

## **Paperback Publishing Made Simple**

Re: Windows 11, Microsoft Word, and Adobe Acrobat Pro  
(September 13, 2025)

Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011) supposedly said, *"Everyone has a book in them and that, in most cases, is where it should stay."*

Well, maybe so. But if you just can't resist the lure of being able to introduce yourself as a published author, that's now easy to achieve on a do-it-yourself basis. No more rejections from publishing houses. No need for an expensive vanity publishing service.

This article assumes that you have a desktop computer equipped with late editions of Microsoft Office Pro and Adobe Acrobat Pro. If needed, you can find non-subscription Office/Acrobat bundles online for as little as \$89.99 ... or even less sometimes if purchased separately. This is all you'll need, to create both your book's interior pages, and its wrap-around cover.

What follows surely looks like a lot of complicated detail, and a lot of work ... but you'll have to do most of these things only once. Printing this out for use as a check list, scratching off each item on the list as you go, might be helpful.

You'll begin by creating your book's interior pages, because you can't do a cover until you know how many pages your book is going to have.

### **Microsoft Word Setup**

1. To make things easy, the following will be about creating a standard 6"x 9" Trade (a.k.a. "U.S. Royal") size book.
2. First, to tell Word about your page size and margins, open a blank document and ...
  - a. Click on *Layout/Size/More Paper Sizes/Paper*. Under "Paper size:" select "Custom size" and enter your page dimensions (e.g., 6" and 9") on the "Page Setup" box that opens.
  - b. Verify that "Whole document" is selected in the "Apply to:" box, then click "Print Options".
    - i. Now you need to tell Word to (1) embed whatever fonts you'll be using in your document, and (2) to not compress images. This assures (1) that wherever your document goes, it'll be rendered just like you wrote it, and not with some substituted font, and (2) that if your

manuscript includes any images, Word will not change their resolution when you save your document.

- ii. Click on *Word Options/Save* and tick the "Embed fonts in the file" box and the "Do not embed common system fonts" box.
  - iii. Next, click */Advanced*, scroll down to "Image Size and Quality" and tick the "Do not compress images in file" box.
  - iv. click "OK" to dismiss the "Word Options" dialog box.
- c. click the "Margins" tab.
  - d. I like to do readers a favor by providing plenty of white space on a page, so I set the margins for my Trade-size books at 3/4" (0.75"). Because I place page numbers at the bottom of the page, I add 1/4", and set the bottom margin to 1".
  - e. "Orientation" will be "Portrait" for this book. Select "Mirror margins" in the "Multiple pages:" box.
  - f. Paperbacks are ordinarily "Perfect bound", meaning that the pages are glued together on the left edge, with a wrap-around cover then

glued to that edge. This makes the inside margins seem smaller than the outside margins, so it's nice to add a little to those inside margins (the right side of "recto" pages, and the left side of "verso" pages). This space is called the "Gutter". Increase the "Gutter" setting arbitrarily and watch the "Preview" to see what this means. Set this to 1/4" (0.25").

Note: Choosing the right gutter size is essential. It ensures that the book is not only visually appealing but also functional for readers. Adjusting the gutter size according to the book's thickness will help maintain the readability of the content. To approximate the appropriate gutter size, use this formula ...  $\text{Gutter} = \text{Pages} \times 0.0025$  ... then set the gutter to the nearest quarter inch.

- g. Verify that "Whole document" is selected in the "Apply to:" box, then click OK.
3. Click OK to save these settings and return to your document.

Note: These settings are now saved with the document itself, not within Windows as a selectable paper size. Should you ever have a need for this size for some future project, your only alternative would be to reload this document, save it with a different filename, then strip its original contents to start over with a blank page.

4. Click OK to save these settings and return to your document.

## Font Selection

The first consideration here is, *Serif* or *Sans-Serif*? This page is rendered in a sans-serif font ... probably Helvetica, if you have it, else Arial.

This line is what serif fonts look like.

Blocks of text rendered in a serif font are generally easier to read, so that's what's appropriate for most books. A sans-serif font might be nicer for a "coffee table" book ... one that focuses more on pictures than text.

The Windows workhorse "Arial" and "Times New Roman" fonts can be used, but aren't usually recommended for publishing. "Helvetica" or "Calibri" are good sans-serif choices. Serif alternatives include "Garamond", "Georgia", "Palatino" or "Caslon".

The newer "Noto" font family is a recent open-source development that's intended as a "universal font", and has become compatible with almost every language. Noto Serif is also very readable, so that's been my choice for my last several projects. The Noto font family might already be installed on your computer; if not you can download it from <http://www.google.com/get/noto>. Download "Noto Sans" and "Noto Serif". The downloads will include all the variations of each font; install at least the regular, bold, and italic versions of each one.

To install fonts, go to *Settings/Personalization/Fonts* and drag the ones you want to install into the box provided.

## About Images

If your book includes any images ...

1. Images must all be at least 300ppi. I usually rescale them at 330ppi just to make sure that they'll not be detected as "borderline" when uploaded to a publishing partner.
2. Do not use transparencies, because they can cause issues during the printing process, potentially leading to poor print quality. Use your image editor to create a page-matching background shade, and flatten the image.
3. Unless your book will be printed in color, make sure that your images are all grayscale; sometimes pictures that look like they're grayscale are actually color images ... sepia, platinum-colored, or something else.
4. Use your image editing software to rescale images to the size you want them to be on your page. Do not rely on Word's photo "Layout Options" for re-sizing images. Unless you have something else, the free [IrfanView](#) can easily do this, or perhaps you already have [Photoscape X](#). I like [PaintShop Pro](#).

### Checking Image Resolution

When uploading your mms, your publishing partner might complain about low-resolution images. Unfortunately, there is no way to check image resolution (dpi) within Word itself. The best way I've found so far, is this ...

- create a new folder under your project folder named "temp"
- right-click "mms.docx" file, and drag it to the "temp" folder and select "Copy here"
- in the "temp" folder, change the extension of "mms.docx" to "mms.zip"
- right-click "mms.zip" and select "Extract here"
- your document's images will be found in "temp/word/media"
- with File Explorer in "Details" view, right click on the column headers and select "Horizontal resolution"
- the "dpi" will be listed for each image

**WARNING:** If your document has any images, before saving it for the first time, double-check *File/Options/Advanced* to make sure that image compression has been turned off. Otherwise, Word will downscale all your images to its default 220dpi, and you'll have to replace them all with your 330dpi versions.

5. Now go ahead and create your manuscript

### Hints

- For ideas on what to include as "front matter" and how to format it, look at a few other professionally published paperbacks. Or see [this minimalist example](#).
- Page numbers ... odd numbers on the front (recto) side of the page; even numbers on the back side (verso). Start with page 1 at the beginning of the body of your book (e.g., "Chapter One"). There's no need to number the front matter pages, or blank filler pages at the back of your book.

- Your finished manuscript must have an even number of pages, the last of which should be blank. Add one or two un-numbered pages at the end, if necessary.
- Proofread, Proofread, Proofread. When readers detect defects in your writing, your book's authenticity and credibility will usually go right out the window, and having them pointed out is an embarrassment that you can well do without. It's very difficult to proofread your own writing, because your mind already knows what you meant to say, and will skip right over typographical, spelling and grammar errors. As many times as you read through your manuscript, you'll still find errors and flaws that need correction. It doesn't hurt to have others proofread your work, but unless they happen to be skilled in the art, it's not necessarily that helpful either. Browse through your mms and fix things that Word has underlined in blue or red. Next, click *Review/Spelling and Grammar* and take another trip through it. Going through your mms with an online proofreading tool, such as [Grammarly](#) can be very helpful (you needn't accept every one of its suggestions). Don't be in such a hurry to see your book in print that you rush through this very important step in the process.

## About ISBN Numbers

International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN) are used to identify unique versions of books in print. If your book winds up having more than one edition or format, each one must have its own unique ISBN. For example, should you decide to offer a hard-cover and a paperback edition, you would need to assign a different number to each one.

If you intend to distribute your book only among relatives and friends, an ISBN isn't needed. Lulu will permit your book to be sold through their online "Market Place" without an ISBN.

If you intend to have your book generally available to booksellers, Lulu will give you an ISBN and barcode free of charge, except that Lulu will then be its exclusive distributor.

Kindle (Amazon) will also provide you with a free ISBN, if needed, but then they will be your exclusive distributor. They will not accept books with an ISBN other than one owned by them or you.

If you want your own, [Bowker](#) is the only company authorized to administer ISBNs in the US. You can buy one for US\$125, or ten for US\$295.

The reality is that most self-published authors never sell enough copies of their book to recover the cost of its ISBN. So, you should probably consider its having its own author-owned ISBN more of a frill, than a necessity. If you hope to get your book into distribution, and are the kind of person who wants to control their own destiny, then you'll probably decide to afford that frill.

### **PDF File Creation (interior pages)**

All finished creating your book's interior pages?

You'll now need to convert your Word ".docx" file to ".pdf" for your publishing partner (Lulu, Kindle, etc.). If your book doesn't have any images, Word's Save to PDF function will probably do. Otherwise, to make sure that your images are perfectly passed through ...

1. Select *File/Print* and "Adobe PDF" from the drop-down list.
2. Under the "Printer" box, select *Printer Properties*.
3. On the "Adobe PDF Settings" tab, select ...
  - a. Default Settings: PDF/X-1a.2001

- b. Click the "Edit" next to this setting to open the "Standard - Adobe PDF Settings" dialog box, and make these settings...

### **General Settings**

- i. Compatibility: Adobe 4.0 (PDF 1.3)
- ii. Object Level Compression: Off
- iii. Auto-Rotate Pages: Off
- iv. Binding: Left
- v. Resolution: 2400
- vi. All Pages: ticked
- vii. Default Page Size/Width: 6.0
- viii. Default Page Size/Height: 9.0

### **Images Settings**

- ix. Turn everything (7 selection boxes) to: Off

## Fonts Settings

- x. Embed all fonts: ticked
    - xi. Subset embedded fonts when ...: clear
    - xii. When embedding fails: Cancel job
  - c. Click the "Save As" button and save your setup as *"PDFX1a 2001(6x9).joboptions"*
  - d. Click "OK" to dismiss the "Adobe PDF Settings" dialog box.
  - e. Reselect Default Settings: PDF/X-1a.2001(6x9)
  - f. Adobe PDF Security: None
  - g. Adobe PDF Output Folder: Prompt for Adobe PDF filename
  - h. Adobe PDF Page Size: Select "US Royal (6x9)"
  - i. View Adobe PDF Results: ticked
  - j. Add document information: cleared
  - k. Rely on system fonts only, do not use document fonts: cleared
  - l. Delete log files for successful jobs: ticked
  - m. Ask to replace existing PDF file: ticked
  - n. Click OK to save these settings and dismiss this dialog box.
4. Click "Print"

5. The "Save PDF File as" dialog appears; specify where you want the file saved to.
6. At the bottom of the dialog box, specify the "File name:" for your PDF file, and select "Save as type: PDF files (\*.PDF)"
7. Click the "Save" button to generate your file, and save it to the specified location.
8. The resulting PDF version of your manuscript will appear for your inspection.

## **Cover Creation**

You don't have to create your own cover, if you don't want to. Any publishing partner you choose will have a variety of free designs available as templates. You need only insert your own title, subtitle, and name on the front, and perhaps a short description of the book on the back. If they have provided you with an ISBN, its barcode will already be on the back, or if you have your own, you'll copy and paste it onto the back in the designated space.

If you prefer to create your own design, you can also use Microsoft Word to create your own wrap-around cover. I've usually used [Scribus](#) in the past, but having recently encountered a problem I couldn't overcome, I decided to resort to Word. The result was actually better, and more easily achieved.

Wrap-around covers have three sections: front, spine, and back. The front and back are the same size as the book's pages, in this case 6" x 9". The spine width depends upon the number of pages in the book, and the type of paper chosen. For achromatic ("black and white") books, the paper choices are usually just "white" and "creme", with the difference often being considered negligible. Publishing partners usually differ in spine width, but the difference is usually so small that you can use one or the other, or the average of them all, rather than design a separate cover for each one.

KDP (Amazon.Com) specifies ...

- White paper: page count x 0.002252"
- Cream paper: page count x 0.0025"
- Premium Color paper: page count x 0.002347"
- Standard Color paper: page count x 0.002252"

Lulu specifies only a single formula for these four cases ...

- $(\text{Pages}/444)+0.06$  in

Ingram Sparks suggests ...

- White paper: page count x 0.0022"
- Cream paper: page count x 0.0025"

So, for this 120-page book with creme paper, I'll go with a spine width of 0.315".

POD books are manufactured using high-speed laser printers, and over-sized page and covers stock. After the book is assembled, it's then sheared to size. It's not necessary to concern oneself with this as far as the interior of the book is concerned, but an extra 1/8th inch (0.125") must be added to the perimeter of the cover.

The cover height will therefore be  $(.125" + 9.000" + .125") = 9.25"$

Its width will be  $(.125" + 6.000" + 0.315" + 6.000" + .125") = 12.565"$

### **Microsoft Word Layout**

1. Open Word, and select the "Blank document"
2. On the "Layout" ribbon, change "Orientation" to "Landscape"

3. Click *Size/More Page Sizes* make these entries ..."
  - a. width: 12.565"
  - b. Apply to: Whole document
  - c. Click "Print Options/Save" and select ...
    - i. Embed fonts in the file: ticked
  - d. Click "Print Options/Advanced" and select ...
    - i. Do not compress images in the file: ticked
  - e. Click "OK" to save these settings and dismiss the "Word Options" dialog box.
4. Back in the "Page Setup" dialog box, click the "Margins" tab and set all five dimensions to "0". ("Ignore" the margins warning.)
5. Click "OK" to save these settings and dismiss the dialog box.
6. Save this blank page with the filename you want to use for your finished cover.
7. Note: These settings are now saved with the document itself, not within Windows as a selectable paper size. Should you ever have a need for this size for some future project, your only alternative would be to reload this document, save it with a different filename, then strip its original contents to start over with a blank page.

## Create Your Cover

Now you need to put on your "Artist" hat.

If you're thinking about just using a cover template provided by your publishing partner, that option will be presented to you after you're successfully uploaded your book's interior (the PDF file created above) at their website. Lulu.Com, for example, offers three choices: a "Lulu Quick Template Cover", a "Cover Creator", and a manual online "Create Your Cover" tool.

You can look through what sort of "Quick Templates" they have to offer, and download one that looks appropriate for your book. It will be already sized correctly, with the ISBN barcode already inserted if you took advantage of that offer. It'll come as a PDF, which Acrobat can convert to a Word document, which will be much easier to work with.

If you want to try Lulu's online tools, [this video](#) is a nice introduction to what that's like.

If you've decided to be "original" and go it on your own with Word, you'll be pleasantly surprised to learn that Word can do the job just as well, and you won't have to sweat through the learning curve of yet another piece of software.

Use text boxes ("Insert/Text Box") to place legends and information wherever you want.

Instead of using Word's own background colors and fill effects ("Design/Page Color"), which sometimes don't convert properly to PDF, create three images to fill in the page: front.jpg, spine.jpg, and back.jpg. The front and back images would be 6.125" x 9.25", and the spine images would be 0.315" x 9.25", or better yet, 0.400" to provide a little overlap. All three should be 330dpi.

Or, you could use a single image measuring 12.565" x 9.25" x 330dpi.

Then use text boxes to add the title, subtitle, author, description, etc. atop these back ground images, and insert the ISBN barcode as a picture in the usual way.

Here's an example of [a cover produced using Word](#). A single background image was created using PaintShop Pro, merely be opening a new blank "image"; the PSP "New Image" dialog box providing everything needed to set the image size, resolution, background, and gradient. That was saved as a .jpg file, which was then inserted into the Word document. The legends are all placed using text boxes, which were accurately placed using *Layout/Position/More Layout*

*Options.* The ISBN barcode was provided by [Kindlepreneur](#) as a .jpg file (the number is not real). The project took less than an hour.

## **PDF File Creation (cover)**

Note: In the following, use the width and length of your own cover where that's called for, not the 12.565" and 9.25" values used for this tutorial.

All finished creating your book's cover?

You'll now need to convert your Word ".docx" file to ".pdf" for your publishing partner (Lulu, Kindle, etc.). Here's how ...

1. Select *File/Print* and "Adobe PDF" from the drop-down list.
2. Under the "Printer" box, select *Printer Properties*.
3. On the "Adobe PDF Settings" tab, select ...
  - a. Default Settings: PDF/X-1a.2001
  - b. Click the "Edit" next to this setting to open the "Adobe PDF Settings" dialog box, and make these settings...

## **General Settings**

- i. Compatibility: Adobe 4.0 (PDF 1.3)
- ii. Object Level Compression: Off
- iii. Auto-Rotate Pages: Off
- iv. Binding: Left
- v. Resolution: 2400
- vi. All Pages: ticked
- vii. Default Page Size/Width: 12.565
- viii. Default Page Size/Height: 9.250

## **Images Settings**

- ix. Turn everything (7 selection boxes) to: Off

## **Fonts Settings**

- x. Embed all fonts: ticked
- xi. Subset embedded fonts when ...: clear

- xii. When embedding fails: Cancel job
- c. Click the "Save As" button and save your setup as "*PDFX1a 2001(9.3x12.6).joboptions*"
- d. Click "OK" to dismiss the "Adobe PDF Settings dialog box
- e. Default Settings: should now show "PDF/X-1a:2001(9.3x12.6)"; if not, select it.
- f. Adobe PDF Security: None
- g. Adobe PDF Output Folder: Prompt for Adobe PDF filename
- h. Adobe PDF Page Size: click the "Add" button, enter whatever you want as the "Paper Name", then enter the dimensions Width="12.565", Height="9.250", and tick "Inch". Click the "Add/Modify" button to save this paper size and dismiss the dialog box.
- i. Adobe PDF Page Size: Select the custom paper size your just created.
- j. View Adobe PDF Results: ticked.
- k. Add document information: cleared.
- l. Rely on system fonts only, do not use document fonts: cleared
- m. Delete log files for successful jobs: ticked
- n. Ask to replace existing PDF file: ticked

- o. Click OK to save these settings and dismiss this dialog box.
4. Click "Print"
5. The "Save PDF File as" dialog appears; specify where you want the file saved to.
6. At the bottom of the dialog box, specify the "File name:" for your PDF file, and select "Save as type: PDF files (\*.PDF)"
7. Click the "Save" button to generate your file, and save it to the specified location.
8. The resulting PDF version of your manuscript will appear for your inspection.

## Conclusion

You now have draft-ready PDFs for your book's cover and interior. I say "draft ready" because the next step is to obtain a physical copy of your book and proofread it. You *will* find things that need to be corrected or revised.

If you already have a publishing partner, you know what to do next. Otherwise, I recommend [Lulu.com](https://lulu.com) because they're the easiest, and least costly, to deal with. You can create an account and upload files on their website and order a single copy in 20-minutes, or less, and the only thing you'll have to pay for is the discounted price of your book, plus shipping.

After editing your draft copy, you can upload the revised to Lulu.Com again and repeat the process, and you can do that as many times as needed Lulu doesn't charge any setup or revision fees.

When you're satisfied that your book is production-ready, you can have it made instantly available in Lulu's online "Market Place", and the royalties you'll receive from any sales will be reasonable. Lulu.Com is not a good choice for trade distribution, because they have to tack on costs that will seriously erode your royalties.

If you want to have your book sold on the open market, a better choice is [Kindle Direct Publishing](#) (KDP), Amazon.com's self-publishing service. KDP is just a little bit less easy to deal with, but your book will almost instantly appear on Amazon.Com, and they offer a much better deal for market-wide distribution.

A third possibility is [IngramSpark](#), a spin-off of LightningSource, one of the first in the POD business, having been around now for over 30-years. My first book was published through LightningSource, and they were a bear to deal with. Their ownership goes way back into print book publishing, and they were very slow to catch up with the times administratively. After resisting the pressure to lighten up, they finally decided to cave after Amazon.Com started KDP,

and established their "Spark" operation. In the beginning, Spark was encumbered with some of the same old Ingram stuff ... longwinded contract agreements, setup fees, revision fees, etc. ... but over the years they seem to have lightened up a lot. Other than having to transfer my titles from LightningSource to IngramSpark (because LightningSource wanted to dump low-volume customers like me), I haven't done much with Spark. A friend, who was a complete novice, insisted on having them handle his book, and told me that they were very easy to deal with one-on-one by phone ... very pleasant, patient, and helpful. IngramSpark's costs seem to be about the same as KDP's.

Having said all that, I'll end this hoping that you've found it useful, and wishing you the best of luck with your book!

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