

Publishing Your Crafty Book

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Writing a Book

Writing a craft book is no joke. It is a labor of love. The chances of you getting rich, or even earning a decent amount of money, from your book are next to none.

The cold, hard truth

The average book in America sells fewer than 5,000 copies. According to one source*, of the titles on the shelves in retail stores, 93% never sell more than 1000 copies in their lifetime. Some of the books that have spent weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list don't even sell more than 50,000 copies.

Most new writers only earn 1.5-8% of the cover price for each book sold. (Note that percentages can vary for the same book, depending on if the book was sold through Amazon, through the publisher's book club, etc.). Do the math—this is not a lot of money for potentially 60, 100, 250+ hours worked. For small craft books, *if* the publisher pays an advance, the advance may only be \$1,000. The book might need to go to a second printing for the author to begin to receive any royalties at all ... and the majority of books do not have a second print run.

So after all of this, why would anyone want to publish a book? Well, it certainly can open doors and will greatly enhance your credibility as an artist/instructor. It is deeply satisfying to tackle such a large project and have the wonderful feeling of accomplishment that comes from writing a book. It can be thrilling to see your name in print.

*<http://ezinearticles.com/?How-Many-Books-Do-You-Need-to-Sell-to-Be-Considered-a-Bestseller?&id=5253694>

For more info, see *The 10 Awful Truths about Book Publishing* - <http://www.bkpextranet.com/AuthorMaterials/10AwfulTruths.htm> and *Book Industry Statistics* - <http://parapub.com/sites/para/resources/statistics.cfm>

Before you write your book

You need to have a market for your book so that the book will sell. If you are using a publisher, you *must prove* there is a market for your book. Your book proposal should list all the reasons why and how your book will sell.

To build enough influence to sell a book, you'll need to establish yourself as an expert in your field. A great way to do this is by having single projects published in magazines, as already explained. Have a website where you engage your students and readers. Teach classes. Build your newsletter mailing list. Do whatever it takes to get your name out there as often as possible.

Be prepared to similarly promote your book. Set up a website devoted to your book. Write blog posts and other articles promoting your book. Create press releases for your book.

When you are ready, prepare a book proposal. Even if you are self-publishing a book proposal can be a useful tool to help keep your focus as you write. Your proposal should include a complete outline of your book, the total number of pages, at least one sample project and/or chapter, biographical information as well as a complete analysis of the market: What other books exist on this topic? How will your book stand out? Why will people buy your book? How large is the market for your book? Is the market growing or shrinking? A great resource to help you through this process is *Write the Perfect Book Proposal: 10 That Sold and Why* by Jeff Herman and Deborah Levine Herman.

If you want to use a **publishing house**, send your proposal to multiple publishers. With any luck, you'll hear back within a few months, and with a lot of luck, you'll have your pick of publishers. Contact authors that have used those publishers to see what their experiences were. Some publishers will request the book be fewer pages, or you change your focus slightly. It is up to you if you want to change your original vision in order to finalize your contract.

If you are **self-publishing**, some places you may wish to check out include authoragency.com, Xlibris.com, iUniverse.com and "1stBook-publishing."

Self-publishing vs. using a publishing house

In the past few decades, self-publishing has exploded. Anyone with a computer can publish a book, and there are many companies devoted to helping authors self-print their books. There are pros and cons to each method.

	Self-Publishing	Using a Publisher
Your initial monetary investment	You are responsible for paying all expenses upfront.	You may be able to obtain an advance, and/or a photography fee, which will help offset any upfront costs. The photography fee is yours to keep. The advance will be deducted from any royalties you earn. Typically, ½ of the advance and photography fee is paid when your contract is signed; the remainder is paid upon delivery of the final product. Though some smaller publishers do not offer advances, at least you are not responsible for printing costs, etc.
Money/royalties earned on paper books	If you print and sell the book yourself, you earn 100% of the cover price. You may choose to sell through other venues, in which case the vendor will likely wish to purchase the book at 40-55% off, and will often expect Net 30 Terms. If you use a self-publishing service, they may take a percentage of royalties.	New authors earn 1.5-8% of the cover price (new craft authors likely receive an average of 3%) for paper books. If you received an advance, you won't start receiving checks until the entire amount of your advance has been "paid for" in royalties.
Distribution	No major chain will carry a self-published book. You are responsible for finding outlets to carry your book. Considering that a book has a less than 1% chance of being stocked in an average store, though, you might be fine with this.	Publishers have relationships with bookstores and will work to get your book in stores. How long the book is carried in a store depends on the sales. Bookstores have no qualms returning books that aren't selling well.
Quality of design and paper	You are responsible for printing your book (or going the eBook route), so you can choose how much you want to spend. Obviously, the better quality paper and binding, the higher cost to you, so either your profit margins will be lower, or you must increase the price of your book.	Publishers typically are able to print higher-quality books than the average self-published author. However you should look at prior books published by that company to get an idea as to their quality standards.
Control over final Product	You have 100% control over the final product, including title, cover design, images and text. For print books, you may have some limitations (for example, the number of pages might need to be in multiples of 16 if the books is printed in a traditional manner, etc.)	If you are lucky, your publisher will ask your input on the title and cover design, but these items are typically completely under the control of the marketing department of the publishing company. After you submit your manuscript and photos, the publisher will lay it out and edit it. You will have the chance to do a final review of your book, but note that at that point, your edits are just "suggestions" and any changes are at the publisher's discretion. (Think of it as though you are a screenwriter—once the movie is in production, it's the director that has the control.)
eBook Options	This is a popular and low-cost way to get a first book published. However, many people still prefer something tangible for their how-to books, because this allows them to easily flip back and forth and write notes.	Many publishers are now creating digital versions of their books. Royalties are higher for these, typically ranging from 15-40%.

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