



Publishing Budget Worksheet

Know what your book really costs – before you spend a dollar.

PLAN EVERY COST, THEN BREAK EVEN

A fill-in worksheet to total your real publishing costs and work out how many copies you need to sell to break even. Use 'your number' columns for your own quotes, and check each total against the example.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Pre-production costs
- Production costs
- Launch & marketing
- Ongoing costs
- Total investment
- Break-even
- Worked example
- Related calculators

START HERE

How to use this resource

Total your costs honestly, then find your break-even point.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKSHEET

1. Gather real quotes where you can; use the ranges only as a sanity check.
2. Fill the 'Your cost' column for every line – write \$0 if you'll DIY it.
3. Add each section's subtotal, then carry them to the Total Investment page.
4. Finish on the Break-Even page to see how many copies pay it all back.

Figures shown are illustrative teaching examples. Printing costs, royalty rates, fees, and discount terms change over time and vary by platform, trim size, and territory – always confirm current numbers in your publishing dashboard and with the matching SimpleLifeCalc calculator.

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**.

TIP

DIY-ing a task saves cash but spends time. Put a rough value on your hours too – a 'free' cover that takes a weekend isn't really free.

Pre-production & production

The two phases that turn a manuscript into a finished book.

PRE-PRODUCTION	TYPICAL RANGE	YOUR COST
Developmental / content edit	\$0 - \$1,500	
Copyedit	\$200 - \$800	
Proofread	\$100 - \$400	
Beta readers / ARC	\$0 - \$60	
Subtotal – pre-production		

PRODUCTION	TYPICAL RANGE	YOUR COST
Cover design	\$0 - \$500	
Interior layout / formatting	\$0 - \$300	
ISBN(s)	\$0 - \$125 (or block of 10 ~\$295)	
Proof copies	\$10 - \$60	
Subtotal – production		

ISBNs are free on KDP; owning your own (via Bowker in the US) costs more but works across every platform – see the [ISBN Decision Guide](#).

Launch & ongoing costs

What it takes to sell the book and keep it selling.

LAUNCH & MARKETING	TYPICAL RANGE	YOUR COST
Promo graphics / branding	\$0 - \$150	
Advertising (launch)	\$0 - \$300	
Review / promo services	\$0 - \$200	
Launch giveaway	\$0 - \$80	
Subtotal – launch		

ONGOING (PER MONTH)	TYPICAL RANGE	YOUR COST
Email / newsletter tool	\$0 - \$30	
Website / landing page	\$0 - \$20	
Ongoing ads	\$0 - \$?	
Subtotal – ongoing /mo		

TIP

Separate **one-time** costs from **monthly** costs. Break-even uses your one-time total; monthly costs come out of ongoing royalties.

Total & break-even

Add it up, then find the copy count that pays it back.

Total investment

Pre-production subtotal _____

Production subtotal _____

Launch subtotal _____

One-time TOTAL investment _____

Ongoing costs per month _____

Break-even

Your royalty per copy (from the Royalty Cheat Sheet) _____

Copies to break even = Total ÷ royalty per copy _____

WORKED EXAMPLE — RIVERSTONE PRESS

One-time total ≈ **\$650** (copyedit \$350, cover \$200, proofs \$40, ISBN \$0 via KDP, promo \$60 — illustrative)

KDP royalty per paperback at \$16.99 ≈ **\$5.34**

Break-even = $\$650 \div \$5.34 \approx$ **122 copies**

Sell past 122 copies and every additional sale is profit — before ongoing monthly costs.

WATCH OUT

If your break-even number feels impossible for your audience, fix it *now* by trimming costs or raising the price — not after launch.

GO FURTHER

Related SimpleLifeCalc Tools

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

These calculators replace the pencil math on this worksheet and keep your totals accurate as quotes change.

Publishing Cost Calculator

WHAT IT DOES Adds up one-time and ongoing costs into a single budget.

WHEN TO USE While filling the subtotals on this worksheet.

WHY IT HELPS Catches the small costs that quietly add up.

Break-Even Calculator

WHAT IT DOES Divides total cost by royalty per copy.

WHEN TO USE On the Break-Even page above.

WHY IT HELPS Shows your 'safe' number before launch, instantly.

KDP Royalty Calculator

WHAT IT DOES Estimates earnings per copy after printing cost.

WHEN TO USE To fill the 'royalty per copy' field.

WHY IT HELPS Break-even is only as good as this number.

KEEP THEM HANDY

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