

# SELF PUBLISHING WITH KINDLE DIRECT PUBLISHING (KDP)

Using KDP is basically a three step process:

1. Preparing and formatting your manuscript (MS).
2. Publishing an e-book, and
3. Publishing a paperback.

There is a 4<sup>th</sup> step, which is marketing your book, but that would require a book in itself and there are plenty of those available for you to buy on Amazon.

I have done this a lot, so I have developed some short-cuts, so you can benefit from my mistakes.

## STEP 1 – FORMATTING YOUR MANUSCRIPT

### e-Books

If you are only going to publish an e-book, this isn't difficult and shouldn't take any more than thirty minutes. If you want to publish a paperback version as well, it will be double that time or possibly more, depending on whether or not the book includes illustrations and photographs.

Starting with an e-book, use the last edited version you have:

1. Remove all mark-up from the copy that may have been left over from the editing process. Especially make sure there are no "comments" remaining. If there are, delete them.
2. The quickest way to remove any remaining mark-up is to go to the "Review" tab on Word, locate the box named "mark-up" and select "no mark-up". Then save the file.
3. Decide on the size of your paragraph indents. I have reduced mine to 0.5cm but you may prefer larger, smaller or no indents at all. You can make several versions of your manuscript and try them out later in the process using KDP's "preview" function to see what they look like and decide which you prefer.
4. Generally speaking, I think e-books look best with a spacing of 1.15 lines and with no spaces between paragraphs, but it's your book, so you decide how you want it to look.
5. Make sure that each new chapter starts on its own page, by inserting "page breaks" into the MS if necessary.

6. If your MS contains illustrations and photos, it may be necessary to adjust their positions later to make sure that you don't leave large amounts of empty space, but you can do that at the preview stage as well.

That's pretty much it as far as formatting for an e-book is concerned.

## **Paperbacks**

KDP is a lot more fussy about paperback formatting. If you try to upload a manuscript created on an A4 template, it will probably be full of things KDP doesn't like and generating the preview that identifies the errors takes between 5 and 10 minutes, which is what makes the process very lengthy, so it will save time to get the formatting right before you start to upload the MS.

Fortunately, KDP has provided a template in paperback size. Unfortunately, it has lots of formatting errors of its own, especially in relation to fonts, so I have modified it to suit most of the formatting options that I use. That modified template is also attached to the e-mail on which I sent this document.

You can download the original template(s) from KDP and you can also get them in a range of languages. If you choose to do that, you will need to use the template that measures 6 x 9 inches or 15.5 x 22.8 cm (approx). Why they send out all the other sizes I have no idea, because KDP will reject most of them because of errors.

The indent size for paragraphs in my template has been set at 0.5 cm, so if you want a larger indent you will have to modify the "Normal" paragraph style.

Copy and paste your e-book MS into the template. The MS will pick up its formatting from the "Style Gallery" in the template. That's pretty much most of the work done. The rest is "fine-tuning". Save the file under a name that makes it clear that it's the paperback version, to make it easier to identify later.

By convention, new chapters should appear on the right-hand page of the book, these are always the odd-numbered pages. If you also want dedications, contents pages, forewords etc to appear on the right-hand side, you will need to check the page numbering for the relevant bits. The quickest way to move a page is to insert a page break at the end of the previous chapter or section.

If you are viewing the file in a way that shows 2 pages side by side, then the odd numbered pages will be on the left, which makes the layout easier to see. Your chapter headings or other sections should also appear on the left. If they don't then you need to make adjustments.

KDP will reject your MS if there are 2 or more blank pages in succession, so make sure that this isn't the case. If there is any text at all, even a single word, it isn't a "blank" page and KDP will accept it.

Finally, if you have used illustrations or photographs, make sure that (a) they are in a good place on each page and (b) they are small enough to fit on the page. You may need to adjust the size. As a "rule of thumb" the side margins of the image or photo should be within the side margins for the text. The images should also be centred.

Every time you change a page, the effects ripple through the pages of the book to the end, so you may need to re-check later pages to ensure that the chapter layouts etc are still correct.

# USING KDP

Use this link to go to KDP

[https://kdp.amazon.com/en\\_US/](https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/)

If you already have an Amazon account (and who doesn't these days?) you can log-in using your existing Amazon username and password. If not, you will have to set up a log-in. Either way, log-in to start creating a KDP account.

In doing this you will have to provide bank details so that you can receive royalties when they are due. You may also, depending on where you live, have to complete a tax declaration.

Once you have completed the formalities, you are ready to start creating your e-Book. Creating a paperback is similar, but there are differences, so I'll treat them as two different tasks.

Your starting point is your "Bookshelf" so once you have finished creating your account, go to the KDP home page and locate that tab and select it.

## UPLOADING AN E-BOOK

Towards the top of the page you will see a section entitled "Create A New Title. Below that is a blue plus sign labelled "Kindle e-book". Click on that.

You will be taken to a page with three tabs on it:

1. "Kindle ebook details"
2. "Kindle ebook content" and
3. "Kindle ebook pricing".

You should be on the first tab, if not, click on that tab.

This is where you enter the basics of your book: title, author name etc. You also set up genres and "key words" to help readers find your book. A lot of this information will appear in your book's listing on Amazon or will help people find it when they do internet searches.

Most of the bits you have to complete are self-explanatory, but for completeness I'll go through them one by one.

**Language.** The default is English, so change if necessary.

**Book Title:** The upper box is the main title. The lower box is for any sub-title that you may use. The subtitle won't appear on the book's cover automatically, but it will be displayed as part of the details on the book's Amazon page.

**Series:** If your book is part of a series, then put the series name in the left hand box and the book number within the series on the right. eg the Magi series book 3 will be entered as "The Magi" and 3.

**Edition number.** Not often used for fiction, but if you write non-fiction works that have been updated and re-published, you show if this is the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> etc edition of the book. Enter only a number, not ordinals.

**Author.** This will appear on the book's cover and on its Amazon page, so if you write under a "pen name", that is the name you use here.

**Contributors.** If you have worked with other authors and agreed to share "credit" with them, enter their names here.

**Description:** You can write what you like in here, but if you already have an agreed "blurb", all you need is to copy and paste that in. If you want to create a new "blurb" the 3 paragraph format is one that has been proven to work.

- The hook: A snappy first sentence or sentences to grab the reader's attention; 20-30 words is usually enough but it shouldn't go more than 50.
- The line: A short description of what the book is about, making sure that the genre is clear. If it is a murder mystery, make sure the murder is mentioned etc. Maybe a maximum of 100 words in length.
- The sinker: Compare it to work by other authors in the same genre and tell the reader how good it is by comparison.

Here's one of mine:

"When corruption reaches high places, expect a long fall.

Clarke Nevis is engaged to ghost write a book about corruption in high places, but when the people doing the corrupting work out how much damage the book will cause, Clarke goes straight to the top of their hit list. The enigmatic Steven Rycroft and his attractive PA, Valerie, help Nevis to navigate the murky past of the Deputy Prime Minister, Timothy Elgin. It isn't a pretty story. Sex and drugs are the most acceptable part of his life and when it comes to protecting Elgin's reputation everyone else is expendable, including Clarke Nevis.

This sizzling political thriller will have you asking if such behaviour is possible in the

hallowed corridors of Whitehall. If you enjoy stories such as House Of Cards and The West Wing then The Deputy Prime Minister is just the book for you.”

Of course, your own description will be better.

**Keywords:** These are the words that help people to find your book when they search Google (other search engines are available) or search Amazon itself, so they are very important and worth spending some time thinking about before you start using KDP. Imagine that you are looking for a book like yours, what words would you use to search the internet? Those are probably the words you should put in here. There’s a maximum of 7 and it is recommended that you use them all. You can also use -hyphens and pairs of words, so you can use “sci-fi” and “science fiction” in different boxes. Don’t use the book title or the author name as they will be found by search engines anyway.

The better your choice of keywords, the more likely it is that your book will appear in the reader’s search results.

**Categories.** Real authors say “genres”. You can only choose 2 genres under which to list your book and to make sure the right readers find it, therefore it is worth taking time to consider which is the best listing for it. Listing under “General Fiction” or “Thrillers”, which have millions of titles listed, won’t be as good as listing under “Mystery – Police Procedural”, perhaps. Some genres, such as “Mystery and Detective”, “Fantasy” and “Science Fiction” have sub-menus (indicated by blue text and a +) you can select from and they help to refine your definition of your chosen genre.

**Age range:** Only needed if you are writing children’s books.

**Pre-order:** If your book has never been published before and you are going to publish it on a set date, you can make it available to “pre-order” before the actual publication date. You don’t need to use this section if your book has already been published or if you are publishing as soon as you have finished the upload.

If you are happy with everything, click on “save and continue”. If you have made any mistakes that KDP doesn’t like it, won’t let you continue until they have been corrected. If you want to go away and have a think about your book’s description, its keywords or its categories, you can save what you have done by clicking on “Save as Draft” and come back later to make changes.

Now click on the second tab “Kindle ebook content”. This is the most technical part of the process and where most mistakes are made.

## **Uploading your MS and creating its cover.**

**Manuscript.** The first choice is whether you want Amazon to protect your digital rights. This means that if someone infringes your copyright via Amazon, they will act to take down the offending content. I always select “yes.”

Next, click on “Upload ebook manuscript”, locate your MS file and click on upload. Depending on your file size and broadband speed, this will take between 30 seconds and a couple of minutes.

**Kindle eBook cover** I’ll deal with this in reverse order to the one shown on the page, because you may already have a cover.

Click on the lower button, which says “upload cover”. There are size requirements so if your image doesn’t contain enough “pixels” it may be rejected. There is no easy way to correct this but I have created a Powerpoint template of the right size, which can be saved as .jpeg file.

But try your file first. Just select the file and upload it. When that’s done, select “preview” to make sure that it’s OK, then click on “save”.

That’s it. Nice and easy. **Note:** If you are using images or artwork that you haven’t created yourself, you may need to purchase the right to use it/them. This can vary from a few £ to hundreds. If you don’t purchase the correct licence and your copyright infringement is discovered (much easier these days thanks to the internet) the cost of legal action may far outweigh the cost of you buying the licence.

If you don’t have a cover, click on the button, labelled “Launch cover creator”.

You can upload a photo or other artwork in .jpg or .tiff format if you have one or are willing to buy one. Again, see the note on licences.

Cover creator will offer you a choice of layouts, all you have to do is select the one you like. You can alter the text in terms of size, font, colour etc by clicking into the box to get a menu. Some boxes will limit the font or image size and if you exceed it you will get a warning triangle containing an ! symbol and you’ll have to correct it.

Once you are happy with your cover you can preview it, then click on “save”.

**Kindle eBook previewer.** This is your chance to see your eBook as the reader will see it. If you created different versions of the MS to try out different formatting, this is where you can see what they look like, but you’ll have to upload each MS in turn because you can only have one MS on KDP at a time. If you don’t like it, you can go back and upload another version of the MS and try again.

This is also where you can see what your photos or other images look like in your book. If they leave lots of “white space” on a page you can go back to your MS and adjust the positioning, but it is a matter of trial and error and may take some time to get a version you are happy with. Perfectionists will always take longer to get an end result than slap-dash types. But remember, the reader will judge the author on the layout, not KDP.

You can change the MS at any time, so if you make edits to your book at a later date, you just come back to this page and upload a new version of the MS and re-publish the book. Very handy for when you get e-mails from readers who point out mistakes or typos (like I do).

**Kindle eBook ISBN.** Kindle books don’t need an ISBN, so you can skip this step. If you have decided to create your own publishing imprint, you can enter the name of it into the box marked “publisher” and it will appear on the book’s Amazon page. I think this is preferable to “Independently published” which is what appears if you leave this box empty.

If you are happy with what you have done, click on “save and continue” or click on “save as draft” to come back later and make changes. You can’t publish the book if you haven’t chosen the former option.

You should now be on the final tab “Kindle ebook pricing”. If you aren’t, select that tab.

### **Pricing your e-book**

**KDP Select Enrollment.** Kindle allows KDP Select subscribers to download books for free and authors get a payment depending on the number of pages read, drawn from the pool of subscription fees. The best-read authors also sometimes get a bonus payment. This is a way of getting your books read by a wider audience as everyone likes a “freebie”. However, if you select this option, you can’t publish in e-book format on any other self-publishing platform, such as Smashwords or Nook. (see Ts&Cs)

On the upside, you can claim 70% royalties on sales in most markets, rather than the standard rate of 35%. You can also get a 5 day promotion where your book can be downloaded for free by anyone. This is often a good way of kick starting a series. You can whet reader’s appetites by allowing them to read the first book for free, in the hope that they will buy the next book in the series – but wait until the second or subsequent books are actually published before you use it.

**Territories.** This allows you to select where your book will be sold. The default is “all territories” which means your book will be sold in all countries where Amazon trades. If you have a reason to limit your market, you can select countries individually by clicking the button marked “Individual Territories”.



**Royalty and Pricing.** If you have enrolled your book on Kindle Unlimited you can select a 70% royalty (except for the USA for some reason). If not, you can only select 35% royalty.

Under “primary marketplace” you can select where you think your book is mainly going to sell, which is probably the country where you live. Being an American company, Amazon has set the default to Amazon.com, which covers the USA and Canada. But you can select a more local market by clicking on the drop-down box. The currency for pricing will be changed accordingly. I always select Amazon.co.uk and pricing in £ sterling.

Amazon sets a minimum price so that it can make money from your books. You therefore have to price your book accordingly. Above that minimum, you can charge whatever you like. But remember, if you aren't J K Rowling, don't set the price that J K Rowling's publishers would set. Readers won't pay the top price for unknown authors. On the other hand, don't sell yourself short. For some reason, many readers don't buy books that are too cheap.

There is an old trick in marketing that says you end your price not with a .00, but with a .99. For some reason this actually seems to work with readers and you only lose a cent or a penny on the sale.

That's it. Once you have read and agreed to Amazon's terms and conditions, you can either save as a draft and come back later to finish off, or you can press the “publish” button to publish your book.

Once you have done that, click on the Bookshelf tab and your book should now be displayed. It will either be showing as “draft” or “in review”, depending on the decision you made above. Once it appears on Amazon, it will be shown as “published”.

## **CREATING A PAPERBACK**

In many ways, creating a paperback is no more difficult than creating an e-book, but there are a couple of subtle differences, especially when it comes to creating the cover and sorting out errors found in the MS.

First of all, in the “Bookshelf” tab, you will see a note saying that your e-book is either published, in draft or being reviewed. Ignore that. Just below, however, it will say “create paperback”. Click on that to start the process. You will be presented with the same three tabs as you were for your e-book, except that now they will say “paperback”.

### **Paperback details**

The “Paperback Details” tab will have copied over all the details from the same page on your e-book, so there is no need to do anything other than check that all the information has

copied correctly. Pay particular attention to the book's "description", because sometimes the "returns" are missing, turning three short paras into one long one.

There is one additional section at the bottom, so that you can declare any "adult" content in the book. This will prevent unsuitable books being sold to people below a certain age.

Either save as draft or save and continue.

### **Paperback content**

**ISBN.** (International System of Book Numbering) Having an ISBN allows bookshops and libraries to order copies of your paperback and store the details of them in their catalogues. You don't need one, but if you want one, click on the "Assign me a free KDP ISBN" button.

If you have your own ISBN which you have purchased from one of the official ISBN agents, click on the other button and follow the instructions.

**Note:** In the UK it is a legal requirement under the Legal Deposit Libraries Act, 2003, that you deposit a copy of all paperbacks with the British Library. To find out more about that, follow this link.

<https://www.bl.uk/legal-deposit#>

You have to pay for the copy and the postage to get it to the British Library. There may be similar legislation in place in other countries, so it is best to check the law where you live.

The good news is that, if you live in Britain, your book becomes part of Britain's literary heritage and will be held by the library until it is stolen or the world ends.

**Publication date** If your book has been previously published and you know the date (or an approximation) you can enter it here. But you don't have to.

**Print options.** This is where you can change the way your book looks once it has been printed, in terms of its paper quality, colours etc. The default is to the cheapest options, which I always use, but it's up to you. If you want to have a glossy cover or thick, cream coloured paper, and are prepared to pay for it, then choose the appropriate option.

**Trim size.** The trim size are the actual dimensions of one page of the paperback. The default is 6 x 9 inches, which is why I always use that template. If you want a different size you'll have to download a different template and reformat your book.

Don't worry about 'bleed settings'. If you want to know what they are, you can click on the blue text for an explanation, but I have never changed them.

**Manuscript** You upload the manuscript the same way as you did for your e-book, but make sure you choose the paperback version.

**Book Cover.** Again, you have a choice between using your own cover or creating one. The difference is that the paperback requires a rear cover and a spine as well as a front cover. If you have all that in a .pdf format, click on the lower of the two buttons. If you only have the front cover, the one you used for the e-book, or no cover at all, then click on the “launch cover creator” button.

You have about 6 designs to choose from.

- If you have a front cover, such as the one you used for your ebook, you can upload it into the cover creator and then use the design that is at the top left of the selection. The template won't import any of the cover or author details, so it won't overwrite anything that is contained in your image. You can select one of the other options, but you'll have to delete any text or images cover creator inserted automatically.
- If you have a photo, you can upload that and then choose the design you like best. The cover creator will import title and author details and insert them in the slots available on the front cover and spine.
- If you have no cover and no photo you want to use, cover creator will offer you options from its range of standard designs, but you risk your book looking like many others on Amazon.
- You have 6 designs visible and if you click the right arrow next to the display of cover designs, you will get some more.

The website <https://www.fiverr.com/> allows you to find people who will design a cover image to suit your needs but, of course, you will have to pay for that service and you will have to tell the designer exactly what you want it to look like. You will also have to pay for any artwork or photos you want to use that the designer hasn't included in the price. You can expect to pay from \$75 (US) upwards, depending on exactly what you want.

The rear cover is down to you to insert the detail. There is usually space for you to insert a photo, perhaps of yourself as author. You don't have to put anything in there if you don't want to. You will also have 1, 2 or 3 text fields that you can customize. They will be filled with Latin text, but you can get rid of that by clicking in the box twice.

You can put your author biography in there or you can put your “blurb” in there – the 1<sup>st</sup> para in one field and the other paras in the other fields.

If you have any warning triangles visible on either the front cover image or the rear cover image, you may need to adjust the image size to make it fit. The same applies with corrections to text.

If you have used one of the stock designs, you can change the fonts, text colour and size to suit your needs or desires, provided you don't exceed the sizing allowed. If you do, you'll get a warning triangle.

To see what your cover looks like, click on preview. If you like it, save it. If not, click on "start over" (bottom left of frame) to start again. Anything you have uploaded or entered will still be visible, so you can delete it, overwrite it or alter it.

Once you are happy with your cover, click on "save".

**Preview.** You are now ready to preview your book – which you have to do. KDP won't allow you to move on from here until you have previewed it, fixed any errors and approved it.

Depending on the size and complexity of the MS, eg whether it contains photos or images, it can take up to 10 minutes to generate your preview, so don't be afraid of going to make yourself a cup of coffee while you wait. In fact, the pop-up window often suggests that, if KDP has calculated that generating the preview will take a while.

Once your preview is displayed, check the "approve" button on the bottom right of the screen. If it is orange then congratulations, it means your book is free from any errors. All you need do is click "approve" to go to the next stage. But I would recommend checking at least a few pages to make sure the format and layout are what you expected. Once your book has been published, it is a bit late to come back and change things because readers will already have seen it. This is particularly important if you have included illustrations or photographs.

If the "approve" button is grey, it means there are errors.

Look at the panel to the left of the screen. Around the middle, it will say "ERRORS" and then there will be some numbers in blue. There may also be an explanation of what the errors are. If you have used the KDP template these are most likely to be:

- Consecutive blank pages,
- Pictures that are too big,
- Errors in your cover
- Fonts that KDP can't print.
- Mark-up left over from the editing of your MS.

The blue numbers are the page numbers on which the errors appear. Clicking on the number will take you to the page so you can see it for yourself. Take a note of the page numbers and what the errors are so you can go back to your MS and fix them.

KDP will offer you the chance to fix those errors that it can deal with. All others you will have to go back to your MS to fix and then upload it again. That means doing another preview, which could mean another ten minutes spent waiting for it to generate.

You can see how uploading a paperback can sometimes take a bit of time, especially if you create more errors when you try to fix the ones you've already been told about. That's why using the template was such a good idea in the first place.

Once KDP has finally allowed you to approve your final copy, either save it as draft or save and continue to the final page, which is:

### **Paperback pricing and royalties.**

Pricing is based on the number of pages that are printed, the paper quality and the finish, so a thick book with a shiny cover will cost more to print than a thin book with a matte cover. This will impact on your pricing, so you may need to go back and re-think your choices.

You have the same pricing options as you did for your e-book, except this time you can't sign up for Kindle Unlimited. Because of printing costs, you will have to start your pricing higher and you may have to compromise on the size of your royalties in order to keep your book competitively priced.

My books are usually between 80,000 and 100,000 words and I sell the paperbacks at £8.99, which gives me royalties of between £1.50 and £2.00. You will have to decide how much you want to make on each book and how that might impact on sales if you make the book too expensive.

Once you have set your pricing, you can now either save as draft or publish, as you see fit.

## **AND FINALLY**

If you have saved as draft and you want to go back and publish, log-back in, select your title and version (e-book or paperback) and do a final check under each of the 3 tabs to make sure there are no errors present, or make any changes you want (you may have come up with better key words, for example), click "save and continue" on each page and "publish" on the last.

Once you have published your paperback you can order "author copies" by clicking on the grey box that says "order author copies". If you live in the UK you will need at least one copy, for the British Library, and if you want to sell books at book signings or book fairs, you will need to order copies. They are priced to cover the printing costs, postage and whatever Amazon wants to charge for allowing you to use their platforms, but they will be cheaper than the list price, which allows you to make a profit when you sell them. Amazon doesn't

print the price on them, so you can charge whatever you want. You should allow 14 days for the delivery of author copies as, for some reason, they are printed in the USA and shipped by Fed-Ex, rather than printed locally, which is what happens when a reader buys a copy from Amazon.

KDP always tells you it will take up to 3 days for your book to appear on Amazon, but in my experience, it never takes more than about 12 hours. If there are any errors that have been detected during the review process, or if your book is not considered, by Amazon's robots, to be suitable for publication (mainly affects erotica), you will get an e-mail to notify you. You will have to correct those errors (or even re-write the book) before it can be published.

The challenge then is to market your book because, believe me, no one is going to stumble upon it by accident.

All that remains is to wish you good luck in your self-publishing. If you have any questions in relation to what I have said, e-mail me at [robert.cubitt@selfishgenie.com](mailto:robert.cubitt@selfishgenie.com)