

# TYPES OF PUBLISHERS

Here is a brief overview of the types of publishers and what you can expect when they say “We want to publish your book.” Above all, when any publisher offers you a contract, know what kind of publisher you are dealing with, and don’t be afraid to ask questions.

## TRADITIONAL TRADE PUBLISHERS

Traditional publishers contract with an author, ideally offering an advance against royalties. (See “Contract Questions and Answers” on page 277 for a current range of typical advances and royalties.) A few traditional publishers offer a flat fee only. Smaller publishers might offer a royalty without advance. Whether the terms are an advance against royalties or a flat fee, the author owns the copyright and his/her name is on the book. Other terms of a traditional publishing contract may vary. Trade books are marketed by publishers’ sales representatives and wholesalers to bookstores, libraries, and schools, and are reviewed in dedicated book media such as *Publishers Weekly*, *School Library Journal*, *Horn Book*, *Booklist*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and reviewed and/or synopsized in bookstore newsletters.

## MASS MARKET PUBLISHERS

Mass market publishers offer similar contracts to trade publishers, though sometimes the copyright may be in the publisher’s name or a joint copyright. Mass market books are handled by publishers’ sales representatives and wholesalers and are stocked primarily by bookstores and discount retailers, such as Target and Kmart. These books receive reviews in some of the dedicated media.

## BOOK PACKAGERS

Packagers or book developers generate story and series concepts, which they sell to traditional and mass market publishers, then find writers and illustrators to produce the work. Their contracts range from offering an advance against royalty to a flat fee. Copyright is sometimes joint, but is often in the packager’s name alone. Sometimes the author’s name is on the book; sometimes it’s not. Distribution depends on the publisher, and reviews depend on the market for the book.

## SMALL PRESSES

Some small presses publish books for young readers. Smaller publishers generally produce fewer titles and may offer a contract with advance against royalties, a royalty-only contract, or a flat fee contract. Review media occasionally cover small press books, and distribution is usually through direct mail catalogs and/or wholesalers.

## EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHERS

Educational publishers publish curriculum-related material geared for use primarily in schools. Contracts may include an advance against royalties, a royalty only, or a flat fee only. Marketing is generally accomplished through a force of sales representatives who present the material to educators (in their offices/schools and at conferences) and educational supply stores throughout the nation. These representatives often sell internationally, as well. Reviews can be found in educators’ periodicals.

## SUBSIDY PUBLISHERS

Subsidy publishers or co-op publishers (often known as vanity publishers) will offer to publish a book if the author will pay all or part of the cost. A recent *Writer’s Market* indicated the expense to range from \$1,000 to \$18,000. This type of publisher offers back a royalty, a percentage of each book sold (the amount varies from 3 percent to 40 percent). However, it is unlikely that a large number of books will be sold. The amount of marketing done by subsidy publishers varies, but will not equal that of traditional publishers. In some cases, an author may be asked to pay for promotional expenses. Subsidy publishers will usually offer to send out sample copies to the media and libraries. However, dedicated book media rarely, if ever, review these books, thus leaving the real work of marketing and distribution to the author. The SCBWI recommends that you avoid any publisher who asks you to pay for the publication of your work.

## SELF-PUBLISHING

Self-publishing requires the author to oversee all of the details of book production, from total cost to marketing and distribution. A self-published book almost never gets review media attention. If you are writing a book just to share with your children or grandchildren, a local printer may be able to help you self-publish several copies, or a desktop computer publishing program may give you the book you want. This kind of publishing is primarily for a book that will have a limited, personal audience.

## ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING

Since the information on electronic publishing is constantly and quickly changing, coverage on this area is found on our website in order to accommodate the rapid changes in the marketplace. ☺