



I admire anybody  
who has the guts to  
write anything at all.

E. B. White,  
*Charlotte's Web*

Self-Publishing for Homeschool Families

By Jane Sharpe

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[www.JaneSharpe.com](http://www.JaneSharpe.com)

If you need one-on-one help, feel free to book an hour with me through my website. You can also schedule a beta reading of your manuscript. I'm thrilled to walk beside your homeschool as you accomplish this big task.

The QR code (above) will take you to my website where you can contact me. I look forward to hearing about your project!

*hello!* I grew up in the 80s, a latch-key kid who read a lot (my fifth-grade book report was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) but was a solid B-student. During my three years of middle school, a side project at my private school every year was writing a short story and “publishing” it. It was just for the students that were interested- not the whole class. I remember the thrill I felt when I saw my little hand-bound books in the “Student’s Writing” cubby at the school library.

When I had my first child in 2001, I couldn’t bear the idea of sending her to school for seven or eight hours a day. My husband and I decided to homeschool, but neither of us had any experience with that, nor knew anyone who did. In 2006 when I picked up my daughter at Sunday school, the teacher commented that her son and my daughter had played together the entire hour. Just trying to make conversation, I asked which school her son attended.

“He doesn’t, we homeschool.” she answered.

“You homeschool?” I cornered her.

“Yes! Do you?”

“I’m supposed to start this year, but I don’t know anyone who homeschools! Can I come to your house and watch you teach your kids?”

“Uh, absolutely not!” she laughed. “But you can bring your kids over to play and I’ll show you our school space.”

I showed up at her house and her two oldest, both boys, played with my two oldest. She explained how they spent their day while my 6-month-old bounced on my lap. She opened a box of Pentominoes, balancing the game in front of her white embroidered maternity shirt. I used her internet to order my first homeschool books from Rainbow Resource. She gave me a bag of counting bears and I borrowed her copy of Susan Wise Bauer’s *The Well-Trained Mind*, I still haven’t returned it. My baby girl and her (then) unborn daughter are friends to this day.

Now I have five kids, three boys and two girls. Our homeschool has graduated our two oldest children. My two middles are in homeschool high school, doing the bulk of their work independently or at co-op. My youngest son, who is eleven, is my only student I direct daily. I have a lot more idle time on my hands than I did when I started with four kids under seven!

During Covid I made some themed alphabet lists on different topics and self-taught myself Photoshop. I illustrated the first two lists into ABC books and then admitted that others could do a better and more varied job at illustrating. I took a lot of classes on how to create professional products, how to best sell books and market myself, and learned a lot. I've published ten books so far. Initially, I published through a small publishing company called BookBaby, but now I publish through Amazon, so I have experience with both methods. Aside from a summary of my experience, this guide discusses publishing through Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing, otherwise known as KDP.

One day during the summer of 2023, I was tutoring a friend's daughter on her writing skills. I like to have kids write about a topic they are really interested in; for instance, my friend's daughter was obsessed with hamsters. In our writing practice together, she was essentially writing a guide to hamsters and their care. I watched her writing improve and her material grow in volume. I realized I knew quite a bit about self-publishing that could be applied in a homeschool setting, to homeschool kids who wants to write "a real book!" Self-publishing is versatile. It can be done by a family who wants to work on a publishing project together, or alone by a student with a particular interest in writing. It even could be directed by a teacher in a homeschool co-op class. Homeschoolers are very motivated and pretty self-disciplined, and I knew that self-publishing tasks are things they could accomplish in their home.

So here we are on the first pages of my self-publishing guide! I hope it is valuable to you. Here's how it's laid out: the first two sections are important information that you and your student should understand before self-publishing, sort of like prerequisites! First we look at how

you, as the homeschool parent, can use this guide. Then we breeze through the history of self-publishing and what it's become today. Next we'll answer the question "Why teach self-publishing?" and look at some examples of things your homeschool can publish, whether it's you, your student, or y'all together. Then there's a section all about your book's content; things to keep in mind and ways to improve it. Finally we come to the section you're here for: Section III, explains the self-publishing process itself. Now, if your homeschool wants to stop at that point, with a successful family and friends launch, that is a huge accomplishment and worthy of praise. But if your student wants to keep going, Section V walks you through launching his book out into the public sphere more successful. I'm excited you're here!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'J'.

P.S.

When I'm writing, I'll refer to "your student" as the person accomplishing the self-publishing tasks. Please, though: remember that parents have a lot of goals, dreams, and stories- all these tasks can of course also be accomplished by you, the homeschool parent. *You* can write a book and self-publish it too!

P.P.S.

If you need one-on-one help, feel free to book an hour with me through my website. You can also schedule a beta reading of your manuscript. I'm thrilled to walk beside your homeschool as you accomplish this big task.

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