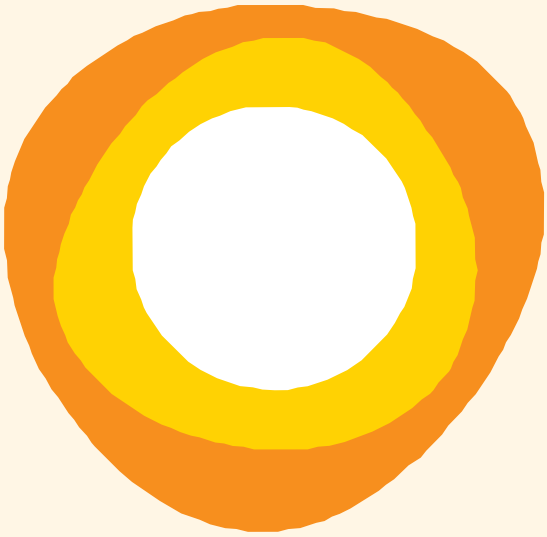


FROM IDEA TO PUBLISHED

The Complete Author's Planning Guide

A practical, step-by-step guide to planning your book, preparing your manuscript, understanding the publishing process, and turning your ideas into a professionally published book.

Whether you're writing fiction, nonfiction, a memoir, a children's book, a business book, or something entirely your own, this guide will help you understand the journey ahead.

A FREE RESOURCE FROM SUNNY DAY PUBLISHING

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This guide is fillable. Tap any box to type in it or check it off.

1. IS YOUR BOOK READY?

Before you begin the publishing process, take a moment to organize the basics of your book.

Book Information

Book Title

Author Name

Book Genre

Intended Audience

Estimated Word Count

Estimated Page Count

Current Stage of Your Book

- ☐ Just an idea
- ☐ Writing my first draft
- ☐ Manuscript completed
- ☐ Manuscript revised
- ☐ Ready for publishing

Manuscript Readiness Checklist

- ☐ My book has a clear purpose, theme, or storyline.
- ☐ I know who my intended readers are.
- ☐ I have identified the appropriate genre and audience.
- ☐ I have completed my manuscript or established a writing plan.
- ☐ I have reviewed and revised my work.
- ☐ Someone outside my immediate circle has reviewed my manuscript.
- ☐ I have checked spelling, grammar, and consistency.
- ☐ I have considered whether professional editing is needed.
- ☐ I have a working title for my book.
- ☐ I have considered how I want readers to experience my book.
- ☐ I understand that completing my manuscript is only one part of the publishing process.

Notes

2. IDENTIFY YOUR BOOK AND YOUR AUDIENCE

Understanding what you're writing and who you are writing for will help guide important publishing decisions.

What Type of Book Are You Writing?

- ☐ Fiction
- ☐ Nonfiction
- ☐ Memoir or autobiography
- ☐ Children's book
- ☐ Inspirational or faith-based
- ☐ Business or professional development
- ☐ Educational or instructional
- ☐ Poetry
- ☐ Cookbook
- ☐ Workbook or journal
- ☐ Other: _____

Who Is Your Intended Audience?

Who do you envision reading your book?

What Is the Main Purpose of Your Book?

- ☐ To entertain
- ☐ To educate or inform
- ☐ To inspire or encourage
- ☐ To share a personal experience
- ☐ To teach a skill or provide guidance
- ☐ To tell a story
- ☐ Other: _____

What Makes Your Book Unique?

What do you want readers to remember, learn, or take away from your book?

Have You Considered Similar Books?

- ☐ I have researched books in my genre.
- ☐ I understand how my book will appeal to its intended audience.
- ☐ I have considered what makes my book different.

Your book's audience, purpose, and genre will influence decisions about editing, design, formatting, pricing, and marketing.

3. THE REAL PUBLISHING TIMELINE

Every book follows a different path, but most publishing projects involve the following steps. Check off each step as it is completed.

1. **Manuscript Preparation** ☐ Complete
   Complete your manuscript, organize your content, and prepare it for professional review.
2. **Editing** ☐ Complete
   Developmental editing, copyediting, and proofreading help ensure your book is polished, clear, and ready for readers.
3. **Interior Design and Formatting** ☐ Complete
   Your manuscript is formatted to create a professional interior layout that meets the requirements of your chosen publishing format.
4. **Illustration and Photography (If Applicable)** ☐ Complete
   Artwork, photographs, charts, and other visual elements are prepared and incorporated into your book.
5. **Cover Design** ☐ Complete
   Your front cover, back cover, and spine are designed to represent your book and meet the technical requirements of your selected format.
6. **ISBN and Copyright Considerations** ☐ Complete
   Determine your ISBN requirements, publishing imprint, and copyright considerations for your book.
7. **Publishing Setup** ☐ Complete
   Prepare your book description, author information, keywords, categories, pricing, and distribution selections.
8. **Print-Ready Files** ☐ Complete
   Prepare and review the final files to ensure they meet the technical specifications of your printer or publishing platform.
9. **Proof Copies and Final Review** ☐ Complete
   Review printed proofs or digital previews, check formatting, and correct any remaining issues before publication.
10. **Publication and Distribution** ☐ Complete
    Submit your book for publication and make it available through your selected sales channels.
11. **Marketing and Book Promotion** ☐ Complete
    Develop a plan to introduce your book to readers, build awareness, and encourage sales.

Publishing involves much more than writing a manuscript. Each step contributes to the quality and presentation of your finished book.

Every book is different. The time required for each step depends on the length, complexity, editing needs, design requirements, and publishing goals of your project.

4. MANUSCRIPT PLANNING WORKSHEET

Organize your ideas and create a roadmap for your manuscript.

Book Title

What Is the Main Idea of Your Book?

What Do You Want Readers to Take Away?

Chapter and Content Planner

Chapter / Section	Main Topic or Story	Key Points and Content
Introduction		
Chapter 1		
Chapter 2		
Chapter 3		
Chapter 4		
Chapter 5		
Chapter 6		
Chapter 7		
Chapter 8		
Chapter 9		
Chapter 10		
Conclusion		

Additional Notes

Tip: Not every book needs chapters. Use this worksheet to organize chapters, sections, scenes, or major topics according to your book's format.

Use the available spaces to outline your book. Add additional pages as needed for longer manuscripts.

5. BOOK DESIGN AND VISUAL PLANNING

A professionally presented book involves more than words on a page. Its design should complement its content and create a positive reading experience.

What Format Are You Considering?

- ☐ Paperback
- ☐ Hardcover
- ☐ Kindle eBook
- ☐ Other digital format
- ☐ Multiple formats

Interior Design Considerations

- ☐ Standard text layout
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Illustrations
- ☐ Charts or graphs
- ☐ Tables
- ☐ Worksheets or activities
- ☐ Special formatting or design elements
- ☐ Other:

Cover Design Planning

What feeling or impression should your cover communicate?

What colors, images, or design elements do you envision?

Visual Content Planning (If Applicable)

Page / Chapter	Visual Element Needed	Description or Notes

Important Design Considerations

- Book size and trim dimensions
- Font selection and readability
- Page margins and spacing
- Image quality and resolution
- Bleed requirements when applicable
- Consistency throughout the book
- Cover dimensions and spine width

A well-designed book brings the manuscript together and helps create a professional finished product.

6. PUBLISHING BUDGET WORKSHEET

Understanding the potential costs of publishing helps you plan your project and make informed decisions. Request estimates for the services you may need.

Service	Provider	Estimated Cost
Developmental editing		$
Copyediting		$
Proofreading		$
Cover design		$
Interior formatting		$
Illustration or photography		$
ISBNs		$
Copyright registration, if applicable		$
Proof copies		$
Printing and author copies		$
Publishing setup		$
Marketing and promotion		$
Additional services		$

Estimated Total Publishing Investment $

Estimated Cost of Working With a Publishing Partner $

Additional Costs to Consider

- Revisions and additional editing
- Additional illustrations or photographs
- Additional book formats
- Printing and shipping
- Marketing materials and advertising
- Ongoing promotional expenses

Before You Choose a Publishing Service

Consider not only the cost, but also the services included, the experience of the professionals involved, the project timeline, revision policies, ownership rights, and distribution options.

Now consider: Would you prefer to coordinate multiple independent professionals yourself, or explore working with one publishing team?

7. WHICH PUBLISHING PATH IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

There is more than one way to publish a book. Understanding your options can help you choose the approach that best fits your goals, budget, and experience.

Independent Self-Publishing

When publishing independently, you are responsible for managing the process. This may include:

- Finding and hiring editors, designers, and illustrators.
- Coordinating deadlines and revisions.
- Managing book formatting and technical requirements.
- Obtaining ISBNs when needed.
- Preparing publishing platform accounts and book details.
- Reviewing proofs and correcting errors.
- Managing distribution and promotion.

Self-publishing offers authors direct control over many publishing decisions, but it also requires time, research, and coordination.

Working With a Publishing Team

Working with a publishing company may provide a more organized and guided experience. Depending on the publisher and the services selected, this may include:

- Manuscript preparation and editing.
- Cover and interior design.
- Illustration and visual content.
- Formatting and print-ready files.
- ISBN and publishing guidance.
- Publishing platform setup.
- Proof review and publication support.

The services, costs, rights, and responsibilities vary by publisher and agreement.

Not all publishing companies operate the same way. Some offer traditional publishing arrangements, while others offer partnership publishing options. Understand the type of agreement being offered, what services are included, who retains ownership rights, and how royalties are handled before making your decision.

Questions to Consider

- [ ] Do I have the time to manage every step myself?
- [ ] Do I understand the technical requirements of publishing?
- [ ] Do I know which professionals I need to hire?
- [ ] Am I comfortable coordinating multiple service providers?
- [ ] Would I benefit from guidance throughout the process?
- [ ] Do I want a publishing team to help coordinate my project?

Remember: Your job is to write the book. Choosing the right publishing support can help make the journey from manuscript to finished book more manageable.

8. COMMON PUBLISHING PITFALLS

Mistakes during the publishing process can lead to unnecessary expenses, delays, and frustration. Here are some common issues authors should understand before publishing.

1. Skipping Professional Editing

A manuscript that has been read and revised by the author may still contain inconsistencies, grammatical errors, or structural problems.

Avoid it: Consider professional editing and proofreading before submitting your final manuscript.

2. Choosing the Wrong Book Dimensions

Different publishing formats and printing platforms have specific size requirements.

Avoid it: Determine your intended book size before formatting the interior or designing the cover.

3. Low-Resolution Images

Images that look clear on a computer screen may appear blurry or pixelated in print.

Avoid it: Use appropriately sized, high-resolution images that meet your printer's specifications.

4. Incorrect Margins and Bleed

Incorrect margins, spacing, or bleed settings can result in printing problems.

Avoid it: Follow the technical specifications for your selected book size and printing platform.

5. Designing the Cover Too Early

The spine width depends on factors such as the final page count and paper specifications.

Avoid it: Finalize the interior before completing the full cover design.

6. Incorrect ISBN Information

ISBN requirements vary by format and publishing platform. Using the wrong ISBN or incorrect publishing information can create problems.

Avoid it: Understand ISBN requirements before publishing. For example, KDP requires ISBNs for most paperback and hardcover books but does not require one for Kindle eBooks.

7. Overlooking Book Details

Your title, subtitle, author name, book description, keywords, and categories all contribute to how readers find and understand your book.

Avoid it: Review all book information carefully before submitting it for publication.

8. Skipping the Proof Copy

A digital preview cannot always reveal how a finished book will look and feel in print.

Avoid it: Order and carefully review a printed proof before approving publication.

9. Assuming Publication Guarantees Sales

Having a published book does not automatically mean readers will discover it.

Avoid it: Develop a marketing and promotion plan before your book launches.

10. Not Understanding Publishing Rights

Authors should understand who owns the manuscript, illustrations, photographs, and other creative elements.

Avoid it: Review all contracts and agreements carefully before signing.

The best way to avoid costly mistakes is to understand the publishing process before you begin.

9. QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE CHOOSING A PUBLISHER

Choosing a publishing company is an important decision. Before entering into an agreement, make sure you understand what is included and what to expect. Use this checklist when evaluating a publishing company.

Services and Costs

- [ ] What services are included in the publishing package?
- [ ] Is editing included?
- [ ] Are cover design and interior formatting included?
- [ ] Are illustrations or photography included, if needed?
- [ ] Are there additional fees for revisions or changes?
- [ ] What is the total estimated cost?

Rights and Ownership

- [ ] Will I retain the copyright to my manuscript?
- [ ] Who owns the illustrations, photographs, and other artwork?
- [ ] Who controls the ISBN?
- [ ] What rights am I granting the publisher?
- [ ] What happens if I decide to publish elsewhere?

Publishing and Distribution

- [ ] Which formats will be available?
- [ ] Where will my book be available for purchase?
- [ ] Who handles the publishing setup?
- [ ] Who approves the final files before publication?
- [ ] Will I be able to purchase author copies?
- [ ] Who receives the royalties from book sales?
- [ ] Who controls the book's pricing and distribution?

Communication and Support

- [ ] Who will be my primary point of contact?
- [ ] How will revisions and approvals be handled?
- [ ] What is the estimated publishing timeline?
- [ ] What happens if the project takes longer than expected?
- [ ] What support is available after publication?

My Publishing Notes

Company Name

Services Offered

Estimated Cost

Questions I Still Have

A reputable publishing relationship should be built on clear expectations, transparent agreements, and an understanding of your rights and responsibilities.

YOUR STORY DESERVES TO BE A BOOK.

You've Got the Manuscript. Let's Bring It to Life.

Writing a book is an accomplishment worth celebrating.

Whether you have just started developing an idea, completed your manuscript, or are ready to take the next step toward publication, understanding the process is the first step.

At Sunny Day Publishing, we partner with new and established authors across every genre to help bring their books to life. Whether you're writing fiction, nonfiction, a memoir, a children's book, poetry, or another type of book, we'd love to learn about your project.

You don't have to figure out every part of the publishing process on your own. Tell us about your book, share your vision, and let our editorial team explore whether a publishing partnership may be the right fit.

Why Start Your Publishing Journey With Sunny Day?

- A publishing team that works with new and established authors.
- Guidance through the publishing process.
- Publishing options for print, audio, and e-books.
- An opportunity to share your manuscript and explore a publishing partnership.

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

Tell Us About Your Book!

Submit your project to Sunny Day Publishing. Share your manuscript details and a sample of your work so our editorial team can review your submission.

We aim to respond to submissions within 4–6 weeks. If your project is a fit, our editors will request the full manuscript and work with you to map out a publishing plan.

SUBMIT YOUR BOOK

Scan to submit your book

SUNNY DAY PUBLISHING

Your Story. Your Book. Your Publishing Journey.

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LET'S BRING YOUR STORY TO LIFE.