

# writingWA...

## Self Publishing

Self publishing is becoming more and more popular now that people have access to computers and desktop publishing software. It can be as ambitious or as humble as an author's ideas (and funds) allow — from glossy, professional-looking books through to photocopied booklets to be distributed among family and friends.

This booklet gives those interested in publishing their own work an idea of the process and considerations involved.

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## Why self publish?

Many people write biographies and personal memoirs that are unlikely to be accepted by commercial publishing companies because their appeal is limited to family and close friends. Others do not want to be constrained by the demands of publishers. Some are sick of receiving rejection slips for their writing efforts, and others are fairly sure they have ready access to a readership in their field, and are willing to risk the financial outlay in order to recoup all the profits of the venture.

For all these people, self publishing is a feasible option. With self publishing you undertake, and pay for, the tasks of production, printing, promotion and distribution yourself. A small print run can be relatively inexpensive and the book can be given to family members or sold within the author's community.

However, while embarking on a self publishing venture enables you to be in complete creative and commercial control, there may be a financial risk to consider. Having some knowledge of the process will help you to make informed and economically sound decisions.

## Do it all yourself — or engage some help?

When you self publish you will be liaising with some or all of the following: editors, designers, desktop publishers, typesetters, proofreaders, printers, distributors and booksellers.

Some authors are able to do book layout themselves, using desktop publishing programs, and adapting design ideas from other books. Alternatively, you can engage the services of a publishing consultant to manage all or part of the process on your behalf. Some designers, desktop publishers and printers offer a package of services involved in production. Always obtain more than one quote when seeking professional services and ask to see examples of work. Make sure quotes itemise exactly what is included, and that all parties understand your budget and your expectations.

If you engage a designer or desktop publisher, it doesn't mean they are the publishers. You are paying for this service, so you own the finished product and you are the publisher.

The writingWA website ([writerswritingwa.org](http://writerswritingwa.org)) has lists of freelance book designers, manuscript assessors and literary agents. Also on the website are relevant fast-track tutorials: 'Successful Self Publishing', 'Easy Marketing for Writers' and 'How to Speak and Sell Your Book'. For self publishing consultants, book packagers, printers, see 'Publishers, book' in the Yellow Pages, and advertisements in newsletters of writers groups such as FAW and OOTA.

## *Vanity publishing*

With vanity (or subsidy) publishing, the publisher takes care of most of the publishing process, while the author pays for all, or most, of the costs involved or waives royalties until sales cover costs. There are some unscrupulous vanity presses around, but many do offer value for money. Ask to see examples, and reviews, of their previously published books, and examine all quotes and contracts to see what is covered (for example, editing and proofreading may not be included, nor distribution and promotion).

## *What if I just want a few copies to give away?*

Photocopying a small quantity to distribute among friends and family is a low-cost way to share your story. To make copies more durable, consider having the cover laminated. Or discuss with a printer how much it would cost to have just the cover and binding done professionally.

It is also possible to distribute your story as an E-book or as a pdf distributed on CD, so there are no printing costs involved at all.

## *A business plan*

If you hope to make money out of self publishing, or even just recover your outlay, you need to research production and printing costs, distribution and promotion costs, and think about who would buy the book, at what price, and how many copies could you expect to sell. Ask yourself: 'If nobody bought the book, could I afford to lose my entire investment?'

It is worth constructing a business plan before you take any steps towards self publishing. This will help put your whole venture into some kind of perspective. Contact the Small Business Development Corporation (08 9220 0222) for referral to your local Business Enterprise Centre which will give you advice free of charge.

## The publishing process

Once you have completed your manuscript, there are four broad stages involved in publishing a book. It is important to consider all these stages if you want your venture to be successful and satisfying.

1. *Pre-production* — editing the text; organising photographs and permissions; ISBN and CIP data.
2. *Production* — getting the raw work into a finished format, designed, proof-read and ready to be printed.
3. *Printing* — producing multiple copies of the finished work.
4. *Distribution and promotion* — getting these copies out to a wider readership.

## 1. PRE-PRODUCTION

This is where you complete your text (edited manuscript, preferably on disk); any photographs organised by chapter, numbered and 'keyed in' to the manuscript (that is, the manuscript marked with numbers corresponding to the photograph numbers, to indicate placement); a separate document of captions for photographs; and written permissions for any copyright material. Your text might also include an 'imprint page' containing contact details, copyright notice, ISBN and CIP data; an acknowledgements page, an index, etc.

### 1.1 Editing the manuscript

Every writer needs an editor. When a manuscript is published by a commercial publisher, an editor is generally assigned to work with the author. Self publishing authors should give their books the same advantage.

Editors work with authors to maximise a manuscript's potential to communicate with readers and eliminate errors that writers often miss. Substantive editing reviews the work in terms of structure, content, language and style; copyediting concentrates on language and consistency, and proofreading involves the correction of basic errors. Editors can also advise on other aspects of the publishing process, including how to prepare text and images for production; and issues of defamation, libel or breaching copyright where you might need to protect yourself.

#### *Can I edit my work myself?*

You certainly should be the first editor of your work. If possible, put it aside for a while and return to it with fresh eyes. Consider whether your opening is strong, the transitions between chapters smooth, and the conclusion memorable. Check for repetition or wordiness, that the expression is clear, and that spelling, grammar and punctuation are correct. Consult Elizabeth Flann and Beryl Hill's *The Australian Editing Handbook* (2004) or Janet Mackenzie's *The Editor's Companion* (2002) to learn more about what editing involves.

You should not be the *only* editor, however. If you cannot afford professional editing then look to family or friends for help with at least basic proofreading. If you belong to a writers group, fellow writers might be willing to check your work in exchange for your checking theirs.

The Society of Editors (WA) publishes a register of its members which can be downloaded from the society's website ([www.editorswa.com](http://www.editorswa.com)).

### 1.2 The small print in the front of a book

The page with all of the copyright and publication information that is usually placed just after the title page is the imprint page. It contains important information for buyers, librarians and readers.

## *Copyright*

Copyright protects your expression of your work (that is, your words), not the story itself, nor its idea or theme, nor any information it provides. Protection is automatic (that is, you don't need to register), but it is customary to include on the imprint page the copyright symbol (©) and your name and the year of writing or first publication, and text warning readers of their limitations under the Copyright Act.

You should also put the publisher's name (business name or your name) and contact details, and the printer's name. You can also put wording which identifies the author's moral right to be identified as the author of the work. For full details about such matters, check with the Copyright Council.

Australian Copyright Council  
PO Box 1986  
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012  
Web: <http://www.copyright.org.au>

## *ISBN and CIP*

An ISBN (International Standard Book Number) is an identification code required for all printed books and pamphlets. CIP (Cataloguing-in-Publication) data, issued by the National Library of Australia, allows the library system to catalogue publications before they are published, encouraging advance orders for books and facilitating their availability in libraries. For further information, contact the ISBN Agency and the National Library's CIP Unit.

ISBN Agency Australia  
Building C3, 85 Turner Street  
Port Melbourne Vic 3207  
Phone: (03) 8645 0385  
Web: <http://www.thorpe.com.au/isbn>

Cataloguing-in-Publication Unit  
National Library of Australia  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Phone: (02) 6262 1458  
Web: <http://www.nla.gov.au/services/cip.html>

## 1.3 Legal considerations

The following information is intended to provide a brief introduction only, and should not be regarded as legal advice.

A published work (for example, a poem, song lyrics, a photograph, a map, an illustration) is covered by copyright for seventy years after the death of the creator, after which it passes into the public domain and can be freely used.

As a general rule, you cannot reproduce copyright material without written permission, and you must acknowledge ownership and permission. Sometimes the copyright owner charges a fee (and imposes conditions) for use of the material.

In some cases, extracts from a copyright work may be quoted without permission, depending on the 'importance' of the part to the whole, and the purpose of the reproduction. Consult the Australian Copyright Council's information sheet 'Quotes and Extracts: Copyright Obligations' for further details.

### *How do I get copyright permission?*

If the material has come from a published source, contact the publisher as a first step. If the material is unpublished (for example, a personal letter), contact the author, if known. The Australian Copyright Council's information sheet 'Owners of Copyright: How to Find' can be helpful.

### *Do I need permission to include stories family members have told me?*

Under copyright law, no. But rules of courtesy apply. If someone is likely to object, obtain written permission first. It is important that Indigenous people give permission for 'publication', in whatever form, of family, community or traditional stories.

### *Defamation*

If you publish a statement that lowers a person in the eyes of others, you may be guilty of defamation by libel. The best way to protect yourself as a writer is to abide by the adage, 'When in doubt, leave it out'.

## 2. PRODUCTION

The production process converts the edited manuscript into a format ready to be printed. It involves book design (deciding on page dimensions, how the text is set out, where photographs and other graphic material are placed, decorative features); layout of text and graphic material according to the design (often called 'formatting', 'typesetting' or 'desktop publishing'); proofreading and re-checking of any corrections; and cover design and production of the cover artwork.

If you are engaging a graphic designer or desktop publisher to produce your book professionally, discuss with them *first* how they want you to present the manuscript to them. As a general rule, they will want minimal formatting.

Even if you feel capable of producing a publication yourself, it is sensible to get some quotes from designers or publishing consultants. It may cost less than you think. You may also consider doing the main body of the text yourself but getting a designer to do the cover. Don't forget to ask to see previous work of a designer before employing their services.

### *Design considerations*

Many self published books look exactly that — self published. But there is no need for your book to look any different from a commercially produced book. A professional designer will help you get a professional look, but if you are doing the desktop publishing yourself, look at other published books to see how it is done.

Check what fonts they use for text and headings; look at the depth of margins and measure the space between the lines of text. Don't mix too many design effects on the one page. For ease of reading, use larger fonts and greater line spacing.

Make sure the software you are using is compatible with the system used by the printer. The printer will advise you on how to reproduce your graphics. You need good quality graphics for the best results. Giving poor quality artwork to a professional designer will not magically result in high quality art. Scanning resolution can make a huge difference to the quality of your graphics. Don't forget, if you use other people's photographs or graphics you need written permission to use them (see the Copyright section above).

### *Sample setting*

A professional designer should show you an example of the intended style (sample setting) *before* they commence full production. This is your opportunity to tell them if there is anything you don't like. They should also show you a proof copy before it goes to print. Take your time checking the proofs for errors. If you can, get other people to proofread too. Often they will pick up mistakes and inconsistencies that you will miss through over-familiarity. Note that this late stage is *not* the time to change or insert new text — you may be charged extra if you do.

If you are dealing directly with the printer, ask for a proof copy before they print the book. If there is anything amiss, this is the time to find it, not after the printing.

## 3. PRINTING

Consult a printer early in the project, as decisions about use of colour, binding style and print-run all affect cost and, therefore, your production budget. The printer will be able to present options which best suit your budget.

Some desktop publishing companies are also printers or work mainly with a preferred printer. Quotes from designer/publishers can include 'overseeing' the printing process. There is a certain advantage in letting a professional deal with the printer as they know what to ask for and what to expect. They know what is an acceptable finished product and when to send it back. In short, quality control is ensured. A designer/publisher has his or her own reputation at stake; no matter how well a publication is designed, if it is badly printed it will look amateurish and no professional wants this.

### *Size of the book*

Among the standard sizes are: A5 (149mm x 210mm), B5 (176mm x 250mm) or A4 (297mm x 210mm), but you can also print in custom sizes. If you especially want a non-standard size (square, for instance) ask the printer how much it will cost compared to the nearest standard size.

### *Number of pages*

Pages in a bound book are usually set in 'impositions' of 4, 8 or 16. Check to find out what imposition your printer uses. You might need to add or take out pages.

### *Colour of the text*

Do you want your text all in black? Two colours? Three? The main body of text in one colour and headings in another? Remember, black is the most legible.

The more colour you use, the more the book will cost to produce. If you want full colour photographs, sections of colour inserts may be cheaper than having colour randomly through the book, depending on whether the book is printed digitally.

### *Binding*

Think about who will be reading your book and how often. If you are producing a large reference book, which will be constantly referred to, it should be section-sewn so that it doesn't fall apart. Novels are usually 'perfect bound' — the pages are glued to the spine. Centre-stapling is the cheapest option if there aren't a lot of pages, but may not look professional and may not be durable. Spiral binding isn't necessarily the cheapest option.

Note that deeper margins may be needed with some binding methods.

### *Covers*

Despite the expression, 'never judge a book by its cover', many people do. Covers are important. They can also double the cost of a book's production. Decide whether your cover will be full colour, one colour or black and white; on light or heavyweight card; matt or gloss finish; recycled paper? Your printer will have a range of samples.

### *Paper*

The thickness of paper ranges from 60gsm to 130gsm (grams per square metre); 80–90 gsm is standard. If your paper is too thin your reader will be able to see what is written on the reverse. Many printers use a gloss finish paper for self-published books, whereas most commercial paperbacks are printed on matt. So if you want your book to look commercially published, you might choose matt.

## *Graphics*

If you are using photographs, drawings or diagrams, they need to be good quality originals. Slide transparencies will reproduce more clearly than photographs. Photographs can be reproduced in single colour, two colours (usually one colour and black) or full colour. Full colour graphics are going to be more expensive. Talk to your printer about how to digitally save your graphics.

## *Print run*

The more copies you print, the less the unit price of the book. Ask your printer to give you quotes on 100/200/500/1000/2000 copies. Keep in mind, however, that the more copies you get, the more you have to store, and distribution becomes a major issue. If you sell your stock, you can quickly and easily do another print run.

Some small printers will do print-runs from as little as a dozen or so. You may also feel that photocopying is a viable option. If so, think about getting just the cover done by a commercial printer as it can lend a professional look to your book. You could also ask the printer to do a perfect bind of your photocopied publication.

New technologies called 'print on demand' also allow small print runs relatively cheaply. Ask your printer or check the phone book or web.

## 4. DISTRIBUTION AND PROMOTION

You can establish your own distribution and promotion networks or find people who will do it for you. Both tasks require time and patience. You also need a dry and safe space to store your books.

### *Distribution*

Distribution involves getting your book to potential readers — placing it in book stores or selling it at family reunions, local markets, clubs or at a book launch. Many book stores, however, will only accept books from commercial distributors (who are not always interested in representing self published books anyway).

If a commercial distributor takes on your book, they will charge you a percentage of the selling price. Just how much depends on what is negotiated. While a small percentage may sound appealing, it may mean that the distributor makes little effort to market your book. You need a reputable distributor (reliable, efficient and with an appealing sales pitch) who will make a reasonable attempt to market your product and make sure it gets onto the shelves of the shops. Ask your local bookseller or newsagent who they recommend.

If you distribute the book yourself, consider registering a business name. Expenses incurred through the distribution process can be claimed in your tax return.

If you choose to handle distribution yourself you need a lot of time, persistence and determination. You need to be a good salesperson, able to advertise and

promote your book; arrange orders, invoices and receipts; organise deliveries and restocking and chase up payment.

### *Promotion*

Promotion involves creating interest in your book. Look for an 'angle' you can use, capitalising on any local connections, for example. You may be able to persuade your community newspaper to write an article about you, or you could offer to give a talk at the local library or service club about the subject of your book (and, of course, have copies on hand to sell afterwards). The more well known you are — even if your 'fame' is only local — the easier it will be to market and sell your book. Books on self publishing often provide helpful advice on promotional strategies.

### Legal deposit

You need to deposit two copies of your publication (defined as those supplied, whether for sale or otherwise, to the public) in the library system: one with the National Library of Australia and one with the Battye Library.

Legal Deposit Unit  
National Library of Australia  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Phone: (02) 6262 1312  
Web: <http://www.nla.gov.au/services/ldeposit.html>

Legal Deposit, Battye Library  
State Library of Western Australia  
Alexander Library Building  
Perth Cultural Centre  
Perth WA 6000  
Phone: (08) 9427 3107

### Books on self publishing

Bill Hornadge, *How to Publish Your Own Book: A Complete Guide to Self-publishing in Australia* (1983)

Wendy Lowenstein, *Self-publishing without Pain* (1995)

Gordon Woolf, *Publish Your Book: A Guide to Self-publishing* (1995).