



THE SELF-PUBLISHER'S FIELD GUIDE

KDP Launch Checklist

Publish Your Book with Confidence

A practical, no-fluff system that walks you through every step of an Amazon KDP launch — from first idea to launch day and the crucial weeks after.

FOR

Beginner & Intermediate Publishers

FORMAT

Print & Check Off as You Go

SECTIONS

12 Actionable Checklists



Contents & How to Use This Guide

Make this checklist work for you

- 1 Print it once, reuse it forever.** Keep a fresh copy for every book you publish — each launch gets its own checked-off record.
- 2 Work top to bottom.** The sections are ordered in the real sequence of a launch. Don't skip ahead — a clean manuscript can't fix a bad topic.
- 3 Watch the callout boxes.** **Pro Tips** save time, **Common Mistakes** save money, and **Quick Wins** build momentum.
- 4 Use the note lines.** Jot prices, dimensions, and decisions as you go so nothing lives only in your head.

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Why Launch Preparation Matters

On Amazon KDP, you can hit "Publish" in an afternoon — which is exactly why so many books launch broken. There is no editor, printer, or agent standing between your file and a paying customer. **You are the entire quality-control department.** A prepared launch protects your reviews, your royalties, and your reputation from day one.

A messy launch is expensive in ways that don't show up right away: a one-star review for a typo you could have caught, a rejected file that delays you a week, or a price that quietly loses money on every sale. Preparation turns publishing from a gamble into a repeatable process — and this checklist is that process.

⚡ QUICK WIN

Order a **physical proof copy** before you announce anything. Holding your book in your hands catches 90% of the errors a screen hides — and it costs only printing plus shipping.

❏ THE MOST COMMON PUBLISHING MISTAKES

- ⚠ **Publishing without a proof.** Trusting the on-screen previewer for a print book.
- ⚠ **Wrong trim size or margins.** Causing rejected files or cut-off text.
- ⚠ **Mispricing.** Setting a price before checking the royalty math.
- ⚠ **Skipping market research.** Writing a book no one is searching for.
- ⚠ **Weak metadata.** Empty keywords and a flat description that no one finds.
- ⚠ **No launch plan.** Publishing in silence with nobody ready to buy.

⊗ COMMON MISTAKE

Treating "publish" as the finish line. The launch is the **start** of the work — the first 30 days of sales, reviews, and keyword data decide your book's long-term trajectory.

Book Planning Checklist

Before you write a word, confirm the book is worth writing. Strong planning is the highest-leverage work you'll do — it's far cheaper to change your mind here than after the cover is designed.

☐ **Topic selected**

A clear, specific subject you can speak to with authority and genuine interest.

☐ **Audience identified**

You can name exactly who the book is for and the problem it solves for them.

☐ **Market research completed**

Confirmed real demand — search volume, Best Seller Rank, and category sales exist.

☐ **Competitor research completed**

Studied the top 10 books in your niche — their covers, prices, reviews, and gaps.

 PRO TIP

Read the **3-star reviews** of your top competitors. They're a free roadmap of exactly what readers wish those books did better — build that into yours.

 QUICK WIN

Write your **one-sentence promise** now — "This book helps [audience] achieve [result] without [pain]." If you can't, the topic isn't focused enough yet.

☐ **WORKING NOTES — TOPIC, AUDIENCE & TOP 3 COMPETITORS**

Manuscript Checklist

Get the words right before you touch layout. Editing a clean manuscript is quick; reformatting a messy one after design is a nightmare. Treat each pass as a separate job — don't try to edit and proofread at the same time.

- ☐ **Editing completed**
Structure, clarity, and flow reviewed. Cut what doesn't serve the reader.
- ☐ **Proofreading completed**
Spelling, grammar, and punctuation checked — ideally by fresh eyes, not just you.
- ☐ **Final review completed**
Front matter, back matter, headings, and consistency all verified end to end.
- ☐ **Formatting completed**
Styles applied consistently — fonts, headings, spacing, and chapter breaks.

💡 PRO TIP

Proofread it **out loud** or use a text-to-speech tool. Your ear catches clumsy sentences and missing words that your eye reads right past.

⊗ COMMON MISTAKE

Proofreading your own work the same day you finish writing. You'll read what you **meant** to write. Sleep on it, then check with fresh eyes — or have someone else do it.

☐ WORKING NOTES — EDITOR, DEADLINES & OUTSTANDING FIXES

Interior Formatting Checklist

This is where most files get rejected. Every setting below must match KDP's specifications for your exact trim size — confirm them once, and uploads sail through.

- ☐ **Correct trim size**
Document size matches your chosen KDP trim (e.g., 6" × 9" or 8.5" × 11").
- ☐ **Margins checked**
Inside (gutter) margin scales with page count so text isn't lost in the spine.
- ☐ **Bleed settings verified**
Bleed enabled only if images run to the page edge; otherwise turned off.
- ☐ **Page numbers checked**
Correctly placed, consistent, and absent from front matter where expected.
- ☐ **Images reviewed**
All images are 300 DPI, sharp, and positioned correctly on the page.
- ☐ **PDF exported**
Saved as a print-ready PDF with fonts embedded — not a Word file.

⊗ COMMON MISTAKE

Using the same inside margin for a 60-page and a 600-page book. Thicker books need a **wider gutter** — skip this and text disappears into the binding.

💡 PRO TIP

Always **embed your fonts** when exporting the PDF. Un-embedded fonts are the silent cause of "looked fine on my screen, printed wrong" disasters.

☐ MY SPECS — TRIM SIZE, PAGE COUNT & MARGIN SETTINGS

Cover Checklist

Your cover is the single biggest driver of clicks. For paperbacks it's one wraparound file — front, spine, and back must align perfectly to the spine width KDP calculates from your page count.

☐ **Front cover reviewed**

Title legible at thumbnail size; design fits the genre and stands out.

☐ **Spine verified**

Spine width matches final page count; text centered with safe margins.

☐ **Back cover reviewed**

Blurb, author bio, and any logo are correct and inside the safe zone.

☐ **Barcode area checked**

Lower-right back cover left clear — let KDP place the barcode automatically.

☐ **Resolution confirmed**

Full wraparound is 300 DPI with correct bleed; no blurry or stretched art.

 PRO TIP

Shrink your cover to **postage-stamp size** and look at it. If the title is unreadable, it's invisible in Amazon search results — simplify until it pops.

 COMMON MISTAKE

Placing text or your own barcode in the bottom-right of the back cover. KDP prints its barcode there — anything underneath gets **covered up**.

☐ **COVER NOTES — SPINE WIDTH, DESIGNER & REVISIONS**

KDP Upload Checklist

Your metadata is your marketing. Amazon's search engine reads every field below — fill them all deliberately. This information is how readers find a book they didn't know existed.

- ☐ **Book title entered**
Exactly matches your cover — spelling, capitalization, and spacing.
- ☐ **Subtitle entered**
Adds searchable keywords and clarifies the benefit, where it fits.
- ☐ **Author name entered**
Consistent across all your books and your Author Central profile.
- ☐ **Description completed**
Compelling, benefit-led, and formatted with light HTML for readability.
- ☐ **Categories selected**
Most relevant, least crowded categories chosen to maximize ranking.
- ☐ **Keywords added**
All 7 keyword slots used with real phrases readers actually type.

💡 PRO TIP

Open the first line of your description with a **bold hook**, not your title. The first sentence is often all a browsing reader sees before "Read more."

⚡ QUICK WIN

Use all **7 keyword slots**. Each empty one is free search visibility you're handing to a competitor — there is no penalty for filling them thoughtfully.

☐ LISTING DRAFT — SUBTITLE, CATEGORIES & 7 KEYWORDS

Pricing Checklist

Price is a strategic decision, not a guess. KDP deducts printing costs and pays a royalty percentage — know your real take-home *per copy* before you commit to a number.

☐ **Royalty option selected**

Chosen the plan that fits your goals (e.g., 35% vs 70% for eBooks).

☐ **Price determined**

Calculated to clear printing cost, hit your target royalty, and match the market.

☐ **Marketplace review completed**

Prices set or auto-converted sensibly across all KDP marketplaces (US, UK, EU, etc.).

 PRO TIP

Run your numbers through the **Simple Life Calculator KDP Royalty Calculator** and **Break-Even Calculator** before publishing. Know your profit per copy and how many sales cover your costs — *before* you set the price, not after.

 COMMON MISTAKE

Pricing a paperback so low that printing costs eat the royalty — leaving you **pennies, or even a loss, per copy**. Always confirm net royalty, not just list price.

☐ **PRICING MATH — PRINT COST · LIST PRICE · NET ROYALTY · BREAK-EVEN UNITS**

Proof Copy Review

This is the most important page in the guide. Order a printed proof and inspect it like a customer would. Check each item against the physical book — never against the screen.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Text errors
Re-read for typos that survived every digital pass. | ☐ Alignment problems
Headers, page numbers, and body text line up page to page. |
| ☐ Image quality
Photos and graphics print sharp, not pixelated or muddy. | ☐ Missing pages
Every page present and in the correct order — front to back. |
| ☐ Margin issues
No text crowding the spine or running off the edge. | ☐ Cover review
Colors, spine text, and finish look right in your hands. |
| ☐ Bleed issues
Full-bleed elements reach the trim with no white slivers. | |

⚡ QUICK WIN

Inspect the proof with a **pen in hand** and flag every issue as you go. Then fix them in a single batch and re-export — far faster than fixing one at a time.

⊗ COMMON MISTAKE

Approving the proof the moment it arrives. Give it a full, careful pass — once you click **Approve**, the next copy a customer sees is exactly what you signed off on.

☐ PROOF DEFECTS TO FIX BEFORE APPROVING

Launch Day Checklist

The file is approved — now make some noise. A concentrated burst of early sales and visits signals Amazon's algorithm that your book deserves to be shown to more readers.

☐ **Publish book**

Hit publish and confirm the status moves to "Live" (allow up to 72 hours).

☐ **Verify listing**

Open the live page — cover, title, description, price, and "Look Inside" all correct.

☐ **Share on social media**

Post the buy link everywhere you're active, with a clear call to action.

☐ **Create Pinterest pins**

Design 2–3 vertical pins linking to the listing for long-tail traffic.

☐ **Notify email subscribers**

Send your list the link and ask for early purchases and honest reviews.

 PRO TIP

Prepare every post, pin, and email **in advance** so launch day is pure copy-paste. Momentum matters more than perfection — concentrate the buzz into one window.

 QUICK WIN

Buy the **first copy yourself** and confirm the entire checkout flow works. A verified purchase plus a quick proofread of the live page catches last-minute surprises.

☐ **LAUNCH CHANNELS & POSTING TIMES**

Post-Launch Checklist

Publishing is the start line. The first month of data tells you what's working — review these on a regular schedule and adjust your listing while interest is high.

- ☐ **Monitor sales**
Check the KDP dashboard for sales, royalties, and pages read; spot trends early.
- ☐ **Monitor reviews**
Watch new reviews; mine them for honest feedback and future improvements.
- ☐ **Track keywords**
See where you rank for target terms; swap underperformers for better phrases.
- ☐ **Update marketing materials**
Refresh description, ads, and graphics based on what's converting.

⚡ QUICK WIN

Your description and keywords aren't permanent. **Edit and test them** any time — a sharper hook or a better keyword can lift sales weeks after launch at zero cost.

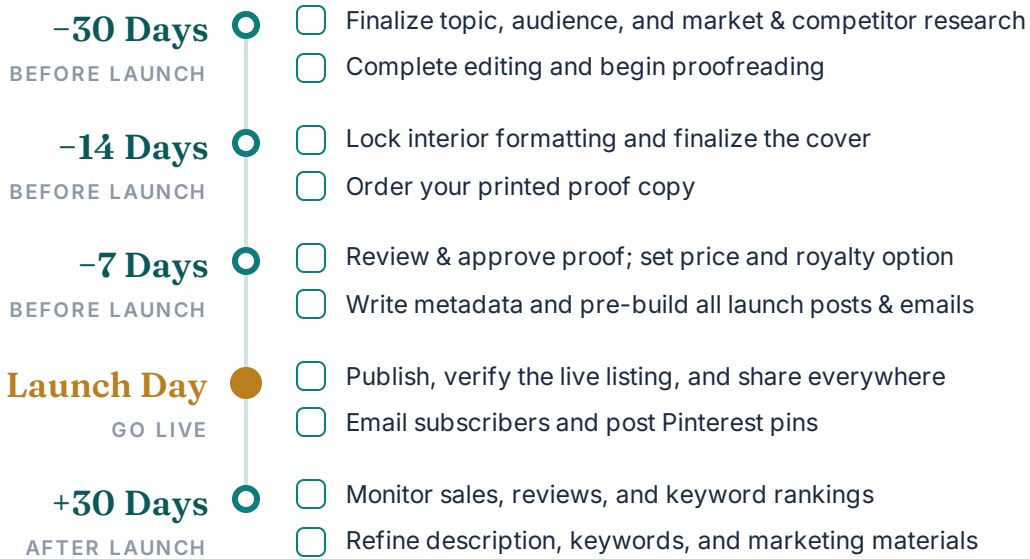
💡 PRO TIP

Set a recurring **weekly 15-minute review**. Consistent small check-ins beat a frantic monthly scramble — and keep your listing sharp while competitors go quiet.

☐ METRICS TO TRACK — WEEK 1 / WEEK 2 / WEEK 4

KDP Publishing Timeline

A simple countdown that turns the whole checklist into a schedule. Back-date from your target launch and protect each milestone — rushing the end is what breaks launches.



💡 PRO TIP

Pick your launch date **first**, then write each milestone in your calendar. A real deadline is what turns "someday" into a published book.

One-Page Master Checklist

The entire guide on a single page. Print one per book, pin it up, and check off your way to launch.

1 BOOK PLANNING

- ☐ Topic selected
- ☐ Audience identified
- ☐ Market research completed
- ☐ Competitor research completed

2 MANUSCRIPT

- ☐ Editing completed
- ☐ Proofreading completed
- ☐ Final review completed
- ☐ Formatting completed

3 INTERIOR FORMATTING

- ☐ Correct trim size
- ☐ Margins checked
- ☐ Bleed settings verified
- ☐ Page numbers checked
- ☐ Images reviewed
- ☐ PDF exported

4 COVER

- ☐ Front cover reviewed
- ☐ Spine verified
- ☐ Back cover reviewed
- ☐ Barcode area checked
- ☐ Resolution confirmed

5 KDP UPLOAD

- ☐ Book title entered
- ☐ Subtitle entered
- ☐ Author name entered
- ☐ Description completed
- ☐ Categories selected
- ☐ Keywords added (all 7)

6 PRICING

- ☐ Royalty option selected
- ☐ Price determined
- ☐ Marketplace review completed

7 PROOF COPY

- ☐ Text errors checked
- ☐ Image quality & bleed checked
- ☐ Margins & alignment checked
- ☐ No missing pages
- ☐ Cover reviewed & approved

8 LAUNCH DAY

- ☐ Publish book
- ☐ Verify live listing
- ☐ Share on social media
- ☐ Create Pinterest pins
- ☐ Notify email subscribers

9 POST-LAUNCH

- ☐ Monitor sales
- ☐ Monitor reviews
- ☐ Track keywords
- ☐ Update marketing materials



You're Ready to Publish with Confidence

You now have the same repeatable system the pros use. Work the checklist, trust the proof, and launch with a plan — then do it again for your next book.

— KEEP GOING · FREE PUBLISHING TOOLS —



KDP Royalty Calculator

See your exact take-home royalty per copy before you set a price. Compare trim sizes, page counts, and list prices in seconds.



KDP Break-Even Calculator

Know exactly how many copies cover your costs, so you can price and promote with real numbers instead of guesswork.



More Publishing Resources

From pricing and royalties to break-even planning, the full suite of free self-publishing calculators and guides is waiting on the website — built to make the business side of KDP simple.

Created by [Simple Life Calculator](#)

Find the KDP Royalty Calculator, Break-Even Calculator & more at [Simple Life Calculator](#)

Tools and guidance for smarter self-publishing decisions.