

# Thinking about Self-Publishing

*Non-comprehensive notes, answering some common questions*

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## The Business of Publishing

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These resources introduce you to the world of publishing, with both traditional and self-publishing background and including information about copyright, writing, production, and distribution/marketing information.

### Deciding about Self-Publishing – Free Guides

- The Book Designer,  
*10 Things You Need to Know About Self-Publishing*  
<http://www.thebookdesigner.com/free-10-things-you-need-to-know-about-self-publishing/>
- Joanna Penn,  
*Author 2.0 Blueprint: How To Write, Publish and Market Your Books*  
<http://www.thecreativepenn.com/blueprint/>

### Publishing as a Business – Free Guides

Dean Wesley Smith, *Think Like a Publisher*

[http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/?page\\_id=3736](http://www.deanwesleysmith.com/?page_id=3736)

Dean is a fiction writer (Star Trek novelizations) who's been involved in publishing for a few decades, and is a leader in helping people to understand:

1. How the publishing / distribution business works.
2. How the drastic digital changes are fundamentally.

Dean's emphasis is that as a self-publisher you are a business entrepreneur and must behave and plan like a business person from the beginning. The first chapter provides specific early business chores, including:

- Pick a business name and a business structure
- Open a business checking account

### Writing as a Business – Free Guides

Kristine Kathryn Rusch, *Freelancer's Survival Guide*

<http://kriswrites.com/freelancers-survival-guide-table-of-contents/>

AND: "Business Rusch Publishing Articles"

<http://kriswrites.com/business-rusch-publishing-articles/#sthash.dYNAuiTL.dpbs>

Kris Rusch published a long set of blog posts that focus on the business of writing. These posts have very detailed background information about how traditional publishing works and the transition in publishing as a business.

## Print-on-Demand Publishing

For background reading, make sure you understand what POD printing means.

- The Book Designer, “Making Printing Choices”  
<http://www.thebookdesigner.com/making-print-choices/>

**Important:** Many business claim to support self-publishing with comprehensive services. Typically these are both expensive and exploitive. If you pursue services to help with production and marketing, be sure to check these resources:

- Writer Beware site—Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, with support from Mystery Writers of America and Horror Writers Association  
<http://accrispin.blogspot.com/p/about-writer-beware.html>  
<http://www.sfwaw.org/other-resources/for-authors/writer-beware/>
- David Gaughan’s “author scam” blog topics  
<http://davidgaughan.wordpress.com/tag/author-scam/>

Two non-exploitive choices for print publication and distribution:

- IngramSpark/Lightning Source: <http://www.ingramspark.com>
- CreateSpace: <http://www.createspace.com>

CreateSpace capabilities, cost, and ease of use have pulled slightly ahead. However, only IngramSpark/Lightning Source creates hard-bound books.

### To get started with CreateSpace:

1. Set up a CreateSpace account — which also requires a Federal tax ID and a business bank account.
2. Decide what book size you plan and download the template from CreateSpace.  
Cover templates: <https://www.createspace.com/Help/Book/Artwork.do>  
Interior templates: <https://www.createspace.com/Products/Book/InteriorPDF.jsp>
3. Finish and format the book in Word or InDesign. *[or hire a vendor to help]*
  - Follow CreateSpace settings for “print to PDF” settings in Word.
  - Complete cover and save as PDF, or adapt a CreateSpace-provided cover solution.
4. Set the print book price so that a distributor can make at least **\$2.00**. You can buy any quantity at production cost plus shipping. (See [Pricing](#) below.)

CreateSpace has a tool that helps you determine what the price should be based on page size, page count, and whether you have color pictures.

CreateSpace lists your book in all distributor catalogs, lists it online in Amazon, Barnes&Noble, etc. and manages distribution. The proceeds are deposited monthly into your bank account. If you use a CreateSpace ISBN instead of your own, CreateSpace will list it for library distribution.

## KDP Information – Kindle Direct Publishing

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Various eBook publishing processes and tools support different types of source content files. Microsoft Word is most often the baseline, with additional support for OpenDocs or tools such as Scrivener. Many guidelines focus on Adobe InDesign, because publishing companies typically use Adobe InDesign for print production and then convert print files to ebooks.

### To get started with KDP:

1. Create an account at with your publishing business name. Amazon sends a 1099 form for U.S. taxes. You have to specify a federal tax ID (a business ID or your SS#).

<https://kdp.amazon.com>

2. Specify the bank account where royalties will be deposited.

3. Learn the formatting guidelines and choose your production process.

- Kindle formatting guide from Amazon:  
<https://kdp.amazon.com/help?topicId=A37Z49E2DDQPP3>
- Mac-specific guide from Amazon:  
<https://kdp.amazon.com/help?topicId=A2AOXJXY43GME3>

## Digital Formats and Publishing Processes

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I'm not covering tools and step-by-step formatting for Kindle and ePub format here, because others have done detailed work. Most such guides are available in both eBook and print format. For deep technical details, I prefer print. Best guides for digital publishing processes I've found:

- The Book Designer, "eBooks & eBook Readers" (an overview)  
<http://www.thebookdesigner.com/ebooks-ebook-readers/>
- David Gaughan, *Let's Get Digital: How To Self-Publish, and Why You Should*  
<http://davidgaughan.wordpress.com/my-books/lets-get-digital/> (PDF is free)
- Aaron Shepherd, *From Word to Kindle*  
<http://www.amazon.com/From-Word-Kindle-Publishing-Formatting/dp/093849757X/>  
and: *Pictures on Kindle: Self Publishing Your Kindle Book with Photos*  
<http://www.amazon.com/Pictures-Kindle-Publishing-Paintings-Formatting/dp/0938497588/>
- Jaye Manus, "Cheat Sheets for eBook Formatting"  
<http://jwmanus.wordpress.com/cheat-sheets-for-ebook-formatting/>
- Resources for learning HTML  
<http://www.w3schools.com/>

## Marketing

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This is a huge topic—and a lot of people are interested in making money by “helping” you—but no one really has the total solution. Unless you have a finished manuscript in hand, the first step is to be informed and create your business plan:

- David Gaughan, *Let's Get Visible*  
<http://davidgaughan.wordpress.com/my-books/lets-get-visible/>
- Joanna Penn, *How to Market a Book* (and other resources)  
<http://www.thecreativepenn.com/marketing/>
- Dean Wesley Smith, *Killing the Top 10 Sacred Cows of Indie Publishing*  
<http://www.deanwesleymith.com/killing-the-sacred-cows-of-publishing/>

## Pricing

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See Dean Wesley Smith's topic on pricing at

<http://www.deanwesleymith.com/think-like-a-publisher-2015-projected-income/>

Some notes:

- Amazon will price match—so especially for POD, you must price to allow for discounters.
- Amazon requires \$2.99 to \$9.99 for KDP retailer/publisher split at 70% (miscalled “royalties”).  
However, you can pulse and change the price at any time for sales.
- “Free” and other marketing programs for KDP require that the title be exclusive on Amazon.

## CreateSpace Calculator

1. The calculator will display non-US prices as calculated on the basis of U.S. price, but you should manually set this to be actual marketing prices: **\$X.95, \$X.99...**
2. The standard recommendation is that the price allows distributors a \$2.00 profit. The “expanded distributor” needs to be able to make 40% of the cover price. However, I decided against raising this title to a price above \$10.00.

**Pricing** [How do I use this page?](#) ◀ Back Next ▶

Set your list price and calculate your royalties for each sales channel and manufacturing location.  
[How are the royalties calculated?](#)

List Price	Channel	Royalty
\$ <input type="text" value="9.99"/> USD* <input type="button" value="Calculate"/> Minimum list price for this title is \$5.60 <a href="#">What's this?</a>	Amazon.com	\$3.75
	CreateSpace eStore	\$5.75
	Expanded Distribution <span style="color: red; font-weight: bold; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px 5px;">2</span>	\$1.75
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, suggest a GBP price based on U.S. price <a href="#">What's this?</a> £ <input type="text" value="5.83"/> GBP** <input type="button" value="Calculate"/> Minimum list price for this title is £3.10 <span style="color: red; font-weight: bold; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px 5px; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center; line-height: 20px;">1</span>	Amazon Europe For books printed in Great Britain	£1.63
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, suggest a EUR price based on U.S. price <a href="#">What's this?</a> € <input type="text" value="7.34"/> EUR** <input type="button" value="Calculate"/> Minimum list price for this title is €3.32	Amazon Europe For books printed in continental Europe	€2.41

\* U.S. Price is required for all titles, even if U.S. channel is not enabled.  
 \*\* Value Added Tax (VAT) is not included in the price. Appropriate VAT will be added to the price before the book is published. [Learn more about VAT.](#)

## KDP Calculator

The “Delivery Cost” per unit sold is deducted from your “royalty.”

The calculator will display non-US prices as calculated on the basis of U.S. price, but you should manually set these to be actual marketing prices: **\$X.95, \$X.99...**

## KDP Pricing and Royalty

Please select a royalty option for your book. ([What's this?](#))

35% Royalty  
 70% Royalty

	List Price	Royalty Rate	Delivery Costs	Estimated Royalty
Amazon.com	\$ 3.99 USD Price must be between \$2.99 and \$9.99.	35% ( <a href="#">Why?</a> )	n/a	\$1.40
		70%	\$0.07	\$2.74
Amazon.in ( <a href="#">What's this?</a> )	<input type="checkbox"/> Set IN price automatically based on US price ₹ 299 INR Price must be between ₹49 and ₹10999. Must be in multiples of 1 INR.	70%	₹3	₹207
Amazon.co.uk	<input type="checkbox"/> Set UK price automatically based on US price £ 2.99 GBP Price must be between £1.49 and £7.81.	70%	£0.04	£2.06
Amazon.de	<input type="checkbox"/> Set DE price automatically based on US price € 3.99 EUR Price must be between €2.60 and €9.70.	70%	€0.05	€2.76
Amazon.fr	<input type="checkbox"/> Set FR price automatically based on US price € 3.99 EUR Price must be between €2.60 and €9.70.	70%	€0.05	€2.76