Retail Distribution Guide

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Distribution & Lulu

Lulu offers a variety of options for self-publishing and selling your books. One of those options is our Retail Distribution service. A big part of selling your book means making it available through the retailers your readers prefer.

When you publish on Lulu and meet all the distribution requirements, we can list your book for you on a range of retail sites across the web.

This guide will provide you with details about what Retail Distribution includes, how to publish your book and take advantage of Retail Distribution, and our minimum requirements for both print and ebook distribution.

What Is Retail Distribution?

This service allows you to list your book on retail channels. All sales are reported to Lulu and listed in your dashboard for easy access and tracking. When a reader buys your book from one of the participating sales channels, that retailer handles the print-on-demand and shipping. The entire process is automated; meaning once you've set up your account and published your book, you'll be selling any time, to anyone!

Retail Distribution Network

Print Book:

- Amazon
- Ingram
- Hachette (French Only | No Hardcovers)

Ebook:

- Amazon
- Barnes & Noble
- Gardners
- iBookstore
- Kobo
- Libri

Publishing for Distribution: Print

Lulu offers two primary ways to print books. You can use our print network just to get a book printed. When you do this, you're just passing the interior and cover files through our system to ensure our printers can print your book. That's it.

You can also use Lulu to publish and print for distribution. When you go this route, you'll need to include additional metadata and an ISBN.

This means you must be careful to provide accurate information and to review everything before publishing.

Reference our Retail Distribution Eligible Products Guide to see all book size and binding combinations eligible for Retail Distribution.

Publishing Steps

Publishing has up to six total steps. By default, four steps are locked. That's because no goals have been selected, and the project begins as a print-only project. Meaning we only need you to select a product type, title your project, and upload your files.

To unlock all the steps to publish with distribution, you'll need to set the appropriate goal.

We'll quickly review some distribution-specific aspects of publishing on Lulu, but for a complete guide to creating your book, please see our Book Creation Guide.

Note: Linen Wrap with Dust Jacket eligible books only include navy or grey linen with gold foil stamped letters on the spine.

Start with a Goal

The first step in publishing for distribution is to select **Publish Your Book** > **Retail Distribution**.

With that goal selected, the button at the bottom of this page will update from **Design your Book** to **Add Copyright Info**.

Copyright: Metadata Round 1

Add all the required information, including your contributors, copyright, and ISBN. Lulu provides you with a free ISBN, or you can apply an ISBN you've purchased under your own imprint.

Your metadata is critical to successfully publishing for distribution. This is true for all self-publishing platforms. If a retailer cannot match the metadata (like author names, title, or ISBN), they won't list your book!

Some of this information will be locked to your project once you complete publishing, so be certain to review everything you enter carefully. Note that the last step in Lulu's publishing process is a thorough review, so you'll have another chance to back up and make any necessary changes.

File Upload & Design Specs

The Design step is where you'll upload your interior PDF. Be sure you've added all the required information (See Mandatory Print Book Distribution Requirements on page 12). That includes your copyright page with the ISBN and a title page.

With the file uploaded, we'll run a check to be sure it can be printed and warn you about anything we discover that you might want to fix before moving forward. We also detect the page size and count to display your book specifications.

Some options, including ink, paper, and binding types, are not available for Retail Distribution. Unavailable options will be locked when creating your project.

Make your selections for your book's design and add a cover. We'll provide a live preview with trim lines and other printer marks displayed. Be certain to review your live preview carefully and see the Book Creation Guide for details about preparing your book files.

Details: Metadata Round 2

In this step, you'll provide additional metadata in the form of a book description, BISAC keywords, and an intended audience. These elements contribute to the complete picture of your book and should not be overlooked or added without careful consideration.

When selling through retailers, your work will appear alongside millions of other books. Your keywords, categories, and description play a vital role in helping potential readers find your book.

Not sure what a BISAC keyword is? The acronym stands for Book Industry Standards And Communications. It's a method of categorizing books using a globally uniform method. BISAC codes provide writers a uniform method for categorization.

Set a Price & Assign Payees

Lulu provides two methods for setting your book's list price; set an exact price in each currency for your book or tell us how much you want to earn and we'll calculate the price for you.

Revenue is displayed for the Lulu Bookstore and for Retail Channels to help you determine how much you'll earn from each sale. Note that we display minimum prices based on retailer markups, particularly important for print books.

Finally, you'll add a payee (or multiple payees) to tell us who to pay and how to send the payment.

Final Review & Publishing

The last step in the publishing process! You'll see a condensed section for each of the previous steps, displaying the data and files you've entered. Carefully review everything, then check the box acknowledging you've reviewed all the steps.

Once you've completed your review, you'll be prompted to set the visibility on the Lulu Bookstore and publish your book!

Approving Your Proof Copy

Once you've published your book, it becomes available for sale immediately on the Lulu Bookstore. There is still one more step to complete the Retail Distribution process: You need to proof your book.

That means ordering a single copy of the book, reviewing this printed copy, and approving it in your Lulu account. Reviewing a printed proof is vital for any project to ensure your readers get your book exactly as you hope it will look.

If you catch any typos or other updates to be made, you'll need to make the necessary revisions to your project, publish this update, and approve another proof.

Note: Retail channels will not list your book unless you've approved a proof copy of the most recently published version. Complete the transaction, and your book will begin our internal review process!

Retailer Approval

After you've approved the proof copy of your book, retailers will review the project to ensure it meets all their requirements. This process can take up to 8 weeks. Once retailers approve your book, they'll list it on their site for sale!

All sales from retailers are reported back to Lulu and listed in your account.

Print Book Distribution Requirements

Print book retailers have established minimum requirements to ensure they can print your book correctly and efficiently using their system and printing network. In order to make your print book available through Lulu's Retail Distribution service, all requirements from all retailers must be met.

Failure to comply with any of these standards can result in rejection from our Retail Distribution service. This includes any noncompliant file settings, content, or metadata.

Distribution Limitations

All retail distributors manage their own retail site and requirements. Lulu's distribution requirements reflect the minimums and standards we've received from these retailers. But any retailer may, at their own discretion, update, amend, remove, or otherwise alter these requirements at any time and without notification. In the event of a discrepancy between Lulu's requirements and a retailer's, the retailer requirements will supersede the list that follows.

Restrictions are as follows:

- Content must be published in available languages only.
- Content cannot be published with Premium Black and White Interior Ink as a selection.
- Coil binding is not an option for any size.
    - To see restrictions for each size and the binding, please view our Retail Distribution Product Page.

Proof Copy

Every print book submitted to our Retail Distribution service must first be reviewed and approved by you. Doing so helps minimize delays when submitting your work to our distribution partners and ensures you have reviewed your project.

Each time a change is made to the interior file, cover file, or book specifications, for a project using Retail Distribution, you will be required to order a physical proof copy to approve the changes.

File Standards

All print books must be created from two (2) files: a PDF interior and a PDF cover. The source file must be well-formatted and Lulu

is not responsible for the design, layout, or any other aspect of the converted PDF.

To ensure your PDFs meet our distribution requirements, we recommend creating a PDF from your own word processing or page layout software. The following standards should be maintained when creating your PDF:

- Ensure that all fonts are properly embedded in your PDFs.
- All layers must be flattened and all vector images must be rasterized.
- Your PDF should be single-page layout.
- Do NOT include trim or bleed marks in your PDF.
- Recommended file size less than 500 MB.

Content Standards

Lulu does not read or review the specific contents of your file. As part of our distribution review, our team and our retail partners must review the file to ensure it is properly formatted and can be printed correctly by all retailer's printers.

Content Requirements:

- Your Interior PDF must have a Title page with accurate metadata including:
    - Title/Subtitle
    - Author
- Your Interior PDF must have a Copyright page with accurate metadata including:
    - Title/Subtitle
    - Author
    - Copyright Date
    - Print Book ISBN
- The Copyright page must come after the Title page.

- No more than two (2) consecutive blank pages are allowed. Content such as "Page Intentionally Left Blank" or lines for note taking are accepted.
- Page numbering must be correct. No page numbers may be skipped or repeated. A page can go without a number, but it must be counted and consistent. Each page must have only one page number. If you include a table of contents, pagination in your PDF must match the pagination in the table of contents.
- Text and Images should not overlap or be layered in such a way that the content is obscured.
- Text must be oriented for left-to-right reading.
- Images should be high-quality, clear, and complete. A blurry, pixelated, or cut off image will cause your book to be rejected.
- Images, tables, charts, or maps with text must be clearly legible.
- The Interior PDF color must match the metadata. If you select color printing when creating your project, the Interior PDF should also be in full color.
- The language in your Interior PDF must match the language selected in the metadata.
- If your Interior PDF uses a Header, any instances of the author, title, or subtitles must match the metadata.
- Each retailer reserves the right to select the genre for your book. We recommend selecting the most accurate genre when creating your book on Lulu to help retailers correctly classify your book.
- Erotica or adult content must be categorized appropriately.
- Explicit content, as defined in the Lulu membership agreement and superseded by any retailers standards, may cause an immediate rejection.
- All content must comply with Lulu's membership agreement.

Title / Subtitle

Your title and subtitle must match anywhere they appear, including the cover, title page, copyright, individual page headers, and elsewhere in your Cover and Interior PDFs.

- The title and subtitle must be 200 total characters or less.
- Only use Latin Character sets for the title and subtitle.

Author Information

The author, illustrator, editor, or any other credit given to an individual or group who participated in the creation of your book must follow these requirements:

- First name should appear before the last name.
- Author names must be correctly spelled and capitalized on the Cover PDF, within the Interior PDF, and in your metadata.
- Do not enter author names in all capital letters.
- Retailers list up to five (5) contributors including author, editor, illustrator, and artist. Please list all contributors individually.

Description

Your print book's description is used by retailers and Lulu to give potential readers information about your book and to help them decide whether or not to purchase your book. Be sure to carefully review the requirements for your description, as these rules are specific and must be adhered to.

- Your description must be unique to the book and must accurately describe the contents.
- Do not use a generic description for multiple print book projects.
- Do not use the title, subtitle, or other metadata as the description.
- Your description must consist of at least 50 characters, excluding blank spaces.
- Your description cannot contain any advertisements or hyperlinks.

- References to pricing for the book cannot be included.
- Do not use HTML tags or other text formatting for the description.
- Cannot mention included materials (EX: CDs, posters, etc.).
- Your description cannot upsell a more complete version of the book.
- Do not mislead buyers or misrepresent your book in the description (EX: Calling your book 'Illustrated Guide' but including no illustrations or images).

ISBN & Metadata

Your title, subtitle, and author information all constitute metadata. For clarity, all required metadata is listed here. This is not an inclusive list of all data or content that may be considered metadata for the purposes of categorizing your book, but if any of the information listed below is missing, inaccurate, or inconsistent, your print book will be rejected.

- Title
- Subtitle
- Author
- Copyright notice with date
- ISBN
- Description

Cover PDF

Your Cover PDF must be a single page PDF sized to the specifications provided by Lulu. Please note that the cover spine width for Lulu's print network and our distribution partners varies slightly. To accommodate this variance, we require a Lulu Bookstore Cover and a Distribution Cover.

We provide a template for each cover file with the specific spine width required.

Additional Requirements for Your Cover PDF:

- The title, subtitle, and author must appear on the cover and match exactly your print book's metadata.
- Cover text must use Latin character sets.
- All text and images must be high resolution (300 dpi). Please be sure the images or text are not blurry or overlapping other elements on the cover (including the barcode).
- Cannot mention included materials (EX: CDs, posters, etc.).
- Your cover cannot upsell a more complete version of the book.
- Do not mislead buyers or misrepresent your book on the cover (EX: Calling your book 'Illustrated Guide' but including no illustrations or images).
- Your description cannot contain any advertisements or hyperlinks.
- Spine text must be at least .0625 in / 1.59 mm away from all edges of the spine.
- Do not include spine text on your cover if the book has fewer than 100 pages.
- Cover must have the correct 13-digit ISBN/EAN Bar Code, provided in black and white and sized to 1.7 wide x 1 in high (44.45 x 25.4 mm).
- Lulu will not add the price to the book cover and we strongly recommend you do NOT include a price on your Cover PDF.

Publishing For Distribution: Ebooks

Publishing an ebook on Lulu uses the same process as a printed book. On the first step, select the ebook product option and the steps will update to include ebook options.

For an ebook that will use our Retail Distribution service, you'll need to apply an ISBN and be sure to meet all metadata requirements. Your ebook will be in EPUB format for all retailers.

Publishing Steps

The first step in creating an ebook for distribution is to select the ebook Product Type.

Note: Submitting an ebook to Retail Distribution requires a one-time fee

Set a Goal

Just like your print book, you'll need to set your retail goals for your ebook. Select Retail Distribution to continue creating your ebook for retail distribution. Once the title, language, and category are selected, you can move to the first metadata step.

Copyright: Metadata Round 1

Add all the required information, including your contributors, copyright, and ISBN. Lulu provides you with a free ISBN or you can apply an ISBN you've purchased under your own imprint.

Your metadata is critical to successfully publishing for distribution. This is true for all self-publishing platforms. If a retailer cannot match the metadata (like author names, title, or ISBN) they won't list your ebook!

Some of this information will be locked to your project once you complete publishing, so be certain to review everything you enter carefully. Note that the last step in Lulu's publishing process is a thorough review, so you'll have another chance to back up and make any necessary changes.

File Upload

For an ebook, the Design step is actually just two file upload buttons. One for your ebook and another for the cover thumbnail.

We can convert a properly formatted DOCX file to EPUB for you, but you can always directly upload an EPUB you created as well. Use our Ebook Creation Guide for more information about preparing your file.

Details: Metadata Round 2

In this step you'll provide additional metadata in the form of an ebook description, BISAC keywords, and an intended audience. These elements contribute to the complete picture of your ebook and should not be overlooked or added without careful consideration.

When selling through retailers, your work will appear alongside millions of other books. Your keywords, categories, and description play a vital role in helping potential readers find your ebook.

Not sure what a BISAC keyword is? The acronym stands for Book Industry Standards And Communications. It's a method of categorizing books using a globally uniform method. BISAC codes provide writers a uniform method for categorization.

Set a Price & Assign Payees

To sell an ebook through retail channels, you'll need to set a price! Lulu provides two methods; set an exact price for your ebook or tell us how much you want to earn and we'll calculate the price for you.

Note that an ebook sold directly through Lulu can be set to FREE ($0.00) but if you intend to sell through retail channels you must set a price at $0.99 or higher. The minimum price for ebooks using Retail Distribution ensures retailers can take their fee.

You should also review information about retail pricing for each retailer. Some of our partners (such as Apple) utilize pricing tiers that may result in the final sale price differing from the price you see in the Lulu pricing table.

Final Review And Publishing

The last step in the publishing process! You'll see a condensed section for each of the previous steps, displaying the data and files you've entered. Carefully review everything, then check the box acknowledging you've reviewed all the steps.

Once you've completed the review, you can set the visibility on the Lulu Bookstore and add the Retail Distribution service to your cart. Complete the transaction and your ebook will begin our internal review process!

Retail Distribution Fee

Ebook projects submitted to Retail Distribution require a one-time fee of $4.99 to cover the cost of submission and review. This fee is only paid on the first submission.

If you revise and re-submit your updated ebook, you will not pay the fee again.

Retailer Approval

Since ebooks are entirely digital, you won't need to approve a printed book. But retailers do still need to review your EPUB file to ensure it adheres to their standards.

Just like print books, this process can take up to 8 weeks. Once retailers approve your ebook, they'll list it on their site for sale!

All sales from retailers are reported back to Lulu and listed in your account.

Ebook Distribution Requirements

Ebook retailers maintain a variety of minimum standards and requirements to list your ebook on their site. To comply with these standards and ensure your ebook can be listed with any and all of our ebook retail partners, we require ebooks meet these Distribution Requirements.

Failure to comply with any of these standards can result in rejection from our Retail Distribution service. This includes any noncompliant file settings, content, or metadata.

Please note that all retail distributors manage their own retail site and requirements. Lulu's distribution requirements reflect the minimums and standards we've received from these retailers. But any retailer may, at their own discretion, update, amend, remove, or otherwise alter these requirements at any time and without notification. In the event of a discrepancy between Lulu's requirements and a retailer's, the retailer requirements will supersede the list that follows.

File Standards

All ebooks files must be in EPUB format.

If you are creating your own EPUB, we suggest using our Calibre EPUB Conversion Guide to create an EPUB that will pass all of Lulu's uploading and distribution standards.

EPUB File Requirements:

- Use EPUBCheck v5 to validate your content. EPUB 3 publications are checked against the EPUB 3.3 specification.
- EPUB must be EAA compliant and meet WCAG 2 Level AA standards for accessibility.
- DTBook EPUBs are not supported; submit EPUBs built with XHTML specifications.
- EPUB must contain proper transcoding. Transcoding errors are commonly caused by improperly encoding the text in UTF-8 or UTF-16 format (EX: Äù ,Äô ,Äú ,Ä¢ displaying instead of quotes, apostrophes, or bullets).
- Your EPUB file must have a complete and accurate Table of Contents (NCX) file.
    - Every chapter, section, sub-section, or other element created with a Heading Style must appear in the table of contents.
    - Chapters should be represented sequentially and in order.
- Recommended file size less than 50 MB. Files over 500 MB may be rejected.

Content Standards

Lulu does not read or review the specific contents of your file. As part of our distribution review, our team and our retail partners must review the file to ensure it is properly formatted and all the content displays accurately when viewed on a variety of device sizes.

Content Requirements:

- Text cannot be cut off or otherwise truncated.
- Text and Images should not overlap or be layered in such a way that the content is obscured.
- All content must be in English, using Latin character sets.
- Images should be high-quality, clear, and complete. A blurry, pixelated, or cut off image will cause your ebook to be rejected.
- Images, tables, charts, or maps with text must be clearly legible.
- Images must be saved in RGB color space.
- EPUB files with interactive elements are not accepted.
- EPUB files with fillable areas (EX: lines for writing notes or answers) are not accepted.
- Your EPUB must contain a Copyright Page with accurate metadata including:
    - Title/Subtitle
    - Author
    - Copyright Date
    - Ebook ISBN
- Each retailer reserves the right to select the genre for your ebook. We recommend selecting the most accurate genre when creating your ebook on Lulu to help retailers correctly classify your ebook.
- Erotica or adult content must be categorized appropriately.
    - Explicit content, as defined in the Lulu membership agreement and superseded by any retailers standards, may cause an immediate rejection.
- All content must comply with Lulu's membership agreement.
- Illegal content is not allowed in retail distribution channels. This includes:
    - Public domain content
    - Repurposed Project Gutenberg content
- Do not include any advertisements or prices in your ebook content.

- Do not include any invalid links or links to online retailers or booksellers.

Title / Subtitle

Your ebook's title and subtitle must adhere to strict capitalization rules to pass our retail partners distribution standards.

- The first letter of all words in the title and subtitle must be capitalized.
    - Excluding: a, an, and, for, from, of, or, the, to
- Title must be in English language and match in every instance it appears, including:
    - Metadata entered while creating your ebook
    - Cover Image
    - Title and Copyright pages
- Titles beginning with articles should display properly (EX: "A Tale of Two Cities", not "Tale of Two Cities, A").
- Titles cannot include references to pricing.

Author Information

The author, illustrator, editor, or any other credit given to an individual or group who participated in the creation of your ebook must follow all title/subtitle rules listed above, as well as these following requirements:

- First name should appear before the last name.
- Author names must be correctly spelled and capitalized on the cover, within the contents, and in your metadata.
- Do not enter author names in all capital letters.
- Retailers list up to five (5) contributors including author, editor, illustrator, and artist. Please list all contributors individually.

Description

Your ebook's description is used by retailers and Lulu to give potential readers information about your ebook and to help them decide

whether or not to purchase your ebook. Be sure to carefully review the requirements for your description, as these rules are specific and must be adhered to.

- Your description must be unique to the ebook and must accurately describe the contents.
    - Do not use a generic description for multiple ebook projects.
- Do not use the title, subtitle, or other metadata as the description.
- Your description must consist of at least 50 characters, excluding blank spaces.
- Your description cannot contain any advertisements or hyperlinks.
- References to pricing for the ebook cannot be included.
- Do not use HTML tags or other text formatting for the description.
- Cannot mention included materials (EX: CDs, posters, etc.).
- Your description cannot upsell a more complete version of the ebook.
- Do not mislead buyers or misrepresent your ebook in the description (EX: Calling your ebook an 'Illustrated Guide' but including no illustrations or images).

ISBN & Metadata

Your title, subtitle, and author information all constitute metadata. For clarity, all required metadata is listed here. This is not an inclusive list of all data or content that may be considered metadata for the purposes of categorizing your ebook, but if any of the information listed below is missing, inaccurate, or inconsistent, your ebook will be rejected.

- Title
- Subtitle
- Author
- Copyright notice with date
- ISBN
- Description

Cover Image

Your EPUB file should contain your cover image in the appropriate location within your EPUB.

Additional Requirements for Your Ebook Cover Image:

- The title, subtitle, and author must appear on the cover and match exactly your ebook's metadata.
- Cover text must be English, using Latin character sets.
- Cannot mention included materials (EX: CDs, posters, etc.).
- Your cover cannot upsell a more complete version of the ebook.
- Do not mislead buyers or misrepresent your ebook on the cover (EX: Calling your ebook an 'Illustrated Guide' but including no illustrations or images).
- Your description cannot contain any advertisements or hyperlinks.
- References to pricing for the ebook cannot be included.
- Cover image must be a flat, 2D image.
- Your cover image should be sized correctly:
    - 612 x 792 px
    - 72–300 dpi resolution

More Resources

Apple's Formatting Guide

The Apple iBookstore includes some very strict formatting for distribution to their store. We recommend using Apple's Formatting Guide to compare your ebook file to their requirements.