

TK'S guide to
**SELF
PUBLISHING**

Choices when you're first
starting

by Tom Kranz



What's the best self-publishing venue?

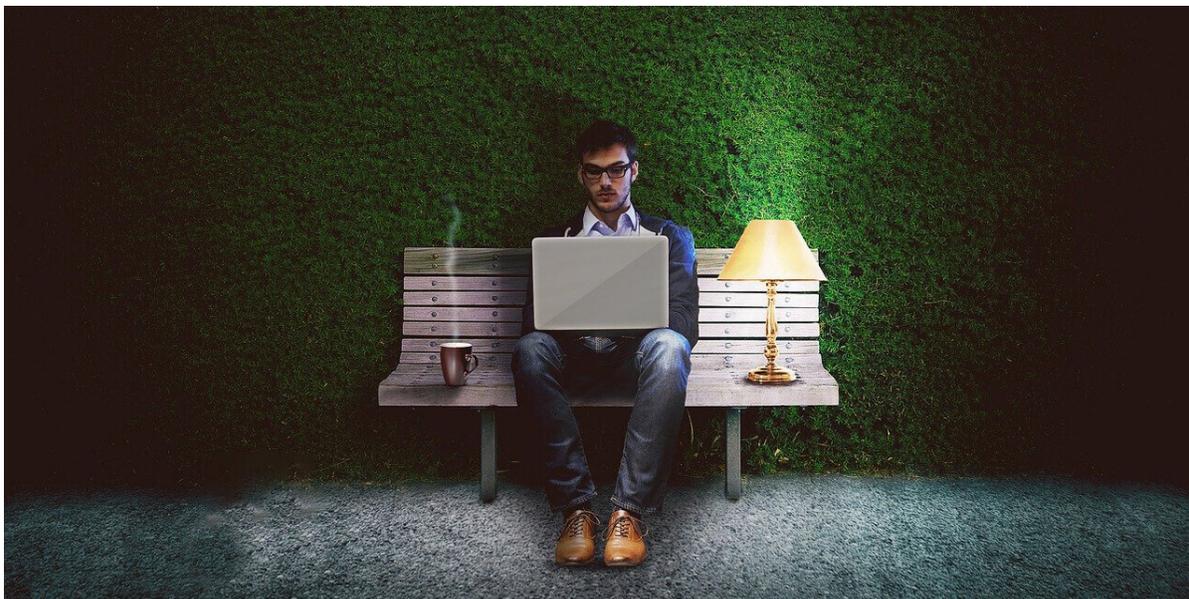
Before we explore that question, have you finished writing your book yet? You can master the mechanics of self-publishing any time, but if the work is boring, poorly written, poorly edited or incomprehensible, it's all for naught. Whether it's a well-written how-to book or a memoir of an interesting person or a compelling non-fiction tale or an engaging children's story or the great American novel, the writing is the thing. So, go write your book. Read and reread, edit and re-edit, maybe pay someone to edit for you. Then come back and read the rest of this booklet.



You can self-publish your book for free or almost free and have it listed on major sites like Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Google, et al. The downside of the free venues is the high DIY factor. You have to do it all, from formatting the pages correctly to supplying or designing a cover, then uploading it, then buying a proof copy to see if it remotely resembles what you envisioned. The self-publishing universe has many, MANY companies that will do all this for you, for a price, usually starting at around \$1,000 for the basics with add-ons that can eclipse \$5,000, \$10,000 and beyond. These companies include iUniverse, BookBaby and many others. You can read their online reviews for yourself. For the purposes of this booklet, we'll just talk about several sites for the DIY self-publisher.

What's the best self-publishing venue?

I've published books using three venues, Lulu, IngramSpark and Amazon Kindle. All three require you to have a finished manuscript in Word format. Lulu and IngramSpark require you to format the pages according to the size of your printed book or an ebook. Ebook formatting is simpler. You usually convert the text to html, eliminate your page numbers and supply a table of contents generated by Word from your chapter headings which you must type in Heading 1 style. Lulu and IngramSpark have detailed instructions on how to format your ebook so it has a seamless flow and your chapter hyperlinks all work. For printed books, it's more complicated. You'll have to format your Word document in the correct size for the book trim you've selected. You'll have to set the margins and the gutter correctly. You need to insert page breaks for new chapters and get out of the habit of using the spacebar or tab to make new paragraphs, instead setting a paragraph style that generates the correct indent or spacing with each push of the ENTER key. Lulu and Ingram Spark provide detailed tutorials and templates for all but even so, the formatting exercise requires trial and error, especially for newbies.



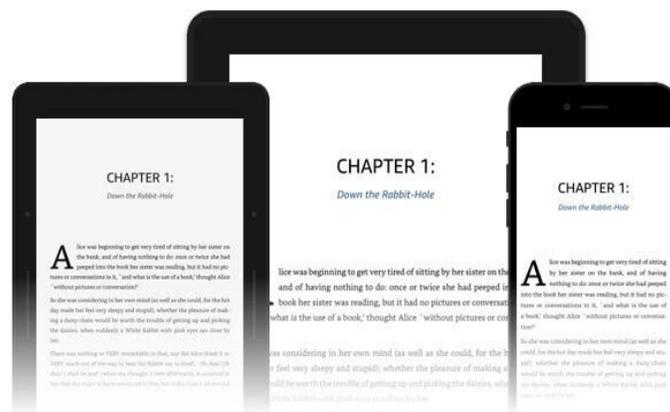
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Amazon Kindle offers a downloadable app called Kindle Create for both Mac and PC. Once downloaded to your machine, you simply load your Word document into the app and it automatically formats it for both ebook and paperback output. It provides an easy interface for moving chapters around, adding front matter and back matter and generating a table of contents as long as your Word chapter headings are in Heading 1 style. You can also add images. You can edit your text right in the app. Once you're done, it gives you a preview of how the ebook will appear on a tablet or a phone. It also gives you some basic formatting choices for the printed version. Then you export the file to your desktop. When it comes time to upload your manuscripts on the Kindle Publishing website, you upload the same file for both editions. While you still need to design a cover, you don't have to obsess about the text formatting. You get a WYSIWYG preview before you send it to Amazon for their approval and final publication on their website.

Venue	Cost	Formatting Required	Marketing
Lulu	Free	Word or PDF	Global
Ingram Spark	\$49	Word or PDF	Global
Amazon/Kindle	Free	Word, PDF or Kindle Create	Amazon, Apple Books

What's the best self-publishing venue?

Both Lulu and IngramSpark list your book on every conceivable online domestic and international book-selling venue. They receive a sizable chunk of the sale price. You get what's left. For Lulu, that's the only cost. IngramSpark charges a \$49 set up fee for each book you publish plus their share of the sale price. Amazon Kindle comes with several catches. It only lists on Amazon and Apple Books, so you would have to self-market to other sellers. And if you choose a higher royalty option (their KDP program), you can't sell it anywhere else for 90 days. In addition, the file created by the Kindle Create app is absolutely no good anywhere BUT the Kindle website. You cannot export to PDF or .mobi, for example. The app creates just the one product, an obvious ploy to keep you in the Kindle fold. Because of this, when you do any editing in that file, you have to duplicate the edits in your original Word document so you have a true master copy for other uses. Kindle Create and the entire uploading and marketing process are free. Amazon keeps its share of the sales, of course.



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What's the best self-publishing venue?

Honestly, I am a convert to the Kindle Create app because I so despise page formatting. It doesn't bother me that it'll be exclusive to Amazon. As far as I'm concerned, Amazon is the go-to place for online book sales anyway. However, there are other limitations to Kindle Create. You have a choice of only a handful of font styles. The paperback formatting choices are limited to the placement of the title, author and page number on each interior page. The pre-built templates for front matter and back matter (Dedication, Forward, About the Author, etc.) have fields to insert text, but no way to customize the text or layout of the elements. Still, if you're willing to accept all these limitations, I predict you will have way less stress using Kindle Create when it comes time to send your finished masterpiece to the Amazon website for publication. If you want to see a finished paperback done with Kindle Create, purchase my sci-fi adventure *[Time Travel Rescue: Escape from the 21st Century](#)*.

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Thomas H. Kravitz

