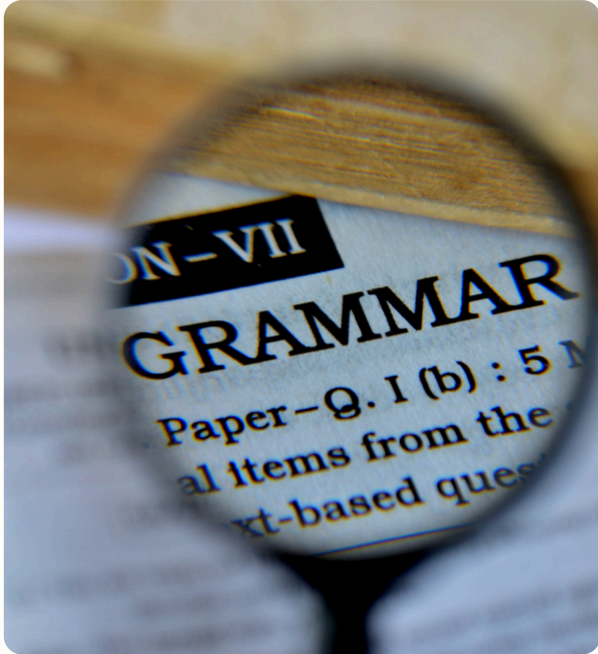


The Indie Author's Toolbox: 10 Free or Low- Cost Resources You Shouldn't Skip

By Jennifer Sullivan



The Indie Author's Toolbox



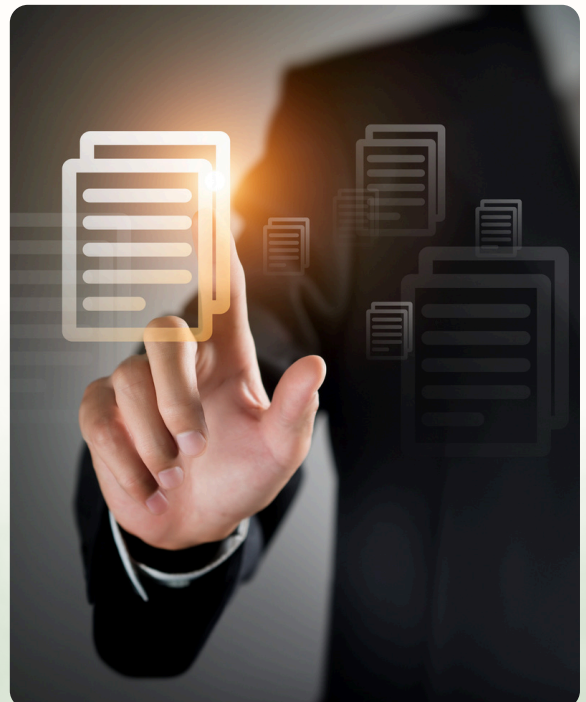
02 Grammarly

Whether you're confident in your grammar or need a little polish, [Grammarly is a must-have](#). The free version catches basic errors, while the premium version goes deeper with tone suggestions and advanced grammar. I used Grammarly extensively at the end of my writing process to do last minute spell checks, a full copy editing check and again I looked for any red Grammarly underlines while I was setting up my pass pages. It's not a replacement for a professional editor, but it's a great first (and last) layer.

01 Google Docs

Let's start simple. [Google Docs](#) is a free, cloud-based writing tool that allows you to draft, edit, and even collaborate with beta readers or editors without worrying about saving your work every five minutes.

You can access it from anywhere, which is a lifesaver if inspiration strikes when you're away from your laptop. You can also save offline copies to work on when you don't have access to internet. If you have a Gmail address, you have Google Docs, so check it out.



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04

Query Tracker

If you're not quite ready to self-publish and you're testing the traditional waters, [Query Tracker](#) is a low-cost, invaluable tool. For around \$25 per year, you can research agents, track your submissions, and stay organized through the often-tedious querying process.

I used Query Tracker myself for a year before deciding to pivot toward self-publishing. And I'll say this: even if you don't end up going the traditional route, the experience of querying teaches you a lot about your pitch and your audience. The feedback I received from the agents that did respond to my queries was invaluable and led me to search for an editor, which greatly improved my memoir.

03

Canva (free + pro)

Book marketing can feel like a full-time job, but [Canva](#) makes it so much easier. You can create stunning graphics for social media, promo cards, bookmarks, ads, and more—without needing a design degree.

The free version is robust, but if you want to save time with custom templates, access premium photos, and get that little "extra," the Pro version is worth every penny. I use Canva Pro for my own books, including designing social media graphics, sell sheets, and promotional materials.

Bonus: You can stay with the free version and search for Canva template packs online. I purchased a couple of book promotion/author social media template packs online that cost me around \$15 and I could upload them into the free version of Canva and personalize them.



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Reedsy Marketplace

Reedsy connects indie authors with vetted professionals—editors, designers, marketers, and more. You can request quotes, review portfolios, and find the right person for your project. While hiring someone will cost money, browsing and building your team is completely free.

I found my copy editor through a friend's memoir, but Reedsy is where I would have started if I hadn't had that personal connection.

05

BookFunnel

BookFunnel is fantastic if you want to offer free chapters, sneak peeks, or deliver ARCs (advanced reader copies) to beta readers and reviewers. Their lowest-tier plan is very affordable, and it simplifies the tech side of sending out digital files.

It's especially helpful for building your email list or running reader giveaways.



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08 Vellum

Vellum is the gold standard for book formatting—if you have a Mac. It's a paid tool (a few hundred dollars), but if you plan to publish more than one book, the investment pays for itself. You can create both print and ebook files that look clean, professional, and bookstore-ready. In my opinion, paying for a good book formatting program is one of the indie author necessities.

If you don't have a Mac, don't worry—there are great alternatives (like Atticus or hiring a formatter like me, wink).

07 Draft2Digital

If you're planning to publish your book digitally, Draft2Digital is a top-tier option for wide ebook distribution. They make the formatting process surprisingly easy and help you push your ebook to Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, and other online retailers—all from one dashboard.

There are no upfront costs; they take a small cut of royalties, which is worth it for the simplicity. Notice that I didn't add IngramSpark here. I'll go into that someday in another blog post.



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10 Audacity + ACX

Thinking about turning your book into an audiobook? [Audacity is a free audio editing program](#) that helps you record and clean up your sound, and [ACX](#) (Amazon's audiobook distribution platform) lets you upload and sell your audiobook on Audible.

Recording an audiobook can feel intimidating, but you can absolutely do it yourself on a budget. I'll be offering a guide soon on how you can record your own audio and upload to ACX the DIY way.

09 BookBrush

Think of [BookBrush](#) as Canva's bookish cousin. It's a design platform specifically for authors, with features like 3D book mockups, cover reveal graphics, and Amazon ad templates. The free version gives you enough to experiment with, while the paid plans unlock all the good stuff.

Perfect for launch season or anytime you want to look polished without hiring a graphic designer.

