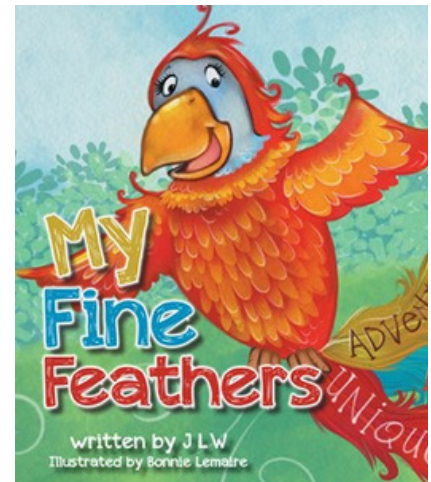
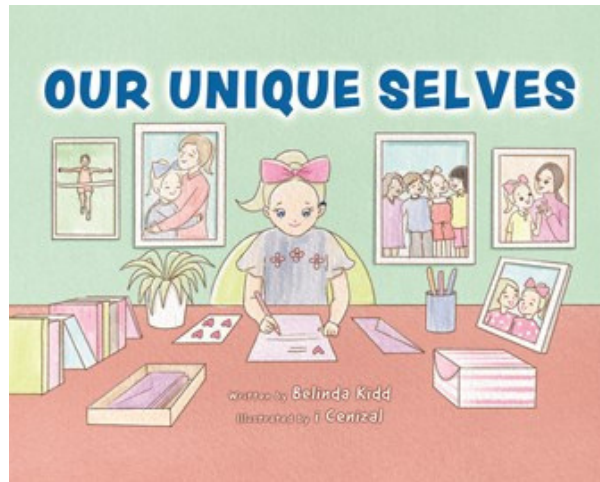
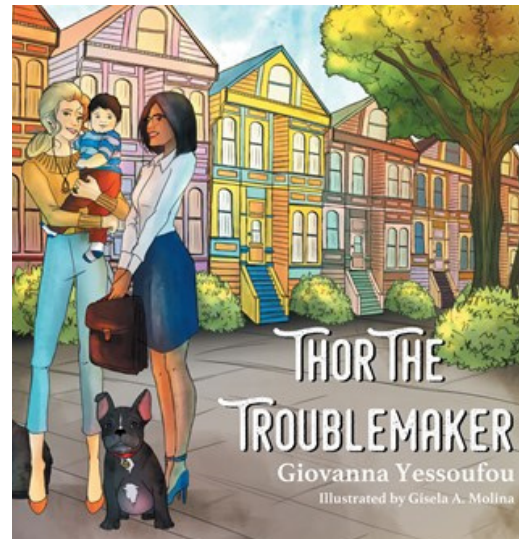
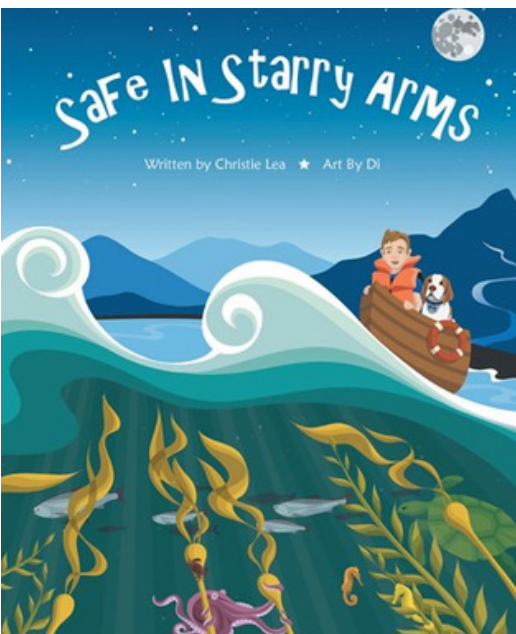
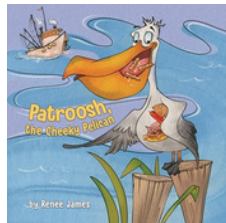
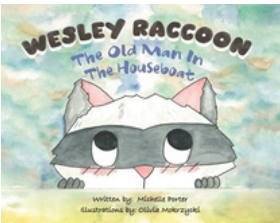


HOW TO
WRITE AND
PUBLISH A

Children's Book



tellwell



INTRODUCTION

Tellwell Publishing has created this guide to help aspiring and existing children's authors fulfill their dreams of turning a story idea into a published book.

Authors around the world have collaborated with Tellwell to publish over 4,000 books, many of them for children. In doing so, we have helped authors navigate the often confusing and overwhelming process of creating, publishing, and marketing their work. We are proud that our children's authors are often featured in the news, receive rave reviews, and win prestigious children's book awards such as:



NAUTLIS BOOK AWARDS

PURPLE DRAGONFLY BOOK AWARDS



MOONBEAM CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARDS



INTERNATIONAL BOOK AWARDS



MOM'S CHOICE AWARDS



This guide on how to write and publish a children's book will walk you through what's involved in creating a children's book, from concept to storyboarding, to illustrations and publication.

You will learn how to:

- Determine whether you have a great story idea
- Create memorable characters
- Tailor your children's book to your target age group
- Brainstorm ideas to generate catchy book titles
- Make your book cover stand out from the competition
- Write a captivating back-cover blurb
- Navigate the different publishing paths and learn the pros and cons to each

We recognise that writing isn't a linear process. Each author will have their own unique way of crafting a story and seeing it through to completion. This guide is simply meant to walk you through the major steps involved in the creation of a kids' book, to offer you important points to consider during the process, and provide a starting point to help you achieve your goal of writing and publishing a children's book!

All books included in this guide were published by Tellwell.

2 DECIDE ON YOUR AUDIENCE

Before you begin writing and storyboarding your book, decide which age range you are writing for. This will help you ensure the plot, language, and word and page count is appropriate for that age group.

Here is a general breakdown of book length for children at various ages.

CHILDREN'S BOOK CATEGORIES

Category	Age	Word Count	Pages	Illustrations
Board book	0–2	0	12–32	Every page
Picture book	2–5	200–400	32	Every page
Chapter book	6–10	3,000–10,000	32+	Almost every page
Middle-grade book	8–12	30,000–45,000	80+	12+ illustrations
Young-adult book	13–18	60,000–85,000	150+	Few if any illustrations

Children's book categories

Board books are printed on thick cardboard, contain mostly pictures, and are usually fewer than 100 words. They are the youngest category of books for children under two.

Picture books are usually read aloud by an adult. The child listens to the story and looks at the illustrations. Short words and sentences work best. The words on the page should match and not get too far ahead of what is shown in the images, and the illustrations need to be colourful and hold the child's interest. The adult plays an active role in reading picture books, so the story should also be interesting to them, especially when read over and over. It can be fun to experiment with rhyming, poetic language, and a sing-song voice that is age-appropriate for the child, but sounds good to listen to.

Early chapter books, on the other hand, are broken up into small chapters with spot illustrations. Manuscript length is short, usually fewer than 1,500 words. These books target early readers who are beginning to read independently, which means the language and storyline may actually be simpler than picture books.

Chapter books are for independent readers who are developing their vocabulary. Manuscript lengths can range from 5,000 to 15,000 words. Trim sizes usually resemble paperbacks, with a page count of 100–160. Books may include black and white spot illustrations.

Middle-grade books are longer than a chapter book but shorter than a young-adult book, and usually contain 30,000 to 45,000 words. They are meant for children aged 8 to 12 and may feature themes such as friendship, courage, cooperation, overcoming challenges, good versus evil, family dynamics, physical changes, and school experiences.

Young adult books are meant to appeal to teenagers, and usually feature a teenage protagonist, although they are also widely read by adults. Common themes in YA novels include coming-of-age stories, friendship, first love, identity, and self-discovery. Scenes with violence and sex should be appropriate to the age group as well, similar to a PG-13 movie rating. Authors have to be careful to not write content that is too explicit. A *new adult* or *adult* category may be more appropriate for books with explicit content.





3 STORY IDEA

Once you have a clear theme and message, and you know who you are writing for, you'll want to start thinking about the story itself.

A few points to consider when coming up with story ideas:

- **It has an important lesson.** Children's books often have teachings and key takeaway messages. What do you want the reader to learn from the story? What is the lesson?
- **The content is age appropriate.** The story is easy to follow and the language is well suited to your chosen age range. Consider your target age range to know how many words you should write and how many words per illustrated page are appropriate.
- **The illustrations are compelling and high-quality.** For picture books, the illustrations are just as important as the story. Children will be focused on the pictures. It's important to have professional, high-quality illustrations that will bring your book to life.
- **The characters are memorable.** Interesting characters have flaws and distinct personalities, and are relatable. Their actions should match their motivations and personalities.
- **It has conflict.** Without conflict, you likely don't have a compelling story. Conflict drives storylines, creates suspense, and makes characters more interesting. In children's books, hook your readers quickly by introducing the central conflict early on, and keep them interested by showing the character struggling to resolve the conflict. Consider your favourite fairy tales and classic children's stories. What were the conflicts? How did the characters resolve them?
- **It will be interesting to adults as well.** Kids' books can be challenging to write, as the story has to appeal to both the child and the parent who will be reading the story over and over.

4 MEMORABLE CHARACTERS

Unique and interesting characters will help the child enjoy and recall the story. Consider creating character cards that outline not only their physical appearance, but their personality, fears, hopes, and dreams. Your characters' actions should match their behaviour.

Some tips to keep in mind when creating unforgettable characters for your children's book:

- They should be similar in age to your reader group and speak like them.
- They should have unique and colourful personalities.
- They should feel real and relatable. They are not perfect, but flawed.
- Their actions should move the story along.



5 OUTLINE YOUR STORY



Every story has four basic components: a beginning, middle, climax, and ending.

Beginning: This where you introduce your characters, themes, setting, and conflict. For picture books, you will want to introduce the action quickly, on the first or second page.

Middle: Your characters will be dealing with the conflict introduced in the beginning. They will be working to overcome the obstacles and challenges in their way. They may travel through different settings and meet different characters along the way.

Climax: Your characters resolve the conflict. There is a clear resolution that often speaks to the theme of the book. The way the character resolves the conflict should also relate to their personality.

Ending: Following the resolution, there is a definitive and satisfying ending that ties up loose ends, and answers any lingering questions. Working the story message and purpose into the ending will make it come full circle.

Does the gingerbread man escape the fox at the end or get eaten by it? In the Russian version of this tale, the fox successfully eats the gingerbread boy. We learn in the ending that it's the same fox narrating the story to her little ones in a message of why one should never run away from home. While the events leading up to the ending are similar in the English version of the tale, the Russian ending and the lesson learned from it make it a very different and more powerful story.



6 CHOOSE YOUR WRITING STYLE

First or third person: First-person language can be more personable and relatable to children; however, a third-person-narrator style may give you more freedom and flexibility with the storyline.

Past or present tense: Children's books are often in the present tense to give the sense of the action unfolding as you read it.

Rhyme, sing-song voice, and poetic language are writing-style options for picture books

7 WRITE YOUR STORY!

Now that you've done all the leg work, it's time to sit down and write your story. You probably have a good story map in your mind already, so it's time to put it on paper.

Here are some tips to keep you focused and productive:

1. **Schedule dedicated writing time.** This may mean temporarily putting other hobbies on pause until you finish your book. Determine what time of day you are most productive, and try to block out time then. It may mean waking up earlier if you are a morning person, or waiting until the house is quiet in the evening, if that works better.
2. **Block out all distractions.** Put your phone away, lock the door, go to a coffee shop or library. Do whatever you need to stay focused and on task.
3. **Set writing goals and deadlines.** Set targets for how many words you want to write each session and how much time you want to allocate. Set weekly and monthly objectives as well. Set a first-draft deadline, one for revisions and feedback and one for a final draft.
4. **Let go of your inner critic.** There is time to edit and perfect once you have a first draft, but editing as you write may block your flow. It can be better to just get the first draft on paper, and then go back multiple times to revise.



8

REVIEW AND REVISE

Okay, now you have a first draft completed. It's a big relief and accomplishment to get to this point!

You may want to put the manuscript away for a week or so and look at it again with less tired eyes. When it's time to review your work, try to be as objective and critical as you can. Now is a good time to ask for candid feedback from family, friends, or beta readers. Consider asking them, as well as yourself, the following questions:

- How does the story flow?
- Is the language appropriate for the age group? Is it too long or short?
- Is the plot interesting? Is there enough conflict and suspense?
- Do you have a clear theme and lesson?
- Are the characters memorable?
- Are there errors, poor sentence structure, or syntax issues?
- Do you have a neatly tied-up ending that imparts a clear message?

If there are any gaping holes and flaws, now is the time to review and revise!



9 EDIT AND FEEDBACK

Now that the first draft is finished, it's time to proofread and edit for spelling and grammatical errors. Start off with a self-edit, and then hand it off to family and friends to catch errors you may have missed. Once that is completed, it's time to trust your work to a professional editor.

While it's great to receive feedback from people close to you, don't mistake this for a professional edit. Professional editing is a valuable and necessary investment. Skipping this step is a disservice to the work you have completed, potentially eroding your readers' trust should you publish with glaring errors and improper sentence structure.

A good editor is essential for making your book a success. Without it, poor spelling, grammar, and book structure will reflect poorly on you and may lead to negative reviews, which can have a devastating impact on sales and readership.



10 ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations are a fun and rewarding part of visually depicting your children's story! If you don't have that level of artistic expertise, you will need to hire a professional illustrator. Looking through illustrator portfolios, you will see artists who may have a particular style that resonates with you.

For picture books, choose an orientation: vertical, horizontal, or square.

- Vertical images work well for character-based books.
- Horizontal images are often chosen for journey-based stories.
- Square images are great for instructional books.

These are the most common sizes for children's book images:

- 5.5" x 8.5"
- 6" x 9"
- 6.14" x 9.21"
- 7" x 10"
- 8" x 10"
- 8.5" x 8.5"
- 8.5" x 11"



You can find illustrators on websites such as Upwork, children's writing/illustrating organizations and societies, and social media, and by browsing the web.

At Tellwell, we have a number of talented illustrators representing a broad range of styles.

Take a look at our [team of illustrators and their portfolios](#).

11 STORYBOARD/ DUMMY BOOK



Creating a storyboard or dummy book involves laying out the text and illustrations for each page. This will help you decide what to include in each illustration and how the text will match up with the images.

We recommend using a program such as Canva or Powerpoint to help you storyboard. Some children's authors will use old-fashioned folded-up pieces of paper and sketch out their illustrations. This could work as a good starting point, but you will eventually want to transfer it online to allow you to make changes more easily.

For authors who will be working with illustrators, you can write notes of what you would like depicted in each image.

You can choose to combine text as part of the illustration, or keep text and illustrations separate. The key is to be consistent.

Once you've completed a first draft of your storyboard, ask yourself these questions:

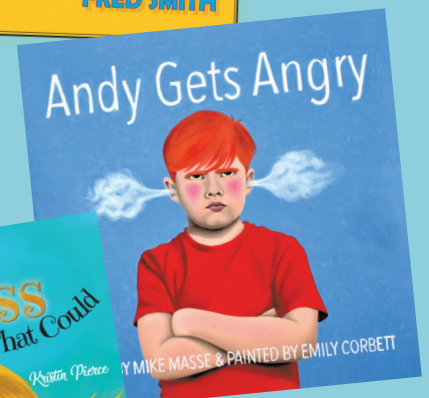
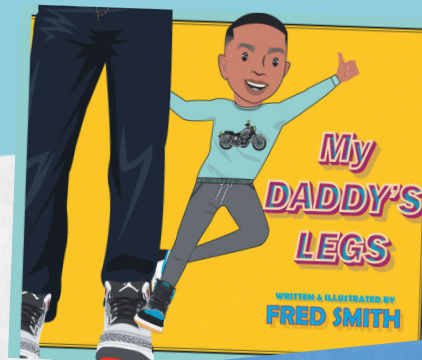
- Is there enough action and visual interest happening in the story?
- Is there a change of scenery, or does everything happen in one location?
- Is each part of the storyboard moving the plot forward?

12 CHOOSE A BOOK TITLE

Choosing a winning title for your book will not only help your book stand out and be memorable, but it can help readers find your book if important keywords are included.

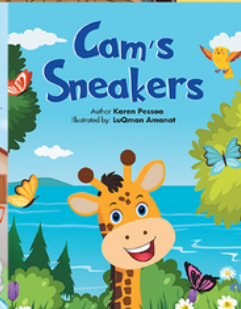
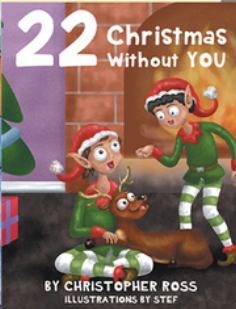
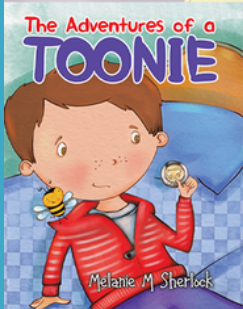
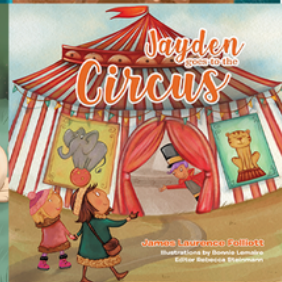
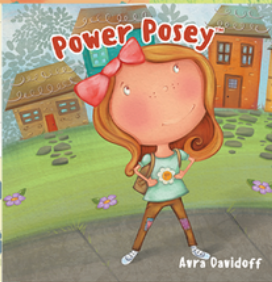
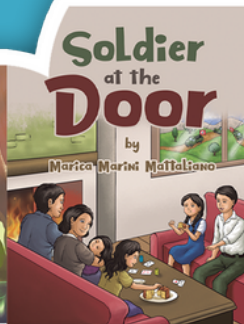
A good way to brainstorm a catchy title for your children's book is to make a list. You can use some of these techniques to stimulate ideas:

1. Use characters' names
(*Sammi's Worry, Thor the Troublemaker*)
2. Include verbs or strong action words
(*To Catch a Sunbeam*)
3. Use a metaphor (*Dream High as the Sky*)
4. Find a catchy phrase from the text
(*Safe in Starry Arms*)
5. Rhyme the title
(*A Tiger Like Me* by Kelsey Lee)
6. Play off a famous saying
(*If My Oak Tree Could Speak*)
7. Include emotion (*Andy Gets Angry*)
8. Use something concrete
(*It Came From the Science Lab*)
9. Stick with simplicity (*Flamingo Feet*)
10. Be unexpected (*Lily Loves Beards*)



13 COVER DESIGN

A really good cover for your children's book will communicate what your book is about while appealing to kids and their parents. A beautiful cover will entice a reader to pick up your book and read it. It's the first impression of your book, a visual depiction of the contents inside.



Everyone judges books by their covers.

For a professional, high-quality, great-looking cover that best represents your book, you should hire a professional cover designer. There are fun software programs out there, but unless you are a professional cover designer, you should not be designing your own cover. Here are five points to consider for your children's-book-cover design.

- 1. Research:** Start by browsing children's book covers. You can look through categories on Amazon and various bestseller lists to get a feel for design trends, themes, and aesthetics that you may want to emulate. Curating a list of covers that you love can help when it comes time to work with your book-cover designer.
- 2. Age appropriate:** You can often guess a book's age group by the cover design. Young-adult fiction books will look different than books for younger age groups.
 - a. Children aged 1–5 will appreciate joyful colours with strong contrasts, rather than muted colours or pastels. They will appreciate big text and simple fonts with familiar, cartoonish characters.
 - b. Children aged 6–9 will like vivid colours and illustrations that hold more detail. Typography can be more complex, with longer titles.
 - c. Kids aged 9–11 will appreciate book covers that hint at intrigue, tension, and mystery. Colours can be softer and imagery more complex, with unique, eye-catching typography.
- 3. The power of emotion:** When a reader looks at your children's-book cover, they should feel something. Visuals that stir an emotion will make your book cover much more memorable. Those feelings could be curiosity, whimsy, happiness, peace, nostalgia, etc.
- 4. Colour:** Once you know what type of emotion and mood you want to evoke, consider which colours can help you convey that message. There is a lot of information available on colour theory and psychology. Warm colours like red, yellow, and orange tend to evoke strong emotions such as love, happiness, and anger. Cool colours such as blue, green, and purple are linked to calmness, sadness, and indifference.
- 5. Typography:** Imagery is very important; however, the typography and title layout should not be overlooked. Your title is like a logo: it should make an impact and be easy to read. You don't want to blend the title into the background, or have the font size too small to read when looking at a thumbnail version of the cover.

To stand out in today's competitive book market, independent authors must take their book-cover design seriously.

14 BACK-COVER BLURB

Back-cover blurbs serve to motivate the reader to buy your book. It's a very important part of selling your book and should not be overlooked.

The back-cover blurb for your children's book should:

- Introduce the main character
- Indicate what the story is about
- Hint at the book's central theme

Tips to keep in mind when writing your back-cover blurb for your children's book:

- Keep it short, under 250 words.
- Keep it simple; don't use confusing language or dialogue.
- Capture the essence of the story. Avoid misleading the reader as to what the story is about, but don't tell them everything.

Patroosh the Cheeky Pelican

Patroosh is a cheeky pelican who always wants more. He'll even take the food right out of your hand, or flap his big wings until you drop it in the sand. But after an unexpected event, and a random act of kindness, this pelican's life is about to change forever.



The Magical 'I Am' Affirmation Bedtime Story



Great for all types of learners, your child will cherish the moments spent together reading before bed. Together you could choose to read the book from cover to cover, or simply choose a single affirmation from the book each night to discuss. This type of exercise encourages you both to safely share thoughts, feelings and emotions, and promotes good communication. Featuring gorgeous, high-quality illustrations that will speak to the heart of your child, the "I AM" Affirmation Bedtime Story is a beautiful way for children to allow themselves to be creative and dream big. Setting their intention before drifting off to sleep gives them the inner knowing that what you feel is what you can become and that you are the creator of your life.

The Adventures of Mali

Join Mali, the mischievous German Shepherd, as her 'favourite day ever' at the beach takes an unexpected twist. Find out if her three whippet friends, Ellie, Sophie and Maggie, can rescue Mali as she ventures below the sand in this fun-filled story from the exciting series: *The Adventures of Mali*.



Our Unique Selves

Meet an eight-year-old girl who tells her story about how she has worked through some of life's challenges and overcome these barriers, while working towards reaching her goals and creating positive outcomes. The story recognises the important role each person plays in this journey.



15 PUBLISH YOUR BOOK

Now that you have a finished book, it is time to make it available for people to buy! Print-on-demand technology and distribution allows for printing one copy per purchase, saving you from having to print books in bulk. Partnering with distributors such as IngramSpark allows your book to become available to upto 39,000 booksellers, including Amazon, Indigo, and Barnes & Noble.

There are generally two publishing routes available to children's authors: the traditional model or the self-publishing approach.

Traditional publishing: In the traditional model, the author must first find an agent willing to represent them. Agents have connections with publishing companies, and once you have representation, they will pitch your book to publishers. They try to get authors the best deal they can, and they receive a commission (usually 15%) for their work.

If a traditional publisher agrees to a deal, they will pay the author an advance for their book and, in exchange, receive exclusive rights to publish and sell the book. The publisher manages and controls the publishing and distribution process. They take on the risk of publishing the book and keep almost all royalties.

The traditional publishing process is highly competitive and can take years to complete.

Self-publishing: In the self-publishing model, the author controls the publishing process from start to finish. There is no submissions process, no advance on sales. The author takes on the risks and costs of publishing, but receives much more of the reward, in the form of royalties. The author retains the rights and ownership of their work.

Authors may decide to take on aspects of the publishing work themselves, such as design, editing, illustrations, and marketing. They may hire contractors to do this work for them, or they may choose to work with an assisted self-publisher, which offers the added benefit of guiding authors through an unfamiliar industry.

Self-publishing a book is a much faster process than traditional publishing, typically taking months rather than years.

Which model of publishing is better?

Neither of these models is inherently right or wrong. Selecting the direction that is right for you depends on your goals and resources.

If you are an established children's author with a large marketing platform, then it may be possible to get a literary agent and publishing offers. In that case, you should weigh the pros and cons of any offers you get by asking: "Does the advance I'm being offered and the marketing investments they say they will make justify giving up creative control, revenues, and my book rights?"

But for the majority of first-time authors who don't yet have a large following, getting a literary agent to represent you and securing a traditional publishing offer isn't a viable option. Self-publishing or not publishing at all become the only two choices.

Why many authors choose to work with an assisted self-publishing company rather than doing it all on their own

Authors can easily become overwhelmed with all the steps and decisions that need to be made throughout the publishing process. They benefit from the guidance provided at each step, and a dedicated team to take care of the critical work.

It's why many independent authors choose to work with assisted self-publishing companies such as Tellwell. We act as a one-stop shop for authors to help with the entire publishing process.

Self-publishing companies have a team of editors, book designers, illustrators, marketing consultants, and project managers who work with the author from start to finish.



16 ABOUT TELLWELL

We are an experienced and friendly team of publishing professionals who want to give authors an exceptional publishing experience. We know the industry can be confusing and overwhelming. Our consultative approach guides and empowers authors throughout the process.

Tellwell was founded in 2015 by Timothy Lindsay in Victoria, British Columbia. Lindsay started Tellwell after he noticed a gap in the assisted-self-publishing industry. The major self-publishing companies were not offering 100% net royalties, nor were they offering a personalized and transparent approach to publishing. He built a company that offers both, and that leaves authors with full creative and financial control so they get the professional book they want, the full returns they deserve, and a direct connection to their audience. Tellwell has grown into an international company, serving authors in Australia, the USA, Canada, and Europe.





Why Tellwell

- With an easy-to-use author portal called Octavo, and a world-class team of publishing professionals, Tellwell guides authors step by step through the publishing process with trusted publishing advice, guidance, and management suited to their needs and skills.
- Tellwell offers a full-service team approach. We are a friendly team of experienced editors, designers, illustrators, marketers, and project managers with exceptionally high standards of excellence.
- We offer the option of 100% net royalties, and have the smartest distribution model in the industry. Tellwell doesn't inflate the distribution costs at all. You are taking the risk, so you should receive all the rewards.
- We offer flexible printing options, including print-on-demand and competitive bulk printing. But if you prefer to print elsewhere, no problem! We will provide you with the files you need to do so. We do not lock authors into contracts with high printing costs that force them to price their book too high.
- We take author empowerment and education seriously. We have created numerous resources for each step of the process, including videos, webinars, and informative articles.

Our accomplishments

- Proudly published over 4,000 books
- Google review rating of 4.5 with over 200 reviews
- A+ rating from the Better Business Bureau
- Ranked among the top 50 fastest-growing companies by Canadian Business Magazine
- Named one of the 10 to Watch companies by Douglas Magazine

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TELLWELL CHILDREN'S PACKAGES



STANDARD - €1,099

The Standard package includes design and distribution. You'll get a book that looks great and is available in paperback format in mainstream sales channels. This package is best for people who don't need help with illustrations, editing, or publicity.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

PROFESSIONAL - €1,899

The Professional package is perfect for authors who have their own illustrations. We provide editing services to polish your manuscript, and help with marketing your book.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

ILLUSTRATED - €1,899

The Illustrated package takes it up a notch by offering up to eight illustrations. Your book will be available in paperback format to 40,000 booksellers and online retailers. You have the option to add hardcover, editing, or marketing support.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

ALL-INCLUSIVE - €3,999

The All-Inclusive includes up to 16 illustrations. We design and distribute your book in paperback and hardcover formats. We provide content and copy editing. Plus we develop a marketing plan, create an author website, and prepare a book backgrounder.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

TRADITIONAL - €5,499

The Traditional package is the all-out experience for children's book authors! It includes full editorial services, and we go the extra mile and execute the marketing services on your behalf.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

18 SUCCESS STORIES



Lamar Jackson

I Dream, You Dream, Let Us Dream!

The Baltimore Ravens quarterback published his first children's book about dreaming big and achieving your goals. And who better to talk about going for your goals than the NFL superstar himself! Jackson's book was featured in *Sports Illustrated* and on *CBS News*. He shares updates on his book to his three million followers on Instagram.

Belinda Cai Red Fred

Belinda Cai draws on her inspiration as a special education teacher who has worked extensively with students with autism, students with emotional disturbances and students with behaviour disorders in her book, *Red Fred*. This emotional-learning resource references different emotions, and depicts the changing of emotions and zones of self-regulation through the use of illustrations. She hopes this book will guide children to create their own toolboxes and become self-aware, resilient and lifelong learners.





Chantel Riley

I AM

Chantel has an impressive résumé as a television and Broadway actress and a singer/songwriter, and she owns a children's clothing boutique. Her positive-affirmations book for children has landed her on eTalk. She's also received glowing reviews and uses her social media platforms of tens of thousands of followers to promote her book.

Namita Mahanama

My Mummy After Our Baby : A Journey of Hope and Healing

Namita Mahanama draws upon her professional knowledge as well as her own first-hand experience suffering through two post-natal depressions after having both of her children. Shining the Light on PND was created as a survival guide by allowing the reader to see exactly how she was thinking and feeling in hope that if you recognise this in yourself or your partner, you will gain the strength to reach out for help.



Renée James

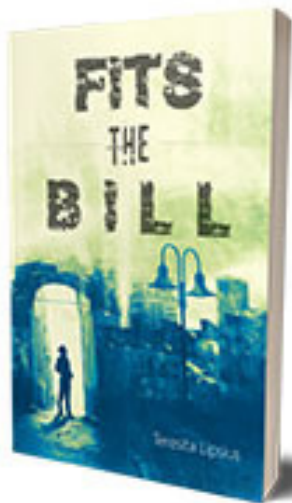
Patroosh, the Cheeky Pelican

The talented Australian author has successfully gotten her book stocked in local bookstores and libraries in New South Wales. Numerous elementary schools and daycares have added her book to their story-time routines, where she's also held several author events. She's received media attention from local news outlets and has been reviewed on a number of book blogs.



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TESTIMONIALS

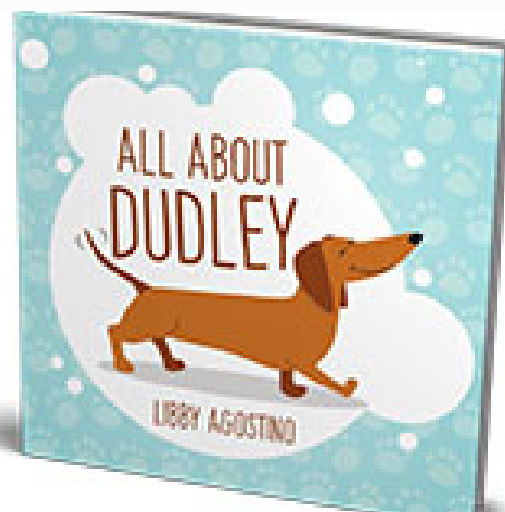


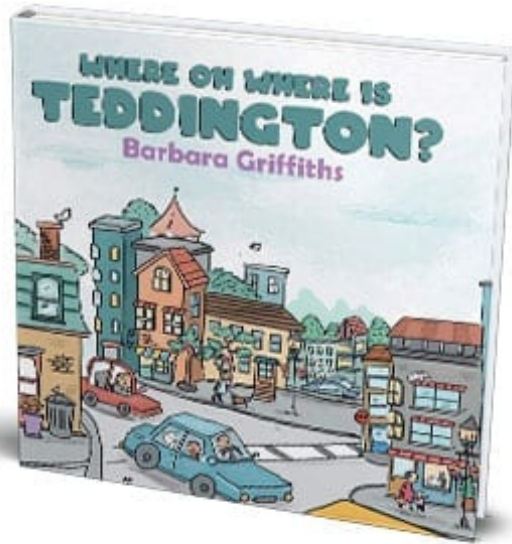
Teresita Lipsius **Fits the Bill**

"Rebecca and Gezel are exceptionally helpful. They understood my situation and the help they extended to me was phenomenal. I am very grateful and thankful to both of them. The staff at Tellwell were incredible. They responded very quickly to my queries and requests and acted accordingly. It has been a pleasure working with them during and after the publication process."

Libby Agostino **All About Dudley**

"My experience working with Tellwell has been excellent and I would highly recommend them to anyone else who would like to see their work in print. Each person I spoke to throughout the process was supportive and professional."





Barbara Griffiths Where Oh Where is Teddington?

"The marketing information and discussion was so helpful and tailored. [Tellwell/Angela] was friendly, patient in her explanations, really knew my book and had put great care into familiarising herself with all aspects. Cannot speak highly enough of the wonderful assistance and support offered by [Tellwell/Angela]."

Stephanie Hewitt Where Did Luna Go?

"As a first time author I have found the process of publishing a children's book less stressful thanks to the good support and direction you get from Tellwell."

