THE AUTHOR'S TOOLBOX

A starter toolkit and an upgrade-later list for first-time authors

FORD MOUNTAIN PUBLISHING
Publishing with heart, for dreamers of every age.

Two questions before you buy anything

- ☐ Will I use this on more than one book?
- ☐ Will it save more hours than it costs?

The starter toolkit ($0 to $147)

- ☐ The word processor you already own, or Google Docs, for drafting and revision.
- ☐ Reedsy Studio for a free print and ebook interior, or Kindle Create if you are publishing only on Amazon (its files work only there).
- ☐ The free tier of a grammar checker, used after your own revision pass and never in place of an editor.
- ☐ Affinity (free with a Canva account) or Canva Free for social graphics and simple promotional images.
- ☐ A free newsletter account, opened before the book comes out.

A first-time author can publish a professional-looking book with nothing more, provided the editing and the cover are handled well.

The upgrade-later list

	Tool	Price (Oct 2026)	Upgrade when
☐	**Atticus**	$147 one-time	You plan a second book, want more design control, or work on Windows
☐	**Vellum Press**	$249.99 one-time (Mac only)	You work on a Mac and want a polished result with little setup
☐	**ProWritingAid Premium**	$120 a year, or $399 lifetime	You will run every manuscript through it between edits
☐	**Scrivener 3**	About $60 one-time	You manage a series bible or a stack of nonfiction research
☐	**Microsoft 365 Personal**	$99.99 a year	Your editor returns notes in Word's Track Changes
☐	**Canva Pro**	$144 a year	You make promotional graphics every week
☐	**Paid email plan**	Varies by list size	Your list outgrows MailerLite's free 250 subscribers

Prices checked October 29, 2026, in U.S. dollars. Microsoft is retiring Publisher in October 2026, so plan a move if you lay out books in it.

Before you subscribe to anything

- [ ] Note the renewal price and date, and set a reminder.
- [ ] Prefer one-time licenses for tools you expect to use for years.
- [ ] Confirm you can export your work in standard formats (DOCX, EPUB, PDF) before you commit a manuscript to any app.
- [ ] Treat any tool that promises to write, publish, or market your book for you with the same caution as a bundled publishing package.

Buying a tool or hiring the work

- [ ] If you will format several books and enjoy the work, buy the software.
- [ ] If this is your only book, compare the license plus your hours against a formatter's written quote.
- [ ] Either way, check every chapter opening, page break, and front-matter page in the previewer before you upload.

My toolkit

Job	Tool I will use	Cost	Renewal date
Drafting and revising			
Organizing the draft			
Grammar and style checks			
Ebook and print formatting			
Graphics and promotion			
Reader newsletter			

Working with Ford Mountain Publishing

We format ebook and print interiors in Atticus at $1 per 250 words (ebook) and $1 per 150 words (print), and we hand back files you own. Every project starts with a free consultation. Visit fordmountainpublishing.com.

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