

eBooks Expert Guide

Everything you need to know about getting started with eBooks, formatting and best practices

eBooks 101

If you have a book, you can have an eBook too!

Publishing an eBook is an effective way to create a digital version of your book and make it easily available to more people than ever. When it comes time to publish your eBook, it's important to understand your options and that you make sure your eBook looks and reads well on all the popular eReaders, like Kindle, iPad, Nook, and more. Here we've put together a beginner's guide to eBooks that will bring you up to speed and help you get started in no time at all.

All About Formatting

Creating an eBook digital file is much different than writing a book in Microsoft Word. If you already have your book written in Word, and are ready to convert it to an eBook, it must be in the correct digital format.

Why MS Word just won't work: We know, you're probably thinking "why won't Word work, it's pretty much universal and words are words, right?" Wrong. To put it most simply, in a word processing program like Word, your content is

divided into pages. This is not the case for eReaders. Since there are many different types and sizes of eReaders, your eBook needs to be flexible – literally – so that the words can move and flow to gracefully adapt to the different screens. This is called reflowable text and it's why Word files must be converted into formats such as ePub or Mobi to become an eBook.

ePub is a standard, universal format that can be read on most eReaders, including: Apple iPad and iPhone, Kobo eReader, Barnes & Noble Nook, Sony Reader and Android phones. (NOT the Kindle).

Mobi is Amazon's proprietary version of the ePub format. An eBook that is formatted in ePub can be converted into a Mobi format so that it can be read on Amazon Kindle devices.

Preparing Your Source Files for eBook Conversion

One of the keys to a successful eBook conversion is preparing a "clean" source file for us to start with. Many files, no matter the software you are using, have both visible and invisible data embedded within them that can cause errors during conversion. Here's an overview to help you:

GOOD SOURCE FILES	BAD SOURCE FILES
Less is more when we're talking source files. The best formats to use are .rtf or .txt files. You can convert any Word document to these by using the "Save As" action.	Word DOC and DOCX files are not acceptable to publishing software.
A print-ready PDF produced from the page-layout software, typically Adobe InDesign.	A PDF file is not a reliable source file for your eBook as it contains a fixed layout format designed for printing, as opposed to reflowable format.
Images should be high resolution and in .png or .jpg format	Low resolution screen grab images will not produce high quality images for eBooks.

In-depth eBook Formatting

Let's take a closer look at eBook formatting. First, let's talk about what it looks like. It is important to understand that your eBook files will not look exactly like your pdf or other source files once they are converted. They will be close in appearance, but not exact, due to minor changes that occur in the conversion process.

For most eBooks, the standard type of formatting that is used is called reflowable text. However, if a book contains elements that require exact placement (such as photos for a cookbook), a fixed format is needed. What's the difference?

“Reflowable” formatting (used for the majority of eBooks)

A standard eBook is generally in ePub format and employs real-time flowable text so you can read it on any eReader and adjust the font size and style to fit your reading preferences. There is no set “page” number as the reader is flexible in adjusting to meet your needs. This is ideal for text-only books and books with small images embedded amongst the text that are between paragraphs.

“Fixed layout” formatting

When it comes to books that include design elements or large illustrations/photos, such as cookbooks, children's books, comics and more, a fixed layout is a better solution to preserve the quality and readability of the final product. A fixed layout is ... fixed! Content (images, text, etc.) will not move sporadically around the page if you change your settings, ensuring that graphic elements stay where they are supposed to be.

It's important to understand the upside and downside of using fixed layouts. The benefit of fixed layout is that you're in complete control of the experience. The drawback is that readers are NOT! With fixed layout, readers lose the ability to resize text, change spacing, change fonts and more. And the difficulty to create this type of format is higher as well, incurring higher charges for conversion services.

Choosing the right formatting

Choose ePub (reflowable) if:

- your book is mostly text (not including cover art)
- your book features small images that are embedded between paragraphs
- you want to ensure maximum usability for your book across all eReaders and computers

Consider using a fixed layout if:

- you want text to wrap around images
- you have graphics, illustrations or other images that need to stay in a specific position within the text
- you would like to set a background color for your book
- you want multi-column text pages



eBook FAQs

Q: The Table of Contents we set up in our source files included embedded links that readers could click on to take them directly to the chapter. They are not working in the eBook file, what gives?

A: Hand-inputted url links in the source files do not translate when converted into eBook files. However, it is important to note that the metadata Table of Contents (TOC) will more than meet your original intention. One thing many people don't realize is that eBooks actually have two tables of contents. One is a traditional TOC, like in a printed book. The second is the metadata TOC, one that is not part of the book text, but is instead accessed by a special command from an eReader. This TOC offers a much superior navigation experience for the reader.

Q: Why do the fonts, charts, special characters and graphic elements I used in my source file look different in the eBook?

A: Special symbols may not convert properly to eBook formats unless they are characters in a standard font set. We recommend that you do not use very large or very small font sizes - 12pt font size for body text and 14-18 pt for chapter titles is best. Standard fonts include Times New Roman and Courier New.

Q How should I prepare my images for eBook conversion?

A: Be sure to resize images before inserting them into your document. Don't stress about the exact size of images within your document. The best approach is to size it to how you want it to appear in relation to the text.

- Images must be in .png, .jpg, or .tif format, minimum 72 dpi, and in RGB color mode.
- Cover image needs to be at least 1400px wide, using portrait or vertical rectangle-shaped artwork (no squares). A height/width ratio of 1.6 (1400 pixels wide x 2100 pixels high) is recommended.

- Full-page images should be at a minimum 150dpi/ppi, and at a resolution of 1275 pixels wide x 1650 pixels high on a letter-size page.
- Smaller logos or simple images should be 75 to 100 pixels high.

Q: Can I edit the eBook files after they have been converted?

A: We recommend that you proof your file for proper spelling, grammar, and syntax before submitting it.

Q: What is Amazon KDP Select?

A: Kindle Direct Publishing via Amazon is a way to publish your books independently with Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) on the Amazon Kindle Store. It's a service Amazon provides that allows you to retain control, makes changes when you want and publish directly to the Kindle platform. (Note: This is a program that requires exclusive publishing on Kindle, so you are not able to publish anywhere else.)



Q: How can I see my eBook after it's converted so that I know what my readers will see?

A: There are a wide variety of eReaders available today, and due to the differences between them, the visual display of your eBook may vary slightly from reader to reader. For instance, the latest model iPad will have different viewing and rendering options than an older model iPhone or Kindle, causing the final view to differ slightly. There are a few free programs, however, that we recommend for re-viewing your eBook to get a good visual estimate of what your reader will see:

- To view an .ePub book, you can use Adobe Digital Editions, which is available for a free download at www.adobe.com/products/digitaleditions.
- To view a .mobi file, you can use Kindle for Mac or view it on a PC, depending on what system you have. You can download both for free at www.amazon.com/Kindleforpc or www.amazon.com/kindleformac.

Here are a few things we look for and advise authors to watch when they are preparing their source files for eBook conversion:

- ☑ Remove all headings and page numbering.
- ☑ Footnotes and endnotes do not convert well into eBooks. If you want to use them, rethink how they are included in the book, possibly moving them to an index, reference, resources or glossary page.
- ☑ The text for any Table of Contents needs to be removed and heading tags inserted to help generate a TOC for your eBook. Most converters will generate a Table of Contents if you have tagged the headings. Use the standard tags or styles (Heading 2 to Heading 4) to give the converter software a way to understand the structure.
- ☑ All word processors allow you to define a document style. Explore the document styles available as these will define the way headings, paragraphs quotations, captions, notes etc. look. Do NOT hand format these.
- ☑ Bold characters, italics and indents will normally translate into your eBook. However, bullet points and special fonts will not be transferred.
- ☑ Justification does not translate well to eBooks. Because the reader can resize and reflow the text, unless the text is small the layout on the screen can look odd.
- ☑ Chapters: converters recognize a page break as a new chapter. Make sure that the text flows through the book and only insert a page break if you want this to be a separate chapter or section.
- ☑ Tables can be remade using XML but you might find it easier to turn them into images and insert these into the text.