

**BOOK CONSTRUCTION BLUEPRINT**

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# Offset Printing Workbook

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# THE BOOK DESIGNER

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## Getting Offset Printing Estimates for Your Book

Requesting prices on manufactured products is largely a matter of knowing the conventions, materials, and processes that are used. Book printing is no different.

In our workflow, getting a price for printed books can come right at the beginning of the book planning process. Because decisions need to be made early about the kind of book that we'll produce, getting an idea of the unit cost of the books—and the investment that will be required by the author—can help in the planning.

For early estimates, we'll make an educated guess about how many pages will be in the book, and we might also ask for separate prices on a variety of design or production variables. For instance, since paper is the largest cost in printing books, we might ask the printer to compare the price of the book on two different paper stocks.

After the book layout is complete, we can modify the specifications to arrive at the final price for the project. This revision will become your contractual agreement with the book printer.

## Stepping Through the Estimate Specifications

As we step through these specifications, we are going to follow the order of the printer's production process as well, where each stage is specified and priced in the order they will naturally occur. Here's how I would specify a typical book. Comments, where appropriate, are added.

**Title and Author:** *The Joy of Self-Publishing*, Joel Friedlander

**Quantity:** 500, 1,000, 2,000

The lowest quantity that's practical is around five hundred books. Two thousand will give us a good unit price, so these quantities will give us the range of prices we need to set our first-printing quantity.

**Trim size:** 6" x 9"

Although all printers can print books in standard sizes, their equipment may be optimized for a few specific sizes. Getting prices from a variety of printers will often make this apparent. If you have an odd-sized book, it's crucial to talk to your printer early in the process to make sure you are producing the book as efficiently as possible.

**Pages:** 200

Make sure this number is divisible by eight.

**Copy:** Print-ready PDF files

It will be the publisher's responsibility—or her book designer's—to create files according to the printer's specifications, which are usually shown on their website.

**Proofs:** Digital proofs for interior, color matchprint proof for cover

Since we are supplying the reproduction files, we only need to make sure the pages are in the right place on the interior. I always recommend a color proof of the cover to avoid surprises when the books arrive. It's important to fully

understand what the books will look like, and approving a proof will eliminate guesswork and uncertainty on both your part and your printer's.

**Press:** Prints black throughout, no bleeds

In other words, there are no places where images in the book run off the edge of the page (bleed).

**Stock:** 55 lb. natural or equivalent

This is a standard book printing paper, and I'm signaling to the printer that rather than specify a particular brand, I'm more interested in the economy of using their usual paper. Printers buy so much paper that this is likely to be much more reasonably priced than other alternatives. "Natural" is an off-white color that makes for easy reading. For books that are text only, I find this color very attractive. For books with illustrations and photographs, a good-quality white paper works better.

**Cover stock:** Your 12' C1S

Again, I'm asking the printer to estimate based on their own "house" stock. The specification is for 12 point paper that's coated on one side and uncoated on the other ("C1S"). Many books are printed with 10 point covers, but 12 point is not unusual and adds some stiffness to a softcover, particularly one with a lot of pages.

**Cover press:** 4/0

This indicates that the cover will be printed in full color on the outside—the coated side—and unprinted on the inside. If you were to say this in conversation, it would be "Four over zero" or "four over nothing."

**Cover finish:** Film lamination

One of the advantages of working with a book printer is the multitude of options available to you. For finishes, we could use press-applied varnishes or film lamination that's either very glossy or perfectly matte to the touch. Check with your printer to see what's available.

**Binding:** Perfect bound softcover

Some printers offer a “notch binding” that’s superior to perfect binding, and some offer sewn bindings. There are also differences in the types of adhesives used in perfect binding, and although it may seem like a tedious detail, the differences can be dramatic, so make sure to enquire. You might ask for prices on more than one binding style when in the planning stages. This is also where we might ask for pricing on special finishes, including embossing the covers, foil stamping with metallic foils, or adding flaps to the cover of a softcover book.

**Packing:** Shrink in convenient bundles, bulk in HD cartons

If you expect the books you’re ordering to last a year, I suggest you have the printer shrink-wrap them in bundles. Here I’m indicating that the printer can decide how many books makes a “convenient” bundle, and what best suits their equipment. I’m only concerned with protecting the books. “HD” stands for heavy duty, and you don’t want your heavy books packed in anything else.

**Shipping:** Please estimate freight for residential delivery to zip code 94901

The book printer gets very good prices on trucking, and some larger printers even use their own trucks to deliver orders of books. They need to know if you require “inside delivery,” which is exactly what it sounds like, and, if so, whether there will be stairs or freight elevators involved. Spell this out on your request.

That’s all you need to get a price from an offset book printer on your project. Of course, if there are other elements in the book, like photos, color inserts, special papers, or any other variation, make sure to add a clear explanation. If you’re in doubt, I encourage you to ask questions. Most good-quality short-run book printers are only too happy to answer your questions.

The printer’s quotation you will receive in response to your request for estimate embodies all the specifications for the physical manufacture of your book. In addition, it is a contract between you and the printer, and after you sign the quotation you will be bound by what’s in it, as well as the usual printer’s terms and conditions. A lot of the

terms and conditions have to do with standard trade practice, and these are discussed in detail in the *Book Construction Blueprint*. Next, we'll examine an offset printer's estimate in detail.

## **Offset Printing Estimate in Detail**

As an example, I'm using a sample quote provided by [Thomson-Shore](#) in Dexter, Michigan. I have a long association with Thomson-Shore and continue to print books there for their outstanding quality and excellent customer service. I'm grateful to Thomson-Shore for giving me permission to use this form.

You'll notice in my illustration that there's a place for you to sign at the bottom where it says "Accepted by," and you should remember that you are signing on behalf of your publishing company, and committing to the project as it's outlined in the estimate. Once signed, the estimate, in effect, is transformed into a contract between you and the printer.

Let's take a look at this form on the next page.

## THOMSON-SHORE

Helping you put your best book forward®

3937 - Marin Bookworks

August 11, 2017

Estimate Number 31734

① Attn: Joel Friedlander  
Email: jfbookman@gmail.com  
Phone Number: 415-459-1311

② Title: The Joy of Self Publishing /Author: Friedlander  
Salesperson: Laurie Schiller  
Email: lauries@tshore.com  
Phone Number: 734-426-6205

### Option 1

Component	Colors	Substrate	Format	Finishing
③ Text 256 Pages	1x1	Natures Book Natural 30% PCR 55 # 400ppi	6 x 9", 256 Pages	Text Full PDF Proofs(Qty 1), Black Front and Back and PDF Workflow - Text - Output-ready PDF file provided.
④ Cover	4x0	Shore 12pt C1S 10% PCR 155 # 170ppi	6 x 9"	Cover Proof Hard(Qty 1), Black, Cyan, Magenta, Yellow Front, PDF Workflow - TS to receive output-ready PDF file and Lamination Front Gloss Layflat

### Overall Finish

⑤ Book - Perfect Bound Glued, Box Single Wall, Pallet, Shrinkwrapping Collective (3) and Shipping: FOB Dexter, MI

### Payment Terms

⑥ Confirm with Credit Dept.

Product	Qty 1	Qty 2	Qty 3
	500	1,000	2,000
⑦ Total	\$ 2,070.45	\$ 2,746.60	\$ 3,843.20
Price per 1000	\$ 4,140.90	\$ 2,746.60	\$ 1,921.60
Unit Price	\$ 4.14	\$ 2.75	\$ 1.92
Over/Under Price	\$ 2.04	\$ 1.47	\$ 1.28

### ⑧ Notes

Estimated freight to ZIP 94901 (XPO) adds approx. \$215 for 500, \$370 for 1000 or \$690 for 2000 copies. This is an estimate only and subject to change.

These prices will be honored for thirty (30) days from the date of this quotation. Signing and returning this quotation or the submission of your Purchase Order within those 30 days will secure the pricing for ninety (90) days from the date of this quotation. Any job received after ninety (90) days will be subject to new pricing. A confirmation, including new prices for any changes, additions, or alterations to the above specifications, will be sent to your after your order is received.

This quote incorporates, by reference, Thomson-Shore's Terms and Conditions which are available through the Thomson-Shore website at [www.thomsonshore.com/termsandconditions](http://www.thomsonshore.com/termsandconditions). Please read these Terms and Conditions as they may have changed since your last order. The Terms and Conditions apply to all purchases and orders.

⑨ Accepted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

By my signature, I certify that I have read and agree to the provision in this quote and to the Terms and Conditions posted at [www.thomsonshore.com/termsandconditions](http://www.thomsonshore.com/termsandconditions)



The estimator takes your specifications and they are all show on the printer's quote. It's a good idea to look over the quotation to see if it accurately reflects everything you outlined in your request for estimate, as laid out in the last chapter.

The only discrepancy I find here between my request and the estimate is a packing detail: "box single wall" cartons are called for, although I specified "HD" or heavy-duty (double-wall) cartons. This is noted in section 5 of the form, "Overall Finish." Everything else is fine, and the difference in the cartons is a minor one.

Let's look in detail at each section of the estimate.

1. **Customer information**—Contains a customer number and your contact information.
2. **Printer's information**—Contact info for your customer service representative (CSR) as well as an estimate number to identify this project and a date, since the estimate will only be good for a limited time. In this case it's thirty days, as noted in the Notes section (8).
3. **Text specifications**—Lists all the specifications for the book interior (text). The paper type with details, number of pages, trim size, and how the digital artwork will be prepared are all indicated in this section. "1x1" means that it will print both sides of the sheet using one color.
4. **Cover specifications**—The same type of information as listed for the text is specified here for the cover. "4x0" means that it will be printed in full color on one side and left blank on the other.
5. **Finish**—The printer is using this section to show the binding method, packaging, and shrink-wrapping requested. It also notes that no freight cost is included in the estimate, since it is "FOB Dexter, MI," indicating the point where the printer is located, and from which shipping is charged.



6. **Payment terms**—As a new customer, you will need to open an account and establish credit. If you don't need credit, most printers will accept payment in two parts: half of the total amount with the print order, with the remainder due when the books are ready to ship. Note that printers will not ship the books until they are completely paid for.
7. **Pricing**—Here's where we get to the bottom line. We have four prices for each quantity I requested: five hundred, one thousand, and two thousand books. (By the way, because paper is the most expensive part of book printing, reducing or increasing the paper quality will have a marked effect on the price.) **Total** incorporates all the elements of the project in one price, and this is what you will pay the printer at each quantity. **Price per 1000** makes comparing prices at different quantities very easy. **Unit Price** does the math for you, showing what one copy will cost at each quantity. Note that the unit price at two thousand copies is less than half the unit price at five hundred copies. Finally, we have the Over/Under Price. Remember from the section on Understanding the Language of Printing earlier in this book that you won't know the exact quantity of books you'll receive until your order is completely finished and ready to ship. The over/under price shows you what you will be charged or credited for each copy over or under the quantity ordered.
8. **Notes**—Don't skip over this section; there's a lot of important information here. For instance, the printer has, at my request, estimated the freight cost for each quantity and included it here. It also contains the date limitation on the estimate's prices.
9. **Signature/Terms and Conditions**—This is where it gets real. If there are any errors or omissions on the estimate, ask the printer to correct it. You want the final estimate to be accurate because when you sign on the line, as I've said, you are in effect signing a contract between you and the printer. Make sure to click the link to check out the terms and conditions before you sign.

This process can seem daunting, especially the first time you do it. Just step through it slowly, and if you have any questions get in touch with your book designer or the CSR at the printer; they will be happy to help.

Although each printer organizes its estimates differently, once you understand the concepts and terminology, you'll be able to decipher them without a problem.

And if you're wondering if all this is worth it, you might be interested to know that a print-on-demand copy of this book would cost approximately \$3.50, which is over 20% more than the offset cost for this book at a quantity of one thousand copies. And I've seen offset estimates that are *half the price* for the same book printed via print on demand.

In any event, the difference between these two methods of production are important, and the cost savings on every offset book sold represent pure profit to you, the publisher.

## **Worksheet for Estimating**

To make your job easier, we've translated the items you need to specify to a worksheet that you can print out and use to put together your own specifications and then submit it to book printers as a "Request for Estimate" (RFE) or a "Request for Quotation" (RFQ) and get a variety of prices for your own book production.

## Offset Book Printing Estimate Worksheet

Use this form to gather your specifications and then, as prices come in, to compare several printers, indicated as P1, P2, and P3 in the worksheet.

Title & Author			
Publication Date			
Quantity			
Trim size			
Pages			
Copy			
Proofs			
Press			
Stock			
Cover stock			
Cover finish			
Binding			
Packing			
Shipping			
Other			
	<b>Printer Price Comparison</b>		
	P1 _____	P2 _____	P3 _____
Total cost			
Over/under cost			
Unit cost			
Production time			