



Royalty Formula Cheat Sheet

Every self-publishing royalty formula, worked out on one sheet.

THE MATH, DEMYSTIFIED

A desk reference to the formulas behind your earnings: KDP paperback, IngramSpark print, and ebook tiers. Each comes with the formula, a worked example, and the variables you control.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- KDP paperback
- IngramSpark print
- Ebook 35% vs. 70%
- Side-by-side
- What you control
- Quick reference
- Related calculators

REFERENCE

How royalties work

One pattern covers print; ebooks are a flat-rate special case.

Print royalties always follow the same shape: a share of the list price, minus the cost to print each copy. Ebooks use a flat royalty rate with no print cost. Knowing the formula tells you exactly which lever to pull.

THE SHAPE OF EVERY PRINT ROYALTY

Royalty per copy = (List price × royalty/keep rate) - printing cost

The 'keep rate' is 60% on KDP paperbacks, or (1 - wholesale discount) on IngramSpark.

Throughout this toolkit, examples follow **Riverstone Press** and its 240-page 6×9 black-and-white paperback, *The Quiet Garden*, with a list price of **\$16.99**. Print cost: KDP ≈ \$4.85, IngramSpark ≈ \$5.00 (illustrative).

TIP

Royalty rates and the formulas behind them are set by each platform and change periodically. Use these to understand the mechanics, then confirm live numbers in your dashboard or the calculator.

Print royalty formulas

Same shape, different keep rate.

1 • KDP paperback (and hardcover)

KDP PRINT ROYALTY

Royalty = (List × 60%) - printing cost

Riverstone: ($\$16.99 \times 0.60$) - $\$4.85 = \$10.19 - \$4.85 =$ **\$5.34 per book**

2 • IngramSpark print

INGRAMSPARK PRINT ROYALTY

Royalty = (List × (1 - wholesale discount)) - print cost

At 40%: ($\$16.99 \times 0.60$) - $\$5.00 =$ **\$5.19** | At 55%: ($\16.99×0.45) - $\$5.00 =$ **\$2.65**

If returns are on, returned copies can claw back earnings – budget for it.

WATCH OUT

On KDP the keep rate is fixed at 60%. On IngramSpark you set it via the wholesale discount – that's why the same book earns different amounts in each channel.

Ebook tiers & side-by-side

Stay inside the 70% band unless you have a strong reason not to.

3 • Ebook — the 35% / 70% tiers

TIER	TYPICAL PRICE BAND	ROYALTY	NOTES
70%	\$2.99 – \$9.99	70% of list – small delivery fee	Best zone for most ebooks
35%	Below \$2.99 or above \$9.99	35% of list	No delivery fee; far lower take

Bands and delivery-fee rules vary by retailer and territory – verify current terms.

EBOOK WORKED EXAMPLE

\$4.99 ebook in the 70% tier: $\$4.99 \times 0.70 = \3.49 – ~\$0.06 delivery \approx **\$3.43**

Same book priced at \$1.99 (35% tier): $\$1.99 \times 0.35 =$ **\$0.70**

Pricing a \$4.99 ebook at \$1.99 means you'd need nearly 5× the sales to earn the same money.

Side-by-side (Riverstone, illustrative)

CHANNEL	SETTING	ROYALTY / COPY
KDP paperback	60% fixed	\$5.34
IngramSpark	40% discount	\$5.19
IngramSpark	55% discount	\$2.65
Ebook (KDP)	70% tier, \$4.99	\approx \$3.43

Your levers + quick reference

Four dials set every royalty number on this sheet.

What you actually control

LIST

List price — your single biggest lever on royalty per copy.

DISCOUNT

Wholesale discount (Ingram) — trades royalty for reach.

COST

Print cost — driven by page count, trim, color, paper.

CHANNEL

Where you sell — each channel applies its own keep rate.

Quick reference

WANT MORE ROYALTY PER COPY?	DO THIS
Raise it directly	Increase list price (test against your market)
Cut the cost side	Reduce page count / use B&W / smaller trim
Keep more on Ingram	Lower the wholesale discount (costs reach)
Earn more per ebook	Price inside the \$2.99-\$9.99 70% band

TIP

Royalty per copy is only half the story — multiply it by realistic sales volume. A lower royalty at a price that actually sells can beat a high royalty nobody buys.

GO FURTHER

Related SimpleLifeCalc Tools

Helpful companions to this resource – not required, just faster.

Skip the arithmetic – these run every formula on this sheet with your real numbers.

KDP Royalty Calculator

WHAT IT DOES Computes paperback/hardcover royalty after print cost.

WHEN TO USE Any time you change list price or specs.

WHY IT HELPS Built-in print-cost estimate, no guesswork.

eBook Royalty Calculator

WHAT IT DOES Applies the 35%/70% tiers and delivery fee.

WHEN TO USE When setting or testing an ebook price.

WHY IT HELPS Shows the cliff at the tier boundaries.

Book Royalty Comparison Calculator

WHAT IT DOES Lines up KDP vs. IngramSpark vs. ebook side by side.

WHEN TO USE When choosing where to sell.

WHY IT HELPS One view of every channel's take-home.

KEEP THEM HANDY

Every calculator is free at SimpleLifeCalc.com – bookmark the two or three you'll use most so your numbers stay current.