



Questions to ask a publisher

Do you charge any fees to publish?

If there are charges, the publisher is providing publishing services and is NOT a traditional publisher.

Do you provide a quotation for the services you provide?

When investing any sum of money, you should know exactly what you're paying for so that there are no surprises at the end of the project.

Do you use qualified editors?

There is a big difference between a professional book editor and someone who is just good at spelling and grammar.

What is involved in the editing?

You need to determine what kind of editing you need. The publisher should be able to help you do this, based on the outcome that you want and the state of the manuscript as it stands. At a minimum, an editor will clean up the copy for spelling and grammar but also look for consistency in voice, flow of sentences, copyright issues, legal issues and overall professionalism of the text.

Do you use experienced book designers?

The book cover is a vital part of the marketing of your book. This is not somewhere that you should be blasé about how it looks. A boring, badly designed cover could be the difference between failure and success of the book because it is the first impression.

Do you project manage the book tasks?

Every book is unique, even if the topic isn't. There should be discussion about how the project runs and who takes care of what. Ideally, the publisher should take care of the logistics of the different tasks of the project so that the client can concentrate on marketing.

Do you take care of the ISBN, barcodes and library deposits?

To publish a book, you don't have to have an ISBN (International Standard Book Number) but it is highly recommended if you want to sell online or through bookstores. When you register an ISBN, the book becomes a legal document and a copy of it must be deposited with the library in your state as well as the National library of Australia (please check requirements for your own country).

Do you retain any rights to my book?

If you are talking to a traditional publisher, they borrow your copyright for the duration of the contract but never actually own it. If you are self-publishing, you should have full control of your copyright at all times, as well as full control of the whole project.

Do you help sell the books?

This is an important question and you need to know this from the start. Some publishers will give guidance, others will charge a fee and others offer no marketing at all. There is no right or wrong, you just need to know for your own planning.



Do you take a royalty from the sales of the book?

Another important question because this is where you work out what your ROI is for your book project. If the publisher is helping you to sell the book, it's fair that they ask for something in return for the time, like a commission or a set fee. If they aren't selling it for you, they have no right to claim a royalty or fee.

Do I have full copyright of my book?

This should be spelled out in the agreement between you and the publisher. No matter what, you always own the copyright of your work but there may be a period of time that the publisher borrows the copyright for a term of the contract.

Do I have full control over the look and feel of my book?

Again, this depends on your agreement. If being traditionally published, they pay for everything, so it's reasonable that they also control these aspects of the book. If you're paying, you must have full control of everything. Publishers can of course give advice but it's up to you to decide what to follow.

How long will it take to publish the book?

This does depend on a few things. Traditional publishing can take up to two years before books are in stores. Self-publishing, on average, is around three months.

Can you help get the book into bookstores?

Traditional publishers will be doing this as part of the project and will cover all costs. If self-publishing, there are a variety of ways to make this happen: by contacting bookstores yourself, using a book distributor or having global distribution by using a print on demand system.

I want a bestseller. Can you help with that?

No one can promise you a bestseller. You can cheat the algorithms on Amazon with an ebook by selling a handful of books and get a bestselling status but everyone knows it's not really a bestseller and bookstores will refuse to stock your book if it has an Amazon #1 sticker on it. The big publishers can't predict a bestseller. They can hope a certain book is one but in the end, only a small percentage will be. Concentrate on creating a fantastic book that everyone wants to read.

How much does it cost to self-publish a book?

How long is a piece of string? For a traditional publisher, their budget might be \$50,000 AUS (they pay) but if you're self-publishing it can cost as little as \$2000 or as much as \$20,000 depending on the scope of your project and the outcome you desire. Factors to account for are the publishing components like editing and design but also printing and promotion.