

5 Ways Teachers and Parents are Self-Publishing For Kids

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Children's books have become very popular with the new writers who wish to self-publish. For anyone who wants to write a children's book, here are five pieces of advice on how to increase the chances for success when self-publishing an illustrated children's book.

5 Ways Teachers and Parents are Self-Publishing For Kids
Increase Your Chances for Success When You Self-Publish a Children's Book

Everyone wants to be an author these days. With the proliferation of print-on-demand technology and instant availability worldwide through e-retailers like Amazon.com, why not? Over 400,000 books will be published this year; one of them could be written by you. Many writers seek fame and fortune; others long to share their memories with their families; and some dream of sharing a message with a child.

Parents and teachers represent a large number of "new writers" on the

print-on-demand scene today, driven by the idea of sharing a moral or lesson with the children in their lives. Why are children's storybooks so popular

with these new authors? One reason is length. Many children's books are less than 1,000 words long, so unlike the daunting endeavor of cracking out a

100,000 word novel, a children's book can sometimes be composed in an afternoon.

In the past, what made publishing a children's book an insurmountable hurdle was the illustrations and up-front printing costs. But today, even high-quality artwork is packaged for sale by many self-publishing services (see www.outskirtspress.com/art as an example) and by using print-on-demand

technology, authors only pay for printing the number of copies that actually sell. Formatting and distribution is often included as well. Many would-be

authors are discovering the only thing standing in their way is desire.

For those who hold the desire, here are five pieces of advice on how to increase the chances for success when self-publishing an illustrated children's book.

#1 MAKE EVERY PAGE COUNT

Good advice for any well-crafted story, but especially true for children's books that are short in length to begin with, and feature full-color illustrations. Printing books in full color is relatively expensive and this is particularly true with print-on-demand. Each two-page spread will need to feature at least one illustration (and preferably a full, two-page

illustration spread), so you want to make every page integral to the story.

For self-publishing authors, fully illustrated children's stories are best kept to 32 pages or less. Why? First there are the printing cost advantages: 32 is divisible by the two most common off-set signatures of 32 and 16, as well as the most common print-on-demand signature of 4. Additionally, a "short" book allows for a competitive retail price compared with

the number of printed pages.

#2 INCLUDE A LESSON OR MORAL

One appealing aspect of publishing a children's book is the opportunity to impart knowledge to a youngster. All successful children's books have a moral or theme. The protagonist must overcome adversity to change, improve

or grow by exercising a positive trait, perhaps one adopted during the course of the story. Well-conceived children's storybooks share good values and lessons to their readers; make sure your story has a strong moral without being preachy.

#3 WRITE FOR YOUR AUDIENCE

While many themes in children's books are universal, you may have more success finding the appropriate tone if you write specifically for girls or boys. Most successful children's stories not only have an age group in mind but a gender. Keep a laser-like focus on your specific demographic. This will also help the artist produce appropriate illustrations. Children usually pretend they are in the story, at least on an abstract level, and it is easier for a boy to relate to a drawing of a boy than a drawing of a girl. Equally important to the artwork is the use of language and the message of the story. Concepts that fall outside your demographic or words that are too difficult for your target age group to understand, will cause your book to miss its mark.

#4 DESIGN A MOCK-UP

One of the trickiest elements to publishing a children's book is coordinating the story with the illustrations. Not only does this involve allocating the proper words to the matching illustrations, but you need to make sure there is enough "white space" (either within the drawing itself, or on the opposing page) for the actual printed words. If the words are printed directly over the artwork, they run the risk of being difficult to read. By creating a physical mock-up of the entire storybook, you can make sure the illustrations will match the words and that there is enough room for the words when you describe each illustration to the artist. This allows you to arrive at solutions in advance when words must lie over busy or dark portions of the artwork. Some solutions include changing the font color or using an opaque "text box" to separate the text from the illustration.

#5 AVOID STICKER SHOCK

Self-publishing a children's book is a rewarding and exciting adventure. It also requires a monetary investment. Granted, the investment is not as high as it used to be, but it still isn't cheap. If pursuing the independent self-publishing route, prepare to order a print-run of at least 2,000 books to make the endeavor worthwhile. Depending upon your off-set printer of choice, and the dimensions/length/format of your book, your 2,000 copies may require an out-of-pocket expenditure of \$5,000 or more. If pursuing the more convenient route of print-on-demand with an online publisher, full color packages range from \$500 to \$2,500, depending upon your publisher of choice.

Artwork is another expensive element. Commissioning original illustrations from a professional artist without the support of a self-publishing service provider can cost you up to \$1000 per drawing (or more). For a 32-page book, it's easy to see how the costs can escalate.

On the other hand, with a print-on-demand publishing partner, award-winning illustrations can cost considerably less.

Print-on-demand self-publishing companies often subsidize the up-front production and artwork costs because they make money on the back-end book sales, too, whereas printers and many independent artists do not.

Some new authors who have self-published a book compare the experience to birthing a child. It can be expensive and painful, but also incredibly rewarding. And through self-publishing, a growing number of parents and teachers are now sharing one bundle of joy with another.

About the Author

Brent Sampson is the best-selling author of *Sell Your Book on Amazon* and the award-winning *Self-Publishing Simplified*. As the president & CEO of Outskirts Press, Brent offers full-service, on-demand custom book publishing services to authors seeking a cost-effective, fast, and powerful way to publish and distribute their books worldwide. Through Outskirts Press, Brent has helped thousands of authors with writing, editing, publishing, marketing and entrepreneurship. Brent is also on the Board of Directors for the Education & Literacy Foundation. For more information about the future of

self-publishing visit <http://www.outskirtspress.com>.