

How-to self-publish on Createspace

This article is intended as a guideline for self-publishing first timers. I learned by trial, sometimes succeeding on the first try and other times failing miserably time and again. I hope to ease the burden of those authors' who travel the same path I did in hopes of seeing their work in print.

Research

Before selecting the company you will allow to publish your work, it is advisable to research at least a few companies. I did the painstaking work of reading the articles and fine print to decide which company was right for me. There are many upstanding self-publishing companies out there who offer useful services for a price. These companies were not right for me, simply because of the price tag involved. I was not afraid of doing the leg work associated with writing, publishing, cover work and marketing of my work. I understood going in that I may never make a dime off of my writings. And that was okay with me. I would shoulder the burden and fail or succeed, it would be on me.

Another reason I selected Createspace was royalties. The amount I receive for each sale is significantly higher than the amount most other companies are offering.

With that being said, I looked at all the angles I could possibly think of and came to a decision that I think was right for me. The price was right, which in reality was very minimal. Like I said, the work did not faze me. I was setting myself up to either fail or succeed based on my own hard work. Money was never going to be a factor in my decision making process which is why Createspace made sense.

Create Account

If you've come this far I assume you have decided that Createspace is the company for you. Let me begin by saying that I am in no way affiliated with the company and do not endorse them or any other company. I simply wish to help the aspiring author who wishes to do what I did.

The first thing you need to do is sign up for an account by going to www.createspace.com. As of the writing of this article, signing up for an account was free. A free account on Createspace allows you access to: submit support tickets, access to the discussion boards, an account dashboard to manage your titles and much more. I will go more into depth later regarding the tools available to create and upload your interior and cover files.

Upgrade Account

Upgrading your account to a higher tier of service can have a few benefits. I was able to get a title in when Createspace was running a promotion. By signing up I basically received higher royalties and a lower purchase price for my book. It was a no lose situation at the time. I believe now it costs a minimal fee to get a title on the "Pro" plan but I would recommend it if you can afford it for the reasons mentioned. It ends up paying for itself many times over if you order copies as well as sell a few online.

Submit title

Before you can do anything to your title, you must first create the instance of your book on your dashboard. The process asks you for your title name, author information such as a bio as well as assigning an ISBN to your book. An ISBN is an International Standard Book Number which is used to identify books or book-like products published internationally. It is comprised of 10 digits and will be used by booksellers, libraries, wholesalers and distributors when referring to your book.

Once your title has been submitted and is available on your Createspace dashboard you can move forward with the next steps.

Interior File

Now that your novel is completed it's time to upload it into the system. But wait, before you hit that Upload button there are a couple things you should consider.

Have you proofread the manuscript? Has someone else proofread it? Has their mother proofread it as well as your uncle, little sister and great aunt?

Okay, you get the point. I have heard many stories, including one of my own which I'll share about proofreading nightmares. Other authors have told me about the proofreading and editing processes they have gone through and how extensive and careful a process is it, only to have mistakes *still* show up in the final product. I am not immune from this either. I was hasty and hit the upload button too quickly only to have many mistakes and flaws in the final product. I will not bore you any more on the subject and will leave you with a final thought: There is no such thing as too much editing and proofreading. Enough said.

Formatting

The interior file of your manuscript should be uniform, of a large enough font to be easily readable and be spaced accordingly. Depending on the dimensions of your book, fonts and size can vary. I suggest Times New Roman as the font and the size at 11. Look at the interior of professionally formatted novels. Most follow a common format. New paragraphs are indented with single spacing between lines. Every time a new character speaks a new line should be started. I could go on and on about the interior formatting, but I won't. Like I said, look at successful author's interiors and select the features you like to incorporate into your formatting. They all do it virtually the same way for a reason.

Your interior file should begin with a title page. The title of your book should be in a large font as well as the name of the author and publisher (although Createspace may take out any mention of their name. Why I'm not sure); nothing else. Next should be your book's synopsis. It should give a quick blurb of what your book is about and intrigue the reader to want to read more. Next should be a credits page that includes your ISBN, credits for cover art, publishing date and disclaimer. Before your story begins you can include a dedication page if you wish. A foreword or prologue can be included next; then comes the body of your story. Each new chapter should begin on a new page. I've seen multiple section break dividers from three stars to lines to just open white space. Again, look at a successful writer's choice and go with what you like. Finally, you can include an epilogue and maybe an advertisement for other works by you, your website and possibly an author bio.

Unless you have any other materials you want to include, this should take care of the interior file. If pictures are included, they should be at least 300 DPI to avoid blurriness on the final product. And unless otherwise specified, the entire interior of your book will be in black and white, pictures included. For advertisement on the final pages of my work, I converted the images to black and white before I sent them. This cut down on image size as well as gave me a good visual of how the picture would come out in print.

Once the interior file has been proofread, edited and formatted, a trim size and paper type needs to be selected. Trim size is the physical size of the pages of the book. There are many available to choose from. I selected the smallest size which was 5.25" X 8". The first is width and the second is height. The thickness of the book depends on how many pages it is. We'll get into that later.

To write and format my novels, I used Microsoft Word. Only when the interior files are *complete*, should you then format the file. Formatting takes the amount of words shown on each page as well as margins and makes them uniform throughout the file. Many times, I thought I had the interior done, then when I formatted it through everything off. This is why you should wait until everything you are going to put in the interior is in before you format.

To format in Office 2007 Word, open your finished interior file and select the page layout tab. Click the Size button, then select More Paper Sizes at the bottom. If you are going with 5.25" X 8", enter these numbers in the width and height on the Paper tab. Then select the Margins tab. By default, this is set to a 1" margin all the way around the edges. I found that using this setting created too much white space around the edge of the page. I used .75" for all settings on this page. When finished, hit OK and check out your file. You may have to reposition things to look right, but once you are done you should be almost ready to upload.

Createspace allows you to upload PDF files only. To convert from a Word document to a PDF requires either Adobe Illustrator, or free software you can download off the Internet. I prefer the free option and use Primo PDF. The software installs a virtual printer on your PC which you can “print” to. You are not actually printing the pages; you are converting the Word document to a PDF.

To convert using Primo PDF, begin by opening your finished Word document. It should be formatted in the trim size as well as having the margins set and all work completed as you want it to look in the final product. You cannot change the PDF file once it’s complete. You can edit the Word document then convert once again if you like.

Once your Word document is open, select the print function and browse to the Primo PDF printer. The program will ask you for a file name as well as a location to save the file. Once this is complete, select EBook as file type to save as and click OK. This will save the PDF to the location you selected and is now ready to upload to Createspace.

Cover File

Now it’s time to prepare the cover file. Hopefully you have some type of picture or art in mind for your cover. I used pictures I took then used Photoshop to add effects, the title text and author name as well as a synopsis of the book on the back cover. Createspace offers several templates to allow you to create your own cover and format it so the front cover, spine and back cover all align properly. The size of the cover will depend on the number of pages you uploaded in your interior file. You will need to upload the finished PDF to allow Createspace’s website to calculate the cover size. Once this is done, you will be able to download a zip file of the files needed to align your cover properly.

There are many ways to accomplish this. I used Photoshop as my photo editing software. I was able to import the template into Photoshop and place my cover photo over it to align my front cover, spine text and back cover to fit properly. Keep in mind that no text can reach the red or blue edges of the template. The background image should reach the blue but not overlap the red border. I chose to put a synopsis on the rear cover to give prospective buyers a teaser which would hopefully entice them to buy. On the spine I included the title and author name in large lettering, but did not cross the borders as I mentioned earlier. This is a slightly tricky process, but once you get the hang of it it’s easy. Since my first book was published, Createspace has deployed another tool to aid in the cover alignment process. I haven’t used it but I suggest you check it out if you are having issues.

When you are confident your cover is complete and aligned properly, Photoshop allows you to save as a PDF. If you use another program to edit your cover, you can use Primo PDF as detailed in the Formatting section.

Upload

Now you are ready to upload your files which is as easy as clicking the upload button and browsing to your files. Keep in mind that the cover file for your book should not exceed 40 MB and the interior file for your book should not exceed 100 MB.

Once the file has been uploaded, the Createspace review team will look at your files and make sure they meet the requirements. If so, you will receive an email telling you that you may now order a proof copy of your book. If the files have problems, you will be emailed with a cryptic error on what is wrong with your files as well as convoluted instructions on how you can possibly fix the issue. If you’re lucky, you will get it right the first time, otherwise it may be a painfully slow process getting the files in the proper format so they will be accepted by Createspace. Follow the instructions as closely as possible and you should be okay. Good luck.

Order Proof

If your files have been approved, go ahead and click the Order Proof button. This begins the process of your title being printed and shipped to you. Once you receive it, you can either approve or reject the final product. If you reject it for whatever reason, you can make the changes necessary and

begin the process once again. If by some stroke of luck you hit a home run on the first try, great! Click the Approve Proof button and get to selling!

Approve Proof

If your proof has been approved, you may now order copies for yourself to distribute, sell, show off or whatever it is you do with your published work. It will take approximately 3-5 days before you see your title available on Amazon as well as on Createspace's virtual shelves. That's it! You are now a published author! Tell your kids-tell your friends-tell your mom!

Conclusion

Marketing and selling your work should now take the driver's seat. Check the Articles section at <http://www.jjritonya.com> for articles and ideas on how to sell and market your novel.

Thanks,

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