

# Self-Publishing Hints and Tips

*These notes have been prepared by Tony Hope FAusIMM and the Tasmanian Writers' Centre.*

*May 2015*

---

Self-publishing can be a valid option for writers wanting to get published. If publishing through a traditional publishing house is not for you, you might want to go it alone. These notes are intended to help you through the process, but are not intended to be comprehensive – do your own research and perhaps join a writer's group.

Before and during writing, never be hesitant to seek advice from colleagues and friends. **Starting a manuscript or book can often be a daunting proposition** although once started it can be a great motivator to continue. Before beginning, one should be clear about the purpose of what is to be written and the audience (reader) to be targeted.

- S Synopsis** - Sum up your work in a short paragraph that gives the reader a clear and succinct grasp of the kernel of your work, why you wrote it and what makes it different from other books in the field. Include a brief bio to state your credentials to the reader. The synopsis can also form the basis of your back cover blurb, a shorter version designed to make the reader want to read the whole book – but don't include spoilers here. Use your synopsis and/or blurb for your marketing material as well.
- E Editing** – good editing is a key to readability. There are different levels of editing from structural (how to arrange your material to make it accessible to the reader) to line editing (checking language, grammar, clarity, etc) to final proof reading once you are ready to send the manuscript on for typesetting. Fresh eyes can see errors more clearly so in some instances consider engaging a professional proof-reader. Check and double-check your work to avoid errors in the finished product.
- L Layout** is important and the use of a graphic designer can provide a professional look. Ensure the font is large enough to be easily readable, and some white space surrounds the text. A serif font is most legible. Don't use multiple font types or styles and try to avoid bold and underlining. For non-fiction, tools such as a table of contents, references or bibliography, acknowledgements, a glossary and an index can assist the reader. You may be able to create these yourself using your own software, or use the services of a

professional. Keep your narrative succinct and where suitable, use some anecdotes that would be of interest to the reader.

- F Foreword.** Seek out a person such as a public figure colleague, politician or historian for example who can write an independent comment on the book as a foreword. You can also use a quote for the back cover and/or your marketing material.
- P Planning.** This is essential before putting pen to paper. Decide your objective for writing the book and how you will research and gather information. Do not rely on memory. Think about the structure of your book, and look at other works for ideas and options.
- U Understand** your reason for writing a book. Consider your reader – who are you trying to reach? Check with others that your book will be of interest, and has a point of difference to other works already written.
- B Believe** in yourself and be passionate for what you are about to embark on. Enthusiasm and passion for your subject or story will shine through and ensure a good result.
- L Learn** from others who have published before you, including their styles and layouts. Look at some good books already published to determine the way you wish your book to be presented. A poorly written, edited or designed book will not appeal to a reader. Contact other self publishers for advice.
- I Illustrations** - photos, records, diagrams and maps add interest to non-fiction. Source these from your own collection, otherwise and in addition, you will need to spend time at libraries and on the internet, but don't forget to check whether there is copyright on any material you use and be sure to acknowledge the source.
- S Search** other sources of information such as correspondence, books, journals, archives and other publications. Be aware that you will require permission to use copyrighted material (including quotes) – contact the publisher or web manager in the first instance.
- H Homework.** Do your homework before you start writing. Ensure any information or claims are accurate, and provide references if your work is non-fiction.

Once you are happy with the written work it's time to move on to book production. Following is a list of the steps involved. You may engage a printer or self-publishing service who take care of everything, or you may need to do some of these yourself:

- Final proof-read – make sure your files go to the next stage as correct and complete as possible.
- Purchase your ISBN and register it online – go to [www.myidentifiers.com.au](http://www.myidentifiers.com.au) you can also purchase a barcode to match, which you then pass on to your designer for inclusion on the back cover.
- Layout and design, including front and back covers.
- Typesetting – your printer fits the text into the layout design. Note that page numbers will change with the layout. Talk to your printer if you are including table of contents and indexes.
- Check the printer's proofs – ensure no errors have crept in during typesetting
- Printing.
- Legal deposit copies – by law you must send one copy each to the State and National Libraries.
- Promotional copies – set aside a number of copies for reviewers, and other potential marketing avenues.

As well as producing your book, you need to plan how to sell it. Prepare a marketing plan well before the book is ready. Timing is the key to sales here – you need to build up interest before the release and make a concerted effort to publicise the release and any events you might hold.

- Create a press release – prepare an A4 sheet which includes the following: Title, author, release date, price (RRP), front cover image, strap line in bold (one short phrase or sentence that encapsulates what the book is about), blurb (a bit more about the book that hooks the reader and communicates the main themes), a quote (from the book or from a high-profile reader or review), your author photo and a short bio, contact details for more information. This can later be altered to serve as an information sheet – remove the date and add details of stockists.
- Marketing – get the word out about your book (and a launch if you plan one): use social media, send out a press release, contact relevant interest groups in your area (and further afield if you are prepared to travel) and offer to visit to talk about your book. Before your launch send review copies to media outlets that publish reviews – choose appropriate media organisations and find out who

is the relevant editor/journalist and address it personally. Let them know you are available for interview, and practice talking about yourself and your book in a succinct way.

- Distribution – contact local bookshops and give them your press release, ask them if they will stock your book, and arrange a launch at your favourite bookshop if appropriate. Unless you are willing to travel and regularly re-stock bookshops further afield contact a book distributor. Note that bookshops and distributors will expect to pay a wholesale price – 40–45% discount off the RRP is usual.
- Book launch – plan a launch event. Research the timing – is there a celebration, international ‘week of’, season, etc that is relevant to your work that you could coincide with? What days/times are best or best avoided? Get the word out well in advance, so it can be listed in newsletters, etc, which may require long lead-time. Prepare a short launch notice with date, time, title, author and short blurb to make it easy for inclusion, attach a cover image and/or invitation. Flyers and posters can also be displayed in prominent places. Invite a high-profile person to launch the book – give them a copy to read well in advance. Personally invite as many people as you can.

Good luck!

Note: beware of publishing ‘services’ that charge high fees, promising great things but don’t deliver. Do your research before you sign.