

How to Publish on Amazon



**MAKE THE MOST OF
YOUR BOOK SALES**

BY THE PUBLISHING EXPERTS AT

 **BookBaby™**

CHAPTER 1:

Why your book needs to be on Amazon

On April 3, 1995, Amazon.com sold its first book: *Fluid Concepts and Creative Analogies: Computer Models Of The Fundamental Mechanisms Of Thought*.

On February 1, 2005, Amazon Prime was born. For a yearly fee, Amazon Prime members would get free shipping in the US for eligible purchases, including books.

On November 19, 2007, Amazon released its first eReader: the Kindle.

These three events forever changed the book publishing landscape. Today, it's an inescapable fact: Amazon is *the* place for authors to be if they are trying to attract readers.

Readers can browse the world's largest bookstore day and night, have their printed books shipped for free, and get instant eBook downloads. Amazon sells every genre of book—fiction and nonfiction—from mysteries to romance novels, from cookbooks to memoirs.

Meanwhile, writers around the world can bypass the traditional publishing process and self-publish their work, enjoying unprecedented freedom and autonomy in delivering their work directly to readers.

But, as the saying goes, nothing worth doing comes easy. There's a lot to do if you plan to self-publish your book, and this guide is here to introduce new authors to the basic facts and fundamentals of self-publishing and distribution on Amazon, the world's most important online retail bookseller.

How important is it for you to have your books on Amazon?

Amazon doesn't publish many statistics, but book industry experts have shared these estimates:

- Amazon sells nearly 70 percent of all books sold in North America—both eBooks and printed books. Amazon dominates the book-selling marketplace in almost every one of its dedicated territories, including the US, UK, Canada, Australia, India, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, and Mexico.
- Each month, 2.5 billion visits are made to Amazon.com. That means the number of visits made to Amazon in one year is nearly four times that of the entire population on Earth.
- In Q1 of 2021, Amazon Prime memberships had reached a staggering 200 million worldwide—up from 100 million in 2018 ([statista.com](https://www.statista.com)).

- In his 2018 stockholder letter, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos noted that over 1,000 self-published authors had each earned over \$100,000 in book sales that year. Many thousands more reported sales of \$50,000+. That number has invariably grown since then.

Amazon + BookBaby

Since its launch in 2010, BookBaby has been a proud partner of Amazon. In that time:

- BookBaby has partnered with more than 55,000 authors from around the world.
- BookBaby has helped authors self-publish over 80,000 titles, both eBooks and printed books.
- BookBaby has paid millions in book royalties to its authors.

BookBaby makes it easy for authors to get their books into the world's largest bookstore while enjoying all the benefits and marketing opportunities Amazon has to offer—all while paying authors 100 percent of their Amazon net sales.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket!

While Amazon is a must for self-published authors, it's a costly mistake to ONLY sell your books through Amazon.

Yes, Amazon is the biggest and most important online bookstore in the industry and you must have your book in all the Amazon stores around the world. But there are many other stores where millions of eBooks and printed books are sold every year, including **Apple Books, Barnes & Noble,** and dozens more.

Remember, not everyone in the US buys their books at Amazon, and that's even truer outside of the US. That's why [BookBaby's](#) eBook distribution network includes more than 60 stores in 170 countries, all managed from one BookBaby account. Want to sell printed books? We offer you your own [Bookshop page](#), as well as access to some of the largest online and brick and mortar booksellers in the business.



CHAPTER 2:

How Amazon works

Amazon's unique publishing suite of services makes it possible for independent authors to bypass traditional publishing companies and self-publish their own books. It gives authors the platform and tools to sell eBooks and printed books directly to readers. Amazon also offers special book giveaway promotions, discount programs, subscription reading platforms, and much more.

If you've ever been a *customer* of Amazon and purchased a book—or anything offered on the site—you know how it works: you order an item online and it shows up at your door a couple of days later. But how does the process work for authors trying to *sell* their books? It's not as simple as you might think. That's one reason thousands of authors have turned to [BookBaby](#) to help put their books up for sale on Amazon. We are THE experts in helping independent authors navigate the sales process on Amazon.

Amazon sells
70%
of all books in
North America

How does Amazon work? In simple terms:

1

You create an account and upload your manuscript, cover images, and more onto Amazon's KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing) platform. You can either do it all yourself or work with a self-publishing specialist (like the experts who work at BookBaby) to walk you through the process and assist with every step.

2

Establish a price for your book, list your book's genre and categories, choose keywords so readers can find your book, and supply more information (metadata) about the book.

3

Your book—digital or printed—will go live on Amazon just a few hours after you've uploaded all your materials. Millions of potential readers can now find your book.

4

When your eBook is purchased on Amazon, the file is immediately transmitted to the reader's Kindle or other digital reader. That's it—the transaction is done. You can track your sales using Amazon's trending reports a few days after the sale is made.

5

If you sell your printed book directly through Amazon, it's part of a distribution process called Print On Demand, or POD. Amazon doesn't have printed copies of your books sitting in a warehouse waiting to be purchased. Instead, they order as many copies as were sold—from one to 1,000 or more—based on the individual sales on Amazon.com. The exact number of books purchased are batch printed, bound, and shipped to an Amazon warehouse for fulfillment to the customer. The printing is done by the lowest bidding vendor, so quality can vary.

If you sell your printed book on Amazon through BookBaby, it's still part of a print-on-demand program, but Amazon tells *us* how many copies they expect to sell (based on its internal ordering algorithm) and BookBaby prints and produces to that demand.

6

Amazon sends out royalty payments to authors each month, approximately 90 days after the sales have been recorded. Amazon royalties are around 12 to 20 percent of the sales price for the physical, POD books sold. Meanwhile, your eBooks sales can earn up to 70 percent of the retail price. *(If you're working with BookBaby, you keep 100 percent of your net Amazon sales.)*

200 million
people around the globe visit
Amazon.com every month



CHAPTER 3:

FAQ – We answer lots of questions about how to get your book available on Amazon

How much does it cost to sell my book on Amazon?

Setting up an account on Amazon is free, as is listing your book. There are optional add-ons that involve fees

What do I get paid?

Amazon pays different royalties for eBooks and printed books. You can learn about [eBook royalty options here](#) and [printed book royalties here](#). (Note: Amazon pays author royalties every month, about 90 days after the sales are made.)

What is KDP?

KDP stands for Kindle Direct Publishing, Amazon's direct and exclusive self-publishing option, which provides access to selling your eBook and printed book title on Amazon (and Amazon alone).

What kind of (genre) books can I sell on Amazon?

Amazon accepts all genres of books.

Do I need an ISBN?

Yes and no. You need an ISBN ([International Standard Book Number](#)) to distribute your book through retailers in the US and globally. Amazon assigns its own identifier, called an ASIN (Amazon Standard Identification Number). This ASIN is what you and the public use to identify your book on Amazon when linking to the book. If your book has an ISBN, that number can be used as a search term on the Amazon website. (Read more about ISBNs on the [BookBaby Blog](#).)

Do I need a bar code?

Yes, all items sold on Amazon must have a UPC, EAN, or ISBN/ASIN bar code number.

How do I choose the best category?

Choosing the best category and keywords for your book is not as easy as you might think. This information is part of your title's metadata, which is used by search engines to help readers



discover your book. It's a fine art to make your metadata work for your title, and many authors have turned to [the experts at BookBaby](#) for help with this important task. As a general rule, the more specific and niche you make your category, the better your chance of getting ranked as a top-seller, which increases your chance of getting recommended by Amazon's algorithm. So getting this right can make a big difference in your success with Amazon sales. (Read more about Amazon categories on the [BookBaby Blog](#).)

Does Amazon do cover design?

No, Amazon does not offer a book cover design service. You should find a reputable designer familiar with book cover design and follow the specifications of Amazon's cover design templates. BookBaby has a team of [talented book designers](#) (cover designers and interior page formatters) who have brought thousands of titles to life. You can use BookBaby's design services regardless of whether you publish through BookBaby or not.

Does Amazon edit books?

No, Amazon does not offer an editing service. ([BookBaby does!](#))

Is Amazon exclusive?

If you publish directly through Amazon, your eBooks and printed books will only be available through Amazon. You can work directly with other distributors and retailers as well, but you have to go through the process of creating a profile, uploading information, etc. with each. (When you publish through BookBaby, your book is made available for sale on Amazon and 60 other major bookstores around the world.)

What is Kindle Select?

Kindle Select is a program that requires giving Amazon exclusive distribution rights to your book if you want to take advantage of its Pricing Countdown or free eBook offering—where you can offer your book for free for a limited time. (You can opt in to Kindle Select through your BookBaby account.)

What is/was CreateSpace?

CreateSpace is the now-defunct printed book distribution division of Amazon. All self-publishing done direct-to-Amazon happens through KDP.

What is Kindle Unlimited?

Kindle Unlimited is a subscription program (\$9.99/month) that allows subscribers to read as many eBooks as they want. If you opt into KDP Select, your title will be available to Kindle Unlimited subscribers. You're eligible for royalty payments from Kindle Unlimited for pages an individual customer reads in your eBook for the first time (you can [learn more about that here](#)).

Do I need to warehouse my printed books?

No. Amazon works as a print on demand (POD) publisher, which means it prints your books as they are ordered, so there is no need to house inventory. If you work with BookBaby, we fulfill the printed books for your Amazon sales as they are ordered. (The same is true for your [BookShop page](#), which is your own storefront, provided by BookBaby if you publish with us.)

Is KDP international?

KDP is supported in the USA, [some European countries](#), Australia, and Japan.

What is a pre-sale?

Your pre-sale period is the time between when your book listing goes live and your release date, which is the date your book is ready to be delivered to customers. Pre-sales happen on most book retail sites and for some retailers (e.g. Barnes & Noble and Powell's), pre-sale orders accumulate and count as sales *on your release date*, which gives you a good chance at cracking some top-100 bestseller sub-genre lists. Amazon counts all sales on the day they are actually made, so your pre-sale numbers do not accumulate and increase your chances of becoming a bestseller on Amazon. But, during the pre-sale period, Amazon uses its inventory algorithm to build a sales forecast for new titles, which is critical. (Read more about pre-sales on the [BookBaby Blog](#).)

Does Amazon promote my book?

No, Amazon does not promote books, though it does provide options to give your book away for free and you can purchase advertising. You can read more about that program on Amazon's [Advertising for KDP Books page](#).

How do reviews work on Amazon?

Anyone can post a review of your book on Amazon, but Amazon gives more weight to verified reviews—reviews posted by readers who bought your book from Amazon. There is also an editorial review section on Amazon where you can post reviews you've received from other outlets.

Can I make changes to my book once it's published?

Yes, you can make changes to your book after it's published, though that is not ideal: you'll need a new ISBN/ASIN and it can disrupt your title's product listing. It's best to get it all right before publishing.

Can I make changes to my book's Amazon page once it is published?

Yes, you can make changes to metadata, book descriptions, categories, etc. after your Amazon page is live.

If you're working
with BookBaby,
you will keep
100%
of your net
Amazon sales.

CHAPTER 4:

Producing and publishing a book on Amazon

Congratulations! You've finished your manuscript. You've decided to publish your book and are wondering, "what's the best way to go about getting my book for sale on the world's biggest bookstore?" Two options include working directly with Amazon's KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing) or working with BookBaby. Here's a simple step-by-step look at how each process works.

Amazon KDP

1. Sign up for a KDP Account.
2. Provide social security and bank account information.
3. Read over the pages (and pages) of help info and watch multiple tutorial videos that teach you how to publish direct through Amazon. You can also download Amazon's guide, "[Amazon Kindle Publishing Guidelines: How to make books available for Kindle devices and applications.](#)" (Beware, it's 114 pages)
4. Find a designer and interior formatter (because you are a writer, not a book designer, and you need someone to help you with this!).
5. Contact cover designers, get quotes, browse samples, establish turn times, etc. Pick a cover designer, enter into a contract, and work with him/her to design your book cover.
6. Contact manuscript formatters, get quotes, browse samples, establish turn times, etc. Pick a formatter, enter into a contract, and work with him/her to format your eBook.
7. Upload files from the formatter and cover designer.
8. In your KDP account, provide the appropriate metadata, book description, author information, pricing information, etc.
9. Wait a few hours for your book to go live.
10. Your book is available on Amazon, and in 60 days your readers will be able to have it delivered to them.
11. Want to sell on another site? You'll have to repeat these steps for each.

BookBaby

1. Call and speak with a BookBaby publishing specialist or [create a quote yourself on our website.](#)
2. Upload your manuscript, fill out our design survey, and provide distribution information.
3. Place your order.
4. Wait for proofs and approve them.
5. Provide BookBaby with your metadata, book description, author information, and pricing information (which will be used for all the retailers you'll be selling your book through).
6. Your book is available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble and dozens of other stores.

BookBaby has helped authors self-publish over

80,000

eBooks & printed books.



CHAPTER 5:

From book idea to book sale, BookBaby is your answer

Have you ever painted your house? Or fixed a leaky faucet? Or changed the oil in your car? Sure, you can do it. You don't *need* to have experience—though you'll be certain to learn from your mistakes in real-time (some are more costly than others). And if you really know what you're doing, or if you're prepared for the work to take much longer than necessary, you might even get the job done reasonably well.

Turns out, the same is true for self-publishing. You can work directly with Amazon, turn your manuscript into a printed book or eBook, and do your best to sell your work on the world's largest online retailer.

But, as this guide has hinted at, there are a LOT of details to consider. Things you know but could use some guidance with (penning a long and short book description), things you didn't realize you'd need to know (how many pages will your 60,000-word Word document translate to a 6x9 book?), things you have never heard of (International Standard Book Number), and things you don't want to have to do (you mean I need to do this all over again to sell my book on Barnes & Noble?).

That's when you may realize that ***paid is better than free***. There is tremendous value in having an expert partner who has answers to all your questions, has experience in every facet of the book production and publication process, provides professional interior formatting and book cover design, and offers a suite of additional author services (including [editing](#) and [marketing](#) services).

People-powered publishing

What makes BookBaby *the* best partner in the business? It's our people. We spend our time on the phones, talking to authors just like you who are nervous, excited, confused, experienced, inexperienced... you name it, we've done it. We spend our time manning printers and binders and cutters, carefully producing top-quality books. We spend our time translating the manuscripts of independent authors into beautifully formatted, professionally designed books, every day. And many of the folks who help you create your books are self-published authors themselves, so we understand the process inside and out.

We offer help in other ways, too, like producing a [one-of-a-kind blog](#) that covers topics ranging from marketing to writing to book production to editing—you know, the sorts of things an

expert in the field would talk about. And the [BookBaby website](#) covers everything an independent author needs to know, from book production to book sales.

And if you work with BookBaby, we'll serve as your guide, letting you know what's around the corner, where the pitfalls are, and what you might have forgotten or didn't see coming. There's a lot of ground to cover from book idea to book sale, and it helps to have a hand to guide you through the entire process.

So, when it comes to your book, why settle for a job done reasonably well? That might work when you're painting the laundry room, but that won't cut it for the manuscript you've been pouring yourself into for the last 18 months.

Wherever you are in the writing process, you owe it to yourself to investigate your options. Why not start at the place that has guided tens of thousands of authors to their publishing dream? DIY doesn't mean you need to do it all alone.