

For Consignment Authors—Please Read This Before Submitting Your Book

Consignment is a service provided for authors who have a book that is published by nontraditional means. That includes self-published, published by a small or micro press lacking access to distribution resources, or books that are out-of-print but which the author has a personal supply or is putting it back into print personally after commercial interest has lapsed.

Traditional publishing is just that—the way it has been done for centuries. A manuscript is submitted to a publisher for possible publication. The publisher, via an editor, will either accept the book, pay the writer, and put the book into print, or find the book unsuited to the needs of that publisher and return it. If the book is accepted, then, depending on the publisher, consignment need never be considered.

It is in the author's interest to explore traditional publishing options first. There are many benefits associated with it and in the long run, should it work out, it will have career benefits difficult to find by other means. Before taking the route of self-publishing, it is advisable to exhaust these options first. If you are unfamiliar with the process, a first step would be to acquire the most recent edition of *Writers' Market*, published by *Writers Digest*. There you will find a thorough overview of the requirements and methods for submitting your work and a list of publishers, briefly outlining their needs.

It is always a mistake to ignore the technical advice available in these books. More on that later.

Among the many reasons to do this is the potential for education. If your work is of a sufficiently high caliber, you will likely get feedback from editors. Likewise if you submit your work to agents. While it may be true that any given new writer is a genius and needs no further input, it is never a waste to get that input and pay attention. Writing is not simply a matter of putting one word after another in an attempt to tell what happens next. Nor is it a simple matter to learn how to make writing worth a stranger's time to read.

Because that is the goal—to make it worth another's time.

This is especially true with fiction.

There are types of books which are suited to self-publishing. Specialist books about topics which may have only a limited appeal, generally nonfiction. But even here, depending on the subject, it is best to explore traditional options first.

Once the decision is taken to self-publish, there are basic requirements to be met. If you have decided to go the route of self-publishing, take the time to examine books published traditionally. Page lay-out, font, the organization of the contents. You should strive to make sure your book is consistent with these design attributes. Simple things like properly indented paragraphs, justified type, proper pagination, and the copyright page and title pages in the correct place and with the correct information. If the layout in your book is at odds with these basic expectations, readers could be easily put off. It may seem like a small thing, but success often hangs on details.

Next, be sure your cover is of good quality. Pixelated artwork, unreadable title and author typography, and a lack of necessary information—title and author on the spine, back cover blurbs, and pricing—will limit the book's appeal.

Pricing is important. It is easy to overprice a book but sometimes a book can be underpriced. Do the research. See how much books like yours sell for as well as how they are packaged and presented. Bear in mind, customers will not know or necessarily care that your book is self-published when they're shopping. It's a book. That's what it is to them and what it should seem to be. The content should be the important part.

Finally, apply proper grammar. Know how to write a sentence correctly. Learn your craft. This is perhaps less concrete than the rest, but what a reader wants is an enjoyable, entertaining, and enriching experience with your book. Poor craft will provide none of that. Good writing is perhaps unquantifiable in the main but bad writing is recognizable and off-putting and whatever other qualities may inform your narrative will be lost because they will go unread. For this, workshops, objective first-readers, classes—and, as mentioned above, submitting to editors and paying attention to feedback when offered.

We offer this advice as assistance, in the hopes of saving time and a bit of heartache in the pursuit of dreams.