



TWG 2025

# *THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF COVER DESIGN*

KATIE GARLAND



Q: "SO WHAT, ARE YOU GOING TO  
TEACH ME HOW TO DIY MY COVERS?"

A: **NOPE!**



*OK, THEN WHAT'S THE  
POINT OF THE CLASS?*



OK, THEN WHAT'S THE  
POINT OF THE CLASS?

I WANT YOU TO FEEL CONFIDENT IN YOUR  
COVER CREATION JOURNEY. WHETHER YOU  
ARE CHOOSING A DESIGNER, SHOPPING FOR  
A PREMADE, OR DIY-ING YOUR OWN COVER,  
THERE IS VALUABLE INFO FOR EVERYONE!



# *WHAT WE'LL COVER*

- Aspects of a Good Cover
- Market Research
- The Cover Design Process (for both DIY & Commissions)
  - Hiring, tools, sourcing assets, choosing art styles, etc
- Tips for publishing via POD (print-on-demand) models



# *THE MAKINGS OF A GOOD COVER*



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*DISCLAIMER: THIS CAN BE VERY  
SUBJECTIVE, BUT IN GENERAL...  
KEEP THE FOLLOWING IN MIND:*



# *THE MAKINGS OF A GOOD COVER*

- Strong composition
- Easy-to-read typography
- High contrast
- Consistency (within and across)
- Balance & breathing room
- “Fits the genre”
- Appeals to the target audience
- Personality
- Proper sizing
- Clear/unified message
- Ethically sourced assets
- Appropriate licensing



PERSONALITY MEANS  
MY COVER SHOULD LOOK  
SUPER UNIQUE AND LIKE  
NOTHING ELSE ON THE  
MARKET, RIGHT?



PERSONALITY MEANS MY COVER SHOULD  
LOOK SUPER UNIQUE AND LIKE NOTHING  
ELSE ON THE MARKET, RIGHT?

**WRONG!!!!**



I MEAN, TRENDS HAVE TO START  
SOMEWHERE, RIGHT? BUT IF YOUR GOAL  
IS TO CONSISTENTLY MAKE MONEY, YOU  
GOTTA PLAY IT SMART: YOUR COVER  
NEEDS TO COMMUNICATE TO READERS  
**EXACTLY** WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN  
THEY PICK UP YOUR BOOK!



HOW DO WE  
ACCOMPLISH THIS?

MARKET RESEARCH!



# MARKET RESEARCH!

HONESTLY, THIS IS YOUR  
**MOST IMPORTANT JOB**  
WHEN WRITING YOUR BOOK  
>> KNOW YOUR COMPS  
>> KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE



WHAT SHOULD YOUR COVER LOOK LIKE?

REAL PEOPLE PHOTOS?

VECTOR/ILLUSTRATION?

LANDSCAPES?

OBJECTS?

TYPOGRAPHY-ONLY?

HOW ARE ELEMENTS LAID OUT?

WHAT TYPES OF EFFECTS ARE USED?



THE EASIEST WAY TO  
CHECK FOR TRENDS?

LOOK AT THE  
BESTSELLER  
PAGES ON  
AMAZON.





STAY TUNED – MORE  
VISUAL EXAMPLES WILL BE  
SHOWN SEPARATELY! ;)



# *COVER DESIGN PROCESS*



# *COVER DESIGN PROCESS*

- Market research
- Choose an art style
- Source assets
- Determine sizing
- Create the design
- Check design for grayscale & thumbnails size
- Export all formats needed
- Order proofs-recommended
- Publish!



# *WHAT SHOULD I HAVE NAILED DOWN WHEN HIRING A DESIGNER*

- Budget
- Exact Genre
- Comp titles
- Trim size
- Page color + cover finish
- Est. page count
- Character/location details
- Book synopsis
- Art style/vibe
- Examples of things you like



# TOOLS & RESOURCES FOR DIY

- For designing:

- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe Illustrator
- Affinity Photo
- Affinity Designer
- Canva Pro
- Adobe Express

- YouTube: follow some tutorials
- Platform help pages/Templates

- For stock photos:

- Depositphotos
- Adobe Stock (can filter out AI)
- Arcangel (PREMIUM photography)
- Bookish Photography
- Period Images

- For fonts:

- Creative Market
- Creative Fabrica



# *PREMADE COVER SHOPPING TIPS*

- Consider your book title
- Test it for grayscale
- Vet the designer/company
- Make sure it's sold only once
- Reverse image search
- Check available formats
- Ask designer for stock images used/proof of licensing
- Pay attention to turnaround time
- Find out if there is series continuation potential
- Verify the deliverables
- Get appropriate licensing



# *COVER DESIGNER SHOPPING TIPS*

- Choose a designer who has the style you want in their portfolio (or evidence that they can do it if not)
- Watch turnaround times/waitlists - you may need to hire them early on!
- Find out their process
- Be vigilant about contracts & payment methods
- Check their Gen AI policies
- Make sure in budget - or find out about payment plans



# *COVER DESIGNER SHOPPING TIPS*

- Check their portfolio against the cheatsheet given
- See what extra services they might provide
- Determine the deliverables they provide
- Confirm licensing options
- Ask about policies for changes and series continuations
- Find out where they source their assets / whether you need to provide them
- Look for potential add'tl fees



# *ARTIST SHOPPING TIPS*

- Choose someone in budget!
- Vet them for plagiarism/AI
- Make sure they do the style you want (DO NOT ask them to mimic another artist's style)
- Make sure they offer appropriate licensing now or that it's available to add on later
- Make sure you can have another designer add typography to the design
- Work with contracts and proper payment methods



*CONSIDER YOUR  
PRINTING PROCESS*



IF YOU USE POD: TEMPER  
YOUR EXPECTATIONS  
AND SET YOURSELF UP  
FOR SUCCESS!



# POD PROVIDERS HAVE GENEROUS PRINT ALLOWANCES

INGRAMSPARK:  $\frac{1}{16}$ " (2mm)

AMAZON  $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3.2mm)



# *BEST PRACTICES FOR POD COVERS:*

- Avoid borders in the design
- Use full-wrap images when possible
- Avoid hard lines along the spine edge
- Use provided templates
- Follow measurements exactly
- Choose colors/finish wisely
- Expect variances
- Plan for the barcode
- Don't forget the bleed
- Use generous margins
- Don't be lazy, keep it looking professional!



*ACCESS THE SLIDES + RESOURCES  
AT: SAPPHY.BIZ/TWG-COVERS*



*NEED HELP? GRAB  
MY CONTACT INFO  
ON THE NEXT SLIDE!*



*GET IN TOUCH WITH ME*

*PSST, YOU CAN SCAN  
THIS TO ADD ME  
TO YOUR CONTACTS!*

(Assuming the resolution is good enough!)

