

Mini Guide to Book Design

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Just as you communicate to your reader through your writing, so do you through the design of your book. Book design is not just making your book look attractive. The design of your book should also support the style and tone of your book and speak to your readership.

The three important areas to consider in book design are:

1. **Format**
2. **Typesetting**
3. **Cover design.**

Format

Format is the shape and size of your book. It is important that your book is the same (or very similar) format to other books of the same genre. For example, non-fiction books often tend to be larger than traditional fiction books which are intended to be carried around; glossy art books are often oversize, or landscape (wider than taller) rather than portrait (taller than wider). Readers who are used to particular genres of books have an expectation that they will look the same.

Some of the most common book sizes are:

- ‘B’ format (small paperback) 198 x 128mm
- ‘A5’ format (non-fiction) 210 x 148mm
- ‘C’ format (‘trade paperback’) 234 x 154mm.

Typesetting

Typesetting is the internal design and ‘laying out’ of your book. Once you have decided on the format of your book, you then need to consider the interior layout and design and then have the manuscript typeset.

Typesetting may seem straightforward because we all create documents on word processing software everyday, but over and above the book looking good, fundamental element that a publisher aims for with all typesetting design that it is easily read.

You need to consider who your readers are and what will they be used to. For example, if you are publishing a book for an audience where the average readership is elderly, then you may want to make the font size slightly larger than usual.

Whereas, if your work is for a mass-market general readership, then you may be able to use a slightly smaller font, that will be more economical when it comes to the number of pages in your book.

Mini Guide to Book Design (cont.)

To ensure your book easy to read for your main readership, you should take into account three key aspects of text design:

- Font size
- Number of words per page
- Style of font for the readership.

On a practical note it is worth remembering that most printers and publishers will not print from files creating using. While your manuscript might look on screen and when you print it on your home printer, the file is often incompatible with professional printers, and the quality of the final product cannot be guaranteed.

Cover design

Let's start with the old adage 'don't judge a book by its cover'. It's just not true. Everybody judges books by their covers to some degree.

The cover is the first thing that people see and you have only a few seconds for your cover to make the critical impact that will induce your potential buyer to pick the book up and turn it over to read the back cover blurb.

Cover design is a marketing decision and should not be based on your personal likes and dislikes. For a retail book it is important to seek advice from a publishing professional – and heed that advice. Book cover design is a specific skill combining knowledge of the bookselling market and graphic design skills.

If you are producing your book and it is not to be sold in bookshops, then put the family photo on

the cover; choose a typeface you like or use your daughter's first drawing on the cover. But it is not wise to take this route if you hope for the book to be a commercial success.

There are endless embellishment options for cover design but here are a few standard options that you will have noticed in bookshops:

- Gloss celloglaze
- Matt celloglaze
- A mixture of the two: called a spot gloss or spot matt, where you have a matt base with a small amount of gloss or vice versa
- Foil title.

If you can capture the bookshop browsers' attention enough that they pick the book up and turn over to the back cover blurb, then your cover has done its job.

David Longfield is the director and publisher at Longueville Media and Publish-Me! He has over 15 years experience in the publishing industry.

Publish-me! is an Australian self-publishing company offering you access to a team of experienced publishing professionals. Contact us now to turn your ideas into reality.

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