

Ebook Formatting

(What You Need to Know)

How to make an Ebook (Kindle, Epub and Smashwords)

No matter what kind of book you're publishing, ebook sales will probably be your biggest numbers. Since ebooks have no production costs, they let you be much more flexible in pricing, and can be a powerful marketing tool to attract new readers.

So even while you're formatting for print, you should be thinking about ebook conversion. Luckily, you can do it for free, and it can be pretty easy - if you aren't picky about the little details (and I'll explain why you shouldn't be).

Below you'll find a few different methods for converting your document to epub and mobi formats, as well as formatting a Smashwords file (ideal for broader distribution).

Terminology Crash Course

"Ebooks" are digital versions of your book that can be read on tablets and smartphones. Most ebook stores use a file format called "epub" - but Amazon/Kindle uses a slightly modified file format called "mobi." Most bookstore chains have their own ereader device and their own bookstore; but some companies like Smashwords, BookBaby, and Lulu offer "distribution" - which means they'll send your ebook out to all the online retailers and keep track of sales for you.

Getting started

The basics

Unlike print books, for which you want everything to be "fixed" and perfect, ebooks need to "flow."

This is so people using various ereaders can set their own options, change the fonts and text size, to make the reading experience suit their preferences. To achieve this, ebook formats use something very similar to html code. While you don't really need to learn this code, it will help if you need to fine tune the details.

When I first started learning ebook formatting, it was frustrating. I was trying to approach it like a print book, and insert images and special designs, and fixed fonts. While this can be done, my complex code would look fine on Kindle or Barnes & Noble but might look strange on Kobo.

It's very hard to get your file to look exactly the same everywhere. The most important thing is that - even if it doesn't look the same - it doesn't look "broken" or obviously flawed.

For this reason, most mainstream publishers use extremely simple ebooks with no decoration at all. Even if you try to use a dropcap or special formatting, it might look funny. So don't get hung up on the small details. Keep it simple.

What you can do

Basically, you'll use "H1" or "H2" tags for headers. Your text will be justified. The first paragraphs of each chapter will be non-indented. And *maybe* you'll offset the first line in all caps, or a slightly bolded or larger first sentence. I'm taking a picture of a bunch of the books on my Kindle so you can get a sense of what they look like.

CHAPTER TWO

JESSICA

The rain pounded the pavement, causing steam to rise from its black surface. It drove in a lot of people who normally might not have come into the bookstore. The flash storm had caught everyone by surprise; no one expected it since the sky had been blue and sunny just a half hour before.

I watched people from the register, eying their movements, watching the way they interacted with things, other people. They seemed so different from myself now. They were so normal. They chatted and laughed with their friends. They picked up books, glanced over them, set them back down. They went about their every day lives like there was nothing that existed outside of the norm. They knew nothing of angels, death, fear. I felt like a stranger in the human race, like I didn't belong here at all.

I envied them.

And yet I could never regret the events that had happened in my life. They had brought more love and

CHAPTER THREE

DETERMINE YOUR DESTINATION

A Brand-New Approach to Artist Branding

YOU, A BRAND? YES. REMEMBER, YOU ARE THE PRODUCT. YOU MUST FIND A WAY to build YOU into a brand. You must find a way to stand out in an increasingly noisy marketplace. You must connect emotionally with your audience. You must be seen as a cluster of positive perceptions.

There are so many writing and speaking brands that are unable to get off the ground because they are focused solely on their lives, their trauma, their testimony—with no regard for mentioning *why* their stories have anything to do with the audience! If people have never heard of you, they simply won't care about your story—unless you explain what's in it for them.

2. IT DOESN'T INTERRUPT

The Keebler Elves, the Trix bunny, the Yoplait ladies one-upping each other with ecstatic proclamations of how good the yogurt is—they were all created to entertain, so that the next time you were in the mood for cereal or a snack, you'd remember the funny ad and be compelled to try the product. The Marlboro Man's steely jaw and far-off stare were designed to convince you that if you smoked his cigarette, you too might exude an ounce of his masculine, independent essence. Ads and marketing are supposed to make consumers feel something and then act on that feeling. In that regard, the content marketers create today is similar

CHAPTER ONE

I wake with his name in my mouth.

Will.

Before I open my eyes, I watch him crumple to the pavement again. Dead.

My doing.

Tobias crouches in front of me, his hand on my left shoulder. The train car bumps over the rails, and Marcus, Peter, and Caleb stand by the doorway. I take a deep breath and hold it in an attempt to relieve some of the pressure that is building in my chest.

An hour ago, nothing that happened felt real to me. Now it does.

I breathe out, and the pressure is still there.

"Tris, come on," Tobias says, his eyes searching mine. "We have to jump."

PRESSIA

BOATS

THEY STEP INTO THE FRONT HALL—the chair rails, white walls, the flowered runner, and wide stairs leading to the second floor. It floods Pressia with a sharp sense of being penned, trapped. She still holds the bottle to her head, her fingers stiff, her entire body aching. She looks into the dining room; again she's startled by the brilliance of the chandelier trembling over the long table. She hears footsteps overhead—Ingership's wife? The chandelier makes Pressia think of her grandfather, the picture of him in the hospital bed. She tries to remember that feeling of hopefulness, but then recalls the dinner knife in her hand, the latex gloves, the burning in her stomach,

PART ONE

The Connection Economy Demands That We Create Art

Opportunities Amid the Junk

Just outside Harvard Square, at 29 Oxford Street, lies the Cruft Lab. Part of the physics department at Harvard, this is where George Washington Pierce invented the crystal oscillator about a hundred years ago. Without his invention, radio stations would never have been commercially feasible.

But Cruft Hall is even more important for giving its name to a vitally important concept. "Cruft" is the engineering term for the leftover detritus, useless

1

Know Your Numbers

Budgeting

Sowing on the good soil

Financial success and success in business are all about sowing seeds on the good soil. If we want to know where the good soil is, before we get started in Real Estate, it is important to know our numbers. I have noticed that many seasoned salespeople have no grasp of their personal finances, or the numbers of the sales business.

How much would you and your sales career benefit, if you

EIGHTEEN

THE REST OF the words lay on my tongue, unspoken. I hugged myself, closing my eyes. Grief was already seeping into my veins, but I couldn't process anything I was feeling yet.

"It gets easier," Adam said. His voice was surprisingly gentle.

I opened my eyes and looked at him. He stood a few feet away, his hand on the panel that had made the gate spring to life, his hair blowing in the wind. Abel stood beside him. They looked so alike, and I was struck by the nobleness in their eyes as they drew back a few paces, giving me space to feel my sorrow.

After another moment of breathing in and out, I straightened and approached them. I might be head over heels for a boy, something I'd never foreseen happening to me, but I hadn't turned wholly stupid. It was dangerous here.

"We should go," I said, and he nodded.

2

Stop Brainstorming and Take a Shower

A person with a new idea is a crank until the idea succeeds.

—MARK TWAIN

A Mind of Your Own

Eleven men and women file into a conference room and take their places around a large table. Coffee cups and pastries are assembled in front of them. George, the leader, steps up to a large whiteboard and scrawls across the top “SOAP STORM SESSION 9/18/12.” “Okay, let’s begin,” he tells the group. “Let’s just start free-associating. What do we

Epilogue

THE ASCENT BECKONS

The hospital hallway was blindingly white. After so many days living by torchlight, gaslight, and eerie witchlight, the fluorescent lighting made things look sallow and unnatural. When Clary signed herself in at the front desk, she noticed that the nurse handing her the clipboard had skin that looked strangely yellowish under the bright lights. *Maybe she’s a demon*, Clary thought, handing the clipboard back. “Last door at the end of the hall,” said the nurse, flashing a kind smile. *Or I could be going crazy.*

“I know,” said Clary. “I was here yesterday.” *And the day before, and the day before that.* It was early evening, and the hallway wasn’t crowded. An old

These books are mainstream bestsellers. If you're like me, you're probably thinking these don't look very good. And that may seem depressing, but it should be liberating: you don't need to spend a lot of time or energy making

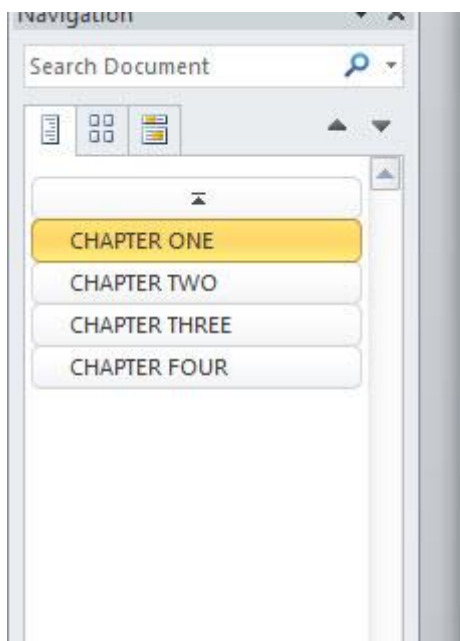
your ebooks perfect, just make sure they work and are clean, and people can read your book without distraction.

Start with a Word File

****If you used Scrivener or Adobe InDesign you can export as an Epub file directly; if you used another open source word processor you can probably save as RTF or HTML. In either case, skip down to the lower sections.****

If your book is in an MS Word file, you should actually have saved a simple copy, before you did any print formatting. That's because your book file needs to be pretty simple to convert it to ebook. I'm going to use Kafka's *The Trial* for this tutorial.

Hopefully you've been using the "Header 1" tag for all your Chapter Titles - so you should already have a "Navigation Panel" showing up with your chapters.



You may need to get rid of some troublesome features; you can use the Search and Replace feature to do so.

I usually search for double spaces and change them to single space, in case I've missed any.

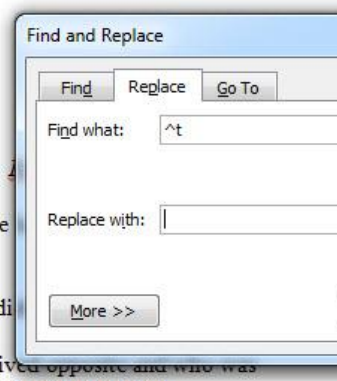
The Trial

Franz Kafka

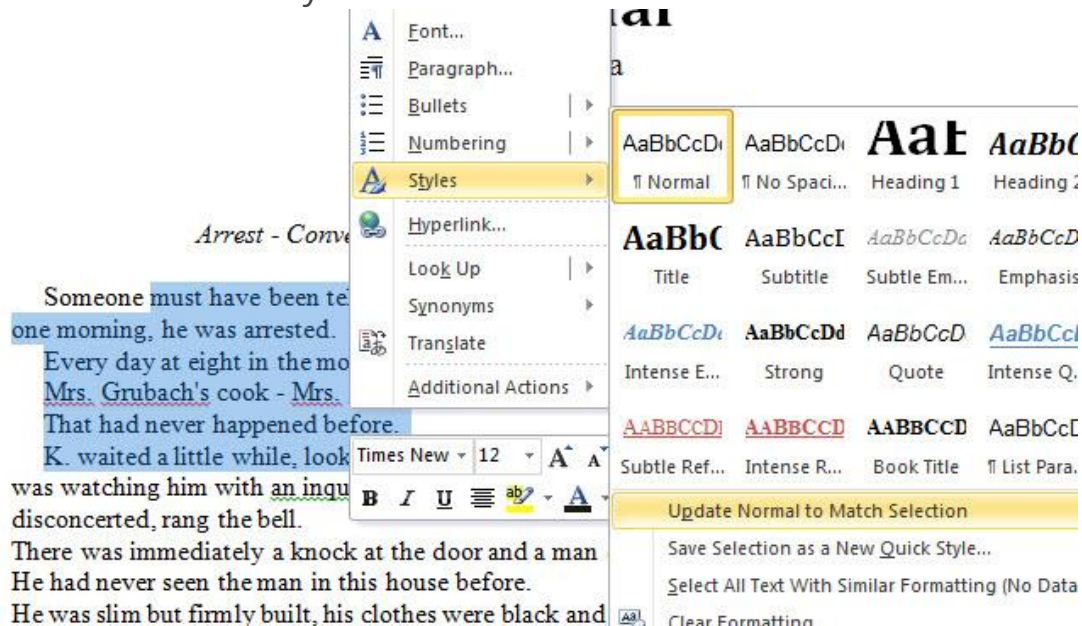
Chapter One

Arrest - Conversation with Mrs. Grubach - Then Miss I

Someone must have been telling lies about Josef K., he knew he but, one morning, he was arrested. Every day at eight in the morning he was brought his breakfast by Mrs. Grubach's cook - Mrs. Grubach was his landlady - but today she did not bring it. That had never happened before. K. waited a little while, looked from his pillow at the old woman who lived opposite and who was watching him with an inquisitiveness quite unusual for her, and finally, both hungry and disconcerted, rang the bell.



You'll need to search for any "Tabs" and remove them: search for "^t" and just leave the "replace with" box empty. Your paragraphs should be indented with the "line space options" - if not, you can set the indent and then "update normal to match style".



Your first line of new sections should already be using a non-indent style (different from "normal").

You should have added a new page break between sections. And if you have any images, you'll probably need to add them in later. This is what my Word file looks like:

Chapter One

Arrest - Conversation with Mrs. Grubach - Then Miss Bürstner

Someone must have been telling lies about Josef K., he knew he had done nothing wrong but, one morning, he was arrested.

Every day at eight in the morning he was brought his breakfast by Mrs. Grubach's cook - Mrs. Grubach was his landlady - but today she didn't come. That had never happened before.

K. waited a little while, looked from his pillow at the old woman who lived opposite and who was watching him with an inquisitiveness quite unusual for her, and finally, both hungry and disconcerted, rang the bell.

There was immediately a knock at the door and a man entered.

He had never seen the man in this house before.

He was slim but firmly built, his clothes were black and close-fitting, with many folds and pockets, buckles and buttons and a belt, all of which gave the impression of being very practical but without making it very clear what they were actually for.

"Who are you?" asked K., sitting half upright in his bed.

The man, however, ignored the question as if his arrival simply had to be accepted, and merely replied, "You rang?"

"Anna should have brought me my breakfast," said K.

I think it's pretty clean and simple, so I'm going to try and use an automatic converter first.

I've set up a simple conversion tool on my book covers site that you can use to test things quickly. Click on this link to try it out: ([free ebook conversion tool](#)).

You might want to save your document as HTML or RTF, but DOCX should work.

On that page you'll see this form.

Make your own ebooks!

Title:

Ebook:

Accepts DJVU, DOCX, TXT HTML, RTF, PDF and files

Author:

Cover:

JPG or PNG files only

FREE instant online ebook conversion: Epub and Mobi

Advanced Options (Optional):

I uploaded my data, hit the button, and got these two links.

Make your own ebooks!

[Download EPUB](#)

[Download MOBI](#)

The mobi file wouldn't open with my Kindle application for some reason (I'm getting it checked). But the epub version looks great! I'm viewing it with

Adobe Digital Previewer. The chapter heading style, italics, centering and non-indent on the first paragraph all came through fine.

Chapter One

Arrest - Conversation with Mrs. Grubach - Then Miss Bürstner

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Mrs. Grubach's cook - Mrs. Grubach was his landlady - but today she didn't come.

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K. waited a little while, looked from his pillow at the old woman who lived opposite and who was watching him with an inquisitiveness quite unusual for her, and finally, both hungry and disconcerted, rang the bell.

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"Who are you?" asked K., sitting half upright in his bed.

The man, however, ignored the question as if his arrival simply had to be accepted, and merely replied, "You rang?"

"Anna should have brought me my breakfast," said K.

He tried to work out who the man actually was, first in silence, just through observation and by thinking about it, but the man didn't stay still to be looked at for very long.

Instead he went over to the door, opened it slightly, and said to someone who was clearly standing immediately behind it, "He wants Anna to bring him his breakfast."

Luckily there's a very simple trick for making Mobi files from the epub.

Download the [Kindle Previewer application for desktop](#).

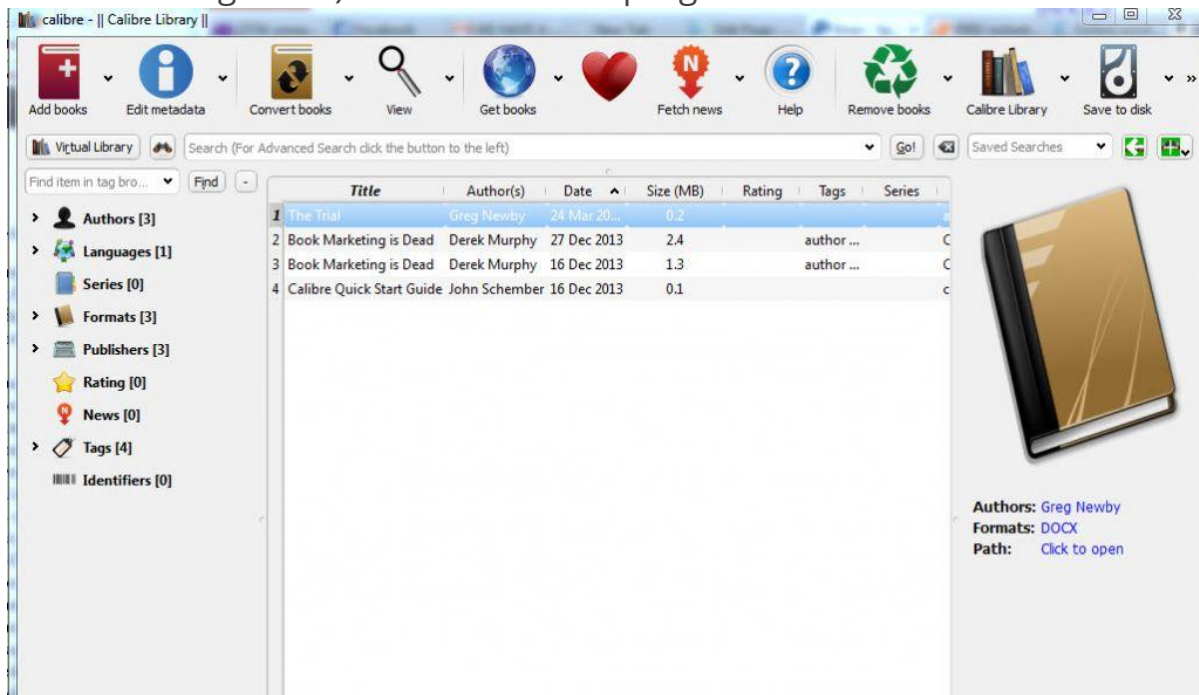
Then just drag and drop your epub file into the program - it will automatically convert to mobi and save the new file in the same folder that your epub was in.

If this worked for you, congrats, you're done!

Upload your files to Kindle, or preview them with as many previewer tools as you can to make sure they look OK.

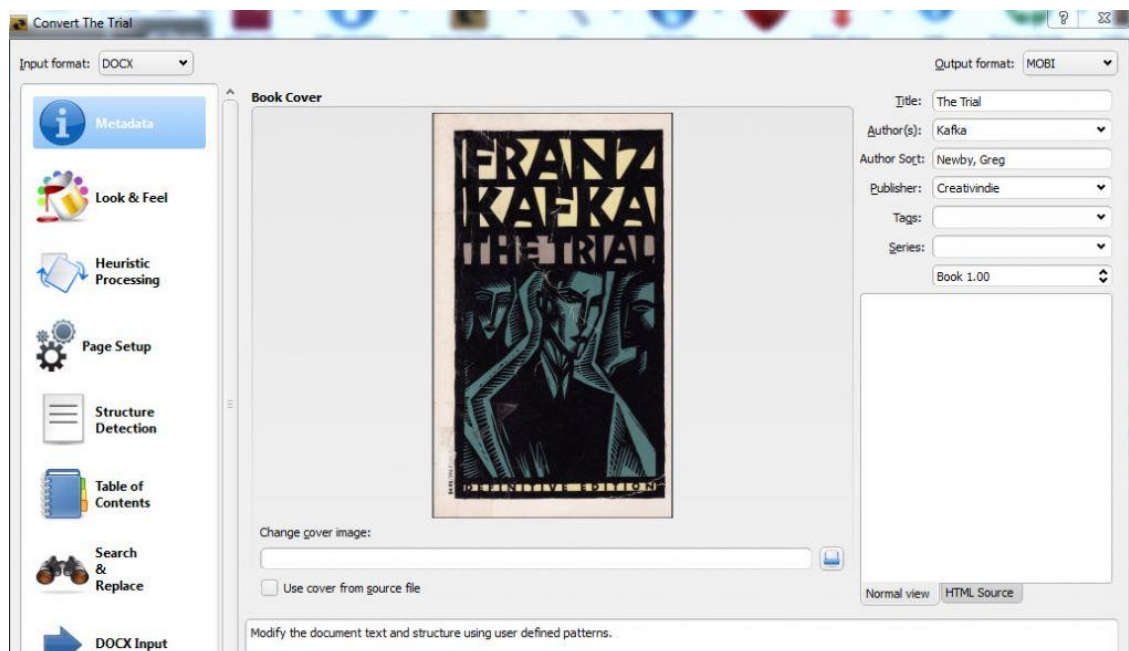
Making an ebook in Calibre

If you want to go a little deeper into the process, you can download and install [Calibre](#), which is free and pretty easy to use (although there's still some learning curve). This is what the program looks like.

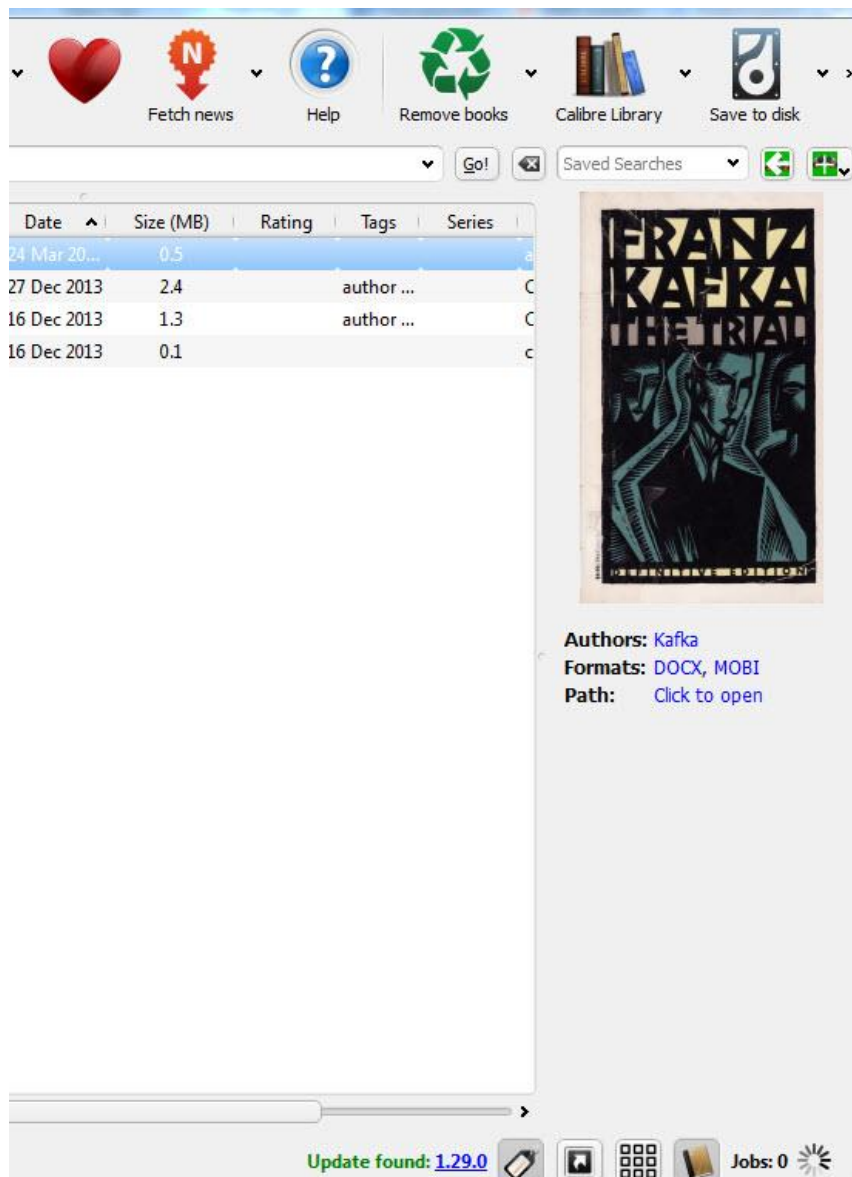


First I'll click on "Add Book" from the top left corner and choose my file. Then I'll click "Edit Metadata" to change the details and add my cover.

Then I'll click on "Convert Books." In this panel, on the top right where it says "Output Format" I can choose to output as Kindle, Epub or another format (you need to do it one by one). On the left menu there are some more options, such as "Look and Feel."



If my simple converter didn't work and you need to fix something (removing spacing between paragraphs for example) you *may* be able to do it here. When you're ready, hit the green checkmark ("OK") on the bottom. It will think for awhile, and then the new format will show up on the right side. Do this for mobi and epub (or just epub and use the Kindle Previewer trick), then click "Save to Disk" and choose where you want to save it.

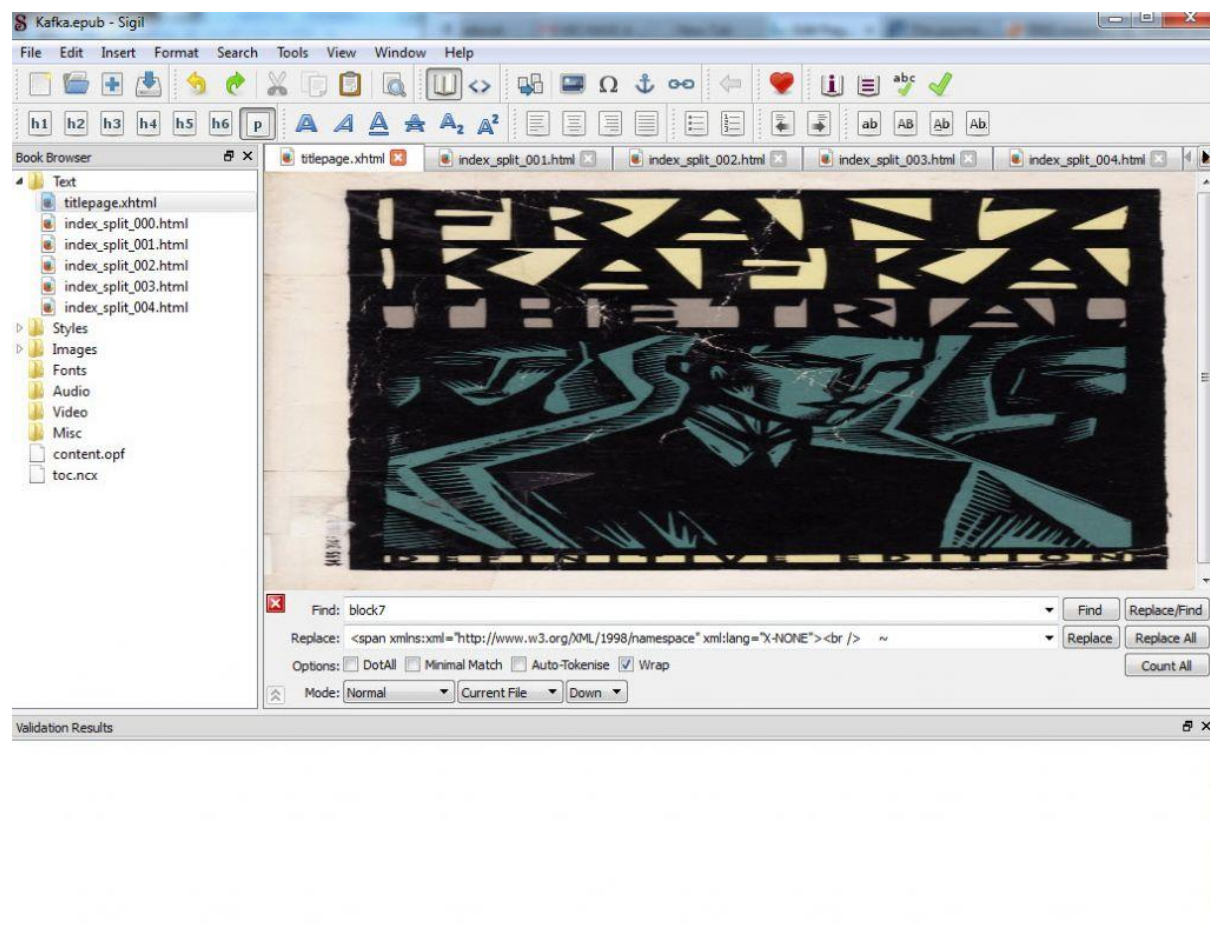


Advanced Options: Using Sigil for fine-tuning

A lot of ebook formatters may take issue at my first two suggestions - they aren't the best way to make ebooks and the code may not be super clean. But for Kindle and the majority of ebook viewers, the files will work just fine. Plus, simple is better.

I opened Sigil, went to "File" and "Open" and chose the epub file I made from my website.

The first page is the cover - and it may seem stretched because it will automatically adjust to the screen width. This is what Sigil looks like.



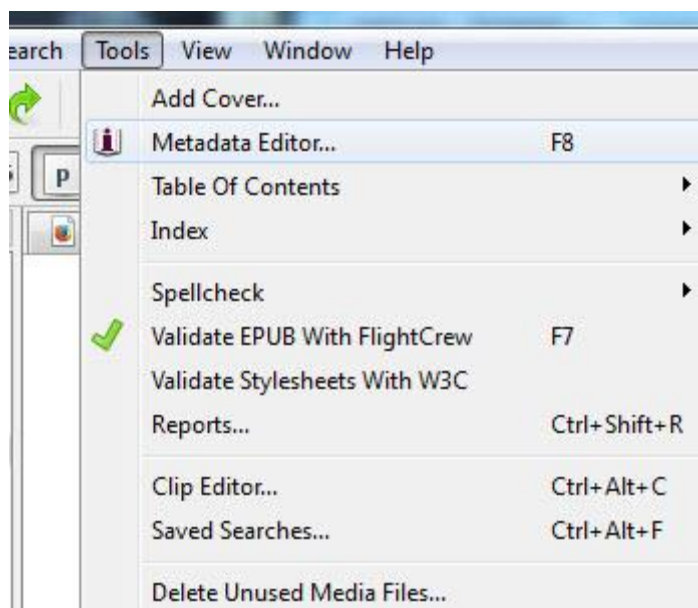
Each "section" is saved as it's only unique html file - you can see them in the menu on the left. So I need to click on them until I get to the one I want to edit. Here's chapter one.

I can edit, add, erase anything in the text just like a normal word processor. I can also add bold, italics and basic formatting from the top menu. It also has a "find and replace" feature which can be really helpful if you want to change all instances of something (like you changed the name of your character from Bill to Tom).

To make simple changes, Sigil is worth getting to know, so you don't have to keep going back to a coder or formatter. If something is displaying strangely, you can hit the "code" view button (next to the "Book View" which is the default). Then you'll see the code, but be careful about changing things if you don't know what you're doing.

Your Chapter Headings should still be using the 'h1' style. If everything else looks OK, you can hit "Tools" and check that your cover, metadata (details about the book) and Table of Contents are right (clicking "Generate Table of Contents" will add all the header tags, but you can uncheck any extra ones that shouldn't be there).

Then you can resave the epub, then you can use the Kindle Previewer to convert it to mobi.

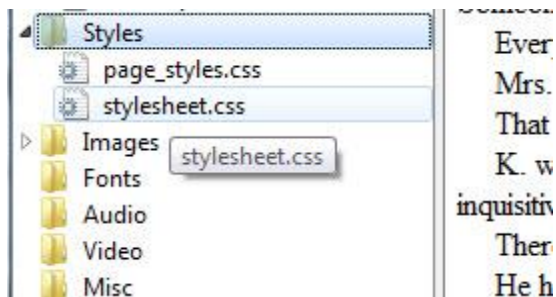


Now let's try some fancy stuff.

Although simple is better, let's add some style for fun.

My "Chapter One" is using the "h1" tag (which translated all the way through from my Word document - that's why we use the "Heading 1" style.)

If I click on "styles" on the left, I can see the stylesheet - that's an external document that tells the html what it should look like. Right now that stylesheet is very simple, but I can add to it.



Let's change the font of the chapter headings. First, we need to import the font. Hit the "+" button on the top left, navigate to your fonts folder, and select a font (you could also copy and paste your font into the same folder your ebook files are in).

I choose Stag - but I'm not sure if I want light or bold, so I added both. The fonts will show up in the fonts folder.



Now go to the stylesheet. At the very top, before any other code, you need to add:

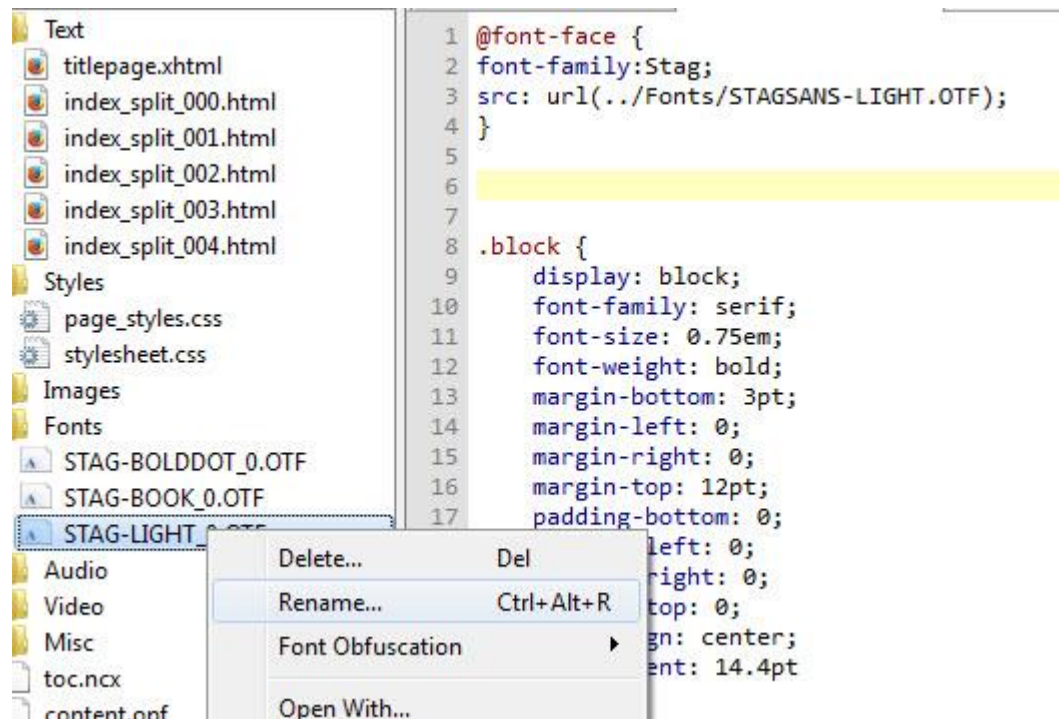
```
@font-face {  
font-family:'Stag-light';
```



```
src: url(../Fonts/STAG-LIGHT_0.OTF);  
}
```

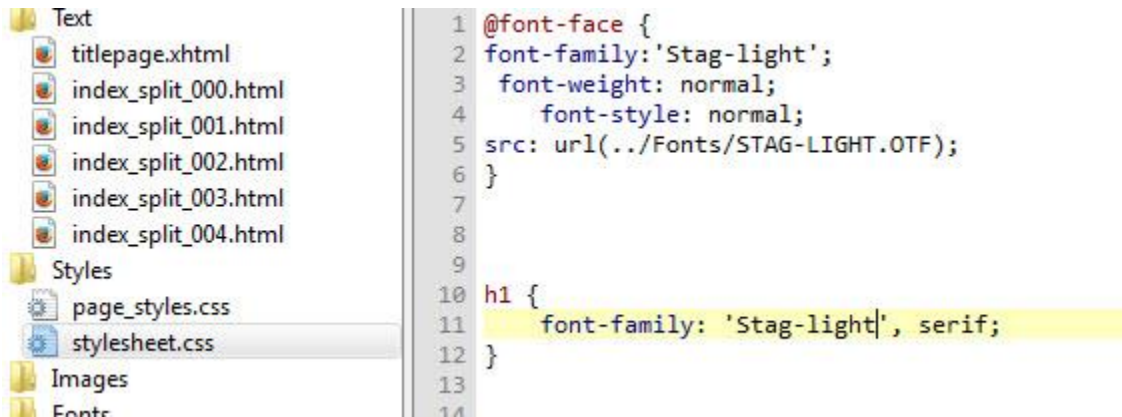
That "src" needs to be the exact link to your font, so it has to match the font name on the left exactly.

If you want to simplify it, you can right click over the font and "rename" it to something simple.



Now that I've added that to the top of my stylesheet, I can go down to the bottom and add new instructions for the H1 tags.

```
h1 {  
font-family: 'Stag-light', serif;  
}
```



The name of the font here needs to be exactly the same as above.

At first this wasn't working for me, so I went in and checked the code. Instead of clean H1 tags there was some other code (the dangers of using Calibre, which doesn't use clean tags). So I removed it and just used:

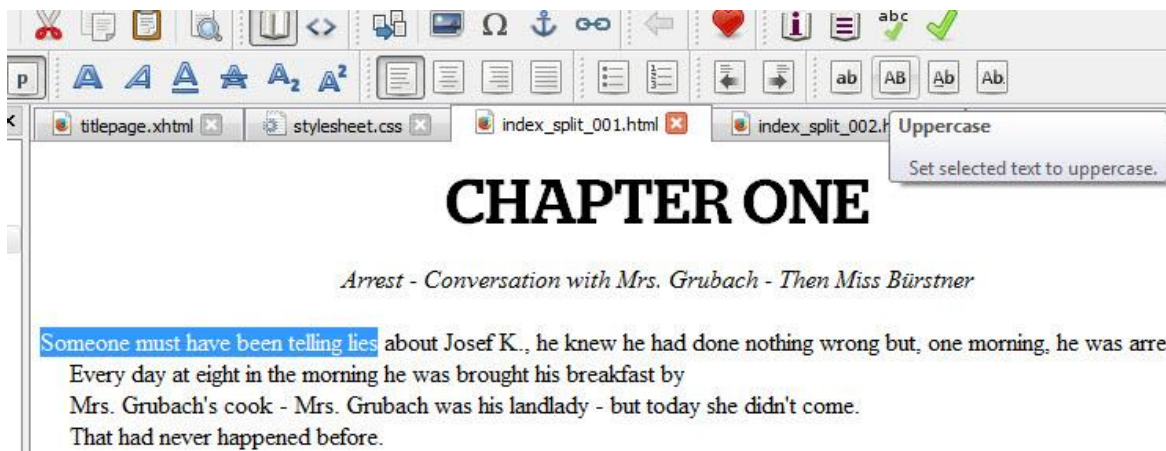
<h1>CHAPTER ONE</h1>

Now the font is showing up.

I used the buttons on the top right to change the text to all uppercase.

Now let's play with the first paragraph style.

I highlighted the first sentence and hit the uppercase button. But that looked a little too busy.



Instead I'm going to be content with just changing my subtitle to "h3" to make it stand out a bit more.

CHAPTER ONE

Arrest - Conversation with Mrs. Grubach - Then Miss Bürstner

Someone Must Have Been Telling Lies about Josef K., he knew he had done nothing wrong but, one morning, he was arrested.

Every day at eight in the morning he was brought his breakfast by

Mrs. Grubach's cook - Mrs. Grubach was his landlady - but today she didn't come.

That had never happened before.

K. waited a little while, looked from his pillow at the old woman who lived opposite and who was watching him with an inquisitiveness quite unusual for her, and finally, both hungry and disconcerted, rang the bell.

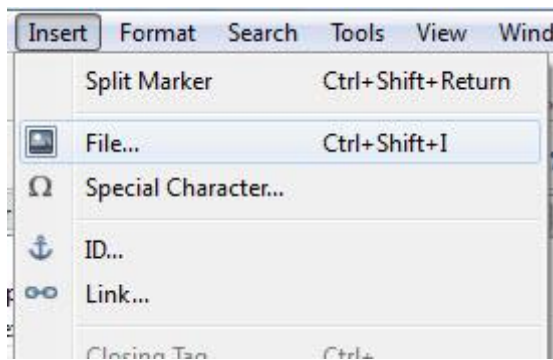
There was immediately a knock at the door and a man entered.

He had never seen the man in this house before.

He was slim but firmly built, his clothes were black and close-fitting, with many folds and pockets, buckles and buttons and belt, all of which gave the impression of being very practical but without making it very clear what they were actually for.

"Who are you?" asked K., sitting half upright in his bed.

And just for fun, I'll add some decoration - first I hit the "+" button and choose a picture. This just adds the picture to the program but doesn't put it in the book; I need to hit "insert" and "file" to choose the picture I've just added. Then I can center and adjust it.



What I can't do easily is change the size of the picture.

In this one, there is too much white space around the graphic but I can't trim that off in Sigil, I'd need to crop it in an image viewer or graphics program, save it, and try again.

CHAPTER ONE

Arrest - Conversation with Mrs. Grubach - Then Miss Bürstner



Someone Must Have Been Telling Lies about Josef K., he knew he had done nothing wrong but, one morning, he was arrested.

Every day at eight in the morning he was brought his breakfast by Mrs. Grubach's cook - Mrs. Grubach was his landlady - but today she didn't come.

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K. waited a little while, looked from his pillow at the old woman who lived opposite and who was watching him with an inquisitiveness quite unusual for her, and finally, both hungry and disconcerted, rang the bell.

There was immediately a knock at the door and a man entered.

He had never seen the man in this house before.

He was slim but firmly built, his clothes were black and close-fitting, with many folds and pockets, buttons and buttons, and a high collar.

One thing to notice: my computer screen is pretty wide, but If I make the window more narrow (like most ebook readers) my subtitle breaks into two lines. This is annoying, but common - the only way to fix it would be to make the text smaller. If you test it on some ebook readers and it always breaks, you could try a smaller size. Perhaps just bold italics and not a header tag.

But if it only happens on a few, don't stress it too much.

The main thing is to get things right in the Word document, rather than messing around with things too much in Sigil.

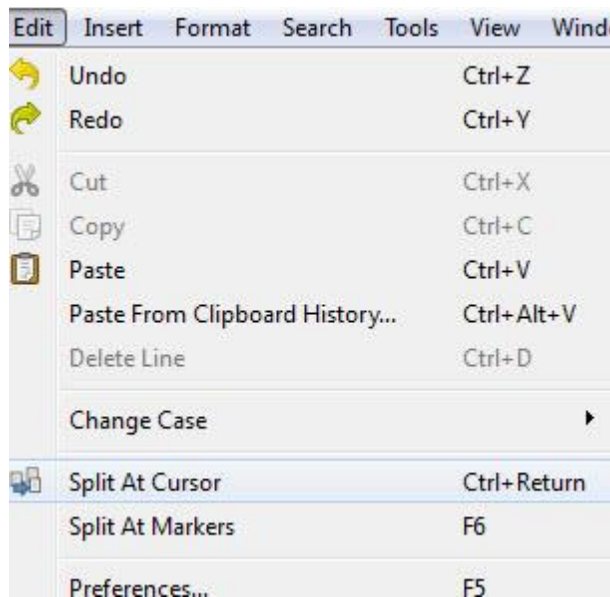
Even more advanced (the 'right' way)

Another way to make ebooks (more professional, but more time-consuming) is to copy all the text from your Word document and use an online service like "word2cleanhtml.com" to make it cleaner.

Then, open a new document in Sigil and paste all that html code in between the body tags.

```
3      "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml11/DTD/xhtml11.dtd">
4
5 <html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml">
6 <head>
7 <title></title>
8 </head>
9 <body>
10 <p>&#160;</p>
11 </body>
12 </html>
```

That's the safest way to do it - manually coding the whole book. It doesn't take that long; you just need to skip down to end of each chapter, hit "split at cursor" under the "edit" menu, highlight all the chapter headings and select H1, add your style to the first paragraph (although - coding the "no indent" first paragraph is a little tricky... You'd need to make two styles in the style sheet; one for normal text, one for no indent.)



Once you get used to it, it's quick. But it's *still* a pain, and so I either use my free ebook generator, or I hire someone on [fiverr.com](https://www.fiverr.com) to convert to ebook files for me, because there's really no need to add style, and it can actually sabotage the process.

The average price for ebook formatting is around \$100 - and I charge even more on my main site; the reason is because, if you're coding everything manually, and the author wants very specific styles or changes, it can take a lot of time.

So if you want more control and you want a designer to spend a lot of time on your ebooks, and you want someone to help you out or fix things when if you run into any problems, expect to pay more; but keep in mind you can do it for free or almost nothing if you keep things simple. (Some mainstream books don't even have indents on the first paragraph, although it's easy to do if you've prepared your word file the right way).

How to make a Smashwords File

While Kindle takes up a big share of the ebook market, it's a good idea to have your book up in other stores as well, especially Apple iBooks. The easiest way to get in is to use a service like BookBaby or Smashwords. I prefer Smashwords because it's free and Mark Coker is a cool guy; they'll

take your Word document but it needs to be clean before going through the "meatgrinder" (their automatic conversion software... it's pretty similar to the function I have on my site that converts to Kindle and Epub formats).

Luckily if you've already gotten your Word document ready as we discussed earlier (remove tabs, headers and footers, use H1 tags) you should just need to add the necessary copyright to the front and "Smashwords Edition" and it should be ready to go. (You can also just use the epub file you've made; you'll have to use Sigil to add "Smashwords Edition" to the front.)

As this can be a source of frustration however, it's another thing I would use fiverr.com for. There are several providers who will make a Smashwords file from your Word document for about \$10.