How to design and create a great ebook even if you don't know a font from a folio and haven't a clue as to how to begin anyway...

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about this ebook

This ebook is a bit different from most of the others you've read. It's not about how to make a million dollars in a week. And, although we touch on marketing, it's not a marketing ebook.

This is an ebook for all those people who don't know how to get started - who don't think they can design and create an ebook - who have a passion to write but don't know how to put it all together in a readable format.

It's particularly for those who don't want an ebook that looks just like everyone else's.

If you qualify on any of those points, read on!

table of contents

congratulations!

You've decided to self-publish your book on the Web!

For any of a hundred valid reasons you've decided to do-it-yourself and I'm tickled for you! It's fun, challenging, and nothing beats the feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment when you click on that little icon and your ebook comes up on the screen.
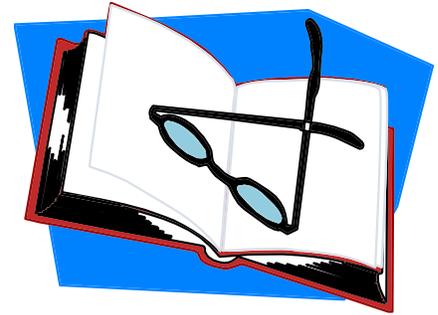
Writing a book is a monumental effort, and you deserve a lot of credit for that. Just getting to this point puts you head and shoulders above most of the would-be writers out there, and you're halfway through the publishing process.

Now comes the fun part - getting your book published!

Publishing a book is no more than a dream for most people. How many writers have good manuscripts tucked away at the bottom of a drawer because they can't (or won't) market them?

How many others have dutifully sent off their manuscripts to 10 or 20 or 50 publishers with nothing more to show for it than a stack of rejection slips?

There are many, many manuscripts out there that deserve to be published, that have a market waiting for what they have written, and yet, because of the way traditional publishing works, these books will never make it to print.

But, the Internet has given us a unique alternative to traditional publishing - the ebook and electronic publishing!

the 5 (no, better make that 6) types of **publishing**

When writers think of publishers, they automatically think in terms of the "Big Boys" - Random House, Prentice-Hall, etc. and they automatically think in terms of a royalty publisher, because that's all they have really ever heard about.

If you are serious about getting your work published, either on paper or electronically, you need to expand your thinking and look into some alternatives.

And, believe me, there are always alternatives - that's what this ebook is all about!

Before the Internet exploded onto the scene, there used to be five major types of publishing - **Royalty, Subsidy, Co-op**, **Vanity**, **and Self-Publishing**.

Now we have a sixth alternative - **Electronic Publishing** - in many different formats.

Here's a quick overview of each type with some of their advantages and disadvantages.

What would you like to publish? You can create anything from a novel to a report, flashy or simple, interactive or static. While this ebook is primarily about creating ebooks, it can be used for virtually any kind of electronic publishing.

All of these types of publishing are also available on the Web.

royalty publishing

Royalty publishing is, plain and simple, traditional publishing.

Royalty publishers include the large publishing houses as well as thousands of small presses scattered throughout the country.

In it's simplest terms, you submit your work to them and they determine whether the book meets their needs, has marketing potential, is well-written, and can be produced economically.

If you fulfill all their criteria, they offer a contract (and possibly an advance against royalties.) You sign the contract, and eventually your book is published ... *maybe*.

Most publishing contracts do not obligate the publisher to actually

publish your book. Book contracts are studded with weasel clauses that allow the publisher to slip out for any number of reasons - deadlines, costs, competing titles - you name it, it's in there!

If your book **does** get published, by the time the editors get through with it and you have made the changes, and the printer gets it off the press, and the cover designer has come up with a cover, you're looking at around 2 years of waiting time!

The disadvantages include...

- lack of control over your book. You will have absolutely no say in how it looks, the format it's printed in, or how it's marketed and promoted,

- the money is usually very poor considering the time and work expended (unless you happen to be Stephen King!),

- the time to actually get published (it takes forever!)

- there is a tremendous amount of competition out there.

The advantages include...

- no out-of-pocket costs of production for the author,

- some money is better than no money,

- you **may** get national distribution, and national or regional publicity, and

- the personal satisfaction of being able to say, "My book is being published by So-and-So Publishing."

Now, that's nothing but ego - and by the time the book is printed, the ego is wearing pretty thin, the $1.85 per copy sold is looking really bad, and the book is outdated!

Wouldn't you rather be telling people how much money you made from selling your ebook on the Net?

One of the first things to do is fire the royalty publishers and create your own publishing company!

subsidy publishing

Although subsidy publishing is often wrongly confused with vanity publishing and self-publishing, it really means that a third party is paying for the publication of your book.

The third party may be an investor, or even a corporate sponsor who plans to use your book to promote their company. Several hundred years ago, all publishing was subsidy publishing, with the author's "patron" footing the bills, and paying for the author's keep while he was working.

Today the "patrons" are the investors or corporations, and they do it for the profit it will bring them, not because they have a love of the written word.

The disadvantages include...

- writing to fit someone else's needs and wants,

- it can be difficult to find an investor or sponsor,

- your work may be limited to the sponsor's use only,

- you may have to share your profits (if there are any) with an investor, and

- the sponsor or investor will want the lion's share of input into both the book's content and the production process. After all, they're paying for it!

You don't have to sit around and wait for someone to approach you if you're interested in subsidy publishing on the Web.

The advantages include...

- someone else foots the bills,

- you will be published,

- you may have more control over the book's physical appearance than with a royalty publisher, and

- there can be a good return in money for the time invested in writing.

Look for local companies that have a web site and think about what kind of ebook, ereport, ebrochure, or ebooklet could help them. Create a sample and approach them with the idea - either via email or in person!

co-op publishing

Co-op publishing is most often done by small presses and applies to books that the publisher thinks are marginal as far as their marketability.

Co-op is something the publisher offers to the author to cut the publisher's risk. In co-op, the author and publisher share the costs of production in varying percentages, usually with the profits also being shared.

For instance, the publisher may ask the author to cover the costs of the pre-press work, while he covers the costs of printing and marketing. In return, you will split the profits or get a higher royalty rate. The possible arrangements are almost endless, so if offered a co-op contract, negotiate. The first offer is rarely the last offer.

Co-op can be advantageous to a new author.

It tells you that the publisher is willing to take some risk on your book, so he thinks it has some merit, and it should give you more say in the production process.

Chances are, you will be expected to help market and promote your book, so if you have ideas you'd like to see implemented, co-op can give you the chance to try them out.

The biggest disadvantage is the cost involved, and this can vary greatly depending on the production processes used, local costs, and the size of the print run. Other disadvantages include (a) being tied into a long-term contract if your book sells well, and (b) confusing and unclear contract terms.

If you think about it, many epublishing houses on the Web are involved in co-op. You create the ebook, and they help you sell it for a percentage of the sales. This can be a good way to sell, but should not be the only way.

Watch out for "exclusive" sales clauses! You don't want to restrict your sales to just that one outlet!

vanity publishing

Vanity publishers will print anything, and promise everything, as long as you're willing to pay for it.

Vanity presses have a poor reputation, but unlike many people, I feel there is a place for the vanity press. Anyone who wants to get published should be able to do so, and for some books and

authors, this is the only way to do it.

If you consider publishing with a vanity press, just be very careful.

Understand exactly what you are paying for - in most cases, you are paying for their *publishing services*, not the books that are being printed. This means that even though you're paying all the costs, you don't even own the books that have been printed - they belong to the vanity press!

Also, vanity presses are notoriously poor in marketing, so most authors using vanity presses end up with their books being stored in a warehouse somewhere until the publisher remainders them, or the author buys them himself at a reduced price.

Whatever you do, don't confuse vanity publishing with self-publishing!

Yes, the Web has vanity presses. It's just not in your best interests to sign up with an ebook publisher who is going to charge you for selling your ebook. You can do a much better job yourself.

self-publishing

Self-publishing is, literally, publishing your material yourself. Self-publishing takes a very special kind of person.

It's the kind of person...

- who doesn't want to wait two years to see their book in print

- who doesn't want to settle for 5-10% royalties

- who wants to hold in their hands that exact book they had pictured in their mind

- who is willing to deal with a wide variety of people from artists to typesetters to printers

- who has marketing ideas that they want to see put into action

- who will look at their book, not just as their baby to be handled gently and coddled, but also as a product to be marketed and sold.

- It takes someone with an eye for detail and never-ending patience.

- It takes creativity and the ability to look at things in new ways.

- It also means you take the risks, and succeed or fail on your own merits.

Self-publishing can be profitable, but you have to have money to put into the project. And, that could mean anywhere from $5,000 to $25,000!

Remember, you don't make any profits until you make back the costs!

There have been some self-published books that have been successful and subsequently been picked up by major publishers. Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens), Ben Franklin, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Virginia Wolfe, Edgar Allen Poe, Peter McWilliams, Robert Ringer, D.H. Lawrence, and many more, have self-published their works and gotten a foothold in the publishing business.

But like everything else, it all depends on the marketing!

web publishing

Web publishing is electronic self-publishing. It can also be the electronic equivalent of all the other types of publishing as well, but with one major exception - the rules are very different on the Web.

It's the closest thing you can find to real freedom of expression. It's also the closest thing to instant publishing that you can find. Write a web page, post it, and it's instantly visible to the world.

You're not limited in format, either. You can publish a single web page, a site, any number of types of ebooks, reports, articles, or booklets, and you can supplement with print-on-demand printed copies.

Web publishing is self-publishing - in it's purest form. You are solely responsible for everything having to do with the production, promotion, marketing, and sale of your ebook!

You can create a course and teach others a talent or skill you might have. You can add all kinds of multimedia to your book. You can produce ebooks as fast as you can write them, and get instant feedback. It's a remarkable medium!

Each new project creates its own excitement and momentum.

The ebook you create will be uniquely yours. It will have the title you want, it will look the way you have visualized it, every comma will be just as you choose, and it will be on the Web when you want it to be.

It will be nothing less than the full expression of your thoughts, feelings, and creativity.

There are many advantages to electronic publishing (e-publishing) and many rewards.

Let's look at 6 main advantages to Web Publishing.

- **Cost** - except for the money you *want* to spend, electronic publishing is virtually free! Why do I say that? Don't you have to buy a program to put it together? And get a website? And pay for a designer? And pay for a cover? And pay for marketing advice? What about selling costs and taking credit cards?

  Remember earlier when I said - *"There are always alternatives"*? That is even more true with electronic publishing than anything else! We're going to be getting into each of these topics in the pages to come - and I'll show you alternatives for each one. Patience.

- **Time** - there is no long drawn-out publishing process. It's simply a matter of writing your project, and getting it out in front of people. If your manuscript is written and ready to go, *you can publish it today!* No ifs, ands, or buts about it.

■ **Effort** - once you get things set up, it all runs automatically! You don't have to go from bookstore to bookstore to promote your book yourself. You don't have to nag the publisher for more promotion. You can spend all that time getting the next project ready, gardening, shopping, or out on the golf course, depending on your own preferences.

The process takes care of itself. It grows as word gets out, like a snowball rolling downhill getting bigger and bigger as it picks up more snow. keep in mind, that your rewards, though, will be in direct proportion to the effort you put into marketing and promotion.

So, you may want to save the golf until you've created that "virtual snowball effect" concerning your ebook.

■ **Skills** - you will pick up new skills as you progress. Skills that will be reproducible and useful with every succeeding project, such as HTML, design, promotion, marketing, and networking.

Each project increases your skill level until project creation is effortless and simple.

■ **Risk** - lets think about this for a moment. *Is there really any risk to it?* If you were self-publishing in print, you'd have a lot of money tied up for typesetting, printing, bindery, sales, and all the other costs involved.

What is actually involved in electronic publishing? Well, we've got the writing of the manuscript. Most writers write. They'd be writing no matter what. Is that a risk? I don't think so.

Is there a risk in a free website? Is there a risk in using free tools? Is there a risk in getting

Sweat equity is alive and well on the Web!

If you have time, but no money, you can do things yourself. Lots of marketing and promotion can be done for free, if you've got the time!

If you have money, but no time, you can hire someone to do it for you. The Web is full of people who can handle whatever you don't have the time to do yourself!

There are so many types of automation available it would take an ebook by itself to explain them all. Here's a few examples - autoresponders can respond to email questions. Your email program can be set up to sort your email as it's received. Your credit card processor will handle all the details and email you on each order. And on, and on!

free promotion? The credit card people don't charge you unless there are transactions. No risk there.

I look at it this way - unless you've expended a bunch of cash, you have little or no risk. Now, it could be argued that your reputation and name is at risk. But you'd protect those, anyway, wouldn't you?

Even then, there are alternatives. For example, if you're writing and selling erotica, you'd probably take some steps and not use your real identity as the author. It just takes a little thought and a little creativity.

- ■ **Profit** - Question - if you have no costs, and you have no risks, how much profit is in the project? Answer - **just about all of the selling price is pure profit.**

    Don't get me wrong - even using all the alternatives I'll be showing you, there will still be a cost for each sale, but it will be minor compared to the profits, and it will come in the form of credit card processing fees. For example - if you're selling a project for $40 and the credit card company takes 10% for processing the order, each order is going to cost you $4. You've made a $36 profit. Is it worth the $4 cost to you? Let's say you sell 100 ebooks a month. $400 in fees - $3600 in profits. *Now* is it worth it?

But before you can reap the rewards, there's a lot of work to be done - if you want to do it right.

You could just throw a bunch of web pages together and call it an ebook, but I'm going on the basis of producing a quality product.

You will be controlling every aspect of the book's production. That means a lot of tedious detail checking, double-checking and then checking once more - just to be sure.

The primary means of communication on the Web is word-of-mouth - and it's pure dynamite!
Everything you do - from sending an email to commenting on a message board - will help fuel the snowball effect.

It means you can't assume anything. (Remember that the word assume makes an "ass" of "u" and "me.")

It means dealing with a new variety of people. It means learning a new vocabulary so you can accurately communicate your wants and needs to these people, and in the end, it means you are the only one responsible for the finished product.

You'll have no one to blame but yourself if it doesn't work, but you'll be the only one taking the bows if it does. A lot of responsibility, isn't it?

Don't feel overwhelmed or discouraged - help is available right here. That's what this ebook is for!

When you have automated your sales, started the snowball rolling downhill, and have invested only your time, this is the closest thing you can find to "free money"

should i **e-publish?**

Absolutely!

It doesn't matter if you're 6 or 60. It doesn't matter if you work at a full-time job or not.

It doesn't matter if you stay home and take care of the kids and the house, or if you're retired.

You can write and publish an ebook!

Some books are better candidates for e-publishing than others, but it really depends on the end result you want to achieve.

If you just want an ebook of your poetry to give to friends and relatives, you will approach the process a little differently than those who want to make some money out of their writing.

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but, i don't know where to **start!**

Relax. You already have!

The first step is finding information and that's why we're here. Each bit of information builds on others to create a base of knowledge.

Let's take a look at what steps you'll need to go through to get your book published.

SELF-PUBLISHER	"SMART" SELF-PUBLISHER	"SMARTER" E-PUBLISHER
Write Manuscript	Research market	Research Market
Edit Manuscript	Plan the book	Plan the book
Plan the book	Design the book	Write Manuscript
Design the book	Pre-sell the book	Edit Manuscript
Typeset the book	Get Paid	Design the book
Proof the type	Write Manuscript	Create the artwork
Create the artwork	Edit manuscript	Build the book

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research the market

This is an ebook on design and creation, but marketing is intimately tied to the development process. There are several reasons for an e-author to research the market, and the reasons vary depending on the subject matter. But, some things are constant - no matter what you're writing you need to know where and how you can sell it, and you need to know who will buy it.

If you want other sites to carry your ebook, you need to look for sites that sell ebooks of the same type you're writing. You need to find the right audience. If you're selling it yourself, you need to know who to sell it to.

Let's face it, you wouldn't sell many hot dogs at a vegetarian picnic!

Use that same thinking when it comes to looking for publishing sites and markets. If you're writing science fiction, don't look at bookseller sites that specialize in romance novels. Study your own field.

Suggestion - Visit http://www.copernic.com and pick up a copy of the free Copernic search program. It's an excellent personal search engine. It will query 10 or so of the major search engines, sort the results, throw out duplicates, and give you a good list of sites to visit. I've always

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find your **creativity**

I want to veer off the path here a bit. One of the biggest problems people have is creativity, and since it's such an integral part of both design and marketing, I want to give you a couple of techniques that might help spur the creative process for you.

First, let's see how creative you are...

individual brainstorming

Your challenge is to come up with at least 30 uses for a common brick. Impossible? Not at all!

The trick to brainstorming is to allow your mind to make connections.

First, think about the primary use(s) of a brick – ways you've seen them used – and write them down. Building is the first thing that comes to my mind.

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plan your ebook

We've all heard the old saying "A journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step." I agree with that statement, but it's incomplete. I think it should say "A journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step – in the right direction."

In order to end up where you want to be, you have to know where you're going.

The single most important step in this whole process is planning!

But how do you plan if you're overwhelmed by what you don't know? The answer is – the same way you would eat an elephant. One bite at a time. This chapter is going to start cutting the elephant into bite-sized pieces.

When we talk about planning an ebook, we're not necessarily talking about it's page format, or the cover (those are a part of design). We're basically talking about the mechanics of how it's to be created, and the content.

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write and edit your **manuscript**

Writing for the web is not too different from writing for any other market. The main difference is being able to include hyperlinks, music, graphics, and other web resources to give readers a richer experience.

There is one problem, though. There is a strong tendency to rush things on the web. Things change so fast, that what's true today, "ain't necessarily so" tomorrow. Resist the impulse to speed through the writing and editing.

You may be self-publishing an ebook, but you should write and edit like you're sending it to the largest New York publisher. At the very least, spell check everything.

I hope you've followed the steps and created a mindmap of your ebook because this is where it will really pay off. Just follow your mindmap, and write about each topic and sub-topic.

Keep in mind that there are no rules here.

Earlier I proposed researching your market BEFORE writing the ebook. This allows you to slant your ebook toward your proposed market during the writing. If you've already written the ebook, don't despair. Simply go through your ebook and slant it. This simply means that instead of generics, you use specifics. Instead of "dog", for example, you'd use the name of a specific

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Now we're getting down to the nitty-gritty - designing the ebook.

Did you ever wonder why all the books produced by big city publishers all look pretty much the same? Why novels all seem to have the same format? Why there are no illustrations in them? Why non-fiction books are badly illustrated and never seem to have any style to them?

It all comes down to one thing. Cost. If you were to try to publish fifty or one hundred books, you'd probably start standardizing them, too. You'd limit your type styles and sizes to just a few. You'd maintain the same margins top, bottom, right, and left for all your books. You'd standardize the number of pages as much as possible to stay within press requirements, and you'd use the same page sizes all the time for the same reason. And all your books would look like everyone else's.

Boring? You bet.

Design is not a sudden bolt of lightning out of the blue. It's trial and error, experimentation, and playing with a project until it looks right. It's nothing more than trying everything and then narrowing down the choices. Trust your instincts.

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html **compilers**

I'm adding this section because there are a few things concerning design that are specific to HTML compilers. While many of the concepts and techniques of general page design also apply to compilers, there are adjustments that have to be made for the HTML language limitations. We'll go over a few of those here, then go into principles that apply no matter what program you're using to create your ebook.

page design

Most books on layout and design start with fonts. I don't know why, because it doesn't make sense to start there. What does make sense is to start with the page. I create the page layout first, then decide the fonts that best fit the purpose and style of the ebook..

First, let's think about page size. What do we need to know? Well, if it comes right down to it, our first concern should be monitor size and screen resolution. It is going to be read onscreen, after all!

This is how icons and an application window look at 640

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layout and your ebook

We've looked at a couple of aspects of pages that are unique to HTML compilers - page size and navigation, and we looked at how to compile an ebook. Now let's get back to general principles and design a layout.

When we talk about layout, we're talking about how the page will look to the reader. We need to determine a number of things in this section – margins, headers, footers, body copy, chapter start pages, headline copy, subheads, and rogue pages. We're also going to revisit page size, but this time in a more generic way. Lots to do, so we'd better get started!

First, though, pick up any hardcover or paperback book that you have handy – it'll help you see what these terms all mean.

page size

We've already seen how an HTML designer *may* be restricted by screen size. A graphic designer who is preparing a job for

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rogue pages

Chances are you've never heard of rogue pages before.

I wouldn't expect you to know the term - it's one I created to refer to all the pages that are not normal body copy pages.

In other words, this refers to copyright pages, Table of Contents pages, acknowledgements, title pages, dedications, indexes, and chapter start pages.

Each of these pages requires special treatment. They're not going to look like body copy pages - each will be unique, and we have to know how to handle them. They're a part of the book, too, and must be consistent with your style.

You may not want to use any of the above pages. Then again, you may want to use all of them. They do not have to be stand-alone pages. You can combine them. For example, your copyright notice may be at the bottom of your title page, or the acknowledgements and dedication may share a page.

Here's a suggested setup, but feel free to change it if you like!

Cover page
Title page (w/publisher info)
Copyright page
Acknowledgements page
Dedication page
Table of Contents
Introduction
Body of book
Glossary
Index

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using **fonts**

Fonts are both the most important and least important part of the process. No, it's not some kind of zen thing. Fonts are important because they actually convey what you're trying to say. They are the least important because if you have chosen them properly, they will be invisible to the reader.

Invisible? Yes - your body copy fonts should guide the reader, make things easier for him or her, and not be noticeable as a design element. If your reader stops reading because you've made it hard for them to continue, you're either a lousy writer (and none of us fall into that category!) or you've made a bad font choice.

How does your type style fit with your subject matter and layout?

What characteristics does your type need?

Type size and style are going to influence the style, tone, overall appearance, and even the length of your ebook.

Our job in this chapter is to clarify why we choose particular fonts for particular jobs.

You can, of course, pick a typeface simply because you like it, or because that's where the dart landed, but type is complex and you really need to get a little bit deeper into it so your choice has more meaning.

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about **graphics**

The last thing we're going to talk about are the graphic elements you use in your ebook.

Graphics include all pictures, boxes, lines, screenshots, clip art, and anything else that isn't type. Graphics explain, enhance, decorate, and clarify in a way that plain words can't.

I've tried to use at least 1 example of each type of graphic in this ebook. Some of them are elements built-in to the layout program - like lines and boxes. Some are gif's and jpg's. Some art was created directly in the layout program and some was done using PhotoShop, Paint Shop Pro, or Snag-it (for screenshots.) A couple are clip art. Some of the art was in-line - meaning it was a part of the body copy, others were placed separately as individual pieces.

The point was to show you that you can use just about anything in your ebook - you're not restricted to only one type of file.

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the **end** of the road

Well, we've reached the end of this ebook.

This ebook was written not so much to give you specific techniques, but to help you expand your thinking, become more creative, and give you a starting point.

Hopefully, I've done that.

Now it's up to you - isn't it time to get started on that next project?

This ebook may be finished but every time I thought I had a subject covered, I thought of more things to say.

Well, it looks like I'm going to have to get started myself and get to work on the next volume!

Don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of help...

Neil

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