

Publishing on Amazon - my personal experience.

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This document is based on my own experience of self publishing on Amazon. It may not exactly fit your own requirements therefore ,but I hope it's enough to get you started. I suggest you read through the document first before actually starting rather than try to go step by step. That comes later.

Write your book

This sounds obvious but this stage is crucial in terms of layout and formatting otherwise you may hit problems when it comes to uploading later.

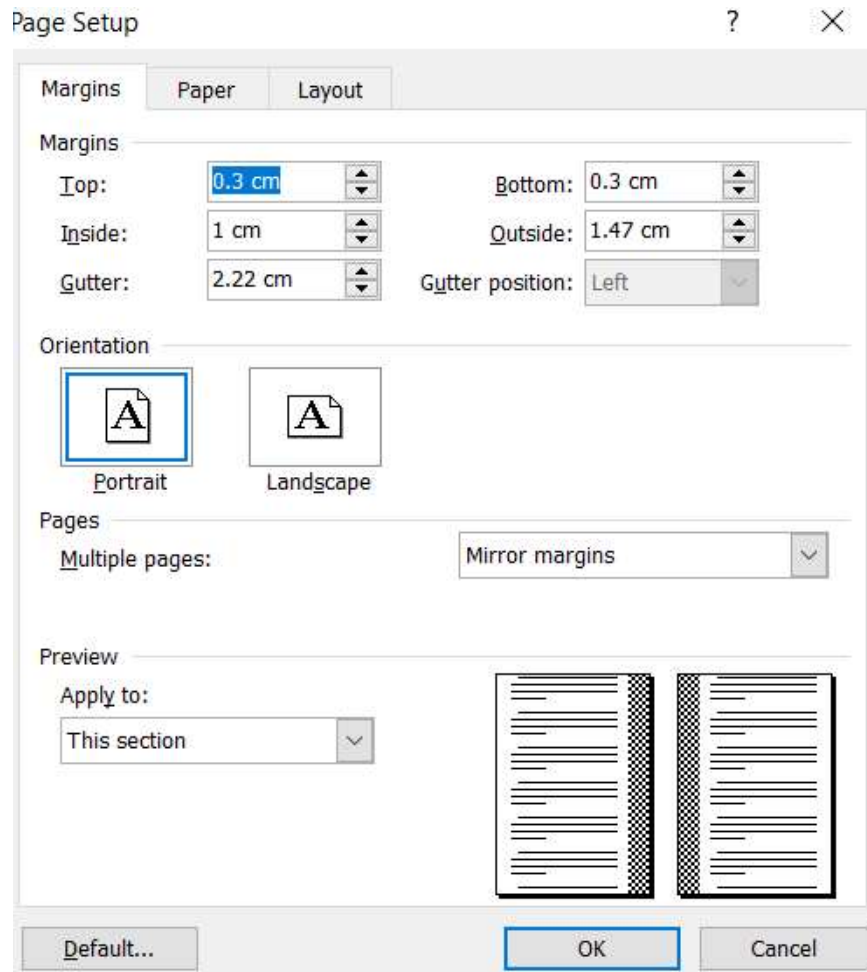
I use MS Word to write. Some people throw up their hands in horror at this and suggest I use other more specialist authoring software. As an impoverished writer I've stuck to what I'm used to. Not only that but my version of Word dates from 2003 so it saves as .doc, not .docx but that's OK because Amazon will still accept .doc (at the time of writing anyway). So I will make a few points based on my Word but the principles apply to whatever software you use.

Fonts

The first thing to be aware of is the font you use. Not all fonts you find on your computer may be used for publication because some are copyright. Times New Roman is OK. I have used that, but my preferred font is Gentium Book Basic which I think is more readable than Times new Roman. I use size 12. I also sometimes use Arial. For example when quoting. In "Maxym" I used Arial for text messages and in "Dancing with Panthers" for letters that were written by the characters. Mac users should be safe with Helvetica.

Page Setup and margins

Then you need to think about page setup and margins if you are also going to publish print versions as well as Kindle. These need to be asymmetric so your words of wisdom don't disappear into the centre fold of the book. How you set these will depend on your book and the software you're using. This is what I have used:



Title and Copyright

Start with your title page and then copyright statements such as:

Copyright © 2024 Patrick C. Notchtree

All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without express written permission of the author/publisher.

Artificial Intelligence

I now include statements about artificial intelligence:

NO AI TRAINING: Without in any way limiting the author's exclusive rights under copyright, any use of this publication to "train" generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to generate text is expressly prohibited. The author reserves all rights to license uses of this work for generative AI training and development of machine learning language models.

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By the way, that is Gentium Book Basic.

Proof reading and checking

Needless to say, thorough proof reading and spell checking is vital. I have used advance 'beta' readers. Also I find reading it out loud helps. If you use Gmail a trick I have used is to paste each chapter into an email as though you're going to send it. Gmail will highlight things it thinks should be changed. Sometimes it's wrong but it does pick up a lot of stuff, not just spelling but contextual matters as well. Then correct your book and cancel the email. After all that you will still find an elusive typo but one of the joys of this is that it can be corrected and a new version uploaded. Readers who have downloaded the Kindle version will find their file updates. If you're going for print as well, future orders will contain the correction. Because books are created by a print on demand system, there is no warehouse with hundreds of copies of your book stacked up. Books are printed, bound and delivered each time a reader orders one.

Contents and Index

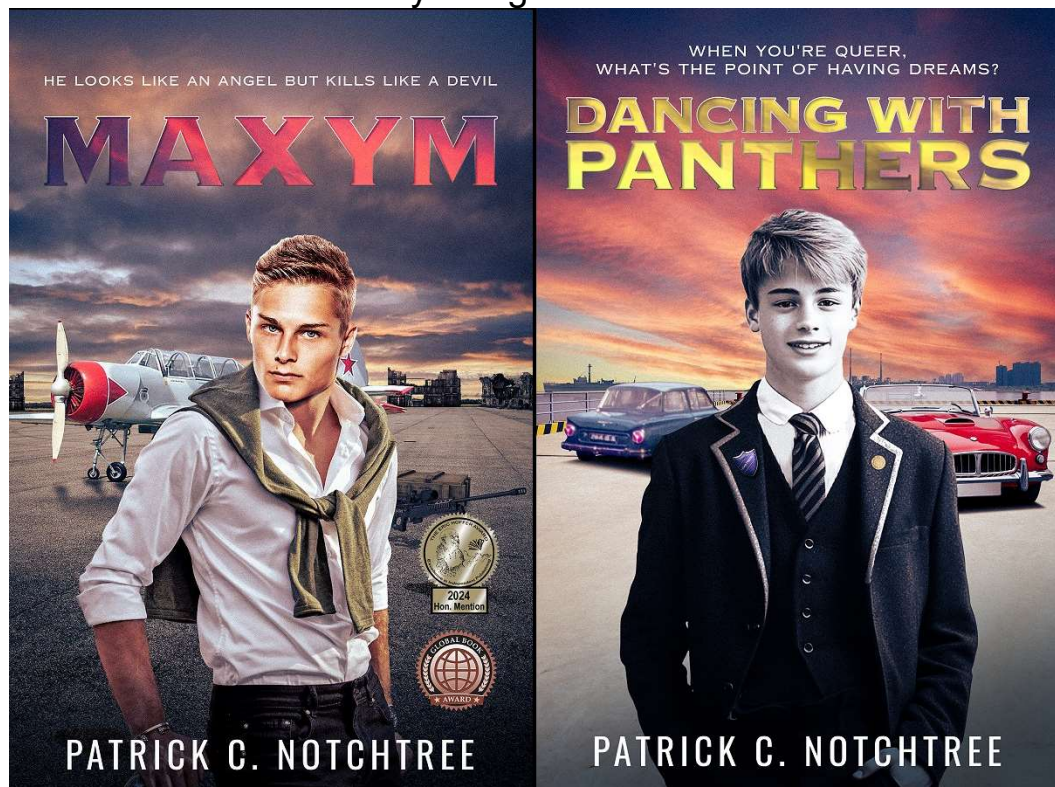
You're going to want a list of contents. By making your chapter headings in a heading style, Word picks these up and once the masterpiece is finished, the table of contents can be inserted, along with page numbers. If you upload for Kindle, the page numbers will be removed automatically because of course they do not apply. The headings should appear as hyperlinks for the chapters in the Kindle device or app. For non-fiction you may wish to create an index, traditionally at the back of the book. Word can do this so I suspect that other systems can, especially those designed for authors.

The cover

It is said you can't judge a book by its cover but in practice people do. For the Kindle book only the front cover is needed and Amazon provide a cover creator which you will come across during the upload process. They tend to be rather bland though so it's best to have a cover design ready. If

you know someone who is artistically inclined and can do this all well and good. I have designed a couple of my own covers but for others I have used a design service. One reason is they have access to large range of stock images they can use, the other is that for print covers the layout and dimensions have to be so precise. I wrestled for ages getting it right for my memoir in 2012 for which I did the cover design. It got very frustrating. So for "Maxym" and "Dancing with Panthers" I used a design service. There are many out there. The one I used for these two books is www.100covers.com and I have found them easy to work with. I supplied them with some images which they incorporated into the design. I supplied a synopsis of the book. The joy was that when I was sent the print covers, they uploaded seamlessly and without error.

Here are the covers they designed.



I sent them the photograph of Maxym's aircraft, the AXMC rifle and the award logos. The figure is a stock image I chose from a selection they provided based on my criteria of what Maxym looks like. For the other, I sent the image of the green Ford Cortina (the actual car!), the prefect badge and the gold Laudatum badge. I sent a photograph of the person who inspired Mark Martin which they then adapted. The image of the boat top left is based on an image I sent. I found them easy to work with and very responsive to my vision of what the cover should include. They provided Kindle, paperback, hardback and audiobook covers. Other cover designers are available.

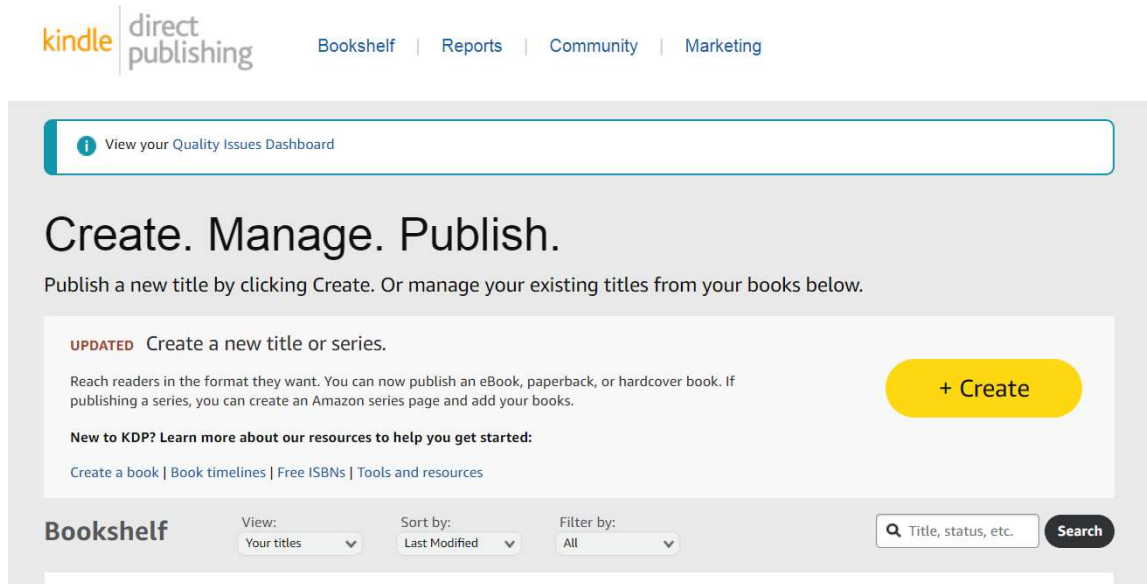
Uploading to Amazon

I have described the writing process in some detail not because I think you can't write but so that the formatting is done to reduce problems during the upload process.

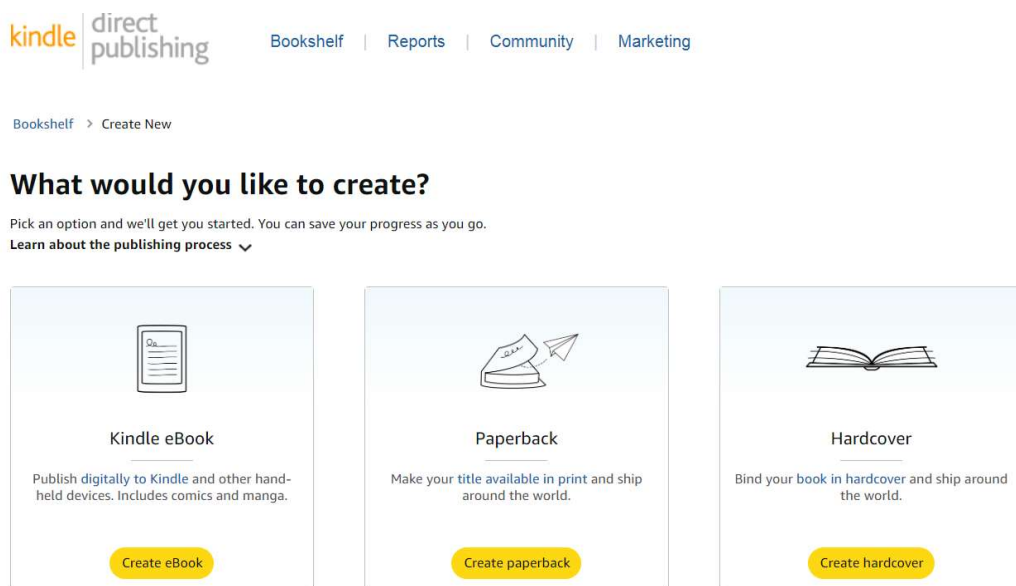
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You then have to decide where most of your books are likely to be sold. I choose amazon.com because the USA is a large market. Note, this does not prevent your book being sold in the UK or elsewhere. In fact my own books tend to sell better in the UK.

Keywords need to be chosen. Think about what search terms your likely readers might use. It might be worth looking on Amazon for books similar to yours and seeing what they use. A keyword can be a short phrase rather than a single word.

You will need an ISBN for your book if you are going for print. An ISBN is optional for Kindle books. If you have an ISBN you have purchased from Nielsen you can use that when the time comes, otherwise Amazon will supply a free one.

The next stage is the content of your book.

To upload your files, log in to your Amazon account and go to https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/bookshelf

As an example, I uploaded a new slightly modified version of "Dancing with Panthers". You will see a page like this:

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Dancing with Panthers

By Patrick C. Notchtree

Kindle eBook

LIVE

Submitted on August 15, 2024

\$3.99 USD

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ASIN: B0DD7P927N

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Again, pricing comes next and I apply the same system as for the Kindle edition. You get the choice of Amazon only or for a lower percentage, expanded distribution. This is a personal choice but I opt for expanded distribution which means it can be made available through other outlets as well.

For hardcover, the process is the same, remembering to choose the hardcover bookcover. Again preview and approve. Pricing follows the same pattern as for previous formats.

So now you've written your masterpiece, successfully uploaded it to the world's largest bookseller, now the hard part begins - publicising and marketing your work, otherwise nobody will know it's there. But that is outside the scope of this guide. Good luck!

Patrick C. Notchtree, December 2024