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Self-Publishing

2nd Edition

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Self-Publishing For Dummies®, 2nd Edition

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Introduction

You may have personal and/or professional reasons why you want to get published. Perhaps you hope to supplement your income or generate an entire income as a writer. Maybe you have important information to convey or a compelling story to tell.

If you want to become an author who has a published book as a result of working with a major publishing house, you have a challenge in front of you because of the highly competitive nature of the book-publishing business.

Would-be authors also have a way to see their work professionally published in book or e-book form, and then distribute it to the general public, through *self-publishing.* New technologies — such as print-on-demand (POD) to create printed books — eliminate the need to print thousands of copies of a book at one time, enabling you to print as few as copy instead. The cost of self-publishing a book has also dropped dramatically in the past few years. Now, virtually anyone can access (and afford) the means to publish a book. Never before has the opportunity to publish a professional quality book or e-book been within reach of any aspiring author.

REMEMBER

People all over the world want information, to gain new skills, to enrich their lives with new knowledge, or to enjoy an escape into the imaginary world that a really good story can create. So, if you have expertise that other people can benefit from or an amazing story to tell, self-publishing may give you the perfect route to take.

This all-new edition of *Self-Publishing For Dummies* helps you take your idea for a book, develop the idea into content to fill a full-length manuscript, and then have it published in print and/or e-book format. This book describes the incredible opportunity self-publishing offers to aspiring writers and authors, business leaders, entrepreneurs, consultants, and anyone else who has a great idea for a book.

About This Book

Self-publishing puts you in total charge of your publishing project. A successful publishing venture requires effectively dealing with each step in the publishing process. Without proper knowledge and experience, you can easily make costly mistakes. The information in this book helps you avoid the most common mistakes made by authors and self-publishers, and helps you properly cater your book to its intended readers. This book also lends a hand when it comes to gathering a highly skilled publishing team for your venture. By hiring freelance experts to help you with editing, design, layout, and marketing, your book can more effectively compete with all the other books currently available for sale.

Most importantly, this book shows you how to obtain traditional and online distribution for your book and properly market it to generate sales. By using marketing, public relations, and advertising strategies — along with the power and capabilities of the Internet — you can transform your book into a successful publishing venture.

REMEMBER

Keep in mind that this book isn't a "how to write a book" book or an "improve your writing skills" book. Developing the writing skills and the necessary expertise on the topic you plan to write about is your responsibility. If you need to brush up on your writing skills, I recommend that you sign up for writing classes or workshops.

Each chapter focuses on one important aspect of the self-publishing process, so you can jump around to quickly obtain the specific information that you're looking for.

I also use a few conventions to help guide you through this book:

- *Italic* words point out defined terms or emphasize words.
- **Boldface** text indicates keywords in bulleted lists and the action part of numbered steps.
- Hyperlinked text highlights website addresses.

And because you need to complete many steps to ensure that you make your publishing venture a successful one, this book's six parts group topics and subdivide them into chapters covering information that directly relates to those topics:

- **Part 1: Do It Yourself: Getting Started with Self-Publishing** introduces you to self-publishing, explains what it is, and clarifies how you can use it to publish your book. This part also helps you gather all the tools that you need

to write and publish your book, while providing you with basic information about developing and fine-tuning your manuscript.

- **Part 2: Pulling Together the Details: Administration and Design** discusses the work that you need to do after you finish writing your manuscript but before you can print it (or publish it as an e-book) and sell it.
- **Part 3: Start the Presses! Examining Printing Choices** outlines the handful of options that you have for publishing and printing your books. You can determine which option to choose by considering a number of factors: your budget, your ultimate goals for the book, your distribution plan, and your audience.
- **Part 4: Making Your Book a Bestseller: Distribution Methods** explains that you can't simply write and publish a book to make it successful. This part focuses on book distribution methods and how to best use each one. You can also find out how to handle your own warehousing, order fulfillment, and shipping, if you need to deal with these tasks based on the distribution method that you choose.
- **Part 5: Creating a Buzz: Publicity and Marketing** explores the options for letting readers know that your book exists. Developing a comprehensive advertising, marketing, and public relations campaign — and then properly implementing it — requires financial and time investment, plus a tremendous amount of creativity, planning, and initiative.
- **Part 6: The Part of Tens** offers you ten common self-publishing mistakes to avoid, ten e-book publishing mistakes to avoid, and ways to establish your expertise and credibility as an author.

Foolish Assumptions

Before writing this book, I made a few assumptions. I know, making assumptions isn't always the best idea, but in developing the content for this book, I had to start somewhere. Here are my assumptions about you:

- **You have basic writing skills and a great idea for a book.** This new edition of *Self-Publishing For Dummies* helps you evaluate your idea in terms of its profitability, suitability, and marketability.
- **You already have information to convey to your readers,** whether you have a good story, or valuable and informative content. Sure, this book helps you fine-tune your approach when it comes to communicating your content to your readers, but you need to decide what information to include within your book, based on your book's target audience.

- **You have content ready to publish or have already tried other publishing methods.** Perhaps you wrote your book's manuscript and want to bypass the traditional publishing process and do it yourself. Or perhaps you already approached major publishers to sell your book without success, and now you want to give self-publishing a whirl. If you already wrote your manuscript, this book explains how to develop it, publish it, market it, and make it available to its intended audience.

Icons Used in This Book

The icons used throughout this book help you quickly pinpoint important information, focus your attention on information that's worth remembering, and draw attention to things you should watch out for and avoid while you work on your publishing project.

REMEMBER

This icon appears when I convey information worth remembering. Sounds simple enough, right?

TIP

You see this icon whenever I provide advice or tips. The information listed with this icon can help save you time and money, or help you improve your overall productivity and chances of success.

WARNING

Watch out for this icon. It accompanies information such as common mistakes people make, misconceptions that need clarification, or potential pitfalls to avoid during the publishing process.

Beyond the Book

Within each chapter of *Self-Publishing For Dummies, 2nd Edition*, you can find information about many useful resources and companies that provide products or services for self-published authors. Keep in mind that the companies listed within this book provide only a sampling of what you can find out there. Feel free to shop around and research other companies or services before deciding which one you want to work with. Also note that pricing for various self-publishing-related services vary greatly, so shop around to get the best deal based on your project's unique needs.

Where to Go from Here

For an overview of what self-publishing is all about and to determine the best way to get started, Chapter 1 definitely gives you the best place to begin reading. Of course, the Table of Contents and Index can help you find specific topics. And don't forget to check out the online Cheat Sheet for other related self-publishing information. Go to `www.dummies.com` and type "Self-Publishing For Dummies Cheat Sheet" in the search bar.

Never before has the opportunity to publish a professional-looking book or e-book been available to so many people at such an affordable price. After you write your manuscript, by following the advice offered in this book, you can become a published author in a matter of weeks (or months) and begin selling your book. If you have something important, relevant, or entertaining to say, self-publishing gives you a viable option for sharing your message, story, or knowledge with the public.

1

Do It Yourself: Getting Started with Self-Publishing

IN THIS PART . . .

Get a big-picture look at the scope, the joys, and the challenges of self-publishing.

Find out about the benefits of self-publishing and the skills that you need to accomplish it.

Determine the target audience for your book before you start writing.

Set yourself up with the writing and publishing tools that you need as an author.

Create an engaging manuscript that your target audience will want to read.

Edit your manuscript before it gets published.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Deciding whether self-publishing makes sense for you
- Creating and editing your manuscript
- Choosing from book design and print options
- Distributing and promoting your book
- Checking out a brief self-publishing timeline

Chapter 1
Welcome to Self-Publishing!

Whether you know it or not, just about everyone has a unique story to tell, experiences to share, knowledge to disseminate, or a creative imagination that allows them to brainstorm incredible stories. Because you've started reading this book, you're likely one of these people. If you've ever dreamed of having a book published with your name prominently displayed on the cover, you're in luck! For more people than ever before, self-publishing has become a viable way to get your book published and accessible to a potentially vast audience.

Most book publishing companies aren't willing to work with first-time authors who have little or no professional writing experience, but this situation is no longer a roadblock for getting your book published. Again, thanks to new digital publishing technologies, just about anyone who has good writing skills and a great idea for content can have a book professionally published and made available to the general public in print, digital, and/or audio formats. This process is called *self-publishing.*

This chapter provides an overview of what being a self-published author involves. The rest of this book takes you step-by-step through the entire self-publishing process. Use this second edition of *Self-Publishing for Dummies* to find out what you must know so that you can put your knowledge and ideas into writing and publish your own book.

Figuring Out Whether Self-Publishing Works for You

Self-publishing offers many awesome benefits. It allows ordinary people — business leaders, celebrities, entrepreneurs, educators, students, retired people, or stay-at-home parents (that is, just about anyone) — to become a published author for a relatively low financial investment. What's required, however, is a tremendous amount of time, creativity, and discipline to write, edit, design, publish, promote, distribute, and sell your book (if you want to be successful — and who doesn't want to be successful?).

When you get hired as an author by a major publishing house, your job is simply to write the book's manuscript and perhaps gather some or all the artwork that's included within that book. For this work, you're typically paid an advance and a royalty on book sales. Various experts working for the publisher handle all the other steps (and there are many of them) in the publishing process. Keep in mind, the author is expected to participate in the marketing process when working with a traditional book publisher.

Self-publishing is different. As the author, you're still responsible for writing your book's manuscript, but you're also responsible for every other aspect of the book publishing process. The good news is that if you have a great idea for a book or knowledge that you want to share, but you're not already a skilled writer, you can find many professional ghostwriters to help you transform your thoughts, knowledge, experiences, or ideas into a professionally written and polished manuscript.

For other parts of the process, you can also find skilled editors, graphic designers, illustrators, publishing consultants, and book marketing specialists to provide any skills you're currently lacking. And you can hire these pros on a freelance basis to help out. In other words, you don't have to handle all the steps involved with self-publishing by yourself. Even when you hire a wide range of freelancers and companies to handle major steps in the publishing process, you're ultimately the decision maker and the person in charge of the entire project — from start to finish. ***Note:*** The more you hire and rely on other people, the more expensive the self-publishing process becomes.

REMEMBER

Self-publishing has two major benefits:

- **Control:** You get 100 percent creative control over every aspect of the book's content, layout, design, format, pricing, distribution, advertising, and marketing.
- **Profits:** Instead of just getting an advance plus a royalty on sales, you get to keep most of the profits generated by the sale of the book.

We explore these two benefits (and many more) in the following sections.

Chapter 2 talks specifically about why you should consider self-publishing, and you can discover the benefits of the process. It also reveals how just about any type of content — fiction or nonfiction — can be self-published and transformed into an e-book, paperback, or hardcover. You can also find out what specific skills you need to become a self-published author.

WARNING

Don't get too excited just yet! Although self-publishing does offer an amazing opportunity for just about anyone to have their book professionally published, compared to having your book published by a major publishing company, self-publishing has a few drawbacks, as well. I also go over these drawbacks in Chapter 2.

Gathering the Right Publishing Tools

Before you sit down to write a potential bestseller, gather the proper writing and publishing tools. (Chapter 4 focuses on the equipment and tools that you need to successfully write a book.) Some pre-writing tasks that you need to accomplish include

- **Creating a comfortable writing environment:** Pay attention to your writing location and the furnishings you use, but also focus on the lighting and temperature where you will be writing.
- **Identifying and minimizing distractions when you're writing:** Get rid of that TV or messaging app that pulls your mind away from writing, and find ways to adjust your work habits that allow you to stay focused.
- **Putting together the perfect writer's toolbox:** Make sure that you have everything you need, not just a good word processor.

What you need in your writer's toolbox varies, based on what format(s) you ultimately want your book to take. For example, beyond just a word processing program, you need specialized software to format and publish e-books; and you have to have separate applications to design the look and feel, and prepare your manuscript for printing in the form of a traditional hardcover or paperback book. Which applications you use depends on several factors, including whether you want to print the content within your book in black and white or in full color, for example.

REMEMBER

As an author, you need certain tools to make the writing process easier and maximize your productivity:

- You can use a Windows PC or Mac desktop or laptop computer that's equipped with a powerful word processing program (such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs) and that has access to the internet and a printer.
- Some people opt to do their writing by using a tablet (such as an Apple iPad, Samsung Galaxy Tab, or Microsoft Surface Pro) that has an external keyboard attached. However, for most writers, this is a secondary writing tool.
- Of course, you can also plan to write the first draft of your book freehand by using a pad and pen. (If you go this route, expect to wind up with a very tired hand!) You can find applications that automatically transform your handwriting into editable text on your computer or tablet, so you have options.

Putting Together a Winning Manuscript

The beauty of self-publishing is that you can transform almost any type of content into a professionally published book. Depending on the type of book you're writing, a full-length manuscript may be anywhere from 50,000 to 100,000 words (or longer). A compilation of poems or short stories, a photobook, or a cookbook that contains recipes follow different formats altogether. Meanwhile, a kids' book is typically less than 500 words, but a book that contains chapters can be as long as 20,000 words, while a book targeted to a middle school or young adult audience can be between 50,000 and 80,000 words. Be sure that you understand your audience and the book-length and format they're accustomed to reading.

REMEMBER

Coming up with the perfect book idea — something that's unique or that offers a new twist on something that's been written about before — is an important step in the book writing and publishing process. Equally important, you need to research your information and make sure that you have enough interesting and informative content to fill an entire book. You then need to properly organize the information so that the reader can make sense of and make use of it.

Starting with an outline and an audience

TIP

The trick to writing a successful book involves first brainstorming and carefully outlining exactly what you plan to write, and then clearly defining your book's audience. Make sure that the content within your book (and later all the marketing for it) targets that specific audience. I explain how to determine your target audience in Chapter 3. Not only do you need to define who will potentially want to read your book, but you also must then make your published book accessible to this audience and market it so that the right people find out about its existence.

Most authors begin the writing process by creating a detailed outline for their book's manuscript before they start researching, writing, and adding visual elements such as photos and illustrations. Chapter 5 focuses on how to prepare an outline, research the content for your book, and decide what elements you want to incorporate into your manuscript.

REMEMBER

Everything within your book must be completely original, unless you have written permission to include someone else's copyrighted materials within your book. Plagiarism is something you want to avoid as a writer. Meanwhile, developing your own voice as a writer is something that you want to establish early on when your writing career is taking off. In Chapter 5, I focus a bit on AI tools for writers and why you should *not* rely on them to create your manuscript.

Fine-tuning your manuscript

The manuscript editing process requires several steps. An excellent strategy has you begin by editing your own work, and then hiring a professional editor to fine-tune the manuscript. In Chapter 6, find out what a professional editor does and how to hire someone who's highly skilled. Editing requires a very different skillset than writing, and people train for many years to master how to edit well.

Keep in mind that software and online-based tools can do a pretty good job helping you fine-tune your manuscript, as well as correct grammar and spelling errors. But *none* of these tools is a replacement for hiring a professional editor to review your manuscript before the layout and design process, and then again before it goes to press.

Prepping the manuscript for publishing

REMEMBER

In the publishing world, the document that you create, containing your written work and supplemental materials that will eventually be published into a book, is referred to as a *manuscript.* After you edit the manuscript and format, lay out, and design the pages to look like pages within a traditional book, the finished

document is referred to as *galleys.* This galley content gets printed as a traditional softcover or hardcover book, or formatted as an e-book.

An *e-book* is a published book that's distributed in a digital format such as epub, PDF, or a platform-specific format. Readers can access it by using a dedicated e-reader (such as an Amazon Kindle or a Barnes & Noble Nook), on a computer screen, or on the screen of a mobile device (including a smartphone or tablet). The pages of an e-book look exactly like the pages of a traditionally printed book, but among other things, the reader can choose the typeface and font size for the text displayed.

Dealing with Administration and Design

Depending on what your goals are for the book, some self-published authors establish their own small publishing company (a formal business entity), especially if they plan to directly sell and distribute their own printed books. Discover, in Chapter 7, why you may benefit from forming a company.

Taking care of the administrative details

Even without establishing your own publishing company, you need to complete some administrative tasks before your self-published book goes to press or is released in any digital format. For example, based on how you plan to distribute and sell your book, you likely need to acquire a unique International Standard Book Number (ISBN), a Library of Congress Control Number, and a copyright. Chapter 8 outlines how to accomplish many of these tasks. (However, in some cases, if you hire a printer that specializes in working with self-published authors, the printer often handles most or all these tasks for you — but for a fee. See Part 3 for more info on print and digital publishing choices.)

TIP

Many companies offer comprehensive publishing solutions for self-published authors, including print-on-demand (POD) and small-print-run printers. These companies can handle some or all of the necessary administrative tasks on your behalf. Using one of these comprehensive publishing solutions can help first-time authors because the service makes the whole process easier and saves you considerable time. However, depending on which service you hire and what tasks you expect it to handle, you'll need to pay for their work upfront and out of pocket — which is a financial investment on your part that could be anywhere from several hundred to several thousand dollars. You can read more about short-run printers and POD companies in Chapter 12 and Chapter 13, respectively.