn't set in this time and world, you'll also want to keep track of the **culture** you create.

Include:

- Type of government and who is in power
- Power hierarchy
- Races/identities
- Social classes
- Economic classes
- Languages spoken
- Religions practiced
- Any particular slang words
- Important rules or laws

Finally, we have **magic rules**. If you're writing fantasy, you probably have a magic system, and you need to keep track of it! Include:

- Specific rules
- The magical powers that exist and who has them or when they can be used
- What the limitations are for magic
- All magical creatures included or referenced
- Magical origins (this can be optional)

**One extra for your book bible:** You should also consider adding a book/series outline in your book bible. This doesn't have to be like a regular outline, and instead can be following just the main plot points and when they occur. You'll generally want to keep track of events so the timeline remains consistent.