

PublishMe

Ebooks FAQ

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What is an ebook?

An ebook is an electronic or digital version of a book or other document.

How can I read an ebook?

With the appropriate software installed, an ebook can generally be read on a computer, smartphone, a tablet (such as an iPad), or on a dedicated reading device commonly called an ereader.

A range of ebook readers are currently on the market.

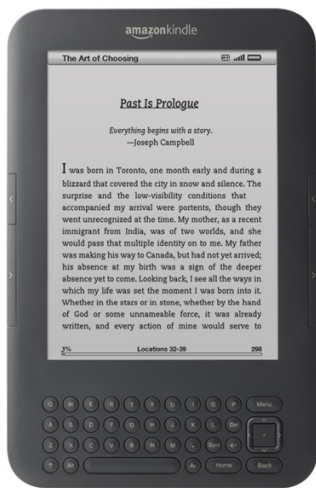


Figure 1: Amazon Kindle



Figure 2: Barnes & Noble's Nook



Figure 3: Apple's iPad

... some ebook readers work better than others in sunlight.



Figure 4: Amazon.com's E-ink vs LCD screen comparison in sunlight

Why are ebooks popular?

Ebooks are popular because they provide convenience and choice. A reader can carry an entire library of ebooks with them and then pick the one they want to read, or jump back and forth between several. Portability is important, particularly for travellers or people on the go: just imagine trying to fill your luggage for an overseas holiday with books or travel guides for all the places you are visiting.





Figure 5: Traditional Books vs. Amazon's Kindle

Most ereaders also give you the ability to alter the font size of the text — in effect, this instantly turns any book into a large print edition, even titles for which no large print actual book may have been published.

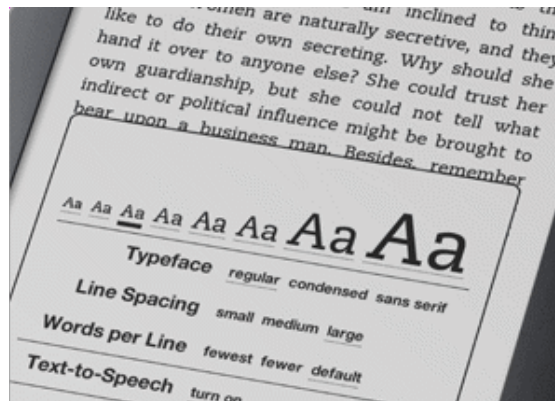


Figure 6: Text resizing on Amazon's Kindle

While not perfect, the carbon footprint of ebooks is lower than that of printed books. That is despite needing electronics for the ereader and electricity from rechargeable batteries, problems with energy consumption, raw materials used to make the ebook reading devices, properly disposing of old devices and so forth. But, as technology improves, the 'footprint' that ebooks leave on the environment will become smaller and smaller. For example, using solar power to recharge your reading device's batteries.

The other advantage ebooks have is that they tend to be cheaper than printed books, and can be bought online. Even if you are travelling overseas you can instantly browse, purchase and download ebooks.

What formats do ebooks come in?

The first ebooks were either saved webpages or PDF files. Other formats have become more popular in the last few years as their versatility provides more benefits to readers.

PDF files have become less popular in recent years mainly because they are not easily readable when reduced to fit the smaller screens found on ereaders and smartphones. Some ereaders do allow you to reflow some PDF documents to make them more readable, but generally this is not the case and having to pan-and-zoom around every page to read them makes them a hassle rather than a convenience. If you are intending to reach large numbers of customers you should consider a more popular ebook format.



For some purposes a pPDF can be an adequate first step or a useful marketing option – a ‘taster’ chapter to have freely available on your website, or to include with your emailed media release. Many educational resources are still suitable in a PDF format.

So what are the most popular ebook formats?

Two formats have come to dominate in ebook publishing, driven mainly by online availability in large numbers with the main book retailers, and smaller file sizes. They are MOBI and EPUB.

What is MOBI?

The MOBI file format is short for MobiPocket format. MobiPocket is a French-based company which was acquired by Amazon.com in 2005. In 2009 MobiPocket stopped accepting new books for sale on its website and now refers publishers to use Amazon.com. Many ereaders still support MOBI files. Amazon’s Kindle will read MOBI files.

What is EPUB?

The EPUB file format actually represents an open ebook standard developed by the International Digital Publishing Forum. EPUB is growing in popularity, with some ereaders such as Kobo supporting only this format. Amazon.com does not support EPUB at the moment, therefore EPUB files cannot be read on your Amazon Kindle. EPUBs with DRM on them may be device-specific because the DRM restricts their use.

So which ebook format should I use?

Which ebook format you use is largely determined by where you want to sell your book and who your customers are. For example, if you wish to sell your ebooks on Amazon.com to a worldwide audience then MOBI is the only type which Amazon supports in its shop.

However, if you wish to sell your ebook on your own website but make it possible for Amazon Kindle owners to purchase and read it, then the recommendation would be MOBI (since the Kindle does not support EPUB).

If you wish to sell your ebook through iTunes, or get it into Whitcoulls for their Kobo ereader, then you will need an EPUB.

We would recommend that you consider producing two ebook versions, one in the EPUB file format and one in the MOBI file format. PublishMe can assist you with this. Should you wish you can then upload the MOBI ebook version to Amazon for sale on their online shop.

What is DRM?

DRM is short for Digital Rights Management. Much the same as with music, DRM is designed to let you access the product while making it more difficult for you to share or resell copies to other people. Many unique types of DRM exist. Files with DRM on them may be device-specific because the DRM restricts their use.

Should I use DRM on my ebooks when I make them available for sale?

There are arguments both for and against using DRM on ebooks in the marketplace. Some people claim they are necessary to stop people pirating your book, while others claim that a little bit of sharing actually gets them more exposure and eventually more sales.

We would recommend that you base your decision on what is selling in the marketplace. With DRM an ebook bought to run on one device may not even install on other devices, potentially limiting its usefulness and value



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How do I add DRM to my ebook?

PublishMe produces EPUBs and MOBIs without DRM on them. If you were to upload these for conversion to AZW files on Amazon.com, you would be able to specify that you want DRM on them before the ebook goes on sale and Amazon will add DRM to the final file.

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PublishMe can produce EPUB and MOBI ebooks from an InDesign original.

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The book market currently demands both printed books and ebooks, because people have a personal preference for format. This is just like the printed book market which has traditionally offered hardbacks, trade paperbacks and paperbacks.

Especially if you want to make a living as an author, you should remember that generally the goal is to reach the most customers you can and that means providing them with your book in the format of their choice.

Can I have my picture book for children produced as an ebook?

Ebooks are designed to be viewed on a wide range of screen sizes, from cellphones all the way up to regular computer screen sizes.

This raises the issue of how well and/or whether your graphics will scale with the variable screen size of the ereaders. In most cases, creating an ebook successfully from your picture book for children will involve some trade-offs. For example, any text displayed over an image will need to be converted to be part of the image itself since ebooks do not support text over graphics.

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My non-fiction book contains many images and tables. Can I have it produced as an ebook?

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