

Self-Publishing on a Budget

Self-Publishing can be an affordable avenue for publishing your books, you just need to evaluate your specific desires, needs, and budget. Here are some tips for working within a smaller budget to self-publish your books.

Necessary: Steps of the process worth their cost.

- **Developmental Editor / Alpha Reader / Beta Reader:**

It's important to get outside feedback on your story during the editing process. Often times hiring is the simplest way to get quality, timely feedback. The intensity of the feedback will depend on how much you spend on it. You can get alpha/beta readers through freelancer websites, or by connecting with freelancers through social platforms. Always ask for recommendations and consider past clients.

For a more affordable alternative, you can ask trusted writer/reader friends for insight if they are willing. You could also offer to do an alpha/beta reader swap and read another writer's book while they read yours. Developing your writer network can help make your pool of alpha/beta readers more robust. You can pull from both your network and hired readers to further expand how many beta readers you have, as the more you can get often better.

- **Copy Editor:**

A good copy editor is pivotal for your book! This editor combs through your manuscript and checks for typos, grammar, punctuation, and any other errors they may catch. All writers, no matter how good with grammar and punctuation they are, should budget the necessary money for a good Copy Editor. These errors could distract readers, and indie books have a bad reputation for typos. Let's prove everyone wrong by presenting a solidly edited book!

- **Cover Designer:**

Books are judged by their covers, it's the reality of life. Spend the necessary money to hire a professional cover designer that specializes in your specific genre to create an amazing cover that will capture the eye of your potential consumer base.

Not Necessary, but Potentially Helpful:

- **Proof Copy:**

If you are truly trying to minimize costs, only having an ebook could be an option that you pursue. While a physical copy of your book is often a dream of a writer, going through the process of spending more money for a physical book cover, and the necessary proof copy to ensure it all looks nice, can be a difficult obstacle. You can always begin with only an ebook and move on to a physical copy (soft and hardcover) later.

- **ISBN:**

An ISBN is not technically necessary for self-publishing. If you use KDP for example, they provide you with a free AISN to publish on Amazon. However, if you want to ever see your book in a brick-and-mortar store you will need to have your ISBN. I would also recommend starting with your ISBNs if you plan on publishing many books, as it gives you more control

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over your books and doesn't keep you tied to any specific Print on Demand publisher. ISBNs are expensive in the US and are only available through Bowker. The most cost-effective way to purchase ISBNs is by bulk purchasing, so I would recommend saving up the money for that initial bulk purchase.

- **ARC:**

ARCs can help drum up interest for your book before its release, and generate reviews so potential readers have some information on the book when it is released. While physical ARCs are desirable, they can be extremely costly. E-ARCs can also be used and is a cost-free alternative for you. While some sites send out the opportunity to readers in your genre to read the book, it can be costly. NetGalley is a popular site that indie authors can use, but at \$100 it's a bit much. You could potentially use it as a debut author, or for the first book of a series, to generate initial interest. BookSirens is another similar site, but you can set the number of possible readers to budget limitations (for example: pay for only 20 people to receive an ebook). Another alternative is to simply reach out to readers in your genres and ask if they would be interested in a free eARC.

- **Ads on Amazon/Social Networks:**

We have very robust social media platforms where we can advertise for free (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, etc.) so while it's not necessary to pay for advertisement, it could potentially be helpful and can be adapted to your budget limitations. Consider taking an ad course to truly maximize your resources.

Alternatives:

- **“Swag”:**

Readers love swag. Buttons, pins, stickers, bookmarks, bookplates, art prints... it costs for all of that. An alternative to sending physical swag to readers is to make digital swag. Additional scenes, alternative POV, behind-the-scenes look, the first chapter of the next book in the series, digital art print, digitally signed bookplate, digital bookmarks to print, etc. are all options you could do to still be able to offer swag to your readers for less of the cost.

- **ARC Campaign:**

If you are offering an ebook to potential ARC readers, you could also offer digital swag as a thank-you for their interest.

- **Pre-Order Campaign:**

Offer something special during the pre-order period to encourage readers to pre-order the book. Pre-Orders can be helpful to boost your book's rankings and convey that there is interest in it. A Pre-Order campaign can include physical swag, which you could limit to the first however many to respect your budget. It could also include digital swag. You could also set a special, discounted price for a pre-order sale to encourage readers to buy then.

What Not To Pay For:

- **Formatting:**

Do not pay someone to format your book. Yes, it's time-consuming to learn how to format your book, but it is a simple process once you learn it, and you will have the ability to go back and edit your document if necessary, and you will have the ability to use the skill in the

future. You can use both Microsoft Word and Pages to format your book. In the future, you could save for a program like Atticus or Vellum for more complex formatting abilities.

- **Reviews:**

Never pay for someone to review your book. Period.