



DrivethruRPG Publishing Guide

a Logbook Project guide by Max Hervieux, for #TTRPGResourceJam

DrivethruRPG.com is the largest online tabletop RPG marketplace around. It is the flagship site in a family of interconnected sites which include DrivethruCards, DrivethruComics, and DMsGuild.

Why should you sell on DrivethruRPG? Put simply, volume. More people use DTRPG than any other market, and while other sites like itch.io are optimized for presenting games, DTRPG is optimized to create sales. It has a lot of powerful promotion tools, it carries a robust recommendation engine, and the catalog is pretty easy to sort through to discover new things. It's also a pretty convenient repository for buyers, making it easy to access everything you've already bought. On top of all of that, they're the premier RPG site that offers print-on-demand sales, and are easily the best thing around on that front.

Unfortunately, it's not all perfect. You only get about two-thirds of your selling price in profit, and there's a number of annoying rules to deal with. The worst part though is that the publishing system is ridiculously byzantine. It takes some effort to figure out how to get your game up on DrivethruRPG, and it isn't explained very clearly. That's where this guide comes in: I want to help you get going. It's worth it.



the Logbook Project

www.logbook-project.com

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The DrivethruRPG logo belongs to DrivethruRPG.com.

Screenshots are all of DrivethruRPG.com, even when the URL is not visible.

Fonts used are Alegreya (Juan Pablo de Peral) and Futura PT.

Creating A Publisher Account

To start, go to <https://www.drivethrurpg.com>. Log into your customer account, or create a new one.

Scroll all the way to the bottom. In the footer, find “**How To Sell On DrivethruRPG.com**”.

It will bring you to a screen trying to explain the benefits of selling on DTRPG. Click “**Get Started**”.

Account Type: Exclusive or Non-Exclusive

The first tab is Account Type. This is the first big decision to make. Of course, as this guide is being released on itch.io, for developers who are also on itch.io, you probably want to pick Non-Exclusive. But here’s a breakdown of what that will affect.

Earnings: Exclusive accounts make 70% of the customer price per sale. Non-Exclusive accounts make only 65%. Non-exclusive is generally better, as you can get that 5% back on other sites easily enough.

Where You Can Sell: If you’re Non-Exclusive, you can sell anywhere you want. Even if you’re Exclusive, you can sell physical copies wherever you want.

If your account is Exclusive, anything you put up on DTRPG can only be sold there, *and also on your own personal website*. This is unclear on this site page, but is clarified elsewhere.

Promotion: DTRPG gives additional promotion rotation to Exclusive accounts, and given that discoverability is one of the best parts of the site, it’s pretty valuable. Probably not worth Exclusivity though.

Changing Account Type: Non-Exclusive accounts can never be turned into Exclusive accounts. If you’re Exclusive, the site wants you to stay Exclusive for a full year, and require six-months notice to switch from Exclusive to Non-Exclusive.

Agreement

The second tab is an Agreement. Here are the main things to take away.

Money: Your earnings are computed in US dollars, and you will be paid either by US dollar check or by Paypal. The specifics for this are on the next tab.

Title Removal: Taking a title down requires six-month notice.

Publisher Name: You'll set your Publisher name here. This is not easily changed, so give it some thought.

Payment Info: Check or Paypal

Lastly, set up how you are going to get paid. The options are to be paid by check or by Paypal. This can be changed later.

Pay By Check: Provide your address, so they can actually send you the check. You will need to declare if you are going to need a 1099 tax form. Put simply, if you aren't signing up a whole organization and you live in the US, you need a 1099. Provide your social security number. Your check will be sent out on the 15th of every month and can take a few weeks to get to you.

Pay By Paypal: Put in your paypal email address. You will decide here if you want to get paid automatically on the 1st of every month or if you want to be able to cash out manually. Either way, with Paypal, whenever you cash out you pay a \$1 fee. If you're cashing out automatically, you might not be paid if you don't reach a certain threshold, which you will be able to set. I recommend cashing out manually, but look on the next page about Verification, it's slightly more complex to start with. If you use Paypal, you will not fill out tax info. You will instead need to get your tax info from Paypal. Unless you're doing a ton of business on Paypal, you won't get a 1099-K from them and will need to manually tally and report your Paypal income on your taxes. It's a hassle, but the Paypal approach is still pretty worthwhile.

Verification

The system does not inform you here about how verification works, but you need to know. When you first make a Publisher Account, you are Unverified. As an Unverified account, you have three limitations.

Tool Access: A number of tools are unavailable to Unverified accounts. They aren't critical tools, these should mostly not be a problem.

Making Titles Public: Once Verified, you'll be able to just set up titles and make them public at will. Until then, you need to Request to make titles public. This will usually go over fine, but it takes about 1-3 business days. It's annoying.

Cashing Out Manually: Until you're Verified, if you select to be paid by Paypal, you'll be unable to cash out manually. You will need to wait for the 1st of the month for automatic Paypal payment or the 15th for a check to be mailed out. You can't make quick cash as soon as you've made a DTRPG account. In fact, at the moment, they're putting 30-day holds on any funds earned to combat current ongoing fraud efforts.

Getting Verified: To get verified, you need to have had two public paid (PWYW counts) titles up for at least a month. If you make your Publisher Account and immediately publish two games, you can have a Verified account in just over a month.

Publisher Details: Lastly, on the Payment Info page is where you can add a logo or a website URL.

Hit Finish. You now have a Publisher Account!

The Publisher Hub

On the navigation at the top-right of your screen, you should now have a Publish tab. Click it.

Log Off

Account

Publish

My Library

Wishlists

You should now see the Publisher Hub and its many categories. Of all of them, for now, you only need one: **Title Management**. And within that, all you need is “**Set up a new title**” and “**Update digital download files for a title**” Click “**Set up a new title**”.



Publisher Hub

Open All



Need answers? Visit our Publisher Knowledge Base

Your publisher account is **unverified**, so certain publisher tools will be locked for you. For more information please see [this article](#) in our Publisher Knowledge Base.


▼ Title Management


Set up a new title  

Edit a title listing 


Update digital download files for a title  


Manage previews of my titles 


 Batch edit titles (?)

Batch add/remove filters 

Manage your product line categories



Manage where titles appear on sister sites 

 Manage bundles (?)

Manage footers for your titles 

Advanced Tool - Product registration system 

Advanced Tool - Manage product subscriptions 

 **Publisher service email** 

> Digital Titles

> Book Printing

> Card Printing

> Accounting

> Sales Reports

> Promotion

> Help

Setting Up A Digital Title

Entering A New Product: Minimum

So, here's the weird thing about putting up titles on DTRPG. You set up the listing for a product and then afterward you'll be able to attach files to it. This is so it's easy to add digital, physical, or card products to a product without needing to basically remake it each time. It is also very unintuitive. Basically, you will not be adding the download files here.

This page is also very unintuitive. It is enormous, and basically none of the items matter. There are only five things you must put in for a game to be valid.

Title: If you're publishing a game, you already have one of these.

Price: Put in the currency and the Selling Price. You don't need to touch Original Price. There's a box to check for Pay What You Want. Even a PWYW needs a value in the Selling Price field, which will be a suggested price to buyers. You can't set a minimum to PWYW and you can't tip extra on non-PWYW titles.

Product Page Text: Technically optional. Pitch your game.

Cover Image: You do need a cover image. They provide some sizing instructions (300 to 900 pixels wide, 8.5x11 portrait aspect ratio, under 200kb, png format).

PDF Source: Select Electronic format or Scanned image, accordingly.

That's all that's directly necessary! If you put in those elements, your title is set up. Everything else is optional. I recommend some of the other settings, but you can put in these five things and be done.

Entering A New Product: Recommended

There's a few settings that aren't required, but are a good idea to fill.

Author(s)/Artist(s): If your game is a one-person affair, and your company is just you, these aren't necessary. However, if you want/need to give additional credits, these boxes let you do that.

Number of Pages: How many pages is the game? Buyers like to know this statistic.

Categories: These checkboxes help people find your game by filing it into the correct categories on the site. You can select up to three boxes per heading, and up to ten boxes total.

Rule System: There's a lot of systems here, but they tend to be mainstream. Powered By The Apocalypse is called "Apocalypse World Engine," and that's the most indie the systems get. If your game isn't in a system, choose "Any system/system-agnostic", "Other systems", and "Other unique systems".

Product Type: Mostly, you'll want "Core Rulebook", "All-in-one Rulebooks", and, if applicable, "GMless Game Guides".

Genre: Choose some appropriate genres. If needed, there is a "Cross-genre/multi-genre" option under "Miscellaneous".

Format: Probably PDF, maybe also with a print option.

Languages: Self-explanatory.

Automatic Previews: There are two types of preview, Flipbook and PDF. Both are recommended for best sales. If you have the pagecount to be able to spoil a few, it's strongly in your interest to enable these.

Flipbook Preview: A flash preview of a few pages. These are shrunk down so the text is completely illegible, meaning it's a nice way to show off layout and art. You should always do this preview type.

PDF Preview: A full download of a couple of pages. If your game is very short, this might be inadvisable, but for longer games it is great.

With the Minimum and Recommended settings filled in, you're good to move on. On the next page I'll briefly cover the rest of the settings.

Entering A New Product: Unnecessary

I just want to do a rundown of the unimportant areas of the page.

Original Price: Including an original price makes the selling price look like it's discounted.

Audio Product: A checkbox for if your game is an audio book.

Add Watermark: A small watermark is added to the bottom corner. Obstructs design, and is kind of terrible as a file security measure.

Disallow Copy/Paste: Text cannot be copied from within the game.

Disallow Printing: The document cannot be printed.

Astral Module ID: Astral is a virtual tabletop partnered with DTRPG. Don't fill this out unless your product is a module for Astral.

Stock Number: If you have the product in your own inventory system, this can help keep that consistent.

ISBN: Provide an ISBN if you have one. You don't need one.

Sort Priority: Okay, this can actually be helpful. By default, on your publisher page, games are listed chronologically from newest to oldest. If you want a game at the top, you can put a number closer to 0 in Sort Priority. Putting 0 effectively pins a game to the top.

Adult Product: When searching DTRPG and its sister sites, you need to opt-in to adult content. In general, if your game has nudity, graphic sexual material, depictions of gore, or crude language, it's adult content. The standards are higher for cover images that depict a humanoid form.

Purchase Note: Want to give buyers a special message? Write it here.

Video URL: Apparently you can embed a youtube video?

Upload Digital Download Files

With the product entered, submit the listing. You'll be given an opportunity to preview the page or edit the page. You can also now upload digital download files. Going down to the Publisher Hub again, find "**Update digital download files for a title**". There is a link for this under **Title Management** and also under **Digital Titles**. They are the same link. It's stupid and confusing.

When you get to that page, you can select which title you want to manage digital files for. Select your game.

Here, you can drag and drop files onto the white box, or click the box to open a file explorer box. Select your game's files, then click Begin Upload. If it gives you any trouble, click the link on the page to Recommended PDF Specifications. The main things to check:

- ~ All images are in RGB color.
- ~ All image are 150 dpi.
- ~ Cover files are placed properly.
- ~ Jpeg 2000 compression is NOT used.
- ~ There is no security or lock on the PDFs.
- ~ PDF/A is NOT used.
- ~ Filenames are sensible and valid.

When you're done, click Done Editing Files.

Request to Make Public

With files uploaded, go back to the Publisher Hub. Looking at your title, make sure it says Format: Digital, Status: File(s) Uploaded, and look for the "**Make Public**" button. When you press that, you'll place a request for your game to go public. If you're Unverified, the game will be approved or rejected within 1-3 business days. If you're Verified, it'll just go public.

You are now published on DrivethruRPG! Congratulations! Once the game is approved, get out there and share the link around.

Setting Up Print-On-Demand

DrivethruRPG offers print-on-demand for books! It's great, and one of the best reasons to use DTRPG.

First, set up the title as previously explained. Then, from the Publisher Hub, find the **Book Printing** category and select **"Upload and manage printed book files"**. Select your game, and choose a format.

Print Formats: DTRPG POD books come in soft- and hardcover, and in black-and-white, standard color, and premium color. The cost system is complex. Here is the pricing chart.

Cover	Binding	Interior	Size	Page Count	US Dollar Cost
Softcover	Perfect Bound	Black & White	Small	18-1200	1.59 + 0.0142 per page
Softcover	Perfect Bound	Black & White	Large	18-1200	1.65 + 0.0208 per page
Hardcover	Case Bound	Black & White	Small	18-1200	6.15 + 0.0142 per page
Hardcover	Case Bound	Black & White	Large	18-1200	6.15 + 0.0208 per page
Softcover	Perfect Bound	Standard Color	Small	18-900	1.59 + 0.0325 per page
Softcover	Perfect Bound	Standard Color	Large	18-900	1.65 + 0.0518 per page
Hardcover	Case Bound	Standard Color	Small	18-840	6.15 + 0.0325 per page
Hardcover	Case Bound	Standard Color	Large	18-840	6.15 + 0.0518 per page
Softcover	Saddle Stitched	Premium Color	Small	4-48	1.59 + 0.0696 per page
Softcover	Perfect Bound	Premium Color	Small	49-900	1.59 + 0.0696 per page
Softcover	Saddle Stitched	Premium Color	Large (except for 6.69" x 9.61")	4-48	1.65 + 0.0932 per page
Softcover	Perfect Bound	Premium Color	Large	49-900	1.65 + 0.0932 per page
Softcover	Perfect Bound	Premium Color	Large Landscape	18-400	1.65 + 0.0932 per page
Hardcover	Case Bound	Premium Color	Small	18-840	6.15 + 0.0696 per page
Hardcover	Case Bound	Premium Color	Large	18-840	6.15 + 0.0932 per page
Hardcover	Case Bound	Premium Color	Large Landscape	18-400	6.15 + 0.0932 per page

Once you've decided on a format, choose a size, then upload your cover file and contents file. Their specific needs can be very particular, so I recommend directing using their Publisher Knowledge Base for specific needs: <https://onebookshelfpublisherservice.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/sections/360003726054-Book-Printing>

DrivethruRPG is just partnered with LightningSource for printing. If you know what LightningSource needs, you've got the hang of it.

The quality of DTRPG's POD is pretty fine! For personal copies I tend to use Lulu, but no one beats DTRPG for customer convenience.

Sales Reports

From the Publisher Hub, if you click View A Sales Report, you can generate reports for how many sales you had, and what your cut of them comes to. DTRPG doesn't usually send you notifications with each sale like some other sites, so it's valuable to check in regularly. The **"Month-To-Date Sales"** and **"Sales for Prior Month"** buttons are usually sufficient, though you can make custom reports if you want.

Withdrawing Funds

If you're unverified, the **"Withdraw, transfer or add to publisher earnings"** button is locked. For now, the **"Publisher account and payment settings"** button will be the best way to control your earnings, allowing you to switch from Pay By Check or Pay By Paypal easily.

Once you're verified, the **"Withdraw, transfer or add to publisher earnings"** page is how you can control your money. It lets you manually cash out to Paypal, or convert your earnings directly into DTRPG credit.

A Quick Summary

Thanks for reading, and I hope this answers whatever questions you have about how to get your game up on DTRPG? To recap and streamline:

- ~ Create a publisher account, choosing exclusive or non-exclusive and pay-by-check or pay-by-Paypal.
- ~ Click "Set up a new title", inputting at least a title, price, product description, cover image, and pdf source (and probably also page count, categories, and previews).
- ~ Go to "Update digital download files for a title" and upload the PDF.
- ~ Click Make Public, and wait for it to be approved (1-3 business days).

That's really it for the simple side of using this very byzantine system. If you have any questions, let me know and I'll update this doc if I know the answers! DTRPG is where the RPG cash flows, so usability should really not stop you from getting at some of it. Happy uploading!