



Is Your Manuscript Ready for Book Design?

A checklist for authors preparing to publish professionally

Before you invest in cover design, interior layout, ebook formatting, or self-publishing setup, make sure the right pieces are in place. This checklist will help you see what is ready, what still needs attention, and what questions to clarify before design begins.

1. Manuscript Status

Check all that apply:

- My manuscript is complete.
- My manuscript has been professionally edited.
- My manuscript has been proofread.
- I am still making major content changes.
- I only expect small typo corrections from here.
- My chapters are in final order.
- My front matter is ready.
- My back matter is ready.

Note: Interior layout should begin only after the manuscript is final. Major edits after layout begins can add time and cost.

2. Basic Book Details

Fill in what you know:

Working title:

Subtitle:

Author name as it should appear on the book:

Genre/category:

Target reader:

Approximate word count:

Preferred trim size, if known:

Formats needed:

- Paperback
- Hardcover
- Ebook
- Not sure yet



3. Publishing Route

Check all that apply:

- I plan to publish through KDP.
- I plan to publish through IngramSpark.
- I plan to use both KDP and IngramSpark.
- I am not sure which platform is best.
- I already have an ISBN.
- I need help understanding ISBNs.
- I need help deciding what files I will need.

Not sure yet?

Your publishing route affects your cover files, interior files, ISBNs, printing options, distribution, timeline, and budget. It is worth clarifying before design begins.

4. Production Needs

Check what you may need help with:

- Cover design
- Interior layout
- Ebook formatting
- Upload-ready files
- Metadata guidance
- Author bio
- Back cover copy
- Book description
- Author one-sheet
- Press kit
- Social media launch graphics
- Not sure yet

Not sure what your book needs next?

If this checklist raises more questions than answers, start with a **Book Design & Publishing Strategy Session**. We'll look at your manuscript, publishing goals, formats, timeline, budget, and next steps so you can move forward with a clear plan.

[Book a Strategy Session](#)



5. Cover Design Preparation

Check all that apply:

- I know what genre my book belongs to.
- I know what other books my readers are likely to buy.
- I have gathered 3 to 5 comparable book covers.
- I know what I do not want the cover to look like.
- I have back cover copy drafted.
- I have a short author bio ready.
- I have endorsements or review quotes, if any.
- I have author photos, if needed.
- I have barcode/ISBN information ready, if needed.

Note: A strong cover is not just attractive. It positions the book for the right reader.

6. Interior Design Preparation

Check all that apply:

- My manuscript is in one clean Word document.
- I have removed extra spaces, tabs, and inconsistent formatting.
- Chapter titles and section headings are clearly marked.
- Images, charts, tables, or illustrations are gathered in one place.
- I have permission to use all images.
- Captions and image credits are ready, if needed.
- Footnotes, endnotes, citations, or references are final.
- I know whether the book needs an index.
- I have checked names, quotes, links, and citations for accuracy.

7. Ebook Readiness

Check all that apply:

- I know whether I need a reflowable ebook or fixed-layout ebook.
- I understand that ebooks do not always match the print layout exactly.
- I have checked all links, URLs, and email addresses.
- I know whether images need to be included in the ebook.
- I know where I plan to distribute the ebook.
- I am not sure yet.



8. Timeline and Budget

Fill in what you know:

- Desired publication date:
- Desired launch date:
- Is this date flexible?

Check all that apply:

- I have allowed time for design.
- I have allowed time for revisions.
- I have allowed time for proofreading after layout.
- I have allowed time for upload and technical review.
- I have allowed time to order and review print proofs.
- I have budgeted for editing.
- I have budgeted for design.
- I have budgeted for ISBNs.
- I have budgeted for printing/proofs.
- I have budgeted for launch or marketing materials.

Note: A realistic timeline helps prevent rushed decisions and expensive corrections.

9. Final Readiness Check

- If you checked mostly “yes,” you may be ready for book design.
- If you checked many “not sure” items, you may need a clearer publishing plan before investing in cover design, interior layout, ebook formatting, or upload support.

Ready to move forward?

If your manuscript is close to finished, the next step is a **Book Design & Publishing Strategy Session**. We'll clarify what your book needs before you invest in design, formatting, or self-publishing setup. Still early in the process? Start with *From Manuscript to Published Book*, my practical guide for authors preparing to self-publish.

[Book a Strategy Session](#)

[Get the Book](#)

Bright Light Graphics can help with:

- Cover design
- Interior book design
- Ebook formatting
- Publishing file preparation
- Book launch materials
- Author one-sheets
- Press kits
- Self-publishing strategy