

# Pre-Publishing Checklist for Authors

Your step-by-step guide before launching your book into the great wide world.

(We recommend printing this guide and crossing off items as you go. Additionally, all of these are optional but recommended! This is YOUR book journey, and our aim is for YOU to feel as ready and confident as possible!

*“The only correct way to publish your book is to publish it at all.” -The BookVision Team*

## To Start:

- Be brave!
- Be excited!
- Don't go too fast. (Authors thrive on passion, but books are eternal. If you slow down for several weeks or a few months to finalize and ensure it's ready, the grand scheme of your life will not be impacted.)
- **You are now a REAL author.** You have just achieved something extraordinary, and you are about to join the 1 in 8,000 people who have written a book this year. You should be damn proud of that fact! Wear it proudly, no matter what.

## 1. Manuscript Readiness:

- How many times have you read through your full manuscript?  
*We recommend 3x or more.*
- Development or copy editing? Some authors utilize this while others do not.  
*This can help in the earlier stages when the manuscript and vision are still somewhat raw or undetermined.*
- Proofreading? At a certain point, you will stop finding errors in your own book or seeing the text clearly (your brain knows each line and will skip over words.)  
*We recommend either hiring a proofreader or enlisting the help of one or more avid readers. We do offer this, if you need!*
- Beta readers? Before your book goes live, we recommend having several people read it. *Please encourage them not to worry about hurting your feelings. If there is any issue with your book, it is best to find this out privately and not publicly. No writer is perfect, and a second set of eyes can take your book to the next level and help you create a finalized work that is unforgettable. Additionally, beta readers can offer a way to remove typos and figure out your precise audience. We also recommend choosing your beta readers from people you know, as they can be trusted with your manuscript and easier to reach/communicate with.*

## Book Formatting & Design

- Paperback AND eBook formatting.  
*We can help with this if you need!*
- Page breaks, fonts, and margins are consistent.
- ISBNs secured.  
*We can explain this process if you are unfamiliar.*
- Table of contents- ensure pages are correct for your paperback and nothing is missing. And be sure to remove this from your eBook and use their formatting tools, because eBook pages will differ from the paperback!
- Don't forget these optional book sections that make your story more personal: acknowledgements, about the author, dedication, author playlist (some readers enjoy knowing what songs inspired your book journey!)  
*Pro tip: On the very last page, create a section that says "Thank you for being a reader. If you enjoyed this book, please consider leaving an honest book review on \_\_\_\_\_ and recommending this work to another reader!"*
- Cover design. Do you have a design you love, both for your eBook and paperback (including back side of book and paperback spine)? Have you run the cover by a few people to get their feedback?  
*We always recommend having an extra set of eyes, but don't bring too many cooks into the kitchen! If you need assistance in creating the perfect cover, we can help!*

## Publishing (this is a big one)

What are your options and what are the pros and cons of each?

### Traditional publishing-

- Literary Agent- You first must acquire a literary agent. There are directories to find them, but they receive many inquiries. You will need to research how to write a query letter, research each agent individually, and be patient as you wait to hear back (6 months or you might not hear back.)
- Once you have an agent, they will find a publisher for your book. This can take 6 months or more.
- Once a publisher is secured, they will take it from there and walk you through everything.
- Your publisher (if one of the Big 5 or comparable) will send you a \$5,000 advance.

- They will edit and hold onto your book for 1-1.5 years and plan the launch strategically.
- Most large publishers will market your book significantly for 2 weeks (give or take) to see if it connects. If your book is not gaining traction in those first weeks, they will pull back the investment funds. It is our understanding that 4/5 books never recoup the \$5,000 advance, and you will need to read the contract about whether this must be paid back.
- Your best odds of success are with a top publishing house; however, there are no guarantees on this journey. **Your best odds of success, no matter what, lie with your own determination, patience, adaptability, and commitment to excellence in your writing.**

#### Hybrid or Vanity Publishing

- There is a spectrum for these publishers. Some will publish any book, ready or not, while others reject a certain percentage that are not a good fit either because of quality or genre.
- These publishers require \$3,000- \$6,000 from you to publish.
- They handle editing, formatting, ISBNs, cover design, and listing your book on Amazon, BarnesandNoble.com, BAM!.com, Apple books, and listing your book on the Ingram distribution network.
- They will do very simple marketing such as an initial email blast and an author page on their website; however, the lion's share of marketing will fall on you entirely.
- In our opinion, if you were willing to spend \$3,000- \$6,000 to publish, there are better ways.

#### For example:

- \$400 for a great copy editor.
- \$200 for a great proofreader.
- \$80-\$200 for a great book cover.
- \$40 (or do this yourself) to format the book for paperback and eBook.
- \$200 for your own author website (or much less if you do this yourself.)
- Use the remaining \$2,000- \$4,000 on advertising to put your book in front of millions of potential readers of the course of 3 months.
- If you simply do not have this kind of cash handy for your book, do not worry! We will show you an easier path.

## Self-Publishing

- As it turns out, you are not required to pay anyone for anything to publish your book!
- Although it is recommended to elicit some professional services, publishing can be 100% free.
- Self-publish directly on Amazon and KU. Just Google: Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing.
- You can publish your book today and it will be available for purchase tomorrow. You can be holding a copy of your book in 1-2 weeks.
- You own this journey 100%. Win, lose, or draw, everything is on you.
- To be clear, there is no easy path to success in any artistic endeavor. Readers are not missing your book because they have never read it. Whether your book ever exists or does not, they will be none the wiser. With this in mind, if you believe in your own ability to market, adapt, and play the long game, you can own this mountain climb and rejoice in every book sale, knowing that you have not only created a book from thin air, but you have made an impact on a reader and are now a paid artist.
- If you publish your book directly to Amazon and nowhere else, you have access to enroll in Kindle Unlimited (KU) and be paid by page read. For readers with a KU subscription, your book appears “free” as part of their subscription and may be easier to sell. Generally, pages read amount to 20-50% of your Amazon income. However, if you publish your book anywhere else, you lose access to KU.
- Publishing on Ingram Spark. Ingram is the largest book distributor in the world, and publishing on Ingram will automatically publish your book to BarnesandNoble.com, BAM! (books a million), and more. Ingram Spark does not charge you for this, unless you need an ISBN number (\$80-ish as of 2025.)
- When you publish on Ingram, you have the option to create an eBook, paperback, or both. If you choose just the paperback, then you can keep Kindle Unlimited and make your book accessible to Barne & Noble or local bookstores if you speak to the buyer and convince them to bring in your book.
- Creating your eBook on Ingram also makes your book automatically for sale on every iPhone in the world. So, the question is: what is Kindle Unlimited worth compared to losing KU but having access to Barnes & Noble and Apple Books? To make this decision less clear, Amazon offers 5-days’ worth of free book giveaways for books enrolled in KU. For example, you can list your book for free Monday-Friday and spread the word to have everyone you know download a copy. Once you are off KU, you lose access to this.

- We recommend staying with KU early (80%-ish of book sales are from Amazon.) Stay on KU early to build reviews, find your audience, and utilize the free book giveaways. Once your book has momentum and you have the confidence, add it to Ingram Spark to make it even more available and then begin working with your local bookstores.
- Local bookstores. There are many local bookstores who will carry your book on a consignment basis. This is worth doing, but make sure you understand the pricing and margins. If people can buy the book for \$15 on Amazon, they will not give \$20 to your local bookstore. Always choose your prices thoughtfully!
- Book events. This is a great way to sell books, but some events are better than others (price of table vs. how many books you can sell and the cost of the display/tablecloth/extra books, etc.) There are Facebook groups to learn more about these, and your local bookstores can keep you in the know!
- Direct sales. There is nothing stopping you from creating an eCommerce website and selling books directly. There are multiple services who will print your books on demand and drop-ship directly to your readers. Building an eCommerce website is now more accessible than ever, and we can help with this. This option could be utilized for special edition books, early readers, sprayed edge books, exclusive stories, and paperbacks. Additionally, you can offer signed books, but you will need to pay to first ship extra books to yourself.
- If you have any questions about self-publishing, including setting up your book on Amazon with the keywords, descriptions, and a compelling author image for your bio, let us know! We've been there, and we've learned a lot along the way.

**Email us at:** [BookVision.net@gmail.com](mailto:BookVision.net@gmail.com)

## **Marketing Foundations**

- Write a compelling book description/blurb. This is ESSENTIAL! Know your book pitch (1-2 sentences about why your book is interesting and what is happening.) Make sure to have a short and long description—a short one (book pitch) that makes people want to read the longer description.
- Research and select categories and keywords (especially for Amazon.) Keywords tell Amazon and Ingram what is in your book and who it is for. It is best not to simply guess here. *This is a place where we can help!*
- Author bio written and consistent across platforms. Make sure you have an interesting author story and consistent headshot. Use it everywhere you can. Make sure your books, Amazon listing, and social media all use the same image. This is branding-101 but people still get this wrong sometimes.
- Author website is live, and book page is updated.

- ARC (Advance Reader Copy) strategy in place. These are the first people to read your book, and they can leave you reviews. This can help your book to have immediate momentum on the day you launch. While it is not required, a well-executed ARC strategy can set you off to a running start!
- Book trailer, launch graphics, or teaser images prepared. These are visuals to begin spreading the word about your book!
- Book launch date selected, and timeline created. This is not required but it never hurts to have a plan!
- Establish your social media presence. Essentials: Instagram, TikTok, Facebook. Useful but not essential: YouTube, Twitter. Least useful but worth considering: Threads, Bluesky, Clapper, Lemon8 Other socials to consider: Tumblr, Reddit, Pinterest, Etsy.

**Launch Planning** (all of these are optional, but we have highlighted the really useful ones.)

- Email list prepped and segmented for launch. (It's okay if you don't have emails and readers before you have a published book to send them. If you can build this list before your book is live, you're a rockstar!)
- Pre-order period set up (if applicable)
- Launch team or street team organized.
- Reviews gathered from early readers or influencers.
- Social media countdown or campaign ready
- Press release written. This is a book description flyer to be sent to wherever.
- Book launch events (virtual or in-person) planned.

**Post-Launch Essentials** (all of these are optional, but we have highlighted the really useful ones.)

- Schedule post-launch promotions (ads, sales, newsletters)
- Reach out to book bloggers, podcasters, or influencers.
- Set up Goodreads profile and request reviews. Goodreads is clunky and outdated; however, readers do use it, and they are tied to Amazon. If you do not build your own profile, they may build it for you, and it can be hard to edit/manage/build. If Amazon and Goodreads fill this in without you, it will take some time to obtain your ownership.
- Apply for book awards or contests (if applicable)
- Collect and repurpose reader reviews for marketing.
- Monitor sales and refine your language as you find your target readers.
- Create book content! Videos, trailers, visuals, reviews. Most people need to see a product 7 times or more before they buy it. Books are no different. Keep pushing your book!

And, of course, we can help you with any of this!

### **Bonus Tips**

- Book trailer or animated teaser uploaded to socials.
- Audiobook production scheduled (if applicable)
- Consider translations or foreign rights strategy.
- Plan next book or sequel (keep that momentum going!)
- Encourage readers to join your email list.
- Look for podcast/interview opportunities.
- Look for local author groups and book clubs. This can help you stay in the loop about local events, stay inspired, and create local opportunities to push your books forward.
- Do not burn out. Play the long game. If your results are not immediate, that does not mean your book is not good.
- If you are getting great reviews from people who read many books, that is a great sign.
- Leverage influencers/social media readers. Their advocacy for your book is a better sales tool than your own words. Need tips on this? We could write a guide for that!
- If you become someone's favorite reader, you could become many people's favorite. Keep going!

**Lastly, if you get stuck or stagnant, reach out to us!**

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