

2014 Edition

How To **Self-publish** Your Book

"the no-fluff guide"

by David Leonhardt
THGM Writing Services
www.THGMwriters.com



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"Most how-to-self-publish guides were written by publishing services to market their publishing platform. This guide is different. This is an unbiased overview to help you select the best option for you."

So you want to self publish...

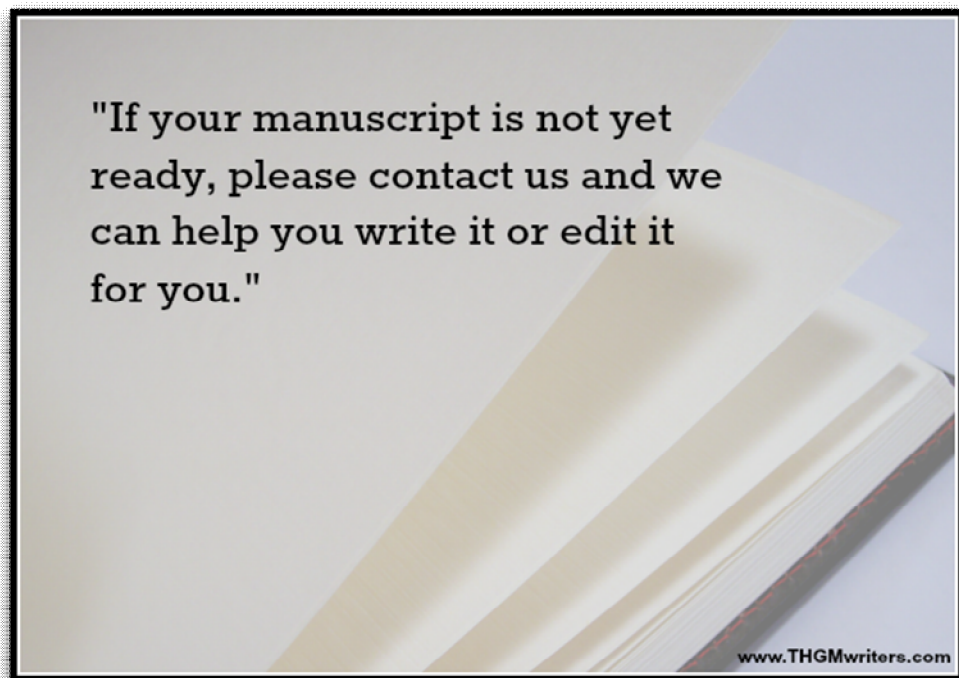
Hi. My name is David Leonhardt, and I run THGM Writing Services. I have worked with many authors, helping them realize their dreams. I bet you have a dream of your own.

The goal of this guide is to help make your dream come true.

Before diving straight into the how-to tips, you should know for whom this is written, for whom this is not written and who will benefit from it. I wrote this to help our clients. We ghostwrite books and we edit books. We want our clients' dreams to come true.

In other words, by the time you read this report, you should already have a manuscript. If your manuscript is not yet ready, please contact us at <http://thgmwriters.com>, and we can help you write it or edit it for you. Don't do typesetting or cover art until you know exactly how you plan to publish.

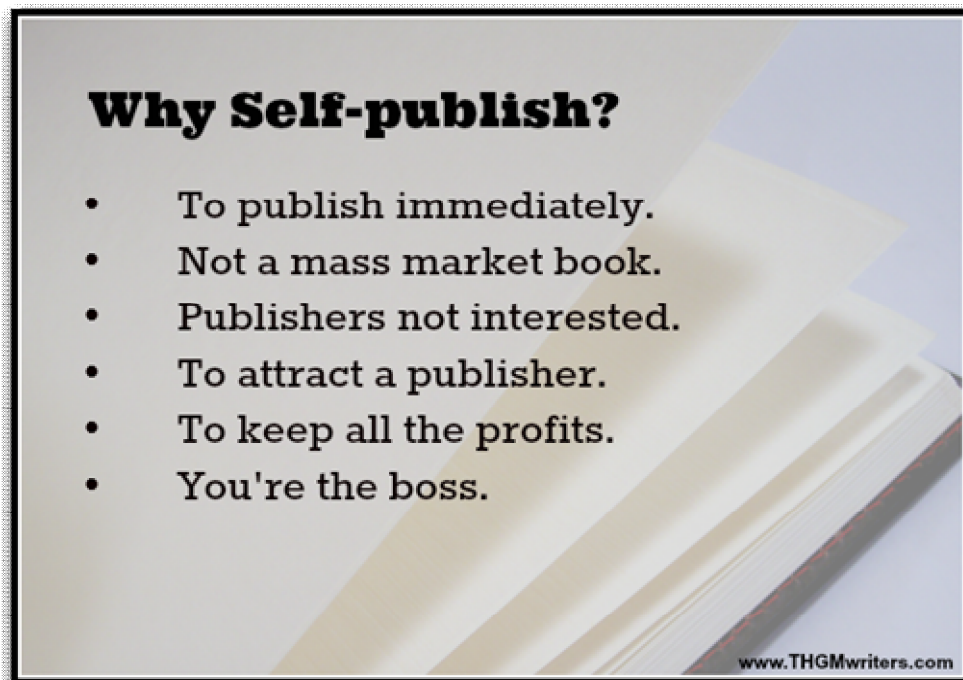
This is not a long report. If you're looking for lots of words to impress you, read Charles Dickens. Here we offer just good, solid advice you can use to get your book published.



Why self-publish?

Traditional publishing involves writing a query letter and a synopsis and sending it to literary agents, then collecting the rejection letters. At some point you might possibly get the attention of an agent who will pitch your manuscript to a publishing house. If a publishing house likes the pitch, you might get rich. There are a whole lot of "if"s involved.

Self-publishing removes all the pesky "if"s. Still, it is not normally the road to riches. Your odds of getting rich from your books, unless you are a paid speaker, have always much better with traditional publishers. That being said, there are signs that the tides are turning, and you might want to [read this report](#) by Hugh Howey. I need to stress this once more: self-publishing is not a road to riches, but the possibilities that it might become one are growing stronger every day.



However, there are certain tangible advantages to self-publishing beyond income...

- No waiting for the lengthy and stressful process of pitching and hoping and pitching and hoping. If your book is time-sensitive, this is crucial. If you simply don't want gray hairs early in life, self-publishing can help, too.
- Maybe you have already earned your gray hairs, but no publishing house was interested. Time to self-publish.
- Your book might not be the type that a publishing house wants - for instance, a training manual, an autobiography or a family history.

- If you do well as a self-published author, a publishing house will want to sign you. You might or might not be interested.
- If you have access to markets, as a professional speaker does, you actually can get rich by self-publishing. You will make MUCH more money self-publishing if you can go directly to buyers.
- You're the boss. You control the cover, the editing and the promotion.

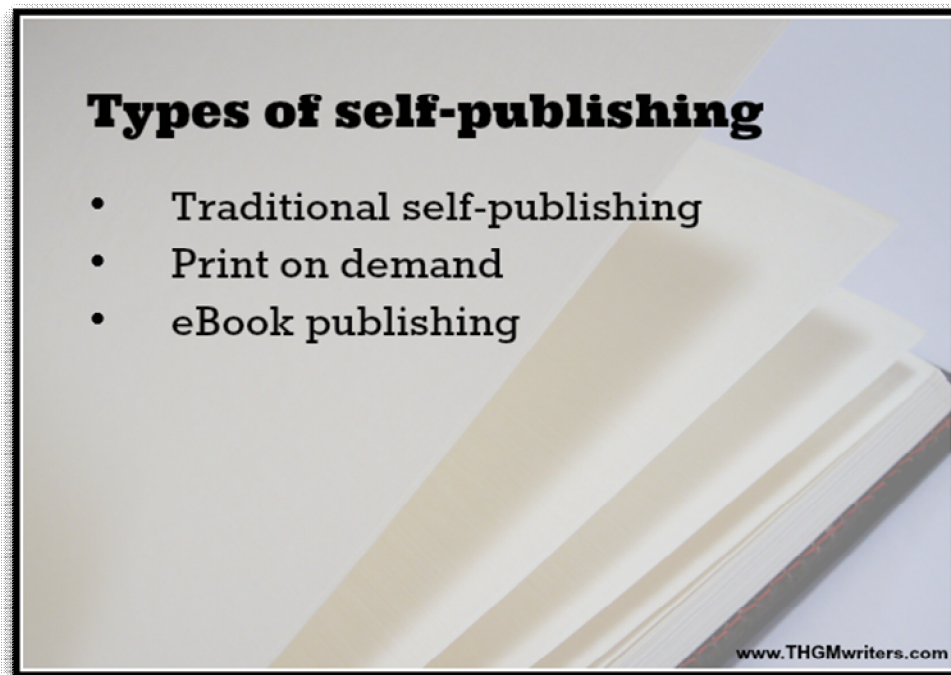
If you want to self-publish, be prepared to put in the effort. Writing is only half the task. Publishing is a job in itself, and then you need to promote your book.

What are the self-publishing options?

There are several publishing options that fall under "self-publishing". Traditional self-publishing involves typesetting your manuscript, designing a cover, and handing it over to a printer.

Modern technology has created a number of other options, including "print on demand". This includes Amazon's [Create Space](#) program, as well as POD publishers like [iUniverse](#), [Lulu](#) and [Xulon Press](#). There are several others, too. (*See my disclaimer at the end.*)

You have also surely heard of eBooks, which used to mean simply creating a typeset file in PDF format (like this guide). Now it can also mean creating a special file for e-publishing on [Kindle](#), [Smashwords](#) or [Nook](#).



Most how-to-self-publish guides were written by publishing services to persuade you to use their services or to provide instructions on using their services. This guide is different. This is an unbiased overview to help you select the best option for you.

Traditional self-publishing

You are in the cockpit here, acting pretty much as a one-person publishing house. You need to arrange the editing and proofreading, the typesetting, the cover, the printing and the distribution. The HUGE – and I mean SUPER GARGANTUAN advantage of traditional self-publishing is that you keep the profits - *all* the profits.

For example, you might have \$2000 upfront costs, then maybe \$5 per book for printing. Your printing costs depend on the size of the book, the paper thickness and the print run (how many copies you print at once), as well as some other factors. Then you keep the profits. Assuming a sale price of \$20, you break even after selling your 134th book. After that, you make \$15 per book.

Compare that to print on demand, where you might make \$4 to \$12 on each book, depending on the program. Your upfront costs might be anywhere from \$0 to \$5000, depending on the program.

Editing. You might choose to edit yourself or [hire a service like ours](#). Editing yourself can be tough, as you are probably too close to the work. You want someone willing and able to review your manuscript with a critical eye and rework some of your passages for maximum effect.

It is also worth hiring someone other than yourself to proofread. Proofreading should definitely be done by a fresh set of eyes. We can do that for you, but you can get just as good a job for less money by hiring an English student from a local university. Proofreading generally covers correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization and consistent word usage.

Typesetting. This means laying out your manuscript in a pleasant and easy-to-read format. Like editing and proofreading, this is a service well-worth outsourcing. You could do it yourself in Microsoft Word, which is what I used for this Guide. Ah, but this guide is just a report. It is not meant to look like a book.

If you want a book that looks like a book, much better to use software like [Adobe Indesign](#). Keep in mind that there is a huge learning curve with any new software. It is also not just a matter of getting the mechanics right. Font selection and spacing options can make a big difference to how people feel about the book. In other words, there is an art to typesetting, which a professional is more likely to get right than you.

Before you can do the typesetting, you have to know the trim size and the margin requirements, as well as the number of pages.

Remember that printers print in increments, depending on how their press functions. For instance, let's say your manuscript gets typeset in 225 pages, and the press can handle 220 and 240 pages. That means you will have to go with 240 pages, including 15 blank pages. You might find something to fill some or all of

those 15 pages, but you might prefer to have the manuscript typeset in just 220 pages; after all, you will be paying nine percent more for 240 pages than for 220 pages. So you need to know the increments your printer will print in.

You will also need to know any other technical specifications, including exact trim size and margin requirements, as well as paper thickness. This is more important for the cover, especially the spine - make sure you have the exact dimensions for the spine - but best to have all the specs before hiring the typesetter, too.

Cover. There is a section ahead just about the cover design and components. What is different for traditional self-publishing is that you need to arrange for printing the cover, so make sure you have all the technical specs. You can design the cover (front, back and spine) without the specs, but the result will not be as professional, or it might end up costing more to "fix".

Distribution. When you self-publish, you are in complete control, and that includes distribution. This is perhaps the toughest part of self-publishing.

If you want bookstores to have access to stock your book, you need to get into **Ingram's and Baker & Taylor's title databases**. You need also to be able to offer bookstores a return policy. With POD publishers, this is out of your hands. But if you print your books, you are on your own. Getting into Ingram's and Baker & Taylor's title databases on your own isn't easy, but if you are counting on bookstore sales, it might be worth finding out if you can.

One of the main reasons an author might want a **website** is to distribute her books. For fiction and creative non-fiction, an author's website or a book-specific website is ideal, and then you can handle fulfilment yourself.

An author's website is about the author. As your repertoire expands, a new section can be created for each new book. This is typical for fiction authors.

A book-specific website is for authors who really have just a single book to promote, with no intention of writing more. Examples would include a biography, a true story, or a book supporting a cause or an idea.

Your website might include a list of books, a blog, an author's biography, reviews and a sample chapter, as well as a video trailer. You might even want to include some historical or scientific notes - and , yes, that goes for fiction, too.

What Should Your Website Include?

- List of books
- Your blog
- Author's biography
- Reviews
- Sample chapter
- Video trailer

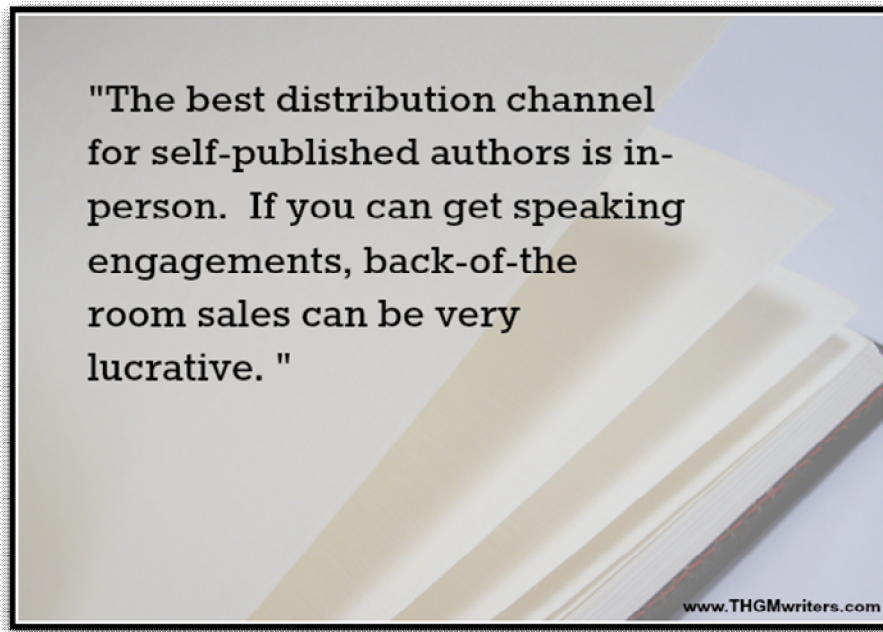
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If you are writing a book for your business, you probably already have a website to sell your services, and the book is then a marketing tool to add to the website.

Regular blogging and participation in social media can build a fan base online, drive traffic to your website and help sell books. If this is a channel of distribution you wish to pursue, we can create your website and also create a video trailer. [Just visit this link.](#)

You can also use **eBay, Craigslist and Kijiji** to sell your book, but now we are crossing over a bit into marketing, and that's a topic for another guide.

The best distribution channel for self-published authors is in-person. This is especially true for non-fiction. If you can get speaking engagements, **back-of-the room sales** can be very lucrative. Motivational speakers know the value of a book, not just because of back-of-the room sales, but because just having a book increases the fees they can charge. Find business audiences interested in your topic and start booking speaking engagements.



If you write fiction based on a major real-life theme, you can also make sales after presentations. For instance, your book is about the post-apocalyptic world that remains in the wake of a superbug that spreads from a hospital in Kansas City. You speak about superbugs, what is being done and what isn't, and of course about the scenario on which your book is based. Then you sell books at the back of the room after your speech.

Book signings are also good venues to sell books and get your name out. You need to get the book into stores first, then offer the stores to do a book signing or "meet the author" event. Sometimes you can also do this at public libraries or other community venues. County fairs, trade shows, book fairs and even flea markets can also be great venues to distribute your book – just rent a table where you think your target audience will be hanging out. But make sure to promote the signing, or you might be sitting by yourself. And don't just sit there; pull people in (politely and non-aggressively). Engage them in conversation.

Don't forget **stores**, and I don't mean bookstores. If your book is about camping, find the stores that sell camping supplies. That's where your readers are. If your book is fiction, see if there is a tie-in to a type of store. For instance, a camping supplies store might just be interested in your novel based on tracking down an injured wolf cub.

Self-publishing online (print-on-demand)

There is much less to write about print on demand (POD) publishers, because once you've edited your manuscript, you just hand it over and they do the rest (including getting into the mainstream distribution channels). In many cases, they will even do the editing for you. Sounds easy, right? OK, so let's roll out the caveats, and please keep in mind that I am making generalizations that might not apply to each company or to each of their packages.

First, in most cases, you get what you pay for. Editing through a POD publisher can be risky; only desperate editors will accept the low pay that most POD publishers offer.

Second, you might or might not like your cover. It might or might not be any good. I have seen some great POD covers and some disastrous ones. Only desperate artists will accept the low pay that most POD publishers pay.

Third, you might or might not like the price. POD earned the moniker "Vanity Press" because of the large upfront fee that had to be paid, even if only a handful of books were printed. Not all POD publishers still charge these huge set-up fees. Amazon's [Create Space](#) offers an affordable option.

There is more science to typesetting than to covers and editing, so the typesetting that comes with a POD program is usually quite good, as long as you don't have any complicated special features to incorporate.

POD publishers will usually handle the ISBN number and bar codes just as well as you, no problems there. In fact, they might insist on it.

So, as far as setting up your book, my advice would be to get covers and editing done yourself (or see what cover they offer you, and get one done yourself if it sucks), but let them handle typesetting and the ISBN.

The really big advantage of POD publishing is on the distribution end. Your book typically gets into all the major online stores such as Amazon and BarnesAndNoble.com without any effort on your part. It is also usually available to all brick-and-mortar bookstores.

Be advised that being "available" does not mean that you will actually see the book in stores. If you plan to do an event in a town or you are doing a media interview in that town, you will still have to contact the bookstores to let them know, and then they might order copies to put on their shelves.

Many POD programs offer a whole series of bells and whistles as upgrades. Some of these are worthwhile, some less so. Which ones you want might depend on the nature of your book and what you are willing to do yourself – and which ones are

really overpriced (and we have seen some that are quite overpriced). Here is a list of some upgrades offered.

- More images allowed
- More “free” book copies
- Hard cover edition
- Copyright registration
- Extra promotion
- Higher visibility on the publisher’s site, or in other online bookstores
- Book signing kit
- Bookseller return program
- Google and Amazon book search programs
- Press release
- Video trailers

Self publishing in eBook formats

No matter how you publish, these days you need an eBook version of your book. At the very least, you should have a PDF version to sell, which can be produced at no extra cost and almost no time at all; the typesetting and cover are already created, and might even already be in PDF format for the printer.

However, PDF is not enough to capture most of your market, since so many of them are reading on Kindles, Nooks and other devices. If you want to make the process easy, across all the main platforms (Apple iBooks, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Flipkart, Oyster, Scribd, Baker & Taylor's Blio and Axis360), the best way to go is through [Smashwords](#). There is very little cost involved, but they will take a cut of the sales (although much smaller than publishing houses and POD publishers).

For Kindle, Amazon leads you through the whole process. Some people claim that it takes just five minutes to publish to Kindle. I assume that timeframe is if you've done it a few times before. Of course, this assumes you have already done all the work of typesetting the manuscript and assembling the cover. And that you have spent the time reviewing their guide. You can [download the guide here](#).

To summarize the Kindle Guide, do global configurations of your Word file, rather than individual configurations. For instance, if you want the first line of each paragraph to indent, don't add spaces or tabs at the beginning of each paragraph; do it once in the paragraph settings of the document.

Remember that the earlier in the process you understand the formatting requirements for your manuscript, the better. This is especially true if you plan to include images, call outs or any "special effects". The Kindle Guide is actually a pretty streamlined guide to creating an appealing look for your book that you might want to use for PDF and print versions, too. It will probably do you well on other electronic platforms, as well.

Traditional Publishing

It is possible that you might be self-publishing with the goal to attract a traditional publisher. If that is the case, there are a few things to keep in mind.

1. The more success you can demonstrate as a self-published author, the more likely a traditional publisher will want to add your title to their roster. Therefore, your goal is to maximize sales (even if that means charging a much lower price), maximize downloads (even if free), and get the best and most reviews and author interviews possible.
2. You will need a synopsis to send to literary agents and publishing houses. You will also need a query letter, but that should wait until you know what to focus on. For instance, if you got an interview about your book in *USA Today*, you will want that to be a centerpiece of your query letter. On the other hand, if you managed to sell 12,000 copies, that is probably more impressive than the interview.
3. If you think your book might make a great screenplay, start working on it immediately. We have written simultaneous manuscripts and screenplays for some clients.
4. Even if you self-publish in your home country, you can still sell foreign rights to foreign publishers. This is how I was published in China, Australia, Croatia, Korea and Singapore (with fish-that-got-away pains from Germany and Saudi Arabia).

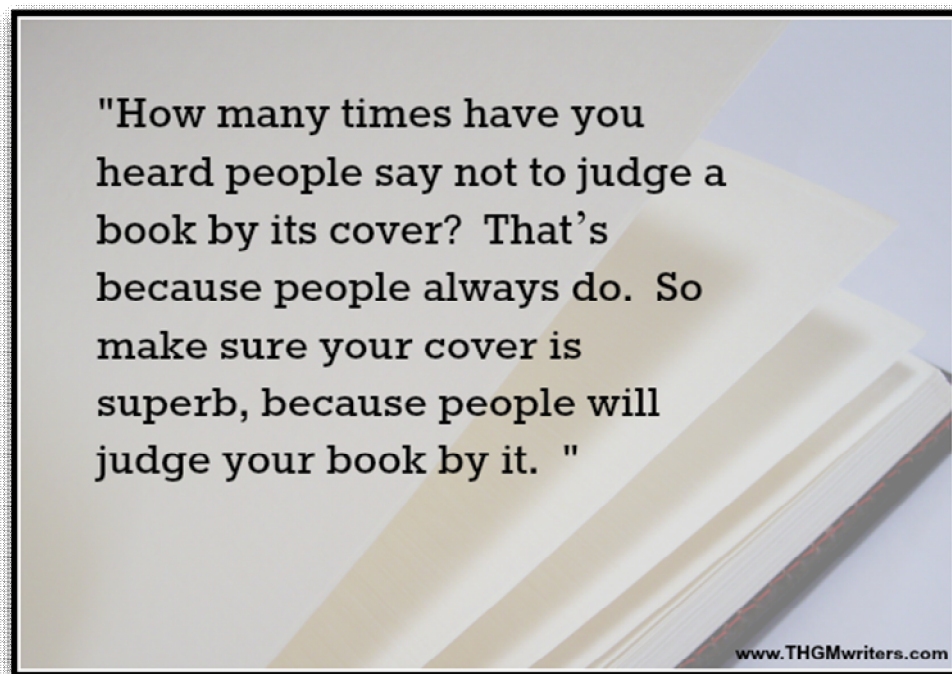
The cover

The cover has certain typical sections. The front cover includes the main image, the title, possibly a subtitle and the author's name. All of these, except the author's name, are critical to making the sale.

For non-fiction, you can get away with a graphic cover, although you might still want some original artwork.

For fiction, you pretty much need original artwork – and that costs money (sorry). We can help create the cover, if you wish - [just visit this link](#). And if you don't use us, remember to specify that you need 1/8 inch bleed beyond the trim size specified by your printer. This is not required for eBook versions.

Don't forget to double check the printer's and publisher's specs. There might be limits to color saturation or to some other aspect of the colors, so you might actually need more than one version for different venues you are using to publish.



On the back, there is the sales pitch. For fiction, here are the elements you want on the back cover:

- If you have been able to get advance reviews (highly recommended), a few choice words from those reviews
- A quick, enticing summary of the plot

- A very short bio of the author
- A picture of the author

For a business book

- A quick, enticing summary of what the reader will gain
- A very short bio of the author
- A picture of the author

A few words about the author's picture.

- For fiction, it is not required, but people do like to feel a connection to the author, so it is recommended.
- For biographies, a picture of the subject should be on the front cover. On the back cover, a lot depends on whether the author and the subject are the same person and what image needs to be portrayed to sell the book.
- For a reputation book, a powerful business photo should be on the front cover, and a more casual picture on the back cover.
- For other business books, just a business photo on the back cover will do.

How many times have you heard people say not to judge a book by its cover? That's because people always do. So make sure your cover is superb, because people will judge your book by it. In fact, make sure it's superb in miniature, because that's how online shoppers will see it.

ISBN

IBN is the number that identifies your book. It is embedded in the barcode on your back cover. This is required only if you plan to sell your book in bookstores. A family biography, a workbook, a speaker's book – these might never be sold in bookstores, in which case no ISBN is required. However, if you want to sell in bookstores and some places online, you will need an ISBN.

[Americans can get an ISBN here.](#)

[Canadians can get an ISBN here.](#)

[UK residents can get an ISBN here.](#)

[Australians can get an ISBN here.](#)

Bar code artwork can be generated for free through [Adazing](#) or [Bookow](#).

Typesetting

I had said earlier that typesetting requires software and that there is a learning curve. You might have been wondering whether you could not just typeset your book in Microsoft Word. The short answer is “yes”. Word has come a long way. Just keep in mind that to use Word to typeset for book quality, you still need to learn its more advanced features, and you also need to have a bit of a designer’s eye to do it properly.

This is a guide, a special report, a white paper. It is designed accordingly. The layout used in this report will never do for a “book” - at least not for a printed book. A professional typesetter is recommended.

If you are publishing through Amazon’s Create Space, there are actually downloadable templates for a fee and a huge DIY specifications guide for free.

CAVEAT: Best to know your printer's specs before you start typesetting.

Interestingly, most printers will require you to provide a PDF file, and many will specify Adobe Acrobat, because many of the free PDF creators are less than perfect. The price of Adobe Acrobat alone makes a professional typesetter appear attractive.

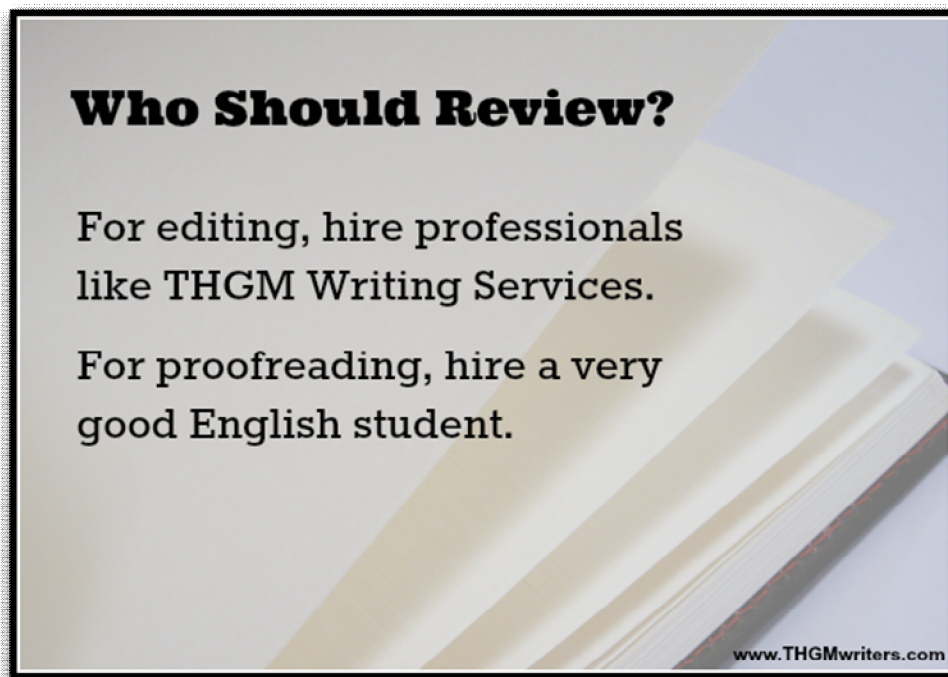
Proofreading and editing

There are three levels of edits (and any number of hybrid combinations). Depending on your writing skills and whether you have hired us to ghostwrite your book, you might not need all three.

Substantive edit: This is where the editor makes significant changes to how the book is organized or how the information flows. It might involve making the main character more sympathetic or changing “point of view” (through whose eyes we see things happening). This is the most involved edit, and also the most expensive.

Copy edit: At THGM Writing Services, we usually call this a simple edit. Unlike the substantive edit, it does not involve making structural changes, but does involve rewording sentences sometimes to make the manuscript flow better. It might also involve splitting sentences or combining sentences for better readability, as well as ensuring a consistent tone (although that could start creeping into substantive edit). Some people [come to us for a simple edit](#), but really require a substantive edit. Much depends on how good a writer you are.

Proofreading: This is a pretty straightforward exercise. We need to ensure correct grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization, as well as consistency throughout the manuscript. No matter who wrote your manuscript, whether it was you or one of our ghostwriters, you should get a totally disinterested set of eyes to proofread it. In other words, not you.



Who Should Review?

For editing, hire professionals
like THGM Writing Services.

For proofreading, hire a very
good English student.

www.THGMwriters.com

Before handing to anybody for proofreading, it is worth **creating a style guide**. For instance, are there certain words or types of words that should always be capitalized or italicized, even if that's not how they are in the dictionary? Your proof reader needs to know this. Is there a reason you use certain words that might seem out of context at first? This is often the case in sci fi and fantasy, where words take on different meanings in the worlds a writer creates, but it can also be true in certain other instances.

Proofreading is also a service we provide. Unlike editing, however, you can get good proofreading at a lower cost by hiring a student. Just make sure they are really, really good with their English, such as a university-level English major. Otherwise, better to hire us.

At this stage, it is worth making sure you have all elements ready to go. At final proofreading, you will want to double check everything. You would not want a spelling error on the cover or a copyright date of 215. Here is a list, from which you can choose what you need or want:

- ☐ Half title page (just the title and subtitle)
- ☐ Title page
- ☐ Copyright page
- ☐ Acknowledgements page
- ☐ Endorsement and advance reviews page (s)
- ☐ Forward or preface
- ☐ Introduction
- ☐ Blank page
- ☐ Table of contents
- ☐ List of illustrations
- ☐ Main body, with chapter titles
- ☐ Images
- ☐ Appendix
- ☐ Glossary of terms
- ☐ Bibliography
- ☐ Read also (for your other books)
- ☐ Author bio / contributors' bios
- ☐ Index, maps, timelines, genealogy, etc.
- ☐ Cover text

There is actually another level of editing that we have done for a few clients, although we have never publicised it before. A few clients have come to us asking for a **high-level review**, to read their manuscript and provide comments on what it needed to make it outstanding. We can do this for you, too.

Copyright

We must preface this by saying that nothing in here should be construed as legal advice; for that, please see a licensed attorney. That being said, international copyright convention gives automatic copyright to the writer of any work. Copyright is on the actual words, not on the ideas.

Copyright registration is not costly and remains the single best way to establish copyright in court if ever you might need to, so best practice is to register copyright.

[Register your copyright in the USA here.](#)

[Register your copyright in Canada here.](#)

[Register your copyright in the UK here.](#)

[Register your copyright in Australia here.](#)

IMPORTANT! Make sure not to assign copyright to any publisher, not even an eBook or PDF publisher, because then they will own your words.

When you use a ghostwriter, who owns the copyright? If you hire THGM Writing Services, you own it 100%. In fact, the main reason we prepare contracts for the books we write is so that there is a document clearly assigning all rights to the client – to you.

Make sure any publishing contracts you sign keep publication rights non-exclusive. This means that you can still publish in other formats, in other languages, in other countries with other publishers. Foreign rights can be a very lucrative source of income.

Promotion

This whole area is worth a guide on its own. There are so many options for promotion through the media, through social media, through in-person appearances, etc. In most cases, you want a website and a book trailer, and you want a presence on Twitter, Facebook and Google Plus, and probably YouTube and Pinterest, as well.

Ideally, you will start getting the word out before publishing. Check for places that offer advance reviews. This gives you something good to say about the book before it's even published, and some places that do advance reviews won't review the book once it is already published.

Marketing begins before publishing.

Disclaimers

I am not associated in any way with Smashwords, Amazon, iUniverse, Lulu or Xulon Press. I have published through iUniverse and was very satisfied with the service. I have had clients published through Lulu, Smashwords, Amazon and Xulon Press, equally satisfied. There are other POD publishers whose absence here does not reflect any opinion on my part.

As I write, something in this guide might be changing. Changes happen very fast in publishing these days, so always double-check, do your homework and make sure that the details have not changed in the past ten minutes.

Who we are

THGM Writing Services is a full-service writing agency. Most of what we write are books and blogs, but we also write screenplays, business materials, press releases, articles and other materials.

We do NOT write resumes or business plans, and we will NOT do your schoolwork for you. We don't believe in cheating people out of an education.

THGM also does website promotion, and we can help you with certain additional services, such as:

- Create your website
- Design your book cover
- Get you a custom book trailer video

If you write a blog about writing, we would love to be quoted. Just contact David Leonhardt at info@THGMwriters.com for an original quote you can use in your blog post.

