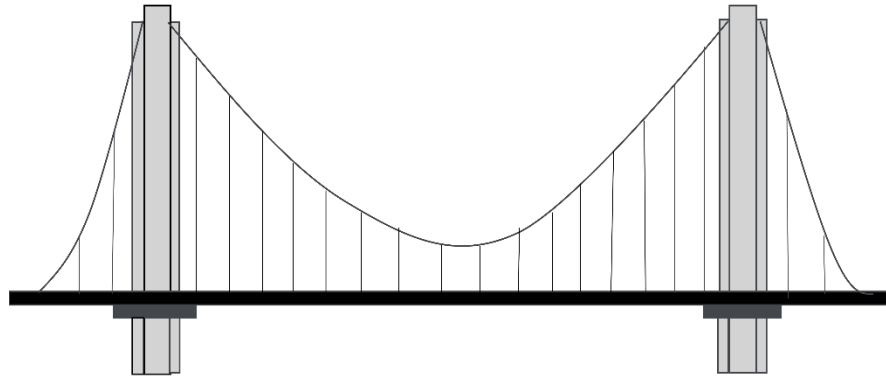


A Step by Step Guide to Self-Publishing **(Or a DIY Checklist for Writers)**



By
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Dedication

Everyone who has helped me on this journey.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction and Disclaimer

My writing journey started years ago, but I never took it seriously until around 2014. After an argument with fellow fans of a mythology adaptation, some of us were challenged to do better if I could. So be warned: more books will be forthcoming from the group. 😊

I started on my own mythology retelling only to realize the research involved was enormous. Not only that I didn't know the original language in which the story was composed, I didn't have a clue what regular people were like in the Iron Age... what they wore, what they ate, their diseases, the weather. Adaptation to modern times was a possibility, but when a story is moved temporally, cultural shifts have to be accommodated. For ex., a king-like figure in modern-day America, say a corporate titan, cannot exactly have two consorts (unless he were a Mormon, I guess), and kidnapping yourself a wife wouldn't be considered the height of romance. 😞 It was great fun trying to figure it all out. In the space of three months, I had a ninety-thousand-word manuscript ready. Yeah, you heard it right. In three months.

Ego is a strange thing. It drives us to do better (re: my decision to write professionally), and it blinds us to our own faults. Confident the world was going to absolutely adore my writing, I went to Goodreads to get myself a couple of beta readers who were, of course, going to lose their mind in ecstasy over this new writer they just discovered.

Er... not exactly what happened. There was a paid beta business who did sing praises, but I was sane enough to know I wasn't *that* good. After a couple of days of hurt feelings, I decided to take their advice. One of them (Michael Lewis), a writer himself, told me fiction needs three essential elements to be readable—setting, character, dialogue. Setting needed to be described with sensory detail... at least three out of five senses need to be used. The main characters needed full psychological profiles. No, not the personality tests you take on the Interweb (I love that word!). What was the main hero's life like before the story started? What did she want to do going forward? Her peeves, her faults, her strengths... so on and so forth. I took it forward myself and decided each character needed a color profile. For ex., my hero had a thing for reds, and she loved a particular perfume. There were certain kinds of books she liked to read (horror), certain music she listened to (Eagles). My dialogue was stiff and formal, with no abbreviations. The last part proved the easiest to fix. I just put myself in the situation and wrote dialogue as though people I know were speaking.

There was another beta reader/editor I feel deserves special mention and not in a good way. She insisted that readers expect more romance in a book by a female author. It put me off, but it also scared me to the point that I adopted a male pen name for a while in my communications with potential betas/editors. Those reading this, please don't do this. There may be legit marketing reasons

to adopt a male-ish name (see: Rowling, JK), but women writers are not automatically slotted into the romance genre.

Then, there was editing to be done. I found two wonderful people.

The first was on a writers' forum (Absolute Write). Those are great places to hang out. Your posts are judged by others such as yourself, some of who are industry professionals. I learned a lot there. I also noted one particular member (Chase Nottingham) who consistently gave excellent advice on writing structure. Since he had the tag editor in his profile, I asked if he would consider taking my project on. Sigh. I learned my dialect was a hopeless mishmash of New York, American Midwest, and convent school India. Punctuation was illogical... basically, a comma anywhere I paused to take a breath. Oh. Don't get me wrong. Chase was super nice in pointing things out, but it was clear I had a lot to learn. With his help, I polished it up.

I started the usual querying route: cold queries, twitter contests, the like. I did get some full/partial requests when I mentioned what it was based on, but the unanimous verdict seemed to be that though the writing was good (thanks to Chase's help), the story itself was not ready. My ego disagreed vehemently. Then, I met Elizabeth Roderick at a pitch contest. She liked my entry, and I checked out her website. I asked her to take a look at my work, fully expecting her to commiserate with me on literary agents who didn't get how fabulous I was. She went through it chapter by chapter and told me where it needed more emotional heft.

The problem was adding emotional heft led to increased physical heft. The manuscript was now about one-hundred-and-fifty thousand words long! Hold on before you roll your eyes. The source material was about two million words long! Both my editors advised me to make the adaptation a series instead of the trilogy I originally planned.

By this time, it was the year 2018. I was getting sick of the constant rewriting and querying process. More to the point, I'd already queried and been rejected by agents who would've picked up the work if it were done well. I was beginning to wonder if the previous four years were wasted effort. To rub salt in the wound, I happened upon a book with lines blatantly plagiarized from a well-known work. This copied work surely went through an agent and an acquisition editor at the major publisher who bought it (we're talking one of the Big Five), before going on to be a bestseller in India.

I had myself a little pity party with a friend who said, "Well, why don't you try something similar? Not plagiarized. Something with mass appeal. Publish it under a different name and see what happens."

I thought to myself, *Why not?* I'd do a 'practice book' to learn the publishing process. Strange thing was the more I kept writing, the more possessive I got about the story. It was no longer a practice book. There were a couple of great friends I'd found in various writing groups who critiqued it, and they seemed to enjoy the tale. This was a very educational process for me as I critted *their* works in

return. I learned a lot. I also turned to the same people who'd helped with the mythology adaptation (Michael, Liz, and Chase). This time, they had good things to say. And this time, agents requested to see my work. Problem was I found myself annoyed by the glacial pace at which the business moved. In my day job, things are expected to be done yesterday. I'd also been around enough publishing types by then to realize I'd have little to no control over important stuff such as cover. Nor could I expect much in terms of marketing help unless my book happened to be one of the lucky works picked each year by publishing houses to push hard. I wrote out a list of pros and cons. Basically, the only thing a traditional publisher would do for me was get the book into stores. They could do marketing, yeah... if they felt so inclined which they didn't have a reason to since the story was a feel-good contemporary and not an 'issues' work. Nor was I a known name.

The biggest factor holding me back was fear. What if everyone hated it? What if someone said I shouldn't have inflicted my writing on the world? I mean, the universe had enough problems to deal with.

Back and forth I went until my child came to me one day (yikes, did I forget to mention I have three?) with a poem which got accepted to a contest or something. It was about her thoughts on our washing machine. 😊 A ten-year-old apparently had more you-know-what than me!

So I decided I was going to let my book baby out into the world. *One Monsoon in Mumbai* was released in June 2019, followed by *A Goan Holiday* in November 2019. I plan to finish out the series in 2021 with the third book (title undecided). The following chapters detail my experiences with the process.

Here's where I give you the disclaimer.

While I address the reader, none of the following is whole or part of a publishing blueprint. These are only what worked for me and may or may not work for anyone else. Also, I do only genre fiction (except for this book, ha!), so none of the following info may be applicable to non-fiction. In addition, while certain things in publishing are worldwide (such as ISBNs), most of my info deals with the self-publishing process in the United States. Finally, please don't mistake me for a marketing guru. However, I *have* detailed what I did. Another point to remember is that the views, thoughts, and opinions expressed in this book belong solely to me and not to any entity with which I have been, am now, or will ever be affiliated.

Chapter 2 – Write the Darned Book

The most common excuse is time. I get it. We all have day jobs. Got to pay the bills. Surely, there's still an hour somewhere daily we could spend writing? It could be early in the morning before the fam wakes. Or you could be a night owl like me. Aim for a thousand words a day. You might delete it. Actually, don't delete. Keep it in a loose ends folder in your computer. I always end up using deleted scenes someplace else. At the end of six months, you should have a first draft ready. If you read my intro, you'll know it probably ain't ready for the world at that point. Do get beta readers... no, not family members. Critique partners would be even better because you learn more by going over someone else's work.

Pantsing vs. plotting

I can't plot; I can't outline. My contemporary stories are at least partly plot-based, but I can never write a decent outline. If I do, I usually end up ignoring it. I write, get my work critted, go back and fix things. I admire writers who can outline, but that ain't me. My epic adaptation (project still ongoing) is from a template, so I don't need to work super hard on an outline. Still, an adaptation means I have to maneuver the pre-existing plot into a form that wouldn't cause the modern reader to roll his or her eye at me. By the way, I was once told my characters roll their eyes so much it's a wonder they don't stick to the brain. 🙄 But I digress.

I'm in good company, though—Stephen King, Margaret Atwood, Pierce Brown. #smug-grin (didn't get an emoji for this). It's the only time I'll be on the same list as these greats. I have a basic idea of the message I want to convey, and the rest of it simply works out.

Famous plotters include JK Rowling and John Grisham.

Anyway, whenever I do attempt to plot, the following is the template I use. There are many such templates out there, depending on the kind of story you want to tell.

1) Opening image. In my contemporary novels, I usually open with the main protag. You can pull a George R martin and open with a sidekick, but well... GRRM is who he is.

2) Theme. I try. Believe me, I do. It never works. I mean, I get the plot theme in there. In *One Monsoon in Mumbai*, it was our cyberspy investigating the minister and his son and the son's friend suddenly arriving on scene. In *A Goan Holiday*, the doctor is in a snit and on her way to canceling a blind date, and she sees the man who sent a message to their college dean eleven years ago to break up with her! So the mystery is about what happened to make him do it. But the deeper, more philosophical theme I want to talk about is usually spread all over the story. In *Goa*, it is 'I am...' How

does each character see himself or herself? What does it mean to be a woman in today's world? Or to be gay? Or poor?

3) Set up. Yeah. This I usually manage to do. I occasionally get flak about adding backstory, and some writer types have positive fits when they see backstory. I don't understand the attitude. I mean, are we so rule-bound that we're prepared to sacrifice originality? The thing to remember is that backstory (or any other part of the story) needs to be interesting. Readers will stick with you through an engaging backstory. Not so much with dry exposition.

4) Inciting incident. Someone told me it needs to be within the first quarter. I'd say within the first chapter.

5) Debate. I generally want to know where the protag is trying to go. Mind you, their goals can change, but I need some idea of what he/she wants in the first act. I want to know what obstacles they face, what consequences are in store if they fail.

6) Break into Act II. It's decision time for our protag. An incident happens, which makes it imperative for him or her to decide on a course of action. In *Mumbai*, it was the heroine and the villain's sidekick sharing a cab ride. Vikram's not exactly a smooth talker, and... well... let's simply say Seema had good reason to call him jerk-face.

7) Protag learns about theme. Yeah, theme is a problem for me. Plot-wise, no. In *Mumbai*, Seema is already aware of what she needs to do to trap the corrupt politician. In *Goa*, Anjali desperately wants answers from Joe on why he simply vanished from her life. The philosophical theme is usually all over the place for me. I mean, the reader sees it, but my protags—three in each book—don't get what is going on until the last couple of chapters. Dunno if that's good or bad. The reviews have been decent, so... (shrugs)

8) Conflicts. Some people might call this the saggy middle, but for me, this part adds depth to the characters, spice to the story. The events in this part inform the actions taken by the protags later on. As with backstory, the key is to keep it interesting enough. The reader should want to stay with the characters, see what their lives are like.

9) Midpoint reversal. Very important! If all is well throughout for the characters, there's no conflict. There should be real danger of failure.

10) Bad guys close in. In my books, there are usually literal bad guys, but this could be anything.

11) Crisis. This doesn't have to be an apocalyptic showdown. In *Mumbai*, it's a comical scene, almost slapstick type. I'm told it worked.

12) Dark night. In *Mumbai*, Seema gets into a position where she has to make a decision between her ethics and her mission. But the dark night scene wouldn't have been as dark without the

heightened, almost screwball comedy of #11. All these things are interconnected. One has to flow into the next.

13) Break into act III. The protag makes a decision to do or die (not always literally). In my case, three protags.

14) Climax. This could be a war, a confrontation between the lead couple. Most importantly, the protag is allowed to fail! It need not always be a happy climax.

15) Final image. Whatever you want to leave your reader with. My contemporaries are feel-good, so the final scene conveys hope (I hope. Ha!). In one of my works in progress, it's a lame child staring at the tombstone of a mentor, wondering if everything he learned was a lie.

Chapter 3 – Cover (Say What?!)

Remember, this is about my self-publishing journey. So I did things a bit out of order with the second book because I realized it would save me time. Cover designers need to understand what you want. You need to make changes that you want. Lemme tell you how I got to this idea of doing the cover before editing.

I happen to have no talent in judging the visual appeal of covers, so I faltered many times before deciding on a cover for *Mumbai*. I first went to a children's book designer because I liked the pics she posted on her Facebook page. Yeah, go ahead. Roll your eyes. It was a big mistake. Oh, there was nothing wrong with *her*. But what she could provide was not what I needed. It's like shopping in the juniors' section when you need an outfit for your work party. Ridiculous!

A few of the beta readers told me bluntly it doesn't work. I returned to the designer and asked for changes which she couldn't deliver.

Then, I asked one of my writing acquaintances for suggestions, and she pointed me to Ashley Byland of Redbird Designs. She was magnificent, patiently going through picture after picture with me. Still, I ended up picking images which couldn't be more different from the descriptions of my characters if I tried! The other problem was that I thought I would decrease the page count by increasing the trim size. Mistake! The copy turned out too big. Eventually returned to Ashley and begged her to make another cover, which she did. I'm super happy with this third attempt. But by then, I'd already put out my paperback with the images I didn't like and at a size which was too big, so I needed to make a second edition of *Mumbai* with the smaller trim size and new cover and brand new ISBN, all of which cost money.

I later switched to www.EBookOrPrint.com because I was doing other covers with them and wanted to keep it all in once place. Their creations practically leap off the page.

So the reason behind doing the cover early is this: you need the designer of your choice (leave it too late, and she might already be booked), you need to give the designer time to work, you need to give yourself time to think on her suggestions, you need feedback from trusted sources on whether the cover fits your story. The last part should come from your beta readers/crit partners who should be reading your work as the cover designer is working on her stuff.

You can finalize the ebook cover once you and the designer decide what you like. For the paperback cover, you can decide on the image, the spine, and the back (including space for barcode), but the PDF will need to wait until you have the final trim size, page count, etc. after editing and formatting. Once the designer has the images ready, even if she's booked by the time you're ready with everything else, she can easily convert the image to PDF of required size.

One important thing to remember is that different distributors might have different templates. For ex., Amazon and Ingram Spark templates vary. Be sure to let your designer know where all you plan to sell your paperback. Of note: Ingram simply converted my Amazon cover PDF to their template which was very gracious of them.

I won't say much about the kind of cover you need because I'm terrible at that sort of thing. I get lots of feedback from people who do know visual art. One thing I've been told is that the thumbnail should look good on a website, and the spine should be easy to read for libraries and such to buy and display the book.

Below is an incomplete list of recommendations I've gotten from other self-pubbed writers. Ashley and ebookorprint are the top two. Bear in mind that except for them, I cannot personally vouch for the quality or professionalism of the designers on the list. My suggestion would be to look through the covers on their sites and engage via email before picking one. You could also contact authors who've worked with them before, which is what I did for the two designers I ended up using.

<https://ebookorprint.com/professional-book-cover-design/>

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ashley-Byland-Redbird-Designs/820078584752867>

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100024117054027>

<https://thebookcoverdesigner.com/>

https://www.facebook.com/groups/bookcovermarketplace/?hc_location=ufi

<https://www.facebook.com/VictoriaCooperArt/>

https://www.facebook.com/groups/sugarspicepremademarketplace/?hc_location=ufi

<https://www.facebook.com/Leashton>

<https://www.facebook.com/tennisprodave>

http://thebookbrander.com/?fbclid=IwAR1wgTTS411iWoA2xCFS10Bx_-3n-oQkdlhdjMrmGeCSPImNe_1O--hLZUA

https://www.facebook.com/groups/coverpopdesign/?hc_location=ufi

<https://www.seedlingsonline.com/home?fbclid=IwAR0k2TD-ljIiy5tcN8zT4ivh0AETLDnFy7CSzXh4UN3AbDLerbDv4dv69k>

https://www.llewellendesigns.com/?fbclid=IwAR3J1rStmyAS9ZOw_my47tes6cIH5Bi8hN0Umm02CNV783JspuVORgXuIV0

https://100covers.com/?fbclid=IwAR3_GJ0PhfnyYGGL3Fs6fNRWKJqWiRqg2m_uTNeHK1U1XZNZS0dBfeeTfKE

<http://tammyseidickdesign.com/?fbclid=IwAR15Gd8GO5TX8zYEEsSgnEQPFpKuFdNg-GK08Mscn060390sJSt5SKSv3PTs>

https://www.facebook.com/ChloeBelleArts/?hc_location=ufi

https://www.facebook.com/mkimsmith?hc_location=ufi

https://www.facebook.com/groups/TheDustJacketDesigns/?hc_location=ufi Jennifer Demeter

<https://infinityauthors.com/>

https://www.facebook.com/elizabethmackeygraphicdesign/?hc_location=ufi

https://www.facebook.com/coversbycreatives/?hc_location=ufi

<http://graphicfantastic.com/>

http://goonwrite.com/?fbclid=IwAR3-th2KMXhc7uIOAN98n9Q_L288dnMuqxiEfrlOksZKy1eey-iQfNe5G0

<https://www.wickedsmartdesigns.com/>

<http://www.bookcollective.com/?fbclid=IwAR2HJeyO2jnUocdRl-uKPzqw-p9cueiuVeJi4RTt0SG67JxfboPUj76i1o>

https://www.theromancecovermarket.com/?fbclid=IwAR2u_UcnRPgqdidX_TqdMRXBZTzTKnA29J-zgTSh6AecECIZjFiDkBtRIOM

<http://www.ampersandbookcovers.com/>

https://www.facebook.com/triumphcovers/?hc_location=ufi

https://www.facebook.com/coverartist17?hc_location=ufi

https://bookcoverzone.com/index.php?gclid=CjwKCAiA-P7xBRAvEiwAow-Vabdf0lW_tofsHNhxd_GikrhTPrJHBdNDs6fRe8nRb63lw0tVVjz2OhoCs9EQAvD_BwE

Chapter 4 – Crit partners, Developmental Editors

Before you let anyone read it, run a grammar check. I use three layers of checking – Word review, Grammarly, and Pro Writing Aid. You don't want your lousy grammar to annoy people willing to help with your book baby. Grammarly has a free portion and a paid service. Pro Writing Aid is not free.

When I'm ready for human eyes on the manuscript, I usually let crit partners, beta readers, and my lovely developmental editor, Elizabeth Roderick, have it at the same time. I also ask them to do this on Google docs (separate doc for each, all docs shared with me). If one reads faster than the other, and I fix something, it's easier for me to update docs for others so they won't be going through the old version and possibly making the same recommendation on something which has already been changed. If you've used share function on Google docs before, you'll know what I mean. You could, of course, do it one after the other, but I prefer simultaneous since it saves me time.

Not everything a crit partner/beta reader/editor tells you may be applicable to you. Despite what I said before about making updates when someone suggests something, I usually wait on making a recommended change until two or more editors/betas suggest the same thing. It really depends on the quality of the professional you end up with. Also, the decision to change will rest on you.

Other points to remember:

- 1) Read their work first if it's an editor you're talking about (most have samples of their own writing you can read somewhere). When you contact them, ask if they'd like to see a few pages first to gauge compatibility. If it's a crit partner, exchange a few pages before you swap manuscripts. You want someone who's at least at your own level or greater in terms of writing skill for a crit partner. I usually go to beta readers only to test pure reader reaction, so non-writers are preferred, but I do ask for honesty from betas. Note that I said honesty, not rudeness.
- 2) Ask for deadlines. I have been in a situation where someone gave me dog-ate-my-homework excuses. It gets tough because you're left wondering if you wrote such crappy stuff they simply couldn't bear to finish it. If they're on Goodreads, check the beta read/edit reviews they got.
- 3) Do not argue over negative comments! You're not allowed to "yeah, but" anyone. If we're talking beta readers or crit partners, simply thank them for their opinion. You can ask for the reasoning behind said opinion, but never start a debate over it. Move on. Vent to a friend or two (I have. Many times). Agree that the beta totally sucks, then sleep on the comments for a couple of days before deciding whether to make suggested changes. Editors are slightly different. I do ask my editors to explain in more detail why they say certain things. But again, be professional and courteous.
- 4) Pay on time for services bought. They're also earning a living the same as you.

5) Do acknowledge them when you eventually publish. If you're not inclined to include all the names in the book, put them up on your website. Which reminds me: <http://talesfrompurgatory.com/> That would be Elizabeth's website.

Once I'm done going through all the suggestions and making changes as I see fit, I run the manuscript through Word check, Grammarly, and Pro Writing Aid.

Then, it's Chase's turn. <https://chaseediting.com/>

He does the final edits for me, keeping my punctuation accurate and language smooth. Plus, he makes sure my male characters don't end up sounding female. I remember one time when my seventeen-year-old hero said he needed the restroom. Chase suggested I use men's room or latrine.

Once he's done, I do a read-through and see if I want to change something. Then, it's time for the third round of Word check, Grammarly, and Pro Writing Aid.

It might sound obsessive, but believe me, even after all this, some reader in some corner of the world is going to D.M. you on Facebook or Instagram or whatever and point out an error. 🙄

Chapter 5 – Boring, Confusing, but Absolutely Essential Legwork

ISBN

Ebooks don't need ISBN when putting them up on Amazon, and the Zon does provide you the ISBN for your paperback, but you cannot use it elsewhere. If you plan to go wide, you'll end up using your own ISBN, anyway, or you're going to have the book under different ISBNs, making it difficult to track sales and such.

https://www.myidentifiers.com/identify-protect-your-book/isbn/buy-isbn?gclid=Cj0KCQjw6_vzBRCIARIsAOs54z7LqM96EkTg75ChrHQ4QVXT7ENq5O7ZKnOP5lkO8ey5mYWsEyGfnekaAIUyEALw_wcB

The above link is where you can get ISBNs. I bulk-purchased since I knew I'd need more than one. Also, the pricing is like that in fast food restaurants. Medium 4.99, Mega 5.99. Hyperbole, of course, but you get what I mean.

Remember, if you change trim size, you'll end up using a different ISBN.

I used ISBNs for both my (fiction) ebooks and used ISBNs I owned for my paperbacks.

Copyright

An addendum to the disclaimer: I'm American, and this is applicable mostly only to the U.S.

People like to claim you own the copyright if you pee and invent something in America. Not exactly. Aside from the fact you need to read the fine print on your employment contract which may actually state your employer owns anything you create even if entirely unrelated to the business, I'm told unless you officially register copyright with the U.S. government, you won't have legal recourse if someone steals your work. I found that out the hard way.

Picture it: somewhere in the American Midwest, fall of 2019. A brand new author receives an email from Amazon that her paperback is being taken off the website because there is some doubt on the work's copyright. Startled, the anxious author calls KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing)'s customer service. They don't really know what's going on except that there might be a question of the work belonging in public domain. "What?" yelps the writer. How could it be? She spent sweat and blood and tears over the manuscript. It is hers, darn it. The customer service rep tells the writer he'll look into it. Days go by, and they're looking... and looking... and looking. Then, the writer remembers the piece of paper she got from Uncle Sam a few weeks before, the copyright proclaiming her right over the work. She sends it to Amazon. It still takes a few weeks and a few hours spent on the phone, trying

to convince them whoever (the jerk) reported it as public domain was merely being malicious. On Christmas Eve, 2019, she gets the paperback reinstated on Amazon.

Now, I don't know if Amazon would've gotten to that conclusion, eventually. Still, having the official copyright gave me a measure of control and would've given me legal right to sue the you-know-what who instigated this to oblivion. Yeah, the world is full of snakes. But not to worry. Said snake is in for a bad time in one of my forthcoming books (evil laugh).

So yeah. Get it copyrighted. <https://www.copyright.gov/registration/>

Another thing I discovered was that copyright is for the work, not the title. If you want to change the title on the copyright document, it will cost you plenty more. Be aware of that.

PCIP (Publisher's Cataloging In Publication)

I didn't even know about this until after my second book was published. Basically, cataloging is descriptive information using a set vocabulary, created according to national standards. Plain old Cataloging In Publication is created by the Library of Congress. Publisher's Cataloging In Publication is created by a private agent, a trained cataloger, but with the same set of rules used by the esteemed Library Of Congress.

Why is it important? Because libraries. PCIP gives librarians the information they need without having to go looking for it. If you're planning to sell to libraries (why wouldn't you?), having this info handy will increase your chances of a sale.

I'm told cataloging block is usually found on the back of the title page where things like copyright, ISBN, etc. go. Mine is there, as well.

I'm definitely not a trained cataloger, so I used an agency. They were very thorough.

<https://www.dgiinc.com/pcip/publishers-cataloging-in-publication-request-form/>

Fix pub date

At this point, I know when I'm going to be ready and fix a date on Amazon. This is important because if you opt to have preorders, you can't change the date without penalty. So make sure you're actually at this point before setting a date for your book release.

Remember, you haven't formatted yet. Also, the cover designer doesn't know the final page count yet. Not to mention you need to get the word out a bit before actual book release. So set the pub date least eight to twelve weeks from this point in the process. I'd say twelve weeks because you're going to need professional reviews to show on your page, and it would take that long.

Chapter 6 – Interior formatting and Finalizing Cover; KDP Select or Wide

Formatting and cover

The interior design has to come first because you'll need the page count you get at the end to notify the cover designer before she finalizes the PDF for your paperback. There are interior design services, and most cover designers offer interior formatting, too. I prefer to do it myself. Amazon has a step-by-step on how to do this, and it was easy for someone only mild to moderately tech-savvy like me to follow.

https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G202145400

Once you have the page count, the designer can finalize the PDF for the cover. Remember, Ingram Spark has a different template from KDP, so do let your designer know if you plan to publish in both or more places.

I've found that Ingram didn't have an issue with Amazon's interior formatting.

<https://www.ingramspark.com/how-to-self-publish-a-book>

Another service you should seriously think about utilizing is <https://www.draft2digital.com/>. That is if you plan to go wide.

KDP Select or Wide

For print, Amazon does not ask or offer exclusivity. For ebooks, they do. That is, if you agree to put your ebook in KDP select, you'll be exclusive to them for the period. During the time, you cannot sell your ebook elsewhere. In return, kindle owners and Amazon Prime members will be able to download your books, and you'll get royalties for pages read. You also have the opportunity to promote your books with free download days and discounted days.

I did this for a while. Problem was that I couldn't sell ebooks to libraries. So eventually, I decided to go wide and pulled my books from KDP Select. I also realized I could simply change the price manually on KDP and advertise with a reading list to inform the audience of it (more on it below).

If you're going wide, consider doing both Ingram Spark and Draft2Digital (links above).

Ingram charges a fee, but most of the time, you can get coupons (check NaNoWriMo site). Draft2Digital takes a small percentage of your royalties.

Upload

Remember, it can take three days or more to be live. KDP does insist you upload the manuscript and cover seventy-two hours prior to set release date. Within those seventy-two hours, you won't be able to update. Once release date has passed, you can update most details any time, except some as specified by Amazon. You'll see when you try to upload. The good thing is their customer service is very willing to walk you through it if needed, so call. You can update the manuscript and cover without problem after release, but the ones who already purchased won't get the new version. If you change trim size, you will need a new ISBN.

Draft2Digital can take even longer but only because they're doing you the service of formatting it for retailers and distributors. They're also beta-ing a version of their service for paperbacks. I can't wait!

Categories

Once it's live on KDP, you can email their customer service to add up to ten categories per edition (ebook, paperback) in each marketplace. You can add keywords *while* uploading and after. I'd direct you to the Kindlepreneur website for more education on both. <https://kindlepreneur.com/> This will turn out to be extremely important in marketing your book.

Chapter 7 – The Dreaded Promotions

Editorial reviews

Meaning reviews from Kirkus, City Book reviews, Midwest reviews, and the like. If you can somehow get them to do a regular review, great! If not, all of them offer sponsored services as well. Kirkus is pricey, but they have a stellar reputation in publishing. The other two aren't bad, either.

Start ten to twelve weeks prior to intended release as even sponsored reviews take that long.

Most services do take Word documents, but I prefer to convert to PDF before sending. I dunno... somehow seems more professional. I don't usually send hard copies partly because I want to expedite the process and not wait until I get author copies after uploading and partly because of the cost involved.

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/indie-reviews/>

<https://citybookreview.com/submission-guidelines/sponsored-review/>

http://www.midwestbookreview.com/get_rev.htm#RFR

Goodreads is another good source, but I found it difficult to get reviewers there with my first book. The second was easier. I expect third to be even more so.

Then, there is Net Galley. I found it very expensive and really not worth the cost.

There are book bloggers who might be willing to review. Fellow writers with some repute would be good.

<https://writerswin.com/the-ultimate-list-of-book-review-websites/>

Update author website

While the reviewers are enjoying your book, you need to get busy with other stuff.

Yes, you kind of need a website. I suppose you can make do with a Facebook author page, but you need to have a decent design. I used a coupon from the Kindlepreneur website to build a Bluehost/WordPress site, but it took a heck of a lot of time, and I'm still not sure how I managed. More than about paying someone to do it, I was worried about not knowing enough to maintain it without again paying someone, so I did it all myself. You also need to make sure it's a secure site.

Check mine out, please. www.AnithaPerinchery.com While you're there, you can read excerpts from my two books.

Amazon author page

<https://authorcentral.amazon.com/>

You start your prelim work with the book here. You can create your page, and the help section walks you through adding a book. You can upload a cover. You can even upload the manuscript. You need to upload all info to set the pub date and enable preordering. You have until seventy-two hours prior to release to make changes to manuscript or cover.

One thing to remember is you can make changes after as well, but the readers who got your book with the original cover/manuscript will retain the same.

Another point to remember is paperback publishing on Amazon does not allow you to set the date into the future. So you'll need to kind of calculate how long it might take Amazon to approve it and start selling. You might even want to call their customer service and ask for guidance on it.

Goodreads author page

Yes, you need to create it yourself. I have more reviews on Goodreads than Amazon.

<https://www.goodreads.com/author/program>

Social media

I wish I didn't have to, but I do it because readers expect it.

Announce on Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, etc.

Update Facebook and Twitter and Instagram with links to the excerpt on the website

Advertising before release

I wasted a lot of time on ads practically everywhere before realizing Amazon ads were the best. I took a free class called Amazon Ad Challenge with the fantastic Bryan Cohen <https://selling-for-authors.teachable.com/> Basically, other platforms like Facebook, Twitter, etc. and even Bookbub will charge you for impressions (that is when a customer sees your ad). Amazon doesn't do that because they make money off the sale. They charge for clicks. If you set the bid per click low enough, you should be able to stay on the positive side. Do take the class above mentioned. The best part is, you can do the ads for preorders!

I've tried Facebook and Instagram ads and did get a few sales but ended up in the red.

The other option which I found useful was to set a deal on Amazon and announce it in lists such as Reading Deals. <https://readingdeals.com/submit-ebook>

There are Goodreads self-pubbed authors' groups which discuss such services.

https://www.goodreads.com/group/show_tag/self-published-authors

Once you have a few reviews back...

Update the Amazon book description (you do it through the author page) with glowing lines extracted from said reviews. Each service has its own rules for it, so be sure to check.

After pub date

There's an awesome class on library marketing called realfastlibrarymarketing.com It's pricey but worth it. Do consider it if budget accommodates. By now, you should have all the editorial reviews back, and those should help sell.

Continue Amazon ads, promos with Reading Deals.

Free book promo sites avails at Kindlepreneur <https://kindlepreneur.com/list-sites-promote-free-amazon-books/>

Book awards are another option, but you need to be careful not to fall into a cash trap with no benefits to the author. Look around and Google reviews on the award in question before sending in your precious baby.

Rinse, lather, repeat.

Once again: remember to copyright!

When you electronically send a copy of the book, there's always the risk of piracy. Official copyrighting is one of the ways you can defend yourself against it.

Chapter 8 – Other Useful Stuff

I made my own DIY mockups, my own teasers, etc. Some links I used are given below.

<https://diybookcovers.com/3Dmockups/#>

<https://www.mockupshots.com/login>

<https://martechwithme.com/how-to-remove-non-alphabet-characters-from-a-string-cell-in-google-sheets/>

<https://www.colorcodepicker.com/?pn=Full%20cover.jpg>

<http://www.audioremoover.com/>

<https://www.remove.bg/upload>

<https://snazzymaps.com/build-a-map>

<https://bgsauthors.com/>

<https://www.pdftron.com/pdf-tools/pdfa-converter/>

That's all, folks!

I did this little booklet to 1) sort out my own thoughts on how to proceed with my next book and 2) to help others who might be floundering through. I did a test run on Amazon but pulled it back to upload so visitors to my website can use the info for free. Hope it helps someone.

Disclaimer time again: this is what worked for me. You'll need to see what works for you. Nor can this booklet be considered a complete list of what you need to do since I'm learning as I go along. Also, check the disclaimer from Chapter 1. **Grammarians, do know that I didn't run this work by my editors. Any errors are entirely attributable to me.**

Below is my Amazon author page if you'd like to take a look at my contemporary romcoms. Or you could click directly on the pictures to be taken there.

(Sorry about the plug! It would be marketing malpractice not to do it).

https://www.amazon.com/Anitha-Perinchery/e/B07QDKG6TM/ref=dp_byline_cont_ebooks_1

