

PUBLISHING AN E-BOOK: A CHECKLIST

Have I convinced you yet that you should publish an e-book?

I hope so, because if you have a dusty manuscript in a drawer, a collection of short stories or even a novella that is good enough to get out there, you should seriously consider e-publishing it. This doesn't have to have anything to do with your "main" writing career, be it established, in process or aspirational (although of course it *can*, if you want it to) – you can always release them under a pen name. No one has to know it's you, unless you want them to. Alternatively you could use e-books as a stepping stone, a kind of advertisement, or to build that – I hate saying this, but we all know it's relevant these days – good old author platform.

Whatever way you choose to use it, e-books can really help to keep you in ink cartridges.

So what do you need to do to publish an e-book? A few weeks back I made this kind of step-by-step checklist for a friend of mine about to embark on the e-book self-publishing process, and I thought it might be useful to a few more people if I put it on here.

(Of course, this is just what I did, and I'm not saying it's definitive or comprehensive or even coherent. Use at your own risk, kindly refrain from suing me, etc. etc.)



Bottle of nail growth stimulator and nail file optional.

1. Prepare Your Manuscript

Get your manuscript reviewed by a professional. Depending on where you are with it, you might want to get your book overhauled – a full, structural edit – or just proofread (a copyedit). This is the one place where you'll *have* to spend money. And it's cliché o'clock at Catherine, Caffeinated, because I'm going to say that you have to spend money to make money. So spend it here.

At the very least, have a few trusted individuals read over it to check for errors. People tend to be more angry about typos when they've paid \$2.99 for the privilege of finding them.

2. Design a Cover

You can also spend money here if you like, but you don't *have* to. (You *should*, but you don't have to.) What you do have to do, however, is make a reasonably attractive cover. They are just as important to e-book sales as they are to print sales; maybe even more so when there isn't a physical book to study and way more low-quality competition that you can easily rise above. Remember: you only need a front cover. A picture, essentially.

Your cover:

- 1 needs to be in JPEG format
- 2 should clearly display a title, sub-title if applicable and author name (remembering that most people will see your cover in a thumbnail size, and possibly in black and white on their e-reader device)
- 3 needs to measure 500 pixels wide by 800 pixels tall (not strictly, but this is a good guide that works for both Smashwords and Amazon)
- 4 should contain an image. PLEASE, people. No text on a single color background, okay?

If you have already self-published a print edition, simply crop the front section and use that. You might want to redesign if the text is particularly small or the cover detailed. Don't forget the thumbnail situation.

If can afford it, get a cover professionally designed to the specifications above.

If you're starting from scratch and your budget is tight, you can make what I call a Poor Man's (or Person's!) Cover. It won't win any beauty pageants but it might just do the job. (At least until you sell enough e-books that you can afford to get one done

properly.) You basically build a cover a Microsoft Word, save it as a PDF and *then* save the PDF as a JPEG file. If you need images, you can either buy them or use royalty-free ones from sites like [iStock](#) and [Shutterstock](#). Here are some Poor Person's covers I made earlier, just to demonstrate:



I got the images from Shutterstock (if I'd paid for them, of course, they wouldn't still be saying 'Shutterstock') and all I did was insert them, set the layout to 'Behind Text' and then make them big enough to cover the entire page. Text is either Word Art or a text box.

As I said, it's not exactly Picasso but wouldn't they do the job?

3. Decide on Your Price

I've said this before: you want to price your e-book at a level that encourages people to buy (to 'take a chance') but not so low that it implies, subconsciously or otherwise, that the book is worthless. I recommend e-books self-publishers work within the \$1.99-\$4.99 price bracket. (*Mousetrapped* is \$2.99.) Right now you have a big price advantage over mainstream e-books (i.e. those published by major publishing houses) who are still clinging to the idea that someone, somewhere will pay a print price for an electronic book. This won't last forever, so use it will you can.

And remember that in almost all cases you get to keep 70% of the list price.



You, while formatting your e-book.

4. Format Your E-Book

You now need to ready your manuscript for conversion. The e-book sites will do the conversion but you need to make sure you've formatted your manuscript in such a way that it comes out the other end looking as it should.

For a simple, straight-forward book, you can use my [How To Format Your E-Book \(the Non-Migraine Inducing Way\)](#).

For a more complicated book, I recommend you follow the instructions in [Smashwords Style Guide](#).

NB: You'll need to do two versions: one that says 'SMASHWORDS EDITION' and one that says 'KINDLE EDITION'.

5. Prepare Your Listing Information

You'll need to prepare:

- 1 a book description (usually your back cover blurb, if the book existed in the print world)
- 2 an author bio.

Don't just scribble something down or do it off the cuff. This is the information that will accompany your cover image on every e-book store listing and convince people to or dissuade them from clicking the 'Buy' button. It should be thought out in advance.

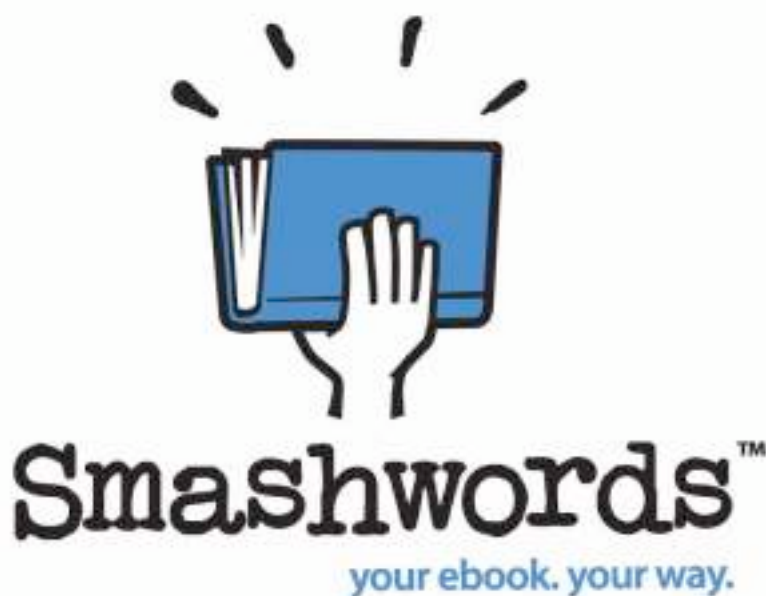
Smashwords allows a short description (400 characters), an extended description (4000 characters) and a short author bio. Amazon KDP allows a description (4000 characters) into which you should also slot your 'About the Author.'

6. Register Accounts

Sign up for free accounts at:

- 1 [Paypal](#)
- 2 [Smashwords](#)
- 3 [Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing](#) (previously Digital Text Platform).

You can use your existing Amazon.com account, if you have one, to register for Amazon KDP.



7. Upload to Smashwords

Armed with your formatted manuscript, your cover file, author bio and book description, head to Smashwords to upload your book. Once you've logged in, click 'Publish' from the list of options towards the top of the page and follow the instructions on screen.

Some points to remember:

- 1 Make at least 25% – 30% of your book available for sampling (the amount of your book a potential reader can download for free)
- 2 Tags are key words that will help readers find your book – enter as many as allowed
- 3 All formats will be checked – keep it this way. You want as many formats to be available as possible.

Once your files have been uploaded and everything has been saved, Smashwords will then queue your book for conversion. You can leave the site; they'll email you when it's done. (If I recall correctly...!) Once it's been converted, go back and submit your book for inclusion in their Premium Catalogue. (You'll see this option on your author dashboard, the screen you see when you log in.)



8. Upload to Amazon KDP

Uploading to Amazon is even easier than uploading to Smashwords and – squeal of excitement! – when you're done, your book will soon appear on Amazon.com. If you've never have an Amazon listing before, trust me: this is *very* exciting.

Some differences:

On the first page:

- 1 Under publishing rights select the “This is not public domain...” option
- 2 The product image is the book cover
- 3 DO NOT enable Digital Rights Management (DRM). Unless you're James Patterson, you don't need to do this.

At the end of the first page, you'll get to see an approximation of what your book will look like on someone's Kindle. If you've formatted your manuscript correctly, this will look good. (Correctly spaced, readable, no large chunks of blank space.) If it doesn't, you need to start all over... Sorry!

On the second page:

- 1 Select “Worldwide Rights”
- 2 Select the higher 70% royalty option (um, obviously!)
- 3 Check the box at the end to confirm you have rights to publish.

Once you save all changes, your book will take 24-48 hours to go live.

NB: Double-check the address you enter. This is where your cheques will be sent.

9. Check Everything is A-Okay

So now your listing is live on Amazon.com and Smashwords has converted your book to all the major formats. But wait – don’t tell anyone about your e-book yet! First you need to check that it doesn’t read like hieroglyphics, or has 1,300+ pages like mine did first time round. We’re just going to check the Kindle edition and the EPUB version Smashwords produced because I believe if they look okay, the rest will be fine.

To check your Kindle book:

1. Download the free [Kindle application for PC or for Mac](#)
2. Download the free sample of your book (or, if you want to pay for it, the full version)
3. Check it looks okay.

To check your EPUB book:

1. Download [Adobe’s Digital Editions](#) – it’s free
2. Download the EPUB version of your book from Smashwords (they’ll let you do it for free, from your dashboard)
3. Check it looks okay.

What are looking for? You are checking for:

- 1 Correctly flowing text. No unscheduled page breaks, broken words or gaps
- 2 A normal number of pages
- 3 Cohesive font and text size.

Generally you want to ensure that your book is readable and looks professional prepared. If you’re not sure, download a free sample of an e-book produced by a mainstream publisher or an experienced e-book self-publisher and compare the two.

10. Wait Patiently

I know you're *dying* to run out and tell the world you've published an e-book – but don't do it! Not yet, anyway. Wait until your book is available and ready to download from at least a couple of major e-book stores, so that regardless of what e-reading device they own, anyone you tell about your book can run straight out and download it in the format they need. I don't think there's any point in waiting until you're on all the major e-book stores, as that could take weeks or even months.

A little bit of patience and you'll be on:

- 1 Smashwords.com website (available to download in all formats from there)
- 2 Amazon.com's Kindle store.

A moderate amount of patience and you'll be on:

- 1 Amazon.co.uk's Kindle store
- 2 Sony's E-Reader store
- 3 Barnes and Noble's e-book store for NOOK

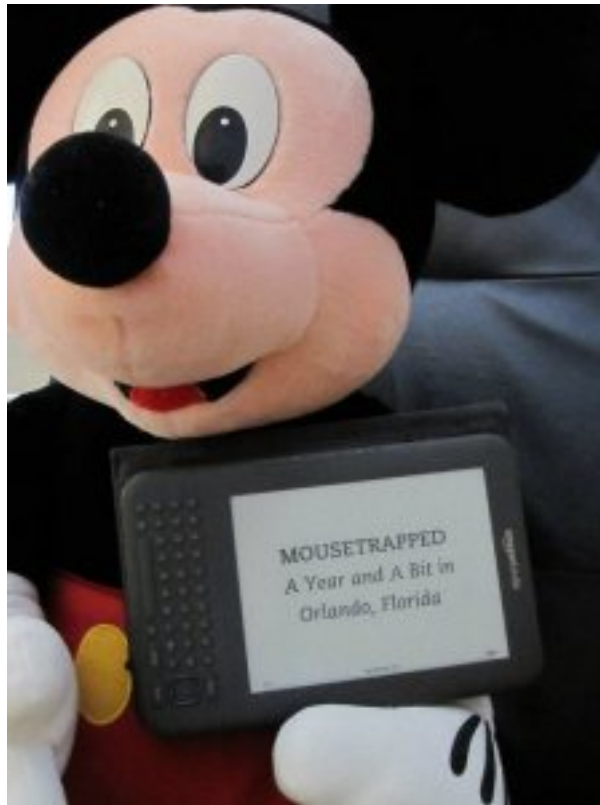
A saintly amount of patience and you'll be on:

- 1 Apples iBooks store
- 2 Diesel
- 3 Kobo.

NB: Smashwords will also convert your book to Kindle format (.mobi). Don't worry about it. I uploaded direct to Amazon as I've instructed here and have sold all my Kindle editions in this way. No Kindle sales have ever appeared through my Smashwords channels. I don't worry about it.

11. Tell the World

Um... tell the world.



Oh, look – it's MY e-book! How did that get on here...?

12. What Happens Next?

Hopefully people start to buy your e-books and the money starts rolling in. Or creeping in, anyway. Trickling in. Whatever. We just want it to come in.

How does the money get from the pockets of Smashwords and Amazon KDP into your pockets? Well, I can only talk about this from the point of view of a person in Ireland who is too lazy to register for an International Tax Number and so lets 30% of her royalties be withheld for standard US tax withholding purposes. (If you don't want to be lazy, check Smashwords and Amazon KDP's websites for more information about tax and the IRS and stuff.)

Smashwords will transfer your cash directly into your Paypal account. You can then transfer it into your bank account or give it straight to The Book Depository in exchange for other people's books, which is what I tend to do.

Amazon I'm still trying to figure out. I thought they were paying me once every two months for the two month period that had ended 30 days before, but then they throw me out with a

payment for one month that comes out of sequence. But as a minimum they seem to pay every two months.

Also, sales from Amazon.com come in dollar cheques and sales from Amazon.co.uk come in British pound cheques.

So... that's about it. (All 2,154 words of it! Phew.)

Let me know if I've left anything out or got anything wrong.

And good luck!

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