

CHOOSE ONE OR TWO

OF THESE

BETA READING

TOOLS & SERVICES

A CONSUMER'S GUIDE
FOR INDEPENDENT AUTHORS



CULTIVATE EARLY
READERS
PARTICIPATE IN
COMMUNITIES
GET YOUR WORK
CRITIQUED

ASK FOR
FEEDBACK
NURTURE
RELATIONSHIPS
TURN YOUR BETA
READERS INTO
SUPER FANS WHO
WILL HELP
PROMOTE YOUR
BOOK ON LAUNCH
DAY AND BEYOND

Beta Reading

TOOLS & SERVICES

A consumer's guide for independent authors

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San Diego, California

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Introduction

Authors X Promotion

<https://www.authorsxp.com>

Authors Cross Promotion offers a \$30 service to find three beta readers. If you're unhappy with one for any reason they'll replace him or her, up to three times. They also offer a \$100 street team service to find readers to review your book and hype it on social media. It includes a team page on the AXP site, a team page on Facebook for your team, and access to the AXP Street Team Maintenance Facebook page where you'll find a steady stream of ideas for keeping your street team entertained and motivated.

Beta Books

betabooks.co

BetaBooks is a new platform for sharing your manuscript and collecting feedback from your beta readers. Your readers will love how easy and professional it feels to read and comment from any device and you will love the way it centralizes all the feedback. The founders developed the platform to solve their own problem collecting reader feedback, and it shows. I used BetaBooks to share this book with my beta readers.

No more converting between formats, or dealing with you-know-who, who can never manage to open your files. Invite your readers by email, and you're done. Receive comments and track your readers' comments chapter by chapter and version by version. It saves so much time, you'll never wonder who's read what again. Filter your comments by reader, chapter, or character. Mark it done when you've made changes.

This would also be a great tool for writing groups!

There are three ways to get readers to BetaBooks:

1. Bring your own beta readers to the platform.
2. Apply to share your book with The Beta Reader Pool.
3. Join The Beta Exchange and exchange manuscripts with other authors for critique.

Free trial with monthly and annual programs at \$0 for one book with a max of three readers, or \$149.99 (unlimited books, 20 readers) and \$349.99/annually (unlimited, embeddable signup, MailChimp import and other features). I'm on the \$349.99/year plan and consider it an awesome value. After all, beta readers are book reviewers, too, and you will need those 50 Amazon reviews on launch day to cause the Amazon recommendation engine to kick in.

Booksie

booksie.com

Booksie is a free social publishing site that provides a place where writers and readers can connect from across the globe. Over the past seven years, tens of thousands of writers have posted hundreds of thousands of short stories, novel, poems, articles and more. Booksie is for writers 13+ (no adult content). Booksie organizes your portfolio and gives you tools (including a micro-blogger) to connect with your audience. You can feature certain work in your portfolio, embed images and video, tell your writers about the latest news (micro-blogging), and keep tabs of your fans."

Booksiesilk

booksiesilk.com

A Booksie spin-off, Booksiesilk, is for erotica and adult content. "BooksieSilk is an adult place to explore those fantasies, share them, and read what thoughts and guilty pleasures others are thinking up. Whether your fantasy is imagined or really happened, you have found the place to let others enjoy the pleasures of your mind."

Bublish

bublish.com

Bublish is a multi-faceted publishing tool that lets you create, share, take preorders, and publish your book to the Big 5 ebook distributors while taking

advantage of beta feedback during the process via social media. Share excerpts or “bubbles” on social media or to embed in blogs and websites. Free bubble creator for one book, \$99/annual subscription for book creation tool and unlimited books, a public author profile, social metrics, EPUB creator, and premium resources.

Critique.org

critique.org

Critique.org online workshops/critique groups is actually branded “Critters,” which was originally founded for serious writers of science fiction, fantasy, and horror but expanded to all kinds of writing from mystery, thriller, and adventure writing to mainstream and adventure writing, kids and young adult books and more. You get your work critiqued in exchange for critiquing the work of others. Critters also has a special program for getting entire novels and other large works critiqued quickly, something that is notoriously difficult in any workshop, face-to-face or on-line. Critters is listed as one of the 101 best websites for writers by Writer's Digest. It runs on donations.

Critique Circle

CritiqueCircle.com

Critique Circle launched in October 2003. There are over 3000 active members, over 100,000 stories and over 600,000 critiques have been posted, with over 35 million visits to the site. "During your first visit to CC you will be a *Trial* user

which means there are restrictions on what you can do. Once a CC Moderator has reviewed your application you will be upgraded to a full registered member and these restrictions will be lifted. This usually only takes a couple of hours. Critique Circle runs on a credit system. You "pay" three credits to submit a story, and receive credits for writing a critique of someone else's story. The credits you receive range from 1/2 to 2 per crit, depending on the length of the crit and the length of the story.”

Facebook Notes

facebook.com/help/115983655152193

Facebook Notes is a great little publishing tool. You might commit to publishing your book so that your fans, even if it's just your family and friends on Facebook, can hold you to a deadline and keep cheering you on.

If you're nervous about opening yourself up to people you don't know, this can be a great place to start before moving on to a public social or beta publishing site.

Or keep it in the family by moving your book to www.betabooks.co and inviting them to comment privately there.

Forums

If you write nonfiction or are in a niche that has a lot of avid readers (romance, thriller, etc.) you may find your community in a forum. I often publish in an adventure motorcycle travel forum called ADVRider.com and so many people

there would be interested in beta reading my memoir about my solo adventure through China on a cranky bike.

You can find readers, writers, and peer reviewers in niche forums. As with any online community, be sure to follow the social media rule of thirds. (Google it!)

Figment

figment.com

Figment is an online community and self-publishing platform for young writers. Created by Jacob Lewis and Dana Goodyear, who both worked at The New Yorker, the site officially launched on December 6, 2010. Figment currently has over 300,000 registered users and over 370,000 'books', or pieces of writing. Other features include frequent writing contests, a blog, forums, and The Figment Review. On February 27, 2012, Figment announced it would purchase and merge user bases with its rival site, Inkpop.com. On March 1, 2012, the two sites merged userbases and works. In 2013, Figment was acquired by Random House Children's Group." Make sure you read their terms of service before you sign up.

Gumroad

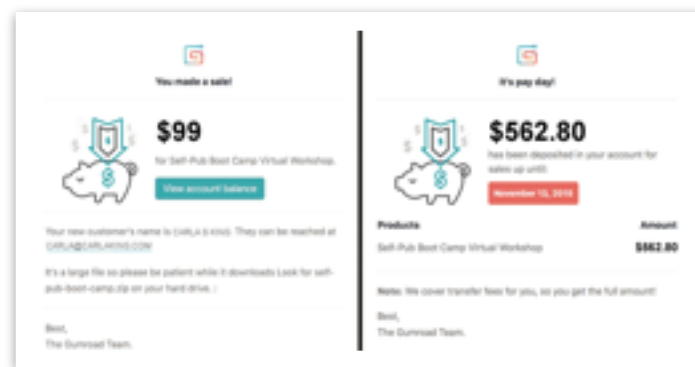
gumroad.com

Upload your book-in-process to Gumroad and price it at free. Gumroad provides widgets to embed in your site so that you can promote or sell directly to your customers and is by far the tool I recommend most for direct sales,

subscriptions, and pre-orders for digital and physical products. But it's a great beta publishing platform, too because you can sell (or give away) your book and send them the new and improved versions as you write and perfect your story.

Simply upload and sell your digital files—up to 4 GB—or create an order form for selling physical objects. Integrated Facebook and Twitter buttons encourage sharing with customer networks. You get customer data and 95% royalty minus a 25¢ transaction fee.

I like Gumroad for its ability to provide both digital downloads and order forms for physical products, as an easy shopping cart system for your site and features that help authors drum up excitement during the book launch. Gumroad competitors include Selz and Sellfy.



I love getting these little notices in my email!

Pressbooks

<http://pressbooks.com/>

If you like WordPress you'll like Pressbooks, an online publishing tool that produces beautifully-designed PDFs for print and print-on-demand books. It also exports to EPUB, MOBI, and HTML.

Use it to create print books that you distribute using vendors like CreateSpace and IngramSpark, along with ebooks you publish on Kindle for Amazon and EPUB for Apple iBooks, Nook, and Kobo.

It's built on the open source WordPress blogging platform so, if you're blogging on WordPress, you already know how to use it. I've created several books and booklets with Pressbooks, including an earlier edition of this book.

I like the Pressbooks blog-to-book import feature, which is awesome for creating a first draft of a book from a series of blog posts. You can see one of my free, public ebooks at <https://motosfo.pressbooks.com/> This book was created from a blog. I just downloaded the “wine country” category posts from the blog and then uploaded it to Pressbooks. Then I added front and back matter, a cover, and made it public. I could also create an EPUB and MOBI and distribute it.

This has become a lead generator (ethical bribe/freebie) for my email newsletter marketing.

Simply log in to Pressbooks, paste in your text, add front and back matter, and choose one of their beautifully designed interior book themes. When you're ready, export your book to PDF, EPUB, and MOBI. It's free to play and to remove the watermark costs about \$25 for ebooks and \$100 for ebook and print.



Pressbooks is based on WordPress and uses CSS to style your book.

If you're intimidated by Pressbooks, start small by using it to create a short book to give away to your email newsletter subscribers. Or pay Pressbooks to do it all for you. Play for free. \$20-\$100



Just a few of Pressbooks' many interior book themes. Scribd

Scribd

scribd.com

Scribd is a document-sharing site and all-you-can-read book subscriptions service. You can sell or give away your stories, excerpts, and ebooks in PDF and document formats. There's lots of platform-building potential here as commenting, social media and sharing widgets are everywhere. Though the social publishing features are not as prominent as they once were, I still think of Scribd as kind of a Wattpad for grownups, with the bonus of being able to sell your work and distribute advance reading copies and private beta docs.

Scribophile

scribophile.com

Scribophile is an online community where writers can post their work and get critiques from other writers. The site works on a karma system. Before you can post your work, you must earn karma points either by critiquing someone else's work, or when other members like your critiques. The longer your critique, the more karma you earn. You "spend" these karma points when you post your work. Posting on Scribophile does not affect first publication rights, as your work can only be read by members.

Scriggler

scriggler.com

Scriggler is a writing, blogging, and debating platform. A place for anyone who wants to write and read on any topic, in any level of detail from fiction to poetry, from science to politics, from book reviews to philosophy. Grow your audience, interact with them and learn who they are through detailed stats on geography, age groups, gender, and more.

They provide promotional tools and also promote their authors via all social media channels. You also get a 25% discount on ProWritingAid electronic editing software.

Wattpad

wattpad.com

Wattpad is worth more than a glance. It's the world's largest community for readers and writers. They have 60 million monthly users across the world who read the 400+ million uploads by 2.4 million writers in 244 different countries and 55 different languages.

The site's raison d'être is for sharing and commenting on stories. Genre writers and authors with a young adult audience get the most traction, but they want to attract older, more mature readers, too. I have stories on Wattpad but they don't get much traction and I like the way they're presented. I keep hoping that the platform becomes more attractive to mature authors and readers.

Here's how it works. Post your story on Wattpad, enter the metadata (keywords) and categories, and start being social. This is the key—being social. Find other authors like you and comment on their story and, hopefully, they'll comment on yours.

Your story can be upvoted and a comments features lets readers make comments on paragraphs. Readers can add your stories to their reading lists and mark it as a favorite. Wattpad curates a list of the best stories, called the Watties, which can also help float your stories to the top.

Wattpad blocks the copy/paste function, so you can post unpublished works on the site without worrying too much about copyright infringement.

Wattpad Premium for readers allows readers to get ad-free stories pushed to their mobile devices. The cost to subscribers is \$5.99 or \$59.99 per year and there is no cost to authors. They have a stated commitment that reading and writing on Wattpad will always be free.

Put your stories on Wattpad and let me know when you do. Maybe we can get a group of more mature, serious authors on the platform, and critique each other's work!

Writing.com

writing.com

One of the largest online writing communities, the site offers writing portfolios, email, a newsfeed, groups, contests, survey forms, madlibs, and submission tracking, as well as tutorials. Writing.com is geared to amateur writers.

Other Places

Here are some more places you may want to try. (If you have any feedback on these I'd love to hear it!)

- 10 Minute Novelists (Facebook Group)
- Absolute Write
- Agent Query Connect
- Beta Readers and Critiques (Facebook Group)
- Christian Woman Critique Partners and Beta Readers (Facebook Group)
- Christian Writers
- Indie Author Group (Facebook Group)
- KidLit 411
- Lit Reactor
- My Writers Circle
- Writer's Carnival
- The Writer's Workshop
- Writing.com

Assignment

Download the Beta Reader Worksheet from the [Resources lesson](#) and start scribbling. The worksheet is designed to walk you through the process of finding, communicating with, and cultivating beta readers. For example:

I'd like to suggest that you find three places to start sharing your writing.

1. Find one community that suits you and fully immerse yourself in it. See the lesson on [Where to beta publish](#).
2. Sign up for [betabooks.co](#) in preparation for bringing your own readers into the platform. It's free for one book and up to 3 readers, then \$14.99 per mo for up to 20 readers and unlimited books. It's always free for the readers.
3. Ask friends, family, peers, current readers, Facebook friends, your mailing list subscribers to be beta readers. See the lesson on [How to find beta readers](#).
4. When they accept, send them an email with instructions on what your goals are. See the lessons [How to interact with beta readers](#) and [Stuart Horowitz on beta publishing](#).

This is fun and scary and you won't believe how rewarding it is. Let's start!

Head on over to the private [Facebook group](#) for questions, support, and community.

