

# **How to Publish Your Own Book:** A Step-by-Step Manual

Produced by Perez Print Productions  
(A full service book production company)

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## Table of Contents

What is Self-Publishing?	Page 2
The World of Self-Publishing	3
Reasons to Self-Publish	5
How to Publish a Book	7
Who Can Help You?	11
How Should You Choose?	12
Choosing the Quantity and Pricing the Book	13
Measuring the Risk	14

## What is Self-Publishing?

Self-publishing is when the author of the material also acts as the publisher by assuming and financing all the duties and responsibilities of a publisher. Few books are truly self-published.

**Traditional Publishing:** Traditional or royalty publishers purchase manuscripts from the author, paying the author through royalties which are a percentage of the sales from the book. The publisher contracts the work, pays for the editing and production of the book, and holds the rights for the book for the time specified in the contract. The author is given little or no say in the editing and production processes, however, it is in the publisher's best interest to please the author. The term holding the rights signifies the party that has the legal authority over the book, i.e., to make decisions regarding reprinting the book, translating the book into other languages, and giving permission for portions of the book to be copied or used for other purposes. The party holding the rights may not necessarily be the same party that holds the copyright, but at the end of the contract agreement between the publisher and the author, the rights will be returned to the author. The interest of the traditional publisher is to purchase only manuscripts that will be well received within the particular market of readers that the publisher caters to and to sell as many books as possible.

**Vanity Publishing:** Vanity publishers produce books at the author's expense. The name "vanity" comes from the fact that these publishers appeal to the author's vanity and desire to become a "published author." They normally print any type of book since that's what they are being paid to do. Since they will have no interest in the actual sales of the book, the quality of their work is often inferior. They normally take little time to edit or design the book and do no marketing, distribution, or warehousing. The completed books belong entirely to the author, but the publisher's name is used rather than the author's name as the publisher. The publisher also registers the books with the Library of Congress and assigns ISBN's as any publisher would.

**Subsidy Publishing:** Subsidy publishers are a mix of traditional and vanity publishing and because there are no hard and fast rules defining them

and no watchdog organization governing them, it is hard to clearly describe them. Researching them can leave one's head in a confused muddle. At any rate, they offer their services as a joint venture or partnership with the author, and although the author is asked to pay for portions of the production cost, the subsidy publisher also assumes a portion (in most cases). The amount each party contributes varies from company to company; however, the author almost certainly bears the greater financial burden. The author does not own the books in the end, but is paid on a royalty basis. Because the publisher is involved actively in promoting and marketing the book, subsidy publishers normally choose the manuscripts they publish and although they likely will spend money on editing and design, the author is not given a great deal of voice in these processes.

**Conventional Do-it-Yourself Publishing:** This is when the author undertakes every step of the publishing process himself, either by hiring individual vendors to accomplish each step or by doing what he feels he is capable of doing himself. Although the author is fully financing the project, he then, of course, retains full ownership of the material and collects all sales. The author in fact has complete control.

**Publishing Services Providers:** These companies are not publishers, but will assist authors in various or all aspects of the publishing process for a fee. Many book printers have begun these services as well as companies that have established themselves for the sole purpose of serving self-publishing authors. The author maintains a great deal of control yet may also receive advice and beneficial consultation. In the end, the author owns the book and collects all profit. Whereas vanity publishers do not promote or market, publishing service providers often assist the authors even in these areas. Publishing service providers do not name themselves as the publishers and they do not register or purchase the ISBNs in their own company name although some will do these things on behalf of the self-publishing author.

## The World of Self-Publishing

Twenty years ago self-publishing was rare. Ten years ago it was a small industry as printing presses became available to do small runs digitally and thus more economically. Today self-publishing is a fast-growing trend and a wave of the future. From 8,000 to 11,000 new publishers enter the field every year. Most of these are self-publishers. Of 195,000 new titles published each year in this country, 78% come from small publishers and self-publishers.

Just as trade associations exist to help traditional publishers promote and market their books, new organizations are beginning for independent or self-publishers. An example of this type of organization is the Independent Book Publishers Association (PMA), which was begun in 1983 and currently has a membership of 4,000 publishers. Their website, [www.pma-online.org](http://www.pma-online.org), provides information and help to self-publishers and especially offers guidance in promoting and marketing the book products. PMA hosts book shows frequently and throughout the country, so that publishers can present their products to interested retail buyers. Large traditional publishers also closely follow these new titles. Each year a small but growing percentage of self-published titles are acquired by traditional publishers.

The cost of self-publishing is as variable as the methods to accomplish it. Print-on-demand and short-run printing can turn out a book for as little as three dollars per copy. Larger runs from 1,000 copies and up can be printed for under a dollar per book. Of course, these are only the printing costs. Every step of the way there are price tags unless the author chooses to do some or all of the publishing tasks himself. That would take a great deal of training, however, and involve a lot of time on the author's part. If the self-publisher wishes to produce multiple titles and make a business of publishing, the time would not only be worth it but absolutely necessary. But if an author decides to publish a single title, it would be foolish to undertake the entire publishing process by himself unless he can devote the majority of his time to the task until all the books are sold.

Despite all of these obstacles, self-publishing is clearly growing in popularity. Even so, self-publishing is not for everyone. Remember that the reason publishing began in the first place was to sell books. If every "wanna-be" author publishes their own work, there is no guarantee that anyone will either learn about or buy their books. In an on-line article entitled "The Tricky Art of Self-Publishing" by Foster J. Dickson, Dickson warns authors to take into consideration four problems with self-publishing:

1. Nearly all major retailers refuse to carry self-published titles. (Dickson explains that while this is because the retailers are "safeguarding against being flooded with titles to manage and distribute," it is "not an affront to the self-published.")
2. "Reviewers will typically not review self-published books and major media will usually not print reviews of self-published books." However, exceptions to this rule are rising in number.

“Publishing Weekly” the publishing industry’s trade magazine which reviews new releases has begun to include self-published titles in its reviews.

3. “All the workload of publicity, shipping, invoicing, accounting, and promotions are on the author, where commercial publishers have multiple employees each undertaking one of these tasks and thus doing them more effectively.”
4. The final problem is having enough money to pay for the print run.

Still another problem noted by Wikipedia, an on-line encyclopedia, is the fact that libraries also avoid stocking self-published books. The criteria required by libraries to obtain a book is often lacking in self-published books. Exceptions might include local histories, “which are of specialized interest enough to be uninteresting to commercial publishers but which are sought out by libraries.” (Wikipedia)

So in order for an author to self-publish, many things should be given careful consideration.

### Reasons to Self-Publish

- The target audience is limited. The target audience is the group of people who will have an interest in reading your book. Every author needs to consider who his target audience is even before he begins to write a book. Many authors feel that everyone will want to read their book, when in fact; such an idea is absolutely false. Books are written for a variety of reasons and speak directly to certain audiences. This is most frequently the reason why unsolicited submissions are not picked up by traditional publishing companies. Every publisher directs his books to the readers who purchase his books. If he knows that there is little chance his target audience will be interested in a book, then it would be foolish for him to publish that book. For example, if you have written your first novel for Christian adults and you are not well known within the Christian community, yet you desire that your book be read beyond your home base, self-publishing may not be the best way to go for you. Focusing on your target audience, the following are good reasons to self-publish:

Your target audience is a particular local geographic area.

Your target audience is a family group.

Your target audience is an organization, business, or church.

Your target audience is a group interested in a particular hobby or cause.

Your target audience is a particular group of students.

- You don't have time to go the traditional route. Perhaps you have no desire or patience to send off your manuscript to a traditional publishing company, wait to hear from it, and if rejected, to go through that process over and over again. It could literally take years to submit your manuscript to a few publishers and there is never a guarantee that your work will be published even after all that time. Of course, if you are well known or have had other books published, it might not be difficult to be published and might be worth it to try. Traditional publishing is a difficult industry to break into, however, without hiring an agent, having some name recognition, or having a self-supporting ministry/organization. One word of warning though. If your only reason to self-publish is that you do not want to try the traditional companies, you should make sure that you have available resources to promote and market your book effectively. Remember that if the traditional companies are turning you down because you're an unknown, how do you know that you will be able to successfully market your book? On the positive side, if you are able to tap into a market line, i.e., you are a public speaker, a pastor, a business owner, a professional, or have access to a mailing list of likely buyers, then you probably could sell a reasonable quantity (1,000–3,000) of books.
- Your manuscript has been rejected by traditional companies at least once and/or you are unknown and do not have a substantial resume, but you believe there is merit in your work being made available to readers. It's true that if you have tried in vain to be published, the chance of your manuscript becoming a published book will likely only happen if you publish it yourself. However, this in itself is not necessarily enough reason to self-publish. Perhaps the rejection letters you have received give some indication as to why the publishers to whom you submitted your work did not accept it. If the reason seems to be the fact that you are not well known, then your action must follow the advice above. If the publishers have hinted that your book is not well written, then you should consider hiring a professional copy editor to help you. It is always wise to pay for this service anyway should you decide to

self-publish a book. This step goes far in gaining a readership and successfully marketing your book. Because many self-publishing authors choose to ignore this step, self-published manuscripts can often be inferior in content. However, your passion for getting your book out, whatever it takes, is a good sign that you will be a good self-publisher.

- You wish to publish more than one title on a subject and start your own home-based business. If you surf the internet about the subject of self-publishing you will discover that a great number of self-publishing authors have done this. One husband/wife team left their jobs and began with one book and their own promotions and public relations company. They now have successfully authored 13 books. Another popular independent publishing venture is for cookbooks and gardening books. If you are enough of an authority on a particular subject to keep producing technical books, self-publishing could be an excellent idea. Visiting [www.pma-online.org](http://www.pma-online.org), the website mentioned previously, will show you a myriad of such independent publishing businesses.
- You have ample financial resources for the project. Self-publishing is going to be costly and more likely than not it will be more than you expected. Can you afford the outlay of cash needed as in any other business start-up, when there is no guarantee that you will get your initial investment back or make a profit? If there is reasonable evidence that you will indeed sell your books, (i.e., you take orders before production begins) then it might be possible to obtain a personal loan from a family member or close friend. Do not go into self-publishing expecting to leave out certain necessary steps or cut corners to the detriment of the final book product.

## How to Publish a Book

Before a book can be published, it must be completed. Completion means that you have finished writing it, you have typed it, you have edited it, and it is in a manuscript form that could be submitted to any publisher even though you will not be sending it to one. When such is the case, then you are ready to begin the publishing process.

Listed below are the necessary steps in publishing a book as well as a cost range for each. Please note that these are each necessary steps. Traditional publishers carefully fulfill every step for one reason: to present their customers with an inviting, acceptable, and quality product.

Self-publishers will also find that unless they follow the same steps, their publishing venture is not likely to succeed.

1. Decide the trim size of the book. Most books for adults measure between 5 to 7 inches wide and 7 to 10 inches long. These are the standard size of printing presses as well, so that books with these measurements are the most economical to print. It is important to choose the trim size first, so that the work logically builds on this measurement and accurate pricing can be obtained.
2. Register the book with the Library of Congress, obtain an ISBN, (the publisher only purchases the ISBN), and copyright the book. [about \$250]  
These items can be completed on-line. (See [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov) and [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov))
3. Copyedit. This means the book is read by a professional editor who not only checks spelling and grammar, but analyzes sentence structure, word clarity, logic, and content. No matter how well you think your book is written, take this step! [\$20-\$50 per hour, 5-10 pages per hour]
4. Design the exterior and interior. The exterior refers to the cover: back, front, and spine and is best completed by a professional graphic designer or artist. The interior design refers to the design of the inside text. Every chapter opener in a book has the same design, fonts used in the text are related to one another, the running heads at the top or bottom of the page are placed a particular way, and there are text box measurements as well. These are the basic elements of interior design. While typesetters can design the interior, it is best to coordinate the cover and interior design so that a unified look and font appear throughout the book. You may have an idea of what you would like your cover and interior design to look like, but it is important to have the advice of an experienced designer to counsel and guide your final decisions. [Cover design: \$300-\$2,500; Interior design: \$200-\$500; it may also be necessary to purchase graphics for the cover, a few can be used without purchasing a license, --the price for the license for the rest begins at \$200 and goes up.]
5. Obtain endorsements. Endorsements go a long way in selling a book. It is important to ask leaders, scholars, and well-known professionals who are familiar with the subject matter of your book to read your material and write an endorsement of the book. [The only cost is postage for mailing your manuscript to those you've asked to endorse it.]

6. Index. Indexes often appear in books other than fiction or poetry. If the book has a great deal of information in the content, then it is often helpful to the reader to use an index to quickly find particular information. Most commonly, a book can have a subject index, an index of proper names, or a scripture index. [Indexers usually charge an average of \$20 per hour and can index about 20–50 pages per hour.]
7. Typeset. Using the interior design for the book, the typesetter pages the book, checking the flow from page to page throughout the text. Placing illustrations, tables, and graphs, complicate the job more. Computer software developed in the last couple of decades has made this task more readily available to the layman. The best programs to work in and most universally accepted by printers are Adobe Indesign and Quark. [Prices range from \$3–\$8 per page.]
8. Proofread. Proofreading is done after the manuscript is typeset. This is to check not only the typesetting job, but also to spot any last spelling or grammatical errors. [\$1–\$3 per page]
9. Print. Printing prices are variable on many things: the trim–size of the book, the page count, the kind of paper used, if the book contains photographs, whether or not the book will be printed in color, how the book is bound, and the quantity. To print 20 copies of a 100–page book using only black ink on the inside and full color on the standard paper cover stock, the price might be about \$100. For the same book, but 1,000 copies, the price might be between \$1,000–\$2,000, while for 5,000 copies, the price could be between \$2,500–\$3,500. When your book is ready to be printed, you need to request quotes from several (three or more) book printers. You must give them the specifics about your book and the quantity you desire and they will provide you with a written quote. It is also important to ask each printer for samples so that you judge the quality of work and you should ask for references and then check them out. Since printing involves a great deal of technology, some knowledge and experience in the field would certainly be an asset for you, otherwise it might be wise to hire a broker to handle your printing. Again, it is important to check on the integrity and reliability of the broker before you hire him.
10. Advertise/promote. A publisher takes time to let its readers know about each new title that will be released, weeks and months before that actually happens. A self–publisher must do the same. It is important to get your investment back as quickly as possible, so you want to talk up your book before there is a book so that you will have immediate buyers. One of the best ways to do this is to

start your own website. Unless you are familiar with how to do this and have some good creative talent, you should hire someone to do it for you. Usually such undertakings are relatively inexpensive. Another good promotion idea is to do a mailing. Printing a few hundred postcards or brochures and mailing them to persons within your target audience will make your prospective readers aware of your book. Wait until after you have a book cover to do this as well as other publicity. You can also inform your local bookstores, library, and newspapers about your book. The newspaper may wish to write a feature story about the local talent and libraries and bookstores are often agreeable to book signings. Local talk radio shows might consider interviewing you, especially if the topic of your book is important to many of their listeners. Again, unless you are very creative and have the ability to produce publicity items, it might be better to hire the services of a promotions agency. The cost to you will vary according to what you choose to do, but it would be wise to allow \$500–\$2000 for promotion and advertising.

11. Find distributors/buyers. Unless you intend and/or have the ability to receive and fulfill orders, it would be wise to hire the services of a distributor. The following might be exceptions to this: you are a public speaker and have the opportunity to sell many books on these occasions, or, your book has such a limited market that it needs to be sold through direct mail promotion only. At any rate, there is a multitude of distributors who reach a multitude of markets. Call them first, and if they express interest in your book, offer them a review copy. Follow-up with an e-mail or call and offer terms. Distributors and other buyers will only buy at discounted prices, which typically are 55% off the retail cover price. Distributors will also only buy case quantities and generally return unsold quantities usually paying the author only after they sell the books and at designated times such as the month's or quarter's end.

12. Warehouse (store) the book. Traditional publishers warehouse or store the books until they are sold. Books must be stored in a climate-controlled atmosphere. Humidity must be regulated as high moisture content in the air will cause the book edges to curl and the books pages to become wavy. It is absolutely essential that the books never come in direct contact with water as this will cause irreparable damage to them. Therefore they cannot be exposed to roof leaks or water from open windows. The cost of warehousing books will depend on the quantity of books being stored and the length of time storage is needed. You can check out rates of local

storage units. One way to avoid warehousing fees is to have your book printed one order at a time. Print-on-demand publishers and printers are able to do this easily. This method works best, however, if you will order only a small (100 or less) number of books over the space of a year.

13. Fulfill Orders. Some publishers sell all their books through wholesalers, and never do order fulfillment. However, many maintain an order and shipping department and are fully capable to receive orders by phone, mail, e-mail, and on-line, and then process these orders daily. To do this, certain equipment is necessary as well as the ability to process payments and have personnel on hand to receive the orders. Whether or not a self-publishing author would be able to handle these responsibilities alone would depend on the quantity of books that needed to be sold and the volume of orders that might need to be handled. The cost for this would be completely dependant on so many variables that it would be difficult to give a price range, but would need to be thought through and budgeted for by the self-publishing author.

Unless an author is familiar with each of these processes and the publishing industry, publishing a book without an expert's help is a monumental undertaking. Warning: If you are taking on the responsibility of publishing your own book, you don't want it to look like you did it yourself. You don't want to end up with a garageful of unsold books. You don't want to lose all the money you sank into this. Not getting your money out of the project means you lost money!

## Who Can Help You?

Vanity Publishing: Twenty years ago, when self-publishing started becoming fashionable, vanity publishing was about the only way to go. Because there was little competition for these companies, their customers knew little about what a final product should be, and since they received their money up front, they cared little about how the final product looked or if the books sold. For these reasons, vanity publishing has had a negative reputation and the final product was often far inferior to what a traditional publisher turned out. Today, however, there is a wider range of reputation among vanity publishers, and vanity publishers have to compete much harder to get their customers, forcing them to raise their standards. Still, an author seeking to go this route should spend much time researching the possibilities. Compare the quality of more than one company and by all means talk to authors who have used the company. Look at the level of quality for every service provided. Make sure

adequate service is being provided and that the company is not leaving out editing and proofreading services entirely. These companies do not help in promoting, distribution, or order fulfillment so be prepared to assume these responsibilities yourself. While the costs will vary from company to company, make sure that you have the resources to pay up front and that your research proves to you that the company you choose has financial integrity.

Subsidy Publishing: Because you are only partially footing the cost as well as receiving royalties, you have less input and control over the project, and you will share the profits with the publisher. You must carefully review the cost to you and the amount of royalty you will receive. On the other hand, you do not have to involve yourself with obtaining an ISBN, registering with LOC, setting up any type of business, promotions, distribution or storage. However, subsidy publishing probably requires the greatest amount of caution and a thorough check into the reputation of the publisher. One on-line website ([www.sfw.org](http://www.sfw.org)) cautions writers to watch and beware of the following when dealing with subsidy publishers:

1. A setup fee or deposit
2. Requiring authors pay for some aspect of the publication process other than printing/binding
3. A pre-purchase requirement
4. A pre-sale requirement
5. Pressure to buy all or most of the books yourself
6. Other “sneaky tactics to extract money from authors”

As Foster Dickson well advises, “If thousands of dollars are being spent on self-publication, the author should have more rights concerning his or her own work than the company being paid.”

Conventional Do-it-Yourself Publishing: While this method is the only true self-publishing method, it is also the most work. You will be responsible for every single facet of production and must hire individual vendors. You will have complete control, but it could be difficult—especially to promote, market, and distribute your books, as well as to fulfill orders. Doing a book this way, could easily turn into a full time job.

Publishing Services Providers: Since you will own the rights to the book and you or your company will be the publisher, publishing service providers’ main objective is to bring back repeat business. Since the number of services provided varies from company to company, it is important to search for a provider who will perform as many services as you need. Service providers are also more likely to give you helpful advice and to listen when you tell them what you would like. Companies that

perform most of the necessary services are difficult to find, however. (Perez Print Productions is a publishing services provider.)

## How Should You Choose?

The most difficult problem for self-publishing authors could well be that they are not “savvy business people and do not want to be.” However, publishing your own book demands that you become business-minded. You must make a conscious choice to do this before you begin. Below is a list of suggestions on how to proceed:

1. Make a list of your personal strengths and assets were you to self-publish.
2. Contact several providers/publishers and ask questions.
3. Talk to their customers.
4. Look at their sample products. Judge their quality.
5. Look for integrity and reputation rather than size or \$\$ amount spent on advertising.
6. Cost might be the least of your consideration. The difficult part is knowing what you are paying for. Warning: A book of poor quality and a company that isn't willing to give you counsel every step of the way may not cost as much as a company that instructs you to a level of high confidence and which produces a topnotch product.
7. Choose the method that makes you most confident about the final product and that makes you most comfortable to work with.

## Choosing the Quantity and Pricing the Book

Choose the number of books you feel confident you can realistically sell in one year. It is better to underestimate as you can always reprint. The cost of reprinting will always be less than the initial run as much of the first run costs include the set-up charges. In a reprint, you are basically only paying for the printing and shipping so the unit cost will be considerably less.

However, also remember that the fewer books you print, the higher the unit cost will be. Even using a print-on-demand method, the unit cost of 20 books (i.e., \$3 per unit for 100-page book) is more than the unit cost of 100 books (i.e., \$1.84 for the same 100-page book). So while you don't want to print too many books, so that the possibility exists that you

will never sell them, you also want to sell enough so that it becomes cost effective per unit.

A subsidy publisher seldom offers you a say in establishing the wholesale or retail price of the book. While the other methods do allow this, it is important to understand what is involved in making this decision.

1. Obtain estimates for every step of publishing a book and use this as your budget. Be liberal and overestimate.
2. Add all of these expenses together.
3. Divide by the number of books you are printing. (The answer is how much you are spending to make each book.)
4. The retail price should be at least 3 times this amount.
5. The wholesale price will be about 55% of the retail price.

You can play around with the figures to make sure that your retail price will be attractive to buyers. But always be sure the wholesale price is enough above the unit cost that your profit margin is sufficient.

Below is an example of the above formula:

1. \$250 for ISBN, registration, and copyright fees; \$400 for copyediting; \$2,000 for interior and exterior graphic design; \$750 for typesetting; \$150 for proofreading; \$3,000 for printing; \$400 for shipping; \$1,000 for promotion; \$600 for storage; \$500 for shipping supplies for orders; \$200 for postage throughout
2. \$9,250
3. \$4.63 (for a 2,000 quantity)
4. \$14.99
5. \$ 6.74

You can see that the wholesale price only allows you a profit of \$2.11 per book. While wholesale prices should only apply to carton quantities, it might be better to raise the retail price slightly so that you are receiving at least a \$3 profit per book on wholesale pricing. On the other hand there will probably be about 50+ books in a carton so your profit for a carton quantity would be at least \$105. Some self-publishers are more concerned that their message is published and do not care how much profit is made.

## Measuring the Risk

Self-publishing a book is a business venture and just as in any new business there is always some risk involved. It is important to weigh

these risks before you begin. Unless you know that you can sell enough books to recover your investment, it may be wiser not to self-publish.

The second word of caution is to guard yourself against any unethical practices by the publisher or providers you hire. Always ask for agreements in writing and preferably in a contract, and then ask your lawyer to read over the contract or agreement before you sign it.

Finally, plan the venture carefully. Take your time and seek advice and counsel as questions arise. If you do proceed in this manner, your satisfaction will be complete in the production of a quality book that brings your message to readers who will happily purchase your book.

If you are ready to begin a publishing venture,  
call Perez Print Productions for a free consultation.

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