



# FROM MANUSCRIPT TO PUBLICATION

A Practical Guide to Editing,  
Publishing and Self-publishing  
2026

Robin Bower

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This guide is intended to provide general information about editing and publishing processes specifically for the Australian market. It does not constitute legal or financial advice. Readers are encouraged to seek independent professional advice where appropriate.

### **Acknowledgement**

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Dedicated to writers with a dream to share their stories with the world.



# FROM MANUSCRIPT TO PUBLICATION

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## About this guide and who it's for

This guide is a practical, plain-English guide for writers navigating editing, traditional publishing and self-publishing, written by an Australian professional accredited editor. It is intended as a reference covering editing, publishing pathways, platforms, costs and processes. It is suitable for first-time and emerging authors who want industry-grounded guidance before investing time or money. It also supports writers preparing manuscripts for professional editing or deciding which publishing path to pursue. This guide provides general publishing information and does not constitute legal or financial advice.

## The writing and revision stage

Before spending money on professional services, writers should complete a full draft and undertake self-editing. This includes tightening language, removing repetition, checking timelines, potential defamation issues, logic and voice consistency, among many other issues.

Early feedback from intelligent readers is strongly recommended. These should be people who read widely, understand your intended audience, and can comment honestly on structure and clarity.

Writers' centres provide courses, peer groups and resources:

- Writing WA – <https://www.writingwa.org/>
- Writing NSW – <https://writingnsw.org.au/>

This is a great resource to start with even though it is for the UK market:

<https://getpublished.penguin.co.uk/>

Here's the process from an Australian perspective:

<https://writingnsw.org.au/support/resources-for-writers/resource-sheets/getting-published/>

## Manuscript assessment

A manuscript assessment (also called a manuscript appraisal or report) is a high-level professional review of a draft. It focuses on structure, plot, pacing, character development, voice, genre expectations and market readiness.

The assessor provides a written report outlining strengths, weaknesses and recommended next steps. It does not involve line-by-line editing or correcting grammar.

This stage often saves money by clarifying whether a manuscript needs major structural work before editing begins.

Find more information at [RB Publishing](#).

## Editing and proofreading – what’s the difference?

Editing and proofreading are distinct stages and are often misunderstood.

**Structural or substantive editing** addresses big-picture issues such as organisation, clarity, flow, logic, voice and narrative effectiveness. Sections may be moved, expanded or cut in consultation with the author.

**Copyediting** corrects grammar, spelling, punctuation, consistency, factual errors, timelines, and internal logic.

**Proofreading** is the final check after the text has been laid out for print or ebook. It ensures all corrections have been applied and that formatting, headings, page numbers and images are correct. There should not be any detailed correcting or addition of text at this stage.

## Finding and working with an editor

Ideally, editors should have experience in your genre and an understanding of your intended audience. In Australia, Accredited Editors listed with IPEd meet recognised professional standards.

Find an editor: [www.iped-editors.org/find-an-editor/accredited-editors/](http://www.iped-editors.org/find-an-editor/accredited-editors/)

When requesting a quote, be prepared to provide word count, a synopsis, target audience, a sample chapter, your timeline and an indicative budget.

Information on editors’ rates: [www.iped-editors.org/about-editing/editors-pay-rates/](http://www.iped-editors.org/about-editing/editors-pay-rates/)

## Traditional publishing pathway

Traditional publishing remains competitive and slow. Publishers invest in editing, design, printing, distribution and some marketing, but authors are still expected to contribute significantly to promotion.

Many large publishers only accept submissions via literary agents. Others accept unsolicited manuscripts, but submission guidelines must be followed exactly. In traditional publishing, roughly half the book price goes to retailers and distribution. Authors typically receive around 8–10% of the recommended retail price for print books, with higher royalties often applying to ebooks.

Some Australian statistics (Industry figures vary by source and year, but overall trends remain consistent):

- In Australia today, roughly 22,000 new book titles are released each year, including print and digital from all sources – big publishers, small presses and indie authors.
- Many of those small presses and independents publish only a few titles each year, showing how crowded and diverse the publishing landscape has become (there were thousands of publishers releasing only one title back in the mid-2010s and that trend continues).

- Globally and in major English-language markets, around 30–34% of all ebooks sold are self-published, a strong indicator that indie publishing now occupies a substantial share of the digital market.
- In the US/UK context (and reflected in broader industry patterns), ebooks generally account for about 25% of the market, with print still making up the largest share – though audiobooks are growing fast too.
- Surveys suggest at least one-third of authors have self-published a book during their career, and self-publishing continues to grow as a choice for writers.
- Traditional publishing remains selective: while precise modern acceptance rates vary by publisher, only a small percentage of unsolicited manuscripts ever get picked up by traditional publishers (industry estimates commonly suggest well under 5% get traditional deals, and some older estimates put it around 1–2%).

### Major traditional publishers (“the Big Five”)

In the English-language publishing market, five large multinational publishing groups dominate commercial trade publishing. These are often referred to as “the Big Five”:

- Penguin Random House
- HarperCollins
- Simon & Schuster
- Hachette Book Group
- Macmillan

Most major imprints within these groups do **not** accept unsolicited submissions and work primarily through literary agents. Each group operates many specialised imprints with different genre and audience focuses.

For this reason, researching suitable agents and smaller independent publishers is often more productive for first-time authors than approaching major houses directly.

### Independent and small presses

Alongside the large multinational publishers, there are many independent and small presses that publish fewer titles each year and often specialise in particular genres, regions or themes.

Small presses typically:

- publish a limited number of carefully selected titles each year
- may focus on literary, regional, experimental or niche subject areas
- are more likely than major houses to accept unsolicited submissions
- offer closer editorial collaboration
- usually have smaller marketing budgets and distribution reach.

For many first-time authors, a well-matched independent press can be a realistic and rewarding traditional publishing pathway.

Always research a press carefully before submitting your work. Review the books they publish, their submission guidelines, and how their titles are positioned and distributed.

## The audience and market positioning

At this stage, publishers will expect you to clearly articulate the audience and market for your book. This is not optional. It underpins acquisition decisions, marketing strategy and sales projections.

Publishers will want to understand:

1. Who is the intended reader? Consider gender, age range, interests, education level and prior knowledge. The more specific you can be, the stronger your pitch will be.
2. What is the purpose of the book? For example, to entertain, educate, inspire, challenge, or motivate.
3. What do you want the reader to feel, think or do when they reach the end of the book?
4. How will the book exist in the market? Will it be published in print, as an ebook, or both?
5. Where would it sit on a physical bookstore shelf? Which section or category would it be sold under?
6. Can you propose a working title and tagline, and distil the book into a clear 25-word pitch?
7. Can you write a concise one-page synopsis?
8. What genre does the book sit in, and which successful published titles are comparable?

This information feeds directly into the publisher's marketing and sales activity once a book is acquired. It also helps publishers assess whether a manuscript is a good fit for their existing list, which is why researching what individual publishers already publish is critical.

## Literary agents

Literary agents act as gatekeepers and negotiators. They assess whether a manuscript suits the current market, submit work to publishers, and negotiate contracts, advances and rights.

Agents typically take 12–15% of the author's earnings.

Australian Literary Agents' Association: <https://austlitagentsassoc.com/>

## Book proposals: what they are and why they matter

A book proposal is a professional document used to pitch a book to literary agents or traditional publishers. It outlines what the book is about, who it is for, and why it should be published.

Proposals are most commonly required for nonfiction and memoir. For most fiction, publishers usually want to see the completed manuscript, although agents may still ask for proposal-style material.

## What a book proposal does

A strong proposal:

- explains the book's concept and purpose
- identifies the target audience
- positions the book within its market and genre
- demonstrates there is a readership
- shows the author's credibility and capacity to promote the book.

## Typical components

While requirements vary, proposals usually include:

- an overview of the book
- target audience and market positioning
- comparable titles
- chapter outline or structure
- sample chapters
- author biography.

## Why proposals are useful

Preparing a proposal helps clarify the focus and viability of a book, strengthens submissions to agents and publishers, and often improves the manuscript itself. Even if a proposal is not immediately submitted, it can guide the writing and positioning of the book.

## Copyright, rights and contracts (overview)

Copyright in a book automatically belongs to the author from the moment the work is created. It does not need to be registered in Australia.

What changes through publishing is not copyright itself, but how rights are licensed or assigned.

Key points for authors:

- Traditional publishers usually license rights for a defined period and territory.
- Self-publishing authors retain all rights unless they choose to license them.
- Rights can include print, ebook, audiobook, translation, film and adaptation.
- Contracts should specify exactly which rights are being granted and for how long.

Publishing contracts can be complex. Authors should read them carefully and seek professional or legal advice if unsure, particularly where rights are assigned rather than licensed.

## Self-publishing (indie publishing)

Self-publishing allows authors to retain creative control and rights. The author is responsible for hiring editors, designers and proofreaders, and for managing production and marketing.

Modern print-on-demand and ebook platforms have significantly improved the quality and credibility of indie publishing. Many authors now combine traditional and self-publishing and are known as hybrid authors.

### Publishing platforms and distribution choices

Major platforms include:

- Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) – <https://kdp.amazon.com/>
- Draft2Digital – <https://www.draft2digital.com/>
- IngramSpark – <https://www.ingramspark.com/>
- Apple Books, Kobo and Barnes & Noble Press.

Amazon exclusivity (KDP Select) offers access to Kindle Unlimited but requires ebook exclusivity for 90 days. Wide distribution offers broader reach through multiple retailers and libraries.

### A common hybrid approach

Many authors start on Amazon exclusive to test the market, then later move wide once they've built an audience. Others publish ebooks wide but use Amazon for print only.

There's no single "right" choice – it depends on your genre, goals, and appetite for risk versus reach.

You will certainly have preferences for different platforms but in all of them, you have the opportunity of distribution to each of the others. You will need to prepare your book for release as an ebook (electronic format) and a print book (print format). Having the book in both formats increases the sales potential.

### Self-publishing service providers (Australia)

These companies are service providers, not traditional publishers. Authors pay for professional assistance, retain full rights to their work, and control pricing, timelines and distribution. Quality and costs vary widely, so it's important to understand exactly what is included before committing.

### What to check before signing with any self-publishing service

- You retain full copyright and all original files.
- Fees are itemised and transparent.
- Distribution claims are specific (not "available worldwide" without detail).
- You can independently verify books they've produced on Amazon, Booktopia or libraries.
- Marketing promises are realistic (no guarantees of sales).
- What services are included in a publishing package.

Company	What they help with / notes	Website
Green Hill Publishing	<p><b>Full-service self-publishing</b>            Editing, cover and interior design, printing and distribution support. Established Australian company; authors retain full rights. Indicative cost: \$4,000–\$12,000+ depending on services.</p>	<p><a href="https://greenhillpublishing.com.au">https://greenhillpublishing.com.au</a></p>
Publish Central	<p><b>Full-service self-publishing</b>            Editing, design, printing, ebook and print distribution. End-to-end project management; packages vary. Indicative cost: \$3,000–\$10,000+.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.publishcentral.com.au">www.publishcentral.com.au</a></p>
IndieMosh (Tellwell Australia)	<p><b>Assisted self-publishing</b>            Editing, design, formatting and global distribution. Australian arm of Tellwell with wide retailer reach. Indicative cost: \$3,000–\$9,000+.</p>	<p><a href="https://indiemosh.com.au">https://indiemosh.com.au</a></p>
Turtle Publishing	<p><b>Assisted self-publishing</b>            Editing, design, print and ebook production. Smaller provider; suits hands-on authors. Indicative cost: \$2,500–\$7,000+.</p>	<p><a href="https://turtlepublishing.com.au">https://turtlepublishing.com.au</a></p>
Author Services Australia	<p><b>Publishing services (modular)</b>            Editing, formatting, cover design and ebook setup. Services can be purchased individually. Indicative cost: \$1,000–\$5,000 depending on services.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.authorservicesaustralia.com.au">www.authorservicesaustralia.com.au</a></p>
Book Reality	<p><b>Assisted self-publishing</b>            Editing, cover design, formatting, print and ebook publishing, distribution and marketing support. Australian company; authors retain rights. Cost: \$3,000–\$10,000+ depending on package.</p>	<p><a href="https://bookreality.com">https://bookreality.com</a></p>

Indicative costs vary by manuscript length and services required.

## Vanity presses vs legitimate self-publishing services

Not all fee-based publishing companies operate in the same way. It's important to understand the difference between legitimate self-publishing service providers and vanity presses.

Legitimate self-publishing services are paid providers who:

- clearly describe their services and fees
- provide editing, design, formatting or production support
- do not claim to be selective publishers
- allow the author to retain copyright and files
- make realistic claims about distribution and marketing
- separate publishing services from book sales success.

Vanity presses typically:

- present themselves as traditional publishers while charging high upfront fees
- emphasise that the author has been “selected” or “approved”
- promise wide distribution or strong sales without evidence
- bundle large service packages with little cost transparency
- retain control of files, ISBNs or distribution accounts
- focus their marketing on attracting authors rather than readers.

Warning signs are:

- guaranteed bestseller or sales claims
- pressure to sign quickly
- unclear pricing structures
- contracts that assign or restrict your rights unnecessarily
- inability to verify their published books through normal retailers
- reluctance to provide sample work or references.

Paying for professional publishing services is normal in self-publishing. Paying for the *illusion* of being traditionally published is not good value.

Authors should research any company carefully, read contracts closely, and seek independent advice if unsure. Unfortunately, if you are contacted by someone praising your work and announcing that they can make your book the next bestseller, they are usually not legitimate companies so beware.

## Step-by-step indie publishing process

The most common platform is Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) – <https://kdp.amazon.com/>. These are the usual steps to follow:

- Finalise manuscript in Word.
- Decide book size, paper and colour options.
- Commission professional cover design or do this yourself via Canva or other programs.

- Write back-cover blurb and author biography.
- Obtain ISBNs (Australia: [www.myidentifiers.com.au](http://www.myidentifiers.com.au)) or use the one provided by Amazon.
- Upload print book first and approve proof.
- Upload ebook version.
- Set pricing and distribution.
- Publish and begin promotion.

### Final Word document

Once you are happy that the manuscript is final, it's fine to leave it in a clean Word format. This becomes the master file that everything else is built from. You'll also need to update the copyright/imprint page with the ISBNs and printing information.

Covers and back-cover pages are usually removed from the Word document at this stage, as these are created separately and added during the upload process (for example, on Amazon KDP).

### Ebook production

The ebook can be produced directly from the final Word document. Many authors use Amazon KDP for ebook publication, and the upload process is generally straightforward once you have the final Word document and ebook cover.

Amazon guides you through the process step by step, and the previewer allows you to check formatting before publishing. You'll need two versions of the cover:

- an ebook cover (front cover only, supplied as a JPG)
- a print book cover (full wraparound, supplied as a print-ready PDF).

The designs should match visually, but they are supplied in different formats. You'll also need to set up an account in KDP (or another chosen platform).

The Word file should be clean (no Track Changes or comments) and use simple, consistent formatting. Publishing platforms will convert the Word file into an ebook format.

It's important to check the converted file using the platform's previewer before publishing, as minor formatting issues can sometimes appear during conversion. Images may display slightly differently across devices, so a small amount of tweaking is sometimes required.

### Print book production

The print book follows a separate production process and is not produced directly from a Word file.

For the print edition, a designer is usually engaged to lay out the manuscript in a book format. This includes setting the trim size, margins, fonts, line spacing, page numbers, chapter openings, and placing any images at their final size and position. High-resolution images (at least 300 dpi) are required so they reproduce clearly in print.

The designer will advise on:

- Trim size – a common trim size is 6 × 9 inches, which is standard for many non-fiction and business titles and works well for text and images
- Typography (fonts, spacing, margins)
- Design features such as headings, chapter openings, and any stylistic elements.

### Cover design (print)

A full wraparound cover is required for the print book (front, spine, and back), designed to the final trim size and page count. The spine width is determined by the final page count and paper type, so the cover is usually designed after the interior layout is complete.

Space needs to be allowed for the ISBN/barcode, and the designer will also account for bleed and print specifications required by the printer or platform (for example, Amazon KDP).

You'll also want to decide whether your photo and biography appear on the back cover or remain inside the book. If the bio moves to the back cover, it usually needs to be quite short, as the back-cover blurb takes up most of the space.

### Getting a book cover

Here are some of the best places to find book cover designers – from pro marketplaces to freelancer platforms and premade options:

#### Professional designer marketplaces

- [Reedsy](#) – curated book cover designers (including many experienced with indie and traditional publishing). You can browse portfolios and request quotes from designers who match your genre.
- [I Need a Book Cover](#) – a directory of cover designers (many with publishing house experience).

#### Freelancer platforms

- [Upwork](#) – post your project and get bids from freelance book cover designers at a range of rates.
- [Fiverr](#) – lots of designers with varied styles and budgets (just check reviews and portfolio quality).
- [Twine](#) – find and global freelance designers.

#### Design contest and agency-style options

- [99designs](#) – you run a contest, multiple designers submit concepts and you pick the best.
- [GetCovers](#) – fixed price cover design with unlimited revisions and money-back guarantee.

#### Bonus DIY options

- [Canva](#) and [Adobe Express](#) – easy online tools with templates you can tweak or show to a designer as inspiration.

Tips: check portfolios, ask for genre-relevant samples, and agree on file formats (print and ebook specs) before you commit.

### Proofing and final files

Once the manuscript has been laid out, you'll review the designed pages as a proof. At this stage, changes need to be approached carefully, as even small edits can affect page flow, image placement, and pagination. This is normal for print production and means the proofreading stage is more involved than working in Word.

After final corrections are made, the designer will supply a print-ready interior PDF, ready for upload to the chosen publishing platform.

### Publishing via Amazon KDP

Once you have the final files, you can begin uploading the ebook and print book to Amazon KDP. This typically includes:

- Uploading files
- Choosing paper colour (cream vs white)
- Choosing paperback or hardcover
- Choosing matte vs gloss cover
- Adding metadata (blurb, keywords, categories)
- Pricing
- Ordering a print proof before going live.

### Keywords and categories

The following is an example of how keywords and categories might be approached. These can be adjusted later based on performance.

### Recommended Amazon keywords

These are tightly aligned to how readers would realistically search for this type of book. It's often best to start with 5–7 focused keywords relating to your subject area.

### Keyword tools

Keyword research tools can help authors identify how readers actually search for books on Amazon. Book-specific tools tend to be the most efficient for authors, while general Amazon SEO tools can provide broader market context. These tools support keyword and category selection but do not guarantee sales; they are best used to refine positioning rather than chase trends.

### Do you need paid keyword software?

No. Paid keyword tools are helpful, but they are not essential.

Many authors successfully choose keywords by:

- researching comparable books on Amazon
- noting recurring words in titles, subtitles and descriptions
- using Amazon's autocomplete suggestions
- applying common sense about how readers would actually search.

Paid tools can save time and provide additional data, but they do not replace good positioning, a clear audience, or a well-written book.

### If you prefer to use just one tool

If an author wants to use a single, book-specific tool without getting overly technical, Publisher Rocket is usually the most practical option.

Why:

- It is designed specifically for Amazon books.
- It combines keyword research and category analysis.
- It is a one-off purchase rather than a subscription.
- It is widely used and well supported.

For many authors, this is more than sufficient. Others choose to use no tools at all.

### The most important point

Keyword tools help refine discoverability, not create it. Clear audience definition, strong metadata, and realistic expectations matter far more than chasing “perfect” keywords.

Here are some keyword research tools that are useful for Amazon/KDP book keyword work – including both free and paid options:

Tool	What it's useful for	Cost
<a href="#">Publisher Rocket</a>	Designed specifically for Amazon books; finds profitable keywords, categories and competitor data	Paid (one-off purchase)
<a href="#">KindleSpy</a>	Amazon book analytics; keyword and niche research, pricing and category insights	Paid (one-off or licence)
<a href="#">Keyword Tool (Amazon)</a>	Generates keyword ideas from Amazon autocomplete	Free basic / Paid tier
<a href="#">Soovle</a>	Aggregates autocomplete suggestions from Amazon and other platforms	Free

### Quick notes

- **Publisher Rocket** is the most widely used paid tool that's actually built for book keyword research, so it's often the go-to if you plan to invest in software.
- **KindleSpy** adds deeper competitive or “spy” insights but requires ongoing payment or licences.
- **Keyword Tool (Amazon)** and **Soovle** are great free starting points – especially if you want simple keyword ideas without cost.

## Ebook vs print metadata

The ebook and print book generally share the same core metadata (title, subtitle, description, keywords, categories). Authors often refine keywords and categories later based on performance.

Metadata can be adjusted after publication without re-uploading files, so this is a starting position rather than a final decision.

## ISBNs and imprints

An ISBN (International Standard Book Number) identifies a specific edition of a book and its publisher.

Authors have two main options:

- use a free ISBN provided by a publishing platform
- purchase their own ISBNs through the Australian ISBN agency (Thorpe-Bowker).

Using your own ISBN:

- allows you to be listed as the publisher
- looks more professional, particularly for bookstores and libraries
- gives greater long-term control.

An imprint is simply the name under which you publish (for example, a small press name rather than your personal name). Many self-published authors create an imprint for professionalism, even if they are the sole publisher.

## Audiobooks (brief introduction)

Audiobooks are a growing format, but they involve separate rights, costs and decisions.

Key points:

- Audiobook rights are distinct from print and ebook rights.
- Production requires narration, editing and mastering.
- Common platforms include ACX and Findaway Voices.
- Costs vary widely depending on narrator and production method.

Many authors choose to delay audiobooks until a print or ebook edition has proven demand.

## Timelines and expectations

Publishing almost always takes longer than authors expect.

As a rough guide:

- Editing and revision often take several months.
- Traditional publishing operates on timelines of one to three years.

- Self-publishing is faster, but quality publishing still benefits from pacing (three to nine months).

Rushing the process is one of the most common mistakes authors make. Allowing adequate time for editing, design and planning usually leads to a stronger book and better outcomes.

## Red flags and common mistakes

Some common pitfalls to be aware of:

- publishing before editing is complete
- confusing service providers with publishers
- paying for marketing before the book is ready
- assuming reviews automatically lead to sales
- failing to research comparable titles or audiences
- signing contracts without understanding rights implications.

A cautious, informed approach protects both your work and your investment.

## Getting reviews: a practical overview

Reviews help readers decide whether to buy a book and improve visibility on online platforms. While they don't guarantee sales, a book with no reviews is at a disadvantage.

### How to get early reviews

#### Advance Reader Copies (ARCs)

Plan to distribute Advance Reader Copies (digital or print) before or around publication. These go to readers who genuinely read your genre and are willing to leave an honest review. Never ask for a positive review – only an honest one.

Who to approach:

- existing readers or newsletter subscribers
- writers or industry colleagues (where appropriate)
- book bloggers and reviewers who accept submissions
- librarians or educators (particularly for nonfiction or children's books).

### Where reviews can be posted

#### Amazon

Amazon reviews are the most influential for most authors. Reviewers must disclose if they received a free copy. Reviews cannot be incentivised.

#### Goodreads

Goodreads is widely used by readers, librarians and book clubs. Reviews here are often longer and more detailed. Readers can also cross-post their reviews to Amazon.

### **Book blogs and review sites**

Many book bloggers review indie and traditionally published books. Each has its own genre focus and submission guidelines. Research carefully and expect long lead times.

### **Libraries and specialist publications**

Some libraries, literary magazines and professional journals review selected titles, particularly nonfiction, memoir and children's books. These reviews are competitive but useful for credibility and reach.

### **Asking for reviews (ethically)**

- Include a brief request for reviews at the end of your book.
- Follow up politely with ARC readers after publication.
- Mention reviews in newsletters or on social media.

Avoid review swaps or paid reviews.

### **What to expect**

Reviews usually build slowly. Ten to twenty genuine reviews is a strong early foundation. Some readers will promise reviews and never post them – this is normal. Reviews support long-term discoverability rather than creating instant success.

### **Costs to authors**

Costs vary widely depending on manuscript condition and choices made. Indicative estimates:

- Manuscript assessment: \$600–1,000
- Editing: varies significantly; see [www.iped-editors.org/about-editing/editors-pay-rates/](http://www.iped-editors.org/about-editing/editors-pay-rates/)
- Cover design: \$600+
- Proof copies and setup: variable depending on quantity

### **Author income and royalties**

Most authors earn modest incomes. Many earn less than \$5,000 per year. A small percentage earn full-time incomes. These figures are indicative only and vary widely depending on genre, market conditions and individual circumstances.

Amazon ebook royalties:

Price below \$2.99 – 35%

Price \$2.99–\$9.99 – 70% (less delivery fee)

Price above \$9.99 – 35%

## Next steps

The most helpful next step is to clarify where you are in the process and what support you need.

If you are still writing or revising:

- focus on completing a full draft
- undertake self-editing and revision
- seek feedback from intelligent readers
- avoid spending money on editing too early.

If you have a complete draft but are unsure what it needs:

- consider a manuscript assessment
- use the feedback to guide further revision
- decide whether the work is ready for editing.

If your manuscript is ready for editing:

- clarify your goals (traditional or self-publishing)
- gather key information (word count, synopsis, audience, timeline)
- seek quotes from experienced editors.

If you are considering traditional publishing:

- research agents and publishers carefully
- prepare submission materials or a book proposal if required
- ensure the manuscript and positioning are as strong as possible before submitting.

If you are considering self-publishing:

- decide how much you want to do yourself versus outsource
- research platforms and service providers
- budget realistically for editing, design, production and marketing.

If you are unsure which path to take:

- seek professional advice before committing time or money
- take a staged approach rather than trying to do everything at once.

Publishing decisions do not need to be rushed. Thoughtful, informed steps usually lead to better outcomes than speed.

## Writer planning worksheets

Use these worksheets to clarify your audience, choose your publishing path, and prepare for professional editing. Completing them will strengthen your manuscript positioning and save time and cost later.

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### Target reader and market positioning worksheet

A clearly defined reader improves pitching, editing decisions, cover design, metadata and marketing.

Working title: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtitle (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Primary genre/category: \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary genre/category: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe your ideal reader in one sentence:

---

### Reader profile

Age range: \_\_\_\_\_

Experience or knowledge level: \_\_\_\_\_

Key interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Professional or personal background (if relevant): \_\_\_\_\_

What problem, question or desire brings this reader to your book?

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### What outcome should the reader have by the end?

- New knowledge
- Practical skills
- Emotional impact
- Changed perspective
- Entertainment
- Motivation
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Tone and reading experience you are aiming for:

- Practical
- Reflective
- Fast-paced
- Literary

Conversational

Instructional

**Comparable books (same audience, similar promise – not just same topic)**

Title + author + what it does well:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

5 \_\_\_\_\_

Bookstore or Amazon category where this book best fits:

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## Publishing path decision worksheet

There is no single “right” path – only the path that fits your goals, timeline and risk tolerance.

Rate each factor from 1 (low priority) to 5 (high priority).

Factor	Rating (1–5)
Speed to publication	
Creative control	
Prestige of traditional deal	
Higher royalty per copy	
Publisher-funded production	
Control over pricing	
Control over cover/design	
Keeping all rights	
Bookstore presence	
Willingness to manage process	

Now answer:

I am comfortable investing my own money in production:

Yes  No  Unsure

I am comfortable managing platforms and uploads:

Yes  No  Unsure

I am willing to wait 1–3 years for a traditional deal:

Yes  No  Unsure

Interpretation guide:

Mostly high scores for control, speed, rights → Self-publishing likely suits

Mixed scores → Hybrid approach may suit

High scores for prestige + publisher funding → Traditional path may suit

Key concerns or constraints:

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## Editor quote preparation worksheet

Editors give more accurate quotes when they can see scope, readiness and expectations. This worksheet helps you prepare a professional brief.

### Project snapshot

Working title: \_\_\_\_\_

Genre: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated final word count: \_\_\_\_\_

### Manuscript stage (tick one)

- Early draft
- Revised draft
- Polished draft
- Submission-ready (in your view)

### Revision history

Number of full rewrites completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Feedback already received from:

- Intelligent readers
- Writing group
- Beta readers
- Previous editor
- None yet

Biggest known weaknesses in the manuscript:

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### Type of editorial help you think you need

- Manuscript assessment
- Structural/substantive edit
- Copyedit
- Proofread
- Not sure – need advice

### Timeline

Desired editing start window: \_\_\_\_\_

Hard deadline (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

### Budget range (optional but helpful)

- Under \$1,000
- \$1,000–\$3,000
- \$3,000–\$6,000
- Prefer estimate first

### Sample readiness checklist

- 5–10 representative pages selected
- Word file clean and readable, simple formatting
- Brief synopsis (150–300 words)
- Brief author biography

Questions for the editor:

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

## Australian resources for writers and authors

### Editors and professional standards

Organisation	What it helps with	Why it's useful	URL
Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd)	Finding accredited professional editors	National editors' association with searchable directory and standards	<a href="http://iped-editors.org">iped-editors.org</a>
Australian Society of Authors (ASA)	Contracts, rights, rates, mentorships	Author advocacy body with strong contract guidance	<a href="http://asauthors.org.au">asauthors.org.au</a>

### Writers' centres (Australia)

Writing WA	Courses, competitions, resources	Key WA writers' centre with publishing support	<a href="http://writingwa.org">writingwa.org</a>
Writing NSW	Workshops, manuscript programs	Major professional development hub	<a href="http://writingnsw.org.au">writingnsw.org.au</a>
Writers Victoria	Courses and manuscript feedback	Well-regarded craft training	<a href="http://writersvictoria.org.au">writersvictoria.org.au</a>
Queensland Writers Centre	Workshops and mentoring	Broad development programs	<a href="http://qldwriters.org.au">qldwriters.org.au</a>

### ISBNs and KDP

Thorpe-Bowker	ISBN purchase and metadata	Official Australian ISBN agency	<a href="http://myidentifiers.com.au">myidentifiers.com.au</a>
Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP)	Ebook and print self-publishing	Primary indie publishing platform	<a href="http://kdp.amazon.com">kdp.amazon.com</a>

### Literary agents and publishing directories

Australian Literary Agents' Association (ALAA)	Agent listings and links	Starting point for legitimate agents	<a href="http://austlitagentsassoc.com">austlitagentsassoc.com</a>
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### Children's and YA writing resources

Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI ANZ)	Children's & YA writing support	Industry access and critique groups	<a href="http://scbwiaustralianz.com">scbwiaustralianz.com</a>
Children's Book Council of Australia	Children's literature standards	Awards and market awareness	<a href="http://cbca.org.au">cbca.org.au</a>
Australian Writers' Centre	Writing courses	Structured children's & YA courses	<a href="http://writerscentre.com.au">writerscentre.com.au</a>

### Independent publishing and small press sector

The Small Press Network	Independent publisher network	Helps identify reputable small presses	<a href="http://independentpublishers.org.au">independentpublishers.org.au</a>
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## How RB Publishing can help

RB Publishing supports authors at different stages of the publishing journey, including:

- manuscript assessments
- structural, copyediting and proofreading
- book proposal guidance
- publishing and self-publishing advice.

Support is tailored to the project, the author's goals and the chosen publishing pathway.

Get in touch!



**Robin Bower | RB Publishing**

**Accredited Editor (AE, IPEd)**

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w: [www.rb-publishing.com](http://www.rb-publishing.com)

Substack: [rbpublishing1.substack.com](https://rbpublishing1.substack.com)

New release: [Senses of Italy](#)

