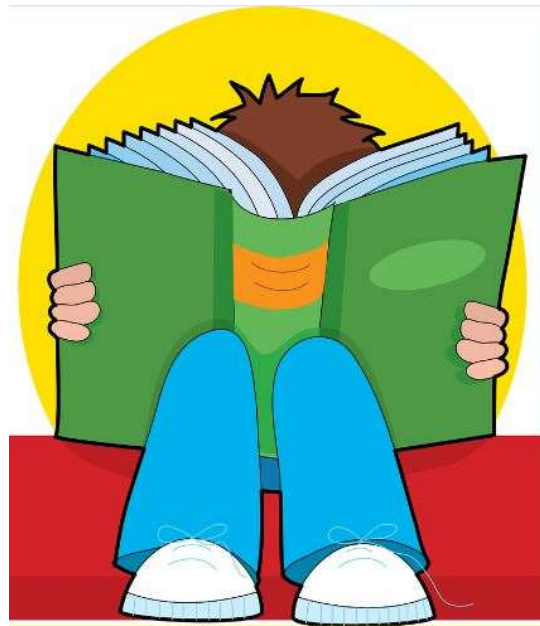


# Children's Picture Book Manuscript Done?

## NOW WHAT?



*Karen Cioffi, Children's Writer*

## **Children's Picture Book Manuscript Done? Now What?**

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With a steady stream of ghosting clients, I am often asked what comes after the manuscript is written and edited.

Well, this depends on which publishing road you'll be taking: self-publishing or traditional publishing.

Since the majority of my clients go the self-publishing route, I'll start there.

## Self-Publishing a Children's Picture Book

### Some basic pages and copy in addition to the story.

1. You'll need back cover copy. This is a brief synopsis of the story, usually 100-200 words. It needs to be 'grabbing' and 'clear.'
2. It's a good idea to have an About the Author or Author's Note page at the end of the story. It's definitely optional though.
3. A Copyright page – you can include acknowledgements on this page.
4. A Dedication / Acknowledgment page is a thought.
5. Some authors want a Preface page, but in most cases this isn't necessary.
6. If you have words that may need to be defined for the young reader, you might include a Glossary right after the story. Most authors don't bother with this.
7. Then there's the Activity Page and Reading Comprehension Page. If you're hoping to get your book into the classroom, this is a must.

*Unless you're creating your own pages, these items will **usually** be an additional fee.*

*Also, depending on the length of your book, the total pages, you may want to add a couple of these pages if you need to increase the pages to meet the minimum page requirement.*

## Illustrations

### Interior:

If you have a children's picture book you'll need to get illustrations done. It's usual to have one illustration per spread – a spread is two pages (left and right). So, if you have a 15-spread manuscript, you'll need 15 interior illustrations.

Keep in mind that a full spread (two pages) will be more money than a one-page illustration. It's usually the cost of two pages.

### Exterior:

The book cover is a BIGGIE. The cover is one of the most influential elements to motivate someone to pick up your book. You want it done right. Covers are more money than interior spreads.

Don't try to skimp on the cover. You want it right. Covers sell books.

You might also want to go for a small back cover illustration. This isn't absolutely necessary though. You can simply have a colored back cover with your back cover copy (brief description of the story) on it. Possibly include an image of yourself (the author).

To save money, you can also use a particular piece/section of an interior illustration along with the back cover copy for your back cover.

### Pricing

Pricing for illustrations vary. I recommend a few illustrators to my clients: one charges \$60-75 per interior illustration, a couple charge around \$75-\$125. Others charge \$150 to \$250 and up per interior illustration.

So, you can see that self-publishing a children's picture book can get pretty expensive.

*On the flip side*, you can probably get illustrations somewhat cheaper through various services / illustrators. Just be sure the one you choose is capable of creating quality illustrations. The illustrations in a picture book MATTER!

Again, cover illustrations will cost more.

Here are some places you can look for illustrators:

Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

<https://www.scbwi.org/illustrator-gallery/>

Children's Illustrators

<http://www.childrensillustrators.com/>

Blueberry Illustrations

<http://blueberryillustrations.com/childrens-book-illustrations/>

Behance

<https://www.behance.net/>

99 Designs

<https://99designs.com/book-cover-design>

<https://99designs.com/pricing>

Upwork

<https://www.upwork.com>

Fiverr

<https://fiverr.com>

You can also post a job for free on sites like Craigslist and Thumbtack.

In addition, try a Google search and ask in children's writing group forums.

Hot Tip: Unless you're a professional illustrator, or really, really, really good, don't attempt to do your own illustrations.

Check out the illustrators you like. Be sure they have a portfolio you can review. See which one is within your budget and is a fit for your story.

Checking the Illustrations and Illustrations to text.

Interestingly, there's not much online about this process. Yet, it's a very important step in making your picture book be everything it can be.

Poor quality illustrations or error filled illustrations will degrade your picture book. This is especially true of the cover.

Unless you hire someone to oversee this process, you will need to make sure there are no errors in the illustrations and that they complement the text.

**For the first part**, you need to carefully review each illustration, including the cover and back cover (if you have an image on the back cover).

It can be something as simple as part of a foot missing, or a picture described in the story conveyed wrong in the illustration. These, among many others, were mistakes I found for one of my clients who hired me to oversee this process for him.

It can even be consistency, maybe how the characters look throughout the story or even the background scenery. In one project, the illustrator had molding in some illustrations and none in others where it should have been.

In a more recent project, the illustrator created characters with harsh feature lines, like in superhero comic books. This would be fine if that's the style you're going for, but in this particular case it definitely wasn't.

You'll need to have a keen eye for this stuff, but getting it right is the difference between a good-quality product and a poor-quality product.

**For the illustrations to text review**, it's the same. You want to make sure the illustration fits the text per spread. Most illustrators get this right, but I've come across a few who do make mistakes.

This is your book. You want it to be the best it can be. This means getting all the details right.

## **Time Frame**

If we go back a bit and start at the point of writing the story, we can get an overall time frame.

If you're writing it yourself, you'll create your own time frame for the story.

### The Ghostwritten Story

Using myself as an example, I usually take one - three weeks to write a children's picture book manuscript of 800 – 3000 words (depends on what my clients want). I do mention in my freelance agreement that it can take up to six weeks.

It's important to know that if you're self-publishing you do have some leeway as to the word count, but it's always advisable to stay close to the traditional industry's standards.

If you're going the traditional route, it's a good idea to stay under 800 words.

Another factor in the time it takes to write a ghostwritten story is the time it takes the client to respond to questions and approvals of content. If a client takes more than a couple of days to respond to emails, the time frame will be thrown off.

### The Illustrations

Getting the interior and exterior illustrations done can take two-three months, sometimes longer. It will depend on the illustrator you use and his/her workload.

So, the writing and illustrations can take around four months.

## **Getting the Book Published (ready for distribution / sale)**

Depending on your budget, you can hire someone from a site like Fiverr.com to format and upload your book onto Kindle and/or other publishing venues.

Or, you can hire a service, like CreateSpace, Dog Ear Publishing, Golden Box Books, Publishing Push, and Smashwords to do it for you. This route will cost more money, but you'll have all your "Is" dotted and "Ts" crossed.

I used a Fivver service to format and upload a nonfiction book I wrote to Kindle and Createspace. The formatting wasn't the best. I'll eventually have to have it redone. So, be careful.

Warning: Services you pay to format and upload your book for publishing will probably offer lots of other services: cover design, editing, illustrations, and so on. They can be expensive and I'm not sure of the quality of, say their editing or illustrations services. So, have the book already to go. All you should need them for is actual formatting for publication, interior design layout, publishing, and distribution.

For a great resource on publishing ebooks, check out:

<https://janefriedman.com/how-to-publish-an-ebook/>

## **Self-Publishing a Chapter or Simple Middle Grade Book**

If you've written a chapter or simple middle grade book or had it ghosted, you'll only need illustrations for each chapter. And, they can be simple grey tone sketches.

While it's not an absolute must to have illustrations for middle-grade books, it does help with engagement for the young reader.

## **The Traditional Road**

The traditional route will cost you nothing if you're writing the story yourself.

If you're hiring a ghostwriter, all you'll be paying for is the ghostwriter. You won't need illustrations.

While it will cost less, it will certainly take a lot longer.

You'll have to submit your manuscript to publishers and/or literary agents to hopefully get a contract. You'll need a 'good' query letter for this. And, having a synopsis of the story is another must.

When and if a contract happens, it takes an average of 18-24 months before your book is actually published. So, patience will be needed.

And, be prepared for the publisher's editor to go over your story and possibly request changes. This is just part of the process. Be open to suggestions.

I recommend you get the most recent edition of "Children's Writer's and Illustrator's Market" by Writer's Digest Books. This book provides information on publishers and agents in the children's writing arena. These are the people you'll be submitting your manuscript to.

I also recommend you read:

Children's Writing and Publishing - The Traditional Path  
<http://karencioffiwritingforchildren.com/2015/08/03/childrens-writing-and-publishing-process-the-traditional-path/>

## The Author Website

*Before you publish your book*, you absolutely need an author website. Publishers and agents will expect this. And, if you're self-publishing it's even more important.

In Chuck Sambuchino's (of Writer's Digest) book "Create Your Writer Platform," he explains that an author's platform (its visibility, connections, and reach) is a key factor when looking for a publisher or agent.

Take note that this is not after a book is published; it's before the author is looking for a contract. Your platform begins with a website.

## Summing it Up

This is a basic run-down of what to expect and what you'll need to do to get your children's picture book manuscript self-published.

Best wishes for a successful journey!



**Karen Cioffi** is an award-winning children's author and busy children's ghostwriter.

Get access to her newsletter on working with a children's ghostwriter, writing tips, and even a bit on book marketing, all through The Writing World: <http://karencioffiwritingforchildren.com/the-writing-world/>

**Need help with your story?** Shoot me an email at [kcioffiventrice@gmail.com](mailto:kcioffiventrice@gmail.com)

**LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH:**

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