

Step I: Build a web site

Avoid proprietary subscriber services like Wix or SquareSoft. Most small publishers will want to use WordPress, which is common, easy to modify, and free after you purchase the hosting.

Step A: Web site hosting

- GoDaddy is cheap, has excellent customer service and reliability, and is known for contributing to far-right causes.
- DreamHost is optimized for WordPress and easy-to-use.
- InMotionHosting (which I use) offers a great deal of flexibility and hands-on modification, if you wish to run multiple sites or work outside of WordPress

Step B: HTML/CSS

- If you learn HTML (HyperText Markup Language) and CSS (Cascading Style Sheets), not only will your web site look better, but you'll have an easier time modifying it.
- Furthermore, ebooks are written in HTML. It's very likely that at some point, you'll have to edit an ebook directly, and will be dependent on your HTML knowledge.
- HTML is a *markup language*, not a *programming language*. There is a learning curve, and it requires *code*, but does NOT require any math whatsoever.
- HTML is best learned from books. I recommend *Sams Teach Yourself HTML, CSS, and JavaScript All in One* by Julie C. Meloni. You will not need the more difficult JavaScript chapters.

Step C: WordPress

- As previously mentioned, WordPress is free and easy to modify, and you will not have trouble finding professional help if you get stuck.
- WordPress is best learned from books. Unfortunately my own experience with WordPress books is out-of-date, but many sites offer reviews and recommendations for the current crop of WordPress books.

Step II: Receiving manuscripts

- Microsoft Word is the standard, and by far the most common, word processor, and you should expect to receive manuscripts in this format. It offers a robust list of features and operating environment. However, it is not free. Note that it has not changed substantially since 2010, so you might be able to secure an older copy.

-Google Docs can read Microsoft Word files perfectly, and is free. Because it is online, some editors will find it easier to exchange notes with their authors, compared to Microsoft Word. Unless and until you need Word's advanced features, you might be able to get by with Google Docs. Note that you'll be converting everything to InDesign anyway, so you might not need MS Word's advanced features.

-Libre Office is free and can import just about any document from any word processing program. You should keep this on hand in case you need to work with an author who does not use Microsoft Word. Note that some formatting loss is possible.

Step III: Formatting manuscripts

Step A: Text

-Your biggest software expense will be Adobe InDesign. I do not recommend any way around this. InDesign is the sole standard for book layout. InDesign is updated frequently, and you should probably invest in its subscription version, to remain up-to-date, and to be able to handle up-to-date InDesign files that might be sent to you from other sources. It is possible to squeak by with InDesign 4, which uses .idml files, an older, more universal file formatting system. Current versions of InDesign work on .indd files.

-Because of its frequent updates, I recommend learning InDesign from online tutorials. There are many.

Step B: Images

-Adobe Photoshop is the standard in image editing software. Unlike InDesign, its file format is not changing, so an older version will work just fine. However, you might want to invest in Adobe Creative Cloud, a subscription service that bundles InDesign and Photoshop with several other programs, including Adobe Acrobat DC, which allows you to edit pdf files. (You shouldn't have to edit those very often, but when you need to...)

-Online tutorials are the best way to learn Photoshop, as they are extensive.

-It is possible to eliminate Photoshop entirely by using the free software GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program). GIMP has all the features of Photoshop, and reads all image file formats well. Unfortunately, online tutorials are much less extensive.

Step C: Ebooks

-Once your book is complete in InDesign, you can export it as an ebook (online tutorials exist).

-Eventually, you will produce an ebook that requires manual editing. For this, the free software Sigil is excellent. Documentation is not robust. This is partially because ebook editors must know HTML, and documentation writers expect you to know HTML.