the BECKON CREATIVE guide to getting your book built

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step 1: set yourself up as a publishing company

In order to publish your book, you need to be a publisher. It's okay if your one book is the only book your company ever publishes. Alternatively, you can publish with another indie house (such as Armour Books) if you can come to a business arrangement with them. Avoid 'vanity press' publishers who ask for a huge fee upfront and never deliver any benefits.

Business name registration:

Register your business name (e.g. Pubby McPubface Publishing) at www.asicconnect.asic.gov.au. You can pay for one year's rego or three, but you'll need to keep it current as the years go by. *DO NOT register your business name with a third party: they rip you off!*

When you enter your ABN be sure to include spaces: XX XXX XXX XXX. Tip: your business name, in the publishing world, is called your 'imprint name'.

ABN & GST:

Get your ABN from www.abr.gov.au. Register for GST, if you're selling in Australia; this is from ATO, so use your MyGov login. If you need any further information, try www.business.gov.au — it's a one-stop shop. For tax purposes, you are a sole trader, and your tax return is now a 'business' tax return.

IMPORTANT NOTE on house insurance:

Some home insurance companies will cease to cover your home & contents if you are running a business out of the premises. They will want you to have a different or additional policy, even if the business doesn't make tax threshold. This means that if for any reason your house burns down, you are not covered!

Happily, some insurance companies are perfectly fine with it, PROVIDED that the business (including boxes of book stock!) does not occupy more than 20% of the floor space of the dwelling, and is not running industrial-grade equipment nor storing chemicals. TALK TO YOUR INSURER and be certain. If necessary, switch.

step 2: end product decisions

Book type:

Paperback, hardback, ebook, audiobook; black & white interior print, or colour?
Each of these will need a different ISBN **and** will be set up for publication differently.
Note: you can't pay for colour on only some *pages; it's either a black & white OR a colour book*.

You may wish to have a paperback AND an ebook. This decision needs to be made BEFORE you contract a typesetter, as the setup involves a different process. Ebooks can be colour, but see notes at Step 6.

Print/distribution house:

IngramSpark, Pegasus Media & Logistics, Kindle Direct Publishing/Amazon, PublishDrive ...
I work with IngramSpark only, as their infrastructure is the most sound and comprehensive.

IngramSpark will print/supply your book on demand for yourself and for all the online bookstores in their network (including Apple Books and Amazon). They do not control the prices the bookstores set; they simply supply the printed items as the middleman, and send you your cut.

Author → Printer → Bookstore ← Reader

IngramSpark are a printing and distribution company. They print from multiple locations around the world (e.g. a US customer will get theirs printed in the US printshop, reducing shipping costs). They distribute your book information, as a listing, to the online bookstores, and supply the books to them on a print-on-demand basis. The industry standard cut for the bookstore is 'bookstore discount 55%'. (This is why self-published books are dearer. Books published by a traditional book company cost the reader less, but charge the author a whopping 75%, while saving on production costs because they have their own factory.)

Book size:

Check your chosen print house's list of available sizes. It's no good dreaming up a size you can't have printed! Here is a link to IngramSpark's list:

https://www.ingramspark.com/plan-your-book/print/trim-sizes

This decision MUST be made before typesetting begins — otherwise you could end up paying for it to be done twice.

Cover style:

Gloss, matte, jacket case laminate (with/without printing on actual cover), digital cloth; glued at the spine (perfect bound), glued at the endpapers (case laminate). IngramSpark does not offer foil. Some companies offer embossing and edge prints.
Some options are for limited sizes/regions.

Paper interior:

white, heavy white, crème, groundwood.
Some options are for limited sizes/interiors.

Typeface and font:

For printed books, choose a typeface for the bulk body text that is easy to read. This means it does not have so many 'pretties' that the reader's eyes get snagged on them all. Believe it or not, this gets physically tiring. You do not want your reader to dread picking up your work. Select a plain font that 'feels' like your book. Most printed books use **serif** fonts because they are literally easier on the eyes. (This font, for instance, is Trebuchet MS sans serif: no 'endings' on the letters.) Good choices are Times New Roman, Garamond, Caslon, Minion, Georgia, Cambria, Palatino. Be sure that your chosen typeface has all the fonts you'll need (e.g. *italic*, **bold**).

If your book has headings or chapter names, you may opt to nominate a fancier font to use for this purpose. The general rule is to use contrast. If your main text is serif, your heading text should be either bigger-identical, or a total departure: sans serif, *script*, or novelty. If you use a novelty font, choose one that matches the tone or era of the book.

Speak to your typesetter about this, and take their advice. They will help you choose the right typefaces, sizes and leading (distance between lines) for the most pleasant reading experience. Often the default leading is fine for a short document but too cramped for a whole book. Consider your audience, too: older readers, for instance, will want larger and clearer lettering.

Tell your typesetter if you are wanting justified paragraphs (both sides aligned) or ragged right (only aligned on the left, like this document).

Tell your typesetter if you would like a header or footer (title/subtitle/chapter name/author name) and if you are fussy about whether the page number is centred or on outside edges.

Tell your typesetter if there is content in the book which is AI-generated (as opposed to AI-assisted) as this must be declared on the copyright page.

Ebooks have a different set of construction rules. Choose the plainest and clearest font you can, because it will make absolutely no difference: the end user can change the fonts and the font sizes at will. Georgia is recommended as a default. You *can* do fancy things with font colours, but again, the reader may change that. Vision-impaired readers sometimes prefer white text on black background; this can swallow up your colours.

step 3: begin marketing and promotion

Marketing stragety:

Think about how you want to promote your book. Social media? Paid advertisements? Letterbox drop? Event speech? Press release? Website? There are many avenues. Do some research, but begin spruiking your book in some form about six months before its release date. Some authors like to create a series of advertisements or excerpts, and diarise them for release. This way their followers get regularly-scheduled updates or reminders, to keep the coming book in the forefront of their minds. Create a plan. Generate some anticipation!

If you are needing a website, talk to your graphic designer.

If you want to have your cover done before you begin marketing, see Step 9.

step 4: set up ISBN

Purchase an ISBN:

Every book (whatever its format, i.e. paperback) needs an International Standard Book Number. You buy these from Thorpe-Bowker at this website: https://www.myidentifiers.com.au

You can buy a single ISBN, or a block of 10, or a block of 100. *Price breaks apply*. There is also a one-off joining fee.

Four formats of the same book = four ISBNs.

step 5: engage an editor

Finish your manuscript completely at your end, with all chapters in order. Make sure footnotes, endnotes and illustrations are finalised. Choose an editor and entrust them with the manuscript. Each editor will have different requirements for the format they will accept, but .docx and .pdf are the most common.

The editor (I recommend Anne Hamilton) will proofread your ms and pick out all the things that might be polished. Try not to think of this as criticism. It is more like fine-tuning. They are the mechanic in the pit lane that will make your racecar win. The editor is your ally and partner, not your detractor; they want to help your book put its best foot forward. When you look good, they look good. So they go in with a fine-tooth comb, looking at things like spelling, grammar, punctuation, logic, continuity, pacing, tenses, consistency, tangles, sense, and point of view. They may also help you tighten your phrases — either by making suggestions or (depending on the arrangement between you) by actually culling or rewriting here and there.

Be aware that in order to quote song lyrics, you must have permission from the music publisher.

This step must be completed **before** engaging the typesetter. This is because every time you add to or subtract from your book, the typesetting will go out of whack and the typesetter will have to reformat from that point forward all over again. All of these do-overs costs you extra time and money.

step 6: engage a book designer & typesetter

Your book must be FINISHED before you send it to the typesetter. Even minor changes can involve the typesetter having to start again. At an hourly rate, this will cost you. Make sure it is in an easy format such as .docx. It takes a lot longer to lift the text out of a pdf.

Book designing:

The book designer will help you with making the inside of your book look visually inviting and appropriate to the subject matter. This includes things like selecting the typeface, adding flourishes or layout styles to the chapter headings, selecting any repeating motifs or dividers, and how illustrations will be presented. These are the professional touches which can make your book stand out from the rest. If perchance they are not the person doing the cover, they will need to liaise with that person, so that together they create a harmonised look.

Typesetting:

The typesetter takes all of those decisions and builds the book from them, laying out all the elements on the page. The program they use varies; I use Adobe Indesign, as it is the best desktop publishing program I've ever come across. The more variegated the design, the longer it will take to typeset. There are considerable settings and text handling differences between Word and Indesign.

Typesetting involves ensuring that the paragraphs appear as instructed, that there are no widows (leftover single lines by themselves at the bottom or top of a page, separated from their paragraphs) or orphans (leftover single words at the end of the paragraph, all alone on a line).

The typesetter does not proofread, necessarily — that's the editor's job — though they may bring to your attention any errors they happen to spot.

Ebooks:

An ebook is not like a paperback, where everything is about how things look across the spread of the pages. A reflowable ebook is one long, long screed — like a scroll. Widows and orphans don't count in this format, because at the touch of a button, the reader can change the font size and make them disappear or be created.

Ebooks come in two types: FLEPUB files (fixed layout, used for picture books and graphic novels) and EPUB files (reflowable, used for everything else). Amazon Kindle will not publish FLEPUBs except for children's books.

'Fixed layout' means that what you see on the tablet looks exactly like what you see on the single page in the print book. It is a series of snapshots rather than a screed; they are what they are, no one can mess with them. This facility leaves control of how the book will be seen in the author's and designer's hands.

'Reflowable' means that the reader can mess with the formatting and cause the text to flex from, say, a 100-page book in 10pt type to a 400-page book in 20pt type. So, headers, footers and page numbers aren't included either, as they quickly become irrelevant. An epub simply flows the text into additional pages and automatically numbers them *at the device*. This facility is a service offered to readers who prefer to choose their own font/size for greatest comfort.

Every element in a reflowable epub has to be set up with a 'paragraph style', including an 'html tag'. It is the business of turning a manuscript into a sort of computer code.

Photographs may be colour, as long as you are willing to risk the aforementioned colour reversal possibilities (see Step 2). Images must sit on their own, centred, between paragraphs, with no text 'wrapping' at either side. It is technically possible to do fancier things with ebook layouts — edit the css — but it takes an ability to do real computer coding to accomplish. Some typesetters have this extra skill, but some (such as myself) do not.

Epub files need their own front cover image before they can be finalised. (See Step 9.)

If your book is intended to be both ebook and paperback, you must tell your typesetter before they start. These are two entirely different processes resulting in two different publication files. At Beckon Creative the process is to create the paperback first, then make a copy of the file and adjust it for epub. This last step takes up to half the time it took to do the paperback, depending on the book's complexity.

At the end of the process, your typesetter will deliver you a custom-made, high-quality pdf and/or epub interior file, ready to be uploaded to the print house.

Ask the typsetter to package and send you the Indesign file, so you can keep it for your files. If, for instance, in five years you want to re-release your book as a second edition, and you've lost the typesetter's contact details, you still have the files and can engage someone else. (It's a good idea to track such changes, so the new edition can be amended rather than restarted from scratch.)

step 7: set up the title with the ISBN

Log in to Thorpe-Bowker and look at your purchased ISBNs. Click the one you're going to use for your book, and you'll be offered a form. Fill in all the fields. You will need to select classifications from a drop-down list, and identify any other contributors to the book (e.g. illustrator, editor). By this stage, you know how many pages long your physical book is.

This process links your book title to that ISBN (rather like owning a stack of licence plates and picking one out and registering the car). *You may want to make a Notepad file on your*

computer where you record all the things you input, for later reference, and all the ISBNs you've purchased.

Until this linkage is done, you can't set the book up at the print house.

step 8: set up the book with the print house

In Step 1 you will have selected a print house (such as IngramSpark) to print and distribute your book for you. Log in to IngramSpark and click 'Publish now'.

https://www.ingramspark.com/plan-your-book/print/print-on-demand

You will be asked to input the ISBN you've associated with your title at Thorpe-Bowker. You do not need to purchase a barcode; they will generate it automatically for you later. You will be asked your imprint name: this is the business name you registered with ASIC.

What follows will be a long, long form where you fill in all the details you decided on in Step 1. You will also need an author bio (usually in third person), a description of the book (the blurb on the back is a good place to start), and to select classifications from a drop-down list. You can save as you go, if you don't have all the details ready yet, and do it over several sessions.

At the end of the process you will be asked to upload the cover file and the interior file and pay an upload fee (like a registration). This interior file is the pdf your typesetter did for you.

The cover file comes next. Often (as with Beckon Creative) you'll be able to get your cover, interior design and typesetting all done with the same company.

step 9: engage a cover designer

Your cover designer will go to IngramSpark and request a cover template in INDESIGN format:

https://myaccount.ingramspark.com/Portal/Tools/CoverTemplateGenerator

They then fill in the form, paying special attention to the book trim size and number of pages (this will determine your spine measurements). When it asks what format you would like your template in, select ADOBE INDESIGN .indd. Shortly an email will arrive containing the .indd file; the barcode is included inside it. This is free: DO NOT BUY A BARCODE FROM ANOTHER SOURCE.

Make sure your cover designer knows EXACTLY what you are after. Also, if they opine that what you want will not best serve your book, LISTEN to them: this is their wheelhouse.

Different fonts evoke different feelings. This is known as 'type empathy'. For instance, a book about success in business does not require a cutesy, curly font. There are degrees of formality and fashions of the day to take into consideration. The cover should look up-to-date without looking dated in two years' time when the trend for brush stroke fonts dies off.

It is said that a book's title ought to be on the top half of the book, so that on a tiered display it will not be obscured by the books in front of it. This is not a *law*, but it is a consideration.

Any fonts, artwork or photographs used on (or in) the book must have a commercial licence or be freeware/public domain. Freeware images can be obtained at unsplash.com, and licenced ones start at $13 from one of the stock companies such as iStock, Dreamstime, Lightstock, Depositphotos, Etsy and so forth. Pay attention to the licencing requirements. In some cases, attribution is required on the copyright page (and in all cases is polite).

AI CONTENT: it is *inadvisable* to use AI-generated images, for two reasons: (1) it can't be successfully copyrighted, which means anyone can use your cover art for their own book; and

(2) it was created off the back of someone else's work and they haven't been paid for it, which means it's built from stolen property. **Do not send your cover designer an AI mockup you love.** It kneecaps their expert creativity; it's unethical for them to use it; and it's difficult to approximate. You can lose *hours* of billable time while the designer combs stock websites looking for exactly that scene. Plus, the fonts used may be hard to identify *or* cost a fortune to licence. **Beckon Creative does not knowingly use AI art or other unlicenced material.** If you are hiring a cover designer, let them design the cover!

You must declare on the copyright page if you have used AI. But there is a difference between AI-generated text, AI-generated images, and AI-*assisted* images (such as Adobe generating fill around an existing image that HAS been paid for). You don't have to declare assisted stuff.

If you are providing your own photographs or artwork, make them the highest possible resolution (and never a photo of a photo!). Despite what you see on TV, there are still a few limits to what Photoshop can do. It cannot make a pixelly image sharp.

The cover designer should work with the typesetter to 'match' the outside of the book with the inside. Sometimes this is problematic if the cover is being designed on a Mac and the interior on Windows and the fonts can't cross over.

Any awards won and/or one-line endorsements from famous people can go on the cover.

At the end of the process, the cover designer will deliver a custom-built, high quality, mm-perfect pdf file set out exactly as Ingram wants it. Leave all the white space in and markers in!

step 10: upload final files

Log in to IngramSpark and go to your book's setup form. Upload the cover and interior files.

Choose a release ('on-sale') date. Traditionally, this is a Tuesday, for some reason. Pick a date that is at least a month away. Add more time if there are delivery complications afoot, such as war, flooding, pandemic, or Christmas. The reason for a month's margin is to give time for receiving and vetting proofs, bulk production, and listings showing up in the various online stores. You do not know how the print or postal services are performing at any given time.

step 11: order proofs

Ask Ingram to send you the eproof file. Check it MINUTELY. It will have lines through it — ignore those. Keep adjusting and reuploading and re-requesting until the proof looks right. There is a short window of time (60 days) wherein these reuploads remain free; after that time expires, you'd need to pay a fee of $25 USD each time you upload a revised file.

When satisfied with the eproof, order one maiden advance copy of your printed book. Tick the box when it asks 'you realise this book hasn't reached its on-sale date yet'. This is for you to examine the physical book buyers will be receiving, and be sure you're happy with it.

When this maiden copy arrives, consider unpacking it on film so you've got a little bit of exciting footage for your social media campaign!

step 12: plan launch & intensify promotions

If you are having a launch party, set a date on or just after your 'on-sale' or 'publication' date to be sure your bulk stock will have arrived and listings are up in the stores. The usual party planning applies — drinks & snacks, decor & music, themes & even costumes, a table full of merchandise — plus you might like to give a speech or a reading from the book, maybe give one or two away as lucky door prizes.

Now is the time to order any matching merch and point-of-sale displays, such as bookmarks, tote bags, banners, pens or what-have-you. Your graphic designer can help here.

You can also do a virtual or Zoom launch.

Start a countdown on your author social media pages. Include fun things like 'Did you know?' or polls or whatever you can think up to raise interest. Ramp up the frequency as launch day approaches. Don't be shy!

Note: Facebook makes it easy to create an event and invite hundreds of people. However, because it lacks the personal touch, Facebook events do not always generate the RSVPs they should. Also, not everyone is on all the time, and not every generation is conscientious about RSVPing. So, be sure to invite people IN PERSON or ON PAPER as well as online!

step 13: order stock-on-hand

If all is well with the maiden copy — go through it page by page! — order bulk stock. How much you order depends on your marketing strategy (launch? book fairs? markets? family dinners? church events? touring? consignment? letterbox drop?) and your home insurance policy. Unless you're having a HUGE launch or you've got a massive platform, most of us don't need more than 30–100 copies in the house at one time. See again the note at Step 1 about insurance companies. If you're touring, you might need to look into your vehicle insurance conditions as well, and certainly its cargo capabilities.

step 14: send a copy to the National + State Libraries

If you are publishing in Australia, you need to go to https://ned.gov.au/portal/ and register the book with the National Library of Australia. For more information, see https://www.nla.gov.au/using-library/services-publishers/legal-deposit. Then you need to post a physical copy **or** upload a digital copy* to them **within a month** of your release date. This is called 'making a legal deposit' and it is **compulsory**. The address for a print book is simply: Legal Deposit, National Library of Australia, Canberra ACT 2600.

You also need to send a copy to the State Library. In Queensland this goes to: Legal Deposit; Metadata Services, Level 4; State Library of Queensland; PO Box 3488; South Brisbane QLD 4101.

Australia Post will no longer send all printed matter fitting through their cardboard slot as a 'large letter' — you will need to pay the 'small package' rate every time you mail a book.

*Ebooks, which they prefer, are deposited at ned.gov.au. This serves **both** the NLA and the SLQ. If the libraries already have one version of your book, they do not want another. So, if you upload your epub to NED, you don't have to post a thing.

step 15: collect your links

A couple of weeks after uploading and finalising your book files at Ingram, you should start to see the title appear in online bookstores such as Amazon/Australia/UK, Booktopia, Angus & Robertson, Barnes & Noble, Dymocks, Fishpond, The Nile and others. *How soon* will depend on how much backlog each company has, and how often they update their online catalogue. Go ahead and **look your book up** in each of these stores and **copy the URLs** to your computer so you have a list of them with your Thorpe-Bowker information. The prices and shipping arrangements will vary from store to store; you will still get the exact same compensation as listed at Ingram. Revisit this setting once every few years to adjust for currency fluctuation and rising production costs.

For ebooks, get a Books2Read universal link by going to https://books2read.com/links/ubl/create/ and entering one of the store links. They will generate a short link for you that gives buyers a choice of retailer. You can put this link on your website or socials, and even at the end of your *next* ebook.

step 16: hold your launch!

Launch your book and enjoy the feeling of being an offical *Australian author.* Congratulations!

Understand that this is not a get-rich-quick scheme; most authors have daytime jobs or are retired, unless they are already famous (what they call 'having a platform' by which sales are guaranteed). For most of us, it is exactly like releasing a music album without being 'discovered' by a record company first. The margin on a book sale is very small, but the pleasure of having your book out in the world is priceless.

BECKON CREATIVE
GRAPHIC DESIGN

- book design
- cover design
- typesetting
- merchandise design
- online ad design
- web design

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