SIMPLELIFECALC PUBLISHING TOOLKIT

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.

WORKSHEET

Costs 1–2

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 (platform ISBN) or $125 for one / $295 for 10 (current US Bowker pricing when checked)	
Proof copies	$10 – $60	
Subtotal — production		

A free platform ISBN (KDP, or IngramSpark where offered) works only on the platform that issued it. A publisher-owned ISBN — bought from Bowker in the US at the prices above, current when checked in 2026 — can be used across publishing services for the same product. Prices differ outside the US. See the ISBN Decision Guide.

WORKSHEET

Costs 3–4

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.

WORKSHEET

Costs 5

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 current earnings / royalty per copy _____

Enter the current KDP royalty or current IngramSpark publisher compensation shown for this title on the platform you are modeling.

Copies to break even = One-time total ÷ current per-copy earnings _____

WORKED EXAMPLE — RIVERSTONE PRESS

FICTIONAL · ILLUSTRATIVE · DATE-SENSITIVE

One-time total ≈ **$650** (copyedit $350, cover $200, proofs $40, ISBN $0 with a free KDP ISBN, promo $60)

Per-copy earnings (fictional input — not a current KDP or IngramSpark figure) = **$5.00**

Break-even = $650 ÷ $5.00 = **130 copies**

Every platform number here is made up for teaching. Use the current per-copy figure your platform shows for your title. Past your break-even count, each sale adds 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 your per-copy earnings.
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 estimate the per-copy earnings field — then confirm the current figure KDP shows for your title.
WHY IT HELPS Break-even is only as good as this number.

MODELING INGRAMSPARK INSTEAD?

The IngramSpark Publisher Compensation Formula Cheat Sheet explains the planning math. For break-even, use the current publisher compensation IngramSpark shows for your title and market — that is the final figure.

KEEP THEM HANDY

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