# Write an eBook

Many books have been written about how to write books so ...

## What's different about this one?

The main difference is that I'm a sixty year old technical writer with - you probably guessed it - experience of writing and publishing. *A great deal of experience.* The following booklet has been compiled from notes that I've made over several years.

## Can I make lots of money from eBooks?

Every month I take around three hundred English pounds from eBook sales. At current exchange rates (early 2013) that's about 480 US dollars per month. OK, it's only pocket money but that money is coming in, now, for no work at all. The books are already written and the selling process is automated. Books don't represent my only (or even main) source of income but they make a useful contribution.

## What sort of book sells?

My eBooks are basically "How To" manuals like this one. They tell you how to accomplish something. I have tried to sell novels and other types of book but most people are looking for information and, if they think it will help them to achieve a personal goal, they are willing to pay for it. So the formula is simple: write an informative book that tells someone how to do something. Make it easy to understand and set the price to match the need. That's not to say that you shouldn't try to sell novels, poetry or whatever takes your fancy. It simply didn't work for me. However, look how many publishers told multi-millionairess Joanne Rowling that "Harry Potter" would never sell. I'm not going to tell you anything of the sort.
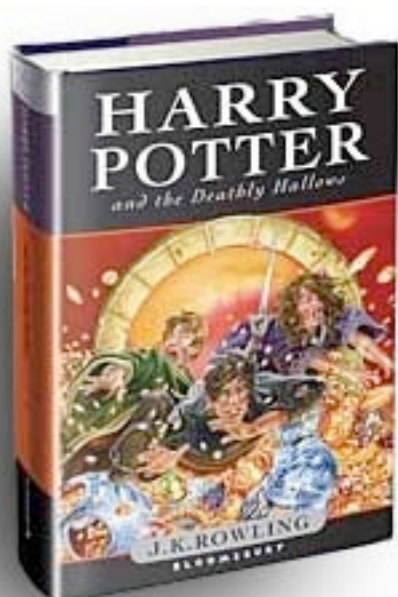
If you have an idea for a book then go for it! The beauty of eBooks is that the production cost is zero. You have the computer and word processor already. You can save it in PDF format (or whatever you prefer) and offer it for download. The whole thing has cost nothing but your personal time and effort.

## The Cover
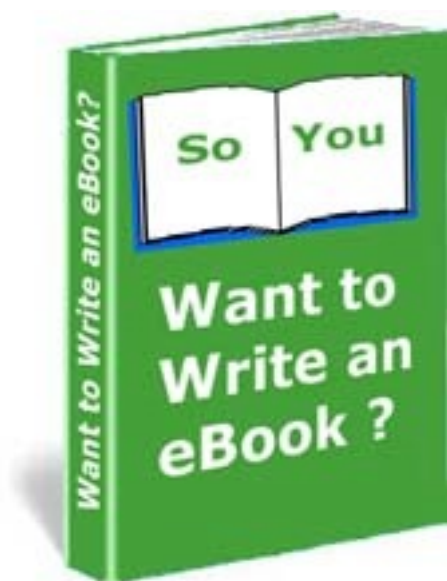
The picture of your "book" is an important factor in clinching the sale. Originally I used flat, two-dimensional images for my eBooks. The day I changed them to 3D images my sales increased by thirty percent. That was an *immediate* increase! That's when I realized how important the cover picture is. Even though the buyer knows that all he's getting is a file to download, the three dimensional image of a book makes it seem like a real, tangible object. Subconsciously, he feels more comfortable. So make it look real, add a shadow, ensure the title is legible and choose the colours carefully.

Many newspapers use "seriph" fonts, such as "Times, which have little "feet". They make it easier to follow a line of text when the point size is small and the page is full of text.

Seriph fonts work well for narrow column text but are less appropriate for books with single-column pages where space is not at a premium. In a book they are best avoided.

## The Colours

There's an entire (free) eBook called *"Colour Psychology For E-Book Cover Design" - search for and download it -* and I recommend you read it at your leisure. In fact it applies, not only to cover design (important for selling) but to the contents as well (important for reader satisfaction). In a nutshell, blue is a calming colour and red is a danger signal. I don't know how well this works for someone who is colour blind but let's assume that it seems to work with the majority of people. So blue shades are more likely to encourage people to stay (and maybe buy) and red shades make them want to leave. Choose carefully, and I would advise against using a lot of colours, either on the cover or in the book.

## Typefaces

Typefaces are often called "Fonts".

In an eBook it's better to use a "sans seriph" font, such as Verdana, Arial or Helvetica. It looks more professional and the "less fussy style" is easier on the eye.

It's generally not a good idea to use a handwriting "script" style, except for special effect!

A standard font such as "Helvetica" is less tiring to read and allows you to hold the attention of your reader much longer.

## White space

So called "white space" is space on a page which is free from text. It makes the text look less daunting so your reader is less likely to stop reading because it simply looks like too much hard work. You can achieve white space by shortening your lines to leave a generous margin on one or both sides of the page.

You can also make white space by breaking up your text into separate paragraphs with one or more "line feeds" between them.

White space is also increased by adding an image.

## Images and                                    placement

Budding writers place an image in flow the text on eyes must "hop" order to read the

often think it's a bright idea to the centre of the page and to both sides of it, so that your repeatedly over the image in text.

You can see, from the text quite

this example, that it makes tedious to read!

It is far better to place the image at the extreme left or right of the text which refers to it (or is relevant to it).

Too much text can leave your reader exhausted. Images can help to liven up your page. However, if you insert too many images they can distract the reader from the point you are trying to make. It's a matter of balance.

## Copyright

Never use images or text unless you are certain that they are not subject to copyright or that the copyright holder has no objection. Doing so can land you in court. There are obvious exceptions, of course. If you use your own photo of a book cover and extol its virtues, telling your readers why they should buy it, then the book author is hardly likely to object.
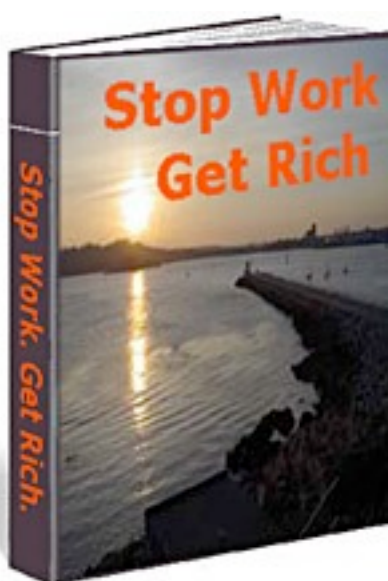
## The Lazy Man's Guide to Making Big Money

http://www.The-Cool-Book-shop.co.uk/money.htm

You'll find this and other useful eBooks at The Cool Book Shop.

## Additional Notes

Writing an eBook can take many hours and involve a lot of research and work. Most people don't realise this and I still get the occasional person asking me how I have the audacity to charge, say, £7.95 for a computer file that they have to print out on their own paper. My response is usually that I'll be happy to supply a printed, bound copy for only £19.95 plus postage!

I don't think that writing is actually "hard" but you have to realise that it will take time to find out all the facts, collate them in some sort of order, then type them, format the text and add images. If your English is not impeccable, you'd also be wise to get someone to proof-read it for you. Most people will forgive the occasional typo but at least 10% of the population will get really annoyed if there are obvious mistakes.

I would guess at spending about an hour creating each page, although I've had plenty of practice so that might be too conservative. You don't have to do the book all in one go! Just take it a page at a time. Send the first attempt to your friends to get some feedback and suggestions for additional material. It's amazing what you can forget to write about, which others will spot immediately.

However, the nice thing about a Word Processor or "DTP" software is that it's fairly easy to swap things around, delete text, and add extra pages in the middle when necessary.

Some "experts" tell you to do an "outline" first. Basically, that involves deciding on the chapter headings and sub-headings before you type a word. I'm afraid I've never been that well organised. My books tend to be "organic" and evolve in a rather piecemeal fashion. My best-selling eBook initially went on sale with 60 pages and is now up to 110 pages and £1 dearer. I offer free updates so my customers never feel "ripped off" because they will eventually get the complete book - or as complete as it will ever be; but to begin with they'll at least get the basic information in the cheaper, early edition.

Think logically about what you are trying to describe in the book. Sit back and consider: "if I were trying to do this myself from scratch, what would I need to do or buy first? Then what would I do? What precautions must I take? Where can I buy these things cheaply? What's my shopping list? What pitfalls to look out for? What will it cost? What useful hints and tips are going to save time and money? Are special tools required and, if so, can they be made cheaply or can an alternative be sourced? What mistakes do people make that I can warn about right now? Where else can people get help with this topic? (Forums, web sites, books).

Do I really want people to email me with questions about this? If so, do I want to offer paid consultancy or free? Do I just want feedback?

How can I make MORE money off the back of this book? (For example, selling items that are mentioned in the book - tools, software, gifts, materials or pointing them to a company that sells them, who will give you a percentage).

I also encourage feedback from readers, which lets me improve my books continually.
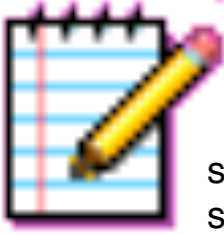
Copyright notice: be sure to include one. Ask people who got an outdated pirate copy to buy the latest version. If the eBook will NEVER be sold on Amazon or whatever then STATE THIS so people know they got a pirate copy. The PDF file should be locked against copying and altering but printing should be allowed. State whether resale rights are included.

Since there is PDF conversion software for MS WORD using Windows, you might be well advised to use that. (Unless you can afford to buy the full Acrobat package - but it's really overkill and tedious to use). If you use an Apple Mac then the choice is much wider.

As for images, my advice is to set the image resolution at 72dpi and the compression at JPEG level 3 (fairly high compression to get small file size). This looks fine on-screen and still gives an acceptable printout. Also keep the image size small. It's rare that you need an image to be greater than 10cm wide, unless you have a lot of detail to show, so keep them small. A 1 cm reduction all round has quite a drastic effect on the image area and file size, while leaving the image looking presentable. To manipulate images, I use Adobe PhotoShop and Macromedia Fireworks (both available for Mac and for Windows). I also use Graphic Converter. The first two are rather expensive. You need something that lets you size and crop according to actual image size (cm) and resolution (dpi). Many software applications can't do this and many don't let you save with JPEG compression at a specific level. You really need these features.

Do try to put at least one small image on each page and leave plenty of "white space". Aim for about 12 to 15 words per line with a generous margin. Split the text into small paragraphs, with space between. It makes the page look much less daunting, more interesting and, of course, increases the number of pages without increasing the file size significantly!

You should keep it simple. Don't be tempted to use more than 3 fonts in the entire book. That's the mark of an amateur and it can increase the file size quite significantly.

DON'T use a background colour! Remember that people may want to print it out. If you use a background colour they won't be happy about replacing an ink cartridge every ten pages. Likewise, don't use a border colour. A thin line is OK but solid colour can look quite horrible on some monitors and eats up ink when printing. Another reason for keeping pictures small.

Try to limit copied material to one or two paragraphs or rewrite it in a different way. You don't want to fall foul of copyright laws. If you get information from sources such as books and magazines, quote these at the end of the book together with subscription or ordering details. That way the copyright holders won't complain that you stole their material. Copying images without permission is really asking for trouble. Get written permission or take your own photos.

Include an Appendix listing additional sources of information. Make all web site URLs into clickable links (some PDF software does this automatically). Be sure to include plenty of links to your own web site(s) and list any other eBooks that you offer, with their cover pictures.
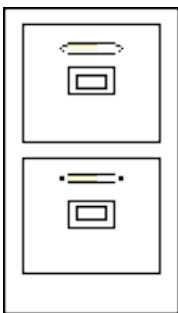
 As you are writing the book and collecting information and pictures, make FREQUENT BACKUPS! Don't wait till it's finished. There's NOTHING more frustrating than to write 6 chapters then lose the lot because your Hard Drive got wiped. These copies will also serve as positive proof that you are the copyright holder. Include the date in the title.

*"Would you say it's better to have more than one e-book under your belt before trying to market your first one? I'm just thinking that if I wrote one and got a lot of interest then it would probably make sense to have another one ready to sell immediately? Assuming I would get a lot of interest, always the optimist!"*

Sure it's better to have more than one eBook - or four - or six.

Just keep on procrastinating!  (I'm joking.)

The problem is that, while you are thinking about writing the second or the third, you aren't making money on the first and you'll get disheartened. Whereas, if you are making £50 a week on the first, you'll be thinking: "Wow! £50 a week for one - I'd better get typing another so I can make £100 a week".

Don't delay. You could be typing 100 words a night for your first e-book. It really doesn't take much work if you do a bit each day.

You can start selling it as soon as it's "good enough". That's what I do. I offer free updates as I improve it. This way, my customers write and say: "Hey, that

was pretty good but you missed out this and this." So I know what to type next. And I have an excuse to mailshot all my customers to say "You'll be delighted to know that there's a free update   available ... and you might also be interested in buying..".

Never miss a chance to sell!

People buy eBooks even on Christmas Day.

## Scams

Last year I had a panic. A guy paid for SIX eBooks in one go - that "set the alarm bells ringing". Worse, I realised he was in South America and using a credit card belonging to a woman in Miami AND his "yahoo" address was in someone else's name. Some of the books he'd ordered were, I thought, useless to him (about UK satellite TV).

I tried to block the downloads but too late! He'd placed two more orders, each for three eBooks, and downloaded the lot.

OK, the 12 eBooks cost me zilch but it was the principle. This was surely a stolen credit card number.

So, in a bit of a huff, I emailed him to say I'd reported the use of a stolen credit card to the police in Miami. (As it happened I hadn't 'cos I couldn't get their email address - waiting for a reply from their "webmaster").

Anyway, the guy replied straight away, assuring me that he was legitimate.

Turns out he was! He's a damn MONK living in S. America and paying by credit card held by the monastery "treasurer" in Miami.

http://www.vozcatolica.org/42/monk.htm

(Sorry but this 2012 link to his site no longer works - 2017).

The satellite TV books were for a monastery in Spain (where they can receive SKY channels). The "organic gardening" book was for himself because he's interested. The "make money" book was also for him.

I'm still gobsmacked. However, you do have to look out for possible fraudulent transactions.

## Illegal Copies

Ebook piracy is going to happen. In my experience it has never got out of hand, although I did come across an eBay auction offering several of my eBooks on a CD. That was easily stopped through eBay's "VERO" protection scheme.

However, you can't prevent people from passing copies to their friends so you should make sure that it brings in at least a little revenue. Make it clear that the copy is probably out of date and point out the benefits of buying the latest copy, which will then provide free updates for life.

DO update your eBooks whenever possible. Add an extra tidbit of information every few months. Consider each eBook to be a work in progress.
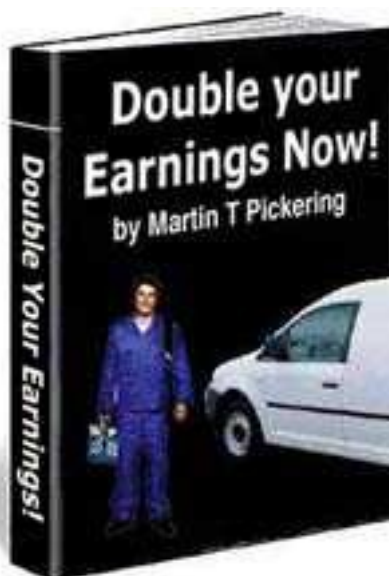
For this reason, you should keep the original file in a state which is easy to update. Keep it in a folder with all of your original images and text notes.

Use each eBook to advertise all your other eBooks and web sites. That way it becomes a catalogue so, if it does get passed around, somebody might be tempted to buy something from you.

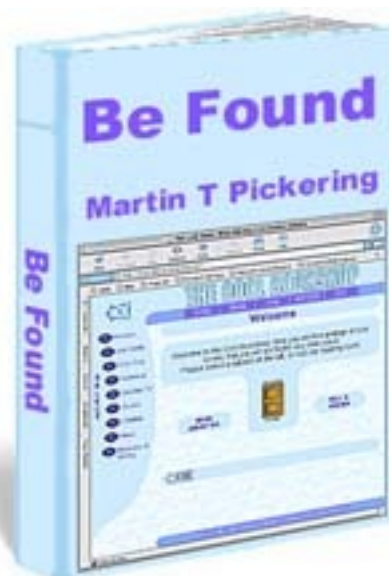This eBook may not be resold or distributed in any format.
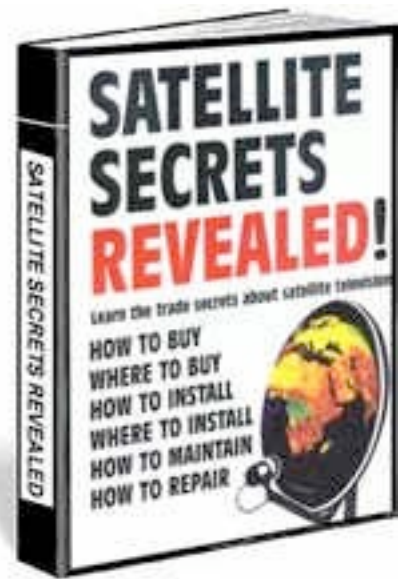
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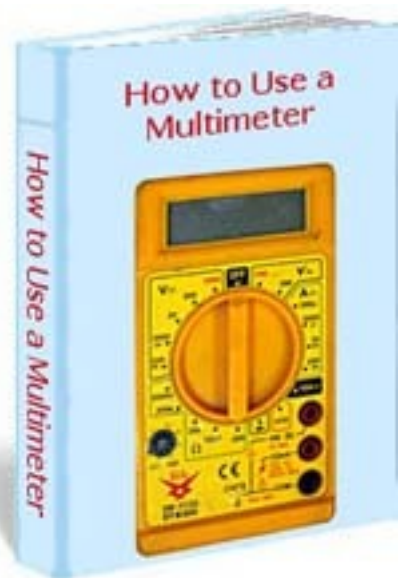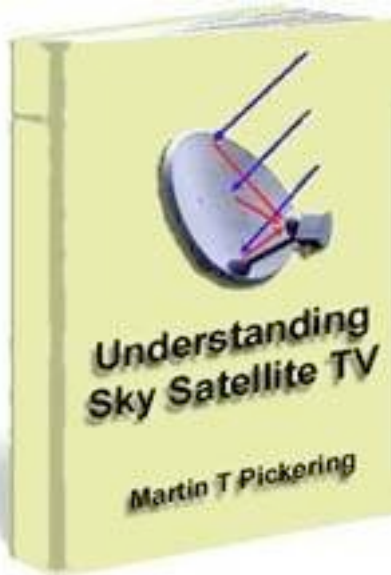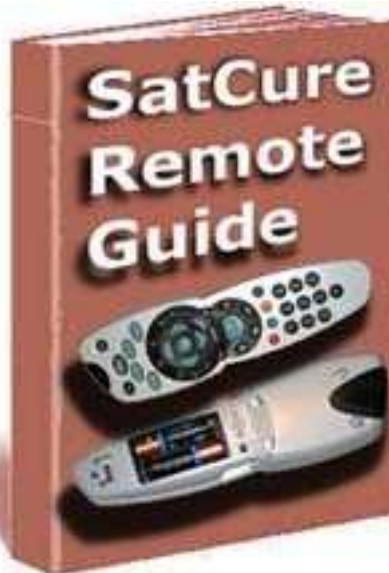
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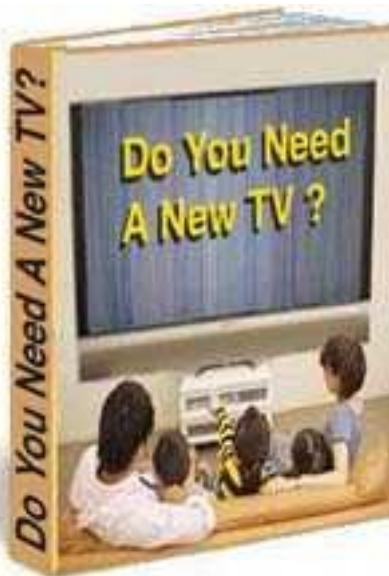
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