

# Self-Publishing? Avoid These 6 Rookie Mistakes

Publishing a book on your own terms is a great idea, but only if you do things right.

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[Writing a book](#) can go a long way in helping entrepreneurs establish their credentials and industry expertise. It can even lead to media coverage for you and your company.



*Sean Gladwell | Getty Images*

Best of all, the rise of self-publishing has made authorship more accessible than ever for entrepreneurs. You don't need to seek out a deal with a major publisher. Instead, you can self-publish and start selling your book on Amazon or [promoting it](#) through your own site.

While self-publishing allows you to get your book to market quickly, self-publishing is rife with potential pitfalls. Avoiding these six rookie mistakes will ensure that you look like a professional.

## 1. Skipping the editing process

You aren't done with your book once you type "the end". Books published by major publishers go through several rounds of revisions and edits before they hit store shelves. If you neglect editing your self-published book, you risk coming across as sloppy and unprofessional.

Editing should cover grammar and spelling issues, and also reveal flaws in the structure or organization of your book. You might not have put enough emphasis on certain topics, or maybe you repeated certain points multiple times in the text. Enlist the help of a few beta readers to go through your manuscript to get an idea of what is or isn't working. Or better yet, hire a professional editor to edit your book. This can, at best, make your book marketable on a larger scale, and at the very least help you avoid embarrassing blunders.

## 2. Picking a poor title

A title can make or break any piece of entertainment — be it a book, newspaper article, or movie. Your title needs to grab the audience's attention while still giving them an idea of what to expect in your book.

One common suggestion for business and other nonfiction books is to combine a "creative" title with an indicative subtitle that tells readers what your book is about.

Greenville University's Deloy Cole [explains](#), "*Eats, Shoots and Leaves: A Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, is a masterful combination of creative title with meticulous, content-oriented subtitle. The title alone wouldn't make a reader aware of the book's subject (apart from actually reading the book), but the subtitle turns the book into something other than an ambiguous scene of gustatory violence."

## 3. Not hiring a professional cover designer

Few things will drive readers away like an ugly front cover. The visual elements of your book's cover will often catch a reader's eye before the title does. Unless you're a professional graphic designer, this means you should turn this job over to a professional who will design an engaging cover that matches the content of your book.

Just how important is a book cover, exactly?

A survey by The Book Smugglers found that [79 percent](#) of readers reported that book covers played a "decisive role" when deciding to buy a book, with 48 percent saying the cover played "a major role." With hardcover books, 40 percent said an ugly cover would even keep them from buying a book they were previously interested in.

## 4. Neglecting your book's marketing needs

Many entrepreneurs self-publish a book as a form of marketing their business. But your book also needs to be marketed to make an impact on your business and your audience.

In an email conversation, J.J. Hebert, president of [MindStir Media](#), a self-publishing services company, explained, "Every book needs a marketing plan that starts before release and continues for at least a few months after the book releases. Hundreds of thousands of books are self-published every year. A few social media posts aren't going to get you the traction you need to stand out and get meaningful sales numbers."

In addition to social media campaigns, self-published authors should [use email lists](#) and newsletters to tell subscribers about the book. Actively participating in online industry groups will ensure that when you talk about your book, you speak with real authority. Media outreach (especially on a local level) can drive momentum for your book release. Also, take the time to reach out to your local bookstore in advance of your release to talk about product placement in their store.

## 5. Forgetting print *and* digital formatting

Self-publishing is very much a DIY endeavor — and that often includes formatting the book. Even if you've thoroughly edited your book's content, it will still look sloppy and unprofessional if the text isn't formatted properly. Seemingly minor details like section breaks or the type of file you upload can make a difference.

Authors should be mindful of all formatting guidelines for the program they are using and carefully review the text for any issues before publishing. Remember, ebooks and print books often have different formatting standards. You'll want to review all versions of your book to ensure that all readers have a superior reading' experience.

## 6. Poor pricing

Be careful to avoid [overpricing or underpricing](#) your book. Pricing a self-published ebook for over \$10 will seem too expensive for many buyers. On the other hand, underpricing could indicate to readers that your book isn't very good. For ebooks, the self-publishing sweet spot is usually around \$2.99 to \$5.99, depending on the length of the book. But do your homework! Book prices vary some by industry and genre, and readers may have different cost expectations.

For print books, you can (and should) go higher to cover the related printing costs. Many full-length paperbacks will sell for \$14.99, and some business books are even more. Find a good balance between profitability and an attractive price point.

## Set yourself up for self-publishing success

[When done right](#), self-publishing can make a big difference for your personal brand. It can even serve as an additional source of revenue in addition to driving new leads to your business. By taking the time to do self-publishing right, you will make more sales and make a strong, positive impression on your readers.