Designing your book (if you are going to submit “camera ready” PDFs)

A quote I read online - “Self-publishing your book means you don't have to conform to someone else's view of what your book should be. Instead, your self-published book will reflect your vision, which is the only one that counts.” (Your vision is the only one that matters only if you don’t care whether your book sells.)

If you want your book to sell it needs to be well-designed and conform to the expectations of the intended audience. Be aware of positive and negative space on the page. The negative space (the non-printed area) is very important. One of the most common mistakes in self-published books is not having a balance between positive and negative space.

I. Know the traditional parts of a book. A successful book needs the necessary parts assembled in proper order.
   Check for examples on-line.
   A. Many contemporary books omit pages such as half-title and frontispiece, and combine pages such as the copyright and dedication pages. Look at books in libraries and bookstores for examples.

II. Is book in the proper format for your genre? Genres such as poetry have specific requirements.

III. Is book the proper cut-size for your market?
   A. Mass market books—must be 4 ¼” x 7” to fit in supermarket, drug store, convenience store racks. This is not a market usually open to self-publishers.
   B. Novels, short story collections, poetry—normally from 5 ¼” x 8” to 6” x 9”. Books published in these sizes are called “trade paperbacks.” Shorter works can be smaller cut-sizes—5.5 x 8.5 is a popular size for chapbooks, Digest size (apparently named after Reader’s Digest) is 5.5” x 8.25”. Longer works can be larger cut-size such as 6” x 9”.
   C. Manuals & instructional books—usually larger size—minimum 6” x 9”, however 8” x 10” or 8 ½” x 11” may work better. depending on subject and number of illustrations.
   D. Art & photo books—no standard cut-size. Square cut-sizes work well for art and photo books since vertical and horizontal images can be displayed effectively.
   E. General non-fiction—6” x 9” is a common size. If you are using side bars a wider format can be used.
   F. Graphic novels and manga—7” x 10” to 8 ½” x 11”
   G. If you plan to publish both hardback and softcover books, the cut-size is usually the same.

IV. Is book properly formatted for the cut-size you want? If you tell your publisher you want a 6” x 9” book, but send them a book formatted to 8 ½” x 11”, they will either tell you to start all over again, or they will simply reduce the pages to fit the format and the finished product will not look anything like what you expected.
V. **Does book have running headers at top of pages identifying book title and/or chapters? Most books should have running headers.**
   A. Normally there is no running header on title, half-title, 1st page of chapters, preface, introduction, etc.
   B. Running headers usually do not appear on single pages that contain just illustrations, tables, etc.
      1. For sections with several pages of illustrations running headers may be used to avoid confusion.
   C. Running headers are usually omitted in novels.

VI. **Is book properly numbered?**
   A. Left-hand pages have even numbers, right-hand pages have odd numbers.
   B. Do not put a number on title page.
   C. Some traditional publishers use same rule as running headers—no page number on title, half-title, 1st page of chapters, preface, introduction, etc.
   D. Front material usually gets Roman numerals; body gets Arabic numerals.
   E. The first page of the body of the book is normally page number 1.
   F. Except for pages listed above, in most books published now, every page is numbered. (Traditionally numbers did not appear on pages with just illustrations, tables, etc. Also, traditionally these un-numbered pages were not included in the page-count, so if there were two pages of illustrations after page 71, then the text page after the illustrations would be page 72.)

VII. **Have you chosen appropriate fonts?**
   A. Use Serif fonts for body, Sans Serif for headings and titles.
   B. Use complementary Serif and Sans Serif fonts for body and headings. Check on-line for font combinations.
   C. Use traditional fonts and fonts specifically designed for books. Check on-line for examples.
   D. Don’t use “overworked” fonts. This includes any default font in MS Office, MS Windows, or Apple operating systems, past and present. Check on-line for lists of overworked fonts.
   E. Don’t use fonts that mimic hand lettering or handwriting.
   F. Font size for books normally ranges between 8 and 12 points. Smaller cut-sizes usually use smaller font sizes.
   G. Font families vary in size, so different fonts, even though they say they are the same point size (the height of the letters), will vary in the amount of space they take up on a page.

VIII. **Books are formatted in “spreads,” which are left- and right-facing pages.**
   A. Set your publishing program to show spreads.
      1. In MS Word go to “View” and select “Two Pages”
   B. Left- and right-facing pages should look like they were designed as a unit.
IX. Readability of text

A. Does book have an optimal number of words per line?
   1. Readability is increased if you have 10-12 words per line. Anything over that tends to confuse reader.
   2. If you are justifying text, anything under 10-12 words per line (approx. 60-65 characters) and you might have problems
      justifying text, with irregular spacing appearing between words.
   3. If using ragged-right text, too-few words per line may produce text blocks that appear overly ragged.

B. Assuming you are using 10-12 words per line, does line width fit with book cut-size?
   1. Line width will be affected by font choices. A 10-12-word line in a 12-point font may be about 4” wide, which means
      that, including the margin, the page should be about 5 ½” wide.

C. Do you want to use columns? To get more words on a page but keep readability, perhaps you want to increase the page
   width but go to a multi-column format.
   1. If you use columns, the space between columns (the gutter) will affect the look of the page. Within reason, the wider the
      column gutter, the better the separation between columns and the easier it is to read the text.
      a. In newspapers, the gutter is generally about 1 unit in width for each 13 units of line width. This means that for a layout with 3 ½”
         columns, the gutter should be about ¼” (or more).
      b. The gutter width should increase for larger line widths.

D. Leading (the vertical space between lines) will affect readability.
   1. Small leading makes lines appear congested, harder to read.
   2. Large leading between lines tends to make text block less cohesive and readability suffers.
   3. As a rule of thumb, leading between 1.2 and 1.5 times the point-size of the font is acceptable.

X. Will book use justified or ragged-right text?

A. Justified text is traditional in book publishing (except for poetry).
B. Justified text looks neater.
C. Justified text allows more word per page
D. How well justified text looks depends on the publishing program. Layout programs do a better job of justifying.
E. In my opinion it is better to have good-looking ragged-right text than bad-looking justified text.

XI. Will you use hyphenation?

A. Hyphenation makes ragged-right text look less ragged.
B. Hyphenation makes justified text look better. It helps avoid “rivers of white” running through your text block.
C. Avoid too many hyphens in a single paragraph.
XII. Set the proper margins. There are exterior margins (top, bottom and outside edge of page), and inside margins (also called the “gutter.” This is the blank space closest to the spine).
A. There are no standard margins. An average margin for a 6” x 9” book is about .75” for outside and top margins, .815” for gutter, and 1” for bottom margin.
B. Margins will vary by book cut-size, smaller margins for smaller book sizes
C. Top margins are traditionally smaller than bottom margins, but they can be equal.
D. Try to achieve a balance between positive and negative space in determining the width of margins. Do not try to cram as many words into a page as possible by reducing margins. Margins that are too small will give page a cramped feel.
E. Inside margin (gutter) will generally be larger that outside margin to make allowances for binding. Because of this, margins for left and right pages will normally mirror each other
   1. In MS Word you can go to Margins→Custom Margins→Pages and select “Mirror Margins”.
F. Size of recommended inside gutter will vary based on number of pages. Once a book is bound the pages will not lie flat. As the thickness of a book increases, the tighter the binding and the greater the tendency for words along the inside margin to disappear into the gutter, especially close the center of the book. Your publisher will probably have guidelines for gutter size based on the number of pages in the book.

XIII. Avoid widows and orphans. Widows and orphans are the single lines (sometimes even a single word) that may appear at the end or beginning of a text block on a page. Ways to get rid of them include:
A. Dividing a paragraph into two paragraphs, possibly adding an extra line.
B. Rewriting a paragraph to add a few extra words (especially a few extra long words) and bumping it up an additional line.
C. Editing a paragraph to shorten it and eliminating a line. Sometimes all it takes is re-arranging a couple of words, or using a short word to replace a long one.
D. If your program supports “kerning (the ability to incrementally vary the spacing between letters), it can be used to shorten or lengthen lines of text.
E. Tracking adjusts the spacing throughout an entire word or line. If used judiciously it can help with widows and orphans.
   1. The tracking in Word is rudimentary (choice between expanded, normal, and condensed). Sections of a paragraph on which a different tracking is applied may look out-of-place compared to other sections of the paragraph.

XIV. Templates. Your publisher, or sites such as The Book Designer, may have templates for the cut-size you want to use.
A. These templates will usually already have margins, headers and page-numbering already set-up.
B. They may have text and paragraph styles already set-up.
C. They should be customizable to accommodate publisher requirements such as size of inner gutter.
XV. Use text and paragraph styles to format your manuscript rather than manually applying text or paragraph attributes.

A. Setting up styles for often-used elements such as regular text blocks, indented text blocks, main headings and subheadings makes it easy to change the formatting. For instance, if you decide you want to change the indent for the first line of every paragraph from five to three spaces, you can just modify the style and all indents will be changed automatically.

XVI. Illustrations.

A. Make sure all images are 300 DPI. Less than that gives inferior printed image quality. More than that just makes the image file larger without any increase in printed image quality.

B. Color images. POD publishers usually print using CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, black) standards, not RGB (red, green, blue).
   1. Some publishing programs automatically convert RGB images to CMYK when the document is converted to a PDF file for printing. Others do not and you must manually do the conversion (within the publishing program or with a digital manipulation program). Make sure you know how your program handles the conversion from RGB to CMYK.

C. Placement of images.
   1. It is easier to move images around in some programs. It can be frustratingly hard to move images around in MS Word unless, after you place the image, you go to Picture Tools—Wrap Text and select an option other than the default “In line with text.”
   2. Programs such as MS Word link images to text blocks. This means that after placing the image, if you change the text, the placement of the image on the page may change.
   3. Programs such as Adobe InDesign key images to specific locations on a page. If you change the text the image stays put.

D. Bleeds. A bleed is when the image goes all the way to the edge of the page.
   1. Generally, for bleeds you set up your publication page to print on a sheet of paper that is larger than the finished page. The outer edge of the image goes slightly beyond the finished edge of the page and is trimmed off when the pages are trimmed to the finished cut-size. Your publisher should have instructions on how it wants the image set up.

E. Sharpening. Many images will need to be sharpened for optimal printing. Digital manipulation, especially scanning, ends up softening the image, and the image will need to be sharpened. Sharpening refers to increasing the contrast along edges in an image.
   1. Image manipulation programs such as Photoshop offer several sharpening tools. One of the best is “Un-sharp Mask.” You can find primers for sharpening images on-line. It is a trial-and-error process and you do not want to overdo it.
XVII. **Cover design. Same basic principles apply, except inside and outside margins should generally be the same.**

A. The book cover will be a separate file from the book interior, and it will be laid out to show the back cover, spine and front cover.

B. You will need about 80 pages in your book to get printing on the spine. Books with thinner pages will need larger page-count.
   1. Some publishers object to padding out the pages with extra black pages at the beginning or end of a book

C. Spine width is dependent on thickness of paper and number of pages in book. Your publisher will tell you what the thickness of its paper is so that you can design accordingly.

D. The bottom of the back cover is reserved for the ISBN barcode and price bar code. Price bar code is optional.

E. Remember that with many POD publishers there can be up to 1/16th” variance in placement of design elements on printed page.
   1. Do not place any design elements within 1/16th” of outside edge of page unless you are doing a bleed.
   2. Design elements for the spine need to have 1/16” allowance on either side to fit on the spine

F. If you are planning to market your book on the internet, you need to design the front cover so it will look good at full-size, and look good as a thumb-nail image on an internet site.
1. Requirements for a manuscript before the conversion process
   a. Manuscript needs to be edited by someone other than yourself. Good editing is essential!
   b. If you have illustrations, they need to be optimized and properly sized for e-books
      i. Images should be RGB, not CMYK. RGB is method used to generate color on a computer screen. CMYK is only used in print industry
      ii. Color is cheap in e-books, but color images can take up a lot of memory.
      iii. Some e-book publishers put limits on size of files. Some accept files up to 10 Mb, others up to 20MB, others more
      iv. E-book images are defined by pixels.
         1. Earlier e-readers had displays with pixel-densities of 167 ppi (pixels per inch) and small screens. The screen resolution of the first Kindles was 600 by 800 pixels. Graphics needed be no wider than 600 pixels. Many low-cost e-readers and tablets still have displays that are below 200 ppi.
         2. Modern e-readers and tablets can have screens with pixel densities over 300 ppi. An Ipad Mini 4 screen has a pixel density of 326 ppi. Its screen resolution is 1536 x 2048 pixels.
         3. Portable devices with high-end graphics can handle images up to about 1600 pixels wide. Recommended e-book image dimensions vary by platform (Apple, Kindle, etc.). I have seen image pixel-widths between 1400 to 1600 pixels recommended.
         4. The standard ppi for formatting images for e-books seems to be shifting from about 150 ppi to 300 ppi.
         5. The larger the image the larger the file size. An uncompressed 3” x 5” color photo (900 pixels x 1500 pixels) at 300 ppi would take up 756 Kb of storage. The same size photo could be compressed to 162 Kb without any appreciable loss in screen resolution. Images can be compressed through image-editing programs, stand-alone apps, or even Word.
   v. Different e-book platforms accept various graphic formats: TIF, GIF, PNG, JPEG, etc... JPEG and PNG seem to be accepted by most platforms and provide good image compression.
   vi. Cover image. I have seen recommendations that cover images be 1400-1600 pixels wide.
       1. Different e-reader platforms have different display aspect ratios (proportional ratio between width and height), 1:1.33 for iPad, 1:1.6 for Kindle, 1:1.5 for Nook. The website, www.bookcoverscreative.com recommends that a cover image with a ratio of 1:1.5 (width to height) will work across all platforms. The site also recommends image dimensions of 1600 x 2400 pixels, with a file size not exceeding 2 Mb.
   c. Need good cover illustration that will grab buyer’s attention at thumbnail size
      i. Cover should not have a lot of text, since most of the text would be unreadable at thumbnail size.

2. Requirements for a manuscript to be converted to e-book formats
   a. File formats accepted by conversion services can vary.
      i. Some, in addition to Word documents, accept formats such as ODT (open document text) and RTF (rich text format).
      ii. A common format for submitting manuscripts for conversion is a Word DOC or DOCX file. Newer versions of Word use DOCX.
      iii. If you use a newer version of Word, and a conversion services accepts only DOC files, you can save the file as an older version of Word.
      iv. Some non-Word word-processing programs allow you to save your work as a DOC or DOCX file, however sometimes the conversion to Word formats is not clean and the resulting file will not convert to e-book format properly.
         1. The Smashwords Style Guide describes a “Nuclear Method” for purging bad formatting in a Word file.
            b. Copy and past your document into a text editor such as NotePad, which eliminates all formatting.
            c. Close and re-open Word
            d. Copy and paste the document from the text editor back to a fresh Word document, ready for formatting.
b. MS Word documents need to be cleaned up before converting. Word puts extra formatting into its documents that may mess up the conversion process. You can do this process yourself, find people to do it for you, or find conversion services that will accept your manuscript “as-is,”

i. Here are a few general suggestions for formatting reflowable e-books.
1. If you need to reformat your manuscript, Smashwords recommends the Nuclear Method as a good first step.
2. Do not worry about page dimensions and margins. You can format to standard 8.5” x 11” size paper width with minimal margins.
3. Use common fonts like Times New Roman and Arial. E-reader fonts will be determined by reader.
4. Minimize number of fonts used—usually just two—one for body and one for headings.
   a. Some e-book readers only allow one font, with a smaller point-size for body text and larger point-size for headings.
5. Minimize different font sizes. Smashwords recommends 12-point for body and 14-point for headings.
6. For reflowable e-books you do not want to use hyphenation or justified text.
7. Drop Caps require special formatting. Don’t use them unless someone will be applying necessary coding during conversion.
8. Headers and page numbers in your manuscript need to be eliminated. They will not appear in your e-book
9. For some conversion services, like Smashwords, you need to insert hyperlinks in the table of contents to replace numbers.
   a. Conversions services like Draft2Digital (D2D) can detect chapter headings and automatically generate a table of contents.
10. Use text styles rather than manual formatting to delineate between headings and body text. If parts of the body need special formatting, like indented blocks of text, set up a different paragraph style.
   a. Some e-book converters determine whether text is part of the body or a heading by detecting text styles.
   b. Don’t use manual formatting to change fonts or font sizes. Some e-book converters may pick up on the underlying style and miss the special formatting.
   c. You can use manual formatting for text effects like bold, underline and italics.
11. Do not use tabs for indents, or the space bar to delineate empty space. You never know how an e-reader will handle these types of formatting. Use the “Paragraph Styles” in Word to define how indents and spacing are handled.
12. Decide what paragraph style you are using (Indented first line with no extra space between paragraphs, or flush-left first paragraph with extra line between paragraphs) and do not mix the two styles.
13. For simple reflowable e-books the illustrations need to be imbedded within the document. This means that all the information about the illustration resides with the document, rather than just a low-resolution image linked to a larger file outside the document. In Word you would use the “Insert picture in-line with text” word-wrap should be turned off.
14. Tables should be converted to graphics and placed, as with illustrations, in line with text.
15. Since there is no back cover, information about the book that would normally appear on the back cover will not be included with the e-book. That information would be provided to the publisher separately to be included in its book catalog.
   a. You may want to add material to the end of your manuscript such as a biography, contact information, URL for your blog or website, etc...

ii. You can reformat the manuscript yourself.
1. If your manuscript is not complex (i.e. few graphics, no tables, etc.) you can easily do the formatting yourself with guides provided by services such as Smashwords.com, and SelfPublishingAdvice.com. The process is not hard.
2. More complex manuscripts can be reformatted by you, but it will take longer and require more skill.

c. Some services, such as Draft2Digital (D2D), will accept your Word document “As is.”
   i. D2D will convert your manuscript for free. You need to realize though, that services such as D2D use an automated e-book conversion process that is limited in how it will format your manuscript. Its converter may override your formatting choices and what you get may not be what you were expecting.
ii. Conversion services for which you pay should be more amenable to converting your manuscript in a way that mirrors your preferences. Costs run from $50 for an un-complicated manuscript to hundreds of dollars for a manuscript with complex formatting, lots of illustrations, tables and such.