

How To Create eBooks

A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating Your Own eBooks

This document is provided FREE from the author's
blog at <http://www.ScrawlBug.com>

Donations and feedback are welcome.

If someone made you pay for this guide, they deserve to be eaten by zombies.

© Copyright 2011 Spike Wyatt
With thanks to Auntie Skinny for the inspiration.
<http://auntieskinny.blogspot.com>



This document is published under a Creative Commons
Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives license.

It can be passed around as much as you like, for non-commercial purposes,
provided you attribute it to the original author and don't alter it.

ScrawlBug

Tips, advice and resources for the fledgeling freelancer.





What's In This Guide

You've seen eBooks on websites all over the place – adverts with a pretty 3D image of a book that you can get free if you just subscribe to the blog, join a marketing spam list or sell them one of your kidneys.

Of course, when you actually get hold of their amazing super-duper fabulous eBook, it's not *really* a cool 3D book inside your computer: it's a PDF. Presumably, you're reading this because you, too, want to make one (or more) of those darned cool PDF files and a funky 3D image to advertise it to your growing fan-base.

That's what this guide will show you. Assuming you're on Windows, since I'm not an iDiot.

We'll walk step-by-step through the process, with details of the tools you need, free resources and other tips to help you produce your own amazing super-duper fabulous eBooks.

You should note that I don't personally guarantee the performance, results or continued availability any of the tools or sites used in this guide: they are the ones I use because they're the simplest or most effective I've found and they're free (except for MS Word, of course). If they disappeared tomorrow, it would suck. Seriously.





1. Prepare your document

If I have to tell you how to use a word processor, you're in deep trouble as an online publisher. For the purposes of this guide, I'm using Microsoft Word: it's a worldwide standard, I happen to own it and when you come to converting the file to a PDF, there's a good chance you won't get any nasty surprises.

[Open Office](#) is a good alternative if you don't want to pay for your word processor: it's compatible with Word's document format and shouldn't cause too much concern when you come to convert to PDF. However, if the pages all go screwy on you, don't blame me. That's why I use Word.

Virtually every aspect of your document's format will be carried over to the PDF you're creating, so you can really go wild with your layout, backgrounds, watermarks, borders and everything else. Of course, the more complex the document is, the bigger the chance of something weird happening when you convert it... that's why all mine are pretty normal-looking.



You should also consider your readers: do they really want an eBook that's so busy inside they have trouble finding the text? Perhaps they do. Perhaps they'd rather have something clean and simple.

Oh, and one other thing: don't write in a font size less than about 12-point. It's just a complete cow to read something that small on-screen. A lot of shorter eBooks are written in 14- or 16-point fonts to make them look longer, though I use Calibri 12.

You might be wondering about the images, too. Mine are all public domain clipart downloaded from the Internet, so that I don't have to worry about copyrights or anything: the last thing I need is some psychotic lawyer contacting me in 15 years' time in an attempt to get back-pay on a struggling artist's work. I hate plagiarism and I'd feel terrible.

So here's your first resource: [Clerk.com](#), where I get the free images.





2. Convert to PDF

When I updated my Beginner's Guide to Making Money Online (which you can among the other [Free Stuff](#) on ScrawlBug) to the 2011 edition, I realised that it had been two years since I'd converted a document into a PDF.

To be honest, I couldn't remember how I did it... so I went looking on Google.

There are a lot of sites around that will offer a free conversion to the PDF format (which, as you probably know, is Adobe's format for use with the Acrobat Reader). However, most of them are offered by people trying to sell full-on software applications, which are far beyond what simple little bloggers like me need.

Many of the free online converters are also a little... twitchy. The Beginner's Guide is a 770k document in Word format and it's not built on a standard template. The pictures make it more complex and apparently there's something in there that most of the web-based tools I found simply hated. They'd chew on my file and spit it right out, either sending me a messed-up pile of gibberish or nothing at all.

Of course, I would have nothing against buying a PDF converter if I were in advertising or producing dozens of reports that I wanted to distribute to hundreds of people on a regular basis – but I'm not and I don't. I needed something free and reliable, for an occasional PDF conversion.

So here's your second resource: [PrimoPDF.com](#). This tool is awesome: it's free, works on most Windows installations and is so simple your pet goldfish could probably use it:

- Download and install
- It puts an icon on your desktop that acts like a virtual printer.
- Go to the folder with your document in it.
- Drag and drop the document onto the icon and the app opens and "prints" it in PDF format.



(i.e. the file is converted and the output goes to the same folder the original source document is in).

You can mess with the options if you like, to improve quality, include publisher name and loads of other blah, but it's still dead easy to use. Drag 'n' drop. Love it.





3. Make a pretty box graphic

Ah. Now, this is where things get a bit tougher.

If you want to produce a nice advertising graphic, you're going to need a bunch of tools, patience and time.

There are, again, several free tools online to produce advertising images like this but – as you would expect – they're operated by people who want to sell you the full-blown pro software. Therefore, the options are often limited.

The web-based tool at MyEcoverMaker.com offers a selection of 5 different base images (binders, books or a box), about 75 background images (of which an area can be selected and used) and the ability to upload your own images and write your own text.

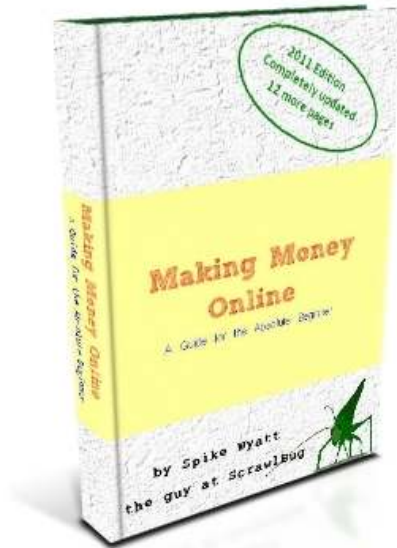
All in all, it's a very generous selection with great flexibility that should suit most people. But in my case, I wanted total control.

The free tool I eventually found is at 3D-pack.com.

Each rendering needs up to five images for the final graphic: a CD with a box only needs images for a front cover and a disc; a book, CD box or DVD box needs front, back and spine images; a full 3D box needs front, back, spine and top images.

In my case, I chose a book so it needed a front, a spine and a back. The site generates a 3D image of the final product so that you can get exactly the angle you want. You wiggle the image around until it's perfect, then grab a JPG (or other graphical format) file.

The image above was my first attempt at using this tool. Looks pretty cool, if you ask me, especially for an amateur!





Preparing your images

a. The front (cover) and back (backside) covers

I took a screenshot of the sample box to figure out the dimensions: my covers came out as 440x620 pixel images. It doesn't matter exactly what software you use to build the image: I used MS Paint (yes, really) for the basic collage pieces with some help from Paint Shop Pro for the textured look and to rotate the 'updated' ellipse and text.

The back cover is obviously the same size. Assuming you use a view angle similar to mine, you won't actually need a back image: it's invisible. However, if you're publishing an actual book you might want to have a butt-shot, so the option's there.

b. The spine (side)

In similar fashion, I measured the spine of the sample book – it comes out at 45x620 pixels. A bit of Paint Shop Pro texturing, some MS Paint for the text and back into PSP to rotate and Bob's your uncle – a neat little spine for my book.

c. The CD

In my case, I didn't need a disc image. However, I tried out the option with my front cover and it basically takes a circular, disc-shaped stamp out of the middle of the image. Create your image accordingly.

d. The top

Works the same way as the spine although the text orientation is, of course, different.

Completing your advert graphic

Uploading is easy: just click the button next to each part of the design and select your images from whatever folder you saved them in.

The rendering takes a few seconds, then your finished image is displayed on the web page. It displays a standard view, so if you're producing several images, don't move it (that way they all look similar). Alternatively, click and drag to spin the image until you get the view angle you want.

To save the image, just click one of the file formats (JPG, PNG or GIF). The rendered image will be replaced by a static image for you to save. Bingo, all done!

