

The Mechanics of Self-Publishing Print Books

10 guidelines in

10 MINUTES

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Certainly there's no one true way to self-publish, but my intention is to share the lessons I have learned about navigating the process in a way that delivers minimal stress and professional results, using tools that most of us already have on our desktops.



My way isn't everyone's way. The internet is awash with advice on self-publishing, much of it excellent, some of it rather prescriptive. Ideas differ about the best distribution channels, formatting options, what we can do ourselves, and when we need professional help.

I am not a tech specialist or a graphic designer. I am a professional proofreader who is a fairly proficient user of Microsoft Word, and I have worked in publishing (in-house and freelance) for over two decades. I have also self-published three books (two of which are available in print).

My self-publishing goals were twofold: **professionalism** and **simplicity**. The guidance in this mechanics toolkit reflects the choices I made in order to achieve those objectives.

The mechanics of print publishing are not difficult (though I do think they are harder than ebook mechanics, particularly when it comes to non-fiction and illustrated books, because of the necessity to produce an engaging design). However, the process *is* affordable – you can use software that you already own.

As long as you keep the design and layout simple, style the elements of your text consistently, and attend to convention, you can provide your reader with a professional-looking print book.

The enclosed information includes recommendations and guidance on following basic publishing conventions regarding layout and design. Why? Because every deviation from convention *disengages* your reader from what your words say, and *engages* them with how those words look. Yes, there's no law when it comes to layout. However, readers are used to seeing book text laid out in a certain way and deviations act as red flags that scream 'DIY job' from the rafters.

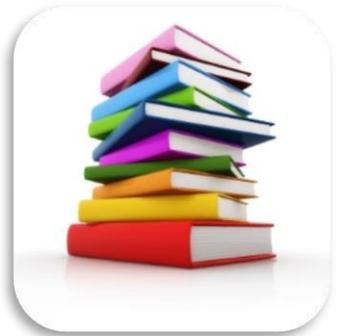
When I self-published my books, I wanted people to think, ‘Great! – Louise Harnby’s written a book that will be interesting to me’, not ‘Louise Harnby has self-published’. It is the content that counts and that is where I want my customers’ focus to be. Reader disengagement is therefore a fail, though one that can be avoided with just a little extra effort.

Each of the 10 sections has been designed so that it can be read in a minute, no more. So without further ado, let’s get going – the clock’s ticking!



I already have an ebook – why bother printing?

Providing a printed version of your book is just good business practice, pure and simple. Why? Because different customers have different preferences. The publishing market is booming, but print is not dead. It’s not even sickly. According to Malcolm Jones, a 2014 Pew study found ‘that readers are embracing e-books on a variety of devices but that print is holding its own ... e-reader and tablet usage is growing, but it isn’t cannibalizing the book buying market’ (*Daily Beast*, 2014).



Most of us don’t need a Pew poll to tell us this. Our own family and friendship networks show us. On my side of the bed is my Kindle Paperwhite; on my husband’s are four paperbacks. He’s simply not into ebooks, although he appreciates why I find digital delivery so convenient.

It’s not just about convenience, though – there is also the data-permanence issue. When you own a printed book, you own it physically.

Furthermore, particularly when it comes to reference and other non-fiction material, some customers still prefer being able to navigate their way to specific chapters or sections of interest by flicking through pages

and bookmarking them with bits of sticky paper. Different strokes for different folks.

The nub of it is this: the writer who decides not to offer the customer the option of print is actively cutting out a sales stream. Since most of us who self-publish want our work to be read by as many people as possible, it makes sense to increase customer choice, not restrict it.

Print distribution options

As with e-publishing, there are plenty of options when it comes to generating a print-ready book. You can work directly with a designer and printer, hire an organization to carry out these steps in the production process for you, or sign up with the likes of CreateSpace, Lulu or BookBaby, to name but a few. The choice is yours, and you should carefully check the costs of production and terms/conditions of service before you sign anything.



Colleagues have reported being very happy with the results of using service providers such as Lulu and BookBaby. After some lengthy research, I chose CreateSpace to create my printed book because it best suited my particular needs. To clarify, I am not saying CreateSpace is the best way – it is simply the option I chose.

The CreateSpace model allows you to upload a PDF generated from a Word file. If you're a Word user, this means that you can control the design and layout using software that you already own and are familiar with, rather than using unfamiliar software or working with external templates. Because I designed my book in Word, the only cost to me, in terms of production, was the percentage of income earned that CreateSpace retains with each sale.

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Are print books economically viable for the self-publisher?

When I embarked on my first excursion into print publishing, I did so with some trepidation. Surely the costs of producing something that could physically sit on a bookshelf were going to be prohibitive. And if that was the case, the only way to make the project economically viable was to pass that cost onto the customer, a fact that would impact on sales.



I was therefore delighted to upload my finished PDF to CreateSpace and find that I could price it in line with similar books in the market. Not only that – I’d still earn a few quid from each sale after CreateSpace had deducted its costs of production. The income stream is not as lucrative as that from e-publishing, but it is still an additional income stream from a market segment that I could not have tapped if I’d only published.

Print-on-demand versus bulk printing

One of the best things about using the likes of CreateSpace and BookBaby is that the books are generated via print-on-demand. This means you don’t have to fork out money upfront to make the product available. Nor do you have to worry about appropriate warehousing. CreateSpace automatically arranges for the book to be available in its own online store and (because it’s an Amazon company) across multiple Amazon territories around the world. (Be sure to check any distributors’ promises about how they will make your print books available on international sales platforms.) In a nutshell, the warehousing, distribution and printing are handled by someone else – for many of us, that’s a weight off our minds.

Some writers may prefer to have bulk copies of their printed books available for sale directly from them, thus securing a larger income stream from sales. If that’s you, by all means source a reliable printer to

see what the costs would be. Just don't forget that you'll have to handle the merchandising and warehousing arrangements.

One final word about print-on-demand – there's a damage-limitation element. Writers are human, and even though their books may (should) have been through a round of self- and professional editing or proofreading, many cannot help tweaking post-edit (I know this is true because I've done it!). Every tweak risks the introduction of an error. The beauty of the print-on-demand model is that you can always upload a revised version of your book (in the same way that you can upload revised files of your ebooks). Yes, we all strive for perfection, but print-on-demand does mean that mistakes can be rectified in a manner that doesn't leave the author with unwanted bulk stock.



Formatting your print book in Word – the advantages

Using Word as the foundation is not the only option, of course. If you already have InDesign or Quark, you may choose to use these. You might have Publisher as part of Microsoft Office. I created my first print book using Publisher and was pleased with the results. However, my second and third books were created in Word, and I found it a much easier tool to work with.

What are the advantages of Word? Well, firstly, it is an extremely powerful design and editing tool that can produce aesthetically pleasing and professional results.

Secondly, if you've already created your ebook in Word, you can make a copy of the file, carefully amend your Styles palette, and generate an attractive book file that incorporates the design elements you were restricted from using in the publishing process.



Thirdly, by using Word, you can use Word's powerful 'Find and Replace' function. This can save the self-publishing author a huge amount of time when it comes to making global changes to a document. In addition, you can take advantage of numerous free macros and add-ins that will help you identify problems and inconsistencies in your text.

Consistency

One of my favourite Word add-ins is [PerfectIt Pro](#). Designed to help professional editors, writers, academics and business people, PerfectIt identifies potential errors in a document and allows the user to decide whether or not to fix the problem. PerfectIt is the ultimate consistency checker.

Confusables

Every writer has a few blind spots when it comes to often-confused words – reactionary and reactive, imply and infer, taught and taut, prophecy and prophesy, and loath and loathe are just a few examples. Allen Wyatt's WordTips has a solution – the [CompareWordList](#) macro. If you are nervous about using macros, never mind installing them, but want to take advantage of Wyatt's tool, read '[Using proofreading macros: Highlighting confusables with CompareWordList](#)' (*Proofreader's Parlour*, 2016) for step-by-step instructions on how to set up, customize, install and CompareWordList so that it highlights your blind spots.



Golden rules of print formatting

I have three golden rules when it comes to formatting Word files for print publication.

I: Use the Styles palette

To prevent reader disengagement, use Word's Styles palette to ensure that each element of your text (chapter headings, subheadings, body text, quoted material, and so on) is consistently presented throughout the file.

If you've not used this function before, it *is* worth learning. It will save you time, honestly!

The image below illustrates how the Styles palette appears on Word's ribbon.



Look at the first seven styles from the left (circled) – they are styles that I created during the writing of this guide in Word. These give me the freedom to easily amend all instances of a given text element (headers, main text, lists) in one hit – by modifying the style only in the palette.

For example, I've set up a main-text style called 15Text. If I decide to change the design of the main text from Calibri Light (size 12) to Arial (size 11), I simply right-click on the 15Text section of the ribbon, select Modify, and change my settings. Then, every piece of text in the document styled as 15Text will automatically change. I don't have to wade through all the text, working out which bits I want to change and which need to stay as they are.

When formatting for print, the Styles palette is your best friend because it will help you display the different elements of your text consistently.

For guidance on getting to grips with styles, take a look at whichever tutorials apply to your version of Word.

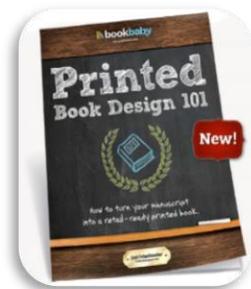
- [Apply, change, create, or delete a style](#) (applies to Word for Mac 2011)
- [Apply styles in Word 2010](#) (video: applies to Word 2010)
- [Customize styles in Word](#) (applies to Word 2016, Word 2013, Word 2010 and Word 2007)
- [Format your document with styles](#) (applies to Word 2007)
- [Microsoft Office Word 2007: Style basics in Word](#)
- [Style basics in Word](#) (applies to Word 2007)
- [Using styles in Word](#) (video: applies to Word 2013)

II: Follow publishing conventions

The publishing conventions to attend to for print books are more labour-intensive than for e-publishing because you're not restricted by the quirks of ebook distributors' conversion platforms. See the sections below on 'Print layout conventions' for a summary of my recommendations.

III: Read *Printed Book Design 101*

Joel Friedlander's free primer, *Printed Book Design 101*, helps authors create professional-looking books by taking them through the steps of interior layout, cover design, and tips on how to avoid simple mistakes that act as red flags to amateurism.



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Print layout conventions – first-paragraph indents

In mainstream publishing, whether print or digital, we don't usually indent the first paragraph in a chapter or in a new section of run-on text (e.g. under a heading). Nor do we usually indent *any* of the paragraphs in blocked text. If you do choose to indent such first paragraphs, the layout will jar your reader for no other reason than it is unconventional. If you are unconvinced, go to your bookshelf, pull down any book, and look at how the paragraphs have been styled.

In the examples below, the green text reflects conventional first-paragraph indentation styles, whereas the red text shows examples of unconventional styling.

Chapter or section heading

This is an example of conventional first-paragraph indentation in run-on text. This is an example of conventional first-paragraph indentation in run-on text.

This is an example of a run-on paragraph. This is an example of a run-on paragraph. This is an example of a

run-on paragraph This is an example of a run-on paragraph.

Chapter or section heading

This is an example of unconventional first-paragraph indentation in run-on text. This is an example of unconventional first-paragraph indentation in run-on text.

This is an example of a run-on paragraph. This is an example of a run-on paragraph. This is an example of a run-on paragraph This is an example of a run-on paragraph.

Chapter or section heading

This is an example of conventional first-paragraph indentation in blocked text. This is an example of conventional first-paragraph indentation in blocked text.

This is an example of conventional second-paragraph indentation in blocked text. This is an example of conventional second-paragraph indentation in blocked text.

Chapter or section heading

This is an example of unconventional first-paragraph indentation in blocked text. This is an example of unconventional first-paragraph indentation in blocked text.

This is an example of unconventional second-paragraph indentation in blocked text. This is an example of unconventional second-paragraph indentation in blocked text.

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Print layout conventions – chapters, page numbers, parts and page balance

Chapters

In mainstream publishing, each chapter heading appears on a new page. Page numbers can be omitted (see below: ‘Page numbers’), but if they are included they should be placed at the bottom of the page. Running heads should be omitted (see below: ‘Print layout conventions – running heads’).



Page numbers

Right-hand pages (called *rectos*) should take odd page numbers, and all left-hand pages (*versos*) should take even page numbers. Page numbers in the main body of the text should be Arabic (1, 2, 3, etc.), while those in preliminary pages (copyright page, contents, preface, etc.) should be Roman (i, ii, iii, etc.). In mainstream publishing, page numbers *can* be placed on chapter-title pages, though you are advised to position them at the bottom of the page. This is conventional and means the chapter title stands out, uncluttered by any other header information.

Parts

If your book is divided into Part 1, Part 2, etc., place each new part title on an odd-numbered page (which should be a right-hand page). Following mainstream publishing convention, avoid placing page numbers on part-title pages. If you must include them, place them at the bottom of the page so that they don't distract your reader's attention regarding the part title.

Stranded lines and unbalanced pages

Set your paragraph styles up in Word so that you avoid ‘orphans’ and ‘widows’. These are lonely single lines that appear at the bottom or top of a page.

If, when you’ve laid out your text in Word, you find that just the first line of a new paragraph is stranded at the bottom of a page (orphan), or just the final line of a new paragraph is stranded at the top of a page (widow), set your paragraph styles up in Word by selecting Paragraph>Line and Page Breaks>Widow/Orphan Control.

Similarly, check that text on facing rectos and versos is roughly the same depth.

Short lines at the end of paragraphs can also give the impression of two lines of white space between two paragraphs.

Caution: be judicious rather than strictly applying rules, though. In run-on fiction text, widows won’t look problematic; in blocked text they will.

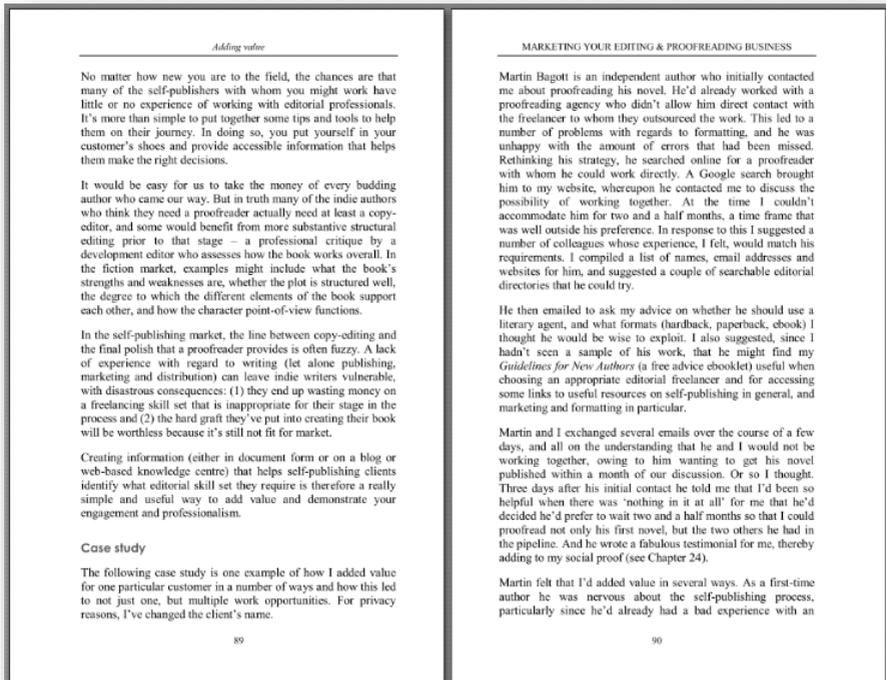


Print layout conventions – running heads

These are the headers one most often sees at the top of pages in non-fiction books (and sometimes in fiction). They may comprise the book title on the left (verso) and the chapter title on the right (recto); or rectos and versos could both take the chapter title; or the book title can go on the verso and the author name on the recto (or vice versa). Page numbers are sometimes included in running heads. The style you choose is less important than consistency.

Running heads are important for non-fiction work because they remind the reader of where they are in your book, and what the focus of the content is in a specific section. When publishing print books, I’d recommend using them in non-fiction.

However, following publishing convention, don't include them on part-title pages, chapter title pages or blank pages – it looks amateurish because your reader isn't used to seeing this layout in books produced by mainstream publishers.



For detailed advice on formatting and managing headers and footers in Word, see 'Sections, Section Breaks, Page Numbering, Columns, Headers and Footers, and Watermarks in Microsoft Word'.

If in doubt about how to design your running heads, visit a bookshop, and pull down a few professionally published books from the genre in which you are writing – this will give you a taste of what the publishing industry is doing, and what the readers expect to see when they open a printed book.



Print layout conventions – block or run-on paragraph styles?

Consistency is king, though most fiction work tends to be presented in a run-on style, while non-fiction might be styled in either way. Block paragraphs have a space between each one; run-on paragraphs are indented (with the exception of the first line in a new chapter or section). Think about what your readers are used to seeing when they open a printed book in a particular genre, and which style choice will make it as easy as possible for them to engage with, and navigate, your content.

The following is an example of blocked paragraphs

This is an example of blocked paragraphs. This is an example of blocked paragraphs. This is an example of blocked paragraphs. This is an example of blocked paragraphs.

This is an example of blocked paragraphs. This is an example of blocked paragraphs. This is an example of blocked paragraphs. This is an example of blocked paragraphs.

The following is an example of run-on paragraphs

This is an example of run-on paragraphs. This is an example of run-on paragraphs. This is an example of run-on paragraphs. This is an example of run-on paragraphs.

This is an example of run-on paragraphs. This is an example of run-on paragraphs. This is an example of run-on paragraphs. This is an example of run-on paragraphs.

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Print layout conventions – spaces

Avoid placing two spaces after a full point. It isn't necessary. Even if you were taught that this is the proper thing to do, or it is something you prefer, follow professional convention. Readers who like two spaces won't notice that you've only used one (because it's not noticeable!) while readers who like one space will be irritated that you've used two. Anyway, it looks rather gappy.



If you love a double space (because 30 years ago your English teacher said, 'That is the right way to do it'), take a look at these two examples, and decide which of the following two options, created using twenty-first-century word-processing software, looks the most aesthetically pleasing.

Here is an example of text written in Microsoft Word with two spaces after a full point. Can you see that it looks rather gappy? Do you own any professionally published books with text that is spaced like this?

Here is an example of text written in Microsoft Word with one space after a full point. Can you see that it is easier on the eye? Do the professionally published books in your home have text that is spaced like this?

Still not convinced? Think about this. Professional typesetters don't do it. Professional book designers don't do it. Professional publishers don't do it. *The Chicago Manual of Style* discourages it. The Modern Language Association, Oxford University Press's *New Hart's Rules*, the American Psychological Association, and a host of other academic and professional bodies all concur ('[Sentence spacing in language and style guides](#)').

Standard professional publishing asks for one space, and, given that we want our books to appear professionally published, I'd recommend you use one, too.

Farhad Manjoo in ‘[Space invaders](#)’ presents a lively and entertaining summary of why using two spaces is not advisable, and how this practice emerged in the first place.

Here are some quick tips on how to remove unnecessary spaces from your Word file:

- Remove all double spaces from your file by pressing Ctrl H (which brings up the Find and Replace tool). Type two spaces in the Find box and one space in the Replace box.
- Remove all rogue spaces at the end of paragraphs by pressing Ctrl H. Type a space followed by ^p in the Find box, and ^p in the Replace box.
- Remove all rogue spaces at the beginning of paragraphs by pressing Ctrl H. Type ^p followed by a space in the Find box, and ^p in the Replace box.



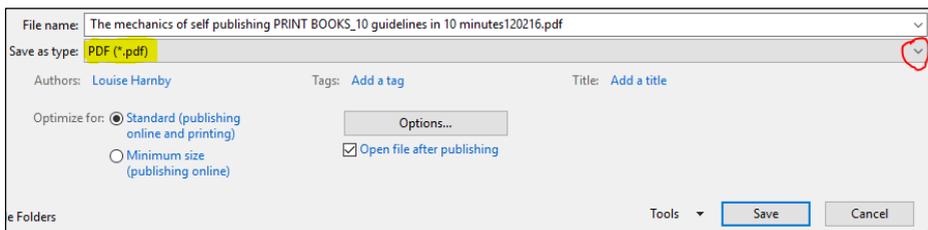
The PDF complement

PDFs don't work well on ereaders. They do, however, work extremely well on desktops, laptops and some tablets. There is, therefore, nothing to stop you creating a PDF version of your print book and selling it yourself (though make sure you read the terms and conditions of any distribution channels you've signed up with to make sure you're not contravening the terms of your contract).

Direct selling allows you to keep a higher percentage of the sales income. And if you have a platform (like a blog) related to the content of your book, or are already part of a network of target readers via social media platforms, you'll be in a good position to market your PDF book alongside the ereader and print versions. The PDF option won't be what all your customers want, but it may be preferable for some, particularly if you've written business-related content that readers want to access as part of their working day.

The beauty of providing a PDF version of your book is that you have to put in very little additional work – you can use your print-ready file.

In recent versions of Word, creating a PDF requires you merely to use the ‘Save as’ function – simply select PDF from the ‘Save as type’ drop-down box (circled in the image below).



Time's up! I hope these 10 guidelines in 10 minutes have given you food for thought on the mechanics of self-publishing a print book. Good luck!

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