

Traditional Route

Despite the huge interest in self-publishing, there is still very much a place for publishers big and small.

Pros:

- Money flows to the author – a true publisher requests no money from you for any step of the process. Bigger publishers might offer an advance. Smaller ones most likely will not. But it shouldn't cost you a thing.
- Book is professionally edited. Usually 2 rounds plus a copy edit. Some will do more or less. Deadline to return it can vary from 1 week to 1 month. While big pubs might publish slow, they do expect work to be completed in a timely manner.
- Professional Cover design. Depending on the publisher, you may or may not have a say in the design. Most covers, even with big pub, will use stock art unless you are a major name.
- Marketing Launch/Team. Again, depends on the publisher. Most authors won't receive much in way of promotion.
- Access to a larger print distribution network. While POD has made strides, they still aren't stocked in stores unless you are a major name. And even then, it is usually by customer demand.

Cons:

- Little control over the artwork and edits. Don't like them? You might be told too bad so sad. They usually hold final approval.
- Editing could be subpar. Again, nothing you can do if they choose to release it with little to no editing.
- Small percentage of proceeds. Small publishers will usually offer better return, anywhere from 25-50% on ebooks. Under 15% for print if they offer it. Big pubs, less than that. It is negotiable, but bargaining power depends on the author.
- Depending on the publisher, you might get paid only once or twice a year, and that amount will be a surprise oftentimes. (If you've earned out your advance.)
- Lack of huge market push. Most publishers expect authors to promote. How well you promote can determine future books with that company.
- Contracts limiting future works. Non compete clauses. Very hard to have removed. Can impede your ability to publish.
- Book belongs to publisher for set amount of time. Big Pub asks for life of copyright. If the relationship sours, the book is usually stuck. Some will release from contract if the book falls under certain threshold. Some will demand buy outs.

What to do if you want to submit:

- Did you have someone objective read over your WIP?
- Did you have it edited? This might seem redundant. Won't they edit it? Yes they will, if they can see past the flaws. Put your best work forward.
- Have you queried an agent? Big Publishers work via agents for the most part. In the cases where they don't, you'll be speaking directly to an editor who will present a boiler plate contract. An IP attorney is recommended.
- Submission rules (strict guidelines for how the manuscript should be presented, font, size, spacing, etc)
- Synopsis (not the same as a blurb). Most will ask for a 2-4 page synopsis of the book. This should be a bare bones representation of the story. No secrets. And include the spoilers.
- Marketing Plan – they will want to know what you plan to do to promote.
- Website – they want to see something.
- Social Media – they expect some kind of presence

Indie Route

There has been a boom in indie publishing the last few years with some authors managing to make a name and lucrative career but, it is a difficult path still and does require an investment in time and money to be successful.

Pros:

- Depending on the price point/vendor authors earn 35-70% of the list price.
- Control of editing/story line/voice. Don't like what an editor has to say? You can ignore it. They work for you.
- Complete control over cover art.
- Creation of self imposed deadlines, or none at all

Cons

- Paying out of pocket for edits/cover/formatting. Good editing is costly. Expect to pay a few hundred dollars up to and just over a thousand.
- Stigma still in certain circles.
- Managing a publishing team. Being your own boss is all well and good, but it requires you keeping tabs on employees. And paying them!
- Dealing with all aspects from start to finish. It can be time consuming. A checklist is a key component to ensure no steps are missed.
- Accounting. How much did the production cost? When do you break even? What can you afford to put in to your project?
- Working hours. Expect to work a lot depending on where you want to be a few years from now.
- Marketing. Costly and time consuming.

What to do if you plan to indie publish:

- Did you have someone objective read over your WIP?
- Did you have it edited? Yes your story is awesome, and yes, you are pretty clean at writing but no one is perfectly clean. Eyes will gloss over and read what is expected and not what is there.
- Edited again? Rarely is one pass enough. And that second pass should go to another set of eyes.
- Get the book formatted for e-book and print. Most vendors will take a cleanly formatted Word doc. It should have proper headings, spacing etc... Looking for an easy way to do it and own a Mac? Vellum is an option to self format for epub/mobi. A PDF/Print option is pending.
- Have you hired a Cover Artist? How much are you planning to spend? Have you studied the books in that genre that are selling?
- Get an ISBN. Canada offers blocks of them to authors for free.
- Send a PDF of your book to Archives of Canada
- Did you get it copyrighted? Automatic copyright happens the moment you start writing but for additional protection should you ever want legal recourse, then you need something more formal. 50\$ per title.
- Upload it to Vendors. Direct Vendors for Canadians: Amazon, Apple, Kobo, Createspace, Ingram. Distributors: Smashwords, D2D, Pronoun.
- Marketing Plan. Just publishing won't get you sales.
- Website. You need one.
- Social Media. Choose 1-3 sites and concentrate on those.
- Business Plan. Is the book a standalone? First in series? Have you commenced the next one?