



# Self-Publishing Your First Book: A Road Map

**D**o you have a manuscript you'd like to publish? Nowadays with Print on Demand (POD), Amazon.com, and eReaders like Kindle, Nook, and iPads, it's easier and less expensive than ever to publish and deliver books to readers.

Basically, there are three ways to publish a book:

**1** Hire a literary agent to pitch your manuscript to large publishing houses that will give you an advance, pay royalties, and promote your book. With this option, you won't have any role in the editing or design process or own the copyright, but you will assist with marketing your book. This option works best for people who are famous or infamous; as most unknown or first-time authors' books are rejected.

**2** Go to an independent publisher, small imprint, subsidy or vanity press and pay them for producing (editing, design, printing) your book. With this option you won't have much control over the editing or design, but you'll need to do all the marketing yourself. You'll receive royalties on any copies that are sold, and the publisher will most likely own the copyright.

**3** Self-publish and take on all the responsibilities of producing and marketing your book and own the copyright. With this option, you'll keep all profits from book sales. You'll also need to determine whether you want

to print your books traditionally (1,000 copies at a time) or use POD (print on demand) services.

If you choose to self-publish, you'll be the general contractor of your book production, distribution, and marketing team. This means you need to become familiar with the publishing process, the costs involved, selecting the right vendors, creating a realistic timeline, and writing a viable marketing plan.

## Select Your Contractors

First, you'll need to research and interview editors. Find someone who works in your genre, ask to see a sample of books they've edited, and have a sample edit done on your manuscript. Then search

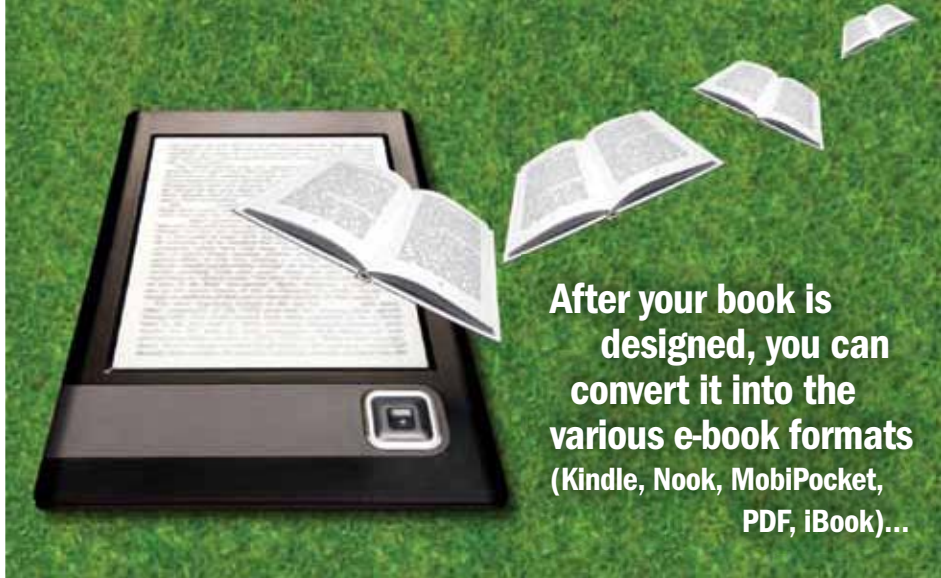


for a cover designer and interior layout artist. Later, you'll need to get pricing from proofreaders, indexers, printers, marketing consultants, and distributors.

### Job Flow and Time Frames

The table below shows average time frames for all the processes that a typical manuscript goes through in its transformation into a printed book. Sometimes, processes can overlap: for example, while you're reviewing the cover comps, a designer can be working on your interior comps.

Process (Start to Finish)	Estimated Time Frame
Editing	3–6 weeks
Proofread Manuscript	1 week
Design Front Cover	2–3 weeks
Design Interior Format	1–2 weeks
Layout Interior of Book	2–3 weeks
Indexing	1 week
Proofread the Cover and Interior Layout	1 week
Printer Proof	1 week
Conventional Printing Soft Cover Book	4–5 weeks
Conventional Printing Hard Cover Book	4–5 weeks
Print on Demand Soft Cover Book	2 days to 1 week
Print on Demand Hard Cover Book	1–2 weeks



After your book is designed, you can convert it into the various e-book formats (Kindle, Nook, MobiPocket, PDF, iBook)...

### The Cover Design Process

There are designers who specialize in cover design, interior page layout, and some who create book covers and interiors. You should review portfolios and interview several designers before selecting one who meets your criteria and style. Request a written estimate itemizing the costs for cover and interior design. Ask about other expenses – stock library images, scanning, custom photography, or illustration.

You'll meet with your designer to discuss cover ideas and solutions that may involve typography, photos, or illustrations. A good designer will like to know your preferences before beginning the creative process.

Your designer will create several front cover ideas (comps), plus

perhaps several variations on one of the themes. The designer will email color PDF proofs to you and your editor. You'll select one of the comps and give your feedback. The designer will make adjustments to the comp until it meets your approval. Several rounds of edits to the cover design are usually included in the estimate; after that, there usually is an additional fee to make more adjustments and revisions.

### The Book Interior Design Process

Ask your designer if their books are custom-designed and have unique formats, or if your book will be created from templates. This will make a difference in price. To create a custom format, the designer will take some sample pages from one of your chapters and devise a few alternate visual treatments, showing different fonts and type size, design, line spacing, layout alignments and margins, etc.

The designer will present these sample interior format pages to you and your editor in a PDF file and ask for your feedback, fine-tuning the format. Once you give your approval, the designer will do one sample chapter layout with this format. After you approve that chapter, the designer will lay out the rest of the book.

If you decide to make changes to the format after the book has been laid out, it may entail considerable time to correct all other similar pages in that same format. In a situation like this, you'd most likely be billed by the hour to make the changes.

## Editing and Proofreading

You should be completely satisfied with the content of your manuscript before it reaches the design and layout stage. This means your manuscript must be professionally edited and proofread first. You'll also need to make all your decisions regarding content and the placement of any inserts (drawings, graphics, worksheets, charts, photos, etc.) during the writing and editing process. Avoid making major edits during the design and layout phase. It will cost more money, delay the process, and may put you at risk of missing your printing deadline.

In addition to having the manuscript proofread before it goes to the designer, the whole interior layout file should be proofread again before it goes to the printer.

You can submit changes and corrections to a designer in whichever way works best for you – use red ink on printed hard copies, or e-mail an errata file with your list of edits; or you can use the electronic “Sticky Notes” feature provided in the Adobe Acrobat software.

## Printing and Distribution

Once you approve the cover and interior layout, your designer will upload the files to your printer's computer. Your printer will give you one more proof before the book is printed.

You can use a POD printer with a partnership with Amazon to get your book listed on Amazon.com; or you can print your books conventionally and work with a distributor to get your books into brick-and-mortar bookstores and online retailers.

## Convert Your Book into eBook Formats

After your book is designed, you can convert it into the various e-book formats (Kindle, Nook, MobiPocket, PDF, iBook) and set up accounts with online retailers. **N**

*Karen Saunders and her team of award-winning designers help authors and small business owners design their books, build their brand, launch their website and market their business. Visit her website to download a free Book Media Checklist and a free eCourse on "How to Create a Best-selling Book Design from the Inside Out" [www.MacGraphics.net](http://www.MacGraphics.net).*

## The Publisher's Responsibilities

*Here's a checklist with approximate time frames of items you'll need to complete to keep the production process rolling on schedule.*

### Publisher's Checklist

	Estimated Time Frame
<input type="checkbox"/> Apply for your ISBN number(s)	1–2 days
<input type="checkbox"/> Apply for your LCCN number	1–2 weeks
<input type="checkbox"/> Select your BISAC (category for your book)	1–2 days
<input type="checkbox"/> Compile testimonials from VIPs	3–4 weeks
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine the price for your book	1–2 days
<input type="checkbox"/> Get bids from several printers	2 weeks
<input type="checkbox"/> Set up an account with your printer	1 week
<input type="checkbox"/> Purchase your bar code	1 day
<input type="checkbox"/> Write and edit the back cover copy	2–5 days
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine your publishing company name	1 week
<input type="checkbox"/> Compile content for your copyright page	1 week
<input type="checkbox"/> Set up your Amazon Advantage account	1–4 weeks

### After Your Book Is Printed

<input type="checkbox"/> Copyright your book	6 months
<input type="checkbox"/> Build your book's website	2–6 weeks
<input type="checkbox"/> Select a distributor	1 week
<input type="checkbox"/> Convert your book into eBook formats	1–2 weeks

