

GUIDE

Metadata

Metadata

There are two types of Metadata which are of concern to authors and publishers.

1. Metadata for Distribution Platforms

An essential part of an author's self-publishing process is to complete the metadata on your chosen distribution platforms.

You may have read all the advice and figured out what platform(s) you will use to distribute your self-published book, but when you login to the first distribution platform, you find yourself faced with a lot of drop down menus, text boxes, and possibly many pages of metadata information you are required to enter before you can upload your files.

You might have to find the information including some you didn't know you would need and some of which is in a form you've never heard of before. It can be daunting, but the easiest way to get through this challenge is to create a metadata checklist and use a metadata template.

Creating a Metadata Template

In addition to a checklist of the process, create a metadata template for all the choices you'll need to make and text you'll need to have ready to copy and paste into the forms.

The first time you upload a file make a note of all the bits of information you need to enter and copy what you do enter into a file. You'll use that information to upload your publication to another platform.

What is "metadata" Anyway?

Metadata is a fancy word for all the information that search engines review when a reader is looking for something. There are three categories of information.

The Template

- **The Basics**
 - **Title:**
 - **Subtitle:**
 - **Series:** If your book is in a series add the series name and volume number
 - **Imprint:** If you have an imprint name, put it here. Many self-published authors use their own name as their imprint.
 - **ISBN:** Assign an ISBN for each format (ebook, paperback, hardback, etc) – make a note of which ISBN goes with which format.
 - **ASIN:** Some platforms (notably Amazon) will assign an internal number to your book either in addition to an ISBN or instead of one. You should record that in your metadata file. It is useful when you add your book to *Goodreads* or are corresponding with Amazon.
 - **Length:** For print, number of pages; for ebook I'm never sure what to put here but most platforms ask for something and readers do like to know how long a book is.
 - **Illustrations:** if your book is illustrated, indicate how many illustrations
 - **Trim Size:** for print books, indicate the dimensions here
 - **Interior:** for print books, record your choices here (standard or premium, paper colour, paper weight, etc)
 - **Cover:** for print books, record your choices here (matte or glossy, paperback or hardback, choice of binding, etc)
 - **Price:** make decisions beforehand; you usually have the option to set one price and have the platform convert it for other markets or to set prices in specific markets. You may need to tweak your price based on the costs and royalty margins. RECORD what your final decisions were so you can check them and be consistent across platforms without having to go back into the platform to look. You can take a screenshot at insert it in your file.
 - **Short description:** Some distribution methods only allow a very short description. (e.g. Ingram Spark limits this to 350 characters.) Twitter trained you for this!!
 - **Full description:** Most platforms also allow you to add a longer description which some distribution methods will pick up. Use it! (e.g. Ingram Spark allows 200 to 4000 characters in this box.)

- **The Contributors: Author(s), Illustrator(s), etc**

There will usually be a drop down to enter each contributor and then a separate area to add further information for each one. If you coauthor books or have an illustrator, ask them for this information and check with them about any edits you've had to make to meet the requirements of the platform.

- **Contributor(s):** add author names, illustrator name
- **Bio (for each contributor):** character lengths may vary by platform (e.g. Ingram Spark allows 4000 characters); This will probably be your standard bio or a version of it; You may want a short version and a long version
- **Prior work (for each contributor):** Other books the contributor has published, with ISBNs; this will help platforms link your book to other things you've published and help readers find other work (e.g. Ingram Spark allows 4000 characters); If a platform doesn't have this as a separate box, you could include this information in your long contributor bio.
- **Location (for each contributor):** This may be public so make it more general if that feels more appropriate.
- **Affiliations (for each contributor):** Optional but may be particularly important for non-fiction if you are affiliated with an organization that lends weight to the content of the book

- **Subjects, Keywords, and other things that aid discoverability**

Things in this section help your readers find your book and provide additional information to help them decide whether your book meets their needs.

- **Subjects:** these are very important for discoverability to take time to do this. Most platforms have a way to search the relevant codes and different platforms use different codes. Brainstorm possible subjects beforehand and then record what you actually used.
- **BISAC codes:** (one type of subject code; learn more here: <https://bisg.org/page/BISACSubjectCodes>)
- **THEMA subjects:** (another type of subject code; learn more here: <https://ns.editeur.org/thema/en>)
- **Regional subjects:** If your book is specific to a particular region (especially for non-fiction) there is a place to indicate that.

- **Keywords:** More freeform than subjects, brainstorm a set of words you think readers might use to find your book.
- **Audience:** There will be a list to indicate the broad category of reader, e.g. children, young adult, adult, professional, etc
- **Table of Contents:** Some platforms allow you to add the table of contents; the character limit may even be sufficient for subheadings; this can be very useful to readers, especially for non-fiction (e.g. Ingram Spark allows up to 4000 characters)
- **Review quotes:** For new editions of existing books you can add quotes from reviews; also useful if you have advance reviews though that's more common in traditional publishing (e.g. Ingram Spark allows up to 4000 characters)

Different platforms have slightly different length requirements and may use different subject categories.

Your Very Own Publisher's Assistant Hat

Keep good records, make sure you copy your final decisions to the file you've created for your book's metadata. This helps ensure that the information on your own website, on Goodreads, and on anywhere else you put information about your book is consistent with what readers will see when they buy it. You might also record things like your universal book links and links to your book on various seller platforms to make them easier to find and share when you promote your book.

Note: The above is a modified copy of a guide created by Jo Van Every

2. Metadata for Websites and BLOGs

If you choose to have a Website and/or BLOG to accompany and support your publication you will need to provide the metadata which is required in the page code tags – even if **THEPUBLISHING.CO.UK** creates them for you.

Each Website and/or BLOG page will require the following:

Page Title: This is the first line that will be displayed in search engine results pages (SERPS) and is extremely important to your rankings. Titles should be a short sentence (60 words max or less) incorporating important keywords which reflect the content and purpose of each page, but don't stuff the Title with them. Every page should have a unique Title tag.

Keywords: According to Google they are no longer relevant as meta tags so don't waste time including a specific list of them.

Description: The Description tag appears in search engine results below the Title tag. It must be included as it provides a brief summary of the page. Typically under 160 characters long it should include primary and secondary keywords but again, don't stuff it with them. Every page should have a unique Description tag which is written in such a way as to persuade the visitor to click on the link to your page.

Don't underestimate the value of web and blog meta tags. Research your best keywords and try to write in a persuasive manner.