

Vanity Publishing Protection Checklist

What Every Author Should Check Before Signing With a Publishing Company

The publishing industry can feel overwhelming, especially when you've poured months or years into writing your book. Unfortunately, Vanity Publishing companies often rely on that overwhelm to sell expensive packages and confusing contracts to authors who simply want support.

This checklist is designed to help you slow down, ask the right questions, and protect yourself before signing anything.

Because professional support should empower authors, not take advantage of them.



SECTION 1: WARNING SIGNS OF VANITY PUBLISHING

Sales Tactics

- Were you accepted almost immediately without proper manuscript review?
- Are they heavily praising your book before discussing practical details?
- Are they creating urgency to pressure you into signing quickly?
- Are they using phrases like:
 - limited spots
 - today only
 - exclusive opportunity
 - guaranteed success
- Do they make self publishing sound impossible without them?
- Do they avoid giving direct answers to questions?
- Are they trying to overwhelm you with industry jargon?



SECTION 2: PRICING & COST

TRANSPARENCY

Understanding What You're Paying For

- Is the pricing clearly explained upfront?
- Have you received an itemised breakdown of services?
- Do you fully understand what is included?
- Are there hidden fees for:
 - revisions
 - file updates
 - uploads
 - distribution
 - corrections
 - marketing
- Have you compared their pricing against independent professionals?
- Are they charging thousands for basic services?
- Are you being upsold repeatedly after initial discussions?
- Are they vague about what happens after payment?



SECTION 3: RIGHTS & OWNERSHIP

Protecting Your Book

- Do you retain FULL rights to your manuscript?
- Will YOU own your publishing accounts?
- Will YOU receive royalties directly from the platform?
- Will YOU control your book pricing?
- Can YOU remove your book whenever you choose?
- Are ISBNs registered in your name?
- Are they asking for:
 - ebook rights
 - print rights
 - audio rights
 - film rights
 - international rights
- Do you understand exactly what rights you are giving away?
- Have you read the contract fully before signing?



SECTION 4: CONTRACT CHECKLIST

Before You Sign Anything

- Is the contract written clearly and transparently?
- Are there lock-in periods?
- Are there cancellation fees?
- Is there a royalty split?
- Are there renewal clauses?
- Does the contract explain how to leave the agreement?
- Does the company maintain control after publication?
- Can they make publishing decisions without your approval?
- Have you considered getting independent legal advice?



SECTION 5: ACCOUNT & PLATFORM CONTROL

This Is Extremely Important

- Is the book uploaded through YOUR own KDP or publishing account?
- Do you have full access to your publishing dashboard?
- Do you control:
 - metadata
 - keywords
 - categories
 - pricing
 - updates
- Can you access your files anytime?
- Will you receive direct sales reporting?
- Are royalties deposited directly into YOUR bank account?

If the answer is no to several of these, slow down and ask why.

SECTION 6: PRODUCTION QUALITY

Professional Formatting & Design Matters

- Have you seen real examples of their previous work?
- Do their books look professionally formatted?
- Are their ebook files properly tested?
- Do they understand:
 - KDP requirements
 - IngramSpark requirements
 - bleed settings
 - trim sizing
 - EPUB formatting
 - accessibility standards
- Are their cover designs original and professional?
- Are sample interiors consistent and readable?
- Have you checked independent reviews of their work?

SECTION 7: MARKETING CLAIMS

Be Careful With Big Promises

- Are they promising bestseller status?
- Are they guaranteeing sales?
- Are they promising bookstore placement without explaining how?
- Are their marketing services clearly explained?
- Can they provide measurable examples of past campaigns?
- Are they charging large fees for vague “promotion”?
- Are they relying on buzzwords instead of strategy?
- Do they explain realistically how difficult book marketing actually is?

Remember:

No legitimate company can guarantee publishing success.



SECTION 8: QUESTIONS EVERY AUTHOR SHOULD ASK

Before proceeding, ask:

- Who owns the publishing accounts?
- Who receives royalties directly?
- What rights am I giving up?
- Can I leave easily if I choose to?
- What exactly is included in the cost?
- Can I see examples of previous projects?
- Are services outsourced?
- What happens if I want to update my files later?
- What support is provided after publication?
- What makes your business different from Vanity Publishing?



SECTION 9: WHAT HEALTHY PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT LOOKS LIKE

Professional publishing support should:

- Educate you
- Support you
- Keep you informed
- Allow you to stay in control
- Be transparent about pricing
- Respect your ownership
- Explain processes clearly
- Give realistic expectations
- Provide quality work
- Empower your publishing journey

You should feel informed.

Not pressured.

FINAL REMINDER FOR INDIE AUTHORS

Self publishing does NOT mean doing everything alone.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with hiring professional support for:

- formatting
- editing
- design
- upload assistance
- publishing guidance

The difference is whether the company empowers you or controls you.

Your book deserves transparency.

Your work deserves respect.

And you deserve to understand exactly what you are paying for before signing anything.

Page Turner
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