



## SOYFRIENDS HOME-PUBLICATION GUIDE

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### Introduction

Because every reproduction machine works in a different way, you'll have to do things by trial and error in the beginning. As you go along, you'll learn to get the best out of your reproduction machine and you'll make less mistakes.

This is a guide to fanzine-making made mostly for students, or for anyone who is interested in home publications but is unsure how to go around doing it due to the lack of sophisticated printing equipment. This is a guide made by experience with a basic, non-technical vocabulary.

By printing your own publications you can escape the traditional channels of publishing and create all sorts of printed works which do not depend on editorial approval. You can therefore do what you desire with no content limitations. Your only limitation is yourself.

### Tools:

1. Reproduction Machine (printer, photocopier, etc)
  2. Paper
  3. Craft Knife / Heavy Steel Ruler (the heavier the better)
- OR
4. Guillotine
  5. Cutting matt
  6. Long-Arm Stapler
  7. Creaser

## Reproduction Methods

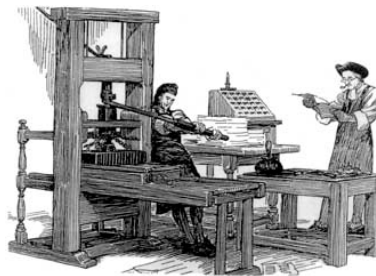
The method of reproduction is a personal choice but sometimes there are limitations and lack of proper printing equipment. Many institutions have open access to photocopiers  
But limited or no access to inkjet or laser printers.

Photocopiers generally have a basic rough quality, which can be a plus at times. However, it *can* happen that you *don't* want the most basic quality but instead you'd like to reproduce the image as accurately as possible.

Out of experience, laser printers work best for reproducing pencil work and black & white photos. Color photos might be better reproduced on an inkjet printer but this is up to you to see what works best by trial and error.

One advantage of printing on a Laser printer is that the image gets split into little dots (halftone pattern). This can be useful because, if you can't afford to print all your publications on a laser printer, you can print each first page on a laser printer (and therefore split it into halftone) and then copy the rest in a photocopier. The photocopier will deal much better with the image because it has already been separated into dots to make a whole picture. By photocopying an image which isn't divided into a halftone, you will get one continuous print with a rougher quality. That is OK too, if this is the effect you desire. But your image will be more accurately reproduced by first printing it in a laser printer.

The disadvantage of printing on a laser printer is that very thin line-work will be a little broken and it might look rougher than the original drawing. Therefore, there will be *some* loss. If you can live with this, then all is good. If not, then you might want to try a photocopier (either Color or Black & White) or an inkjet.



## Paper

Paper is a design element just like color, size, layout or technique. You can add value to your publication by printing it on a different kind of paper. Some printers don't print on cardstock. Both paper texture and color are important, and you must decide what works best for the artwork you're printing.

Standard paper weight is 80 gsm. This is what machines normally use.

I used an EPSON printer before and it didn't take cardstock (160gsm) but a HP did. So, if you're looking at printing in card, you might want to find out about it before you select a printer.

Very white paper can be used successfully in some situations but I find that some color on the paper may add another quality to the publication that will increase its value.

Keep in mind that making a cover in card will make it harder to fold, but it will preserve the inside pages and artwork. You don't always need to create the highest possible quality, so sometimes cardstock may not mean the best choice. This just depends what your publication is for. Paper is important. Take some time to find out where you can get the paper you want.



#### Craft Knife or Guillotine

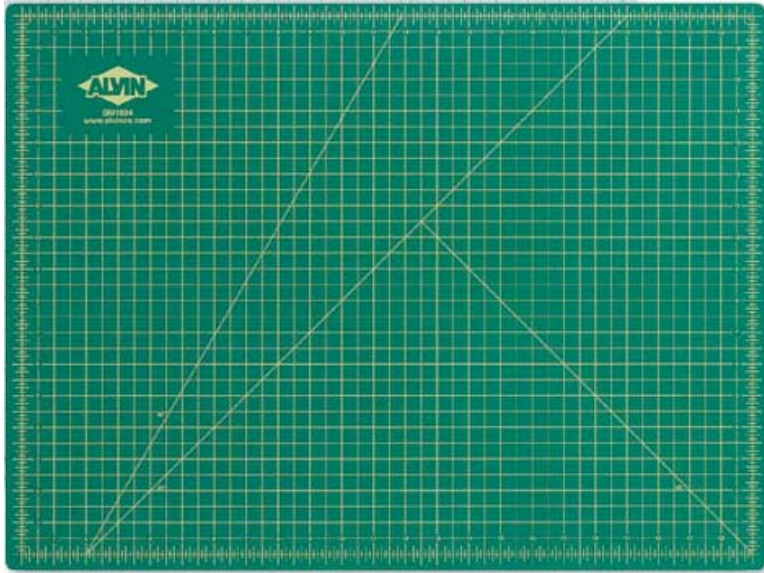
Having access to a good guillotine can save you a lot of time and patience but it will cost you a bit more money. Check the printing department at your university or your local print shop. The cheapest option is to go for a craft knife but it will take you more time and test your perseverance. If you take the craft knife option, it is crucial to have a good knife that will not make the edges of your publication look like they have been chewed off. The sharper the knife, the easier the task will be.

A heavy ruler is important because it will hold down the pages of the publication while you are cutting them, creating a neat edge. If you go for a lighter ruler, you will have to use your body weight to press the pages down, which is tiring.



### Cutting Matt

Having a cutting matt isn't a must if you have a guillotine. However, it will be necessary if you're using a craft knife. So you might want to do the math to see what turns out more cost-effective: craft knife + steel ruler + cutting matt or a good guillotine. However, in either case it can make a nice platform to work on, specially if you are considering doing a large number of publications.



### Long-Arm Stapler

A long arm stapler is essential for some publication formats. If your staples are placed in the centre, like a normal booklet, you will need a long-arm stapler. You could alternatively place the staples on the top or side (like a receipt book or flipbook). The long arm enables the stapler to reach the middle (spine) of the book. For very thick books, use the second type of stapler. I think it's called a 'heavy duty stapler'.



### Creaser

This tool is used in book binding. I'm not even sure if it's called a creaser but I will call it that in this guide. It can be a neat and useful tool to crease your publication. You could use anything that would crease the spine, but with his tool you'd be sure to make a neat job.



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## HOW TO PUT THE FANZINE TOGETHER

*Here I will explain how to put together a publication in the simplest way I know. I'm talking about A5 portrait format, which will be an A4 page folded in half, stapled in the middle, and trimmed. I will not speak about other types of binding simply because this is the most practical and cleaner one I found.*

### Step 1 : Planning (Editing Part)

Once you have your artwork, think what you want the sequence to be. This is the editing part and, by showing a specific sequence of images, you can obtain a different effect or mood to the book.

Let's suppose you are making a booklet with 20 pages. If you fold an A4 in half you get four pages. So, to get 20 pages you'd need five A4 sheets. Hold them, fold them in half, and mark your image sequence. This way you will create a dummy which you will refer to every time you need to check if you're on the right track laying out the images.

Take in consideration that you might have to split some images in half, unless they are the centre of the book or covers.

### Step 2 : Printing (Production Part)

Prepare your artwork in your software program of choice. Place the images where you want them to be. If you are using Photoshop you can use the blue guides to mark the areas where your printer reaches. Make a printout and mark the page with a pencil in the areas where the image stops (where the printer doesn't reach). Then, in Photoshop, drag the blue guidelines to that spot. Holding the paper, fold your image in half and look at where this creased line is. In Photoshop, drag a blue line to that same area. This will be your middle.

If you want your images to be printed on both sides of the paper, you will have to play around to find out which way your printer prints. This is one of the most tedious parts but it's necessary.

### Step 3: Folding, Stapling and Trimming

When you print out the pages, you can hold all the 5 pages, neatly (and firmly) folding them in half. Place the page down and, pressing down, run your hand along the spine to create a middle. Now you have your spine, which is where you will place the staples. This first folding is to find your middle.

Open the pages (keeping them together) and staple the middle which has just been folded. Now you will notice that your pages tend to open back a little. So, hold it back down and now, with the creaser, run it along the spine. Note: you should put a thick page between the creaser and the paper, otherwise you'll scratch off the ink or even damage the paper. Sometimes, when you are folding cardstock, the paper tends to look un-neat along the spine when you open it again. If the first fold was to find your middle, this second fold is to neaten it.

Now that your pages are securely bound to one another, you can trim it. If you trim it before, the pages may move, and you might not get a lined-up edge.

Sometimes, when your publication is quite small in size, it's best to press your publication before trimming it. This is because, when the paper is A5, it distributes the weight better. If the publication is A6, it will be quite small, and won't have as much weight to press the other publications underneath. This is a minor detail so, if you're not a perfectionist, don't worry.

(Note: I figured that the ideal number of pages in a publication is 16 to 24. More than that, the booklet will be harder to fold and the pressing will take longer.)

#### Step 4: Pressing

The pressing part is up to you, if you want your publication to be nice and flat. Place them spine to spine (one spine to the left, another to the right, and so on). This will distribute the weight equally.

Because I'm guiding you through how to make home-publications with what you have available around you, and if you want your publications to be completely flat, you might want to place them spine-to-spine, and place something heavy ( like a few thick encyclopedias ), and let it press for some days.

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### THOUGHTS ON SMALL PRESS BOOK VALUE & DISTRIBUTION

#### Pricing and Perceived Value: Judging a Book by the Cover

A lot of fanzines are given away. However, if you're making a neater production that requires much work and equipment, you might want to, at least, make your money back. Profit is also good because it can help you paying for better materials to better your production system.

Many people also feel they have to take better care of objects that cost them something. Freebies are sometimes regarded as having little value.

So, calculate how much it cost you to put your publications together and calculate the cost. If you only made 5 copies, you might not get your money back unless you price up your publication. This is not advisable - unless you are using a technique with a higher perceived value such as screen printing, or another laborious/crafted printing method.

Unlike literature books, picture books *are* judged by their covers. This is unavoidable but it needn't be bad. Use this to sell the book. A good cover can really make people pick up the book and page through it.

If you use a different printing technique for the cover, such as screen printing, pressing, litho, or simply a color print, this will increase the value of your book.

Remember the use of paper? If your work is presented on the right kind of paper – be it normal white cartridge or another paper – your publication may gain value. Paper can enhance the artwork or simply help cutting out the rawness of some types of drawing. Using a different paper, cardstock, or even material for the cover can also be the finishing touch you need.

Before beginning the distribution of your books, you can choose to number them. This will create unique copies and thus increase the value of each piece.

If you think your price is right, even though people say it's a little high, don't worry. You know the value of your work, and the price also speaks for it. However, be realistic, and don't overprice, or you might end up never distributing your work. At an initial stage, distribution is good to get your publications into the stores.

### Distribution

You know your work better than anyone (even better than your tutor, if you happen to be a student) and you know where you want your work to be seen. By selling your book to the audience who can appreciate it best, you'll be in your environment and people who truly like it will be willing to pay the fair price. If you place it in the some odd bookstore or a bar top, you'll have worked for nothing and people who don't understand your work won't be willing to pay for it. How (and where) you present your book says something about it.

Some shops sell on consignment and you might choose to drop off your publication and see if it's sold eventually. But, if possible, sell your books straight away. This way you don't have to keep up with all the paperwork from the stores you sent your books to 2 years ago.

If you're selling online and can't afford a website, you can start a blog for free where you post images of your book. You can scan or photograph the cover and some pages. Some internet payment systems, like Paypal, may require you owning a credit card so that you can send and receive money.

### Editor Instinct

Editorial integrity can be a hard thing to keep. If you're looking at starting out a collaboration with someone else, either by printing together with them, or printing their work, do not compromise your editing instinct. You know it best, and you know what works best in *your* publication. Once you begin publishing things you don't like, there might be no turning back. If you're printing several artists together in a book, select them because the artwork *fits* together.

Not because those people are your friends. You might really like an artist's work but the work might not fit along with the rest of what you are printing. If you think it doesn't fit, don't include it. Rather not compromise, it doesn't necessarily have to do with quality and skill, but with the type of artwork at *that* moment in *that* publication.

This applies to your own work too. Don't print things that you don't like. Always show people the artwork *you* like, and not what people think you should print. If you print what you like, whatever that may be, in time your own style will come through and you'll find what you truly like to do. What I'm saying is also: don't always think too much, do things on instinct, trust yourself, try new things and enjoy it.

Good Luck!

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*This document can be downloaded at:*

<http://www.soyfriends.com/>

*Another useful guide which includes tips on scanning artwork,  
Xeroxing, screen printing and offset printing can be downloaded at:*

<http://www.reddingk.com>

*(Written by Ron Regé, Jr., Dave Choe, Brian Ralph and Jordan Crane)*

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