16 ESSENTIAL GUIDES TO SELF-PUBLISH A CHILDREN'S BOOK

TULLIPSTUDIO

ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISH A CHILDREN'S BOOK

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CRUCIAL THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE SELF-PUBLISHING A CHILDREN'S BOOK

The Difference Between Self-Publishing and Traditional Publishing

Self-publishing is like setting sail on your own creative voyage. You are the captain, steering the ship exactly where you want it to go. You can choose to navigate every step yourself or invite skilled professionals aboard to help guide the way. This route offers total freedom and control, but also asks you to be ready for the waves and challenges along the journey.

Traditional publishing is a different kind of voyage. Instead of steering the ship alone, you work with an agent who helps you find the right publisher. Once accepted, a crew is already in place. Editors, illustrators, and designers are hired by the publisher and will work alongside you to bring your story to life. You will not need to cover the upfront publishing costs, but you will share the treasure from each sale with the publisher.

Available Formats for Self-Publishing

When you self-publish, you can choose the form your story will take. A printed edition, which could be a charming paperback, an elegant hardcover, or even a sturdy board book for tiny hands. Or a digital edition, known as an eBook, which can travel the world in an instant. Printing costs will depend on the number of pages, the paper quality, and the type of cover you select. Many publishers

can also help you distribute your book through online marketplaces, bookstores, and even directly to eager readers.

Understanding Copyright Ownership

When you self-publish, the crown of ownership rests entirely on your head. You hold the full copyright, which means you have complete authority to reproduce your work, create adaptations, translate it into other languages, or even write sequels. You control how it is sold, displayed, and shared with the world.

If You Hire an Illustrator, Who Owns the Art?

Bringing in a professional illustrator does not mean giving away your creative rights. You still hold the authority to sell and distribute the book as a whole. You can decide whether or not to place the illustrator's name on the cover, but you cannot claim to have created the illustrations yourself. That honor belongs to the artist who crafted them.

How to Distribute and Sell Your Children's Book

Before releasing your book into the world, choose the format you want and research the publishers who can help you achieve it. Amazon remains a strong platform for both printed and digital editions. Many publishers also offer distribution to physical bookstores, online platforms, and direct sales, opening multiple doors for your story to find its readers.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF SELF-PUBLISHING

Advantages

1. Complete Creative Freedom

When you self-publish, you are the artist and the director of your own masterpiece. Every choice is yours to make. You can handle the entire process on your own or invite talented professionals to help you. There is no shortage of skilled freelancers who can transform your manuscript into something magical. They can create captivating illustrations, refine your story with expert editing, and design a cover so eye-catching that readers cannot resist picking up your book.

2. Faster Time to Market

Your publishing schedule is in your hands. From the first word you write to the moment your book rolls off the press, you decide how quickly the process moves. If you work efficiently, your book can be ready for readers sooner than expected, giving you precious time to focus on your marketing plans. This could mean organizing promotions, planning a launch event, revealing your cover, visiting schools, signing books, and creating unforgettable moments that spread excitement about your story.

3. Freedom to Sell in Any Format

When you self-publish, the copyright is fully yours. Even if you hire an illustrator, you decide how and where to sell your work,

as long as you follow the platform's rules. Traditional publishers often set restrictions, but self-publishing gives you the freedom to release your book as a printed edition, an eBook, or both. You can place your story anywhere you believe your audience will find it.

4. Higher Profits Compared to Traditional Royalties

Many authors choose self-publishing because the earnings from traditional royalties can be surprisingly small. With self-publishing, you keep every dollar from each sale. There is no need to divide your income with agencies or publishers, which means your hard work pays you directly.

Disadvantages

1. High Upfront Investment for Professional Quality

A beautiful, professional children's book often requires a significant upfront budget. You may need to hire an editor, illustrator, and possibly a marketing expert, in addition to covering printing costs. While this investment can be substantial, the polished results are often worth every cent.

To protect your budget, research the rates for each service and compare costs from various self-publishing companies. Once you know the numbers, plan your spending carefully and look for areas where you can save without compromising quality.

2. Challenges in Getting into Bookstores

Placing your book on the shelves of physical bookstores can be tricky. Some retailers are hesitant to accept self-published works due to their internal policies.

One way to overcome this is to work with a publisher that already has distribution partnerships with bookstores. For example, IngramSpark provides print-on-demand services along with distribution to retail outlets where customers make their purchases.

3. Handling Everything Yourself or Hiring Help

Self-publishing means every step is your responsibility. This can be exciting, but also exhausting, especially if you are balancing it

with other commitments. Hiring professionals can save you both time and energy, but you must choose them carefully. When bringing in an illustrator, for example, review their portfolio, discuss pricing and copyright terms, agree on a contract, and ensure their style perfectly matches your vision.

HIRING A PROFESSIONAL BOOK EDITOR

Every author dreams of holding a book in their hands that feels complete. A story that shines in every way, from the beauty of its illustrations and the allure of its cover to the texture of its pages and, most importantly, the strength of its words.

This is where a professional book editor becomes your secret weapon. They are not just grammar fixers. They are story sculptors who help shape characters into living, breathing personalities, tighten your plot so it grips the reader, and fine-tune your main conflict until it pulses with energy. They help craft character arcs that feel unforgettable and choose words that land with precision and heart.

Traditional publishers never skip this step, and neither should you as a self-publisher. Bringing in an editor with expertise in your genre and years of experience can transform your manuscript into something you never thought possible. They can spot plot holes you did not know were there, strengthen characters who feel flat, and smooth out storylines so they flow like a perfectly told tale.

You can find skilled editors ready to collaborate on platforms such as Reedsy.com.

Content Editor

Think of the content editor as the architect of your story. They

look at the big picture, ensuring the structure is solid, the plot is captivating, and the pacing keeps readers turning the pages. For non-fiction, they will also make sure your facts are accurate and your flow is easy to follow.

Copy Editor or Line Editor

Once the foundation is secure, the copy or line editor steps in to polish the details. They remove grammatical errors, fix awkward sentences, check for inconsistencies, and make your language sparkle. They also help you replace overused phrases with fresh and precise wording.

Proofreader

The proofreader is your final guardian before the book heads into the world. They comb through each page, hunting down any lingering mistakes. This last step ensures your book is flawless and ready to delight every reader who opens it.

HIRING A PROFESSIONAL ILLUSTRATOR

Credibility

The search for the perfect illustrator is like setting off on a treasure hunt. You are looking for someone who can bring your story to life with beautiful, captivating illustrations. The most important thing to seek is their credibility in the world of children's book illustration. Ask to see books they have worked on before and learn how those books performed in the market. This ensures that you are investing in a professional whose work meets high standards and whose reliability will not disappoint you.

Take your time exploring portfolios carefully, one by one. When you find an illustrator who feels like the right fit, visit their website or social media to see the full scope of their work and check for consistency.

Consistency

Consistency is the secret ingredient to creating something remarkable. The more time illustrators spend crafting art for children's books, the more refined their skills become. Over time, they also experiment with different styles, each one designed to catch a reader's eye and spark their imagination.

Look closely at their past work to see if they have consistently delivered quality illustrations for children's books. Once you are confident in their skill and dedication, the next question is whether their style matches your vision.

Style

The world of children's book illustration is bursting with variety. Some styles are whimsical, playful, and light. Others lean toward cartoon-like fun, stylized designs, sketch-based charm, or rich realism. Each style takes a different amount of time to create, and the difficulty of the style often affects the cost.

Choose the style that not only fits your budget but also reflects the soul of your story. This is why it is wise to write your budget plan early, covering everything from the start of the illustration process through to marketing.

Illustration from Peter Pan by Alejandro Mesa

Illustration from Good Night's Book by Chaos Ego

Illustration from Barnabe by Alena Tkach

Illustration from Super Tahlia by TullipStudio

Illustration from Super Tahlia by TullipStudio

Budget and Cost

Creating a children's book is both a creative journey and a financial investment. That is why it is essential to plan your budget from the very beginning. Decide how your book will be formatted and how many professionals you will bring in to complete it. The more people involved and the larger your print run, the higher the cost will be.

Illustrators' fees vary widely, so you can often find someone who suits both your vision and your budget. Before you begin, make sure you and your chosen illustrator sign a clear working contract. This agreement will guide the project, protect both parties, and ensure your collaboration runs smoothly from the first sketch to the final page.

BEWARE OF FAKE ILLUSTRATORS

Lack of Communication

A good collaboration thrives on clear and steady communication. Your working contract should outline not only the deliverables, but also how you and the illustrator will communicate and how the workflow will progress from start to finish. Some unprofessional illustrators may be difficult to reach, which can cause delays and frustration.

Before you hire, read reviews from other authors who have worked with the illustrator. Learn how reliable they were, how they handled deadlines, and whether they delivered what they promised.

Disobeying or Violating the Project Contract

One of the worst situations you could face is having your illustrator break the agreement you both signed. In rare but unfortunate cases, this could mean they take your payment and disappear without delivering any work. To protect yourself, arrange to pay half of the total fee once the project is halfway complete, and the remaining balance only after all illustrations are finished and approved.

Fake Illustrations

Always study an illustrator's portfolio before beginning any discussions. Sadly, there are still people who present clip art as original children's book illustrations. Clip art can often be downloaded for free from the internet, and you may not recognize it immediately.

There are simple ways to check if an image is genuine. Search for it on sites like freepik.com, vecteezy.com, or google.com. You can also ask the illustrator to provide an initial sketch before finalizing the agreement.

Fake illustrations often have telltale signs.

1. They appear overly digital, lacking the warmth of hand-drawn or carefully crafted art.
2. They are offered without any sketch previews.
3. They are priced suspiciously low, often between five and twenty dollars per illustration.

By taking these precautions, you can avoid costly mistakes and ensure your book is brought to life with art that is both authentic and beautiful.

Fake illustration/Full of clip arts

Fake illustration/Full of clip arts

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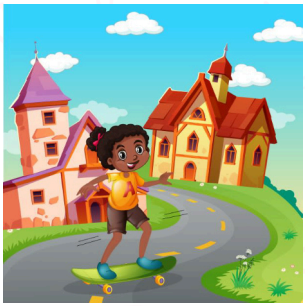


Fake illustration/Full of clip arts

HOW ABOUT USING AI?

Artificial Intelligence is no longer just the stuff of science fiction. It has quietly stepped into the world of storytelling, illustration, and publishing. For self-published children's authors, it can be both a magical tool and a tricky puzzle. Knowing how to use AI wisely can help you create books that delight young readers while still staying true to your artistic voice.

Advantages of Using AI

1. Faster Story Development

AI writing tools can help you brainstorm story ideas, outline plots, or even refine sentences. You can use AI to explore different story endings, create unique character names, or suggest vocabulary that matches your target reading age. What once took weeks of planning can now happen in a single afternoon.

2. Affordable Illustration Options

Hiring a professional illustrator can be costly, especially for full-color picture books. AI-generated artwork can provide affordable draft images or visual references, helping you shape your vision before committing to a final illustrator. For authors with smaller budgets, AI art can even serve as the main illustration source when done with care and originality.

3. Translation for Global Reach

AI translation tools can quickly turn your story into different languages, making your book available to children around the world. While human translators are still the gold standard for cultural accuracy, AI makes the first step faster and less expensive.

4. Enhanced Marketing Materials

From social media banners to interactive quizzes, AI tools can help you create eye-catching promotional content. You can even generate quick product mock-ups to showcase your book before it is printed.

Disadvantages of Using AI

1. Risk of Generic Writing

AI may produce text that feels flat or formulaic if left unedited. While it can offer inspiration, it often lacks the emotional depth, humor, and subtlety that human authors bring to children's stories.

2. Limited Artistic Consistency

AI art tools sometimes struggle to maintain consistent character appearance across multiple illustrations. This inconsistency can be distracting for readers and may reduce the professional quality of your book.

3. Possible Licensing and Ownership Issues

Some AI tools have unclear terms about who owns the generated work. This can cause problems when selling your book commercially. It is vital to check the licensing rights before using AI content.

4. Reduced Human Collaboration

Working with editors, illustrators, and beta readers often brings unexpected magic to a project. Relying too heavily on AI can limit the richness that comes from human creativity.

Dangers to Be Aware Of

1. Copyright Infringement

Some AI systems are trained on copyrighted materials without the consent of the original creators. This means AI-generated content might unintentionally copy or resemble existing works, putting you at risk of legal issues.

2. Inappropriate or Inaccurate Output

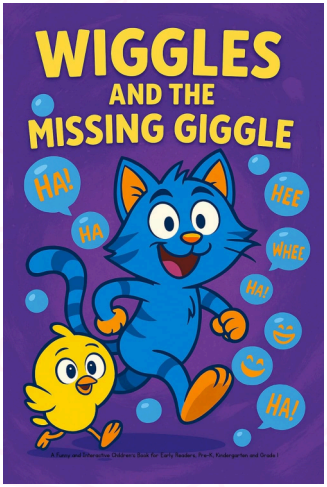
AI does not understand context the way humans do. It can produce culturally insensitive imagery or incorrect information, especially when creating educational content for children. Every AI-generated element must be carefully reviewed.

3. Loss of Creative Authenticity

Overusing AI can make your work feel less personal. If every sentence, picture, or idea comes from a machine, you risk losing the unique storytelling voice that makes readers connect with your work.

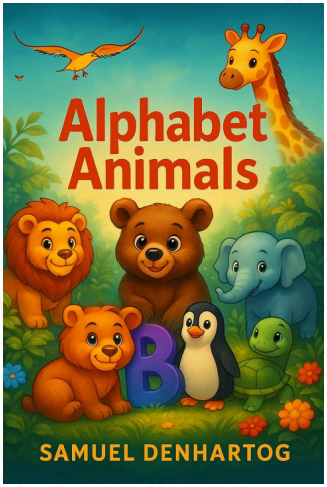
4. Overreliance on Technology

AI tools can stop working, change their terms of service, or become costly. Relying entirely on them without having your own creative process can leave you stuck if the technology changes.



Wiggles and the missing giggle by Eitan P.

Shellby the Crab and the Coconut by Miss Rainbowlite



Alphabet Animals by Samuel DenHartog

Miss Farts-A-Lot's Busy Classroom by Annie Noor

AI should be a helper, not a replacement for your creativity. It is a powerful tool that can speed up the process, expand your possibilities, and help you reach a wider audience. However, the heart of a children's book still comes from you, your imagination, your voice, and your connection to the child turning each page. Use AI thoughtfully, and it can become an ally in bringing your stories to life.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Self-publishing a book is like embarking on a grand creative adventure. It is thrilling and deeply rewarding, but it does require an investment of both time and money. For children's books in particular, there is an added treasure you must budget for. The illustrations that will bring your words to life.

These illustrations are more than just pictures. They are the heartbeat of your book, the element that will make young readers fall in love with your story before they even read the first word. High-quality illustrations can be a significant part of your budget, but they are worth every cent when they capture the magic you imagined.

To achieve the best results, work with a professional illustrator who not only has skill, but also a deep love for creating art that speaks to children. Their touch can transform your book into a timeless keepsake.

Here are the average costs you might expect when self-publishing a children's book.

Professional editing for story plot, character development, and flow	$100
Professional proofreading to ensure your text is flawless	$100
Cover design to make your book stand out	$150
Picture book illustrations that bring your story to life	$1,000 - $5,000

Book interior design and formatting for a polished finish	$100
TOTAL	$1,650- $,5650

While these numbers may seem high, they represent an investment in quality, professionalism, and the long-term appeal of your book. When done right, your book will not just be read. It will be cherished.

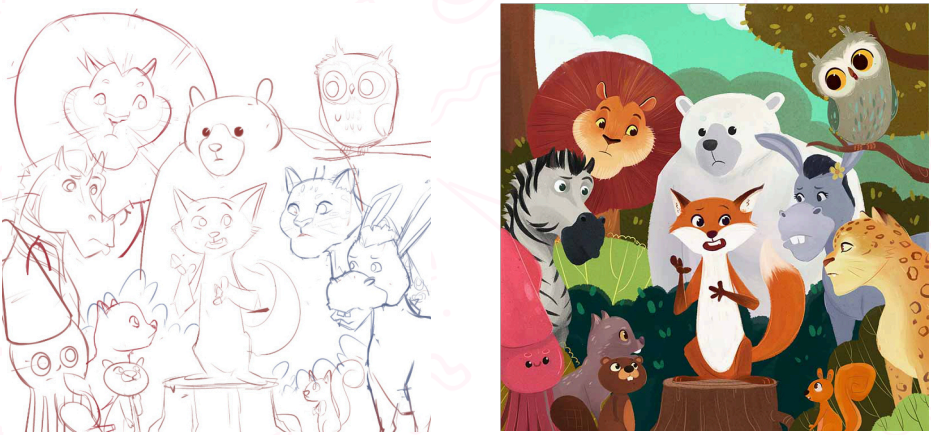
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TULLIPSTUDIO

At TullipStudio, every illustration begins with a blank canvas and a spark of imagination. Using a pen tablet, our artists carefully hand-draw each piece based on the detailed brief provided by the author. No clip art. No shortcuts. Every line starts from a sketch, ensuring that the final artwork is as original as the story it belongs to.

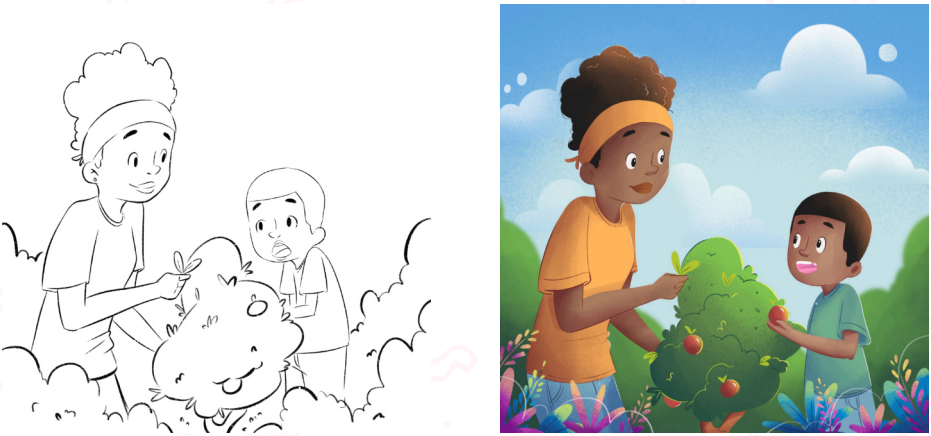
We take pride in guaranteeing that every illustration is crafted exclusively for the author who commissions it. Each piece is professionally created, polished to perfection, and delivered with the quality your story deserves.

Each image is a product of creativity, skill, and dedication, starting from the first pencil stroke and growing into a vibrant, full-color scene that captures the heart of your book.

Original illustrations created from sketch by TullipStudio



Original illustrations created from sketch by TullipStudio



Original illustrations created from sketch by TullipStudio

Original illustrations created from sketch by TullipStudio

Free Sketch for Your Project

We believe in letting the art speak for itself. That is why we offer a free sketch before you commit. You can experience the joy of seeing your story come to life without spending a single cent upfront. Once you have seen the sketch, you can decide whether to continue the project or walk away. This way, your decision is made with complete confidence.

GET MY FREE SKETCH

PRINTING METHODS

Offset Printing

Offset printing is the art of producing books in large quantities. In this method, the contents of your book are printed on oversized sheets of paper, which are then cut into the right dimensions and bound together to create the final product. This approach is widely used in traditional publishing because it offers lower costs per copy, high-quality results, and the advantage of having plenty of books ready for distribution.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Produces exceptional quality, especially for full-color books	Requires a significant upfront investment, often starting around two thousand dollars including printing and shipping
Lower cost per copy when printing in bulk	Needs ample storage space for all the printed copies
Large quantities allow for fast and efficient distribution	Takes longer to produce since it involves printing a large batch at once

Print on Demand

Print on demand is a modern and cost-efficient alternative. Instead of printing hundreds or thousands of copies in advance, each book is printed only when someone orders it. This method is especially popular among self-published authors because it minimizes upfront costs and avoids the need for storage space.

Companies such as IngramSpark offer print-on-demand services and can ship directly to readers or bookstores as soon as the purchase is made.

Advantages	Disadvantages
No need for a large upfront printing investment	Higher cost per copy compared to offset printing
No storage space required for unsold books	Quality may not match the standard of offset printing
Many publishers can handle direct distribution to customers or bookstores	Less effective for titles expected to sell in very large volumes

PRINTING COMPANIES FOR SELF-PUBLISHED AUTHORS

Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP)

Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing is one of the most popular platforms for indie authors. As part of the world's largest marketplace for digital eBooks, KDP allows you to publish your work in print or eBook format and reach a global audience.

With KDP, you are in full control. You must prepare everything yourself, from cover design and illustrations to editing and marketing. If you decide to hire professionals for any of these tasks, choose wisely to ensure your book stands out.

KDP also offers a special program called KDP Select. By enrolling, you agree to sell your book exclusively through Amazon in exchange for promotional benefits such as free promotions and Kindle Countdown Deals. Keep in mind that exclusivity means your book cannot be sold anywhere else during the enrollment period.

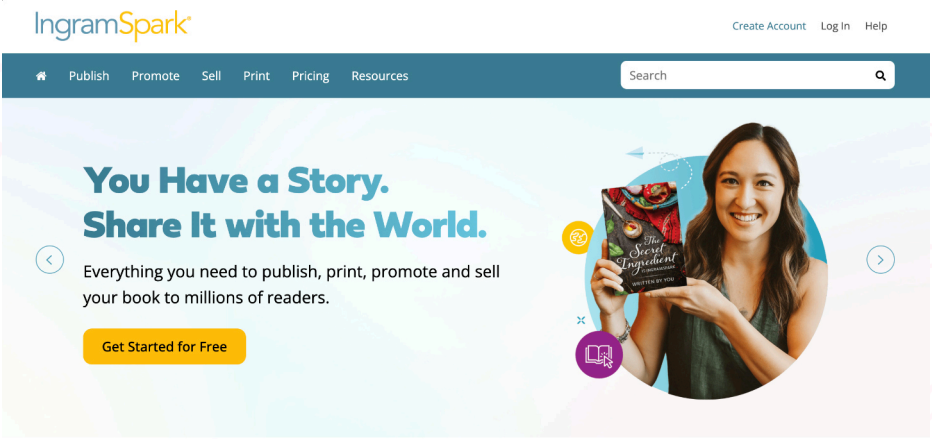
It is important to note that KDP is not the same as Amazon Publishing, even though both belong to Amazon.

KDP website preview

Pricing	Free to upload
Available for	Printed books & eBooks
Distributions for eBooks	Available on all Amazon marketplaces
Distributions for printed books	To expand distribution to libraries and bookstores, you must join the Expanded Distribution program and meet its requirementsrequirements to get your books distributed to libraries and bookstores.
Royalties	50 percent for books priced below 9.98 dollars 60 percent for books priced above 9.99 dollars

IngramSpark Publishing

IngramSpark is known for its vast global distribution network, allowing indie authors to publish in both print and eBook formats. They work with major retailers and offer professional printing services that meet industry standards.



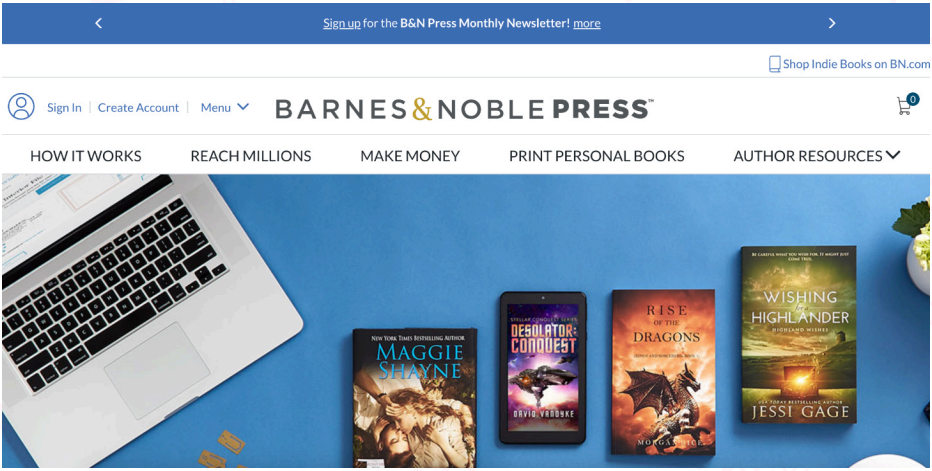
IngramSpark website preview

Pricing	Free to upload
Available for	Printed books & eBooks
Distributions	Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, Apple Books, Kobo, Zola Books, Follett, Booktopia, Bookmate, EBSCO, 24Symbols
Royalties	IngramSpark provides an online royalties calculator so you can estimate your earnings in advance

Barnes & Noble Press

Barnes & Noble Press, formerly known as Nook Press, is Amazon KDP's closest competitor. It allows you to self-publish in both print and eBook formats. You can choose color printing, customize trim sizes, and select different finishes for your printed books.

One unique perk is that if you sell over 500 copies within a twelve-month period, you become eligible for additional promotional opportunities on Barnes & Noble platforms.



Barnes & Noble website preview

Pricing	Free to upload
Available for	Printed books & eBooks

Distributions	Barnes and Noble stores and websites
Royalties	70 percent for author royalty for books priced between $0.99 and $199.99 30 percent for B&N Margin for books priced between $0.99 and $199.99

Apple Books

Apple Books, launched in 2010, quickly became a major player in the digital reading market. Within two years, more than 400 million books had been downloaded from the platform. Apple Books, much like Kindle, offers an integrated experience where readers can enjoy eBooks and audiobooks in one app.

However, Apple Books is exclusive to Apple device users. Authors must also own an Apple product such as a MacBook or iMac to publish on the platform. Non-Apple users can still access audiobooks through iTunes but cannot read eBooks through a web browser.

Pricing	Free to upload
Available for	Printed books & eBooks
Distributions	Exclusively for Apple Book users
Royalties	70 percent for the author 30 percent for Apple Books

ISBN AND BARCODE

When Do You Need an ISBN?

An ISBN is your book's official fingerprint. It is the unique number that identifies your publication in the global book world. You will need one when you are ready to publish, and each version of your book must have its own ISBN. For example, if you release your story as both a paperback and a hardcover, each format will require a separate ISBN with its own description.

Having an ISBN makes it easier for bookstores, libraries, and readers to find your book. It links directly to important details such as the title, genre, synopsis, publisher, and author name.

What Is the Difference Between an ISBN and a Barcode?

An ISBN is a product number that stores all the details about your book. A barcode is the visual form of that number, designed to be scanned quickly by a machine. The barcode can also include additional information such as the price of the book, which is particularly useful for bookstores.

Important Facts About ISBNs

- An ISBN never expires
- One ISBN is assigned to one specific format or version of a book

- ISBNs make books easy to search and identify
- They help readers and bookstores know exactly what the book is
- They are the global standard for book identification
- In some countries, books without an ISBN may be taxed at higher rates
- To find the official ISBN agency in your area, visit https://www.isbn-international.org/agencies

Do Self-Published Authors Need a Publisher to Buy an ISBN?

No. You can purchase your own ISBN without going through a publisher. In publishing terms, the "publisher" is simply the person or entity that initiates the production of the book, which can be you.

What If the Publishing Platform Provides a Free ISBN?

This depends on the platform's rules. For instance, Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing provides free ISBNs for eBooks sold on Amazon. However, this ISBN applies only to that eBook version and only within Amazon's marketplace.

If you plan to sell outside Amazon or publish in multiple formats such as paperback or hardcover, you will need a separate ISBN for each version.

Samples of ISBN and Barcode

COPYRIGHT AND LICENSE

What Is Copyright?

Copyright is a form of intellectual property that belongs to the creator of an original work. Whether it is a song, a film, software, or a book, copyright grants the creator the exclusive right to reproduce the work in many forms, distribute copies, earn income from sales, and perform or display the work publicly. It is a powerful shield that protects your creation and ensures you have control over how it is used.

What Does Copyright Not Protect?

Copyright does not protect ideas. An idea must be turned into a tangible work, such as a written manuscript, before it is protected. Facts are also not eligible for copyright because they are not original creations. Titles, short phrases, names, colors, lists of ingredients, or familiar symbols cannot be copyrighted either, as they do not meet originality requirements.

Why Register Copyright If Protection Is Automatic?

- A registered copyright is easier for the public to identify
- Some royalties require registration before they can be claimed
- A registered copyright is mandatory before filing an infringement lawsuit in court

- In legal disputes, registration creates a presumption that the ownership claim is valid
- Registration protects against the illegal importation of unauthorized copies

How Long Does Copyright Last?

For works created on or after January 1, 1978, copyright protection lasts for the lifetime of the creator plus seventy years after their death. For joint works created by more than one person, the term extends to seventy years after the death of the last surviving creator. Once that period ends, there is no renewal and the work enters the public domain.

International Copyright

The United States maintains mutual copyright agreements with 171 countries worldwide. Under these agreements, each participating country honors the copyrights of the others' citizens, eliminating the need for creators to re-register their works in multiple countries.

BOOK DISTRIBUTIONS

Book distribution is the bridge between your story and your readers. It is the process of getting your book into the hands of people, whether through a publisher, retailer, or a distribution service. While it can be one of the most challenging parts of publishing a children's book, the arrival of the internet has transformed it into a more accessible and flexible process.

Today, self-published authors have the same access to online retail distribution as traditional publishers. This means you can place your book directly on platforms like Amazon, the world's leading retailer for both printed and eBook editions, without facing steep upfront costs.

But Amazon is not the only path. You can create your own personal website, sell your book directly through it, and manage every aspect of distribution yourself. This approach allows you to connect more personally with your readers and maintain complete control over sales.

Printed Book Distributions

If you choose a print-on-demand service, getting your printed book into circulation is relatively simple. With print-on-demand, your book is only printed when an order is placed, and it is shipped directly to the customer by the retailer. While this is convenient, it also means your book may not appear on the shelves of brick-and-mortar stores.

To widen your reach, you can use both Amazon KDP and IngramSpark together. Amazon KDP works perfectly for distributing printed books exclusively on Amazon, while IngramSpark can handle distribution beyond Amazon, including physical bookstores such as Barnes & Noble.

eBook Distributions

Once your eBook files are ready in formats such as EPUB or MOBI, you have two main options. You can work directly with online retailers or use an eBook distribution service.

Store	Publishing Platform	User Friendliness	Comments
Amazon Kindle Store	Kindle Direct Publishing	★★★	Opt out of KDP Select unless you want to be exclusive
Apple Books	iTunes Producer / Books Author	★	Only Available on Mac OS
Kobo	Kobo Writing Life	★★★	Also reaches Kobo's and Overdrive's distribution network
Barnes & Noble	B&N Press	★★	B&N Press revamped their site in 2018, making it more use friendly
Google Play	Google Play Books	★	You first need apply to be accepted in the "Google Book Partner Program"

Source: Reedsy.com

Working directly with retailers gives you more profit per sale, greater control over your book, and better access to marketing tools. On the other hand, using a distribution service means sharing some of your earnings in exchange for having the distributor manage your titles and reach markets you might not access otherwise, such as libraries. Many distribution services also provide helpful tools to enhance marketing and boost sales.

MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

What Is Marketing?

Marketing is the art of connecting your book with the people who will treasure it. It is not the same as promotion, though the two often work hand in hand. Marketing is the ongoing process of attracting readers and encouraging them to purchase your work again and again. To build an effective strategy, ask yourself four key questions. Who are your potential readers? What are their interests? How will they discover your book? And what will convince them to buy it?

These questions align with what is often called the marketing mix, also known as the four Ps. Product, Price, Place, and Promotion.

Product is about how your book will appear to the world. Will it be printed, available as an eBook, or both? How will it feel in the reader's hands?

Price requires you to consider all your costs, from professional services to publishing fees, and decide on a fair yet profitable selling price.

Place refers to where your book will be sold. Will it be in bookstores, on online marketplaces, or through your own website?

Promotion is how you communicate your book's value to potential readers. This could involve book signings, social media engagement, and advertising campaigns on platforms like Facebook Ads or Amazon Ads.

What Is Advertising?

Advertising is the fourth element of the marketing mix and one of the most powerful ways to boost your book sales. It is the method you use to ensure your book is seen and heard by the people most likely to buy it. Modern advertising tools such as Amazon Ads and Facebook Ads make this process more targeted and efficient than ever.

With these platforms, you can define the age range of your target audience, make your book appear in their social media feeds, select the geographical regions for your campaigns, and control exactly how much you spend. If you prefer not to manage this yourself, you can hire a marketing service to run the campaigns for you.

At TullipStudio, we support authors by showcasing their illustrated books across our social media channels, website, and Amazon pages. This added visibility can spark interest, encourage engagement, and help your book reach more readers.

THINGS TO AVOID WHEN WRITING CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Creating a children's book is a joyful adventure, but there are pitfalls that can trip up even the most enthusiastic author. Some are easy to spot, while others sneak in quietly and weaken your story. By avoiding these common mistakes, you will give your book the best chance to connect with young readers and their parents.

Writing Without Knowing Your Audience

Every children's story has a specific age group in mind, from toddlers to tweens. Writing without this focus can make your language too simple for older readers or too complex for younger ones. Research the reading level and emotional needs of your target audience before you begin. This helps you choose the right vocabulary, sentence length, and themes.

Preaching Instead of Storytelling

Children's books can teach important lessons, but a story that sounds like a lecture quickly loses their interest. Rather than telling readers what to think or do, let them experience the lesson through the characters' actions, choices, and emotions. A well-told story invites children to discover the message for themselves.

Overcomplicating the Plot

Young readers love adventure and surprises, but too many twists, flashbacks, or complicated timelines can be confusing. Keep the storyline clear, with a logical sequence of events. If you have multiple characters or subplots, make sure each one serves the main story rather than distracting from it.

Forgetting the Visual Element

Illustrations are more than decorations, they are partners in storytelling. New authors sometimes forget to leave space for the art or fail to imagine how text and images will work together. Picture the scenes as you write, thinking about how the illustrator will bring them to life.

Using Language That Talks Down to Children

Children are quick to sense when an author underestimates them. Avoid overly simplified language that strips away richness and personality. Use vivid, precise words that challenge young readers without overwhelming them. Respecting their intelligence builds trust and keeps them engaged.

Ignoring Rhythm and Read-Aloud Quality

Many children's books are read aloud by parents, teachers, and librarians. Writing without considering the sound of the words

can make your story flat or awkward. Read your sentences out loud to catch clumsy phrasing, overly long lines, or missed opportunities for playful repetition.

Skipping Professional Feedback

First-time authors sometimes rush from writing to publishing without letting anyone critique the story. Beta readers, editors, or critique groups can point out issues you may have missed, from pacing problems to unclear character motivations. Honest feedback is a gift that strengthens your work.

Neglecting the Emotional Connection

A story can be perfectly structured and beautifully illustrated yet still fail to touch the heart. Children remember the books that make them feel something joy, curiosity, empathy, or courage. Focus on creating characters and moments that evoke real emotion.

Overloading the Page with Text

Too much text on a single page can overwhelm young readers and crowd out the illustrations. Keep sentences concise and break the story into smaller, more digestible sections. This makes the reading experience smoother and more enjoyable.

Forgetting the Adult Reader

Children's books are often purchased, read, or recommended by adults. A story that entertains both the child and the adult creates a shared reading experience and increases the chance of the book being read again and again.

Blindly Following the Hype

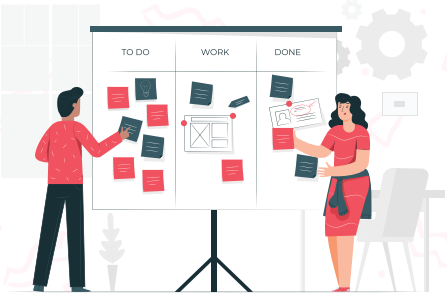
There is a world of difference between feeling inspired and chasing what everyone else is doing. Inspiration is a spark. It is when someone else's work ignites an idea in you, and that idea grows into something uniquely yours. Following the hype, however, is like painting over someone else's picture without truly knowing why they created it.

The real magic of writing a children's book lies in creating something that fulfills you as an artist. It is about weaving words into a story and pairing them with illustrations that breathe life into your vision. You do not have to be the one holding the paintbrush. Many gifted illustrators can bring your imagined worlds to life in the exact style you envision.

Rushing to Publish

Publishing a book is thrilling, but rushing can rob your story of its full potential. A successful self-publishing journey begins with a map, and that map is your plan. The very first landmark on that map should be research.

Research everything. Learn who your ideal readers are and how old they might be. Find a publisher who matches both your vision and your budget. Understand how your book will travel to its readers. Seek an editor who can strengthen your plot and characters. Choose an illustrator whose style matches the story's personality. The time you spend planning will save you from costly detours later.



Neglecting a Marketing and Promotion Plan

Finishing your manuscript is not the end of the journey. It is the moment before you step onto the stage and share your work with the world. Even before your book is in print, you should have a marketing and promotion plan ready.

Decide exactly where your book will be sold and how you will reach your audience. Picture a book signing on launch day, complete with curious readers and fresh pages ready for your signature. Imagine advertisements on platforms such as Amazon or Facebook, drawing new readers to your story. The more intentional you are with promotion, the better your book's chances of finding a home in the hearts of readers.

HOW DO YOU MANAGE THE MERCHANT FOR YOUR BOOK?

Selling Merchant Fulfilled Books on Amazon Seller Central

For self-published authors who want complete control over their books, **Merchant Fulfilled** on Amazon Seller Central can feel like running your own personal bookstore, right from your home. Instead of printing through Amazon's print-on-demand services, you produce your own books in advance, store them yourself, and ship each order directly to the customer.

This approach can be a perfect fit for authors who value quality control, personal touches, and higher profit margins, but it also comes with extra responsibilities.

Advantages

1. Full Control Over Book Quality

When you handle the printing yourself, you decide on paper type, cover finish, binding, and overall craftsmanship. Your readers get exactly the book you envisioned without the limitations of print-on-demand specifications.

2. Potentially Higher Profits Per Sale

Since you are not paying per-book print-on-demand fees, your cost per unit is often lower. If you print in bulk, the savings can be significant, allowing for a healthier profit margin.

3. Opportunity for Personalization

Because you pack and ship each book, you can include special touches like signed copies, bookmarks, thank-you notes, or promotional flyers for your next book. These little extras can turn a one-time buyer into a loyal fan.

4. Flexible Inventory Management

You decide how many copies to have on hand and can adjust print runs based on seasonal sales, events, or special promotions. You are not locked into someone else's stock management system.

Disadvantages

1. Storage Space Needed

Keeping dozens or even hundreds of books at home takes up space. You will need to consider where you will store them to keep them safe from humidity, sunlight, and damage.

2. Time-Consuming Order Fulfillment

You must handle every shipment yourself, including printing labels, packing books, and visiting the post office or arranging courier pick-up. During busy periods, this can take hours out of your week.

3. Upfront Printing Costs

Bulk printing saves money in the long run but requires a larger payment upfront. You must be confident you can sell enough copies to make the investment worthwhile.

4. Amazon's Shipping Standards

Amazon has strict rules for packaging, tracking, and delivery times. Failing to meet these can lead to negative reviews or even account suspension.

5. No Amazon Prime Badge

Merchant Fulfilled books are not automatically eligible for Amazon Prime's two-day shipping, which can make your listing less attractive to Prime customers compared to Fulfilled by Amazon (FBA) listings.

Final Thought

Selling Merchant Fulfilled through Amazon Seller Central is like being both author and bookstore owner. It is rewarding for those who enjoy hands-on control and want to maximize profits, but it requires organization, time, and commitment. If you have the space, the discipline, and the passion to personally send your books into the world, this method can make your publishing journey even more personal and profitable.

FBM (Fulfilled by Merchant): Printing Yourself and Partnering with a Fulfillment Company

FBM, or Fulfilled by Merchant, is an approach where you take charge of producing your own books, but you are not personally packing and mailing each order to Amazon customers. Instead, you ship your printed books in bulk to a third-party fulfillment company. This partner stores your books and takes care of the

packaging, shipping, and in some cases, customer service. When a reader clicks "Buy Now" on Amazon, the fulfillment company steps in to handle the delivery.

Advantages of FBM with a Fulfillment Partner

1. You Keep Full Printing Control

Since you are printing your own books, you can select the paper, cover finish, and quality that perfectly matches your vision. You are not limited by the print specifications of Amazon KDP or other POD services.

2. Professional Packaging and Fast Shipping

Fulfillment companies specialize in order handling, so your books are packed securely and shipped promptly. This can result in fewer damaged books and happier customers.

3. More Time for Creative Work

With storage, packing, and shipping off your plate, you can focus on writing, illustration, and marketing instead of running to the post office every day.

4. Scalability for Growing Sales

If your book suddenly becomes a hit, fulfillment companies can handle the increase in orders without you scrambling to keep up. This makes FBM a good option for authors with growth in mind.

5. Potential Cost Savings in Bulk Shipping

When you send books to the fulfillment partner in bulk, you can

often save on per-unit shipping costs compared to mailing each book individually from home.

Disadvantages of FBM with a Fulfillment Partner

1. Upfront Printing and Storage Costs

Unlike print-on-demand, you must print books in advance. This means paying for a full print run and storage fees before you sell a single copy.

2. Less Immediate Inventory Control

Your books are stored off-site, so you must trust the fulfillment company's inventory tracking. Any miscounts or slow updates could lead to stock shortages.

3. Monthly or Per-Order Fees

Fulfillment companies charge for storage, packing, and shipping. While these fees may be offset by bulk shipping savings, they can add up, especially for slower-selling titles.

4. Choosing the Wrong Partner Can Hurt Sales

A fulfillment company that is slow, careless with packaging, or poor at customer service can damage your reputation. Choosing a trusted, reliable partner is essential.

5. Requires Careful Amazon Setup

FBM listings on Amazon require you to link your fulfillment company's shipping speeds and return handling to your Amazon account. Mistakes in setup can lead to late shipment penalties or poor performance ratings.

Is FBM with a Fulfillment Partner Right for You?

This option works best for authors who value printing freedom, want to ensure consistent quality, and are prepared for the upfront investment of bulk printing. It is also a good fit if you anticipate significant sales and need a professional team to handle the logistics while you concentrate on the creative and marketing side of your author business.

FBM (Fulfilled by Merchant): Printing Yourself and Partnering with a Fulfillment Company

If self-publishing your children's book is a grand adventure, then Fulfilled by Amazon, or FBA, is like hiring a fleet of helpful crew members to handle the heavy lifting. In this method, you print your books, send them in bulk to Amazon's fulfillment centers, and let Amazon store, package, and ship them to customers whenever an order is placed. You focus on storytelling and marketing while Amazon handles the logistics.

Advantages of FBA

1. Prime Badge and Fast Shipping

Books fulfilled through Amazon's warehouses qualify for Prime shipping. This means customers can receive their order in as little as one or two days, which can greatly boost your sales potential.

2. Hands-Off Logistics

No more packing boxes late at night or making frequent trips to

the post office. Amazon stores your books, ships them for you, and deals with customer returns. This frees up your time for writing your next masterpiece or building your author brand.

3. Customer Trust

Readers trust Amazon's packaging, tracking, and delivery reliability. The smoother the buying experience, the more likely customers are to recommend your book to others.

4. Scalability

If your book suddenly becomes a bestseller, Amazon can handle large volumes of orders without you needing to worry about running out of packing tape or shipping labels.

Disadvantages of FBA

1. Upfront Inventory Costs

Since you need to print your books in advance and send them to Amazon, you must pay for a bulk print run. This can be costly, especially if you are just starting out.

2. Storage and Fulfillment Fees

Amazon charges fees for storing your books in their warehouses and for each order they ship. If your books sell slowly, storage fees can pile up over time.

3. Inventory Management

You must monitor your stock levels in Seller Central and restock before running out. Failing to do so can interrupt sales momentum.

4. Less Direct Control Over Packaging

While Amazon packages orders professionally, you cannot include personal touches such as signed copies, bookmarks, or special messages unless you set up a more complex arrangement.

Is FBA Right for You?

If you want your children's book to benefit from Amazon's Prime badge, faster shipping, and hands-off order fulfillment, FBA can be a powerful option. It is especially helpful for authors with strong marketing plans who expect consistent sales. However, if you prefer to print only when orders arrive or want to add personal touches to every shipment, you might find other methods more fitting.

Print-On-Demand (Pod) Books

Print-on-demand is the modern magic trick of publishing. Instead of filling your garage with boxes of books you hope to sell one day, your book is printed only when a reader orders it. This means no wasted copies, no huge upfront printing bills, and no need to play Tetris with stacks of inventory in your home.

When a customer clicks "Buy" on Amazon or another platform, a POD service instantly brings your book to life, prints it, packages it, and ships it directly to their doorstep. You could be sipping coffee in your pajamas while your book makes its way across the country, or even across the world.

Advantages of POD

1. No Upfront Printing Costs

With POD, you do not have to pay thousands of dollars in advance to print a bulk order. You can start selling your book with minimal investment and scale as your audience grows.

2. No Storage Worries

Since books are printed one at a time, there is no need to rent storage space or turn your spare bedroom into a mini warehouse.

3. Automatic Fulfillment

The POD service handles printing, packaging, and shipping. You do not have to make trips to the post office or juggle stacks of envelopes.

4. Easy Updates

If you spot a typo, want to update your author bio, or change the cover, you can upload new files without wasting existing stock.3.

5. Global Reach

Many POD companies, such as Amazon KDP and IngramSpark, have international printing facilities. This means your book can be produced and shipped locally in different countries, reducing costs and delivery times for readers.

Disadvantages of POD

1. Higher Cost Per Copy

While you avoid the upfront investment of bulk printing, the cost per copy is higher than offset printing. This can lower your profit margin, especially if you plan to sell your book wholesale to bookstores.

2. Limited Printing Options

POD services offer fewer customization choices compared to traditional offset printing. If you dream of special finishes like foil stamping, embossing, or unique paper textures, POD might not be able to deliver them.

3. Potentially Lower Quality

Many POD books look excellent, but the print quality can vary between providers or even between batches. It is important to order samples before committing.

4. Less Advantage for High-Volume Sales

If you are confident your book will sell thousands of copies quickly, bulk offset printing could be more cost-effective than POD in the long run.

CREAT YOUR OWN CHILDREN'S BOOK