

Scott Editorial

The Do's and Don'ts of Self-Publishing on Amazon

Self-publishing on Amazon is one of the most accessible and empowering ways for authors to share their stories with the world.



Whether you're writing fiction, nonfiction, or even a journal or workbook, Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) gives you a platform to launch your author career, on your own terms.

But while it's easy to start, it's not always easy to succeed. That's where understanding the key do's and don'ts comes in. Let's break down the essential things you should and shouldn't do when self-publishing on Amazon.

The Do's

Do Your Research

Before you hit "Publish," take time to study your genre, successful books, and your target audience. Look at bestselling titles in your niche, read reviews, and note what covers and blurbs stand out. Understanding the market helps you position your book more strategically.

Do Invest in a Professional Cover

People do judge books by their covers—especially online. A professional-looking cover immediately builds trust and grabs attention. Use professional designers or at least quality templates tailored to your genre.

Do Edit, Edit, and Then Edit Some More

Nothing ruins a reader's experience faster than typos, plot holes, or awkward sentences. First, start with a self-edit (see our self-edit blog for how to complete this part of the process). Once you have done all you can on your own, engage with a few beta readers. A fresh set of reader-eyes will find the plot holes and areas to expand/reduce. After making the final adjustments, it's time to hire a professional editor. If you think you don't need to work with a professional, head over to our blog about why working with a professional editor is invaluable to understand why it is an important step to take.

Do Optimize Your Metadata

Your title, subtitle, book description, and keywords all influence how your book appears in search results. Learn the basics of Amazon SEO (search engine optimization) and use relevant keywords that your audience is actually typing into the search bar.

Do Take Advantage of Amazon's Tools

Amazon KDP offers powerful tools like Kindle Unlimited, promotions, pricing options, and category selection. Use them wisely! Enrolling in KDP Select, for example, gives you access to Kindle Countdown Deals and Free Promotions to boost visibility.

The Don'ts

Don't Rush the Process

We get it, you're excited to publish. But rushing through editing, cover design, or formatting just to hit a deadline can sabotage your book's success. Take your time to make it polished and professional. This also applies to setting up a pre-order on Amazon. Give yourself the time to make your book the best it can be. If you miss or cancel your pre-order date, even if you don't have any pre-orders, Amazon will ban you from setting up a pre-order for a year. Save the pre-orders for the 2nd/3rd book after you know exactly how long the pre-publishing process will take you.

Don't Skimp on Formatting

Poor formatting leads to bad reviews. Whether it's a paperback or Kindle ebook, make sure your chapters are structured properly, your text flows well, and your layout meets Amazon's standards. Tools like Vellum, Atticus, or even Kindle Create can help, but, if you are not tech-savvy, hire a formatter to make sure your book looks professional.

Don't Ignore Reviews

Reviews offer credibility and social proof. Don't try to manipulate the system by buying fake reviews or getting friends to leave glowing but dishonest ones. Focus on delivering real value and encouraging honest feedback. Readers don't want to see endless 5 star reviews. Having a couple of low reviews gives your higher reviews credibility.

Don't Set It and Forget It

Publishing is just step one. After launch, promote your book through social media, email lists, book bloggers, and ads. Keep an eye on sales data and reviews, and consider tweaking your keywords or

pricing if things go stale. If you are a Scott Editorial writer, don't forget you can receive a free marketing plan to get you on the right path.

Don't Undervalue Your Work

Pricing too low might devalue your book, while pricing too high without an audience might scare readers off. Test different price points, and remember: your time, creativity, and energy are worth something.

“Indie publishing on Amazon is an incredible way to live your dream of becoming a writer and sharing your books with audiences who will love your writing, but it’s not a shortcut. Treat it like a business—learn your craft and invest in the tools you need to succeed. When done right, indie publishing can be rewarding both creatively and financially.”

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