



## Info Sheet: Self-publishing

Self publishing is when you, the writer, independently publish your book—without a traditional or hybrid publisher. You have complete control over the editing, design, typesetting, price, distribution, marketing, finances and legal obligations.

All financial risk - whether you publish ebooks or print books - is yours.

### So why self publish?

There has been a huge rise in self-publishing in the past five years, with genre authors (especially romance) leading the charge and the rise of ebooks has made it easier too.

You might choose to self-publish for a whole range of reasons:

- You want control over your books content and covers
- You want to earn more per book that you might from a traditional publisher
- You write in a niche market which might make it difficult to find a traditional publisher
- You might want to publish a book with a limited general interest, for instance, a family history for the immediate members or your own family
- You want to create a career for yourself as an author.

### The good, the bad and the ugly

Having total control over your publishing, choosing your covers, your stories and your genre can be an enticing prospect, as can the idea that all the royalties you earn are yours alone. Self published authors receive the majority of the cover price of their book, instead of a smaller royalty from a traditional publisher.

But if you put your book on etailer platforms, like Amazon, iBooks, Kobo and Barnes and Noble for instance, you won't earn 100% of the cover price of your book. Amazon, for example, will take 25% of the cover price for "hosting" or publishing your book on their platform.

By self-publishing you can skip the difficult and sometimes arbitrary process of submitting to agents and/or publishers. And you can work fast: you could finish edits and have your book ready to go that same hour.



If you write fast, you'll be in a better position to respond quickly to changes in the market to capitalise on trends, including by changing your book cover overnight.

But...it's worth keeping all the following in mind.

You'll be up for all the upfront costs: printing (if you're printing copies), design and formatting (if you're going digital), hiring a cover designer, hiring editors (structural and copyediting: see the Writers SA Info Sheet Editing for more information), purchasing your ISBN and dealing with all the technical issues around uploading your books.

You'll also have to do all your own marketing and publicity, and it may be more difficult to get your physical book into bookstores - and impossible to get it into the discount department stores (like Big W, Target and Kmart where up to 25% of all Australian books are sold).

The Australian magazine Bookseller+Publisher reports that in 2017 alone, there were 22,832 titles published by 4,000+ publishers in Australia alone. That is a lot of competition.

Some self-published books would have been better served if they'd been edited and proofread before they were published. Writers SA would strongly suggest that you have your book professionally edited. If you're diving into the world of self-publishing, you want your book to be the best it can be so it can compete with all those other books on the market.

Cover design is crucial too. See the Writers SA **Info Sheet Book Covers and Design** for some handy tips.

## Online publishing services and distributors

These services and distributors are not publishers, but they can assist to convert your book into an ebook format (ePub, Mobi or PDF) and distribute it to online booksellers.

They are easy to use and cost effective. They can be used to publish both ebooks and print-on-demand, which means to print books to order. The writer receives royalties, minus the cut from the service or distributor.

Online publishing services and distributors include:\*

- Blurb
- Bookbaby
- Createspace
- Lulu
- Smashwords
- Draft2Digital

\*Listing here does not imply any endorsement from Writers SA.

[www.writerssa.org.au](http://www.writerssa.org.au)



For ebooks, you can also convert your file using programs like Adobe InDesign or websites like Pressbooks (or pay someone to do it for you) and upload it directly to bookselling platforms like Amazon and iBookstore, without having to go through self publishing services such as the ones listed above.

## Having your books printed

Another way to self publish is to create a print-ready file (or pay someone to do it for you) and send it to a printer.

This means going for a print run—receiving a predetermined number of copies—instead of print-on-demand. This is more expensive and risky, since you will have paid for the books without the guarantee that they can be sold.

Pros of print-on-demand	Cons of print-on-demand	Pros of a print run	Cons of a print run
<p><b>Small investment:</b> There are little to no upfront costs.</p> <p><b>Distribution:</b> You can distribute your book to Amazon and other online booksellers.</p> <p><b>Quality:</b> There is usually no difference in quality.</p>	<p><b>Pricing:</b> The cost per book is higher, so you may need to charge the reader more.</p> <p><b>Local bookstores:</b> Print-on-demand is less efficient if you plan to distribute to brick and mortar bookstores.</p>	<p><b>Pricing:</b> less per book.</p> <p><b>Printing options:</b> You have more options in printing—like colour, paper quality or type of binding.</p> <p><b>Local bookstores:</b> There are advantages if you plan to distribute to brick and mortar bookstores.</p> <p><b>On hand:</b> You'll have plenty of copies on hand.</p>	<p><b>Large investment:</b> There is a significant cost involved.</p> <p><b>High risk:</b> As well as paying upfront, there is no guarantee that you can sell the whole print run.</p> <p><b>Storage:</b> You'll need to store your books. If you don't have a space already, you may need to pay for one.</p>

## Step-by-step

There is a lot to learn if you are planning to self publish. Writers SA regularly runs workshops on a whole range of areas to do with writing, including self-publishing. Head to our website to see all the details.

## Some other things you need to know



**ISBN:** Print books require an International Standard Book Number (ISBN): a 13-digit number used to identify your book, like a barcode. Ebooks don't require an ISBN, but if you choose to use one it cannot be the same ISBN that is used for your print version.

Some self publishing services provide free ISBNs. You can also buy them online through Thorpe-Bowker.

**Tax Info:** Most self publishing services and distributors operate out of the United States of America. The United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) withholds 30% of authors' revenue. Because Australia has a tax treaty with the USA, Australian citizens are eligible for 5% withholding. You can claim the lower tax withholding with your Australian Tax File Number.

**Metadata:** When you upload your ebook or sell your print book you will need to include metadata, such as a title, blurb, description, logline and keywords. Have these elements prepared when you come to self publish.

**Pricing:** Deciding on a price can be difficult. If your price is too high, readers won't be prepared to buy your book, especially with there is so much competition in the market at lower prices, not to mention free books. If it's too low, you'll receive fewer royalties and the reader may negatively judge the quality of the book. For an ebook, \$2.99-\$3.99 is the average. Print varies depending on size, genre and cost of manufacturing.

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