

Self-Publishing on Amazon

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Do you have treasured family documents, photos, stories, genealogical charts, and letters that are calling out to have their story told? Do you want to share this information with family and friends but are not sure where to begin? Self-publishing on Amazon is an interesting and rewarding process where you have complete control over every aspect of the production of your book.

This handout will provide you with preliminary steps to think about prior to self-publishing a book on Amazon.com.

Why self-publish on Amazon?

Free software	It is easy to use
Large choice of book sizes	Good quality of photographs & book binding
You can change/add to your book at any time	Published books are inexpensive
You can print on demand	You can import your work (Word or PDF)
You could sell on-line worldwide	You can manage your own selling price
Amazon can do some of the set-up process for you	Amazon.com/.ca is known worldwide

Reasons to not self-publish on Amazon

You want to make lots of money	You want books distributed to a mass market – bookstores
You think the subject of your book will interest mass market	Publishing costs are not an issue
You cannot dedicate time to the entire publishing process	You have no interest in learning new software or technology
You need help putting all your book material together	Timeline to print is not important
You want to publish with a known publishing house	You want to do a book signing with 100s of books

Before you start the self-publishing process, you need to ask yourself a few questions:

Why do I want to self-publish my family history?

- to preserve my family stories, pictures, and genealogical data for myself
- to make my family data available for other family members and future generations
- to create a gift for a family member or relative
- to provide inspiration for other family members to add branches to my trees
- to document my family history for libraries or genealogical societies
- to sell my family history in bookstores

Your answer will help you determine the type of book you want, your timeline, the distribution of your book, and the costs.

What type of book do you want to self-publish?

- Biography about a specific ancestor
- Story about a specific generation(s)
- Family photo album
- Photos with some text
- Text with family trees and charts
- Compilation of family letters/poems/recipes
- Genealogical report with text and photos
- Fiction/non-fiction novel

Now it's time to get your material ready based on the type of book you want

Take a look at one of your favourite books or a book that you want to use as a guide for your self-published book. In particular, take a look at the front and the back pages.

Front matter: Do you want a title page, copyright page, foreword, prologue, preface, table of contents, list of photographs and illustrations?

Chapters or Section headings: Do you want chapters or section headings? If so, where do you want them located on the page and what is their numbering sequence?

Photographs: Do you want to add captions and sources?

Footnotes: Will you be adding footnotes to cite your sources?

Maps, family charts, census records, and vital records: Do you want to add some charts or records and if so, how will they fit on your page?

Back matter: Do you want appendices, acknowledgements, endnotes, a bibliography, an epilogue, an index of family names or places, etc.?

Fonts: Standard fonts for the body of a book are Times New Roman, Georgia, Garamond, and a few others. Check to see what is free with your word processing software. Standard font size is 10-12 points. If you want large print, 14 points is good. Choose a different font from the body of your book for your front matter, back matter, and chapter headings. Your body should be a serif font such as Times New Roman or Georgia, while your chapter headings a large sans-serif font such as Arial. Using a drop cap for the first character of the first sentence in each chapter is recommended. Note that your eBook fonts will be different from your print books fonts.

Formatting, paragraph indentations and dialogue structure: Be consistent with all indentations. Recommend to justify the body of your text for a clean look.

Once you have finalized the content of your book:

- Ensure all material is included in your word processing document, exactly as you would like to see it in your book (Amazon provides some guidelines on formatting, depending on the physical dimensions of your book).
- Add page numbers and any blank pages where appropriate.
- Proofread, proofread, and proofread.
- Print out a copy. Yes, in this digital age it is recommended to print out a copy since the printed copy should look exactly as you want your book to look. If you only review your book on-line, you will be caught with some unwanted surprises when you publish your book.

Some additional items to think about before you get started with the self-publishing process:

Book cover: Do you want to design your own cover, or have a professional design your cover, or an automated cover design from Amazon?

Book size: Do you have an idea of what size of book you would like, such as a 5" x 8", 6" x 9", 8" x 10", etc.; portrait or landscape format?

Book type: Do you want an eBook; a paperback; a hardcover; or all three?

Paper type: You will need to make some decisions on the paper your book will be printed on such as the type of paper (glossy or matte) and the colour.

International Standard Book Number (ISBN): Would you like your book to have an ISBN? If so, do you want a Canadian ISBN or an Amazon generated ISBN?

Now we're ready to start the self-publishing process!

Login to Amazon's Self-Publishing tool called Kindle Direct Publishing (formerly called Createspace) at <https://kdp.amazon.com>

References:

Amazon's Self-Publishing tool (Kindle Direct Publishing) at: <https://kdp.amazon.com>

The Chicago Manual of Style Online <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

The Chicago Manual of Style, the University of Chicago Press

The Elements of Style, William Strunk Jr. And E.B. White

Style Lessons in Clarity and Grace, Joseph M. Williams, Gregory G. Colomb

