

The end.

Now what?!

6 STEPS TO TAKE YOUR
MANUSCRIPT TO MARKETPLACE
IN 6 WEEKS.

BY STEVEN SPATZ, CMO, BOOKBABY

If you've picked up this guide, you've either finished writing your book or you're close to it.

To you I say: Congratulations. Next I'll say: Cork the champagne.

It's time to go back to work, because some really important stuff comes next.

This guide is intended to help you take the next steps towards realizing your ultimate goal – seeing your published work in bookstores, both online and off.

We'll explore the six steps you have to take to bring your manuscript to the marketplace in six weeks or less. In short order, they are:

Step 1: KNOWING WHEN YOU'RE REALLY FINISHED WITH YOUR BOOK

Step 2: EDITING YOUR BOOK, AND WHY IT'S ESSENTIAL

Step 3: CHOOSING YOUR PUBLISHING PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

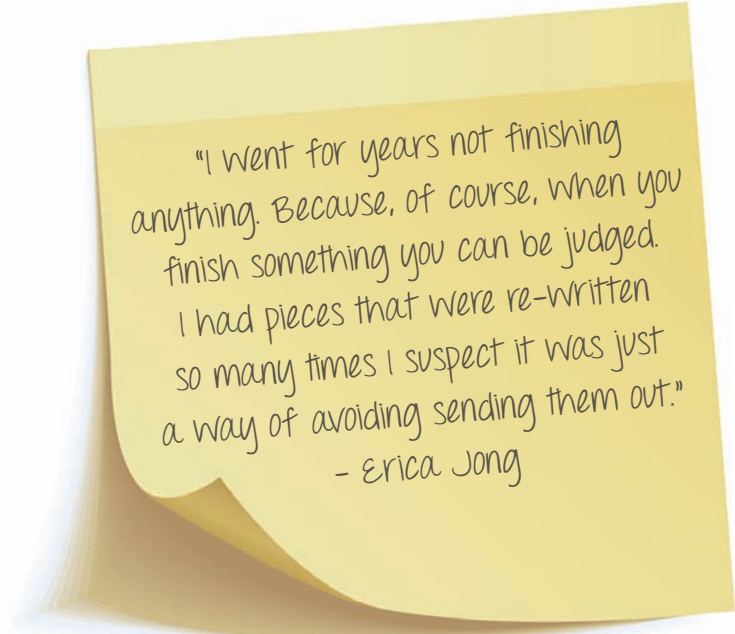
Step 4: GETTING A JUMP START ON BOOK MARKETING BASICS

Step 5: GIVING YOUR BOOK AN EYE-CATCHING COVER

Step 6: UNDERSTANDING EBOOK AND FORMATTING BASICS

It's a forced march to be sure, but it's one that any motivated author can finish. Depending on the path you choose you can be seeing your eBook up for sale at Amazon, iBooks, Barnes & Noble, and other stores just a couple of months from today!

And we're off!



"I went for years not finishing anything. Because, of course, when you finish something you can be judged. I had pieces that were re-written so many times I suspect it was just a way of avoiding sending them out."
- Erica Jong

Step 1:

When is *done* really done? Typing “the end” is no guarantee that you’re finished.

TIMELINE: ONE WEEK

Sometimes we don’t know when to put down the virtual pen. It’s human nature to want to constantly improve and tinker with your work. Most authors say if they could pick up their book again six months after finishing, they’d find more than a few things to change beyond some simple typos.

We’re on a six week-long journey and our purpose in Week One is simple: we’re trying to determine if your book is in shape for the next step – the editing your book richly deserves (and needs). You may have already revised it a time – or four – by now. Maybe it needs even more work. Depending on what you find in this section, it may take more than six weeks for you to hit the marketplace. Better you find out here and now rather than later on in the process.

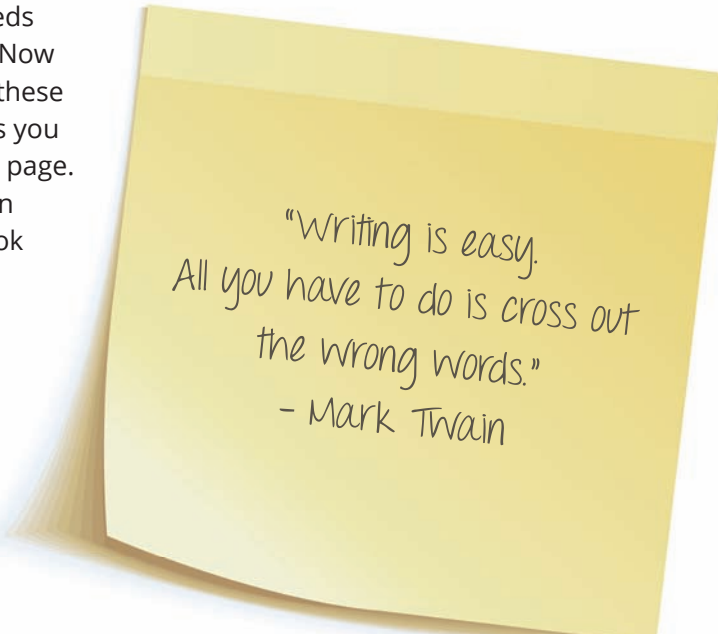
Here are some tactics and suggestions for making sure your book is fully cooked:

Find objective readers – Beware the praises or critiques of your great aunt Edna. Few friends or family members can honestly offer you objective feedback. If they CAN, count yourself lucky and listen to what they have to say. But in most cases, you’d be better off joining a local writers group. The authors in these groups can provide tremendous feedback, inspire new ideas, and give great moral support. Of course being engaged in this kind of group isn’t something you can simply accomplish in a week. Hopefully this has been part of your writing strategy all along to get feedback during the process. Writing is often a very solitary pursuit and these groups can be your lifeline at times. Digest their commentary, be surprised at their insights and your blind spots, dust yourself off and revise if necessary. If it takes longer than six weeks to find your way onto Amazon and beyond, so be it.

Online help – If you can’t find these power readers within your own circle, go online. There’s a large community of readers who are very willing to give their opinions to new writers. Check out websites like www.skypen.com, www.worldliterarycafe.com, www.youwriteon.com or www.authonomy.com. You don’t have to submit the whole book – just give them parts. Try submitting the opening chapter for a quick reality check and possibly very useful feedback.

Read your book like it’s brand new – You’ve spent hundreds of hours looking bleary eyed at the characters on a screen. Now you’ve got to take it offline for another look. You’ve viewed these same words so often that your brain sometimes sees words you think are there, and not really reading exactly what’s on the page. Print out your entire book in a different font, maybe even on different colored paper to fool your brain. Reading your book aloud can also help you see it fresh and let you more easily identify awkward phrases or sentences.

Distill your book in summaries – This is a tactic borrowed from the visual art world. The usual assignment is to draw quick sketches of an everyday item – let’s say a toaster in this case. But you have to draw it 25 times in 25 different ways. You’d have to get very creative – drawing it in different perspectives, angles, maybe with props or decorations.



“writing is easy.
All you have to do is cross out
the wrong words.”
– Mark Twain

Now apply it to your book. The assignment is to write a series of summaries about your book, but in different perspectives or viewpoints. These should be pretty short – 800 to 1200 words – but these summarized versions may help reveal what's most essential about your book. Reading all the summaries should help clarify the core essentials of your story, the relative strength of your characters or topics, and perhaps even provide clues about how to best structure your book.

In reality, a book is finished when everybody is reasonably happy. On the one hand, you love your story and want it to be the best it can possibly be. On the other, you've got things to do, a life to live, and so on. Surely there's a happy medium. The decision to say "It's really THE END" will always be yours alone. Not only that, it will change as you become a better writer. In the end, all we can do is build our trust in the book and let it go.

Of course the next step is putting it into the hands of people who can take your prose to the next level and potentially save you from silly mistakes – your editor!

Step 2:

Editing is for everyone. Without editing, even a good book could be doomed.

TIMELINE: FOUR WEEKS


I can't say it strongly enough: Editing is an absolute must if you want your book to reach its full potential. Your book could be chock full of grammar, punctuation and spelling errors that will jerk readers out of the reading experience. It's the editor's job to find and fix those errors.

On our timeline, we're going to allow four weeks for this process, from finding your editor to getting back your fully edited manuscript. If you're scoring at home, that means we've only tackled two items on the list and we're already five weeks into our six week process. Relax – there are three steps we can be working on while your manuscript is being edited. But more on that later...

There are two basic levels of editing you should consider at this point:

✓ **Proofreading** – The simplest and most affordable form of editing, proofreading is for writers who don't need help with the contents of the book itself, but who need someone to simply go over the text for basic grammatical and spelling errors.

✓ **Line Editing** – The second type of editing most editors offer is line editing, which is a little more detailed than proofreading. Line editing will determine if your manuscript has plot holes, limited characterization, factual errors and/or syntactical problems. Even the most polished writer can benefit from line editing.



Length matters

Is your story too long or too short? You can use the generally agreed upon standard below to see where your book falls:

SHORT STORIES: 1000-8000 words

NOVELLA: 10,000-30,000 words

COMMERCIAL FICTION: 95,000-120,000 words (*including women's fiction, crime fiction, fantasy etc*)

ROMANCE: 55,000–85,000 words

NON-FICTION: wide variance by subject

FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS:

Board book: 100 words maximum

Early picture book: 500 words

Picture book: 750-1,000 words maximum

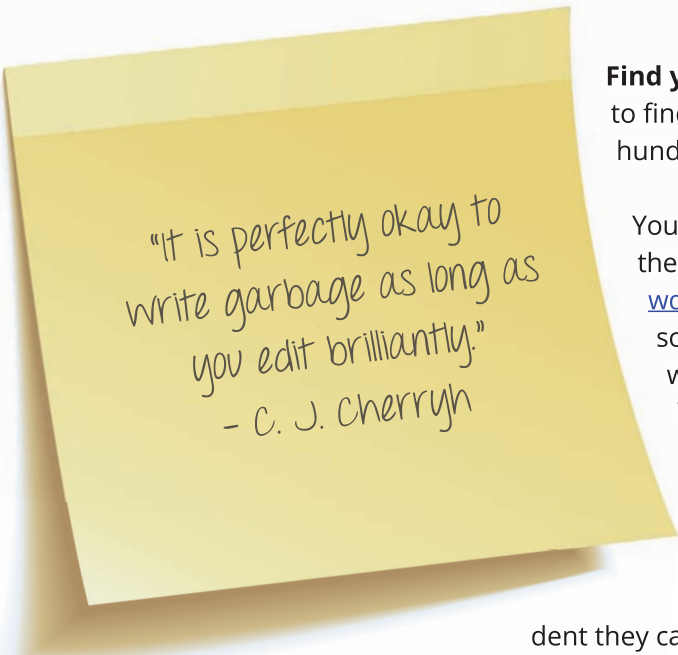
Early Reader: 3,500 words maximum

Chapter book: 10,000 words

Middle grade: 35,000 words for contemporary, mystery, humor; 45,000 for fantasy/sci-fi, adventure and historical

YA: 70,000 words for contemporary, humor, mystery, historical, romance, etc.; 90,000 words for fantasy, sci-fi, paranormal, etc.

It's highly recommended you stay within the limits for your genre. If your book is too long or too short you will have difficulty finding readers.



"It is perfectly okay to write garbage as long as you edit brilliantly."
- C. J. Cherryh

Find your editor – There is no shortage of resources available for you to find the editor the suits your needs. A quick Google search will yield hundreds of choices.

You could start your search for a professional editor by browsing the listings at industry leading sites such as Writer's Digest (www.wd.com) or Media Bistro (www.mediabistro.com). Another good source is the Editorial Freelancers Association (www.the-efa.org), which has a directory of EFA members that you can search online. The EFA also has a great list of typical rates for various kinds of editorial services at www.the-efa.org/res/rates.php.

Get a sample edit – Before you buy a car, you always take a test drive. It's the same with editing. If you're going to invest a good sum of money into this service, you need to be confident they can deliver an amazing final product. Many freelance editors are, or should be, willing to give you a free sample edit. The company that partners with BookBaby for editing services – Firstediting.com – gives authors a free edit of the first chapter of their book within 24 hours, along with a price quote for editing the whole book.

Consider the costs – Let's use a fiction book of 100,000 words for our example. Proofreading is the least expensive option but will still cost in the high hundreds of dollars. Typical line editors charge about \$25 to \$50 per hour, depending on their level of experience and expertise and on the subject matter, and they generally complete five to ten pages an hour. Engaging even a \$25-per-hour copy editor for a 100,000-word novel will cost you about a thousand dollars.

Is it really worth it? – In a word: Yes. This is the step in the publishing process many self-published authors neglect, and it costs them much more in the long run. Consider the return on investment: if you choose to go the traditional publishing route, a literary agent will be impressed with your tight, cleanly written prose. If you're going direct and publishing yourself, the requirements for editing are just as strict.

If your book requires extensive line editing, then our six-week timetable might not be possible. Just like our cost rationale, the time spent to improve your book is a sound investment.

Don't worry – your precious book is in good hands. Meanwhile, you've got some decisions to make!

Step 3:

Pick your publishing path. Laying out all the options for your writing career.

TIMELINE: ONE WEEK.

When our good friends and BookBaby partners over at Amazon launched the Kindle, I don't think even Jeff Bezos himself foresaw the self-publishing revolution that continues to sweep the globe. As the technology has matured and stabilized, it's even more obvious how the publishing world has flipped around to give authors all the leverage. Simply put, there's been no better time in recorded history to be a writer. Your options are many; your opportunities are vast!

While your book is being edited, the next decision you need to make is what you'll do with your freshly edited manuscript. You have two basic options:

- ✓ 1. Pursue the traditional, “legacy” publishing path of finding an agent, submitting your book to publishers large and small, and putting your book in the hands of industry experts.
- ✓ 2. Or you can go the self-publishing route, either completely DIY or with the assistance of digital publishing converters/distributors (like BookBaby). You’re in control, with a choice of selling printed books or eBooks – or both – directly through Amazon, Barnes & Noble and many other portals (including your own).

Both of these routes are crowded with authors who’ve found fame and fortune and many more who have found neither. Let’s help you make your best decision by considering the pros and cons of each route.

Traditional Publishing Pros

- Wide distribution and more exposure – Legacy publishers can more easily place books in brick & mortar stores.
- Most offer an advance, sometimes a large one – Once you get established this could be a considerable amount.
- They do the editing, formatting, cover art – You just get to sit back and write. Leave the rest to them.
- Marketing power – They are the masters at building the buzz.
- Ego booster – It’s a goal of millions of would-be authors to sign that publishing deal.

Traditional Publishing Cons

- Very hard to break into – How hard? J.K. Rowling’s first Harry Potter book was rejected by a dozen publishers. *A Time to Kill*, bestselling author John Grisham’s first novel, was rejected by 16 agents, then a dozen publishers.
- Take six to eighteen months before publication – After working so long to find the agent, and then another long search to land the publisher, you get to wait even longer.
- You often have little input – They have power over cover art and title and don’t involve you in many decisions regarding your book.
- Pay royalties twice a year – and worse still, the royalty rates are pretty lousy, usually around 5%
- They own “your” book – you’ve basically signed your rights away.

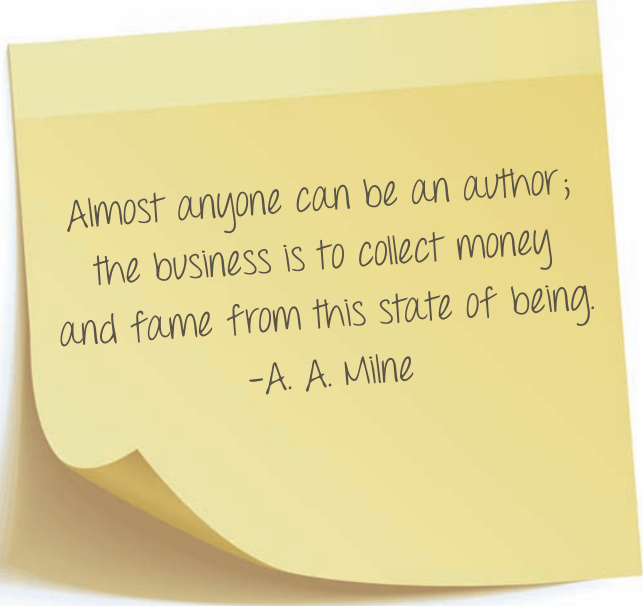
Self-Publishing Pros

- Paid once a month – and the royalty rates are much better, usually between 50-70%
- You control price and cover – in fact every decision is yours.
- Publication is almost instant – Weeks, not months or years.
- Easy to implement changes – You’re the boss.
- You keep your rights - You own the content and everything that has to do with it.
- Anyone can do it – Yep, even great aunt Edna.

Self-Publishing Cons

- No free professional editing, formatting or cover art – You need to source, vet and pay for it.
- Marketing is on your shoulders – Frequently that leads to fewer sales without this support.
- Less than 20% of current book market – But it continues to grow.
- Greater potential to publish crappy books – Anyone can do it, including great aunt Edna.

Either, Or...or Both – There’s a lot to consider. But this doesn’t have to be an either/or kind of decision. The smart choice might be to do both. Set yourself up to self-publish your first book or books. Get out in the marketplace and experience the life of an author. You’ll learn so much in the first six months after you’ve published that your second, third and following books will be that much better.



Almost anyone can be an author;
the business is to collect money
and fame from this state of being.
-A. A. Milne



EBOOKS, PRINT BOOKS OR BOTH?

Some things to consider when choosing which format is best for your book.

Why do you need to pick one or the other? Get the best of both worlds when your book is made into an eBook plus a run of printed books. Publishing companies such as BookBaby specialize in this kind of one-stop shopping.



(eBooks)

PROS

Low cost: Very cheap to relatively cheap to convert files and distribute to retail stores.

Fast: eBook production and distribution takes a few weeks.

Available everywhere, anytime: Readers can find your book in Tasmania in 2 am local time.

Best payout: Amazon returns as much as 70% back to authors going direct.

More trees: eBooks are environmentally friendly.

Add multi media: Something that is available only for eBooks.

CONS

Not everyone uses eBooks: many enjoy the tactile feel of paper and ink.

Must have an eReader, tablet, or smartphone: Not every one of your potential readers has a Kindle, iPad or other device.

Not for every book: Graphic-heavy books or text books are not ideal.

(Printed Books)

PROS

Legitimizes you: nothing like a freshly printed book to tell the world: I'm an author!

Accessible: No eReader needed.

Personalize them: Authors can sign them, your readers can take notes in them.

Also fast: Modern technology – including Print on Demand (POD) is decreasing lead times to days.

Collectible: Ever seen a first edition eBook?

CONS

Costly to produce: While short-run and POD brings the total cost down, there's still a significant upfront investment into printing your own book.

Hard to sell online: You can sell on your own website and maybe Amazon marketplace. But you also have to package and ship the product direct.

Even harder to sell offline: Very difficult to get placement in brick and mortar stores.

Step 4:

Start your book marketing machine. Get a jump on some of the marketing essentials.

TIMELINE: ONE WEEK.

In no particular order, here's a list of some marketing essentials for a successful book launch and promotion.

- **Author's blog** – Do you have one? If yes, keep posting daily to maintain a lively and interesting blog that gets your audience to come to your site. If you don't have one, get started now.
- **Other authors' blogs** – Get involved with other authors now by providing those bloggers with content by guest blogging or commenting. When it's your time to promote, these folks will be glad to help.
- **Facebook by genre** – Facebook is a terrific place to interact with your audience if your genre is romance, children's fiction, or science fiction/fantasy.
- **Goodreads** – Owned by Amazon, and 25 million readers strong, you should get active in this community of readers now. Goodreads offers contests that draw new readers to your books.
- **Promote on Pinterest** – This site has grown to almost 100 million users! Pull together great visuals that your audience finds intriguing and they may find your books intriguing, too.
- **Twitter** – There's power in 140 characters. If you have an account, provide valuable content for your audience—and keep your thumb on the pulse of what your audience is interested in, too.
- **YouTube** – Believe it or not, it's the second biggest search engine after Google. Find a way to get your content on YouTube. It's yet another way to find new readers and engage with your following.
- **Plan, plan, plan ahead** – Start thinking about how you're going to launch the book. There are plenty of websites devoted to book launches and marketing. You can do promotions with email newsletters like The Frugal eReader, Book Deal Hunter, Story Finds, and more.

All books can be GOOD sellers, if not BEST sellers. All books can find their niche audiences—if authors spend time planning and executing interactive book marketing strategies that truly engage with their audience. But that's a topic for another guide.

While you're pouring over the first revisions from your editor, you can exercise the other side of your brain by thinking about that all important first-impression of your book – your cover.

Step 5:

Cover Design – don't try this at home. Let visual experts help you stand out.

TIMELINE: ONE WEEK.

Book cover creation is an art form unto itself. It's different from simply drawing or painting, or even general graphic design. Digital cover design for eBooks is its own separate area.

The main goal of every book cover is to generate excitement and attract attention. Think of the millions of potential readers that will only know your work by a quick glance at your cover. A brilliant cover is the absolute best tool in your future marketing arsenal. It's your anchor point for all of your promotions, a graphical symbol of your book. Creating something that stops people in their tracks or on their browsers requires a special talent.

Simply put, it takes a professional cover artist to achieve this. In our six week timeline we've allotted just one week to come up with a great book cover. Is that enough time? Absolutely. As important as it is, this is an area where you

*"The work never matches
the dream of perfection
the artist has to start with."
- William Faulkner*

shouldn't overthink it. If you focus on this for seven days with the right cover artist, you'll have a winning design faster than you can imagine.

Finding your professional designer – As with our previous search for editing help, there are plenty of freelance book cover artists to be found online. It's a matter of matching the best artist in your genre with the price point you can afford. Before you go designer shopping, keep these things in mind:

- **Make sure the prospective designer works with your genre.** The needs of a romance novel cover are different from the action/adventure genre. Visit their portfolio to make sure they're up to designing for your niche.
- **How does the designer design for themselves.** Is the designer's website professionally designed? If the website doesn't look professional then how can you trust that the book covers will?
- **Take the time to really check out their references.** Talk with the authors they've worked with in the past. Ask if the designer is easy to work with, open to ideas, reliable (responsive and meets deadlines) and are the authors happy with the services rendered and the final product?
- **Do they do digital?** This is critically important if you're going the eBook route. Make sure you see the designers' eBook cover designs. Subtle design that looks incredible at 9" x 6" will be crunched and squashed down to a measly few centimeters in Amazon thumbnails.

Step 6:

eBook file conversion 101

You mean I can't just use my .doc file?

TIMELINE: ONE WEEK.

A lot of authors still don't know much about eBooks, how they are created, or even what they look like on an eReader. So we'll do a little eBook 101 here to bring you up to speed.

No matter the content or genre, your manuscript has one final hurdle to jump before it is eReader-ready: You'll need to have your manuscript converted to ePUB, the file format compatible with the most popular eReaders. With your freshly edited manuscript in hand it's best if you review the following formatting guidelines. Whether you're doing the conversion yourself or having a professional conversion house take care of the job (see sidebar), you can go a long way to make the process easier by making some simple fixes if necessary:

- Use basic text files to upload. eBook formatting works best when authors can supply original files in .doc, .html or .txt file formats.
- Don't use tabs or the space bar to format paragraphs or individual lines. Use the format paragraph menu or the alignment buttons in the toolbar of your text-editing program.
- Use standard fonts for your document, like Times New Roman or Courier New. Don't use very large or very small font sizes. Use 12pt. font size for body text and 14-18pt. for chapter titles.



eBook file conversion:

A NECESSARY EVIL.

It's the fork in the road for digital publishing. Do you want a professional file conversion house to produce the necessary digital files for Amazon, Apple and the rest? Or do you want to save the expense and do it yourself?

Lots of authors have gone down the DIY road and found success. You'll find a lot of great information on websites, author forums, and more to walk you through it. If you want to sell your book only in Amazon's Kindle Store, you can convert your Word file for free by submitting it yourself to Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing.

To reach other stores including Apple's iBooks and Barnes & Noble, converting your Word file into ePUB isn't for everyone. With the technology, standards, and best practices for eBook conversion constantly in flux, it's tough for authors to stay abreast of all the latest developments.

I recommend leaving the technical details to the experts. It's not very expensive – BookBaby does it for as little as \$99 — and your book will look great on all the different eReaders in the marketplace. Writers should be doing what they do best – write.

- Resize large images to 300 pixels high if you would like them to display in-line with text.
- Do all image resizing work outside of the document, then reinsert them before saving. All images must be in .png, .jpg, or .tif format, 72 dpi, and in RGB color mode.
- Don't wrap text around images. All images (except full-page images) should be set "in-line" with text.

Time to publish


A review of our journey from manuscript to marketplace.

WE'VE COME A LONG WAYS IN SIX SHORT WEEKS.

- In **Week 1** we made it official – the book is finally done.
- You bought into the notion that editing was essential in **Week 2** and chose the perfect editor.
- While your prose was being edited, you chose between Self Publishing or the Traditional route in **Week 3**.
- **Week 4** saw us covering some basic book marketing ideas.
- We discussed the importance of book cover design in **Week 5**, and you were convinced to seek professional help.
- And when your edited manuscript made its way back to you, we went through some basic formatting guidelines for eBook publishing.

If you've chosen to self publish, you're all ready to go. Whether you choose our company, BookBaby, to take care of your publishing needs, or you choose to go direct to Amazon, you've put yourself in near perfect position to begin your publishing career in a few short days.

If instead you've chosen the traditional route of seeking an agent, your chances for success have been enhanced by the work you've done to prepare your manuscript for careful scrutiny by publishers. Good luck with that journey.



"My dream has always been to reach a lot of readers, and make a living doing something I love."

-J.A. Konrath,

Self-published author who has sold hundreds of thousands of books through Amazon. His blog is a must read: <http://jakonrath.blogspot.com/>

BookBaby makes it easy to publish, promote and sell your ebooks.



Just upload your book

We accept most file formats, including Word, PDF, inDesign and more. You can supply a finished ePUB file or let us make your book ready for every retailer supported reading device – Kindle, iPad, Nook and more.

All BookBaby authors receive BookPromo™ FREE

Spread the word by using our powerful promotional tools, including listings on Goodreads, guaranteed book reviews, and so much more.

Sell your books worldwide

In just a few days your book is selling on the biggest retail stores in the world including Amazon, iBooks, Barnes & Noble and more, PLUS on BookShop, your very own direct-to-reader page.

People-powered publishing

BookBaby provides the highest level of customer support in the industry – real, live human beings, working with you one-on-one to give you the best publishing experience possible. It's what we do.

GIVE US A CALL AT **877-961-6878** AND WE'LL TALK YOU THROUGH IT.

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