

# WHICH BOOK FORMAT SHOULD I CHOOSE?

Book Publishing Tip Sheet

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# BOOK PUBLISHING Tip Sheet

## Which Book Format Should I Choose?

Did you know that some of the publishing packages at Outskirts Press offer over 50 different format choices? That sounds like a lot (and it is), but it may be helpful to keep in mind that a format isn't just the physical dimensions of the book; it is also the binding, the cover type, the paper type, and whether the printing involves economy color printing, premium color printing, or exclusively black & white.

Still though, no matter how you look at it, choosing one format from among fifty choices is an exercise. This tip sheet is designed to help make that selection process easier.

### COLOR vs. BLACK & WHITE

The first, and probably easiest, choice is deciding whether your book will be published in color or black & white. Most books are published in black & white, and unless you have a significant reason to do otherwise, it is the best and most economical choice. Black & white publishing is less expensive up front for you, and less expensive on a per-copy basis after publication. The retail price of your book can be lower, and your profits can be higher. Nearly all mainstream adult fiction books are published in black & white, and the vast majority of adult non-fiction books and spiritual books are black & white, as well. From time to time, a non-fiction book (typically of the instructional variety – medicine, landscaping, art) will require full-color publishing, but these are the exceptions rather than the rule.

If your book requires full-color artwork, illustrations, graphics, or line drawings, you may need to publish with a full-color format. But if your only consideration is making the page numbers blue, or the headers/footers orange, or a design element purple, it may be worth sacrificing that design aesthetic for all the financial advantages that black & white publishing can deliver.



## ECONOMY COLOR vs. PREMIUM COLOR

If your book requires full-color printing, Outskirts Press offers two different tiers of gorgeous full-color printing to provide the best balance of price vs. quality. Our economy color printing is nearly as cost-effective as printing in black & white and still offers the appeal of a full-color publication. If your book is over fifty pages and you have pages that require color, economy color printing is for you. The on-demand printing process simply does not accommodate individual full-color pages, so the whole book will be printed in color (even the black & white pages). The same is true if you have a full-color insertion within the body of a primarily black & white interior. POD printing does not accommodate color inserts, so the whole interior must be printed in color. In that case, full-color economy printing is the most economical choice, in order to keep your retail price lower and your profits higher. Publishing a book longer than fifty pages with *premium* full-color printing is not typically cost effective (since the retail price will be so high), but it can be quite reasonable with *economy* color printing.

Most children's books are less than fifty pages and rely heavily upon full-color illustrations to convey their story. As such, they are perfect candidates for premium full-color printing, especially in paperback. Many children's books are also casebound (rather than paperback), and when you combine a casebound binding with premium color printing, the on-demand retail price can climb out of the comfort level for a children's book. For this reason, children's book authors start weighing the pros and cons of casebound bindings against premium color printing to choose one or the other (but rarely both, unless your retail price and/or profit margin is of little concern). Here's a hint if you have to choose one or the other: If the artwork coverage is 50% or more of the page, choose a paperback with premium color (economy paper tends to buckle under that degree of color coverage). If the artwork coverage is less than 50% of the page, go with economy color printing and a casebound binding.

## HARDBACK vs. PAPERBACK

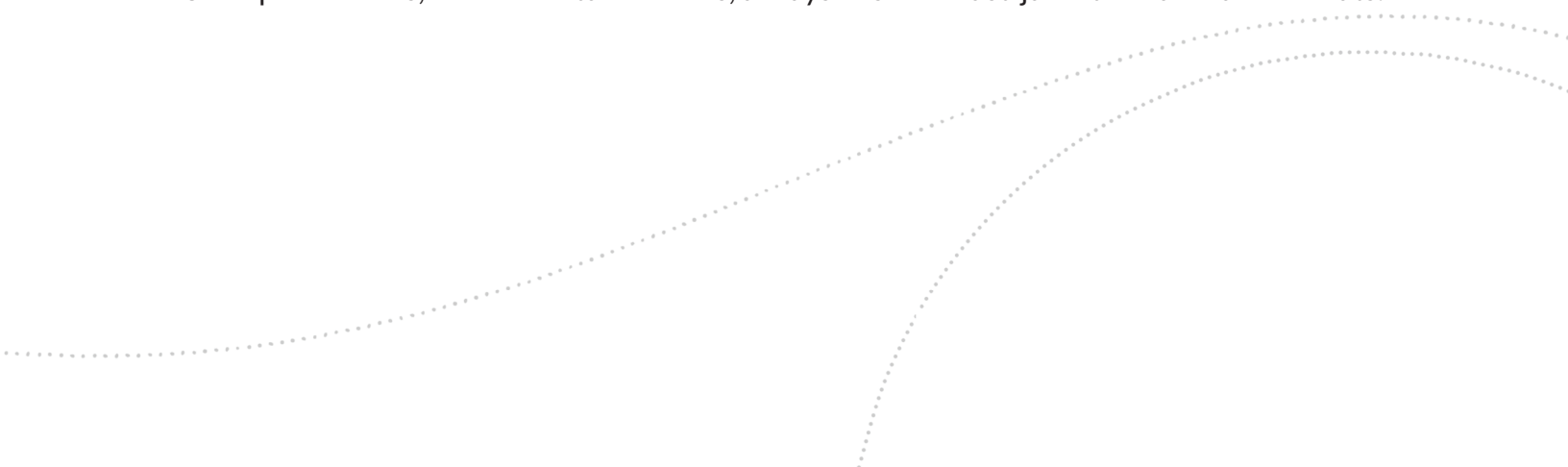
Slightly more difficult than black & white vs. color is the decision about whether to publish a paperback format of your book or a hardback format. The most efficient, economic choice in almost all cases is to publish both. Think about it – your initial *a la carte* publishing package is going to cost anywhere from \$900 to \$1700. Getting an entirely different (hardback) publication with its own ISBN, distribution, and retail pricing for a few hundred dollars more is a relatively easy choice. Paperbacks are required for marketing purposes (since hardbacks are too expensive to give away); hardbacks are showpieces for gifts, the coffee table, and leaving your legacy. When all is said and done, you'll be glad you published both.

If your budget requires choosing just one format, always choose paperback. The economic reasons are too significant to ignore. While paperback bindings add about \$1 to the overall production cost of each on-demand copy of your book, each casebound hardback binding adds approximately \$6, and each dust-jacketed hardback binding adds approximately \$8. That means you have to sell 6 times or 8 times (respectively) as many copies, at a higher retail price, to get the same return on your investment as a paperback book. Hardback books are beautiful, there's no doubt about it; they're treasured by family and friends, and they look like *accomplishments*. If you can afford to publish both (and you should), then definitely do it. But you're going to need marketing copies, and giving away hardback copies for marketing purposes doesn't make financial sense, so if you can publish only one type, publish a paperback.

## DUST JACKET vs. CASEBOUND

Traditionally speaking, few non-fiction books have dust jackets. So if you have a non-fiction book of any kind, our recommendation is to forgo the dust jacket (and, in almost all cases, for economic reasons, forgo the casebound edition, too; your best economic choice is a paperback.) If you plan on publishing both a paperback and a hardback format of your non-fiction book (and there's some economic reasons to do so), a dust-jacketed format is always going to look more impressive than a casebound edition.

Generally speaking, if your book isn't a non-fiction book, it's either a novel, a children's book, a spiritual work, an autobiographical work, or a showpiece (coffee table book, etc.). Let's look at each of these possibilities separately:

- If your book is a novel, you should publish both a paperback edition (for marketing purposes) and a dust-jacketed hardback edition. Read the above section if only one format is in your budget. But no fiction books are published as casebounds; the hardback editions *always* have dust jackets. So, publish either a paperback format, a dust-jacketed hardcover format, or (preferably) both.
  - If your book is a children's book, you have the most amount of flexibility, and it really depends upon your own preferences. There are a lot of dust-jacketed children's books. There are also a lot of hardback children's books, with or without dust jackets. In the traditional publishing world, when a book has a dust jacket, the same artwork is displayed on the casebound cover itself. That is NOT the case in the print-on-demand world. If you choose a dust-jacketed cover, the dust jacket will be your gorgeous full-color artwork, but the casebound cover itself will be a drab, cloth-covered, casebound cover in either blue or gray. Since most kids (or their parents) eventually throw the dust jacket away, it's in your best interest to choose a casebound cover, *without* the dust-jacket, for your hardcover children's book. Besides, it's less expensive!
  - Spiritual and autobiographical works are also very flexible, because their formats are determined by the personal preferences of their audience and their author. If you have only one format in your budget, paperbacks are still the way to go, unless you have a very specific and motivated audience/buyer, who might absorb the higher price for the higher-caliber presentation. And in that case, there is no substitute for the dust-jacketed hardbacks at Outskirts Press. They're gorgeous! Even the hardback case under the dust jacket is perfect for spiritual works, with cloth-stitched fabric and a gold imprint of your title on the binding. You cannot get any classier. Rare is the spiritual work or memoir that doesn't deserve a hardback, so make it the dust-jacketed version.
  - Showpiece works, like coffee table books, always deserve dust-jacketed hardback formats.
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- Decorative dotted lines in light gray, consisting of two curved lines that sweep from the bottom left towards the right side of the page.

## MATTE COVER vs. GLOSSY COVER

Matte covers are a relatively new production option in the on-demand publishing world, so anything “new” has a certain appeal for the reader/buyer, regardless of what type of book it is. Plus, our matte covers are gorgeous, and they feel like silk. They’re exquisite (and still new enough to seem unique and special). It’s hard to recommend against them. If your format selection (based upon the other considerations detailed above and below) offer a matte cover choice, there are many good reasons to choose it.

That being said, there are certain considerations to keep in mind. Traditionally and historically speaking, children’s books have rarely featured matte covers (either in paperback or hardback). There is something to be said for conventions.

There is a psychological belief that “matte” covers are more “literate” in nature. Sometimes that translates to “higher quality.” If you have an axe, or blood, or some version of a monster on your cover, glossy covers are going to serve your goals better. On the other hand, if you have a book of poetry, or “highbrow” literature, a matte cover is an understated way of delivering that content.

Matte covers can also soften the blow of a higher retail price. Granted, this is rarely of any true value in the on-demand world, where 99% of purchases take place online (and most online retailers do not divulge the *feel* of the cover in advance), but when a prospective shopper is holding a book in their hands, matte books feel more expensive. If your page count demands the higher price, a matte cover may help justify the additional cost (unless you have something salacious on your cover).

All that being said, traditionally speaking, children’s books, spiritual books, and showpiece books are rarely in matte.

If you’re publishing both a hardback and a paperback edition, make sure the covers match. If the paperback is matte, the hardback should be matte, also.

## CRÈME PAPER vs. WHITE PAPER

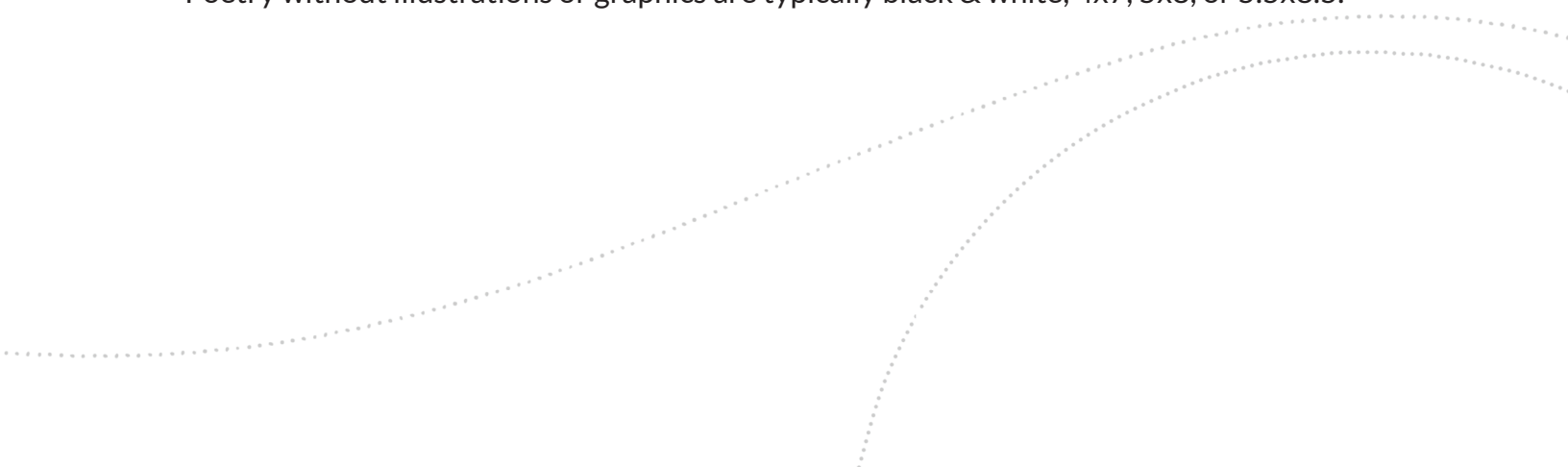
Crème is the definition of color in relation to “white,” and it means “off-white.” If you compared crème paper side-by-side with white paper, you would have no trouble identifying which one was white and which one was off-white. But without that side-by-side comparison, crème paper appears white, and serves the purpose of being easier on the eyes when reading. The contrast from the black ink of the printing is easier to read, which is why crème paper is the preferred paper type for books that are primarily words.

On the other hand, books that are primarily illustrations or photographs look better on white paper. That is why our full-color printing options offer white paper selections exclusively. If you have any drawings, illustrations, charts, or graphics, your book will be better served with white paper over crème paper.

## 4x7 vs. 8.5x11, PORTRAIT OR LANDSCAPE

All the considerations above, plus the package you are selecting, will most likely dictate your book size. Only select sizes are available with select packages, select paper types, select cover types, and printing type (color or black & white). All of those considerations are more important than the actual size of the book, so allow those considerations to play the largest role in your choice for book size. Hardbacks are available in fewer sizes than paperback, so if you choose to publish both (and you should), be sure to choose a size that is available for both, since you don't want a hardback that is different in size from your paperback.

If you've selected your color type, binding type, cover type, and paper type, and still have a range of book sizes to choose from, below are some standard conventions to keep in mind. You can tell the difference between a portrait or landscape book by the trim size numbers (the first number is always the width of the book and the second number is always the height of the book).

- Fiction books are typically black & white, 4x7 trim size through 6x9 trim size.
  - Non-fiction books are typically black & white, 6x9 through 7x10.
  - Children's books are typically full-color with premium printing, 5x8 through 8.5x11 in portrait, or 11x8.5 in landscape.
  - Spiritual and Christian books are typically black & white, 5.5x8.5 through 7x10.
  - Memoirs and biographies featuring a lot of photographs are typically full-color with economy printing, 5.5x8.5 by 6.14x9.21.
  - Memoirs and biographies that don't feature many or any photographs are typically black & white, 5.5x8.5 by 6.14x9.21.
  - Long cookbooks are typically full-color with economy printing, 8.5x8.5 and 8x10.
  - Short cookbooks are typically full-color with premium printing, 11x8.5 in landscape.
  - Poetry that features color illustrations are typically full-color with economy printing, 4x7, 5x8, or 5.5x8.5.
  - Poetry without illustrations or graphics are typically black & white, 4x7, 5x8, or 5.5x8.5.
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- Decorative dotted lines in the bottom right corner of the page, consisting of two curved lines that sweep upwards and to the right.