

The Many Paths to Publication: Cheat Sheet

Keys to Success

Know what your goals are before you seek publication

Assess your strengths and weaknesses to help you narrow your choices

Traditional Publishing

Big 5

Ideal for: Those with a national following; no timeline for getting published; desire for national distribution, recognition, and brick-and-mortar presence; want marketing support

Money: Could be big advance (\$2,000 to \$500,000), standard royalties

Medium-size and academic publishers

Ideal for: Those with a regional following or academic stature; no timeline for getting published; desire for national distribution, recognition, and brick-and-mortar presence; want marketing support

Money: Moderate advance (\$2,000-\$100,000), standard royalties

Small presses

Ideal for: Those looking for the personal touch; don't have or want an agent; a shorter timeline for getting published; desire regional and online distribution; want marketing support

Money: Small or no advance (\$0-\$5,000?), small royalties

Self-Publishing

Do-It-Yourself

Ideal for: Those on a tight budget; those with the time and tech skills to do it; flexible timeline for getting published; desire for online distribution only, or for friends and family

Money: Spend little, potentially earn back your investment

Hire pros to help you

Ideal for: Those with regional following; marketing knowledge; the capital to hire vendors; short timeline for getting published; desire for online distribution with limited brick-and-mortar presence

Money: You pay a few thousand dollars up front, earn all (or nearly all) of the profit

Self-publishing company

Ideal for: Those with the capital to afford the company's packages; the education to avoid scams; short timeline for getting published; desire for online distribution only (with few exceptions)

Money: You pay \$750 to \$10,000 up front; a percentage of the profit (royalties); many variations

****THOROUGHLY RESEARCH YOUR CHOSEN COMPANY****

The Misfits

Collaborations

Ideal for: People with a cause or niche, comfortable with flexibility, close ties to community; okay with limited distribution

Money: Any amount; author may pay for marketing

Work-for-Hire

Ideal for: Those who wish to make a living as a writer; willing to give up creative control; strong writing and research abilities

Money: Small, one-time fee paid to you (\$2,000–\$4,000 for 240-page book); no royalties (usually)

Hybrid

Ideal for: People who want production and marketing support; have money; have strong writing skills; are willing to hire their own editor

Money: You pay them, usually several thousand dollars; 60%–80% royalties