



Print On Demand

Print on Demand (POD) is the system most self-publishing authors use to make their print books available without holding stock or paying for large print runs. Instead of printing hundreds of copies upfront, a POD service prints a single copy whenever a reader orders one. It's efficient, low-risk, and accessible, and it's how platforms like KDP and IngramSpark operate behind the scenes.

A Quick Prompt to Get You Started

Do I want my print book available only online, or do I want it stocked by bookstores and libraries too?

Your answer shapes which POD service you rely on.

How Print on Demand Works

When a customer orders your book, the POD service prints it, binds it, and ships it directly to them. You don't handle inventory, packaging, or postage. You simply upload your files once, and the system takes care of the rest.

This means:

- no upfront printing costs
- no storage or fulfilment
- no risk of unsold stock
- consistent quality across orders

It's a modern, sustainable approach to publishing.

Where POD Fits Into Your Publishing Plan

Most authors use POD for:

- paperbacks
- hardbacks
- special editions
- proofs and author copies

Ebooks are delivered digitally, so POD applies only to physical formats.

KDP Print vs IngramSpark POD

These are the two main POD routes for self-published authors, and they serve different purposes.

KDP Print

- prints and ships books ordered on Amazon
- simple setup
- no upfront fees
- limited bookstore reach

KDP is ideal for Amazon-focused authors.

IngramSpark

- prints and distributes through the wider Ingram network
- reaches bookstores, libraries, and non-Amazon retailers
- more print options (trim sizes, paper types, hardbacks)
- setup fees may apply

IngramSpark is ideal for authors who want broad print distribution.

Many authors use both:

KDP for Amazon orders, IngramSpark for everywhere else.

Quality and Expectations

POD quality is generally very good, but it's not identical to offset printing. Expect:

- slight variation between batches
- differences in paper tone between services
- occasional minor alignment shifts

This is normal for POD. Ordering a proof copy is the best way to check how your book looks in the real world.

Costs and Royalties

You don't pay to print copies unless you order them yourself. Instead, the printing cost is deducted from your royalty each time a book sells.

Your royalty depends on:

- list price
- printing cost
- platform fees
- wholesale discount (IngramSpark only)

POD makes it possible to publish without financial risk, but it also means margins are tighter than bulk printing.

When POD Is the Right Choice

POD is ideal if you want:

- low-risk publishing
- global availability
- no storage or shipping
- consistent quality
- the ability to update files at any time

It's not ideal if you need:

- very high-volume print runs
- custom finishes or unusual formats
- the lowest possible per-unit cost

For most self-published authors, POD is the perfect balance of convenience and professionalism.

A Simple Exercise

Write a short note titled “My Print Goals.”

Include:

- where you want your print book sold
- whether you want hardback, paperback, or both
- whether bookstore access matters to you

Your POD choices will become clear from those answers.

A Final Thought

Print on Demand has transformed self-publishing. It removes the financial risk, expands your reach, and lets you focus on what matters most: getting your book into readers’ hands. Once your files are ready, POD turns your manuscript into a physical book with remarkable ease.