



The Author Guide Course for non-fiction authors

Insight 4

[Your video tutorial for Insight 4 is here.](#)

Explore your publishing options

It may seem a bit early to start talking about publishing, but the sooner you understand your options and the costs and rewards, the more you can focus on what you need to do to ensure your book meets your chosen publishing option.

Publishing broadly fits into three main categories:

1. Traditional – where you need to get your manuscript (or book proposal) accepted
2. Independent – where you pay a fee to the publisher, and get various services in return for that
3. Self – where you do everything yourself and pay for each element.

In the independent category there are various sub-categories, like boutique publishers, online agencies, etc.

Traditional publishing

If you really want to get a publishing contract with a traditional publishing house, you'll need an agent. Publishers don't talk to authors looking for a contract.

The best ways to source an agent:

Find another author who has one and ask if they'll introduce you.

Visit your local library and look at the Writers' & Artists' Year Book. This is usually classified as a reference book, so you may not be able to borrow it, so take a notebook. Make sure you're looking at the latest version (this year's).

You can purchase a copy either online or in your local bookshop (you may have to order it).

Or you can subscribe to the Writers' & Artists' online directory for £22 a year.

<https://www.writersandartists.co.uk/resources/listings>

Bear in mind that, even if you get a publishing contract, the royalties are likely to be no more than 7 ½% of net – and that’s before your agent takes any commission. An advance for a first time author is rare.

On the plus side, a good agent will help you with marketing. Find out exactly what they offer before making a commitment.

Typically an agent will expect you to have a proposal (as will a publisher), look at AGC Book Proposal worksheet for more help with this.

Lead times from receipt of the finished MS to having a book in your hand (or available online) vary with traditional publishing. Six months is really quick, but be prepared for anything up to 2 years.

Independent publishers

This is a very broad spectrum, with a lot of blurred edges where some ‘self-publishing’ options are actually not, but should be classified as publishers.

The rule of thumb is, whoever purchases the ISBN code is the publisher.

Independent publishers provide a service, which you pay for. The fees per book vary enormously, from a few hundred pounds up to thousands.

What can you expect from an independent publisher:

Service	What to expect
ISBN code	Yes
Professional book layout	Yes
Print-on-demand for hard copies	Yes
Epub version for Kindle, Nook, Kobo, iBooks, Google Books, etc.	Yes
An agreed split of royalties after costs	Yes
Cover design	Some do, some don’t
Editing	Few offer this, usually there’s an additional fee
Proofreading	Few offer this, sometimes for an added fee
Listing on Amazon, Kindle, Nook, Kobo, etc.	Most will do this.
Advice on marketing	Good publishers do – it’s in their interests, so they sell more books!

Bear in mind that most independent publishers don't make a judgement on your manuscript. They will publish whatever you give them. The better ones will recommend you invest in a professional editor, it will make your book better and, consequently, sell more copies and get better reviews.

There are some independent publishers that fall into the 'hybrid' category, who don't accept every submission and may even have an in-house editor. What separates them from traditional publishers is that they will give you a much bigger share of the royalties and you will still pay for their services.

Independent publishers offer more per book sold. This can be anything between 20%-50% of the cover price. Higher shares are not necessarily better, they usually are given where the minimum of services are offered by the publisher.

Lead time from receipt of finished manuscript to publication with independent publishers is usually a minimum of 2 months, but can be more. However, they usually have a much quicker turnaround than traditional publishers.

Self-Publishing

This can be a minefield for the uneducated – You don't know what you don't know.

There are many different self-publishing services, including Amazon.

But Amazon also offer 'self-publishing' where they provide the ISBN code – which is actually Amazon becoming your publisher. This also ties you to the platform, preventing your book being listed elsewhere. If you want to have hard copies of your book as a paperback that people can purchase, rather than only an ebook version, you'll need to ensure you can easily obtain copies.

If you self-publish you will need to do everything yourself or pay for an expert to do things for you.

You need to:

- Obtain an ISBN code from Nielsen's
- Format your book with a style sheet, so headings, fonts, spacing etc. are consistent
- Write the back cover blurb
- Get your cover designed
- Have your book edited
- Get the final manuscript proofread
- Pay a professional layout technician to do the final layout for print
- Arrange for fulfilment (some self-publishing services offer this)

- Upload your book details to Amazon – and any other online platforms you want it on
- List your book with book wholesalers (Gardners, Ingrams, etc.)
- List your book with Waterstones

Lead time from finished manuscript to publication – is up to you! How much time do you have to invest in getting all your ducks in a row?

This week's assignment

Use the ***Publishing worksheet*** to:

- Research literary agents and their expectations – and what they offer.
- Research independent publishers and what some of them offer for the fee they charge.
- Research self-publishing options and costs.

Decide on which publishing route you will pursue.

There is also a Book Proposal worksheet in the Insight 4 folder. This will be a work in progress. It's not something you need to complete right away, but start working on it and add to it as your book development progresses. We'll be starting on your book content in the next Insight!