

# Everything You Need to Know About How to Self-Publish Your Book

All the tips, tricks and steps on how to self-publish your book

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# Self-Publishing Your Book

*Unlike the traditional publishing model ... the author controls the entire process, including design, price, distribution, marketing, and public relations. The author may perform these activities themselves or they may outsource these tasks. In traditional publishing, the publisher bears the costs, such as editing, marketing, and paying advances, and reaps a substantial share of the profits; by comparison, in self-publishing, the author bears all of these costs but earns a higher share of the profit—*  
Wikipedia

So you've decided to self-publish?

## What you need to know about self-publishing your book

There are two main ways to go about self-publishing your book. You can either do it yourself, or you can hire an author services company to do all or part of the process for you.

But first, a word of advice...

## There is no such thing as a self-publishing company

...unless it's your own. As Dave Bricker says in his excellent blog, *Self-Publishing Scams: Keep the "Self" in Self-Publishing*, 'The very notion of a self-publishing company is an oxymoron' (my emphasis: an **oxymoron** is a contradiction).

Just as no one but you can have 'self-control', undertake 'self-help' activities, be 'self-centred' or 'self-conscious', no one but you can self-publish your book!

To self-publish means you are the author **and** the

publisher of your book. You may hire a graphic designer to do the layout and the cover for you, or even hire an author services company to do certain aspects of the process for you, but that doesn't change the fact that you are the publisher, no one else.

There are many reputable author services businesses, including multinational companies – even if they do call themselves self-publishers when they're not!

But before you head down the path of publishing your own book, it is vital that you do thorough research into what's involved in self-publishing. As the old adage goes, forewarned is forearmed.

## Do it yourself

To keep it simple, I've broken the process of self-publishing a book into six main steps. I have not included promotion and distribution.

1. Book layout and cover (front and back cover).
2. Name for publishing business.
3. ISBN (and barcode if producing a print book).
4. Prepublication Data Service.
5. Printing your book (if producing a print book).
6. Legal deposit.

## Book layout and cover

There are many graphic design and book layout businesses, so it's a bit of a minefield knowing who to choose.

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Read the section *Book cover* below.

(If you're a graphic designer or you have a friend or family member who's a graphic designer or adept at book layout software, then you're lucky and you don't need to read this section. Skip to the heading *ISBN*.)

## Recommendations are gold

If at all possible, obtain a recommendation from someone who's already self-published a book and who was happy with their designer.

## Research

If you can't obtain a recommendation, then Google a variety of book designers/graphic artists. Read their customer reviews.

## A handy checklist

Here are some things to take into consideration, and questions to ask the designers you are approaching initially.

- Check on their website the book covers they have done for previous clients. A legitimate designer will be keen to showcase their work.
- Positive customer reviews on their website.
- Ease of getting hold of them initially.
- Ask to speak to the 'boss', the person in charge of the business. Make sure they seem enthusiastic about your project.
- Ease of communication (do they communicate clearly, share information freely).
- Price.
- Package inclusions (applies if they're doing more than just the cover and layout).

- Flexibility of packages – can you tailor to your heart's content, or are you restricted by what they are prepared to change (applies if they're doing more than just the cover and layout).
- Make sure they have no claim on future sales.
- Make sure they are not promising worthless promotions for excessive costs (applies if they're doing more than just the cover and layout).
- Ask what help and support they offer.
- Ask what aspects of the process they expect you to do, i.e. where they provide little help or support (applies if they're doing more than just the cover and layout).
- Timeline – how long it will take.

One final thing: once your book is laid out, the designer will send you a proof copy of your book for proofreading. Before proceeding to printing, make sure you do a thorough proofread of the book and the front and back cover, or hire a professional proofreader to do so, as errors can slip in during the design process.

## Name for your publishing business

Decide on a name for your publishing business. You'll need this for registering the ISBN. It will be included on the imprint page of your book (the page on the back of the title page).

It's best to give this some thought. Make it appealing. Don't use your name, unless you've got an appealing sounding name! Keep it concise. Then, it's wise to Google it to make sure it's not already taken. You'll be surprised.

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## ISBN



One of the features of being a self-publisher is that *you* purchase the ISBN for your book. ISBN stands for 'International Standard Book Number'. It is a unique numeric commercial book identifier, allowing your book to be searched internationally. More specifically, the ISBN is 'used by publishers, booksellers, libraries, internet retailers and other supply chain participants for ordering, listing, sales records and stock control purposes' (International ISBN Agency).

Current ISBNs are 13 digits long. As a self-publisher, you buy an ISBN from an affiliate of the International ISBN Agency. In Australia, that's Thorpe-Bowker.

At time of publication, a single ISBN in Australia cost \$44. You also pay a one-time new publisher's fee of \$55.

If you are producing a print book you will also need a barcode. The picture above shows both the barcode and the ISBN. You can purchase an ISBN/barcode combo from Thorpe-Bowker for around \$90.

## Prepublication Data Service (National Library of Australia)

The Prepublication Data Service (previously known as CiP or Cataloguing in Publication) is a *free* service offered by the National Library of Australia (NLA).

The service is for Australian publishers and self-publishers who want the details of their upcoming publications made available to Australian libraries, library suppliers, booksellers and the public. These entities can then search for upcoming titles, facilitating their ordering process. What does this mean for you? It means that your book can be searched for and potentially ordered once it's published.

When your application is completed, the NLA will email you a logo to include on the copyright page of your book.

Note: You need to have purchased your ISBN in order to complete the prepublication data service process.

The process of registering for the Prepublication Data Service is simple and straightforward.

## Printing your book

If you are producing an eBook, you can disregard this step.

If the printing world is an unknown to you, I would encourage you to find a reputable and knowledgeable print broker, or print manager, rather than going direct to printers for quotations. Chances are, the intricacies of the process won't be explained to you by the printers, and they may come up with their best price, but the finished product may not have the look or be of the quality that you had imagined. They may only ask 'how many copies' and 'what paper stock do you want', but as I discovered recently, there's a lot more to it than that.

My daughter and I recently met with a print manager to discuss the print version of her book. It is a cookbook with over 200 pages containing coloured photos and images on every page. Obviously, this is more complicated and costlier than printing a novel.

It made us realise how important it is to work with someone who knows the print business intimately and

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who can steer you in the right direction before you veer too far in the wrong direction! Aside from advice on paper options, paper quality, printing options, order quantities and the rest, the job of a print broker/manager is to obtain the best quotation for you. They do this by approaching several printers on your behalf.

## Legal deposit

You make a legal deposit for your book after it has been published.

Legal deposit is a free service provided by the National Library of Australia. It is a requirement under the Copyright Act 1968.

*Legal deposit applies to any Australian person, group or organisation that makes this material available to the public for sale or for free*  
—National Library of Australia

The legal deposit process is simple and straightforward.

## Contract an author services company

If you prefer to hand your book over to an author services company to handle most of the self-publishing process for you, then read this section carefully.

### A handy checklist

First, read *A handy checklist* above, as all these points apply to contracting an author services company.

### Their services vary

The services offered by author services companies vary widely. Some arrange all the above for you – except for applying for the ISBN of course, as explained above. The more services you choose, the

more it will cost. It's about balancing convenience against cost.

### Book cover

You need to have a good idea of how you would like your cover to look. If you have absolutely no idea, it's going to be hard for the designer. They won't read your book to see what it's about – yes, that's right, and you can't expect them to have the time to do so. Whatever you can provide in the way of pictures, photos, ideas in your head, will help the designer move from vague to concrete and enable them to provide you with a couple of different options.

Make sure to ask as many questions as you want so that you are fully informed about the process.

### Research, research, research

As Don, one of my clients advises, 'Research, research and then research some more!'

*I have learned through the process that first-time authors are a target due to their ignorance of the process. There are definitely scammers out there ready to take advantage*  
—Don, editors4you client

Don says, 'I read review after review using different search terms. Sometimes, negative reviews would appear if I searched "first time author", rather than "publishing services".'

This forms your 'due diligence' – checking and confirming the authenticity of the provider of publishing services. If the reviews seem genuine, then contact them for a quotation. You'll soon weed out the ones who show no interest or who you don't relate to, and then ideally you'll end up with two that you can ask more incisive questions of.

While it's satisfying to support a local business, the main requirement is that they're going to work well

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with you and they're going to do an excellent job. If the designer you choose isn't local to you, be prepared to communicate by phone and email.

## Credits and resources

### ISBN

International ISBN Agency, What is an ISBN? 2014, [https://www.isbn-international.org/content/what-isbn?fbclid=IwAR07fWD8yOj9Yoc5CUx9WRQNmKXCD6HVVU GWVfBBTzzzRdC2\\_0xAerHBSehY](https://www.isbn-international.org/content/what-isbn?fbclid=IwAR07fWD8yOj9Yoc5CUx9WRQNmKXCD6HVVU GWVfBBTzzzRdC2_0xAerHBSehY)

Thorpe-Bowker Identifier Services, <https://www.myidentifiers.com.au/Get-your-isbn-now>

### Legal Deposit

National Library of Australia, What is Legal Deposit? <https://www.nla.gov.au/legal-deposit/what-is-legal-deposit>

### Pre-Publication Data Service

National Library of Australia (NLA), <https://www.nla.gov.au/content/prepublication-data-service>

### Self-Publishing

Bricker, D., Self-Publishing Scams: Keep the "Self" in Self-Publishing, 2015, <http://theworldsgreatestbook.com/self-publishing-scams-2/> Accessed 25 Jan 2019.

Wikipedia, Self-Publishing, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-publishing> Accessed 25 Jan 2019.

# About The Author

**Gail Tagarro is a writing coach and Accredited Editor (Institute of Professional Editors).**

She holds a Master of Arts in English and Spanish Linguistics, and a Diploma in News Journalism.

She has worked as a journalist, technical writing consultant, TESOL teacher, translator, editor, and freelance writer.

She lives on the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia, with her family.

## Other Publications by the Author

### Non-fiction:

Ten Ways to Super-Charge your Writing (2019)

How to Format your Manuscript before Editing and Save (2014)

Spain: A Travel Narrative (coming in 2019)

### Short stories:

Painful Amore (2004; published 2019)

The Shed (1999; published 2019)

Tom's Boring Day (1999; published 2019)

### Novels:

Chopin (coming in 2019)