

## Questions and Answers for Media Kit

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### **Why did you write *Self-Publisher's Legal Handbook*? Aren't there enough books out there about self-publishing?**

When I self-published my historical novel, [\*Coyote Winds\*](#), I found no legal guide to help independent authors and bloggers deal with issues such as copyright, defamation, and taxes. Dozens of books offered advice on designing covers, editing content, and tweeting effectively, but few tell writers how to set up their writing businesses, protect their Social Security Numbers, or spot scams. I wrote the Handbook to help writers publish and promote their work while minimizing legal risks and errors.

I have been a business lawyer for 30 years. I do not go to court, and no one is ever going to produce a movie about the exciting life of a business attorney. But I get a great deal of satisfaction by keeping my clients out of trouble, so they can focus on their businesses, creative projects, and lives.

And there is a personal reason I wrote the Handbook.

My parents were artistic people; my mother an actress and my father a stage and television director. By temperament or choice, they did not understand business or money. When I was young, I saw them being taken advantage of over and over again. I went to law school so I would have the tools to navigate the business world myself and to help creative people like my parents.

### **Is the Handbook full of warnings and horror stories that scare writers?**

Not at all. The Handbook focuses on how to accomplish the various tasks of independent publishing without getting into tax or legal trouble. Much of the information is useful for traditionally published writers as well.

For instance, many writers are surprised to discover they are starting a small business. They have questions about incorporation, hiring freelancers and calculating the dreaded sales tax. I cover all those topics.

I also explain what it means to own a copyright and how to protect it.

If writers are interested in collaboration, I devote an entire chapter to what should go into a collaboration agreement.

Yes, I do explain defamation, infringement, and other risks writers face, but I also provide practical information on how to minimize those risks.

### **What are the biggest risks writers face?**

Many writers assume their biggest risks are defamation, privacy, and infringement claims, but I disagree.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of books are published, and maybe there are few hundred lawsuits claiming defamation, infringement, or disclosure of private facts. But every year, tens of thousands of writers sign on to unfavorable, if not unconscionable, contracts, especially if they don't have a literary agent or lawyer on their team. In fact, many writers don't even read their contracts. One writer told me a contract looks like 5000 words run through a blender!

I am something of fanatic about this. I am sure any writer who can master plot, character, voice, pacing, and all the other elements of a book is capable of reading and understanding the key provisions of a contract, particularly any grant of rights. The Handbook includes a line by line explanation of key contract terms. I also explain where writers can get help when needed.

### **What are the most common questions you hear from writers?**

Writers ask me the most interesting questions. One recently asked me if he should get permission before placing a fictitious murder in a real world restaurant. I encouraged him to do so.

The most common questions deal with using lyrics and images created by others. I've written two short e-books on when and how to get permission to use lyrics and images. [\*How to Use Eye-Catching Images Without Paying a Fortune or a Lawyer\*](#) and [\*How to Use Memorable Lyrics Without Paying a Fortune or a Lawyer\*](#). Both are available for 99 cents on Amazon. I give them away for free to people who sign up for my newsletter.

Next most common is how to use real people, places, events, and trademarks in both fiction and nonfiction works. And finally, many writers ask me what expenses are tax deductible. The Handbook addresses these questions and more.

### **What are the most common mistakes writers make?**

Assuming anything they find on the internet is free to use. It's not.

Not reading their contracts.

Overpaying a self-publishing company, marketing service, or publicist who overpromises results. Authors are particularly vulnerable to aggressive marketers because anyone who

writes tends to be a dreamer. We hope to find the secret formula to bestselling success, and for \$99, or \$199, or \$999, maybe we will be admitted into that exclusive club. Writers need to develop a skeptical eye when considering these too-good-to-be-true offers.

**Where can readers get the Handbook?**

The Handbook is available in print through Amazon, Barnes & Noble or by order through your local bookstore. Ebooks are available through Amazon and Smashwords. By April 1, 2015, the ebook will also be available on iTunes, Oyster, Scribd and Kobo.

**Are you available for speaking engagements?**

Absolutely.

**Where can writers reach you?**

I have a website and blog at <http://helensedwick.com/>.

I am also active on Google+: <https://plus.google.com/u/0/+HelenSedwick/posts> and

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/HelenSedwick>

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