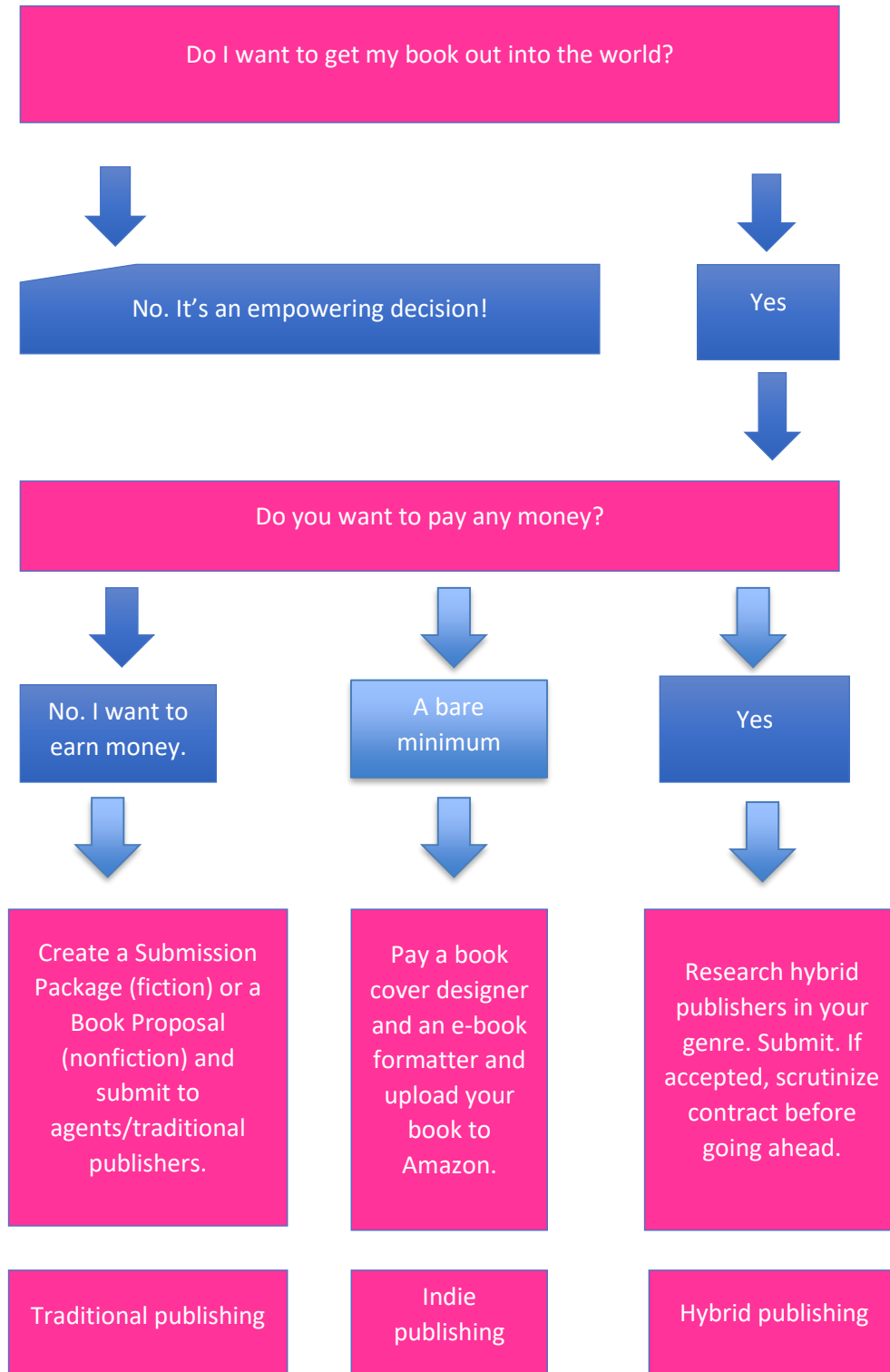


Plan to Publish

First, answer the One Crucial Question:

How much – if anything - do you want to pay?





Ok, but what do those terms mean?

Let's start by thinking about what publishing means.

You want to make turn your polished and edited work into a book (an ebook, a paperback a hardback, an audiobook or all of them) and you want to be able to either give away copies or to sell it to strangers.

When you publish your book, unless you own your own printing house, you are giving someone else legal permission to make copies of your original work.

This principle is true for all the types of publishing I've described below.

In all cases except for "author service", or "assisted" publishing, you are also granting that other person the right to distribute and sell copies of your work.

In deciding what type of publishing to pursue, you have some fundamental choices to make. We will talk about these on our call but read them through and think how you might answer them.

1. Is your book long enough to satisfy a traditional publisher's minimum requirements?
2. Is your book likely to contain photographs or illustrations?
3. Do you want your book to be stocked on the shelves of your local bookstore with national distribution? Rather than simply available as an ebook?
4. Who do you want to bear the costs of production? Your publisher? You?
5. Are you happy to take a small cut of net profits or do you have the time and expertise to organise promotion, sales and distribution yourself?
6. Do you want simply to write and to leave all the business of production to someone else – without stumping up cash for it?
7. Do you prioritise validation of your work by an agent or publisher over reaching your readers directly?
8. How quickly do you want, or need, to publish?



The purpose of our session together is to help make you aware of the facts that may influence your decision as to which publishing path to follow.

I go quite deep into the mechanics of hybrid publishing – if you do not wish to invest a large sum in publishing your book, then skim that bit.

Your Goals

To make the best decision for you and your book, you need to articulate your true publishing goal.

For example:

- Is your goal to hand a copy of your book on the family's history to your child?
- Is it to sell hundreds of copies at conferences to promote your professional reputation?
- Is it to put your book on library shelves throughout the county?

Think what your goal, individual to you, is.

Be clear about your goal.

What best fits your resources (time, energy and financial) and your intention?

Overview of the publishing world

Traditional publishing

One option open to you is to seek a publisher, either by asking the few that take direct submissions from writers (more often publishers of nonfiction do this, than fiction) or by persuading an agent to act as your intermediary.

This is known as **traditional publishing**, which is curious because this form of publishing, where a publishing company assumes the financial risk of the success of your work, has been around for perhaps a hundred and fifty years, whereas for three hundred years before that, publishing was self-financed or subscription based. (So crowd funding in publishing is not new, nor is self-publishing).

To do this, you research the market. If you are writing nonfiction, you may find you can approach the publishing house direct with your



submission. On the whole, by contrast, fiction “queries” are handled by literary agents who negotiate with the publishing house on behalf of the writer so your first step is to find an agent and persuade them of the commercial viability of your manuscript. The key to this (apart from having a superbly well-written story) is writing a Query Letter that grabs their attention. This is an art that needs to be studied and learned.

Indie publishing

Alternatively, you could take control of production, distribution and sales into your own hands by publishing on an electronic distribution platform. The most famous of these is Amazon’s Kindle Direct Publishing. This is called **independent (indie)** or **self publishing**.

Outsourcing printing functions, etc

If you chose not to seek *traditional publishing* (remembering that success is rare unless your book has been commissioned or you can persuade the publisher of its economic viability) and you do not want to go to the enormous effort of *independent publishing* for very little cost, then you will need to pay to outsource the work to other companies. Your options range from simple printing to working with something very like a traditional publisher, except you assume some financial risk in a business model that pays you royalties.

Companies that print books

You could simply pay for the cost of production of the book – formatting and design as an ebook, paperback, hardback, audiobook, a cover - by finding a company that specialises in doing that and arrange for all the marketing and distribution activity to sell the book yourself.

This is another form of self-publishing, albeit much more expensive than the KDP route. With a large print run resulting from this one-off transaction, it might leave you with a garage full of books waiting to be sold.

Going down a Printing byway

This is a helpful article on all things printing: as you love books, read it even if you have no intention of going down this route for your book!



<https://www.janefriedman.com/book-printing-101-what-you-need-to-know-before-approaching-a-printer/>

Plain Outsourcing

Alternatively – I hear you groan, *another alternative?* - you could pay for the book to be produced, and for marketing and distribution and any number of add-on services. There are a number of names for this type of publishing: for example “**author service company**” or if they provide a full range of services, “**full services publishing**”.

A growing difficulty in this area is that sales teams dream up new names for publishing services as the market develops, and sometimes a name for one type of publishing can be used for another (e.g., “**Partnership**”).

This area tends to the murkier end of the publishing world. It doesn't matter what they are called so long as you know what you are paying for, and that you get it. No royalties are paid in such arrangements. It's a product and service contract, plain and simple.

The crucial thing in distinguishing what these services offer is:

- To know what is possible
- To know what you need and
- To ask questions, in minute detail, of any company whose services you are thinking of engaging.

The single most important thing to understand the difference between a company that will produce your book for a one-off fee – essentially a glorified printers – and a company (a hybrid publisher) who has a vested interest in the success of your book's sales.

This is the most important distinction to make in the self-publishing world.

Books sales generate profits and a publisher wants profits to come from sales of your books to repay them for the money they have sunk into production and distribution.

The printing company's job is done once the books are produced.

That is the difference between a printing company and a publisher, whether or not you yourself are making a significant outlay for the publication of your own book.



Hybrid publishers

Hybrid publishing works this way: you, the author, pay a publisher an agreed price to create a book out of your manuscript and, to the extent you agree between you, to market, distribute and sell the book.

Unlike in traditional publishing – you carry the financial risk that the book won't sell and repay your outlay.

Why "Hybrid"?

The difference lies partly in the *selection process* of a hybrid publisher. This is what makes them a "hybrid": like a traditional publisher, they choose the manuscripts they publish; like assisted self-publishing, they take payment from the author.

However, and this is the crucial distinction with assisted self-publishing, they negotiate a royalty arrangement with the author on the future sales of the book.

Anecdotal evidence in the US suggests that the selection process is discerning. Perhaps a tenth of submissions are publication ready (subject to final edits), around a half need significant developmental editing before progressing and so that means around 40% are rejected.

Follow the Money

Publishing is a commercial venture, not a prize for literary quality.

People buy books they want to read, so sometimes the literary quality of the book is relevant – but not always. The skill of a publisher lies in an ability to spot the book a reader will want to buy.

It costs a great deal of money to run a publishing house. In traditional publishing as well as hybrid and self-publishing, there are premises to pay for, printing equipment to run or outsource, and staff to support. To keep the lights on, they need to run at a profit.

How a company stays in business varies, as I mentioned before, from performing a simple exchange of printing services for an up-front, one-off payment to a longer term sharing in the financial risk with the author. That risk is reflected in the percentage of royalty the publisher pays to the author.



How hybrid publishers charge

There is no standard approach in how a hybrid publisher charges.

What you should look for is crystal clarity in every component of the offering. If you don't understand what something is, ask – and ask again if the answer doesn't mean anything to you.

Some charge a single fixed price

In this case, the publisher lists the activities they will perform in return for a one-off, all inclusive price. A limit may be imposed on the overall word count of your work.

Typically, they may undertake to see to:

- Book cover
- Interior design
- Proofreading
- Obtaining ISBN
- Copyright filing
- e-book conversion and upload, management of metadata
- distribution to trade through distribution partner
- warehousing of short run of printed books for [one] year
- fulfilment of orders on short print runs

Add-ons

Options to have book sale reports on a monthly or quarterly basis may be offered, or opportunities to purchase books at cost, or graded reductions for increased print runs. There may be graded price increases for longer manuscripts.

Some of these add-ons may be unnecessary. I have seen one offering to set up Amazon's *Search Inside* feature – that is automatic nowadays on any ebook upload; another talks of "First Year's Registration Fees" – registration of what, in what?

Consider the value of each one carefully before throwing it into your basket.

Customised quotes



Some – perfectly reputable - companies will quote based on your needs: they will have worked out a menu, or a service list and you choose a bespoke service based on your selections from that menu.

This is where it pays you to have a thorough knowledge of the ins and outs of the publishing world, understanding how money flows through it and what language it uses, so that you know what to ask for, what you need and what you don't need.

Wilder models

I keep saying, publishing is a commercial venture. Therefore, if there is business to be had, there is no limit – subject to legality - as to what authors and publishers can agree between them. It depends on the author's appetite for risk.

In theory (I don't know anyone who offers this):

- One could arrange with the publisher to reach a certain number of pre-sales before publication begins.
- Or the publisher could require the author to buy a certain (large) number of copies over a certain period, in return for not having to make an up-front payment.
- An element of the costs, such as the book cover design, might be waived in exchange for a share of the royalties.

What you might expect to pay for

Note: you could bring down the cost a little by hiring your own team for the asterixed items. The quid pro quo is that you have more to manage.

- Editing and proofing *
- Cover design *
- ISBN
- Copyright permissions
- Production of e book
- Production of audiobook
- Printing of physical copies
- Advance Review Copies (ARCs)
- Postage and shipping
- Warehousing
- Marketing, Promotion and Publicity *
- Website *



How do you get paid for sales of your books?

It is common for a self published or hybrid published author not to recover their outlay in publishing their book. The publishing and printing costs, whether you go for 'more economical' print runs or Print on Demand, may well outweigh your income – the royalties.

Profitability is a different question, though, to how an author gets paid on the sale of each copy of their book.

How is the calculation of what is due to the author made?

What are royalties a percentage of?

Worked example

Suppose your hardback book's list price is £19.99. Let's assume you go for hybrid publishing and agree a royalty figure of 65% of the net proceeds of sale. No sales tax is being imposed.

When a consignment is sold to a bookseller, it is sold at a discount. Typically the bookseller would be charged 60% of the book's list price.

So, your book at the discounted price costs the bookseller £11.99.

Let's estimate the Print on Demand cost is £4.15 per book.

So far, the net sale of your book is £7.84 but there is more.

35% of that goes to the publisher: £2.74

That leaves you with your 65% royalty of £5.10, on a book the list price of which was £19.99.

So, royalties are calculated on the net sales of books, not the list price.

Is it possible to break even?

Yes, if you work hard at selling the books and take a second look at the print costs.

Print on demand

Suppose you spend £6000 in hybrid publishing costs on the same scenario. That is £6000 divided by the net sales, which is, rounded up, 1,177 books. So you need to sell 1,177 books to cover your outlay.

Copyright rests with the Creator. Please respect my Copyright.

©Ruth Bullivant

books@ruthbullivant.com
www.ruthbullivant.com



Print run

Suppose instead of agreeing with the publisher to Print on Demand, you commission a print run of 1500 books at £2.20 per book. That costs £3,300 on top of what you have agreed to pay the publisher.

Your publishing and print costs will therefore total £9,300.

The net sale price per book is £11.99 less £2.20, which is £9.97.

35% goes to the publisher, £3.43. That leaves you £6.54 royalty per book. Which is great, because that is £1.44 more than you would have got on Print on Demand.

But you will have to sell 1,422 books to break even, 245 more than if you chose Print on Demand, and before you can start to make a profit.

So the moral of this tale is make sure you know exactly what you are getting for your money.

Sales reports

A publisher should send an author a report on the sales of their book. The frequency of the reports depends on your agreement with the publisher. They could be monthly, two monthly or quarterly. The data in the reports depends on timely reporting by the end seller, so quite often there will be lags in the reporting.

And an annoying little accounting feature of retail bookselling – from the author's perspective – is that the bookseller is entitled to return unsold books after a period, say, three months. So don't rely on the number of books sold to the bookseller; the only figure that matters is the net sales figure of a book sold to a customer.

What sort of publishing will suit you best?

The route to seeking traditional publishing is for you if:

- You have written a book with a clear 'route to market' – one that a publisher will judge can recoup their investment in producing your book – and is of the right length: roughly, over 60,000 words for slim nonfiction, over 75,000 words for a novel. In most cases, under



120,000 words but that is up to individual publishers and genre-dependent.

- You are resilient in the face of rejection and prepared to put effort into multiple submissions with no guarantee of eventual success.
- You can stand a potential 2-3 year wait for publication of your book.

Independent publishing is for you if:

- You like being in sole charge of your creative project and have time to plan, learn new skills and to carry out the myriad of tasks necessary.

Paying for author-services or assisted self publishing is for you if:

- You want to take delivery of boxfuls of your books to sell or give away, yourself.

Seeking hybrid publishing is for you if:

- You have no time, skill or desire to independently publish.
- You like a sense of partnership and control over design decisions such as the cover, the title and want the expertise of an experienced publisher.
- Want to be associated with a publishing company that fits your personal style.

Comparisons

It is difficult to compare the various forms of publishing because there is so much variation in the way each company does business, but in this table, I have made some reasonable assumptions for the sake of simplicity:

	Traditional	Hybrid	Assisted	independent
Submission	✓	✓	✗	✗
Vetting	✓	✓	✗	✗
Rejection	✓	✓	✗	✗
Editorial	✓	✓	✗	advisable
Design	✓	✓	✓	✗
Production	✓	✓	✓	✗
Distribution	✓	optional	optional	on platform
Sales	✓	optional	optional	own
Marketing	Limited	optional	optional	✗



Checklist of questions to ask a publisher (trad, hybrid)

Whether you are going to sign a contract with a traditional publisher or you are about to spend thousands of pounds on a publishing service, you will want to systematically research the companies before you choose to partner with them.

Check the website of each publisher.

- Buy a couple of books to check the quality.
- Find out what three authors have to say about them.

This is a list questions to ask your potential publisher. You may have come up with other questions after reading through this article. Some of the answers may be found on the company's website; others you would ask face to face and before signing a contract.

In the case of hybrid publishing, note how this list opens up more useful information than the question, "How much do you charge?" The question is not *how much* but *what am I paying for?*

<i>Questions to ask</i>	<i>Relevant to</i>		
	<i>Traditional (direct submission)</i>	<i>Hybrid</i>	<i>Assisted</i>
How quickly do you decide whether to accept my book for publication?	✓	✓	✗
If you accept my book for publication, when will I see my book on the shelves? Can you give me an outline project plan?	✓	✓	✗
If you require me to get coaching, or my manuscript edited before resubmitting to you, do you have an in-house team that can help me?	✗	✓	✗
Do you have in-house copy, line and proofreaders?	✓	✓	✗
How big is your staff? What is the turnover of staff?	✓	✓	✓



Would you require me to use your in-house staff or can I use my own team? Does that reduce my bill?	x	✓	x
How much control do I have over selecting the final book cover? The title?	✓	✓	✓
Do you anticipate any problems in creating the interior design of my book?	✓	✓	✓
Who is responsible for seeking copyright permissions to use quotations, song lyrics and images in my book – me? Or you? Who is responsible for paying for ensuing copyright licences?	✓	✓	✓
Do you obtain and pay for the ISBN?	✓	✓	✓
(USA) Do you register the copyright on my behalf? Who pays the fee?	✓	✓	✓
What formats do you produce my book in: print – paperback? Hardback? Ebook? Audiobook?	✓	✓	✓
How do you manage printing: do you batch it in print runs – how big? Do you provide Print on Demand (POD)?	✓	✓	x
What is the unit cost of each printed book for respectively POD and print run?	✓	✓	✓
How long will you store my books for? Where? How quickly can I access them personally?	x	✓	✓
Do you upload to Amazon (and any other e-platforms?) and do you	✓	✓	x



create and upload the metadata for my book?			
What support do you give in getting my book into bookstores? Onto eplatforms? Other trade outlets? Libraries?	✓	✓	✗
Do you fulfil orders? For how long? Who pays the shipping – me or the customer?	✓	✓	✗
Can I sell my book direct from my own website?	✓	✓	✗
What promotional activity will you undertake?	✓	✓	✗
Will you help me with my website set up?	✓	✓	✗
Do you have a Sales team? Will they be pro-active in pre-selling my book to bookshops, libraries and online retailers? Show me what you have done in the last year for three of your books.	✓	✓	✗
If I publish with you, will you try to stop me publishing new books independently?	✓	✗	✗
What brings our agreement to an end? What happens to my book after the end of our agreement?	✓	✓	✓
When will my right to publish my own work revert to me?	✓	✓	✗
Can you put me in touch with a couple of your authors so I can talk to them?	✓	✓	✓
Will I have to assign my right to produce an Audio version of my book to a	✓	?	✗

Copyright rests with the Creator. Please respect my Copyright.

©Ruth Bullivant

books@ruthbullivant.com
www.ruthbullivant.com



publisher you introduce me to? (if speaking to Agent)			
---	--	--	--

Resources

How reputable is this hybrid or assisted services company?

- The Best Self-Publishing Services. (And the Worst). Rated by ALLi.
<https://selfpublishingadvice.org/best-self-publishing-services/>

Give me data about independent (or self) publishing

- 'Facts and Figures about Self-Publishing: The Impact and Influence of Indie Authors'
<https://selfpublishingadvice.org/facts-and-figures-about-self-publishing-the-impact-and-influence-of-indie-authors/>

What rules govern hybrids?

- US only: IBPA Standards 2018 (non enforceable guidelines)
<https://www.ibpa-online.org/page/hybridpublisher>

How can I find agents and publishers?

- Writers' and Artists' Yearbook (annual)

From 'all good bookshops' and may be accessible through local library