

5 facts you need to know about self-publishing a children's book

Every person seems to have a children's book in them. However, just because these books seem simple, doesn't mean the publishing process is uncomplicated—short and sweet. That doesn't mean you shouldn't publish your children's book—however you do need to arm yourself with as much knowledge about the publishing process as possible.

We want our authors to explore publishing a children's book with the eyes wide open, so these facts are a great place to start. There is no authoritative guide to self-publishing a children's book and there are as many types of children's books as there are say self-help books. Pickawoowo as a trade publisher of Mind Body Spirit books for children since 2005 obviously can share their expertise but as a future author these 5 facts give you what to consider when creating a typical children's book (e.g., illustrations, printing options, trim sizes, ebooks) before you start.



1. It takes time and effort—then more time and effort.

Illustrations, let me rephrase this, good illustrations take a lot of time. We have exceptional illustrators that work with us but if our illustrators have a waiting period it could be weeks or months before they're able to get to your book project. You may be inclined to find your own illustrator, but we would urge you to read fact 2 before doing so.

So, illustrations are just the beginning. You also have services like editing and yes this is important too regardless of it being 'just a children's book.' The style layout of the interior and cover takes considerable time (or ebook creation) and as a final point your choice for printing needs to be carefully discussed as it can be the difference between 4 weeks or 3 months depending on printing solution chosen (see fact 4 below).

All this needs to happen before your book can be made available for purchase. So, we always encourage authors to have realistic expectations around publishing time for their book. As a rule of thumb—if you want your book out by Christmas, you should start the Christmas *before*. That said, if

your intent is to get your book in bookstores by Christmas, then you'll probably have to start even sooner, given that most bookstores make their holiday selections between June and July.

2. You need an exceptional illustrator—with experience.

With hundreds of thousands of children's books on the market or entering the market, the success of your children's book depends on its illustrations. If the illustrations aren't exceptional or engaging, it won't interest the purchasers (usually women) or children. A qualified illustrator understands the industry requirements and can bring your words and your story to life in a way that'll translate to a printed book.

If you are not working with one of our experienced illustrators, then here is a quick rundown of how to work with a qualified illustrator. If you need support during this process (when working with an illustrator) then we suggest you book some time with one of our book consultants to guide you in the process—so poor decisions can be avoided.

- Children's book success depends a lot on the quality of its illustrations. Without illustrations, your book isn't complete. Therefore, if you're not an illustrator you'll need to hire one before you get to the publishing stage. This entire process (hiring and completion of illustrations) can take a long time. Start early. Working locally with a qualified illustrator may make it easier for the revisions process however these days the internet makes everything possible (other than meeting in person).
- Choose someone whose work excites you and have a written contract in place. There are two options for contracts and one provides you with ownership and the other they retain ownership—not knowing the difference will cost you dearly. Having a contract will spell out exactly what each of you is responsible for; what work will be completed in the process; how much it will cost including revisions, and what happens if one of you terminates the agreement.
- Some decisions should be carefully thought out in the initial stages of illustrating. Book format size will dictate the format for the illustrations; Landscape images if utilised will need to be illustrated carefully and differently for Print on Demand or Offset Books—no colour is allowed in the gutter for POD titles; Will a unique cover be illustrated for consistency or will you utilise an internal illustration, this can depend on budgets and themes? Covers give branding opportunities for your book and should be carefully considered especially if part of a series; Does the cover work as a thumbnail as this is the way it will be primarily seen via online stores? And so forth.



3. Illustrators expenses expanded.

Children's book illustrators vary considerably in price and we would urge authors to be mindful of this.

Pickawoowo's fees vary depending on the style chosen but are usually around 20%-25% less than ASA's rates (indicated below) as we work primarily with two professional illustrators— who work full time. As a company our philosophy is to customise our quotes (and artwork fees) according to our authors budget, wherever possible, so just talk to us.

We would encourage authors to budget for \$175 per illustration as a minimum. The more complex or advanced \$225+ per illustration. Professional and simple illustrations is a better model than cheap and unprofessional - as your book will not sell.

To show you an unbiased viewpoint of fees (as a guide) here is the Australian Society for Authors (ASA) rates webpage suggestions:

FROM ASA WEBSITE: The following rates (in black) are based on A4-size projects. Rates can be increased depending on detail required, research involved, and conceptual input required. For 'one-off' or single illustrations paid on a flat fee without royalties add 20 per cent; for online usage, a limited time agreement of a maximum of two years and an indication of the type of access should be specified. The rates are exclusive of GST.

Roughs

- Black and white = \$65
- Colour = \$95

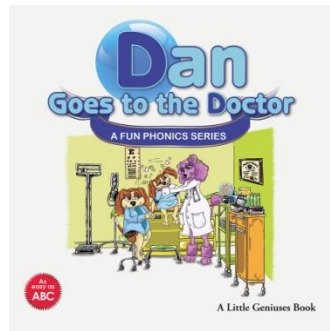
Black and white book illustration

- Quarter page or chapter head = \$215
- Half page = \$340
- Full page = \$455
- Double page spread = \$575

Colour book illustration

- Quarter page or chapter head = \$300
- Half page = \$475
- Full page = \$675
- Double page spread = \$900
- Cover = \$1300 (At Pickawoowo we coach clients around where savings can be made and there are some industry secrets to reduce costs for covers - but still acquire a professional cover layout)

NB: These rates are extracted from and based on the recommendations of the Australian Society for Authors (ASA)



4. Your book purpose will dictate your printing and distribution choices.

Firstly, so many children's authors end up with thousands of books in their garage with no knowledge of how to move them. For this reason, if you are not a seasoned children's author. Secondly, if we had \$100 for every time an author states, "my printer said the minimum is 500 to 1000 books." we would be rich. There is new technology available now that allows you to print small numbers cost effectively. We encourage you think carefully on these questions:

- Do you want to try a low risk, lower print cost with library quality output print run? If so, then Print on Demand is a viable option.
- Do you want to create something for personal use such as providing to family and friends? - If so, then Print on Demand is a viable option.
- Do you have a readership established that you can direct to your website? If so, then Print on Demand is a viable option.
- Do you need the distribution options available to 39 000 ONLINE retailers? If so, then Print on Demand is a viable option.
- Do you need the distribution options for PHYSICAL retailers (bookstores)? If so, it requires a physical distributor plus offset printing in bulk of your book (Min 500-1000 books)
- Choosing between colour and black and white. If the interior of your book has colour images, even just one, the whole book will be printed in colour for Print on Demand. Whereas Offset Printing you can receive a colour insert—printing just a few pages in colour and having them inserted as a block in the book. The reason you would do this is to reduce your print costs as interior colour increases the cost of your project.
- Choosing between print on demand or offset printing requires some serious consideration. The differences being quality, quantity, and printing costs. Offset printing is not digital printing and is more traditional and offers higher quality ink for both colour and black-and-white interiors. A wider range of trim book specifications and paper weights are available as are printing methods such as spot finishes, pop up, fold-out pages. Offset printing costs more to set up but this is not for the faint hearted as you will need to print in large quantities (500 books or more).
- E-book - Another factor to consider are e-books however the cost for set up and illustrations is very similar to creating a print book, albeit there is no cost to print. That said, children's e-books usually retail at around 2.99-3.99 so it will take some time to recoup your investment if this is your only publishing format.

As you can see, your answers to the above questions can dictate your printing options and on your book's profitability.

Essentially, your purpose for self-publishing will also influence your choice of printing and distribution.

Here is an real life book example, a Pickawoowo title in the table below ... The retail price is \$14.95, you will make around \$5.24AUS from a sale through a distributor to a bookstore but you will need to print large quantities (around 1000) but your costs to print in bulk are substantial (\$3500+). But at the same time, you can make a similar amount through your own website (direct-to-reader), without having to print so many books upfront with print on demand.

Here's an example of how print costs can impact your printing choice. This example is for a large format paperback 32 page full colour Pickawoowo children's series title.

Printing Costs for an 280mm x 216mm Large Paperback, 32-Page, Colour Interior Children's Book		
Number of Copies Printed	<i>Cost per Book PREMIUM Colour</i>	<i>Cost per Book STANDARD Colour</i>
1-500 (Print-on-Demand)	\$6.48	\$4.10
500 to 999 (Offset Printing)	\$2.99	
1,000 or more (Offset Printing)	\$1.81	

**Note: These prices may vary with different cover weights, gsm for offset etc.*

As you can see to get a cheaper cost-per-book price, you'd have to print at least 500 books. But if your intention is to only sell to family and friends, is it worth printing all these extra books (and design costs)? Yet, if it is your dream to see your book in physical bookstores then printing low numbers via Print on Demand translates into a high per-book cost plus adding 55% to wholesale distributors - will then increase your RRP (Recommended Retail Price) and can create a book (if you are not careful) that is so high that people may be unwilling to buy it.

Getting quotes

If by now you've branched out and received quotes from a local printer (and nearly fainted) then just look at these quotes below for standard children's book sizing from our POD printer PLUS distributor. Local printers print and that is it.

Via POD you get a printer plus distributor (up to 39 000 online outlets) at your disposal, you can't beat that. Utilising our Print on Demand printer here are some examples of actual print costs - We do not inflate pricing as vanity publishers do – You buy at print costs as the publisher and there are no minimum print runs - print as many as you wish. Your print files however must meet the print on demand printer's specifications (request this checklist if interested).

32 page FULL COLOUR children's book

A) 8.5 x11 (280 x 216) (Large format)

PAPERBACK

1	Premium Color 8.5 x 11 in or 280 x 216 mm Perfect Bound on White w/Gloss Lam	32	AU\$ 6.48
1	Standard Color 8.5 x 11 in or 280 x 216 mm Perfect Bound on Standard 70 White w/Gloss Lam	32	AU\$ 4.10

HARDBACK

1	Premium Color 8.5 x 11 in or 280 x 216 mm Case Laminate on White w/Gloss Lam	32	AU\$ 12.43
1	Standard Color 8.5 x 11 in or 280 x 216 mm Case Laminate on Standard 70 White w/Gloss Lam	32	AU\$ 9.46

B) 8.5 x8.5 (216 x 216) (Square)

PAPERBACK

1	Premium Color 8.5 x 8.5 in or 216 x 216 mm Perfect Bound on White w/Gloss Lam	32	AU\$ 5.24
1	Standard Color 8.5 x 8.5 in or 216 x 216 mm Perfect Bound on Standard 70 White w/Gloss Lam	32	AU\$ 4.10

HARDBACK

1	Premium Color 8.5 x 8.5 in or 216 x 216 mm Case Laminate on White w/Gloss Lam	32	AU\$ 11.79
1	Standard Color 8.5 x 8.5 in or 216 x 216 mm Case Laminate on Standard 70 White w/Gloss Lam	32	AU\$ 9.36

C) 5.5 x 8.5 (216 x 140) (approx A5)

PAPERBACK

1	Premium Color 5.5 x 8.5 in or 216 x 140 mm Perfect Bound on White w/Gloss Lam	32	AU\$ 3.64
1	Standard Color 5.5x 8.5 in or 216 x 140 (A5) Perfect Bound on Standard 70 White w/Gloss Lam	32	AU\$ 3.13

HARDBACK

1	Premium Color 5.5 x 8.5 in or 216 x 140 mm Case Laminate on White w/Gloss Lam	32	AU\$ 10.19
1	Standard Color 5.5 x 8.5 in or 216 x 140 mm (Demy 8vo) Case Laminate on Standard 70 White w/Gloss Lam	32	AU\$ 9.05

5. A Marketing Conundrum.

You don't market to children whereas most other books you market and promote to the end user or what is also known as target audience. Children are not the ones buying books, you market to the people who buy books for children. Essentially this is the adults, mainly female, who are in their lives. That means your job is doubly difficult: You have to write and publish a book that children will love, then consider a children's book that their parents and relatives want to buy. Therefore, your book MUST appeal to both audiences and ensure in some way you set yourself apart from other children's books.

A marketing plan: We help children's authors to realise their dreams, but this requires some hard work as over a million books are published every year. To compete with other children's book titles, you must establish a plan for how you intend to promote your work. There are a lot of marketing and publicity options, but what's right for you and your book depends on several factors, including your target audience and themes. We can assist you to create an authors platform and marketing plan via our services below or we can coach you to undertake them yourself.

What We Offer: Marketing Consultation; Author Website; Amazon Exposure; Amazon Keyword Listing (ebook only); Bookstore Sell Sheet; Digital Book Reviewer; Facebook Fan Page; Facebook Advertising Campaign; Goodreads Profile; Goodreads Advertising Campaign; Press Release; Twitter Profile; Website Media Kit.

The Bottom Line.

1. Spend good money on a great illustrator.

2. With new technology and new PRINT ON DEMAND platforms, a children's writer can easily commence their publishing career. We encourage authors to take this path first especially if:

- you want to start with a small inventory of books
- don't want to invest as much upfront
- don't want or require special features

3. If however, you are serious about being a children's book publisher then we would coach you differently, but your time and investment is substantial. We would coach you around both POD and Offset as both have their benefits so be prepared that we are talking in the thousands once all aspects of publishing (editing, illustration, design, printing, promotion) are taken into consideration.

In conclusion, how much does it cost to self-publish a children's book? There are a lot of choices that need to be made with no easy answer. The one thing for sure, you need a competent company like Pickawoowo on your side, helping you along the way.



Pickawoowo Publishing Group

Email: author@pickawoowo.com

Tel: 1300 88 58 58

BOOK CONSULTATION

If you require assistance during this process you can organise a book consult session with any of our book consultants who can provide you with further information saving you costly mistakes and time.

Book consultations are minimum half hour @ \$48.50+gst.

