The Road To Being A Self-Published Author

Based on the experiences of Meghan Marie Geary

* Write! Just get your thoughts and ideas down on paper or digitally. As you keep going, you will eventually be able to turn it into a story of your own.
* Find an editor. You can put a post out on your own social media, one of the Facebook groups for self-published authors, or freelance websites like Upwork or Fiver.
* Find an illustrator. You can find one in the same places as your editor-through a social media post, self-published author Facebook groups, or free-lancer websites like Upwork or Fiver
  + Tip: Make sure you are on the same page as your illustrator. Do you want to have input in what the illustrations look like? Ask them if they are ok with you giving our input. Make sure you can get along with and speak well with your illustrator as you will work pretty closely over the next few months. Ask if they can help with formatting (where the text goes on the page and uploading to your printer to meet printing specifications). They should be able to do this for you, however, if they do not you will also need to find someone to do the formatting for you if you are unfamiliar with how to do that.
* Find a printer. Do you want to do print on demand (POD) through platforms like Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) or Ingram Spark? Or do you want to find a mass printer that ships your books to you and you distribute? Or do you have a local printer that will do the printing for you?
  + Tips and things to think about when choosing a printer
    - How much does it cost to print?
    - What will your profit be after printing and royalty costs?
    - Do you want to be available to other distributors and libraries? (Ingram Spark provides this once you enter their database, Amazon does not) Keep in mind if your book is only available via Amazon it is hard to get to other distributors because it is non-returnable. Big box stores want the option to return the books if they do not sell.
    - Do you have the space and means to mass print up to 1000 books in order to increase profit margin? (Then you can use a platform like the IAPC)
    - Do you want only paperback and e-book, or are you looking for hard cover too? (Amazon KDP only provides e-book and paperback option)
    - I suggest going to someone of these platforms, create an account and play around with the calculators they have when determining book size, page number, paper weight, book price and all of those details to see your printing price and how you can create a decent profit margin.

\*\*Vanity Publisher: This means a publisher that requires you to pay upfront fees for them to publish your book. If you are contacted by a publisher there should never be a fee for you to pay! Keep this in mind because there are many out there! It of course is entirely up to you, but be cautious when you are asked to pay for someone to publish your book.

* ISBN number. If you purchase your own ISBN number you have control over distribution of your book and you are still the publisher. If you use the free ISBN provided by platforms like Amazon KDP, they are listed as the publisher and it is a little harder to get mass distribution.
  + You can purchase your own ISBNs at myidentifiers.com
  + You need a different ISBN for every title and every version of that title (one ISBN for paperback version of a title, a different ISBN for a hardcover version of that title). E-books require an ASIN number. These can be purchased or are provided by platforms like Amazon.
* Barcode. This goes under your ISBN number and typically has the price embedded into it (preferred by big box retailers). You can purchase these on your own, but are also provided by platforms like Amazon and Ingram Spark. As long as you own the ISBN it should be ok to let them put the barcode on there. Barcode and ISBN number belong on the bottom right corner of your back cover.
  + Also found at myidentifiers.com
* Copyright. About $55 to file for a copyright. You can begin the process by filling out the information but you will need to upload your file copy once it is completed.
  + [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov)
* Marketing. Be prepared to be your own marketing company! Think outside of the box and start creating a following or interest in your book.
  + Amazon advertisements (Absolutely recommend taking webinars/classes on how to properly advertise on Amazon).
  + Craft fairs
  + School readings
  + Social media
  + Vendor fairs
  + Boutique book shops
  + Think about what niche your book falls into and who would benefit most from it-find that person and go directly to them.
* Fees.
  + Editor
  + Illustrator
  + ISBN
  + Barcode (If you decide to purchase)
  + Printing
  + Marketing materials
  + Website (if you choose to do this)

\*\*My take on fees. Create your budget-stick with it. If you cannot be happy with your product with illustrations that fit your budget, wait a bit and work on the other parts until you are able. Do not let this deter you from meeting your goal (I know easier said than done). Find ways to create an income for yourself in order to save to meet these. You can make these purchases in steps. Your biggest fee will be your illustrator. If you finish and are out of budget to mass print, hang out on Amazon or Ingram Spark for a bit until you start making sales in order to create an income to purchase your own stock. Do pre-orders via your website to create buzz about your books. Profit earned during pre-orders can be used towards printing fees. Consider crowdfunding by doing a Kickstarter campaign (again a whole other realm to dive into, definitely suggest doing your research on things like this). There are ways to break this down into manageable chunks so you can get it done. Sometimes looking at each individual mark can seem less daunting. I promise you can make it work if you want. Be patient with yourself!

* Miscellaneous. This is a random list of things to think about throughout the process.
  + Don’t forget a copyright page. Look on copyright.gov for proper wording and what is required to put on this page.
  + Dedication page.
  + Book belongs to page.
  + Back cover blurb.
  + Research other books to get ideas of how yours will fit-colors, size, price point, etc.
  + Research Amazon for books like yours to see the different categories available.

\*\*Some of my favorite resources\*\*

\*Amazon KDP

\*Ingram Spark (so many webinars on here)

\*IAPC-Independent Author’s Publishing Collective-Many webinars available as well as printing options.

\*Facebook group: Children’s Book Authors and Illustrators: Publishing, Marketing and Selling

\*myidentifiers.com

\*copyright.gov

\*Anyone you know who has done it before!

I hope this information has helped you get a jump start on something you have always wanted to do. If you have a story and feel you need to share, I absolutely encourage you to go for it! Don’t let the fear of a saturated market or fees or self-doubt keep you from doing it. Someone is waiting for you to write your words, don’t keep that from them 😊

\*\*Disclaimer-this information is completely based on my own experience in self-publishing. Use it as a jump start to find more information. I do not claim any of this to be your only options. Prices, websites, and information is all based on my knowledge on the subject as of today (3/20/20). All of this is subject to change on a minute to minute basis. There are many options out there, these just happened to be the ones I chose. \*\* Be sure to do your own research as well to be as knowledgeable on the process as possible.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions!