

Book Marketing Checklist

*For Writers and Those Who Want to
Support Them*



Marketing Checklist Overview

What kind of marketing plan is this?

An average marketing plan will include all the activities listed below, in roughly the order given.

How flexible is this plan?

All dates and schedules are recommendations only and may need adjusting based on your project goals and timelines.

Should I read this plan in full before implementing it?

Depending on your strategy, some steps may need to run in parallel with others. Other steps may need to be repeated after certain milestones.

Reading through the plan in full, even if just once, will give you a better idea of what to expect throughout the process, which can help inform how you handle even the first steps you'll take in the beginning.

Useful Notes

Here are the top marketing activities that appear to be working effectively in 2025:

1. Using mailing lists and lead magnets.
2. Reaching out for reviews and influencer marketing.
 - a. Especially consider BookTok/TikTok for readings, on-site reviews, and similar services.
3. Having multiple books to build up a series or brand, as this tends to create a stronger body of work that does better in sales over time.

The Checklist

Steps	Substeps	When?	With What?
Research	Decide the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who are your target readers? Consider doing a detailed “reader persona” exercise. Define your reader avatar in detail—age, lifestyle, reading habits, where they hang out online, and what problems or interests they have that your book speaks to. This helps align tone, visuals, and marketing language. 2. Your book’s genre and keyword categories/descriptors. 3. Your book’s goals. 4. Your book’s launch/release date. 5. The budget for edits, design, publication, and marketing. 6. The potential pricing for all formats of your book. See similar books for guidance, and pay special attention to how a single book’s price can differ between formats. 	Before outlining your book.	The internet, mentors and marketing experts’ advice.
Create a brand for yourself and your book.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decide on—and create—the look and feel of who you are as an author and what you are writing about. This includes your overall image, logos, slogans, colour palettes, fonts, electronic business cards, email signatures and blurb, brand name, and brand identity guide. 2. Finalize your draft blurbs, as well as the look of your book’s front cover/ thumbnail (important for promotional reasons). Note that draft blurbs are mostly for book sales platforms—it’s okay if your (typically more condensed) <i>back cover blurb</i> is still in progress. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. When deciding on your front cover, remember that you can use image teasers or even poll cover options for extra interest. 3. Create a media kit/promotional material containing the synopsis, imagery, and other broadly-interesting info on your book. N.B. While it’s common for media kits to contain an ARC of your book, it does not need to, and you can already start sending media kits/ promo material out before the book is fully ready. 4. Start doing shares and teasers of the book on social media and relevant websites. 	About six months before publication.	The internet, mentors and marketing experts’ advice. For your cover thumbnail, strongly consider hiring a designer. If self-designing (or if you intend to give your designer stricter specifications), look at similar books in your genre for ideas. See our colour psych guide for extra inspiration.

Steps	Substeps	When?	With What?
Decide on a marketing strategy and start it.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your social media strategy? which platforms will you target? What will you do on each one? How often will you target each one? Be sure to use AI tools to schedule posts, help you engage with your audience efficiently, and aid in further content creation (for example, brainstorming blog or reel ideas, or summarizing industry reports to help inform your next move). 2. Look at your email lists (or start compiling some if you don't have any). Who do you know who might want to be on a book newsletter or get updates? Offer lead magnets. Mailing lists can be built using platforms like BookFunnel. 3. Plan a reader journey—from lead magnet, to first purchase, to upsell (i.e. the next book or offer). 4. Set up an author website for your content and be sure to post updates. Also make sure to track how many web clicks your page is getting via Google Analytics or similar. 5. Consider what role creating blogs and newsletters will play in your book's marketing (and how your website and/ or mailing lists can help you gain extra traction through these methods). This line of thinking should also be applied to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Talks and events. b. Articles on host sites or in media. c. Awards and competitions you might apply for. d. Reviewers and influencers that you can approach. 6. Give some thought as to the kind of book launch you want based on your overall strategy so far. 	About six months before publication.	The internet, mentors and marketing experts' advice.

Steps	Substeps	When?	With What?
Decide on distribution.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decide what platforms to publish on based on book type, market penetration, and your target audience. If you have not done so already, be sure to get a feel for what your options are, and read up on the pros and cons of any platforms you are interested in. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Depending on your strategy, consider distributing directly to the public via your own website using a commerce/trade/print-on-demand option. 2. If you intend to see your book in a library or a brick-and-mortar bookshop, how do you plan on making that happen? For example, if you live in the Republic of South Africa, you need to contact local book distributors like Blue Weaver or Sula for local sales. International prints can be offered via Barnes & Noble, Ingram Spark, or Draft2Digital. 3. Identify potential B2B (<i>business-to-business</i>) partners or bulk buyers relevant to your book’s topic (corporates, schools, NGOs). 	About six months before publication.	The internet, mentors and marketing experts’ advice.
Apply for your book’s ISBN.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submit draft, metadata, and registration forms for your book per book format type. 	One to two months before publication. Once your book is ready.	Your national ISBN registrar.
Finalise your full book cover for use with promotional material.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You will already have a thumbnail design from earlier to develop, so use that as a base to refine your design. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Unless absolutely necessary, avoid dramatic visual changes and focus instead on refining and perfecting the more subtle elements that can elevate a design from “good” to “great”. 2. Remember that, once you have your final cover, you can continue to use image teasers to generate extra interest. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. That said, you’ll probably want to avoid polling cover options at this stage since any options you have for your full cover will likely be only subtly different from the thumbnail you decided on earlier. 	As soon as you feel ready (but don’t delay unnecessarily —a finalized full cover is an essential part of any author’s promotional material).	Hire a cover designer (at this stage it’s non-optional). Refer back to any book covers you used as inspiration earlier. See our colour psych guide for additional inspiration.

Steps	Substeps	When?	With What?
<p>Double-check your back matter marketing.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure your book’s back matter includes a call to action—such as a link to your next book, mailing list signup, or review request. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Remember that back matter in a book usually refers to your author bio, general author notes, conclusions, reference lists, and other content that comes after your main body of work. In most cases, the author bio and conclusion are the best spots to do a little marketing. b. For fiction books, you might not have the same kind of conclusion as in non-fiction, but you can still have an author bio. You can also drop plot hooks or hints of your next story in your epilogue (if you have one—hinting at sequel hooks is also acceptable during the denouement of a story). 2. If/ where appropriate, consider using the back of your book cover for light marketing too (just be very careful here—a book’s back cover is supposed to sell the book <i>it is attached to</i>. Unless handled deftly, trying to fit in a call to action aside from your back-of-book blurb and/ or “about the author” section can feel forced). 	<p>About the same time that you’re finalizing your book’s interior content and exterior full cover.</p>	<p>The internet, mentors and marketing experts’ advice.</p>

Steps	Substeps	When?	With What?
Get an ARC (advanced reader copy) created and sent out.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Double-check that you're happy with your book's interior formatting. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If you intend to make any ARC-specific alterations to your book's formatting or layout (e.g. adjusting margins for easier screen reading or adding cover images into the doc instead of merging them later), remember to first make a copy of your formatted manuscript and work in that rather. This way you aren't left with situational edits in your book's master file. 2. Save your work a PDF that includes your book's exterior front cover and back cover. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Make sure your entire ARC PDF is watermarked (non-optional). b. Adjusting the margins so that they are even can improve the readability of your PDF (since it won't be bound like your actual book will), but this isn't strictly necessary and can be skipped to save time if needed. 3. Send out ARCS to reviewers, influencers, and similar figures. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. ARCs can be sent out individually or can be bundled into an expanded media kit. 	As soon as your book's full cover is complete and the interior is formatted.	-
Press release/ traditional PR.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare a press release and send it to local media outlets, radio stations, or online book columns. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. This is especially important if your target audience is mostly local, or if you want to gain traction with local readers, distributors, and so on. 		
Set up pre-orders, giveaways and special offers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Start a pre-order list on your website. 2. Offer a special release price that can be changed after a month or two. 	One to two months before publication.	On your website or social media.

Steps	Substeps	When?	With What?
Get reviews and plan reveals to build hype.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give away ARCs to reviewers and your budding fan base. 2. Approach Goodreads or similar review platforms. 3. Obtain pre-launch reviews by known authors and reviewers. 4. Release sample content on your website or social media. 	About six weeks before publication (maybe earlier depending on the known authors you intend to approach).	Reviewers and review platforms.
Create countdown posts and promotions.	Release timed posts, reviews, blogs, and similar content.	One month before publication.	n/a
Launch party and reading.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decide on a venue and send out invites well in advance. 2. Even if this is just with everyone you know, at your home, this can be a great way to mark the launch of your book, lift your spirits, solidify how people see you as an author, and create a lasting memory for those you invited. 	<i>Invites:</i> one month before publication. <i>Party/reading:</i> on publication.	n/a
Get on Goodreads.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Claim your Author Profile! Go to the <i>Goodreads Author Program</i> and follow the steps to claim your profile. You'll need a Goodreads account and your book must already be listed (though getting listed often happens automatically once on Amazon). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>On listing your book:</i> if your book isn't showing up, manually add it via the "Add a New Book" function under your author dashboard. 2. Optimise your profile! Add a professional author photo, bio, links to your website and social media, and your blog feed if applicable. This helps establish you as active and alive as an author. 3. Don't forget to engage with your readers. Create reading lists, host Q&As, comment on reviews, and use Goodreads giveaways or group interactions to further build visibility and let your potential readers know who you are and what you're about (you may also end up making friends with some other authors). 	On publication/ shortly after publication.	

Steps	Substeps	When?	With What?
Make use of affiliate marketing.	Consider creating an affiliate link system to reward readers/influencers who refer others to buy your book.	On publication/ shortly after publication.	
Consider sponsored ads via your publishing platforms and Google.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If going this route, strongly consider pay-per click. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. For best results, be sure to double-check your research so you can be confident you are targeting your ads properly. 2. Also do A/B testing to see which ads are succeeding. 		
Celebrate and reward yourself.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take a break or a holiday, book a massage, open a bottle of bubbly. 2. Journal and post about successes. 3. Create a visual success board. 	Regularly at each milestone or success.	Absolute zest, good friends, and family.
Continue marketing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organize readings, talks and signings. 2. Keep up your social media tasks. 3. Be sure to take part in competitions, giveaways, and reviews. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. This step is more open-ended than it might initially seem. For example, taking part in competitions may mean submitting your work for awards... but it could also mean hosting competitions that your readers or even fellow authors can take part in. Consider what will benefit your book and contribute to your overall marketing strategy best. 	For a minimum of one year after publication.	As per your plan.
Monitor your book.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review price, book distribution, and sales figures. 2. Adjust marketing efforts as needed. 	Ongoing	n/a

REMEMBER:

- Marketing is a marathon, not a sprint.
- Do as much as feels comfortable. If you feel overwhelmed, consider outsourcing some, most, or even all of your basic marketing while you get on with writing more books.
- Some books take off years after publication. Some take off straight away. There is no miracle formula to determine how quickly your marketing efforts will pay off.
- If it is your goal to stand out more than the typical author, there are a myriad of ways to increase your chances. Consider the following optional additions to your strategy:
 - TikTok / BookTok strategies (especially for YA, romance, and thrillers).
 - Podcast interviews.
 - Post-launch webinars or workshops based on your book.
 - Custom hashtags.
 - An encouragement of fan art or other user-generated content (allow it, notice it, and incentivize it).
- For more resources like this, check out [our blogs, videos, and writer support tools](#). You can also contact us through our website [here](#).