

BEGINNER-FRIENDLY FIELD GUIDE

The No-Panic KDP Picture Book Publishing Guide

A click-by-click checklist from finished files to a live paperback



Includes the exact setup used for a 32-page, full-color, 8.5 x 8.5 inch children's book

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START HERE

You do not need to understand everything

You only need the right files, the right settings, and a calm checklist.

This guide was built from a real Amazon KDP upload of *Kitsy & Rainbow and the Dancing Light*. It captures the decisions, screens, and mistakes that matter most when publishing a full-color paperback picture book.

THE RULE: Do not rush the upload. Move one screen at a time, verify what is shown, and do not approve the preview until you have checked the cover and every page.

The whole process in seven moves

1. Prepare two final PDFs: one interior file and one full-wrap cover file.
2. Enter the book details exactly as they appear on the cover.
3. Choose an accurate audience, three categories, and seven useful keyword phrases.
4. Assign the ISBN and match the KDP print settings to the files.
5. Upload the interior and cover, then answer the AI disclosure truthfully.
6. Use Print Previewer to inspect the cover, page order, bleed, and safety margins.
7. Set pricing, review the royalty calculation, and submit the paperback.

What this guide assumes

- You are publishing a paperback through Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing.
- Your illustrations extend to the edge of the page, so the interior uses bleed.
- Your book is image-heavy and uses premium color on white paper.
- You own or control the rights to every part of the book.

STEP 0

Prepare the files before opening KDP

A clean upload begins before you click Create Paperback.

You need two print-ready PDFs

KDP FIELD	WHAT TO ENTER OR SELECT
Interior PDF	Single pages in reading order. Do not upload two-page spreads.
Full-wrap cover PDF	One page containing back cover, spine area, and front cover.
Image quality	300 DPI recommended for all illustrations and cover artwork.
Fonts	Embed all fonts in the exported PDF.
File names	Use clear names containing Interior or Cover so they cannot be confused.

For an 8.5 x 8.5 inch book with bleed

- The selected trim size in KDP is 8.5 x 8.5 inches.
- The interior PDF page size is 8.625 x 8.75 inches.
- Images extend 0.125 inch beyond the top, bottom, and outside trim edges.
- Keep important text and faces safely inside the trim and gutter areas.

IMPORTANT: Cover dimensions change with trim size, page count, ink, and paper. Generate the correct cover template for every book. Never reuse an old wrap size just because the trim size matches.

The 32-page example

Our real example used a 32-page premium-color interior. Its full cover measured 17.325104 x 8.75 inches with a 0.075104-inch spine. Those numbers are an example, not a universal template.

KDP does not allow spine text on books under 79 pages, so the example cover intentionally had no spine title.

STEP 1

Create the paperback and enter the details

The metadata should describe the book - never decorate or exaggerate it.

KDP FIELD	WHAT TO ENTER OR SELECT
Language	Choose the language used in the book.
Book title	Enter it exactly as it appears on the cover.
Subtitle	Leave blank unless a subtitle is printed on the cover.
Series	Add the title to a new or existing series when appropriate.
Book number	Use 1 for the first ordered book in a series.
Edition number	Leave blank for an original first edition.
Primary author	Enter the author name exactly as it should appear on Amazon.
Contributors	List real contributors only. Leave blank if none should be credited separately.

If this is the first book in a new series

1. Click Add to series, then choose New series.
2. Choose Main content for a primary book in the story series.
3. Enter the series title and select Ordered if the books should be read in sequence.
4. Add a short series description that explains the recurring characters, tone, and promise.
5. Save the series, return to the paperback, and confirm the correct book number.

REAL EXAMPLE: Series: Kitsy & Rainbow. Book title: Kitsy & Rainbow and the Dancing Light. Book number: 1.

STEP 2

Write the description and choose the audience

Help the right reader recognize the book without keyword stuffing.

A simple description formula

- 1. Introduce the main characters and their contrast.
- 2. Present the problem or adventure without giving away every beat.
- 3. Name the emotional benefit or lesson: patience, courage, teamwork, kindness, or curiosity.
- 4. Close with the intended age range and reading occasion, such as bedtime or read-aloud time.

KEEP IT CLEAN: Use short paragraphs. Avoid claims such as bestseller, guaranteed, free, or perfect. Do not reference unrelated authors or titles.

Rights and audience settings

KDP FIELD	WHAT TO ENTER OR SELECT
Publishing rights	Select that you own the copyright and hold the necessary publishing rights, if true.
Sexually explicit images or title	Select No for a normal children's picture book.
Reading age	Set the real intended range. Our example used minimum 3 and maximum 5.
Primary marketplace	Choose the store where most sales are expected. Our example used Amazon.com.
Low-content book	Leave unchecked for an illustrated storybook.
Large-print book	Leave unchecked unless the book truly meets the large-print definition.

STEP 3

Choose categories and keyword phrases

Accuracy beats clever tricks. Help Amazon place the book where readers expect it.

Choose up to three relevant categories

Our picture-book example used these three paths:

- Children's Books > Animals > Cats > Fiction
- Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Siblings > Fiction
- Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Social Skills > Fiction

DO NOT GAME CATEGORIES: Every category should reflect the central story. Misleading categories can create a poor customer experience and may be changed or rejected by Amazon.

Use all seven keyword boxes

Use short, natural search phrases. Do not waste space repeating the title, author name, or words already covered by the selected categories.

- Reading occasion: bedtime read aloud ages 3 to 5
- Tone: gentle animal adventure for preschoolers
- Plot: firefly rescue story for children
- Theme: teamwork and cooperation for young children
- Emotional promise: patience and curiosity story
- Setting: magical garden nighttime adventure
- Experience: cozy illustrated story for families

Publication timing

- For a new book, select Publication date and release date are the same.
- Choose Release my book for sale now unless you have a planned future launch date.

STEP 4

Match the print settings to the files

This is the step that prevents most technical upload errors.

KDP FIELD	WHAT TO ENTER OR SELECT
ISBN	Choose Get a free KDP ISBN unless you already own an ISBN you want to use.
Ink and paper	Premium color interior with white paper for an image-heavy picture book.
Trim size	8.5 x 8.5 inches for the example in this guide.
Bleed	Bleed (PDF only) when art reaches the edge of the pages.
Cover finish	Matte for the example; glossy is also available and is a creative choice.

Why premium color mattered

Premium color is designed for image-heavy books where sharpness and richness matter. It also supports books beginning at 24 pages. Standard color requires a higher minimum page count, so a 32-page picture book belongs in premium color.

LOCK BEFORE LAUNCH: Ink type becomes locked after publication. Confirm the choice carefully before submitting the book.

Quick file-to-setting check

- The PDF trim and bleed dimensions match the KDP selections.
- The interior page count matches the cover template used to build the spine.
- The book has an even number of interior pages.
- No spine text appears when the page count is below 79 pages.

STEP 5

Upload the interior, cover, and AI disclosure

Use the finished production PDFs - not a proof collage, master spread file, or PNG.

Upload in this order

- 1. Click Upload manuscript and choose the interior PDF.
- 2. Wait for the green successful-upload message.
- 3. Choose Upload a cover you already have (print-ready PDF only).
- 4. Upload the full-wrap cover PDF and wait for processing to finish.
- 5. Leave the cover barcode box unchecked when your cover does not already contain a barcode. KDP will add one automatically.

Answer the AI question truthfully

KDP requires disclosure when an AI-based tool created the actual text, images, or translations. Using AI only to edit, refine, brainstorm, or check human-created content is treated differently. Answer according to what actually happened in your project.

KDP FIELD	WHAT TO ENTER OR SELECT
AI tools used?	Yes, when AI created actual book text or images.
Texts - example	Entire work, with extensive editing.
Images - example	Many AI-generated images, with extensive editing.
Translations - example	None.
Tool name - example	ChatGPT.

EXAMPLE, NOT A SHORTCUT: Those disclosure selections matched our actual workflow. A different creator must choose the options that accurately describe their own book.

STEP 6

Use Print Previewer like a preflight inspection

A green upload message is not the same as a finished quality check.

Launch Previewer and wait

KDP may take several minutes to process a color interior and wraparound cover. Let the process finish. Do not repeatedly click the button or refresh the page while it is working.

Inspect the cover

- The front title and author name are safely inside the trim lines.
- No important art or text crosses into the spine or fold area.
- The back-cover text is readable and inside the safe area.
- The KDP barcode does not cover text or important artwork.
- Background art extends completely through the bleed area.

Inspect the interior

- Open Thumbnail View and confirm the complete page order.
- Check that page 1 begins on the right and facing spreads pair correctly.
- Confirm there are no missing words, accidental blank pages, or duplicated pages.
- Check that important faces and text stay away from the center fold.
- Review every warning. Fix the production file rather than ignoring a real issue.

APPROVE ONLY AFTER CHECKING: When the cover, page sequence, bleed, and safety zones all pass - and KDP reports no blocking errors - click Approve.

STEP 7

Set the price and submit the paperback

The final screen turns a finished file into a product.

Rights and pricing checklist

1. Choose All territories (worldwide rights) only if you hold worldwide rights.
2. Confirm the primary marketplace, usually Amazon.com for a U.S.-focused launch.
3. Enter a list price at or above KDP's displayed minimum.
4. Review the printing cost and estimated royalty that KDP calculates on screen.
5. Decide whether Expanded Distribution fits the project and its lower-margin tradeoff.
6. Read the terms, confirm the final price, and click Publish Your Paperback Book.

PRICE WITH ROOM TO BREATHE: For premium-color picture books, printing cost is substantial. Do not choose a price only because it feels inexpensive. Check the royalty shown by KDP and make sure the book earns enough to support your goal.

After submission

- The book will move into review. Do not assume it is live until the Bookshelf status changes to Live.
- KDP may email if a file or metadata issue needs correction.
- Once live, use the Bookshelf link to view the Amazon page and order author copies.
- Save the exact interior, cover, description, keywords, categories, and price as the permanent project record.

ONE-PAGE PREFLIGHT

Final checklist before you publish

If every line below is true, you are ready for the yellow button.

- The title, subtitle, author, and series metadata match the cover.
- The description accurately represents the story and intended age range.
- Publishing rights and audience answers are accurate.
- Three relevant categories and seven natural keyword phrases are saved.
- The ISBN is assigned.
- Ink, paper, trim, bleed, and cover finish match the production files.
- The interior is a single-page PDF in the correct reading order.
- The cover is the correct full-wrap PDF for this page count and print type.
- The barcode answer is correct.
- AI-generated content is disclosed accurately.
- Print Previewer shows no blocking errors.
- Every cover element is inside the safety zones.
- All interior pages and facing spreads appear in the correct order.
- The list price produces an acceptable royalty.
- You understand that submitting starts Amazon's review - not instant publication.

BREATHE: A careful first upload can pass with zero errors. The secret is not technical genius. It is matching the files to the settings and checking one screen at a time.

AVOIDABLE MISTAKES

The problems that cause the most frustration

Title mismatch: The KDP title must match the wording printed on the cover.

Wrong trim size: The KDP trim selection and interior PDF dimensions must agree.

Uploading spreads: KDP wants single interior pages, not two-page spread files.

No bleed selected: Choose bleed when artwork reaches the page edges.

Wrong cover template: A page-count or paper change alters the spine and full-wrap dimensions.

Barcode collision: Leave a clear area or include a correctly placed barcode of your own.

Spine text too early: Do not place spine text on a paperback with fewer than 79 pages.

Misleading metadata: Irrelevant categories and stuffed keywords can hurt the customer experience.

Skipping AI disclosure: Disclose actual AI-generated text, images, or translations as KDP requires.

Approving too quickly: Use thumbnail view and inspect the cover before clicking Approve.

Official KDP references

- [Format Your Paperback](#)
- [Set Trim Size, Bleed, and Margins](#)
- [Paperback Submission Guidelines](#)
- [Create a Paperback Cover](#)
- [Color Ink Options](#)
- [Make Your Book More Discoverable with Keywords](#)
- [KDP Categories](#)
- [Content Guidelines, including AI](#)
- [Paperback Printing Cost](#)
- [Cover Calculator](#)

PLEASE NOTE: Amazon can change its interface, pricing, and requirements. This guide is educational, does not guarantee approval or sales, and should be used alongside the current official KDP Help Center.

One screen. One decision. One finished book.