

# The Self-Publisher's Time Line - LIVE!

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The following is a pumped-up version of Appendix C from the book, with extra URLs added - all "live" links so it becomes a tool to enhance your organization and productivity. Print it out and the check boxes turn it into a concrete to-do list to keep you on top of the process.

It's a serviceable timetable for your own self-publishing adventure, drawn from my experience (and the mistakes I made). Certain production and review milestones are more rigid than others, but if you stay roughly on this course, you'll be in good shape.

**Where applicable, I've included the page number in the book that discusses the step in more detail.**

### I. Before You Start Writing Your Book

- Do a book proposal to make the case for the market viability of your book. (32) Check out *How to Write a Successful Book Proposal in 8 Days or Less*, by Patricia Fry ([www.matilijapress.com](http://www.matilijapress.com)).
- Visit a bookstore to scope out what competition exists for your proposed topic. Is your topic or your approach unique or are there another 20 similar books out there? (31) [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) and [www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com) are good places to start.
- If your book has competition, give some serious thought to your USP (Unique Selling Proposition): how your book will be different and better than others. This can form a cornerstone of your marketing plan. (29)

## II. Six Months Before You're Done Writing

- Brainstorm your title and subtitle. (39). Once you have a few, run them past friends and colleagues. When down to a short list, verify that they're not taken on *Books-in-Print* ([www.booksinprint.com](http://www.booksinprint.com); check "Forthcoming" titles, too) and on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).
- Line up a book cover designer. Ideally, visit a bookstore with him/her to scope out the competition, and which designs do and don't work. (38)
- While exploring competitive (or similar) titles at the bookstore, get a sense of what's a reasonable and feasible price for your book. (57)
- Secure your block of 10 ISBN numbers ([www.bowker.com](http://www.bowker.com)), and once received, assign one to your book. (46)
- Decide on a name for your publishing company. NOT *Joe Blow Publishing*; you'll be instantly labeled as a self-publisher, and an amateur at that. Have simple, inexpensive business cards printed up.
- Reserve your web site's domain name (I use [www.godaddy.com](http://www.godaddy.com); good service and low rates), and keep the registration info (and expiration date!) in an easy-to-find file. Make a note in your planner to renew; the companies don't always do so. (100)
- Join both PMA, The Independent Book Publishers Association ([www.pma-online.org](http://www.pma-online.org)) and SPAN, the Small Publishers Association of North America ([www.spannet.org](http://www.spannet.org)). (xxv)
- As you work on the manuscript, pull out "excerptable" chunks that would make good standalone articles (e.g., Top Ten lists), and set them aside in their own file. (158)


## III. Three Months Before You're Done Writing

- After you've assigned your book's ISBN, register your title with Bowker's *Books-in-Print* and Ulrich's Periodicals ([www.bowkerlink.com](http://www.bowkerlink.com); register on the site first). (48) Secure your free listing with *ForeWord* magazine. (48)
- Secure your Pre-assigned Library of Congress Control Number (LCCN) through the PCN program at <http://pcn.loc.gov>. (48)
- Craft your PCIP information (49), either through a third party (50; Quality Books can handle the creation of your PCIP info: [www.quality-books.com/pcip.htm](http://www.quality-books.com/pcip.htm)), or doing it yourself with the help of a librarian. (50) When you have the info in hand, input it on the copyright page of your work-in-progress, or if using a third party, you can forward the emailed file on to your typesetter for placement on the copyright page.

- Finalize copyright page verbiage and copyright date; remember that next year's date is okay for books released after July. (51)
- Secure your EAN bar code ([www.isbn.org/standards/home/isbn/us/index.asp](http://www.isbn.org/standards/home/isbn/us/index.asp)), and once the file is in hand, email it to your cover designer for back cover placement. (47)
- Set up your publishing entity (i.e., sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, etc.); contact a CPA (or EA: Enrolled Agent) or attorney to help.
- Get a business license (call your county Business License division for details/fees). With license in hand, go to your bank and open up a business checking account.
- Hire a web designer or start building your site yourself, adding content as you have it (table of contents, sample chapter, cover artwork, etc.). (100)
- Get print quotes (at least five to seven) for both your short-run galley printing and your larger, final offset print run. BookMasters, Inc. (my printer) handles both. (60) Use [www.PrintIntellectual.com](http://www.PrintIntellectual.com) for getting multiple quotes. (60)
- Nail down a good editor with proven skills in both editing and proofreading. Get references. If you're certain of your completion date, determine their availability for that time; if not, get back to them when you are. (52; See Appendix A for resources)
- Ditto the above for a typesetter (see Appendix A for resources). Nail them down based on your editor's projected completion time. (54)

#### IV. When Your Book Is Done

- Finalize your cover artwork, making sure you leave spaces for one blurb on the front cover and one or two on the back. Load the current image up to your web site. Have your designer create your "artwork toolkit" for various ongoing promotional needs. (39)
- Send your manuscript off to your editor, and review changes when they're done. The editing/proofing process, on average, should take two to four weeks. In the meantime...
- Start the ongoing process of crafting your book's promo materials, your "article toolkit" (157), and any other key written marketing components. Review all of Chapter Two to sharpen your marketing chops. If you haven't already done so, consider investing in *The Well-Fed SP Biz-in-a-Box* (Appendix B) [www.wellfedsp.com/spbinb.shtml](http://www.wellfedsp.com/spbinb.shtml). (265)

- Craft your back cover copy, understanding how crucial this piece is. (42)
- Set up your home shipping center in advance of sending out your galley run. (275; for padded book mailers, check out [www.uline.com](http://www.uline.com); 800-295-5510).
- Get set up with the major wholesalers: Baker & Taylor ([www.btol.com](http://www.btol.com)) and Ingram ([www.ingrambook.com](http://www.ingrambook.com)), either through a distributor or PMA's P/IWAP program ([www.pma-online.org/benefits/ingramprogram.cfm](http://www.pma-online.org/benefits/ingramprogram.cfm)). (104). Determine how you'll handle fulfillment, whether through a fulfillment company (114; like [www.bookmasters.com](http://www.bookmasters.com)) or a distributor (107), and whether PMA's Trade Distribution Program makes sense for you and your book ([www.pmaonline.org/benefits/tradedistribution.cfm](http://www.pmaonline.org/benefits/tradedistribution.cfm)). (109)
- If you plan to do your own accounting (vs. using a distributor or third-party fulfillment company), research and choose a D-I-Y book publishing software program. (118; Two good options are *AnyBook* ([www.ronwatters.com/RonSoft5.htm](http://www.ronwatters.com/RonSoft5.htm); roughly \$100-400, depending on level chosen) or Myrlyn ([www.myrlyn.com](http://www.myrlyn.com); \$349, or \$249 for PMA/SPAN members).
- Make final printer selection for both your galley and offset runs, and get firm quotes in hand for the quantity print runs you've decided on. (60)
- Put together your list of "blurb reviewers"—the folks to whom you'll send galleys for the testimonials that will appear on your front and back covers, and inside pages. (44) Think about authors and other "key influencers" in your subject area.
- Line up an indexer for your book. Check out [www.asindexing.org](http://www.asindexing.org) or see Appendix A for resources. (55) If you know precisely when your typesetter will be finished, lock the indexer in to a particular timetable. Or, to simplify things, have your typesetter create the index if they can.
- Have a designer or print shop design a 4" x 6" label () with your cover artwork on the front, for all future reviewer/purchaser book shipments. (276)
- Get a "Review Copy—Not For Resale" stamp made up at your office supply superstore to stamp on the cut edges of all review copies. (277)
- Research book clubs (and their submission guidelines) that might be a fit for your title. Check out *Literary Marketplace* or [www.booksonline.com](http://www.booksonline.com) for ideas. Contact the acquisitions editors of the good candidates, pitch them, and offer to email sample chapters or send a galley when done. (118)

**NOTE:** As mentioned earlier, I'm using the outdated term "typesetting" here to describe the process of "interior book design," or "interior layout" to draw a distinction between "design" as it relates to your book's cover vs. its text.

## V. When Editing Is Done

- Send the edited, proofed manuscript off to be typeset, a process that should typically take three to four weeks. Provide your typesetter with cover artwork, and in addition to typesetting the manuscript for print, have them create your ebook version—a PDF with the cover artwork inserted. (209)
- Make sure your typesetter leaves the first four to six pages of the book file blank as placeholders for testimonials with the words “(Blurbs Pending)” up top.
- Figure out what customer payment system you’ll use (e.g., third-party fulfillment company (114; **www.bookmasters.com** is one option), your own merchant account (97) with shopping cart system (98), PayPal (**www.paypal.com**) (98), your own merchant account (97) with shopping cart system (98), etc.). If you’ve hired a web designer, get him or her involved in the process.
- Start building your book’s profile on Amazon.com, adding cover art, summary, author info and other salient info by joining and maximizing the Amazon Advantage program (**www.amazon.com/advantage**). (124)
- Determine your “official publication date” (OPD) and make sure it’s at least 90-120+ days after your “bound book date” (BBD), the date you have printed books in your hands (46). You’ll use this period to get your book into the hands of key industry reviewers and to start building your grass roots buzz.
- Identify potential resellers for the ebook version of your book, trying if possible to find resellers who focus specifically on your subject area. Start the process of creating ebook “reseller marketing kits.” (210)
- About six weeks before you have your galleys in hand (when your typesetter’s about half done), email the folks on your blurb target list and secure their agreement to provide a blurb, and let them know to be on the lookout for a galley in 45 days or so.
- For niche books, keep beefing up your “final book” review copy list (those who will get the final version) by hunting up web sites or web-based entities that mesh with your subject area. Shoot for having an initial list of 200-300 and grow it from there. Create a system for keeping track of your contacts. (E) Consider hiring an intern to help you with this process. (90; check out **www.internweb.com** and **www.internjobs.com** to post a listing).
- For titles with more mainstream appeal, start making targeted pitches to relevant content editors of major magazines (six- to eight-month lead-times; check out **www.writersmarket.com**, **http://magazine-directory.com**, or **http://dir.yahoo.com/News\_and\_Media/Magazines**).

- Continue the process of crafting marketing materials begun earlier (#3 in previous stage).
- Craft chunks of your book (i.e., Top 10 Lists) into finished articles, perhaps of varying lengths, and add to your “article toolkit.” (157)

## VI. When Typesetting Is Done

- Send the manuscript to your indexer, the final stage in your “content construction.” Indexing should take roughly a week, two at most.
- Make sure you have all necessary shipping materials in your home/office shipping center for your galley package mailing coming up. (275)
- Verify with your galley printer the format in which they need to receive your text and cover files and alert your typesetter and cover designer.
- Keep building your “final book” review copy list.

## VII. When Indexing Is Done

- Have your typesetter and cover designer send their files directly (and separately) to the galley printer (59). Verify with the printer that everything’s in order. Galley printing should take two to three weeks, max. While you’re waiting...
- Assemble all your blurb reviewer packages, with written (preferable) or printed address labels affixed, cover letter written and copied, business cards ready, waiting only for books to arrive and assembly to begin.
- Assemble packages for your “First-Line Reviewers” (the ones that need to see your book 90-120 days before OPD). This is your *only* window to reach these folks, so don’t miss it. Visit their web sites and *follow their submission guidelines carefully*. (70)

*Booklist*-[www.ala.org/booklist/](http://www.ala.org/booklist/)

*Library Journal*-[www.libraryjournal.com](http://www.libraryjournal.com)

*Publishers Weekly*-[www.publishersweekly.com](http://www.publishersweekly.com)

*ForeWord* magazine-[www.forewordmagazine.com](http://www.forewordmagazine.com)

*Kirkus Reviews*-[www.kirkusreviews.com](http://www.kirkusreviews.com)

- Take a vacation. Seriously. As long as everything’s kosher at the printer, there’s nothing to do at this point but wait. It’s about to get busy, so kick back while you can. [www.orbitz.com](http://www.orbitz.com), [www.travelocity.com](http://www.travelocity.com). 😊

## VIII. When Your Galleys Arrive

- Assemble review copy packages for both your blurb reviewer list and first-line reviewers, affix galley insert sheets (e) on the inside front cover of the latter group's books, and send them all out.
- Send galleys to any acquisitions editors of book clubs who expressed an interest in seeing the complete work.
- Continue creating marketing materials and articles for placement.

## IX. When Reviewer Blurbs Return

- Edit any long blurbs down to roughly 35-40 words, and email the edited versions back to reviewers for approval.
- Once all blurbs are finalized, choose the three biggest names, put one on the front cover and one or two on the back, then put the rest in order of notoriety in a list (with your cover stars repeated at the start) for placement on your opening pages.
- Send cover blurbs to your cover designer to insert on the front and back covers.
- Send the full blurbs list to your typesetter to insert on the four to six blank pages up front in the book. Make any final corrections to the manuscript that have been noted or brought to your attention since the galleys were printed.

## X. Time to Go to Print!

- Have your typesetter and cover designer send their final files directly to your printer, who will verify with you in 24-48 hours that all is in order. The printing process should take four to five weeks. Don't forget to print up 250-300 extra book covers to use as press kit folders (149). While you're waiting for your books...
- Finalize your preliminary review copy list—the (ideally) 200-300 names you've been assembling, based on your research (or your intern's) into relevant web sites, associations, web- or print-based newsletters, or any other publication or entity that meshes with your subject. (73)
- Assemble review copy packages (including press kit contents) for your main review copy mailing list, ready to add the books and the extra covers for your press kits.

## XI. When Your Books Are Ready

- Ideally, you've decided to use a fulfillment company or distributor, in which case, have your printer ship you 250-300 copies of your book.
- Once you have books, finish assembling review copy packages and send them out.
- Email the ebook version of your title to the ebook resellers you've chosen to work with (210), along with ebook "reseller marketing kits." (210)
- Visit the U.S. Copyright site, download and fill out the copyright form, and send it in with two copies of your book. (50; [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov), then *Publications, Forms*, then *Short Form TX*).
- Send one copy to the Library of Congress as part of the PCN process. (48; [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com), [www.onlinenewspapers.com](http://www.onlinenewspapers.com)).
- For titles with more mainstream appeal, start making targeted pitches to relevant content editors of major newspapers (one-month lead-times).
- Keep the pressure on! Continue to identify new review copy targets, use mainstream media when appropriate (especially when making appearances), write and place articles whenever possible and keep doing everything else we've discussed. Most of all, have fun!