



BOOK CONSTRUCTION **BLUEPRINT**

**Everything You Need to Know to Put
Together an Industry-Standard Book**



**Book
Design
Templates**

The Book Construction Blueprint



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Hi, and thanks for downloading this guide.

These articles on various aspects of book design are intended to provide reliable guidance to anyone taking on the construction of a book that must conform to generally-accepted practice. Here are the subjects you'll find:

An Unabridged List of the Parts of the Book

Chapters and Subheads

Elements of the Book Page

The Title Page

Book Trim Sizes

Pagination Styles

Book Covers, Dust Jackets and Casewrap Books

I hope the information in this guide helps you with your formatting tasks. Being able to publish our own books gives us unprecedented ability to reach, entertain, and inspire our readers. Not having to worry about the details of book production can make that job easier and more rewarding.

Happy publishing!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel'.

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An Unabridged List of the Parts of the Book

The history of book printing goes back to the first bibles pulled sheet by sheet off Johannes Gutenberg's presses in Mainz, German in the late fifteenth century. The first books were attempts to replicate the handwritten books of the time, which varied widely. Over the centuries publishers have gradually established conventions about the way books are constructed.

A Gutenberg Bible

Although type design is often likened to architecture, you could also argue that the construction of a book is in some way architectural. The first order of business in creating a blueprint for book construction is to identify the parts of a book and the order in which convention—the inherited wisdom of the logic of the book from all the book creators that have preceded us—dictates they should appear.



To guide you in creating your book, follow this list. Certainly no book will contain all these elements, but now you know exactly where they fit in the scheme of things.

Many publishers have been guided by the history and traditions of print publishing even as they have moved toward electronic publishing ... including the logical order of elements in a printed work. —Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition

Major Divisions of the Book

Books are generally divided into three parts: The frontmatter, the body of the book, and the backmatter. Each contains specific elements, and those elements should

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appear in a specific order. Certainly authors who know and understand these divisions may well have aesthetic or organizational motives to stray from these conventions, but usually they have a good reason to do so. Deviation for no reason does not help your book.

Keep in mind that there is no book that has all of these parts. Use this list instead to make sure you have the right content in the right category, and that elements of your book appear in the sequence in which they are expected.

Frontmatter

The pages at the beginning of a book before the body of the book. These pages are traditionally numbered with lowercase roman numerals

Half title—Also called the Bastard title, this page contains only the title of the book and is typically the first page you see when opening the cover. This page and its verso (the back, or left-hand reverse of the page) are often eliminated in an attempt to control the length of the finished book.

Frontispiece—An illustration on the verso facing the title page.

Title page—Announces the title, subtitle, author and publisher of the book. Other information that may be found on the title page can include the publisher's location, the year of publication, or descriptive text about the book, and illustrations are also common on title pages.

Copyright page—Usually the verso of the title page, this page carries the copyright notice, edition information, publication information, printing history, cataloging data, legal notices, and the book's ISBN or identification number. In addition, rows of numbers are sometimes printed at the bottom of the page to indicate the year and

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number of the printing. Credits for design, production, editing and illustration are also commonly listed on the copyright page.

Dedication—Not every book carries a dedication but, for those that do, it follows the copyright page.

Epigraph—An author may wish to include an epigraph—a quotation—near the front of the book. The epigraph may also appear facing the Table of Contents, or facing the first page of text. Epigraphs can also be used at the heads of each chapter.

Table of Contents—Also known as the Contents page, this page lists all the major divisions of the book including parts, if used, and chapters. Depending on the length of the book, a greater level of detail may be provided to help the reader navigate the book. History records that the Table of Contents was invented by Quintus Valerius Soranus before 82 bce.

List of Figures—In books with numerous figures (or illustrations) it can be helpful to include a list of all figures, their titles and the page numbers on which they occur.

List of Tables—Similar to the List of Figures above, a list of tables occurring in the book may be helpful for readers.

Foreword—Usually a short piece written by someone other than the author, the Foreword may provide a context for the main work. Remember that the Foreword is always signed, usually with the author's name, place and date.

Preface—Written by the author, the Preface often tells how the book came into being, and is often signed with the name, place and date, although this is not always the case.

Acknowledgments—The author expresses their gratitude for help in the creation of the book.

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Introduction—The author explains the purposes and the goals of the work, and may also place the work in a context, as well as spell out the organization and scope of the book.

Prologue—In a work of fiction, the Prologue sets the scene for the story and is told in the voice of a character from the book, not the author’s voice.

Second Half Title—If the frontmatter is particularly extensive, a second half title identical to the first, can be added before the beginning of the text. The page following is usually blank but may contain an illustration or an epigraph. When the book design calls for double-page chapter opening spreads, the second half title can be used to force the chapter opening to a left-hand page.

Body

This is the main portion or body of the book.

Part Opening page—Both fiction and nonfiction books are often divided into parts when there is a large conceptual, historical or structural logic that suggests these divisions, and the belief that reader will benefit from a meta-organization.

Chapter Opening page—Most fiction and almost all nonfiction books are divided into chapters for the sake of organizing the material to be covered. Chapter Opening pages and Part Opening pages may be a single right-hand page, or in some cases a spread consisting of a left- and right-hand page, (or a verso and a recto). Statistically, if a spread opening is used, half the chapters (or parts) will generate a blank right hand page, and the author or publisher will have to work with the book designer to decide how to resolve these right-hand page blanks.

Epilogue—An ending piece, either in the voice of the author or as a continuation of the main narrative, meant to bring closure of some kind to the work.

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Afterword—May be written by the author or another, and might deal with the origin of the book or seek to situate the work in some wider context.

Conclusion—A brief summary of the salient arguments of the main work that attempts to give a sense of completeness to the work.

Backmatter

At the end of the book various citations, notes and ancillary material are gathered together into the backmatter.

Postscript—From the latin post scriptum, “after the writing” meaning anything added as an addition or afterthought to the main body of the work.

Appendix or Addendum—A supplement of some kind to the main work. An Appendix might include source documents cited in the text, material that arose too late to be included in the main body of the work, or any of a number of other insertions.

Chronology—In some works, particularly histories, a chronological list of events may be helpful for the reader. It may appear as an appendix, but can also appear in the frontmatter if the author considers it critical to the reader’s understanding of the work.

Notes—Endnotes come after any appendices, and before the bibliography or list of references. The notes are typically divided by chapter to make them easier to locate.

Glossary—An alphabetical list of terms and their definitions, usually restricted to some specific area.

Bibliography—A systematic list of books or other works such as articles in periodicals, usually used as a list of works that have been cited in the main body of the work, although not necessarily limited to those works.

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List of Contributors—A work by many authors may demand a list of contributors, which should appear immediately before the index, although it is sometimes moved to the front matter. Contributor’s names should be listed alphabetically by last name, but appear in the form “First Name Last Name.” Information about each contributor may include brief biographical notes, academic affiliations, or previous publications.

Index—An alphabetical listing of people, places, events, concepts, and works cited along with page numbers indicating where they can be found within the main body of the work.

Errata—A notice from the publisher of an error in the book, usually caused in the production process.

Colophon—A brief notice at the end of a book usually describing the text typography, identifying the typeface by name along with a brief history. It may also credit the book’s designer and other persons or companies involved in its physical production.

Chapters and Subheads

Chapter Titles

Most nonfiction books are at least divided into chapters. Chapter lengths vary widely, and the goal of trying to keep chapters the same length may be elusive. The chapter is a convenient method of dividing material by subject matter, by chronology, or by any other means the author uses to construct his book.

Chapter Format

Both right-hand (recto) and left-hand (verso) opening pages are common, and double page (double truck) openings in which both pages are used as a spread, are also used. Normally the chapter opening page has a drop folio and no running head.

Logically the first chapter in a book would start on a recto. The chapter opening page typically contains the chapter number and the chapter title. If they are used, a chapter subtitle or an epigraph may also appear, although it is important for all chapters to remain consistent.

Use of Subheads

The next logical way to divide the subject matter of a book is to subdivide the chapters, and this is accomplished with subheads. Subheads serve to guide the reader through the text, and to help cast light on the author's way of thinking about her subject. Try to avoid chapters with only one subhead, and remember to keep subheads, like chapter titles, consistent throughout the book.

If more than one level of subheads is needed, each level will follow the guidelines for the initial level of subheads. For instance, try to avoid—unless necessitated by the material—having subsections with only one second-level subhead.

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Keep in mind that chapters do not need to have the same number of subheads, or the same levels of subheads, depending on the needs of the specific chapter's material.

Style of Subheads

Subheads provide another way for the designer to help the author's communication with the reader. Typographically subheads are distinct from the body text and appear on their own line, separate from the text. Each level of subheads receives a different typographic treatment to both signify the level of importance within the scope of the work and to help the reader differentiate the sections set apart by the author.

Occasionally the lowest level subhead is run in at the beginning of a paragraph. In this case the typography will distinguish the subhead from the text by either italics, bold face, or both. The run in subhead is capitalized sentence style and punctuated as a sentence, with a period at the end.

Scientific and Technical Books

It is often the case that in scientific and technical works authors or publishers prefer to divide chapters with numbered sections rather than levels of subheads. Perhaps because of the technical nature of the content in these books, it seems easier for scientists and technical writers to cross-reference using numbers rather than textual names.

Numbered chapter sections start over at 1 with each new chapter. Subsections are numbered with the appropriate section number as well as their own subsection number. Each section or subsection number contains the complete "map" of the sections and subsections to which it belongs. Periods, hyphens or colons are used to separate the numbers.

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Other systems can also be used, as long as the system employed is consistent throughout the work. These same systems are used for reference to illustrations, charts, tables, and other non-text elements.

Good Form

Although you may be tempted, it's considered bad form to refer directly to the subhead as the text begins. The subhead and the text should each stand on their own without reference to each other.

Text Breaks

There are occasions when the author would like to have a break in the flow of the text, but doesn't need to announce a new subject area, and has no need for a subhead. In these cases the book designer, with a type ornament and additional space between paragraphs, can create a text break. Using a row of asterisks is also common, and in some books just an extra line space is used. This method is unreliable, however, because it is very easy for a reader to miss the extra space if it falls at the bottom of a page.

Typographic Interest

Chapter opening pages and the treatment of text and subheads are the chief way the book designer influences the look and style of the book. Choices of typeface, spacing, decorative or illustrative material like drawing or photographs, type ornaments, and the layout of the chapter-opening pages themselves provide a counterpoint to the main text pages. Likewise, typographic styling of subheads helps provide color and rhythm to the page, while making the author's communication more effective.

Elements of the Book Page

Running heads

Running heads play an important role in orienting the reader within the book. Any material that takes up more than one page should have a running head. In books with long chapter titles it's common to shorten the title to fit on one line along with a page number.

In some cases running heads reflect the content of specific pages by using subheads as copy or another editorial scheme.

If subheads are used as running heads, some pages will have more than one subhead on them. In this case, use the last subhead on the page as the running head if the page is a recto (right-hand page) and use the first subhead on the page if the page is a verso (left-hand page).

Running heads are often omitted in novels, unless they are used specifically as a design element. They can be eliminated if they serve no particular purpose. When they are placed at the bottom of the page, they are called running feet.

When Not to Use Running Heads

Running heads are never used on display pages like the title, half title, chapter and part opening pages. They are not used on matter opening pages, like the first page of the Preface or the first page of the Contents.

Running heads are also omitted on pages that have only an illustration or a table on them. On the other hand, if there is any text at all, even one line, then running heads should appear.

If an entire section or run of pages contains only illustrations, running heads can be used to help orient the reader.

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Front Matter and Back Matter

Like all other parts of the book, any particular element that is longer than one page should have running heads if they are used in the main body of the text. Ordinarily running heads in front matter use identical copy for both verso and recto pages.

Running heads in the backmatter, however, are quite the opposite. For instance, in a book with several Appendices, use the Appendix number as the verso running head and the Appendix title on the recto. Likewise if the book has more than one Index, use the Index name in the running heads.

In Notes sections, use the method employed in the text to decide how to organize the running heads. If notes are organized by page number, then the relevant page numbers should be cited in the running heads. On the other hand, if the notes are organized by chapter, use the chapter designations in the running heads.

In all cases, running heads act as guideposts for the reader, and the reader's ability to orient himself to part, chapter, page and topic are paramount in the use of running heads.

Different Types of Running Heads

There are many ways to use running heads, depending on the type of book and the organization of the material within it. For instance, any of these possibilities are acceptable:

Verso = Part Name. Recto = Chapter Name.

Verso = Chapter Name. Recto = Chapter Subtitle

Verso = Chapter Name. Recto = Page Subhead.

Verso = Page Subhead. Recto = Page Subhead.

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Verso = Author Name. Recto = Chapter Name.

Page Numbers

Page numbers, an intrinsic element of the book page, are covered extensively in the section on Pagination.

Notes

Notes become a page element when footnotes are used, either alone or in conjunction with endnotes. Endnotes appear at either the end of the chapter or in a Notes section in the back matter.

When footnotes are used they are placed from the bottom of the text block and allowed to expand upward as necessary. Notes are sometimes separated from the main text block by a short rule at the left margin, but are often separated only by extra space inserted between the note and the last line of text.

Very long footnotes may need to run over to the bottom of the succeeding page(s) as necessary, but every page in the work must have some text.

Typically footnotes are set in a smaller type size than the main text block. Although there are various schemes for identifying and sequencing notes, if there is only one footnote on a page, only an asterisk is used to annotate the text and identify the footnote.

The Title Page

Title page—Announces the title, subtitle, author and publisher of the book. Other information that may be found on the title page can include the publisher's location, the year of publication, or descriptive text about the book. Illustrations are also common on title pages.

But title pages are more than a dry listing of facts. They are commonly the most decorative display page in a book, and are often used as the only location really suitable for expressions of design and graphics, since the rest of the book is devoted to transmitting the thoughts of the author.

Some consider the title page one of the least important parts of the frontmatter. This may be because the first printed books did not have title pages. Typically, the text would begin on the first page, and books were identified by their first words, rather than by a separate title.

Here are elements that are found on the title page:

- Full title of the book
- Subtitle, if any
- Author's name
- Editor's name, in the case of anthologies or compilations
- Translator's name, for works originally in a different language
- Illustrator or photographer's name, for illustrated books
- Number of the edition, in the case of revised editions
- Series notice, if part of a series
- Name and location of publisher

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- Year of publication

It's Your Title Page—Make the Most of It

When it comes to title pages, you have a lot of leeway for creativity. If you use the same type fonts that are used for the title on the cover, and the text of the interior, you will help integrate the various parts of the book, making for a more harmonious reading experience.

But if you've got illustrations, artwork for your cover, or an idea of a bold typographic design, this is the place to use it.

As long as your title page conveys basic and necessary information, it can be an opportunity to set a visual tone for your book. Be creative.

Book Trim Sizes

As soon as you get serious about self-publishing a book, you are confronted with the choice of what size your book ought to be.

For instance, if you want to get a price on how much a book will cost to print, the first thing you need to know is the size.

Some pricing on digital books is in a range of sizes rather than having a different price for every different size, but that only helps a bit.

If you plan to print offset, you'll need to specify the exact size in your request for an estimate. So one way or the other, it's good to figure out near the beginning of your planning.

That's not to say you can't change your mind along the way. You won't be locked into anything at this stage, so as long as you're close to what the final size will be, the figures you'll be working with should also be close enough until later in your production process.

Traditional Trim Sizes

Book sizes are known in printing terms as trim sizes since that's where the book is trimmed at the last stage of production.

There are very few "rules" about book sizes, but there are a number of conventions that are good to know about. (All sizes quoted in this article are width x height.)

- The only real rule is that **mass market** books have to be 4-1/4" x 7". These books are often sold through racks at point of purchase sites in supermarkets, airports, drugstores and the like and their size is an essential part of the way they are distributed. These are not usually self-published books, so you probably won't have to worry about considering this size.

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- **Trade paperbacks**, a pretty loose category of books, are often in the 5-1/2" x 8-1/2" to 6" x 9" range. This page proportion—for instance in the 6" x 9" size—of 2:3 has long been considered an ideal for a book page, and you can create good looking books at different sizes but in the same page proportions. Most self-published books are trade paperbacks.
- **Manuals and workbooks** are larger and, depending on the printing equipment being used to produce them, are in the 8" x 10" to 8-1/2" x 11" range. This size is also good for directories and instructional books with lots of graphics or detailed drawings to follow. It lends itself to a 2-column text layout which is an efficient use of space.
- **Novels** appear in lots of different sizes but for a shorter book I prefer smaller sizes that seem to be more intimate a reading experience. 5-1/2" x 8-1/2" is probably the most popular size, but 5-1/4" x 8" is also a charming size for these books. Memoirs are similar sizes. Longer novels move to 6" x 9" to avoid becoming overly bulky at smaller sizes.
- **Short story** collections or collections of essays are generally the same size as novels and memoirs
- General **nonfiction** titles seem to come out in 6" x 9" making this size arguably the most popular of all. It's also the most widely used size for hardcover books. When more room is needed on the page, for instance for sidebars or pull quotes, 7" x 10" is a frequent solution.
- **Photography or art books** don't conform to any particular size. They can be very small, or big and heavy "coffee-table" books. Many artists and photographers prefer books that are square or nearly square. This allows both horizontal and vertical pictures to have about the same amount of white space on the page.

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Production Decisions and Trim Sizes

The decision you make on how to print your book will also affect your choice of trim sizes. Generally speaking, due to the highly automated nature of digital printing (used in print on demand distribution) you will have fewer choices of sizes.

For instance, here is the entire list of trim sizes offered by Lightning Source, the largest supplier of print on demand production:

- 5 x 8" (203 x 127mm)
- 5.06 x 7.81" (198 x 129mm)
- 5.25 x 8" (203 x 133mm)
- 5.5 x 8.5" (216 x 140mm)
- 5.83 x 8.27" (210 x 148 mm) A5
- 6 x 9" (229 x 152mm)
- 6.14 x 9.21" (234 x 156mm)
- 6.69 x 9.61" (244 x 170 mm)
- 7 x 10" (254 x 178 mm)
- 7.44 x 9.69" (246 x 189mm)
- 7.5 x 9.25" (235 x 191mm)
- 8 x 10" (254 X 203mm)
- 8.25 x 11" (280 x 210mm)
- 8.268 x 11.693" (297 x 210 mm) (This is the A4 size)
- 8.5 x 11" (280 X 216mm)

CreateSpace, the Amazon print on demand supplier, has a similar list, but offers nothing over 8.25":

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5 x 8 inches

5.06 x 7.81 inches

5.25 x 8 inches

5.5 x 8.5 inches

6 x 9 inches

6.14 x 9.21 inches

6.69 x 9.61 inches

7 x 10 inches

7.44 x 9.69 inches

7.5 x 9.25 inches

8 x 10 inches

8.25 x 6 inches

8.25 x 8.25 inches

You'll notice these sizes are identical to the Lightning Source sizes. Many are considered "industry standards."

At more specialized digital printers, the choices may be even more limited. For instance, at the color book specialist Blurb.com, you have a choice of only 5 sizes for color books:

7" x 7"

8" x 10"

10" x 8"

13" x 11"

12" x 12"

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These are all larger sizes, intended for full-color books.

Other considerations may further limit your choices. I often recommend a creme-colored paper for novels and memoirs, and even some self-help and nonfiction books. I find it easier to read for long stretches and with less glare than the pure white papers.

However, both Lightning Source and CreateSpace limit which trim sizes are available with creme paper. For instance, at CreateSpace only the 5.25" x 8", 5.5" x 8.5", or 6" x 9" are available, all other sizes print with white paper only.

Offset Printing

Offset printing has few of the restrictions imposed by the digital book printers. Although it's handy to stay with the traditional sizes, you can print your book any size you like. Some sizes may make more efficient use of paper and consequently be more economical, but it's possible to do almost any size. I have a book on press right now that's 9.5" x 11.5", an impossibility for digital printers at the moment.

Offset book printers will also make the full range of paper stocks from many paper mills available to just about any size book. Printing papers vary widely and you can choose different weights, colors, textures and finishes if you like. There really are very few limitations other than your creativity and your budget.

Picking a Size for Your Book

Most of the books I see from self-publishers are either 5-1/2" x 8-1/2" or 6" x 9." They are good, readable sizes that will work for many types of books. If this is your first book and it falls into the categories I've listed above, there's a good chance one of these two sizes will work for you.

Pick a different size if:

- your book is clearly in a different category, like a workbook

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- if you have a functional reason you need a larger or smaller book, like for a gift book or an atlas
- if you want to stand out in your niche by having a different size than everyone else.

However, be wary of larger sizes, over 6" x 9" or 7" x 10". Why? Many book shelves—including the shelves in some bookstores—won't easily handle books bigger than that. Unless you're producing an art book, you probably don't want to end up with a book that won't fit anyone's bookshelves.

Takeaway: Consider the genre of your book, the printing method you plan to use, and your paper choices before deciding on a trim size for your book. If possible, pick an "industry standard" size.

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Pagination Styles

In book design we have to decide which style of pagination to choose. Here you'll get information on both so you can make an informed choice.

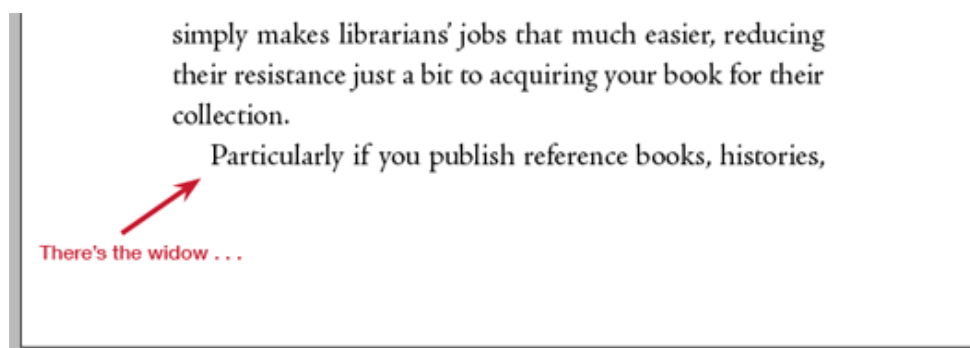
People often seem to divide themselves neatly into two camps: shirts vs skins, innies vs outies, grow it out vs shave it off. And so it is in book design. There's one decision every book designer has to make on most every book of prose they work on: squared-off pages vs no widow or orphan lines.

Okay, you need to know what "squared-off pages" and "widows" and "orphans" mean when talking about book pages, so let's look at those first.

Pity the Widows and Orphans

Text consists of letters built into words, which are strung into sentences sequenced into paragraphs. There are probably about 90 words in a typical paragraph. That means in a manuscript of 75,000 words you will be dealing with over 800 paragraphs and 5,000 line endings.

Because there are so many paragraphs, there's a kind of random distribution that happens in books. If you get to the bottom of a page and there's only room for one more line, and that line is the first line of a paragraph, you will have an odd look at the bottom of that page. This is a **widow**:

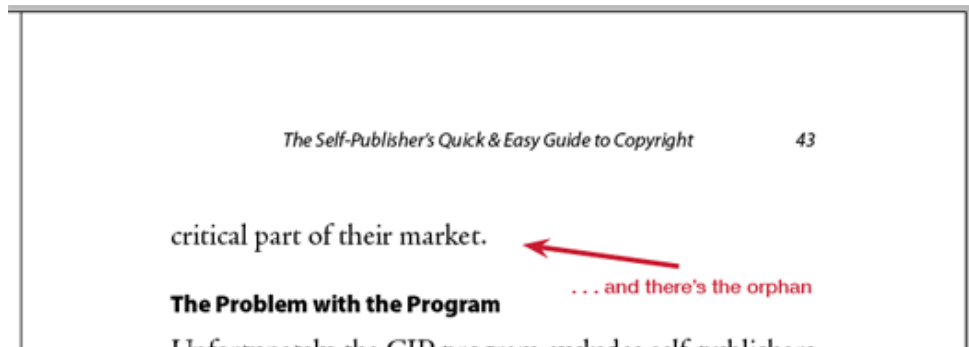


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On other pages, just the last line of a paragraph may bump to a new page, leaving a stub of a line at the top. That's an **orphan**:



Now some people hate these widows and orphans, and they will do anything to get rid of them. And since they don't look very neat and tidy, you might think that's a good idea.

But wait! There's another entire group of people who, although they don't like widows and orphans either, prefer them to the alternative.

What happens when you eliminate the widows and orphans? You lose your **squared-up pages.**

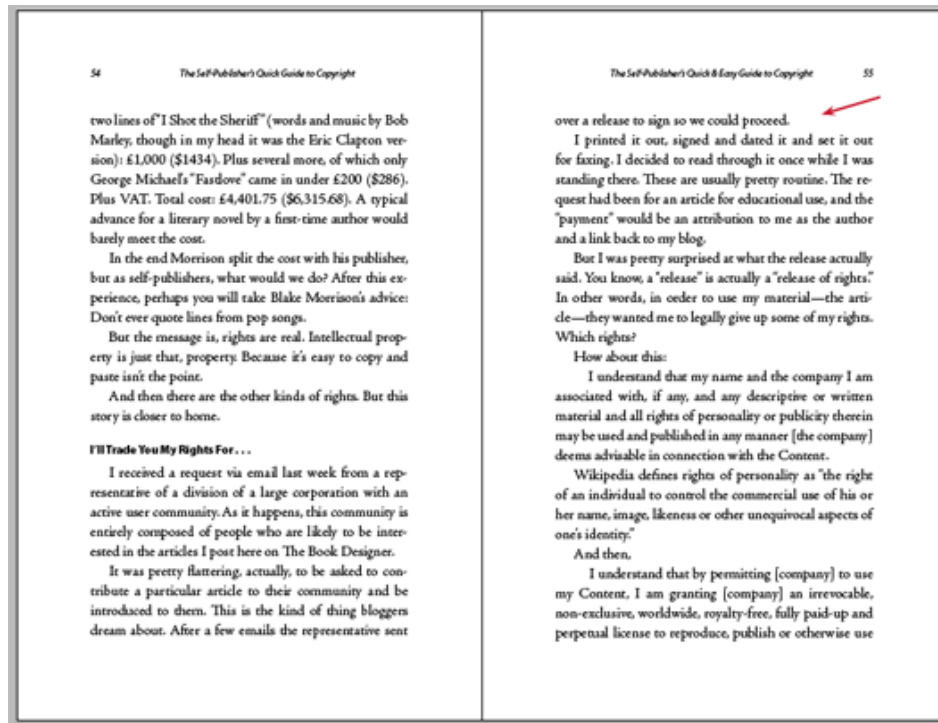
Let's take a look.

To Square or Not to Square: That is the Question

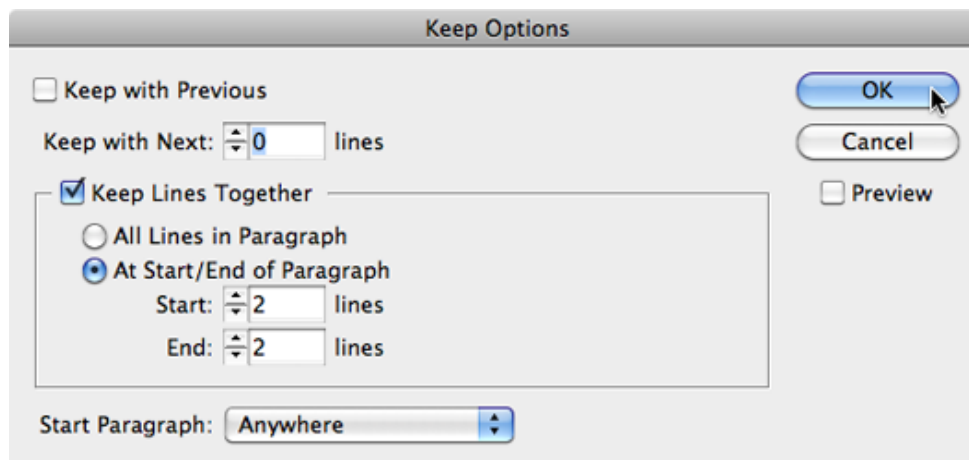
Here is a spread from a book. Notice that the widows and orphans have not been changed, and the right-hand page has an orphan line at the top.

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You can change this globally throughout the book very easily. In Adobe InDesign we use the Keep dialog on the Paragraph menu. This allows us a lot of control over what you might call the infrastructure of the paragraph and how it behaves on the page:

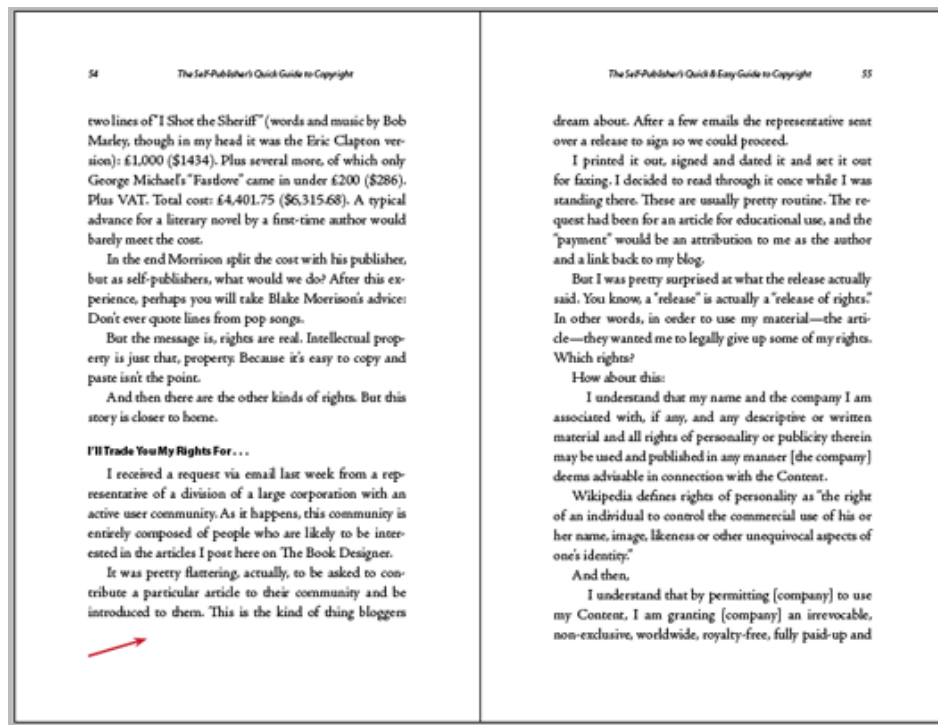


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You can see here I've instructed InDesign to keep at least 2 lines together at the beginning and end of paragraphs. This will eliminate all widows and orphans. So why isn't everyone happy?

Here's the resulting spread:



You'll see that there is no longer an orphan line at the top of the right-hand page. But the line that moved there to keep the orphan company had to come from somewhere, and it left a space at the bottom of the left-hand page. We now have a different number of lines on these two pages, and they are no longer "squared off" at the bottom.

Which One Will You Choose?

For many years I preferred this second method of pagination for the books I worked on, unless a client specifically asked for squared-off pages. I don't like the way widows

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and orphans look, and the way they make spreads look untidy. Book designers don't like untidy books.

Recently I've become more flexible and now do many books with squared-off pages. I find the disturbance of the occasional widow or orphan less bothersome than that missing line at the end of the page.

When it comes time to do the layout and pagination of your book, you or your book designer or the personnel at the company you've hired to typeset your book will have to make this decision. And you'll be ready to decide which part of the world of book design you belong to: with the widows and orphans and squared-off pages, or banning widows and orphans altogether.

As a self-publisher, it's one more thing you get to decide. Which one will it be?

Note: After this article was posted I received an email from Michael N. Marcus, in which he said:

Years ago (maybe on my college newspaper) I learned that an orphan was the lonely entity at the bottom of a page, and the widow is at the top. To remember this, I visualize the "widow's walk" at the TOP of old seaside homes.

I found this fascinating because when I learned this nomenclature long ago it was the exact opposite. It was the widow at the bottom of the page (always a full line) that had been "abandoned" and left behind, while the orphan (always a short line, since it's the end of the paragraph) that had been left without the rest of its "relatives" and forlorn at the top of the page.

Wikipedia has this to say:

In typesetting, widows and orphans are words or short lines at the beginning or end of a paragraph, which are left dangling at the top or bottom of a column, separated from the

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rest of the paragraph. There is some disagreement about the definitions of widow and orphan; what one source calls a widow the other calls an orphan.

However, [Chicago Manual of Style](#) prefers Michael's usage, and readers should be aware of that.

Book Covers, Dust Jackets and Casewrap Books

All books by their nature have a cover. We categorize book covers into hardcover and softcover, but they are better referred to as casebound and paperbound. A trade hardcover book is a bookblock (the interior pages taken together) glued, or sewn and glued, into a case, constructed of laminated cardboard and covered with cloth or paper.

Casebound books are sometimes issued with paper covers, or case wraps that are printed to identify them and also to act as advertisements for the book, establishing a mood or carrying commercial messages and endorsement designed to appeal to potential buyers. These books are sometimes known as case-wrapped.

Cloth cases are frequently stamped with the title, author's name and a publisher's name or logo. Paper cases are often printed and laminated before being wrapped on the cardboard and consequently don't need dust jackets. Special impregnated cloth can also be used for this purpose, for instance on textbooks.

A feature unique to casebound books is the use of endsheets, a four-page sheet of paper at both the front and back that helps connect the bookblock to the case, while covering the edges of the case wrap for a neater and more durable book.

Paper covers

Printed heavy weight paper is used for the majority of softcover books. The bookblock is glued into the printed and scored case, then the entire book is trimmed on three sides to the final trim size. A book bound in this way is said to be perfect bound.

A variety of finishes can be used on the paper covers before binding, including:

- foil stamping

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- embossing (creating raised areas)
- debossing (creating sunken areas)
- varnishing
- laminating with either liquid quick-setting plastic laminates, or with film that is then affixed to the cover with heat and pressure. Film lamination affords the best protection, but may cause the cover to warp in conditions of changing humidity.

Paper used for softcover books is usually uncoated on the inside to create a more porous surface for the glue to adhere to.

Content and Use of Jackets and Covers

The three main sections of a book cover are the front, the spine, and the back cover. Copy that occurs on the back cover of a softcover book would generally appear on the front and back flaps of the dust jacket of a casebound book. The other major difference between dust jackets and the covers of softcover books is that the cover is intrinsic to the book and cannot be easily separated from the bookblock.

The back cover of a paperback or a dust jacket, or the back cover of a case-wrap book needs to display its Bookland EAN Barcode, which is covered in a separate article. The barcode is typically printed in black against a white or very light background, since it needs to be scannable.

The most common uses of the back cover involve:

- Excerpts from the book
- Promotional copy
- Testimonials to the book's quality (blurbs)
- Author photo and biographical paragraph

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- Category and human-readable price
- Publisher's logo and/or brief contact information

Spine

The spine of dust jackets, paper covers, or case-wraps is usually printed with the author's last name, the title of the book, and a way to identify the publisher. This might take the form of the publisher's initials, a shortened version of the publisher's name, or the use of the publisher's logo. The subtitle of the book is usually omitted from the spine.

Front Cover

In non fiction books, the cover or front of the dust jacket is an extension of the publisher's marketing plan for the book. The graphic approach, colors, and style will be used to position the book within its niche or category. The title, subtitle, author's name, exceptional blurbs, and other inducements to buy are often featured on the cover. Serious non fiction books are typically more restrained, but in the world of design there are few rules.

This is most clear when examining the covers of novels and short story collections. Besides genre-identifying features, these covers attempt to convey some quality drawn from the narrative, often in subtle and surprising ways. Here rules are often broken with intent, and there is a whole class of novels that have been issued without any type on the front covers at all.

Credits for artwork, or for author photos, is printed on the back cover of paperback books, and on the inside back flap of dust jackets, although this credit may also appear on the copyright page of a softcover book since the cover is not typically separated from the rest of the book. If a credit is needed for artwork printed on the case of a hardcover book, it too can be printed on the copyright page.

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Putting it All Together

This completes our tour through the various parts of the typical trade book, and the logic behind the way they are built. Armed with this information as a reference, you can be assured of constructing a book that conforms to standard practice, and for that reason can stand the test of time.

