

CREATIVITY PUBLICATIONS

Helping Authors Write, Publish & Grow

FIRST-TIME AUTHOR PUBLISHING CHECKLIST

**40 Essential Steps to Take Your Manuscript
From Finished Draft to Published Book**

A Practical Publishing Resource for New Authors



Created by Creativity Publications

Author Resources • Publishing • Book Marketing

creativitypublications.com



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This checklist is provided for educational and informational purposes. Publishing platforms, distribution services, policies and technical requirements can change. Always verify current requirements with the publishing platform before submitting your book.

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INTRODUCTION

Publishing your first book can feel overwhelming because there are far more decisions involved than simply writing a manuscript and uploading it to Amazon.

You have to finish and edit the manuscript, choose the right publishing path, prepare the interior, create a professional cover, handle ISBN and publishing information, write your book description, choose categories and keywords, prepare your files, order a proof, plan your launch, collect reviews, and continue marketing after publication.

And the order matters.

For example, your final page count can affect your print cover and spine. Your title, subtitle, author name and ISBN need to remain consistent across your publishing files and metadata. KDP's current guidance also requires separate ISBNs for different print formats when an ISBN is required.

This checklist is designed to help you avoid those expensive mistakes.

Use it from beginning to end. Don't rush to the publishing stage before completing the earlier stages.

How to Use This Checklist

Use the boxes below to track your progress.

☐ **Not started**

☒ **Completed**

Needs attention

You can bookmark this page, print it, or save a copy for every book you publish.

The publishing journey

Idea → Manuscript → Editing → Publishing strategy → Book production → Cover → Metadata → ISBN → Upload → Proof → Launch → Marketing → Post-launch

PHASE 1: Define Your Book Before You Finish It

Before worrying about Amazon, covers or advertising, make sure you know what you are actually publishing.

Book identity

- ☐ Working title chosen
- ☐ Subtitle drafted, if appropriate
- ☐ Book category/genre identified
- ☐ Target reader identified
- ☐ Main problem, desire or transformation identified
- ☐ Book's central promise clearly defined
- ☐ Approximate word-count target established
- ☐ Intended format identified: ebook, paperback, hardcover, audiobook or multiple formats
- ☐ Publishing territory/markets considered
- ☐ Comparable books researched
- ☐ Book's unique angle identified

Ask yourself:

Who is this book for?

What problem does it solve?

What does the reader expect to gain?

Why should someone choose this book instead of the hundreds already available?

If you cannot answer these questions clearly, stop here and clarify the book before moving forward.

NEED HELP WITH THIS?

How Much Does It Really Cost to Self-Publish a Book?

Self-publishing doesn't have one fixed price. Your total investment can vary depending on whether you pay for editing, proofreading, cover design, formatting, ISBNs, printing, marketing, and other services.

Before you commit to a publishing budget, use the [Self-Publishing Cost Guide and Calculator](#) from Creativity Publications to understand the major expenses you may need to plan for.

Knowing your potential costs before you begin can help you create a realistic publishing budget and avoid unexpected expenses.

[Estimate Your Self-Publishing Costs →](#)

PHASE 2: Finish the Manuscript

Don't start designing the cover simply because you have written "The End."

Your manuscript should be genuinely finished.

Manuscript completion

- ☐ First draft completed
- ☐ Missing chapters identified
- ☐ Unfinished sections completed
- ☐ Repetitive sections removed
- ☐ Contradictions resolved
- ☐ Research gaps identified
- ☐ Claims requiring sources checked
- ☐ Examples and illustrations verified
- ☐ Statistics and figures verified
- ☐ Quotes checked
- ☐ Bible verses or other copyrighted/reference material checked where applicable
- ☐ References/citations completed where needed
- ☐ Final chapter completed
- ☐ Conclusion completed
- ☐ Call to action included where appropriate

PHASE 3: Self-Edit Before Paying an Editor

Professional editing is easier and less expensive when you don't send an obviously unfinished manuscript to the editor.

First self-edit

- ☐ Read the entire manuscript from beginning to end
- ☐ Remove unnecessary repetition
- ☐ Remove weak introductions
- ☐ Remove unnecessary filler
- ☐ Strengthen unclear explanations
- ☐ Check chapter order
- ☐ Check transitions between chapters
- ☐ Check consistency of terminology
- ☐ Check names, dates and numbers
- ☐ Check quotations
- ☐ Check references
- ☐ Read difficult passages aloud
- ☐ Use text-to-speech to catch awkward sentences
- ☐ Check paragraphs for unnecessary length

- ☐ Check headings for consistency
- ☐ Check that every chapter contributes to the book's purpose

One powerful test

After reading every chapter, ask:

"If I removed this chapter, would the reader lose something important?"

If the answer is no, reconsider the chapter.

NEED HELP WITH THIS?

Estimate Your Book's Page Count

Before you finalize your book cover or choose your publishing specifications, it helps to have a realistic idea of how many pages your manuscript may produce.

Use the [Word Count to Page Count Calculator](#) from Creativity Publications to estimate your potential book length based on your manuscript's word count and formatting assumptions.

This can help you plan your trim size, estimate printing costs, and avoid designing a cover before you know your approximate final page count.

[Calculate Your Estimated Page Count →](#)

PHASE 4: Choose the Right Editing Level

Not every manuscript needs the same type of editing.

Developmental editing

Best when you need help with:

- ☐ Structure
- ☐ Argument
- ☐ Story development
- ☐ Pacing
- ☐ Chapter organization
- ☐ Reader experience
- ☐ Missing information

Line editing

Focuses on:

- ☐ Clarity
- ☐ Flow
- ☐ Voice
- ☐ Sentence construction
- ☐ Style
- ☐ Readability

Copy editing

Focuses on:

- ☐ Grammar
- ☐ Spelling
- ☐ Punctuation
- ☐ Consistency
- ☐ Usage
- ☐ Facts and internal consistency

Proofreading

The final quality-control stage.

Check for:

- ☐ Typographical errors
- ☐ Formatting mistakes
- ☐ Missing words
- ☐ Incorrect punctuation
- ☐ Page-number problems
- ☐ Heading inconsistencies
- ☐ Caption errors
- ☐ Table of contents errors

Important: proofreading is not a substitute for editing.

PHASE 5: Build Your Book's Style Sheet

This is one of the steps many beginner checklists overlook.

Create a simple document containing decisions that must remain consistent throughout your book.

Record:

- ☐ Author name
- ☐ Pen name, if applicable
- ☐ Book title
- ☐ Subtitle
- ☐ Character names
- ☐ Place names
- ☐ Preferred spelling
- ☐ Capitalization preferences
- ☐ Number style
- ☐ Date format
- ☐ Bible translation, if applicable
- ☐ Citation style
- ☐ Heading style
- ☐ Italicization rules
- ☐ Hyphenation preferences

☐ Special terminology

☐ Product/company names

☐ Abbreviations

This becomes your **single source of truth** during editing, formatting and future revisions.

PHASE 6: Decide How You Will Publish

You generally have three broad routes.

Traditional publishing

- ☐ Research suitable publishers
- ☐ Check submission guidelines
- ☐ Prepare query letter where required
- ☐ Prepare synopsis/proposal where required
- ☐ Research agents where appropriate
- ☐ Track submissions

Self-publishing

- ☐ Choose publishing platform(s)
- ☐ Decide whether to publish exclusively or widely
- ☐ Understand platform requirements
- ☐ Prepare publishing assets yourself or hire professionals

Hybrid publishing

- ☐ Research company carefully
- ☐ Understand exactly what you are paying for
- ☐ Read the contract
- ☐ Identify who owns the rights

- ☐ Understand distribution
- ☐ Understand royalty structure
- ☐ Check cancellation/termination terms
- ☐ Investigate the company's reputation independently

Red flag

Never pay a company simply because it promises guaranteed bestseller status, guaranteed sales or guaranteed placement.

PHASE 7: Choose Your Publishing Formats

Decide which versions you will release.

- ☐ Kindle/eBook
- ☐ Paperback
- ☐ Hardcover
- ☐ Large-print edition
- ☐ Workbook/journal edition, if appropriate
- ☐ Audiobook
- ☐ Other edition

Remember that different formats can require different production files and publishing decisions.

KDP notes that if you publish ebook, paperback and hardcover versions, the formats should be set up correctly and matching book details help Amazon link editions together.

NEED HELP WITH THIS?

Want to Understand the Publishing Process Better?

Publishing your first book can involve decisions about editing, formatting, cover design, ISBNs, metadata, distribution, pricing, publishing platforms, and marketing.

If any part of the process still feels confusing, explore the [Publishing Guides from Creativity Publications](#) for practical explanations designed to help authors make informed publishing decisions.

Instead of trying to figure everything out at once, take one stage at a time and learn what you need for the next step. [Explore Publishing Resources →](#)

PHASE 8: Choose Your Book Trim Size

For print books, decide your final trim size before completing the interior.

Common choices include:

☐ 5" × 8"

☐ 5.25" × 8"

☐ 5.5" × 8.5"

☐ 6" × 9"

☐ 8" × 10"

☐ 8.5" × 11"

☐ Other appropriate size

Choose based on:

☐ Genre

☐ Reader expectations

☐ Book length

☐ Images

☐ Tables

☐ Workbook requirements

☐ Printing considerations

☐ Your chosen publishing platform

PHASE 9: Prepare the Interior

Your manuscript is now ready to become a book.

Front matter

Depending on the book, consider:

- ☐ Half-title page
- ☐ Title page
- ☐ Copyright page
- ☐ Dedication
- ☐ Epigraph
- ☐ Table of contents
- ☐ Foreword
- ☐ Preface
- ☐ Introduction

Body matter

- ☐ Chapter titles consistent
- ☐ Paragraph formatting consistent
- ☐ Fonts consistent
- ☐ Page margins correct
- ☐ Page numbers correct

- ☐ Headers/footers correct
- ☐ Images correctly positioned
- ☐ Tables correctly formatted
- ☐ Captions correctly positioned
- ☐ Widows/orphans checked
- ☐ Blank pages intentional

Back matter

Depending on your book:

- ☐ About the author
- ☐ Acknowledgments
- ☐ References
- ☐ Notes
- ☐ Bibliography
- ☐ Resources
- ☐ Further reading
- ☐ Other books by the author
- ☐ Author website
- ☐ Newsletter invitation
- ☐ Reader review request
- ☐ Next-book preview

☐ Call to action

KDP's paperback guidance specifically identifies front matter, body matter and back matter as parts of the interior manuscript.

PHASE 10: Format Your Table of Contents Correctly

- ☐ Every chapter appears
- ☐ Chapter names match the manuscript
- ☐ Page numbers are correct
- ☐ Heading levels are consistent
- ☐ Links work in the ebook version
- ☐ No accidental duplicate chapters
- ☐ No missing sections

For Word documents, use actual heading styles rather than manually formatting chapter titles.

This makes the document easier to maintain and helps generate a proper table of contents.

PHASE 11: Check Images and Graphics

For every image:

- ☐ Do I own the image?
- ☐ Do I have permission to use it?
- ☐ Is the license appropriate?
- ☐ Is attribution required?
- ☐ Is the image high enough quality?
- ☐ Does it remain readable when printed?
- ☐ Does it have the correct placement?
- ☐ Does it extend into bleed where necessary?
- ☐ Is the image correctly positioned?

Never assume that an image found through Google Images is free to use.

PHASE 12: Create Your Book Cover

Your cover is not merely decoration.

It is part of your book's marketing.

Front cover

- ☐ Title correct
- ☐ Subtitle correct
- ☐ Author name correct
- ☐ Genre visually appropriate
- ☐ Typography readable at thumbnail size
- ☐ Strong contrast
- ☐ Professional appearance
- ☐ No unnecessary clutter

Back cover

For print:

- ☐ Book description/blurb
- ☐ Author bio where appropriate
- ☐ Author photo where appropriate
- ☐ Reviews/testimonials where legitimate
- ☐ Barcode area considered

- ☐ Website/CTA if appropriate

Spine

- ☐ Title correct
- ☐ Author name correct
- ☐ Spine text readable
- ☐ Spine width calculated from final page count

Do not finalize the print cover before your interior page count is final.

KDP's current guidance says the final page count is needed to size a print cover correctly, and its cover must include the back, spine and front as one file. KDP also specifies that spine text requires a minimum page count.

PHASE 13: Check Your Cover File

Before uploading:

- ☐ Correct dimensions
- ☐ Correct trim size
- ☐ Correct bleed
- ☐ Correct spine width
- ☐ Correct safe areas
- ☐ Images high resolution
- ☐ Fonts embedded where required
- ☐ No crop marks
- ☐ No template instructions
- ☐ No accidental guides
- ☐ No placeholder text
- ☐ Correct PDF format where required
- ☐ File opens correctly
- ☐ Cover matches book metadata

KDP currently recommends at least 300 DPI for cover images and specifies other PDF/file requirements. Always verify the current platform requirements before upload because specifications can change.

PHASE 14: ISBN and Publishing Identity

Before entering your book details, decide:

- ☐ Do I need an ISBN?
- ☐ Who will be the ISBN registrant?
- ☐ What will my publishing/imprint name be?
- ☐ Is the author name final?
- ☐ Is the title final?
- ☐ Is the subtitle final?
- ☐ Are the edition details correct?
- ☐ Are different formats handled correctly?

For KDP, an ISBN isn't required for an ebook, while paperback and hardcover books generally require one except for certain low-content situations; KDP may provide a free ISBN for eligible print books.

Never copy an ISBN from another book.

PHASE 15: Create a Book Information Master Sheet

This is another step worth adding to your publishing workflow.

Create one document containing:

Book title:

Subtitle:

Author:

Pen name:

Series:

Edition:

Language:

ISBN:

Publisher/imprint:

Publication date:

Trim size:

Page count:

Book description:

Short description:

Author bio:

Categories:

Keywords:

Website:

Contact information:

Copyright information:

Keep this document.

Use it whenever you upload or update the book.

This reduces one of the easiest mistakes to make: having different information in your manuscript, cover and publishing dashboard.

KDP specifically warns that book details such as title, author name, edition and ISBN should match the corresponding information in your files.

PHASE 16: Write Your Book Description

Your description has two jobs:

Explain the book.

Persuade the right reader to buy it.

Before finalizing:

- ☐ The opening creates curiosity
- ☐ The reader understands what the book is about
- ☐ The target reader is clear
- ☐ The benefits are clear
- ☐ The description isn't simply a summary of every chapter
- ☐ Important keywords appear naturally
- ☐ No keyword stuffing
- ☐ No misleading promises
- ☐ No unsupported claims
- ☐ Call to action included where appropriate

Test it

Give the description to someone who has never seen your book.

Ask:

"Who do you think this book is for?"

If they can't answer, improve the description.

NEED HELP WITH THIS?

Create a Stronger Book Description

Your book description is one of the first things potential readers see when they discover your book online. A great description should quickly communicate what the book is about, who it is for, and why the reader should care.

If you're struggling to turn your book's main idea into compelling sales copy, try the [Creativity Publications Book Description Generator](#).

Use it as a starting point, then refine the result so the final description accurately reflects your book, your voice, and your intended readers.

[Create Your Book Description →](#)

PHASE 17: Choose Categories

- ☐ Research relevant categories
- ☐ Identify where your ideal reader actually shops
- ☐ Choose categories relevant to the book
- ☐ Avoid misleading categories
- ☐ Don't choose a category simply because you think it will make the book look more popular

KDP explicitly warns against selecting categories that are unrelated to the book or intended to manipulate customer discovery.

PHASE 18: Research Keywords

Think about what your reader would actually type.

Create a keyword list.

For example:

Topic

Problem

Audience

Genre

Outcome

Format

Specific use case

Then:

- ☐ Remove irrelevant keywords
- ☐ Remove misleading keywords
- ☐ Remove repeated variations that add no value
- ☐ Prioritize reader language
- ☐ Use keywords naturally

Don't confuse keyword research with keyword stuffing.

PHASE 19: Create Your Author Platform Before Launch

You don't need a huge audience.

But you should have somewhere readers can find you.

Author website

- ☐ Domain
- ☐ Homepage
- ☐ About page
- ☐ Books page
- ☐ Individual book page
- ☐ Contact page
- ☐ Privacy page
- ☐ Relevant legal pages
- ☐ Email signup
- ☐ Social links
- ☐ Media/press page if appropriate

Author profile

- ☐ Professional photograph
- ☐ Short bio

- ☐ Long bio
- ☐ Author story
- ☐ Areas of expertise
- ☐ Published books
- ☐ Contact method

PHASE 20: Build Your Reader List

Do not rely entirely on Amazon, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok or any other platform to maintain your relationship with readers.

Consider building an email list.

- ☐ Email service selected
- ☐ Signup form created
- ☐ Lead magnet created
- ☐ Welcome email written
- ☐ Confirmation process tested
- ☐ Privacy/consent requirements considered
- ☐ First few emails prepared

Good lead magnets

- ☐ First chapter
- ☐ Bonus chapter
- ☐ Workbook
- ☐ Reading guide
- ☐ Templates
- ☐ Exclusive bonus material

PHASE 21: Prepare Your Book Launch Assets

Don't wait until publication day.

Prepare:

- ☐ Book cover image
- ☐ 3D book mockup
- ☐ Author photo
- ☐ Book description
- ☐ Short book description
- ☐ Social media graphics
- ☐ Email announcement
- ☐ Launch email
- ☐ Launch-day post
- ☐ Follow-up posts
- ☐ Short video
- ☐ Author quote
- ☐ Reader quote/testimonial where legitimately obtained
- ☐ Website book page
- ☐ Media/press information if applicable

PHASE 22: Recruit Early Readers

Before launch:

- ☐ Identify potential early readers
- ☐ Ask people genuinely interested in the subject
- ☐ Give them clear expectations
- ☐ Provide the correct manuscript
- ☐ Set a reasonable deadline
- ☐ Ask for honest feedback
- ☐ Record recurring issues
- ☐ Make final corrections

Never manufacture reviews or pressure readers to leave a particular rating.

PHASE 23: Final Manuscript Quality-Control Pass

Before uploading:

- ☐ Read the final manuscript again
- ☐ Check spelling
- ☐ Check grammar
- ☐ Check chapter order
- ☐ Check page numbers
- ☐ Check headings
- ☐ Check table of contents
- ☐ Check images
- ☐ Check references
- ☐ Check hyperlinks
- ☐ Check blank pages
- ☐ Check headers/footers
- ☐ Check copyright page
- ☐ Check author name
- ☐ Check book title
- ☐ Check subtitle

- ☐ Check ISBN
- ☐ Remove tracked changes
- ☐ Remove comments
- ☐ Accept/reject pending edits
- ☐ Save a clean master copy

PHASE 24: Create Your Final Upload Files

Create a dedicated folder for the final book.

Suggested folder structure

BOOK MASTER

- 01 Manuscript
- 02 Cover
- 03 Metadata
- 04 ISBN
- 05 Proof
- 06 Marketing
- 07 Final Published Files
- 08 Archive

Then:

- ☐ Save the editable master manuscript
- ☐ Save final PDF
- ☐ Save final ebook file
- ☐ Save final cover
- ☐ Save metadata sheet
- ☐ Save ISBN information
- ☐ Save final book description

☐ Back everything up

Never rely on one copy of your book files.

PHASE 25: Upload to Your Publishing Platform

Before pressing Publish:

- ☐ Select correct format
- ☐ Enter correct title
- ☐ Enter correct subtitle
- ☐ Enter correct author
- ☐ Enter correct contributors
- ☐ Enter correct description
- ☐ Enter correct language
- ☐ Enter correct ISBN
- ☐ Enter correct publishing information
- ☐ Select appropriate categories
- ☐ Enter appropriate keywords
- ☐ Upload manuscript
- ☐ Upload cover
- ☐ Enter pricing
- ☐ Select territories/rights correctly
- ☐ Review every field

☐ Preview the book

KDP's current workflow separates book details, content/upload, and rights/pricing, and recommends reviewing the files before publication.

NEED HELP WITH THIS?

Calculate Your Potential Amazon KDP Royalties

Before choosing your book price, it's worth understanding how pricing can affect your potential earnings.

The [KDP Royalty Calculator](#) from Creativity Publications can help you estimate potential earnings from your Amazon KDP book based on factors such as format, price, printing costs, and royalty structure.

Use the calculator to compare different pricing scenarios instead of choosing a price based only on what other authors are charging.

[Calculate Your KDP Royalties →](#)

PHASE 26: Preview the Book

This is one of the most important steps.

Never assume the uploaded file looks exactly like your original document.

Check:

- ☐ Cover
- ☐ Title page
- ☐ Copyright page
- ☐ Table of contents
- ☐ Chapter starts
- ☐ Page numbers
- ☐ Images
- ☐ Tables
- ☐ Headers
- ☐ Footers
- ☐ Blank pages
- ☐ Margins
- ☐ Font rendering
- ☐ Special characters
- ☐ Hyperlinks

☐ Last page

☐ Back matter

Look for:

Text cut off

Images moved

Unexpected blank pages

Wrong page numbers

Missing characters

Broken formatting

Inconsistent spacing

PHASE 27: Order a Physical Proof

If you're publishing a print book, don't stop at the digital preview.

Get a physical proof when the platform offers one.

Check:

- ☐ Cover colors
- ☐ Cover alignment
- ☐ Spine alignment
- ☐ Text size
- ☐ Paper quality
- ☐ Margins
- ☐ Images
- ☐ Tables
- ☐ Page breaks
- ☐ Chapter openings
- ☐ Overall readability
- ☐ Book thickness
- ☐ Whether the book looks professional in your hands

Ask yourself:

"If a stranger paid full price for this book, would I be proud to hand it to them?"

If not, fix it before publication.

PHASE 28: Final Metadata Audit

Compare your:

Manuscript

against

Cover

against

Publishing dashboard

against

Website

against

Marketing graphics

Everything important should be consistent.

- ☐ Title matches
- ☐ Subtitle matches
- ☐ Author name matches
- ☐ Series information matches
- ☐ ISBN matches where applicable
- ☐ Edition information matches
- ☐ Description matches intended version
- ☐ Cover information matches

This simple audit can prevent avoidable publishing problems.

PHASE 29: Create a Launch Timeline

6 – 8 weeks before launch

- ☐ Finalize manuscript
- ☐ Finalize cover
- ☐ Build author page
- ☐ Build book sales page
- ☐ Start gathering early readers
- ☐ Prepare email list
- ☐ Prepare launch materials

3 – 4 weeks before launch

- ☐ Send early copies where appropriate
- ☐ Announce upcoming book
- ☐ Prepare social content
- ☐ Prepare launch emails
- ☐ Prepare author interviews
- ☐ Contact relevant media/blogs

1 – 2 weeks before launch

- ☐ Confirm final files

- ☐ Confirm metadata
- ☐ Confirm pricing
- ☐ Confirm links
- ☐ Schedule launch content
- ☐ Remind early readers

Launch week

- ☐ Publish
- ☐ Verify live book page
- ☐ Verify purchase links
- ☐ Send announcement
- ☐ Publish launch content
- ☐ Contact relevant partners
- ☐ Monitor issues

NEED HELP WITH THIS?

Publishing Your Book Is Only the Beginning

Getting your book published doesn't automatically mean readers will discover it.

After publication, you need a strategy for getting your book in front of the people most likely to want it. That can include content marketing, social media, email marketing, reader communities, partnerships, and other promotional channels.

Explore [Book Marketing Strategies That Actually Sell Books](#) from Creativity Publications for practical ideas you can use to promote your book and build a long-term marketing strategy.

[Explore Book Marketing Strategies →](#)

PHASE 30: Launch Day Checklist

- ☐ Confirm book is actually live
- ☐ Test the purchase page
- ☐ Check cover
- ☐ Check description
- ☐ Check price
- ☐ Check formats
- ☐ Check author name
- ☐ Check website link
- ☐ Send launch email
- ☐ Publish announcement
- ☐ Share with your community
- ☐ Thank early supporters
- ☐ Monitor questions
- ☐ Record any problems

Don't spend the entire day refreshing your sales dashboard.

Your launch is the beginning of the marketing process, not the end.

PHASE 31: Your First 30 Days After Publication

Week 1

- ☐ Verify book listing
- ☐ Fix obvious errors
- ☐ Collect legitimate reader feedback
- ☐ Share useful content related to the book
- ☐ Contact relevant blogs/podcasts

Week 2

- ☐ Publish an article related to the book
- ☐ Create short-form content
- ☐ Answer reader questions
- ☐ Improve your author website

Week 3

- ☐ Look for interviews
- ☐ Pitch relevant guest articles
- ☐ Create a useful free resource
- ☐ Continue email marketing

Week 4

- ☐ Review traffic
- ☐ Review sales
- ☐ Review reader feedback
- ☐ Identify strongest marketing channel
- ☐ Plan next month's promotion

PHASE 32: Build Your Book's Long-Term Marketing Engine

A book shouldn't disappear after launch week.

Create a system.

Every month:

- ☐ Publish useful content related to your book
- ☐ Share excerpts or lessons
- ☐ Create short videos
- ☐ Answer questions related to your topic
- ☐ Participate in relevant communities
- ☐ Pitch interviews
- ☐ Look for podcast opportunities
- ☐ Look for guest-post opportunities
- ☐ Build relationships with other authors
- ☐ Grow your email list
- ☐ Update your website
- ☐ Promote older books

PHASE 33: Final "Am I Really Ready?" Test

Before publication, answer **YES** to these questions:

The book

- ☐ Is the manuscript finished?
- ☐ Has it been properly edited?
- ☐ Has it been proofread?
- ☐ Is the book useful to its intended reader?

Production

- ☐ Is the interior professionally formatted?
- ☐ Is the cover appropriate for the genre?
- ☐ Is the cover technically correct?
- ☐ Has the book been previewed?
- ☐ Have print books been physically proofed where appropriate?

Metadata

- ☐ Is the title correct?
- ☐ Is the subtitle correct?
- ☐ Is the author name correct?
- ☐ Is the ISBN correct?
- ☐ Is the description persuasive and accurate?

☐ Are the categories relevant?

☐ Are the keywords relevant?

Business

☐ Do I know my production costs?

☐ Do I understand my royalty structure?

☐ Is my pricing intentional?

☐ Do I understand my publishing rights?

Marketing

☐ Is my author website ready?

☐ Is my book page ready?

☐ Do I have somewhere to collect interested readers?

☐ Do I have launch content prepared?

☐ Do I have a post-launch marketing plan?

If several answers are **NO**, you may not be ready to publish yet.

THE FIRST-TIME AUTHOR MASTER CHECKLIST

Before Writing

- ☐ Define target reader
- ☐ Define book promise
- ☐ Research competing books
- ☐ Choose publishing objective

Manuscript

- ☐ Complete manuscript
- ☐ Self-edit
- ☐ Fact-check
- ☐ Research-check
- ☐ Developmental edit
- ☐ Line/copy edit
- ☐ Proofread
- ☐ Create style sheet

Publishing Strategy

- ☐ Choose traditional/self/hybrid route
- ☐ Choose publishing platforms
- ☐ Choose formats
- ☐ Choose markets

Production

- ☐ Choose trim size
- ☐ Format interior
- ☐ Prepare front matter
- ☐ Prepare body matter

- ☐ Prepare back matter
- ☐ Create table of contents
- ☐ Prepare images

Cover

- ☐ Design front cover
- ☐ Design back cover
- ☐ Calculate spine
- ☐ Add barcode area where appropriate
- ☐ Check bleed
- ☐ Check resolution
- ☐ Check typography
- ☐ Export correctly

Metadata

- ☐ Title
- ☐ Subtitle
- ☐ Author
- ☐ ISBN
- ☐ Imprint
- ☐ Description
- ☐ Categories
- ☐ Keywords
- ☐ Language
- ☐ Rights

Website

- ☐ Author page
- ☐ Book page
- ☐ About page
- ☐ Contact page

- ☐ Email signup
- ☐ Privacy/legal pages

Launch

- ☐ Early readers
- ☐ Launch team/community
- ☐ Launch graphics
- ☐ Emails
- ☐ Social content
- ☐ Media/podcast outreach
- ☐ Launch-day plan

Publishing

- ☐ Upload manuscript
- ☐ Upload cover
- ☐ Enter metadata
- ☐ Preview
- ☐ Correct errors
- ☐ Order proof
- ☐ Approve final version
- ☐ Publish

After Publication

- ☐ Verify live listing
- ☐ Test links
- ☐ Collect legitimate feedback
- ☐ Continue content marketing
- ☐ Build backlinks
- ☐ Grow email list
- ☐ Promote book

- ☐ Monitor performance
- ☐ Update when genuinely necessary

10 Mistakes First-Time Authors Should Avoid

1. Publishing an unfinished manuscript

"Finished writing" does not necessarily mean "ready to publish."

2. Designing the cover too early

Your final print page count can affect the spine and complete cover dimensions.

3. Skipping professional proofreading

Readers notice errors quickly.

4. Choosing categories only because they look profitable

Categories should accurately represent your book.

5. Using copyrighted images without permission

Finding an image online does not automatically give you permission to publish it.

6. Uploading without previewing

Your original Word document is not the same thing as the final published book.

7. Never ordering a physical proof

Digital review cannot reveal every physical printing problem.

8. Launching without a marketing plan

Publishing is distribution. It isn't automatically marketing.

9. Buying fake reviews or artificial engagement

Build genuine readership instead.

10. Forgetting about the book after launch

A book can continue generating readers long after publication if you keep creating useful content around it.

YOUR BOOK PUBLISHING DASHBOARD

Copy this section for every book you publish.

Book title: _____

Subtitle: _____

Author: _____

Pen name: _____

Genre/category: _____

Target reader: _____

Word count: _____

Trim size: _____

Page count: _____

ISBN: _____

Publishing platform: _____

Publication date: _____

Book description: _____

Website: _____

Launch date: _____

Editing completed: ☐

Proofreading completed: ☐

Cover completed: ☐

Interior completed: ☐

Metadata completed: ☐

Preview completed: ☐

Physical proof approved: ☐

Launch assets ready: ☐

Book published: ☐

Post-launch marketing started: ☐

FREE RESOURCES TO HELP YOU COMPLETE THIS CHECKLIST

Official KDP Resources

For authors publishing through Kindle Direct Publishing, always check the current official requirements before uploading because technical specifications and platform policies can change.

KDP Publishing: [Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing](#)

KDP Paperback Formatting: [Format Your Paperback](#)

KDP Cover Requirements: [Create a Paperback Cover](#)

KDP Book Details & Metadata: [Metadata Guidelines for Books](#)

KDP Manuscript File Requirements: [Save Your Manuscript File](#)

THE GOLDEN RULE OF SELF-PUBLISHING

You don't need to do everything yourself.

But you **do need to know what is supposed to happen.**

A professional editor can edit your manuscript.

A designer can create your cover.

A formatter can format your interior.

A publishing service can help with distribution.

But the author remains responsible for making informed decisions.

Don't rush because you are excited.

Don't spend money because someone sounds confident.

Don't publish because you are tired of editing.

Publish when the manuscript is ready, the production files are correct, the metadata is accurate, and you have a plan for getting the book in front of the right readers.

And remember:

Publishing the book is not the finish line. It is the point where your book's journey with readers begins.

Your Next Step

If you are a first-time author, don't try to complete this entire checklist in one sitting.

Start with **Phase 1**.

Define the book.

Then work through each phase in order.

When you reach the publishing stage, return to this checklist and perform the final quality-control audit before you press **Publish**.

CONTINUE YOUR PUBLISHING JOURNEY

You've completed the checklist. Now take the next step.

Publishing your first book is more than uploading a manuscript and pressing **Publish**.

You've worked through the important stages—from finishing and editing your manuscript to formatting your book, preparing your cover, choosing your metadata, reviewing your files, and getting ready for launch.

But publishing is only the beginning.

The next step is learning how to **publish smarter, market your book effectively, reach the right readers, and build a sustainable career as an author.**

That's where **Creativity Publications** comes in.

Explore More Author Resources

At Creativity Publications, we're building practical resources designed to help authors move from **manuscript to published book—and from published book to successful author.**

Whether you're publishing your first book or preparing your next one, you can find practical guides, calculators, checklists, and publishing resources designed to help you make better decisions.

[**AUTHOR RESOURCES →**](#)

Explore practical resources created to help authors understand the publishing process, solve common publishing problems, and make informed decisions at every stage of their journey.

[**PUBLISHING GUIDES →**](#)

Learn how to navigate self-publishing, book formatting, Amazon KDP, publishing costs, book preparation, ISBNs, metadata, and other important parts of becoming a published author.

[BOOK MARKETING →](#)

Publishing your book is only half the journey.

Learn practical book marketing strategies for getting your book in front of potential readers, building awareness, creating content around your book, and developing a long-term marketing strategy.

[FREE AUTHOR TOOLS →](#)

Use practical publishing tools and calculators to make decisions easier.

You can find resources such as our [Book Description Generator](#), [Word Count to Page Count Calculator](#), [KDP Royalty Calculator](#), and publishing cost resources.

Your Next Step

If your manuscript isn't published yet, go back through this checklist and complete any steps you skipped.

If your book is already published, use the resources below to improve your next stage:

Need help preparing your book?

Explore our publishing guides and author resources.

Need help making publishing decisions?

Use our calculators and practical tools.

Need more readers?

Explore our book marketing resources.

Planning your next book?

Start the checklist again—and improve the process with what you've learned from your first publication.

CREATIVITY PUBLICATIONS

Helping Authors Write, Publish & Grow

Practical Publishing Resources • Author Tools • Book Marketing • Publishing Guides

[Visit Creativity Publications](#)

Discover more practical resources to help you **write better, publish smarter, and grow as an author.**