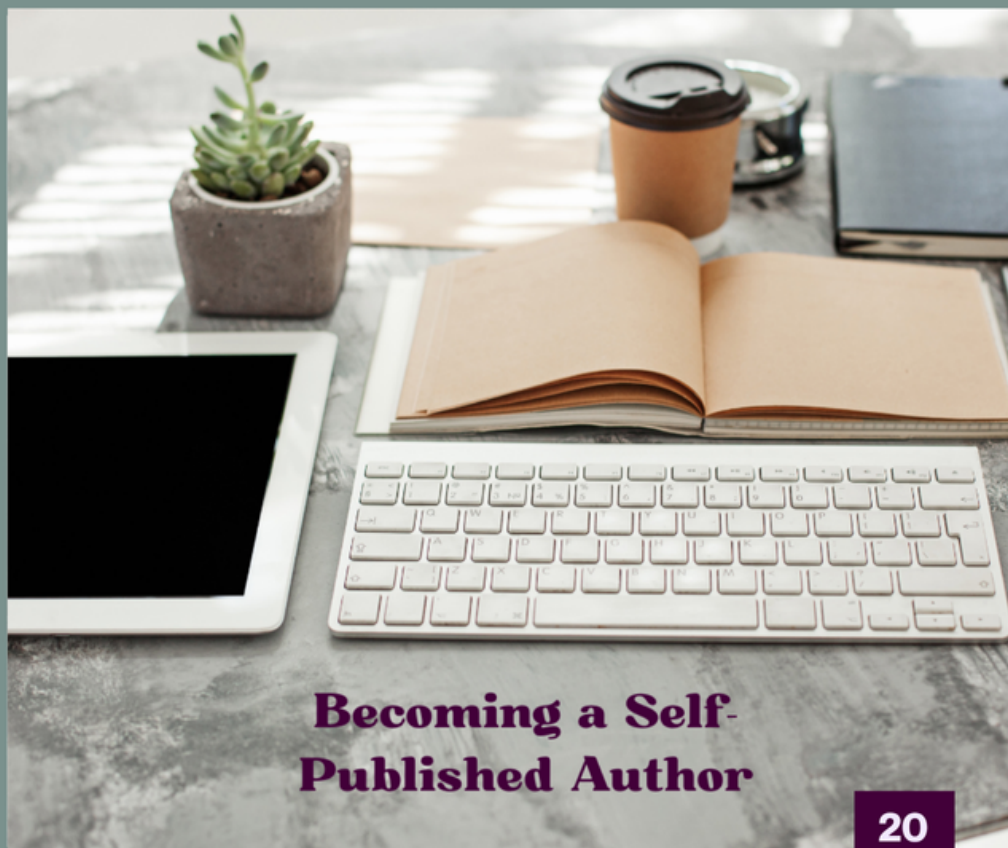


A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING



**Becoming a Self-
Published Author**

20
25



Welcome

Congratulations on taking the first steps toward becoming a published author. This booklet is written to walk you, clearly and practically, through the self-publishing process — from polishing your manuscript to planning a successful launch and thinking about long-term sales.

We designed this guide to be useful whether you're publishing a picture book, a middle-grade novel, a non-fiction guide, or an adult fiction title. Where helpful, we highlight considerations for children's books (illustration, layout, target word counts) without assuming every title needs the same process.



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1. Who we are

The Curious Philomathic is an independent publishing house founded by author and storyteller Louise A. Shaw.

In 2021, Louise began her publishing journey by submitting two children's book manuscripts to several traditional publishers in London. Within weeks, she received five publishing offers—an exciting milestone for any new writer.

But there was a darker side. Many publishers require authors to pay thousands of pounds just to see their manuscript turned into a book. That huge investment doesn't guarantee sales—it simply lines the publisher's pockets. Even worse, authors are often expected to give up copyright and have no assurance of support with promotion or sales.

This revelation was a turning point. Louise realised that while many writers dream of being published, few fully understand the hidden costs and restrictions that come with traditional contracts. Determined to find another path, she explored independent publishing as a way to:

- Maintain full creative control
- Protect copyright
- Produce high-quality books that still reach readers

Before her first books went into production, she founded The Curious Philomathic Publishing House.

After navigating the challenges of indie publishing—covering everything from editing and design to marketing and distribution—Louise defined the mission of The Curious Philomathic:

- Empower authors to publish their books without giving up their rights
- Provide transparent support with no hidden costs
- Champion diverse voices and stories that might otherwise go unheard.



2. Overview: the self-publishing route

Self-publishing places the author in control of every stage: editorial decisions, design, production, pricing, and marketing. That control is powerful — but it also means you will shoulder the cost of every element. The decision to take the self-publishing route is not a small one, but for many authors the risk is worth taking.

Here are a few options you might need to consider:

- Do-it-yourself (DIY): You coordinate freelance editors, illustrators, typesetters, printing companies, social platforms, and sales yourself, often via print-on-demand services or by arranging your own print runs.
- Partner with an indie publisher or hybrid press: They provide services such as editing, design, and distribution, while you retain more rights than in most traditional publishing deals.
- Use a full-service provider (sometimes called traditional or hybrid services): They may oversee editing, typesetting, illustrations, cover design, listings, distribution, and sales. Always read contracts carefully to understand rights, obligations, and costs.

We hope this booklet will help you make the right choice for you. No two self-publishing journeys are the same, and no process follows exactly the same route. But we will walk you through the steps and provide checklists to keep the process manageable.

3. Step 1 — Prepare your manuscript

Blood, sweat, tears and some very late nights have gone into producing your final manuscript. If you thought that was the hardest part, you might be wrong. Depending on what genre you are writing, your word count will vary. Typically the following rules apply:

Picture book: 500-1000 words

Young Reader Chapter Book: 4000-8000 words

Young Adult Chapter Book: up to 60000 words

Adult Chapter: 80000 words upwards

Now it's time to get a clean, polished manuscript that shows the book you want to publish.

What to do:

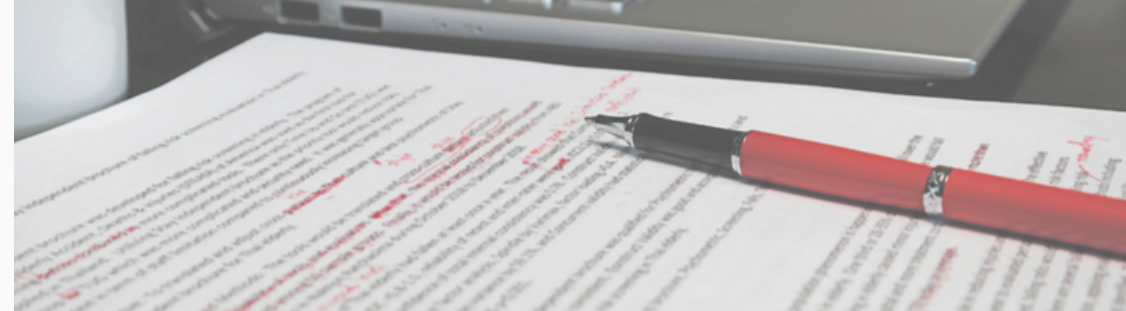
- Know your audience. Who are you writing for? For children's books, decide if it's a picture book, early reader, or middle grade.
- Self-edit. Fix obvious errors, tighten your language, check spacing and structure. Use tools to help you like read aloud, Grammarly, and manuscript formatting.
- Ask beta readers. Find trusted people who read your genre and ask for honest feedback. Join a writers group or workshop.
- Read your genre. This can help you find inspiration and insight into writing trends and styles.
- Devise a writing timetable. Allocate time to dedicate to writing, little and often is always best. No one likes having writers block and sitting at a blank computer screen.



- Consider signing up to writing course. Writing is hard work and it takes practice.
- Format your manuscript. Use a simple font, double-spaced, with clear headers. For picture books, sketch out page breaks or use a 32 pages double spread so your editor/illustrator can see how you imagine the flow. or map out what you want to see in each chapter. This will help with your flow of writing.
- Use a professional editor - in order for you to give your book the best chance as possible, find an editor you can work with.
- And finally - go easy on yourself. Give yourself time. This is not an overnight success.

Checklist:

- Know who you want to write for.
- Read your genre.
- Enrol in writing courses, join a writers group or maybe find a book writing coach.
- Work out a writing timetable and try to stick to it.
- Structure your manuscript and decide how you want it to look.
- Use writing aids - these are essential!
- Use beta readers - they will spots things you don't.
- Find an editor - they are worth their weight in gold!!
- Give yourself a break - don't rush it, but don't stress it either.



4. Step 2 — Editing (how to plan and what to expect)

Why an Editor Matters

Every writer needs an editor — even the best-selling ones. When you've lived inside your manuscript for months (or years), it's almost impossible to see it with fresh eyes. That's where an editor steps in.

An editor doesn't just fix spelling mistakes. They help you spot gaps in the story, smooth out clunky sentences, and make sure your book flows in a way that keeps readers turning the page. They're your partner in polishing your work so it shines at a professional standard.

Think of it like this: you wouldn't launch a new product without testing it. In the same way, sending your manuscript into the world without editing risks losing readers' trust and sales. A good editor makes sure your story is the best version of itself — and that's a gift both to you and your future audience.

Editing brings your manuscript to a professional level. There are a few types to know:

- Developmental edit: Big picture feedback — plot, pacing, characters, and structure.
- Line edit: Improves style, flow, and voice.
- Copyedit: Fixes grammar, punctuation, and consistency.
- Proofread: A final tidy-up before printing.

Tips for working with an editor:

- Ask for a sample edit first.
- Agree on what's included (how many passes, turnaround time).
- Be open to feedback — but remember, it's still your story.





5. Step 3 — Design & Illustration

The Power of Design & Illustration

Readers do judge books by their covers — and often by what's inside too. A strong design can make the difference between a book that looks homemade and one that feels professional and inviting.

For covers, design is your first chance to capture attention. The right colours, fonts, and imagery signal the genre and mood of your story in seconds. For children's books, the cover also needs to delight the child and reassure the adult who's buying.

Inside, design shapes how easily readers can enjoy your story. Clear fonts, good spacing, and thoughtful layout make reading effortless. In illustrated books, the way images and words work together is just as important as the story itself.

Illustrations bring your world to life. They add personality, deepen storytelling, and create emotional connection and for those who are neurodivergent, illustrations are the make or break of capturing their attention. A good illustrator doesn't just draw pictures — they help tell the story visually, often in ways words alone cannot.

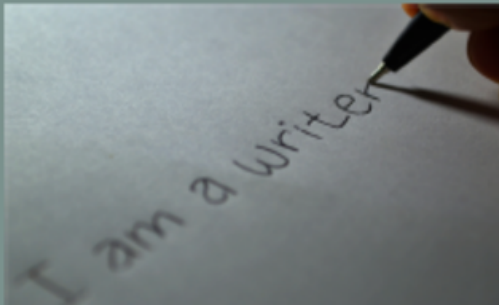
In short: design and illustration aren't extras. They're part of the storytelling itself. Investing in them shows your readers that your book is worth their time.

How to Brief a Designer or Illustrator

A clear brief saves time, money, and stress. Here's what to include:

- Project overview: What your book is about, who it's for, and the overall tone (funny, magical, serious, educational).
- Target audience: Age range, genre, and any comparable books they should know.
- Style references: Share covers, colour palettes, or illustration styles you like.
- Deliverables: What you need (e.g., front cover only, full wraparound, chapter headings, 12 full-page illustrations, spot art).
- Formats & specs: Trim size of your book, resolution (300 dpi for print), file types (usually PDF, TIFF, or PNG for images), and colour mode (CMYK for print).
- Timeline & budget: Be realistic about how long illustration takes and confirm payment milestones. Be warned: illustrations are expensive and there are extra factors you will need to be aware of. The rule of thumb is, illustrators will always retain the copyright to the illustrations. Regardless of the fact that you have paid for them, they are the Illustrators Intellectual Property. When you have found the right Illustrator, you will have to decide whether you will enter a contract for collaboration or standalone. The difference is, standalone will be full price with no commission once the book is on sale and making profit, whereas collaboration is a reduced cost, typically half price and then up to 20% commission once your book is making a profit.
- Rights: Make sure the contract spells out usage (print, ebook, audiobook, merchandise). Always get it in writing.
- Be prepared it will take time. You will be looking at 3-6 months from start to finish.

A strong brief helps your designer or illustrator bring your vision to life — and avoids costly misunderstandings later.



6. Step 4 — Legal, rights & metadata

When you self-publish, you're not just an author — you're also the publisher. That means you need to protect your work and make sure it can be found by readers.

Copyright

The good news is: your book is protected the moment you write it. But keep dated drafts and contracts safe — they're proof of ownership if ever needed.

Contracts & Rights

Be cautious when working with freelancers, publishers, or service providers. Always read contracts carefully. Make sure you know:

- What rights you're granting (print, ebook, audio, translations, merchandise).
- For how long (a limited term is better than forever).
- Where (worldwide or specific regions).

Ideally, you keep as many rights as possible. That way, you stay in control of your story.

Metadata

Metadata is simply the information that helps readers (and retailers) find your book. It includes:

- Title and subtitle
- Author name
- Keywords and categories (e.g., "Children's Fantasy," "Mindfulness for Teens")
- Series information
- Book description (the "blurb")



Think of metadata as your book's shop window online. Clear, accurate information makes it easier for the right readers to discover you.

ISBNs & Barcodes

An ISBN is a unique number that identifies each format of your book (print, ebook, audiobook). You can use a free one from some print-on-demand distributors, but they will be listed as your publisher and they will retain the copyright to you book. Buying your own keeps you listed as the official publisher. For print books, you'll also need a barcode linked to your ISBN and price.

Nielsen hold records of all ISBN number that are allocated. You can buy on from them starting from £99.00. However, at The Curious Philomathic, we offer you a reduced price, to help you get on the ladder with Nielsen. The Curious Philomathic will be listed as the publisher, but you retain 100% of your copyright.

Something else to bear in mind. If you want to produce a physical book as well as an ebook you will need two different ISBN numbers.

British Library

As a publisher, there is a legal right to send of **FIVE** copies to the British Library, failure to do so, will lead to legal action. Sadly, self-published authors don't get paid for these and don't get help towards costs. It's an expense that has to be written off. We have included the address within the **Resources** section.

7. Step 5 — Formats, Production & Distribution

One of the biggest advantages of self-publishing is flexibility. You decide how your story reaches readers — whether through eBooks, printed copies, or even audiobooks. Each format has its strengths:

eBooks

- Instant global distribution through platforms like Amazon KDP, Apple Books, Kobo., IngramSpark, Book Vault.
- Lower upfront costs (no printing).
- Great for accessibility: readers can adjust fonts, sizes, and background colours.
- Downsides: some genres (like picture books or highly illustrated texts) don't always translate well into digital format.

Print Books

- Still the most popular choice, especially for children's books, non-fiction, and gift books.
- Options include print-on-demand (no upfront storage costs, but higher unit price) or bulk printing (lower per-book cost, but higher upfront investment).
- Print gives your book a physical presence for events, signings, and retail shelves.
- Pages: Some platforms have a minimum page count they will accept for print-on-demand services. KDP won't take anything under 72 pages.
- Printed books means stock and upfront cost. Be prepared for stock everywhere and the length of time it might take to shift it.



Audiobooks

- Fast-growing market, particularly for fiction, self-help, and educational titles.
- Can be produced via professional narration or AI-assisted tools (quality varies).
- Distributed through platforms like Audible, Findaway Voices, and Spotify.
- Higher production costs, but they open your book to an audience that prefers listening to reading.

Tip: Many successful authors publish in multiple formats. Start with the format that fits your audience and budget, then expand as your readership grows.

- Ebooks: Use EPUB format. For children’s books, consider fixed-layout for images.
- Print: Choose size, paper, and binding. Always order a proof copy.
- Audio: Growing in popularity. You’ll need a narrator (or record yourself), editing, and mastering.



8. Step 6 — Pricing, royalties & accounting basics

Money talk isn’t the glamorous side of publishing — but it’s essential if you want your book to succeed and your effort to be rewarded. As a self-publisher, you decide your price, you receive royalties, and you’re responsible for the bookkeeping that comes with them.

Pricing

- Look at comparable books in your genre and format — your price should feel familiar to readers.
- Balance affordability with profit: too low and you under-value your work; too high and you risk losing buyers.
- Consider format: eBooks are usually priced lower than print, while illustrated children’s books may be priced higher due to production costs.

Royalties

- Print-on-demand platforms pay you a percentage of the retail price after subtracting printing costs.
- eBooks often earn higher royalty percentages (up to 70%) but vary by platform and price point.
- Audiobooks royalties depend on whether you go exclusive with one distributor (like Audible) or “wide” with multiple platforms.

Accounting basics

- Keep clear records of all expenses (editing, design, ISBNs, ads) and all income (royalties, direct sales).
- Save receipts and invoices — they’ll matter at tax time.



- In many countries, authors can claim creative expenses against tax, but rules vary. Check local guidance or speak with an accountant.
- Set aside a percentage of each payment for tax, so you're not caught off guard later.

Tip: Treat your book like a small business. Even simple spreadsheets (or accounting software, if you prefer) will help you stay organised and see if your book is turning a profit.

Sample Profit Breakdown (Print-on-Demand Book)

Let's say you publish a paperback children's book priced at £10.00 through Amazon KDP:

- List price (set by you): £10.00
- Amazon's sales commission (40%): – £4.00
- Printing cost (based on size, colour, page count): – £3.00
- Your royalty (what you receive): £3.00 per book sold

Now compare this with an eBook priced at £3.99:

- List price: £3.99
- Platform royalty rate (70% if priced £2.99–£9.99): – £1.20 (platform fee)
- Your royalty: £2.79 per copy sold

And an audiobook priced at £14.99 via Audible (exclusive distribution):

- List price: £14.99
- Audible royalty rate (40% exclusive): £6.00
- Your royalty: £6.00 per copy sold

Takeaway:

- Print books carry higher production costs, so margins are slimmer.
- eBooks are inexpensive to produce and often bring higher profit per sale.
- Audiobooks have the highest earning potential per copy, but also the highest upfront cost (narration/production).



9. Step 7 — Pre-launch, launch and marketing

Writing the book is only half the journey — the other half is making sure people know it exists. A clear marketing plan helps you build momentum, connect with readers, and give your book the best possible start.

Pre-launch (building anticipation)

- Create your author platform: Set up a simple website, mailing list, and at least one social media channel you enjoy using.
- Share the journey: Post sneak peeks of illustrations, behind-the-scenes updates, or your cover reveal. Even your journey to get to this stage. People want to invest in YOU! before they will invest in your book.
- Advance readers: Send review copies to bloggers, early readers, or friends who can help spread the word.
- Gather reviews: Early testimonials give your book credibility before launch day.

Launch (making a splash)

- Pick a date: Announce it clearly and stick to it.
- Host an event: This could be online (a live stream, Q&A, or giveaway) or in person (a signing, book fair, or school visit).
- Engage your community: Encourage readers to share photos, reviews, or unboxing videos.
- Press & local media: Reach out to local newspapers, radio, or community groups — they often love featuring new authors.

Marketing (long-term visibility)

- Keep talking about your book: Sales don't stop after launch day. Share stories, quotes, or themes connected to your book.



- Pitch to libraries & bookshops: Many are open to stocking indie books, especially with a professional finish. Although I will add, libraries rarely touch self-published authors, which is a great shame. They are missing out on many many fabulous books and authors. Something I would gladly champion to change.
- Collaborate: Partner with other authors, illustrators, or small businesses for cross-promotion.
- Paid ads (optional): Platforms like Amazon Ads or Facebook can help, but always start small and measure results.

Remember: Marketing isn't about shouting the loudest. It's about building relationships, sharing your passion, and helping the right readers discover your work. Be present, and consistent.

Sample Launch Timeline

6 months before launch

- Finalise your manuscript and begin professional editing.
- Research illustrators, cover designers, and/or formatters.
- Outline your marketing plan and set a provisional launch date.

3 months before launch

- Cover design complete — share a cover reveal online.
- Set up your author website and mailing list.
- Request advance reviews (friends, early readers, bloggers).
- Order proof copies of your print book.

1 month before launch

- Share teasers: excerpts, illustrations, or fun facts about your book.
- Confirm launch day details (venue, online event, or campaign).
- Send press releases to local newspapers, magazines, and radio.
- Line up social media posts for launch week.

Launch week

- Host your launch event (online or in person).
- Post photos, videos, or a “thank you” message.
- Encourage readers to share reviews and unboxings.
- Offer a special promotion (discount, signed copies, or giveaways).

1 month after launch

- Keep momentum: share reviews, press mentions, or reader photos.
- Pitch your book to libraries, schools, and bookshops.
- Start gentle paid ads if within budget.
- Begin planning your next project — keep your audience engaged.

Enjoy to process. It will be exhausting but worth while. You will remain fully in control and all the hard work will pay off.



10. Step 8 — Post-launch: reviews, events, backlist

Publishing your book isn't the finish line — it's the starting point of your life as an author. The post-launch stage is about keeping your book visible, nurturing readers, and setting yourself up for the long game.

Reviews

- Reviews are gold: they build trust and help new readers decide to buy.
- Encourage readers to leave honest reviews on Amazon, Goodreads, or social media.
- Share snippets of positive reviews in your marketing (with permission).
- Don't be discouraged by the occasional negative review — it happens to every author. And don't forget, your book will not be the taste of everyone, it's not personal, your readers don't know you.

Events

- Appearances, whether at schools, libraries, book fairs, or festivals, give you valuable face-to-face time with readers.
- Events are opportunities to sell signed copies, share your story, and build your reputation.
- Even small gatherings (like local craft fairs or author panels) can create loyal fans who follow your future work.

Backlist

- Once you have more than one book, your earlier titles become your backlist.
- Each new release can boost sales of your previous books — readers who enjoy one will often buy others.

- Keep your backlist fresh: update covers, reformat interiors, or bundle books into box sets or collections.

Tip: Think long-term. A book isn't just for launch day — it can continue selling for years if you keep it in circulation, share it at events, and link it to your growing body of work.

Post-launch Checklist

- ☐ Ask readers for honest reviews on Amazon, Goodreads, and social media.
- ☐ Share review highlights on your website, mailing list, and platforms.
- ☐ Schedule local events (libraries, schools, bookshops, fairs).
- ☐ Prepare a short author talk or reading for events.
- ☐ Keep copies of your book handy for signings or direct sales.
- ☐ Pitch your book to libraries and indie bookshops.
- ☐ Review your sales data — what's working, what isn't?
- ☐ Update your author website with reviews, events, and press mentions.
- ☐ Cross-promote with other authors or small businesses.
- ☐ Revisit your backlist — update covers, formatting, or descriptions if needed.
- ☐ Start planning your next project to keep readers engaged.



11. Sample timeline & budget checklist

Every publishing journey is different, but having a rough timeline and budget in mind will help you stay organised and avoid surprises.

Sample Timeline (12-month plan)

- Months 1–3: Final edits, proofreading, and beta reading
- Months 4–5: Cover design, illustrations, typesetting, and formatting
- Month 6: Order proof copies, start sharing teasers and building buzz
- Months 7–8: Advance reviews, pre-orders (if available), marketing prep
- Month 9: Book launch (events, press, social media)
- Months 10–12: Post-launch marketing, reviews, pitching to shops/libraries, and planning next project

Budget Checklist

Publishing can be done on a shoestring or with investment — the key is knowing your priorities. Here are common costs to consider:

- Editing: Developmental edits, copyediting, proofreading (£300–£2,000 depending on length and depth)
- Design & Illustration: Cover design, interior layout, illustrations (£200–£3,000+)
- Production: Print-on-demand setup fees, bulk printing, ISBNs, barcodes (£50–£2,000 depending on print runs)
- Marketing: Ads, press releases, website hosting, event materials (£50–£500+)
- Distribution: Platform fees or percentages deducted from sales (varies)
- Events & Promotion: Travel, stalls at fairs, merchandise (bookmarks, posters, etc.) (£50–£500+)

Tip: Decide your must-haves (editing and design are non-negotiable for a professional book) and adjust the rest according to your budget. Keep a simple spreadsheet to track every expense and income.

We hope you have found this booklet helpful. We wish you the very best of luck!



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12. FAQ's

What is The Curious Philomathic?

The Curious Philomathic is an independent publishing house founded by Louise A Shaw. We don't directly design covers or created to give authors a fair and transparent way to publish their work. Our aim is to empower writers to publish without losing copyright, hidden costs, or unnecessary barriers. We provide ISBN numbers, publishing support, and guidance for indie authors who want to publish their work.

What does an ISBN do, and why do I need one?

An ISBN (International Standard Book Number) is a unique identifier for your book. It allows your book to be listed in major catalogues such as Gardners Wholesalers and makes it discoverable by bookshops, libraries, and distributors. Without an ISBN, it's much harder for your book to be officially stocked or found.

How much does it cost to publish through The Curious Philomathic?

We offer a simple package: £30 for an ISBN number and listing on Gardners Wholesalers.

- From there, you are free to manage your own marketing, distribution, and sales. We'll support you by featuring your book on our Author Page and sharing it on our social media channels.

Do you design book covers or illustrations?

We don't directly design covers or illustrations, but we can recommend trusted freelancers and services. A professional cover is one of the most important investments for an indie author.

Which print-on-demand services do you recommend?

We suggest using Amazon KDP, BookVault, or IngramSpark, to name but a few, for print-on-demand publishing. The Curious Philomathic do not provide in-house printing. You can always opt to bulk print and manage sales and distribution yourself. Ask us for more information.

Will you market my book for me?

Marketing is largely the responsibility of the author, but we do help by: Posting about your release on our social media channels

- We also encourage you to build your own marketing strategy to maximise visibility and sales.

Do I keep the copyright to my book?

Yes! One of our core values is ensuring authors keep their copyright. Unlike some traditional publishing contracts, you will always retain ownership of your work.

What services do you offer?

Our core services include:

- Supplying ISBN numbers (£30 each)
- Listing your book with Gardners Wholesalers
- Featuring you on our Author Page with links to your book
- Sharing your work on our social media platforms

We also offer optional extras such as proofreading services and recommendations for cover design, illustration, and print-on-demand services.

What happens if I decide to publish under another publishing house later on?

That's absolutely fine. You will lose the ISBN number assigned by The Curious Philomathic, and your new publisher will issue a fresh ISBN. You will need to update your manuscript to reflect the new ISBN and publisher details, but your copyright remains yours.

Do you handle book marketing for me?

We will promote your book on The Curious Philomathic's social media platforms and feature you on our Author Page. However, we do recommend that you take ownership of your marketing to build your audience and visibility.

Do you provide editing and proofreading services?

Yes! We offer an Advanced Proofreading Service suitable for manuscripts, academic papers, articles, and more. This ensures your work is polished, professional, and ready for readers or submission

Do I need an ISBN?

If you want your book to be listed with Gardners Wholesalers (which supplies most UK bookshops and libraries), then yes, you need an ISBN. Having an ISBN also makes your book more professional and discoverable.

I'm not ready to publish yet – can you still help?

Yes! We offer proofreading and guidance for manuscripts, short stories, academic work, articles, and more. Even if you're at the early stages, we can help you prepare your writing for the next step.



13. Further resources & contact

Design & Illustration

Association of Illustrations

www.theaoi.com

Freelancer

www.freelancer.com

Fiverr

www.fiverr.com

Etsy

www.etsy.com

Book Brush

www.bookbrush.com

Canva

www.canva.com

Heyzine PDF to Flipbooks

www.heyzine.com

Print-On-Demand

Amazon KDP

www.kdp.amazon.com

IngramSpark

www.ingramspark.com

Book Vault

www.bookvault.app

ISBN & British Library

ISBN Nielsen

www.nielsentitleeditor.com

British Library -
Legal Deposit Office,
British Library,
Wetherby,
LS23 7BY

For Educational Needs

Renaissance

www.uk.renaissance.com

Bulk Printing

BookPrintingUK

www.bookprintinguk.com

Alliance of Independent Authors www.allianceindependentauthors.org

Are you ready to take the next step?

Want to know more information about what The Curious Philomathic Publishing House can offer you?

Why not get in contact!

Contact

Phone: 07802 651306

Web: www.thecuriousphilomathicpublishinghouse.co.uk

Email: the curiousphilomathic@gmail.com

