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If you've got many MP3 audiobooks, or even podcasts, converting them to the M4B format—while less portable—should give you a nice added level of audiobook friendliness. If your files are already in M4A format rather than MP3, all you have to do is rename the extension to M4B.After uploading a slew of lectures onto my iPod in preparation for a big trip, I realized I'd want...Read moreMP3 to iPod Audio Book Converter [free!PodSoftware by Brent Evans] Heidi Thorne is a self-publishing advocate and author of nonfiction books, eBooks, and audiobooks. She is a former trade newspaper editor.I had a comment on one of my posts asking about what tools could be used for creating audio books. Audio books are popular these days since people are always looking for ways to multitask. Similar to podcasts, listening to books being read out loud allows people to "read" books while completing other activities such as exercising, housework, driving, etc.So if you're thinking about producing an audio book of one of your print books or eBooks, here's what you need to know.What Is an Audio Book?In simplest terms, an audio book is a recording of someone reading a book out loud. But as will be discussed, it is a much more complex project than simply recording the voice of someone reading a book aloud.A Recent and Very Brief History of Audio BooksIn the late 20th century, audio books were commonly offered on cassette tapes. The problem with tapes was that it was difficult to scan and search through them using cassette players. As media formats evolved, CDs offered easier scanning and searching functions to audio books. But they still required a clunky CD player.When smartphones arrived, audio books would forever change. 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These days, with the plethora of devices and apps offering audio content of all types on all kinds of devices, CDs are quickly becoming obsolete.If I Record Myself Reading My Book on an MP3 File, Can I Upload It to Sell on Amazon?No. Until October 2014, Createspace did allow publishers and artists to upload and sell MP3 files through Amazon. But even then, this MP3 service was limited to music.Currently, self-published audio book content to be sold on Amazon must be produced through the ACX platform.Okay, Can I Just Record an MP3 of Me Reading My Book Aloud and Sell It On My Own?Technically, you can and there are services to help you sell digital content online. But why would you want to? Aside from all the technology and talent required to produce it, selling it own your own means you're in business. That means being responsible for all the technical glitches and customer service problems that your readers experience with your audio book product.Plus, in some areas, direct selling of digital products of any kind incurs sales taxes. Then you'd be responsible for collecting, reporting, and paying those... in addition to filing regular business income taxes whether sales taxes are required or not. If you're already in business, that might not be a big issue. But if you aren't, this puts you on a completely new path that could engulf your life for very little return. Selling audio books is just as tough as selling books and eBooks.What If I Want to Narrate My Book Myself?Whether you're hoping to save money or create a personal connection with your readers, yes, you can narrate your own audio book if you decide to publish through ACX. However, as noted earlier, the technical requirements for the recording can be extensive and would require investment in equipment, software, and a steep learning curve that may not be worth it. Plus, ACX has to approve whatever content you produce. If it doesn't meet their standards, you might have to redo it and/or pay them to help produce something that meets their requirements. Aside from these issues, narrating a book is a skill akin to acting. You need to know how to control your voice and deliver your content properly. It isn't just reading out loud like you did in grade school! Audio book readers expect PERFORMANCE! That's why ACX has a way to help authors connect with professional narrators and actors to read their books, if authors cannot do it themselves or hire proper talent. 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Content is for informational or entertainment purposes only and does not substitute for personal counsel or professional advice in business, financial, legal, or technical matters. © 2017 Heidi ThorneCommentsHeidi Thorne (author) from Chicago Area on December 13, 2018:Hi Elizabeth! Good to see you popping in to HP. Happy Holidays!Elizabeth Parker from Las Vegas, NV on December 13, 2018:Thanks for posting this. Going to check it out!Heidi Thorne (author) from Chicago Area on June 21, 2018:Hi Glenn! I think all of us authors are thinking about audio books these days! But the costs involved can be quite significant.I don't know if you knew, but I did actually successfully publish my first book on ACX, doing it as author/narrator. I will tell you from personal experience now that the learning curve is STEEP! I'm working on the second one and bumping into a few more unexpected issues with artwork of all things, as well as tech issues. But it is getting better.I'm finding, too, that my ROI on my blog and other online adventures are still good. So keeping my investments in audio books and podcasts in check until they start showing some results.Thanks so much for stopping by! I do hope that as tech and systems for audio books get better, that you'll once again consider them. Have a great day!Glenn Stok from Long Island, NY on June 21, 2018:I was thinking about this lately and started looking into the options I had to make an audiobook version of my paperback book. Your article gave me the answers I was looking for—both the pros and the cons.Based on the weak sales potential, I ruled out studying ACX, and you helped me confirm that decision. It's just not worth the time.You made it clear that the entire audio book industry is growing and new technology is coming along, so I am convinced it's best to wait and not consider it at this time. Even if I used one of the services to develop it, it's still time consuming. Time is better spent writing online content anyway. Thanks, Heidi, for a well-informed article.Tommy Wakefield on November 19, 2017:TY. :)Heidi Thorne (author) from Chicago Area on November 11, 2017:Bill, glad you have a Heidi file. :) I'm kind of in the "no thanks" side of the fence on this one, too. But if an easy to publish option develops, I might reconsider. Thanks, as always, for your support and conversation! Happy "Stay Warm" Weekend to you, too!Heidi Thorne (author) from Chicago Area on November 11, 2017:Mary, you've offered some great examples! Glad your audio books are a good mental escape for cooking. (I'd concur.) I also am undecided about authors narrating their own books. I've heard Elizabeth Gilbert read her own books and she's excellent. But then I've heard others that, yikes, are just bland at best, irritating at worst.I, too, am looking forward to seeing more options for self-publishers in the world of audio books. Thanks so much, as always, for sharing your experience and insight with us! Have a great weekend!Bill Holland from Olympia, WA on November 11, 2017:I, too, love audiobooks, but the chances of me ever making one are zilch. Still, I'll file this away under "Heidi" because never say never. :) Happy Saturday my friend. Stay warm!Mary Wickison from Brazil on November 11, 2017:I love listening to audiobooks when I am cooking dinner. It makes an otherwise dull event, meaningful.Some of the narrators are rubbish! I listened to one who was pronouncing town names in France incorrectly. He wasn't even close, and yet it was an easy thing to check.I remember a Steve Harvey book which had an excellent reader. I have also listened to many where the author themselves read it, and I sit on the fence with that, some just don't have a voice which works for me.It's an interesting topic and I do hope technology develops to allow others to expand into this field.Heidi Thorne (author) from Chicago Area on November 11, 2017:Flourish, like your husband, my husband, who also has a long commute, is really enjoying his Audible books. Years ago, I used to be on the road for hours when I was in advertising sales. So I used to "read" audio books (they were on tape and CD back then). It was a great use of my windshield time. Today, with most of my work being done in the office—and it requires a lot of mental concentration—I find that audio books are less appealing than they used to be.Totally agree that the audio and narrator quality can make or break the reader's experience. You provided a great example of that! With all the tech requirements, I personally wouldn't attempt a full-fledged audio book without professional help.Thanks for sharing your personal experience with us, as always! Have a lovely weekend!FlourishAnyway from USA on November 10, 2017:What an excellent topic! My husband has a two hour commute and as a result has listened to a broad range of audio books. With the aging population, audio books are also a good option to large print editions or giving up on reading books. When I have listened to audio books sometimes a poor narrator with a nasal quality or clicks in their voice really annoy me. Definitely not for all do-it-yourselfers.







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