

Is Your Manuscript Ready?

A Book Preparation Checklist for Aspiring & Independent Authors

Finishing a manuscript is an accomplishment - but completing the writing does not always mean the manuscript is ready for publishing.

Before moving into editing, book design, formatting, and publishing, take a few minutes to evaluate where your manuscript stands.

Use this checklist to identify what you've already completed, what may still need attention, and the next step that may be right for your book.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Read each statement and check the items you can confidently say **yes** to. Don't worry if you can't check every box. The purpose isn't to achieve a perfect score - it's to help you understand where your manuscript is in the publishing process.

Tip: Be as objective as you can. If you're uncertain about an item, leave it unchecked. That uncertainty may point to an area that needs another look before publication.

Your Manuscript Readiness Checklist

Check each statement that accurately describes your manuscript today.

1. MANUSCRIPT COMPLETION

- ☐ My manuscript has a clear beginning, middle, and conclusion.
- ☐ I have completed all intended chapters or sections.
- ☐ There are no unfinished sections, placeholder notes, or missing content.
- ☐ I have reviewed the manuscript from beginning to end at least once.
- ☐ I am comfortable with the overall message and direction of the book.

2. PURPOSE & READER

- ☐ I can clearly explain what my book is about.
- ☐ I know who the primary reader for my book is.
- ☐ I know what I want readers to learn, understand, experience, or take away from the book.
- ☐ The content consistently supports the book's primary purpose.
- ☐ My title or working title reflects the direction of the book.

3. STRUCTURE & CONTENT

- ☐ My chapters or sections follow a logical order.
- ☐ Each chapter contributes something meaningful to the overall book.
- ☐ I have removed unnecessary repetition or content that does not support the book's purpose.
- ☐ Transitions between chapters or major sections make sense.
- ☐ The manuscript feels complete rather than simply finished.

4. EDITORIAL READINESS

- ☐ I understand that professional editing is different from proofreading.
- ☐ I am open to editorial feedback and revisions that may strengthen the manuscript.
- ☐ I have not relied solely on spellcheck or automated tools as my final editorial review.
- ☐ I understand that developmental editing, copyediting, and proofreading serve different purposes.
- ☐ I am prepared to review and approve revisions before the book moves into final production.

5. PUBLISHING PREPARATION

- ☐ I have considered whether my book will be paperback, hardcover, eBook, or a combination of formats.
- ☐ I understand that the manuscript should generally be edited before final interior formatting.
- ☐ I have considered the trim size or physical dimensions of my printed book.
- ☐ I understand that a professionally prepared cover requires information about the final book specifications.
- ☐ I have started thinking about my book description, author bio, categories, keywords, ISBN, and publishing platform.

What Does Your Checklist Tell You?

Your answers can help you identify the stage your book is in and what kind of support may be useful next.

If you're still developing the idea or structure...

Your book may need more planning before manuscript production begins. Clarifying your message, reader, chapter direction, and content roadmap can save considerable rewriting later.

DBHH Book Blueprint may be the appropriate starting point.

If your manuscript is complete but you're unsure whether it's ready...

A completed manuscript can still have issues with organization, clarity, development, readability, or editorial readiness.

DBHH Manuscript Assessment can provide a professional evaluation of your manuscript and recommended next steps.

If your manuscript is complete and you're ready to move toward publication...

Your next stage may include professional editing, cover design, interior formatting, publishing setup, proof review, and preparation of your final files.

DBHH Professional Publishing provides comprehensive support through the professional publishing process while you retain ownership of your work, rights, royalties, and publishing accounts.

Not Sure Which Stage You're In?

That's okay. Every publishing project is different. Tell us about your book through the DBHH Project Inquiry Form, and we'll review your project to help determine the appropriate next step.

START YOUR PUBLISHING JOURNEY

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