

Free Publishing Using Amazon's CreateSpace

Valerie Hibbard (Forba Fates)
Valerie@PlainAndPractical.com

Cassandra Morgan
Contact@AuthorCassandraMorgan.com

The game has changed. Gone are the days that you had to get a manuscript approved by a publisher, or pay for services such as editing and typesetting or page design. No longer do you need to save up a couple of grand to have your book printed by a vanity press and then attempt to unload them onto the public one by one. It's all pretty much free now. Free not only monetarily, but free in that you control the options and make the choices. With great responsibility, comes buckets of work, but for those of us who have more time than money, CreateSpace and online publishing with Amazon, is the best game in town.

Is CreateSpace right for your needs? If your book is text from beginning to end, no charts or graphs, no maps or illustrations along the way (more or less every fiction, romance, or police procedural novel out there), Yes, CreateSpace will work great for your needs. With a little more effort it will work for other publications, also.

Step 1:

Create your manuscript, and I recommend Windows 10. No, I don't like Windows 10, and it's not on my main computer, but I used it to make sure that my file would transfer into the CreateSpace platform for e-book publishing, as well as eliminate some other hassles along the way. You can create in whatever Windows program you have, do the conversion and make necessary corrections in a Windows 10 program wherever you have access, save the file.

Don't bother with page numbers and don't worry about the chapter breaks. Those will change when your file is uploaded into the size format.

Step 2:

Create your account in CreateSpace, title the book, and click that you want the free ISBN number. Print that out and put it in your writing binder for that book. Stick in other notes, photos, everything to do with that book.

Step 3:

Write the peripheral pages you'll need next. You can pick up books off your shelves and study their samples, and create your Title Page, Acknowledgements, Dedication, Postscripts, or any Table of Contents that you need for your work. Spell out how it can be shared or reprinted, the date of copyright, ISBN numbers, contact info if you wish, Qr code for your blog, other resources, all the little pieces that provide bookends for your material in the middle.

Step 4:

When you feel you have edited your work completely, there is nothing more to add or remove, it's one giant file from start to finish, go to the Library of Congress online copyright site, choose the format that fits your work (serialized or not, multiple owners or not, etc.) and have your credit/debit card ready. It costs \$35 to file online, and \$85 for print—and remember, you have to send two print copies and pay postage so it's over \$100 by then. E-filing is much, much better. You'll instantly have proof it's been sent, and a copy of the file that was sent, but either method is a 12-18 month return time for the document so make sure whatever address you use not only matches the card used for payment, but can also be good for almost two years while you're waiting to have your documentation arrive.

Step 5:

Go to your CreateSpace account and download the file for your book, choosing size and how shiny the cover will be, and other options. I have excellent internet speed and it took about 5 minutes one time; another time the site or my end were having issues and it took over an hour with repeated reboots. Middle of the day seems

best but that could just be my personal luck. In an hour or two days, you'll receive an email that your file is ready to review.

Step 6:

I like to use that time after the work is submitted, to create my cover art. This is done through CreateSpace as well, but you'll want to choose your photographs or drawings, make sure everything is digitalized if not already created that way, with the goal of having the size and pixel ratio recommended for your size cover. When you download the cover into CreateSpace's platform, it will help you choose a template for the style, position the title, and will automatically arrange for the spine as part of the process. Then after it is submitted, you'll receive an email that it's ready to be reviewed and you can make any changes you wish as often as you like.

Step 7:

You get the email that the book is ready to review. Open the file and begin adjusting the preceding pages so that the title begins on a right-hand page, add space so the chapters start the way you like, and when you finish, do the pagination with the automatic header.

WARNING I've talked to over 20 CreateSpace authors who have complaints about the pagination feature. Be prepared to either breeze through it or suffer hours of frustration, based entirely on a balance of your luck, karma, web savvy for the unexpected, or help from the support team. There's something wrong with this aspect of their platform. It's the only thing. Deal with it. One of my books is mis-numbered and I stopped caring. Maybe I'll go back and fix it someday.

Step 8:

The email comes that the cover is ready to review, so work on both Step 6 and 7, making sure you're catching every last paragraph break (I missed a few) and adjusting the placement of the chapters.

Now here, you can make a choice. You can have ONE trial copy printed and sent to you so you can make your corrections and see how it really looks as it is now. Or, you can finalize and just go straight to publication. That's what I did. I am not worried about every misspelling or error, but some people are, and I respect that. If you have the print version sent, do the corrections and then publish. Within a day or two, you will be able to order books printed and have them in a couple of weeks, to start doing your marketing, give to friends who helped, have copies to sell at book signings.

Step 9:

Choose the options and set up the accounts for e-books as well as print, and for the VAT-aligned European printing rights, also. There's nothing as cool as getting an email that you've sold a book in Japan!

Step 10:

There's some really easy and FREE marketing resources.

- One, book signings—contact your library and bookstores and any events that are aligned with your topic (I'm taking Gruesome Farm Stories to a couple of Farm Markets this summer).
- Join Facebook or local writing groups, concentrating on the ones who are serious about marketing, not those wringing their hands and saving up eight thousand dollars to do leather bound copies of something they've been writing for thirty years.
- Open a Redbubble store, using your cover art to create mugs, tee shirts, and other great products.
- Blog, create a Facebook author's page, attend author meet and greets, tell everyone about your book!
- let any friends in newspaper work know you've published a book, even a high school interview will make its way to the web and be good PR for you. Local newspaper or radio, even better.

Not FREE but easy, and might work well for you—

- Give your local library a copy or two, get a receipt.
- Put a copy (with permission) in your Dr.'s office, on the break table at work, other places you frequent.
- Send a copy (with permission) to someone who reviews similar themes and blogs to thousands
- Place a copy with the permanent archives of your college
- Donate a copy to anywhere doing door prizes, raffles, or other promotions, where hundreds of people will see the cover and be exposed to the fact it exists
- Offer to speak (if appropriate) to high school groups, reading clubs, women's social groups, church, senior residence campuses, VFW, museum, other places with people who are in your target population, leave a copy for their internal members library.
- If you know your hospital does a gift box for new parents, and your book is about parenting skills or children, maybe you could print a chapter or two as a "sample" and have it inserted into those boxes, with the link where to order the full-length version. Think about your subject matter and match it to opportunities that fit.
- If your local coffee shop uses a variety of mugs customers can choose off the shelves, ask if you can place a couple of mugs with your cover art up there, too. Hundreds of people a month will see those.
- If you're going to be doing a book signing, put up a poster in advance with time and day clearly marked on it.
- Get a couple of Redbubble stickers and put them on your car, make sure they are large enough to be read.
- Grab Fans. If anyone contacts you about how much they love your work, embrace that potential relationship. Let them organize author meet and greets, blog about upcoming news you can share, have their photo taken with you, signed roughs of your notes they can frame. You throw away stuff every day that a fan would be proud to put on their wall and brag about, use it to your advantage. If they are really into it, let them manage a fan page on Facebook, twitter like crazy when you're doing a signing, take photos for publicity purposes, whatever their little inner jewel can offer.
- start a Twitch channel and promote your writing three times a week, transfer those to a You Tube channel.

Costs more money but effective:

- product placement in local commercials, performances, etc. A local theatrical agent can get you started with local resources.
- Send a mug and copy of your book to radio personality, local news station director, newspaper editors, favorite anchorperson, etc. Tell them you've always enjoyed their work, were inspired to work on your own creative projects because of their encouragement/professionalism/upbeat personality.
- get a table at a writer's conference
- organize a writer's workshop retreat at a bed and breakfast
- provide books for a charity event's swag bag
- have videos made and start a you-tube channel, hire a publicist to push for television show
- hire a professional voice actor to read your book to create an additional product to market
- Want 300 decks of custom printed cards with your cover art? About \$1200 from Kardwell International, 1-800-233-0828
- Magnetic poster for your vehicle, \$80-125 full color
- Approach a small independent Christian or Alternative radio station and offer to do a half-hour or hour call-in program (get your FTC license if you want), see if local bookstores and libraries want to advertise, see if local

college writing programs or workshops will throw money your way. Promotes your work, and others, too. Even our local gun shop manages to have a live Saturday morning show, why not you?

Other things to think about:

Can you create a secondary product to go with your novel? Maps and artworks? A coloring book of events from the novel (you might have to have the help of an illustrator)? What about a game? A preprinted pattern for someone to sew an item from your book?

If you teach classes, you can make your own textbook and sell it to the students as part of the class package.

If you teach workshops, you can sell them the textbook, they take their notes in your Redbubble journal, and get a Redbubble tee-shirt or tote bag at the end of the session to take it all home in. You make money x4.

Maybe a portion of your book would be of interest to a magazine or blog publisher who reaches a larger audience? Contact them and find out. Does your book have a dog or cat? Knitting happening all the time? A man who lives in New York City of the 1940s? Does the lead character successfully manage a particular disability? Go to a large library or online and look at the magazines and ask yourself, which ones would be appropriate for my story? Then go to their web site and look up the specs for submitting work.

When you visit places that you might use in your writing, hand out business cards to anyone you can, “I’m working on my novel—here tell them title you’ve already registered—and looking for local details to put into my book” and so on. I buy cheap cards and give them to EVERYONE, and so does husband, relatives, friends. I leave one on the table at the library when I leave. I leave one on the table in the doctor’s office, the coffeeshop ledge, in a cab, hell, I’ll tell the waitress and give her one, too. Self-publishing means self-promotion, but you can get 1000 business cards for \$25 or less, and that’s cheap advertising.

Think about options for travel and writing—once you’ve got a bit of a name going, maybe you can do writing and publishing workshops on cruise ships or for vacation destinations—they pay very well and usually room and board are fully included, your students will be engaged, you may be able to pair theme (Gothic) with destination (Haunted houses tour with Castle B&B). Or Amish-country Romance with an upscale campground full of \$200,000 motor homes in Pennsylvania.

Public and private and charter schools also have money to hire extracurricular experts. Put together a proposal to help students publish a poetry and short story collection, meet them after school one day a week to work on it, and publish it on CreateSpace at the end of the year (they can sell copies to offset expenses).

Summer camps are always looking to fill slots for education of all kinds. How about a one-time visit to discuss writing, answer questions, sign a sample chapter (if your material is child-appropriate). Or swing a whole-summer contract writing a story at the camp (visiting-artist style) letting them see the creative process while you have a great time interacting with the campers, working in a fresh new setting, getting great ideas? And summer camps come in all flavors, children, adults, special needs, specific educational tracks, horseback riding, science, etc.