



Self-Publishing Comparison Workbook

KDP, IngramSpark, or both? Compare on what actually matters to you.

CHOOSE YOUR PATH WITH EYES OPEN

A workbook to compare the main self-publishing routes across the factors that affect your reach and earnings – then score them against your own priorities and commit to a plan. Built around KDP and IngramSpark, the two routes most authors weigh.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- The routes at a glance
- Factor-by-factor table
- Cost & royalty
- Reach & control
- Score it for YOU
- Decision matrix
- Worked example
- Your plan
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START HERE

How to use this resource

Compare the routes, score them for your goals, commit to a plan.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

1. Skim the at-a-glance table to see the big differences fast.
2. Read the factor pages, noting which factors matter most to you.
3. Score each route 1-5 on your top factors on the 'Score it' page.
4. Use the decision matrix to land on a plan, then write it down.

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.

The routes at a glance

ROUTE	BEST KNOWN FOR	TYPICAL AUTHOR
KDP (Amazon)	Lowest print cost on Amazon, easy setup, huge marketplace	Amazon-first authors, beginners
IngramSpark	Wide distribution to bookstores & libraries	Authors going wide / building an imprint
Both (hybrid)	KDP for Amazon + Ingram for everyone else	Authors who want reach and low Amazon cost
Aggregators (ebooks)	One upload → many ebook stores	Ebook authors avoiding many dashboards

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**. The same book is scored both ways in the example.

TIP

This isn't either/or for most authors. The common winner is **hybrid**: print on KDP for Amazon's lower cost, and use IngramSpark to reach every store KDP can't.

Factor-by-factor

Eight factors that separate the routes in practice.

Factor-by-factor

FACTOR	KDP	INGRAMSPARK
Print cost (Amazon)	Lowest	Higher
Bookstore / library reach	Limited	Strong (Ingram catalog)
Setup fees	None	Low (sometimes waived via promos)
Discount control	Fixed (60% keep)	You set it (40-55%)
Returns option	No	Yes (optional)
Imprint name shown	'Independently published' (free ISBN)	Your imprint (your ISBN)
Ease for beginners	Easiest	Steeper learning curve
International print	Some regions	Broad global network

A simplified comparison of common cases; specifics change – verify current terms before deciding.

WATCH OUT

Don't enroll the *same* Amazon channel through both KDP and Ingram – pick one source for Amazon (usually KDP) to avoid listing conflicts.

Cost, royalty, reach & control

Where the money and the readers actually are.

Cost & royalty (Riverstone, illustrative)

CHANNEL	PRINT COST	ROYALTY / COPY
KDP paperback @ \$16.99	\$4.85	\$5.34
IngramSpark @ 40%	\$5.00	\$5.19
IngramSpark @ 55%	\$5.00	\$2.65

Reach & control

KDP

Best on Amazon, lowest cost there, simplest setup – weakest for physical stores.

INGRAM

Best for bookstores, libraries, and global retail – more setup, higher print cost.

HYBRID

KDP for Amazon + Ingram for the rest. Most reach per dollar for many authors.

TIP

Reach is only worth the lower royalty if those extra channels actually sell copies. Be honest about whether bookstores will stock *your* title before chasing the 55% discount.

Score it & decide

Make the comparison about your goals, not generic 'best'.

Score it for YOU

Rate how well each route serves your goals, 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Total the columns – highest wins, but weight the factors that matter most to you.

FACTOR (YOUR PRIORITY)	KDP	INGRAMSPARK	BOTH
Low cost on Amazon			
Bookstore / library reach			
Simple to manage			
My imprint shown			
Control over discount			
International reach			
TOTAL			

Decision matrix

PICK KDP

If your readers are on Amazon and simplicity beats reach.

PICK INGRAM

If bookstores/libraries/your imprint are the whole point.

PICK BOTH

If you want Amazon's low cost AND wide reach – and can manage two dashboards.

Worked example & your plan

Land the decision and write it down.

WORKED EXAMPLE — RIVERSTONE PRESS

Priorities: own imprint, bookstore reach, and Amazon sales — willing to manage two dashboards.

Scores (illustrative): KDP 22 · IngramSpark 24 · **Both 28**

Decision: **Hybrid** — KDP for the Amazon paperback (cost \$4.85, royalty \$5.34) + IngramSpark at 55% for bookstores (royalty \$2.65), under Riverstone's own ISBN.

Your plan

My chosen route _____

Amazon paperback via _____

Wide distribution via _____

Wholesale discount _____

ISBN approach (free / own) _____

Why this route

In one sentence... _____

TIP

Revisit this workbook for each new title — the right route can change as your goals, genre, and audience grow.

GO FURTHER

Related SimpleLifeCalc Tools

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

These turn the comparison into concrete numbers for your specific book.

Self-Publishing Profit Calculator

WHAT IT DOES Models total profit across KDP, Ingram, and hybrid.

WHEN TO USE While scoring the routes.

WHY IT HELPS Replaces guesswork with dollars per route.

Book Royalty Comparison Calculator

WHAT IT DOES Compares royalty per copy across every channel.

WHEN TO USE On the cost & royalty page.

WHY IT HELPS See the trade-offs side by side, instantly.

Book Pricing Calculator

WHAT IT DOES Finds a price that works in every channel you choose.

WHEN TO USE After you pick your route.

WHY IT HELPS A hybrid price must survive Amazon AND a 55% discount.

KEEP THEM HANDY

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