KEEP CALM AND UPLOAD E-BOOKS

A FIRST-TIMER'S GUIDE TO DIY E-BOOK PUBLISHING

DON BOSCO

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A First-Timer's Guide to DIY E-book Publishing
by Don Bosco

You write stories. You want to publish your own e-books.

Well, okay, let's do it.

Here's a fun and easy guide to get you started. We'll break down the whole e-book publishing process into manageable steps; introduce some of the more popular tools for writing, publishing, designing, and promoting your e-book; explain the challenges that may pop up; teach you when to hire freelancers to help with some of the trickier tasks; and share tips on receiving payments from your e-book sales.

There are other books out there that might as well be called The Complicated Rocket Science Guide to Publishing E-books Like a Clever Technology Guru While Taking Selfies and Balancing Twenty Cats On Your Elbow. What you have here is quite the opposite.

If you already have a story to share, and you're just eager to get people reading it, this should be enough to get you going.

About the author: Don Bosco is a writer and the founder of Super Cool Books, a small publishing studio producing story entertainment for teens and children. His latest title for children is Lion City Adventures (Marshall Cavendish Editions). He's also a member of the StoryCode Singapore transmedia community.

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This is a work in progress. We hope you find the information here useful, relevant and encouraging. Do send us your feedback, ideas, requests, personal e-book publishing anecdotes, etc, so that we can improve this further.

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Do you have
a story to share?

Introduction

When I was invited to speak at the Asian Festival of Children's Content 2015, I thought it would be wise to make an outline so I would know what to say.

To my dismay, I had to scratch my head and listen to music for a long time before I managed to scribble just three lines in my notebook. And these weren't even related to my talk—they were notes about what I definitely shouldn't be wearing on the day.

It seemed to be a slow and slightly disheartening start, but I kept at it. A week later I had a few pages of loosely connected ideas, enough that I considered typing them up on my laptop so I could shuffle the points around and hopefully arrive at something coherent.

And then more ideas came up.

And then I had to add new bits to clarify some of the earlier points. Also, I couldn't help imagining

the kind of questions people might want to ask, so I tried to address those too.

Surprise! I ended up with a chunk of text so long that I heard a voice inside my head start screaming, "Put this out as an e-book! Put this out! As an e-book!"

Since my childhood, I have always been in awe of the crazy voices inside my head. And I have made a creative life out of listening to them and taking their demands quite seriously.

So I thought, "Hmm, okay. Why not put this out as an e-book?"

The main chapters will take you through the process of creating, uploading, and making money from your e-book. It's mostly filled with explanations and tips. And there's a chapter at the end with a list of great resources that you can use.

But let's get started with a simple yet deeply important question:

Do you believe in e-books?

CHAPTER 1
Do you believe in e-books?

If you hope to do this right, it will surely help if you're not only familiar with e-books but also enthusiastic about reading them.

You've probably heard about the recent wave of self-published e-book success stories. It goes something like this: an unknown writer works on stories in her free time, whether at home or at a coffee shop or while travelling to work, and uploads these stories to an e-book platform. Eventually there are so many people downloading these stories that the writer enjoys a significant income from this.

Also, often enough, a publishing house hears about her and rushes to offer her a really generous publishing deal.

In short: upload story, download money, and

then fame and the sweet life will follow.

It's easy to be sceptical about this scenario. For starters, some of the major e-book platforms aren't officially available in parts of Asia. So you won't see evidence that e-books are taking off here. For the same reason, there won't be many people around you who are already uploading their stories and interacting with their readers.

In this case, listening to all that hype about e-books can be frustrating. You might even start to wonder if e-books are just a myth.

Dive in and explore e-book platforms

If you don't own an e-book reader yet, you need to change this.

Use your smartphone or tablet to download a free e-book reader app. There are so many available, and they cost nothing to install. These apps allow you to buy, download, and read e-books on your device.

Some e-book reader apps you can start with: Amazon Kindle, iBooks (iOS only), Nook Reading App, Scribd, and Kobo.

After installing the app, explore the main menu

and see if you can locate some of your favourite authors.

Don't fret if you find an app that isn't compatible with your particular device or doesn't seem to work properly. Just download another one and give that a try.

Enjoy the e-book shopping experience

Now that you've installed your e-book reader app, one way to appreciate the convenience of e-books is to buy ten titles that really interest you.

It's not enough to visit a free e-book archive such as Gutenberg and download a few classic titles. Why? Because you should get a real sense of the shopping experience of a reader using the platform to look for and purchase e-books.

After buying and reading your first ten titles, remember to add a short review or rating to each e-book's product page. Also, spend time studying the other reviews and see how other readers have responded to the same title.

It's all part of the e-book experience.

If you don't have a habit of reading e-books on your smartphone, this could take some getting used

to. Change the fonts, try out different font sizes, and experiment with background colours and other settings until you get a configuration that doesn't annoy you.

You might also find it useful to change settings for each new book, simply to make the text flow differently or create a different visual experience.

Follow the leaders

There are many people who are truly passionate—almost evangelical—about reading e-books. In order to accelerate your learning, you need to locate and follow them.

Spend time reading the reviews attached to each title, and look up the more prominent reviewers. You'll get a sense of their e-book reading habits and come to understand how they've integrated e-books into their lifestyle.

Amazon's website is a great place to start. The reviews are very entertaining and full of cool insights. Goodreads is a social network for bibliophiles, and you'll find lots of useful information in its forums.

Join the discussion in one of these forums and

share your views. Feel free to ask questions.

You don't have to engage in marathon social media sessions. Just find a quiet spot somewhere and spend twenty minutes or so browsing a few discussion threads.

Just enough to assure you that yes, there are lots of people who genuinely care about buying, enjoying, and discussing e-books.

CHAPTER 2
Half a plan is better than no plan

Once you have a rough map of what it looks like out there in wild e-book county, it's time to create your own e-book publishing plan. Something that's practical yet seems more like fun than work.

This will consist of:

1. An idea or rough synopsis for your book;

2. A timeline for writing the story and preparing the manuscript (more about this later);

3. Which e-book platforms you'll be uploading your story to. Note: you should be uploading to as many as possible. There are a few e-book distribution services that do this on your behalf, the most popular so far being Smashwords.

Here are your first tasks.

Writers are the new publishers

For many decades, writers have been encouraged to focus on crafting their story and leave the production and publicity duties to an editor or publisher. I still encounter writers who actually feel that if they take on all these tasks themselves, they'll be violating some sort of sacred code.

Times have changed.

Use your Google skills to hunt down blog entries, interviews, magazine features, etc., about writers who have successfully written and self-published their own e-books. After reading four or five of these, you should get a clear idea of how this is working out for them.

Create a new document on your laptop and make a note every time you come across something an author did as part of her digital publishing process. Look up any technical terms that you're not clear about.

You can also try visiting your local library and looking for resources on publishing your own e-books.

Write what you love

Pick a genre that you not only are familiar with but also feel passionate about.

Explore the e-book platforms and see what sort of expectations the readers have about your genre. Are there any comments that intrigue or inspire you? Spend time making notes and see if any cool ideas develop.

The most central element in a work of fiction is the cast of characters. So start some profiles of your main characters and see how you can bring them to life in an interesting and original way.

Save all your notes, even if they don't seem very promising at first. Sometimes if you go back and read them a week or two later, you might have new insights.

If you go as far as drafting the first chapter or two of your e-book, consider posting them to a site such as Wattpad, which is a platform for sharing original young adult stories.

Worst case scenario: if after all that work you still come up with nothing, consider writing about your own experiences in school. This always kicks off some creative sparks.

Upload something just for fun

Publishing a paperback is a challenging process. But publishing your own e-book can be pretty much like preparing a Word document and then sharing it with a friend as an attachment. Except that there's the extra option of setting your own price.

If you've ever prepared a longish report of some sort and sent it off in an e-mail, you have used all the publishing skills you need to get started.

A digital publishing platform such as Scribd will allow you to publish anything. Even a PDF of your grocery list. Suggestion: go create an account now and upload something as soon as you can. Just for the experience. Keep it up there for at least a week. If you're not comfortable, you can always take it down again.

Also, you could always get a friend or family member to help you with this. Maybe someone who's also interested in publishing e-books.

CHAPTER 3
Finish what you start

Finishing your story: that's the most important part of the creative process.

Checklist: it needs to have a compelling main character, the story world has to be rich enough to engage your reader's imagination, and the story events should come together nicely to form a coherent and satisfying plot.

When reading a good story, you can sometimes feel as though you're watching a puzzle being slowly pieced together. There might be some surprises along the way that throw you off, but when you reach the end and look back, they actually seem crucial to the journey.

All this is easier said than done. Writing a story is often hard work—for many of us anyway. There are just too many reasons why a writer might not be able to finish writing a story.

And if you don't finish writing your e-book, you'll have nothing to upload.

Care about your main characters

Experiencing writer's block? Here's a fast solution: get curious about your characters, the same way you might with real people you encounter.

Ask questions about them. Try to explore their private spaces. It doesn't matter if you start to notice unpleasant things about them. In fact, this could make your story more captivating.

Good behaviour is boring. Bad or less-than-perfect behaviour, efforts to turn over a new leaf, and bad behaviour masquerading as good for the sake of a reward: these qualities make for compelling drama.

When you find yourself lying in bed at night and you can't fall asleep because you're busy thinking about your characters and what they might be doing over in their story world, that's when you know for sure that you've got your characters set up right.

For character ideas in a hurry, pick up a

newspaper or view a news website and scan the crime section. Look out for people who were apparently leading normal lives until some dark secret or antisocial habit surfaced and ruined everything. That's what compelling fiction is made of.

Plots are puzzles pretending to be stories

Even if you don't have much creative writing experience, you can still cobble together a plot that works well enough for your story.

Get back to basics. Divide your story into three parts. Girl meets boy; girl loses boy; girl gets boy.

Or go with something similar to this: boy finds secret; boy is almost killed by secret; boy gains mastery over secret.

Or: detective discovers crime; detective is accused of crime; detective solves crime.

Then fill each section with lots of interesting characters, curious details, misleading clues, annoying complications, etc. Find ways to link the three sections together.

Some people have a natural talent for making up cool plots. If you're not one of them, consider

writing an outline for your story, and work on this until you're confident that the events flow nicely.

It helps if you get a friend or fellow writer to go over your plot outline and ask you questions.

After that, you can move on to fleshing it out.

Always be writing

Q: What's the biggest reason stories don't get published? Is it:

a. Unhelpful agents and publishers

b. Terrible luck

c: The story wasn't finished

Answer: c.

Make sure that doesn't happen to you.

Carry a mobile device with you—a smartphone, tablet, or laptop—and work on your story whenever you can steal five or ten minutes. Maybe it's during your lunch hour, and you have to hide away in the photocopying room. Maybe it's during your commute to and from school. Maybe it's in the bathroom, where you won't be disturbed. Whatever works for you.

Check out the website of National Novel Writing Month—more affectionately referred to as

NaNoWriMo—for all sorts of tips on being more productive as a novelist.

Keep a watch on your total word count, and find a way to increase it every day, even if just by fifty or one hundred or two hundred words. Don't worry about quality at first. Just get your sentences flowing.

If you find this a real challenge and your word count isn't budging at all, you might consider something more drastic. Such as taking a day or two off and going somewhere quiet to work on your story.

CHAPTER 4
Your manuscript is your baby

Before your story can be published, it needs to be edited and formatted. If this is done properly, the manuscript will be free of errors and inconsistencies, and it will have the right punctuation, spacing, and breaks throughout.

In addition, if you're uploading this to an e-book publishing platform on your own, you need to add the appropriate document bookmarks and hyperlinks so that it can be successfully converted to a standard e-book format.

For many, preparing the manuscript for publishing can seem a daunting task, and this is the main thing that keeps them from publishing their own e-book. It's common to find all sorts of mistakes in manuscripts that have not been edited

and proofread by a professional editor several times over.

Take this very seriously

Even if you have no experience editing stories and don't know what I'm talking about, just dive right in.

Fire up Google and run this search: "preparing your manuscript for publication".

You'll find lots of articles about this. Some will be about editing research papers, some about magazines or newspapers, and some about blogs or professional websites. Just go over the articles and you'll get a sense of the editing process, as well as what's important and why.

For a full authoritative guide on preparing your text, consider getting hold of the Chicago Manual of Style (as recent an edition as you can).

For insights on how to format your Word document so that it will convert to the common e-book formats without errors, download the free Smashwords Style Guide (from the Smashwords website).

There are also many helpful YouTube videos

that you can watch.

Go get help

Perhaps you have a good idea what to do, but it'll take up too much of your time. In this case, it could be worth getting someone to help you.

If you have a friend or family member with suitable editing skills, you can always start there—especially if this person is enthusiastic about seeing you publish your own book. Otherwise, you can consider hiring a freelance editor to work on your e-book.

You can get connected with many experienced professionals on freelancing platforms such as Upwork (previously known as oDesk), Freelancer, Elance, People Per Hour, or even Craigslist.

If you're hiring someone for the first time, always start off by getting them to edit a small section from your story. Perhaps the first few chapters. Make sure you're happy with the result before proceeding with the other chapters.

Don't let manuscript preparation drive you crazy

Editing is a pretty straightforward process. But it requires careful attention, and professional experience definitely makes a difference. This is why creative types often shy away from this task.

If you see yourself being really prolific and putting out many new e-books in a year, it's worth investing the time and effort to master this.

Look out for publishing courses or workshops conducted by industry veterans. They'll tell you all about the more common mistakes to look out for. Also, you can ask for an editing checklist that you can refer to as you work.

One idea that works for me: turn this into a game.

Set yourself some targets, rewards, and bonuses as you edit each chapter. Get a fresh sheet of paper and write down all the chapter and section headings from your book. Stick this up where you'll see it every day. Once you've finished working on a chapter, cross it out on this sheet. It will serve as a constant reminder of your progress, also helping you stay focused on what you need to tackle next.

If you don't seem to be making much progress,

break up your manuscript into smaller sections, perhaps a few pages or even paragraphs, and work on one at a time. It will feel a lot less daunting. You might even start to love your manuscript again.

CHAPTER 5
Get the picture

We know not to judge a book by its cover. Yet we often find ourselves being drawn to certain titles for the clever way the cover design conveys information, emotion, and a sense of style.

Good publishers know that book covers play an important part in selling the story. They give a visual preview of the narrative to come. The cover should whet your appetite and give clues about the kind of yummy scenes or style of writing you can expect inside.

If you haven't been trained in graphic design, it's easy to feel intimated by all the software and technical talk that goes with creating a book cover.

Make images in your head

When thinking about designs, people sometimes

come up with long and elaborate lists of descriptions and requirements but then get stuck when it comes to actually executing these.

When you're creating your e-book cover, don't start with words. Instead, think of your story and make pictures in your head. Then use these images as your starting point.

Search magazines, stock photo archives, Google Images, etc., for pictures that reflect the key aspects of your story. Or spend time daydreaming about your story world and capturing those visuals in a sketchbook.

Or go out and take your own photos. As a creative exercise, spend a day taking photos with your smartphone and trying out all sorts of filters and effects. You might end up with something you really want to use.

For research: look up other e-books in the same genre and study their covers. Do you notice a common mood? Similar fonts? Preferred symbols or icons?

When you're ready, grab a notebook and start sketching out ideas for your cover. Get your brain used to thinking in terms of shapes and layouts.

Software saves the day

Next, you need to use a design or layout software to arrange the text and images for your cover.

A common e-book cover size would be 1600 by 2400 pixels, jpg (300 dpi). This should be accepted by most platforms. Keep your file size under 2 MB.

If you're uploading your e-book to Amazon's Kindle store, you can use its online Cover Creator to produce decent book covers. It's free and it's quite easy to figure out.

You can also try Canva, an online design service that comes with its own stock photos and design templates. Use this to create a few different versions of your cover and then send them around to your friends for comments. Or you can post them on your Facebook page and ask for feedback.

Consider inviting a good friend over and sharing a creative evening trying out different options for your covers. If you're really having fun as you work, your e-book cover will reflect this.

You're no Picasso? So what!

Give it a go, but don't beat yourself up if you find that you absolutely hate the cover design process. You can always hire someone to help you with this.

There are many designers who specialise in creating e-book covers for specific genres. You can find them online, browse their portfolios, and check out their rates.

Before agreeing to hire someone, make sure you examine that person's portfolio and actually see some stuff that you like.

Worth a try: Fiverr is an online marketplace where you can hire designers and illustrators, starting from US$5 for basic services.

If the cost is low enough, you can hire two or three different designers for the same job and then combine all the good bits to create your final masterpiece.

CHAPTER 6
The big upload

Q: Which is the ideal platform to upload your story?

A: One where there's already a huge community of readers who are enthusiastic about buying more books in your particular genre.

For someone starting out, it might be hard to decide which platform to invest your efforts in, and why. They all work differently. For instance, some platforms will pay you through PayPal, while others insist on money transfers to accounts in approved banks, and some will only send out cheques. You'll need to work this out in advance if you seriously intend to get paid; otherwise you could face unpleasant surprises along the way.

For some writers, these considerations can be so overwhelming that they almost abandon their DIY digital publishing plans.

Focus on what's important

Figure out your priorities by finding out the distinctive features of each platform. Check their bestseller lists to see if there is already a strong demand for stories like the one you intend to publish.

If you're looking for an audience for your young adult book and you're not ready to charge for your story, try a free story sharing platform such as Wattpad.

If you want avid readers in the United States to give your book a try, start with the Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing platform.

If your book contains lots of graphics or custom formatting, try Blurb, which will offer your title in both print and digital formats.

Scribd is another good platform for distributing graphic or extensively designed content.

Your target readers will share certain expectations about what they wish to see, and how much they will pay for your book. Be aware of these factors.

Spread your eggs

If possible, make your e-book available on more than one platform.

Smashwords is a good service for getting your books out to different e-book platforms. Your title will be sent out to other platforms, such as iBooks, Nook, Scribd, Oyster, Kobo, Flipkart, Indigo, WH Smith, OverDrive, and many, many more.

Once you've uploaded your e-book and received a confirmation e-mail, you might sometimes have to wait up to two or three weeks before you actually see it on the other vendors' platforms.

Also try this: run a Google search and seek out all the obscure e-book publishing start-ups in different countries. Sign up with them and upload your e-book. Some will actually be grateful to hear from you, and they might even arrange for a special marketing effort to promote your title.

Important: on some platforms, you won't need to have an ISBN for your e-book. Other platforms might actually issue you an ISBN for free. And others might require you to get your own ISBN. Clarify before you commit.

Stick with Word

For your first e-book, you shouldn't waste time struggling with the different e-book publishing technologies.

Instead, stick with the most basic option. Most e-book platforms will allow you to upload a Word document, with simple formatting requirements. After this, they'll convert your file into the relevant e-book formats.

You can't go wrong publishing with Smashwords and Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, as both accept Word documents.

Some other platforms even have online tools that allow you to cut and paste your text into their preformatted templates. This could be more convenient if you don't actually own a copy of Word.

After you've uploaded your story and cover image, these will be converted into an e-book package by the online service. Download a copy and test it on your own reading device.

Sometimes there might be formatting problems, or perhaps mysterious chunks of space will turn up. Go back to your original document and fix the problems. And then upload it again.

In some cases, the easiest way to correct formatting problems could be to start all over again with a plain text file.

CHAPTER 7
What to charge and why

There are many real-life stories about self-published e-book authors who see no sales, or very low sales, for a long period of time. And then one day they decide to change the price of their e-book.

Some raise it, some choose to lower it, and some even make it free for a while. And this is enough to trigger a sudden flood of downloads that eventually puts the e-book on the bestsellers chart.

Moral of the story: it can feel as though getting your price right is a decision that will make or break your DIY digital publishing career.

Here are some tips to help you work this out.

Follow the market

Find some titles that are similar to yours—in terms of genre, target audience, word count, etc.— and see what they're charging. Sometimes a title could be priced differently for different countries; it could be worth looking up this information.

Some DIY e-book publishing veterans recommend making your first title a free download so that readers can sample your work and decide if they want to buy the sequel or another book of yours. Worth a consideration.

Don't spend too much time on this. Just go with a price that seems the most obvious. How much might you be prepared to pay for your own e-book, and still consider it a good deal? Next, sit back and see how the readers respond.

Try and try again

Maybe you're thinking of setting a higher price for your e-book but are afraid readers will be put off and give your e-book a pass. What should you do?

Give it a try. At least for a while. You never

know.

You can always change the price again later. And keep doing this until you get a better idea of what might appeal to your readers. After all, changing the price is pretty easy. You just log in, enter your new settings, and submit the changes.

Some e-book publishing platforms allow you to offer your book as a preorder long before the e-book is actually available for download. You could use this feature to test for the optimum price.

Or you can try making your e-book free for two months and then setting a price for the next two months. This might give you some real insights about how readers respond to your title.

The reader is always right

When you're selling e-books this way, you're being compensated not based on your effort but rather based on the satisfaction that each reader expects to derive from reading your story.

Think of it this way: uploading an e-book is very much like posting a proposal. You can propose any price you wish, but the reader is the one who decides whether to accept or reject your proposal.

This is important, so do think about this carefully: the reader gets to decide if the sale will happen. Not the writer. So do whatever you can to help the reader think, "Yes! I'm getting this e-book!"

By offering your e-book as a free download, you're allowing readers to just dive right in. If they like what they read, they'll consider coming back for more.

Some e-book platforms allow you to set a price but then override this with a promotional offer so that your e-book can be free for a limited time period. This is another useful feature that e-book readers love.

CHAPTER 8
How to do social media without feeling yucky

Once your e-book is available, it will start to receive reviews, ratings, and mentions on social media. Also, if readers are interested in your work, they might share your book cover images or repost your interviews and blog articles. Ideally, you will be in constant conversation with your readers over Twitter, on Facebook, or perhaps on a forum, answering their questions and sharing insights and teasers.

But some writers are introverts by nature and prefer a low-key existence. It terrifies them to even think about having to reach out and interact with strangers every day.

Does this sound like you? Here are some suggestions for dealing with this.

Split your personality

Perhaps you value your privacy too much, preferring to limit your social network connections. One common thing writers do is create one set of social media accounts for private life and another for public persona. This way, you can take a break from your public social media accounts while still enjoying a connection with your friends and family on your personal accounts.

There are apps and online tools that help you manage your multiple social media accounts. Hootsuite and TweetDeck are two of the more popular options. Setting up the extra social media accounts will only take a few minutes. Do remember to provide links to these at the end of your e-book.

If you have friends who are incredibly chatty and prolific on social networks, you could invite them to try running your author account for a while.

Join the conversation

Let's say you have a social media account and you post some information about your e-book, but nobody cares enough to respond. That can be annoying. And worrying. So what should you do? Give up?

No. If you can't start a conversation, try to join an existing one instead. Look for a discussion about a similar book or a closely related topic, and then try to contribute some interesting views. If you're genuinely friendly and knowledgeable, you'll find people popping over to check out what else you're up to.

Goodreads is a great social network for connecting with passionate readers. You'll find book clubs and reading groups dedicated to almost every genre you can imagine. Try to take a genuine interest in other writers' works.

Make sure your user profile includes all your essential author information: links to your website, your e-book's product page, your other social media accounts, your e-mail address, etc.

It's all about the weekend

You probably can't afford to spend much time monitoring your social media accounts. No problem. Figure out a simple weekly schedule that works for you, and stick to it.

For example, find out when your potential readers are most likely to be active. This would likely be later in the week and throughout the weekend. Factors to consider include time zone, occupation, general social media habits, and special occasions such as holidays and festivals. If you can find out when they're most active, and plan your social media posts to match, you should see some interaction.

Once you get a regular routine going, you might actually start looking forward to interacting with your followers or reaching out to new people. And if things ever feel too complicated, just focus your attention on one or two main social media platforms.

CHAPTER 9
Learn to love criticism

It would be great if everyone loved your story and had lots of positive and interesting things to say about your work. And it would be perfect if those with negative comments kept their thoughts to themselves and never attempted to post their views online.

This would be heavenly indeed. But it's not how things work on social media.

There's always a chance that you might attract unfavourable or unfair reactions. The more you try to promote your e-book, the likelier you are to run into people who take pleasure in undermining your effort.

If you're the kind of person who can shrug this off and continue, that's great. But if you're not, this

could seem like a living nightmare.

Ignore the bad stuff

Even the most highly celebrated bestselling authors get their share of scathing reviews. So don't expect to be spared. See if there's anything useful you can learn from the review, and ignore everything else in there.

This requires a bit of emotional discipline. Your feelings always follow your thoughts. So you just need to keep a close watch on what thoughts you pay attention to.

It works this way: as you hold a thought in your mind, your emotions will start responding to it. So if you're thinking about the negative comments, you'll feel all sorts of unpleasant emotions coming up. This can get quite uncomfortable.

But if you switch to thinking about the positive comments instead, or just focus on your own progress as a writer, then you'll just as quickly feel confident and comfortable again.

As you get better at dealing with negative comments about your work, you might even start to feel grateful to those people for actually taking the

time to engage with your work.

If you're serious about taking your writing career further, you could look into getting some emotional coaching to help manage your reactions more effectively.

Show them what you're really about

Sometimes readers might misunderstand your story or fail to grasp your creative vision, and hence they post negative comments.

This is why it's important to keep an online journal where you can provide in-depth commentaries and musings about your creative process. It also gives readers a sense of your personality and helps them relate to you.

Instagram is really good for sharing candid snapshots of your life, your working space, or whatever inspires you. It doesn't take much work to post a photo or two every now and then, and it allows people to get a sense of where you're coming from.

If you can do this regularly and in an authentic way, you'll find that people start to appreciate your effort, even before they've actually read a single

page of your writing. It's a really great feeling when you can connect this way.

Another idea: reach out to some book bloggers and offer to write a guest post for their website. This will give you a chance to share your creative process with a new audience.

Always be improving

Q: What if people are saying that you can't write? Or they're annoyed by the errors and inconsistencies in your e-book?

A: Take note of everything that they point out, and where relevant, try to fix these issues as soon as possible.

Good thing you're a DIY digital publisher, because in most cases you can simply upload a new document with the corrections, at no extra cost, instead of having to recall thousands of paperbacks or hardcovers and printing new copies to replace them.

Learn to use the "find" and "replace" functions on your word processor software. This will help you quickly locate specific words, phrases, or formatting bits that need attention.

When in doubt, try to get a second opinion. Or even a third and a fourth. Maybe join a writers circle and wait for your turn to introduce your work and ask for feedback.

If you're really busy and can't find the time to sit down and make the changes, see if you can get someone else to help.

In really extreme cases, you can take down your e-book and put it up again after you've fixed the problems.

CHAPTER 10
Don't sell e-books; connect with readers

Some e-book titles need time to take off. It could be months before word of mouth grows and you attract the right community of readers. But once this happens, the title might keep selling month after month, even without further work to promote it.

How many e-books should you expect to sell in your first six months? If this is your first time publishing your own e-book, you may feel somewhat disappointed to see the figures reflecting only moderate or low sales. You might think that you've failed.

Some people feel uncomfortable about marketing their own book. For whatever reason. Well, don't market your e-book then. Do the

following things instead.

Find your tribe

If your ideal readers don't know your e-book exists, you have a problem.

Start telling people about your e-book. But not just anyone. Focus on those who already own an e-book reader or are using a reading app on their smartphone. And more importantly, tell people who are specifically interested in your particular genre.

Look for easy ways to let them know it exists. Anything counts, as long as it's not illegal or in bad taste. Even if you can't find anyone to talk to, keep posting relevant content on your blog or social media wall. And wait for your tribe to eventually find you instead.

Be flexible about pricing

Maybe the price of your e-book is sending out the wrong message. Think about changing it.

There are lots of articles on the Internet about the psychology of e-book pricing. For example,

some readers prefer to pick up bargains; so if you price your e-book too high, you'll put them off. Others think that price reflects quality; so if your e-book is priced too low, they might think that your work is shoddy.

When you're starting out, you can focus on just testing three main price points: free, US$0.99, and US$1.99. This simplifies things for you.

But if you're really curious about how high you can go, you can always experiment with pricing your e-book at US$9.99, US$19.99, or US$99.99. Or even higher.

Check that nothing stinks

Perhaps there's something about your e-book that's putting readers off. It could be your title. Or the synopsis. Or the picture on the book cover.

Is there anything offensive about your work?

Would you somehow feel awkward about showing your e-book to your parents or neighbours or random strangers on the street?

Get three friends you trust, and ask for their honest opinion.

If necessary, you can always change the book

cover or the title or the blurb. And if you think there's anything objectionable in the story, you could consider changing this too and seeing if it helps your e-book sell better.

Note: only do this if you're keen to experiment with your options and get a better understanding of how this affects your sales. If you're happy with your e-book as it is, then feel free to ignore this last bit.

CHAPTER 11
How to get paid

At this point, you'd probably start receiving money from the sales of your e-books. This is great. It verifies that you've successfully implemented your own e-book publishing process.

But how do you picture this happening? Do you imagine yourself opening the mailbox and finding cheques written out in your name? Or would you prefer receiving payments through PayPal or some other bank transfer?

Or does your mind go blank here? Perhaps you've never spent much time considering money matters, and this is all new to you.

Sometimes getting paid will require extra paperwork, such as tax-related information or documents that must be submitted from your bank. Some writers get furious when they become stuck in this, and they vent their frustrations about e-book

publishing on their blogs or in forums. No need for that.

Take it slowly

Some forms are ridiculously tricky to fill out. Lots of boxes and spaces and tables, along with rows of tiny text that make you squint and choke just looking at them. But if you want to receive your money, you need to get your paperwork in order. No other way around it. So take a deep breath and relax the muscles at the back of your neck. And then go over your forms very slowly and make sure you provide the right information about yourself.

If you do a Google search, you'll find some e-book writers who have very kindly posted step-by-step guides to understanding and handling these payment-related matters. This includes how to fill out forms faster.

Also, just as some people find forms incredibly painful to complete, there are others who have a natural talent for it. See if you can find just such an individual to help you out.

After you've completed your forms, you probably won't hear back from the e-book

publishing platform until it's time to issue your next payment. And then you'll find out if you did it correctly.

Stay patient and cheerful. Do not give up. You've come this far already.

Check the terms and conditions

Perhaps you've been expecting to receive some cheques, based on your recent sales reports, but so far nothing has turned up.

Go over the terms and conditions and see if there's an explanation. For one thing, you'd probably need to have earned a certain minimum amount before they'll issue your cheque. Your earnings will keep rolling over to the following month until you reach the minimum amount.

Also, check that your payment and contact details are correct.

You won't be the first one to have experienced delayed payment. Run a Google search and see how other e-book writers managed to deal with their respective situations.

Often, the terms and conditions are displayed in small print in tight paragraphs. Feel free to increase

the text size in your browser or PDF reader, until you can read each line comfortably. You'll find it less of a headache.

Go over the FAQ section thoroughly, to see if there's any information that relates to your situation.

When all else fails, you might consider calling the company and speaking to someone from the finance department.

Fix whatever problems there might be, and then wait for the next payment cycle. Meanwhile, keep your fingers crossed.

Don't upload another book to this platform until the payment situation is resolved. You don't want to find even more of your earnings getting tied up here.

You have a problem that isn't covered here

This book doesn't pretend to deliver perfect advice about writing or publishing; it's not a comprehensive technical guide, and it sure doesn't contain any instructions on how to become a self-published e-book millionaire. But it's enough to help you create a personal map of the process and

guide you through the different milestones that you'll need to meet.

You'll definitely have more questions that need urgent answering. If you keep the insights here in mind, you'll find it relatively easier to make sense of the other books, articles, and instructional videos that you'll come across.

In the next chapter, you'll find a list of resources about publishing and promoting e-books on your own. They'll help make your journey faster, smoother, and more rewarding.

I wish you happy writing, successful publishing, and lots of fun along the way!

CHAPTER 12
Resources

Write your ebook

LibreOffice
Free word processing software.
https://www.libreoffice.org

Scrivener
Excellent software for managing your drafts,
research notes and edits. Very helpful for book
projects.
https://www.literatureandlatte.com/scrivener.php

Evernote
Free software for taking and organising notes and
drafts. Also has apps for mobile devices.
https://evernote.com

Google Drive
Free service, with cloud-based word processor and file storage service.
https://www.google.com/drive/

Daedalus
Nicely designed writing app for iOS.
http://daedalusapp.com

Create a cover

Canva
Online design tool with ready ebook cover templates. Use the free features, or pay US$1 for each stock image if you need it.
https://www.canva.com

Unsplash
Free high quality photos you can download and use.
https://unsplash.com

iStock
Huge selection of stock photos.

http://www.istockphoto.com

PicMonkey
Online photo editor with cool filters and layers.
http://www.picmonkey.com

Get freelancers

Upwork
https://www.upwork.com

Freelancer
https://www.freelancer.com

Elance
http://elance.com

People Per Hour
http://www.peopleperhour.com

Fiverr
https://www.fiverr.com

Upload it

These are some of the ebook publishing platforms you can check out. The websites are in English. There are loads more out there catering to different languages.

Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing
https://kdp.amazon.com

Smashwords
https://www.smashwords.com

Blurb
http://www.blurb.com

Leanpub
https://leanpub.com

BookBaby
http://www.bookbaby.com

iBooks Author
https://www.apple.com/sg/ibooks-author

Lulu
https://www.lulu.com

NOOK Press
https://www.nookpress.com

Pronoun
http://pronoun.com

eBookIt
http://www.ebookit.com

Scribd
https://www.scribd.com

Draft2Digital
https://www.draft2digital.com

Booktango
http://www.booktango.com

Kobo
https://www.kobo.com

Fast Pencil
http://www.fastpencil.com

Liberio
https://liber.io

Pressbooks
http://pressbooks.com

Wattpad
https://www.wattpad.com

Social networking

You can use these platforms to share updates and connect with readers.

Goodreads
Exclusively for book lovers.
http://www.goodreads.com

Shelfari
Run by Amazon.
http://www.shelfari.com

Book Country
Post your manuscripts and get feedback.
http://www.bookcountry.com

Facebook
Good for interacting with readers and fellow
writers.
https://www.facebook.com

Twitter
Publish short updates.
https://twitter.com

Tumblr
Very simple blogs.
https://www.tumblr.com

Instagram
Post photos. Cool filters preferred.
https://instagram.com

LinkedIn
More for professionals.
https://www.linkedin.com

SlideShare
Make slides and share them.
http://www.slideshare.net

YouTube
Put up your own video greetings, ebook trailers, etc.
https://www.youtube.com

Vine
Post short video clips.
https://vine.co

reddit
Daily news website.
http://www.reddit.com

National Novel Writing Month
Great community of people trying to complete
their novels in one month.
http://nanowrimo.org/forums

About the author

Don Bosco writes stories for children and teens. Although grown-ups do read and enjoy them too. These are mostly influenced by the mystery, thriller, science fiction, adventure, fantasy and joke books he enjoyed as a child.

He started the publishing studio Super Cool Books in 2011. Much of his work is inspired by Asian legends and myths, or Asian pop culture like manga, and features a very diverse cast of

characters. He loves to highlight the old customs and legends from around the region, and acknowledge local landmarks, food and events.

Don lives in Singapore but seems to spend most of his time either wandering around inside his head or searching the Internet to discover new music to listen to.

Follow the adventures of Super Cool Books at: http://www.SuperCoolBooks.com.
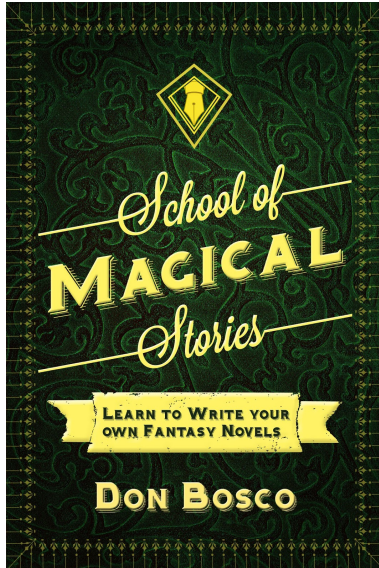
Welcome to the SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STORIES!

Do you enjoy reading fantasy books? Have you ever been inspired to write your own stories? Now you can! Speculative fiction author Don Bosco has designed these lessons to help you develop your talent. You'll learn: How do stories work? What makes a story special? How does a writer weave a magical adventure out of thin air?

These are questions that have been asked for thousands and thousands of years. Yes, storytelling is probably the oldest art in this world! The lessons here should give you hours and hours of creative pleasure. You'll soon be using your imagination to create something new and wonderful, which you can share with your family and friends.

May you be showered with all the creative magic that you can expect!

SUPER COOL BOOKS

FIND YOUR STORY