



Self-Publishing School Lesson: 1 Transcript

BUDGET / TOOLS

You wouldn't write a book on a cell phone or tablet, would you? I suppose you could, but you'd probably hate yourself after the first page. For the best author experience, you should plan to use a 'full-blown' desktop application... It's easier on the eyes... not to mention your mind... and naturally, you'll want to keep your mind decluttered to do your best writing.

As an author, your most important tool investment is your editing software. Shop around with diligence before you buy any of them.



INSONA[®]
AUTHOR ALLIANCE
Recommended
Authoring Software

For a variety of reasons, we recommend Microsoft Word on either a Microsoft or MAC OS. There are lots of new apps and writing software applications, but Word is still the long-lived king, and it's what most editors use. Keep in step with your editor. It makes both your work and theirs easier.



Word also makes it simple to install add-ins like *Grammarly* and *ProWritingAid*. You can even add both. These add-ins are not only superior to the default Microsoft spell-checker for grammar and spelling, but they also provide phrasing and word usage tips, among other things, and they offer *permanently free* versions for an exceptional value.

The greatest benefit we find in MS Word is the “Track Changes” feature. Track Changes allows an editor to place corrective mark-up notes and comments directly into the manuscript margins. You can even have multiple editors. Then when in review, the author can accept or reject any notations. Accepted markup is then effortlessly inserted into the document. It’s time-saving for everyone involved. — And saving time saves cash by eliminating the dreaded cycle of ‘edit/rewrite, edit/rewrite, edit/rewrite.’ Once you’ve reviewed your change recommendations, save the document with a new revision number, and your good-to-go to the book interior formatting and file conversion processes.

Word is not freeware. Full-feature *student* and *home* versions are available, as are cloud-based or stand-alone solutions. The MS Office



Suite includes Word, Excel for spreadsheets, PowerPoint for presentations, Outlook for powerful HTML email, and many other features. It can be purchased online for around thirty-nine dollars (for older versions) to almost \$285 for the latest, greatest Professional revision. So, shop smart, and select the optimum toolset for your specific need.



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AUTHOR ALLIANCE
Recommended
Electronic + Traditional

At INSONA Author Alliance, we highly recommend using modern utilities like Grammarly, ProWritingAid, or Hemingway Editor. In fact, we use at least two of them for everything we write, from press releases to social media posts. Each enhances your natural-born writing skills and greatly reduces the efforts of a traditional, human editor... again that means money savings.

We, however, do *not* recommend attempting to release a professional book without a professional editorial review. Books of standards exist that are deeply engrained in publishing. The Chicago Manual of Style, for American style editing, and the New Oxford Style Manual, for British style editing are industry standards used by professional editors. These



style books have a biblical impact on the quality and commercial acceptance of a published work. Without following these standards, you face the risk of not being taken seriously as a writer.

Copy editing, and proofreading, in the book publishing process, take time and money. You'll want to interview several professional editors and read some of their work. A great editor will have years of experience, a large portfolio, and possibly a master's degree in English literature. They can charge by the word or by the page, ranging in price from one penny per word to 2.5 cents a word, or more. A good editor is also in tremendous demand, so you should plan to work with their schedule and availability. Cut-rate editing can bite you in the backside, so we highly recommend putting a proper amount of time and budget into this most important part of the process.



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Recommended
File Conversion Software

For interior layout and basic file conversion, you can always rely on your MS Word application to format and save a document as a .PDF file. PDF is used for pre-release readers, printing, or those who wish to read the book on a computer. However, when it comes to converting



your file for Amazon (for Kindle), .EPUB (for NOOK, Sony, Kobo, Apple, and others), or .MOBI readers, we recommend the freeware application ‘Calibre.’

Calibre is a very well-developed open-source eBook reader slash manager that’s lightweight and whirlwind-fast. Unlike many free eBook readers, Calibre supports Amazon’s AZW format (note: it won’t open DRM-protected files), as well as all the other popular eBook file types. Also, if any metadata is missing, such as genre or cover art, you can add it yourself from the application’s intuitive menus.

We love Calibre and couldn’t live without it for getting files perfectly dressed for upload to publishers and distributors.



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Recommended
Cover/Illustration Design

Unless you’re a proficient graphics designer, we don’t think it’s prudent to attempt creating your own book art. Software to render a quality final product is expensive and can have a very large learning curve. Instead, put your time and efforts into seeking out a proven artist. Again, someone with a great portfolio can give you and your readers inspiration that you may not envision. Talent is key. If you see the work



and get that warm fuzzy feeling, pay your dues and take the leap to feed a starving artist. You'll smile every time you show your book. Not to mention that more readers will be drawn to your work and you'll sell more copies.

The words, "you can't judge a book by the cover," *do not apply*. People do judge a book cover and make their purchases based on first impressions. If you were not self-publishing, a traditional publishing house would devote a realistic budget to this effort.

The upside is that you don't need pricy graphics software. You can put that cost into a real art masterpiece and use your time to move toward a more suitable project like writing blurbs.

If you insist on doing the art yourself, there's a plethora of valuable information on the internet about the best practices for book cover design and illustration. Read, read, read, before you begin, and apply all you learn. Remember your art is your book's only public image. It's that important.

As an author myself, I've learned the hard way that my artwork is not nearly my top game. When I look back at some of the graphics I've created, I wish I had just spent the bucks for the best I could afford.



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INSONA AUTHOR ALLIANCE
Recommended
Author Website Design

The same thing can be said for website design and implementation. If you're not a programmer, don't waste your time. Talk about a huge learning curve. Web programming is hard and it represents your 'main-street storefront.'

Do you need an author website? All those in the know, say you do. What with all the places that will host your book sales information, the singular one you can absolutely trust to ensure you get paid is your own.

A word of caution is to be very careful where you upload your book file. Your publisher, Amazon, and Barnes & Noble may be a few of the honest ones. But buyer beware, there are dozens of sites that promise to promote your work and charge a small fee to market and list your book. Many of these types of promoters are in some unnamed third-world country. Sure, they put your book on a worldwide website for you to view, but if someone actually buys it through them, you may never even know, and it's almost guaranteed that you will never see a royalty payment.



Of course, Amazon is free to list on, but Amazon takes a huge chunk of the royalty when you make a sale. The worst of it is that you are listing on a site where thousands of other books in your genre are in a feeding frenzy for the same reader you need. On Amazon you become a competitor in a giant dynamic market and amazon may put a dozen or more “Products related to this item” on your listing page.

We’re not suggesting that you *not* list on Amazon. You almost have to in order to be taken seriously. However, when it comes to your own marketing, point readers to your own private site, and make the sale there. On your author site, you control 100% of the content and you also get 100% of the royalty. It’s a double win.

So, get your personal “author.com” on GoDaddy for less than the price of three or four latté grandes a year, and create the power lever you need to make a sale. Better yet, get a pro to create it for you. Once it’s built and online, maintenance is minimal, unless of course you write a dozen books every year or want to change your picture every time you take a selfie.

In summation, “Here’s the deal, pickle.” You get what you pay for and book publishing is a prime example.



- 1- The best carpenters use the best tools. Spring for MS Word. It's the best word processor.
- 2- Family and friends are not editors unless they are. And if they truly are, they should be paid for something as valuable as editorial knowledge.
- 3- Forget paying for expensive tools that require major learning time to use. Instead, use the money to pay a professional.
- 4- Keep your royalties every chance you can.
- 5- Broadcast your own website, not the 'competitor cattle call.'

Join me for Lesson: 2, Getting Ready for Release & Amazon/Prime-Time.

See you next time.



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CURRICULUM TOPICS

- 1- Word Processor Recommendation
- 2- Editor Options and Recommendations
- 3- File Conversion Tool Suggestion
- 4- Graphics Budgeting Considerations
- 5- Author Website Discussion