

DM's Guild Self-Promotion Guide

A Note From The Document Curator

Welcome to the newest iteration of the DM's Guild Self-Promotion Guide, circa March 2021. When I originally created this document in August of 2018, my goal was to share some of the wonderful advice I'd received from other members of the DM's Guild community that helped me soar as a new writer. As a "living document", the Self-Promotion Guide continued to grow with the input of many members of the community. However, like an untended and pot-bound bonsai, the document had grown without pruning for a long time and become a tangled, unhelpful mess.

While I consider myself no more an "expert" on the DM's Guild than I did over a year ago, I will acknowledge that I've collected quite a few experiences, and I hope that sharing them can help others new to our world. I've done my best to learn from "the masters", some of the most prolific and successful members of our community, and I hope to pass on all that I've learned.

Sincerely, Ashley May

Growing This Document

Got a helpful link, hashtag, FB group, or other resource you think needs to be listed here? Contact me! You can find me in the DM's Guild Creator's Discord (discussed later in this document), on Twitter at the handle [@ashleymaywrites](https://twitter.com/ashleymaywrites), or you can e-mail me directly at ashleymaywrites@gmail.com.

Major Update History:

3/4/2021 - Pardon the dust! The Reviewers section is undergoing a major overhaul.

2/25/2020 - Added information about Reddit algorithms. Thanks, Laura Hirsbrunner!

Facebook

If you're just starting on Facebook and you haven't joined any groups, you should immediately should join the [official Dungeon Master's Guild Facebook Group](#), and follow the [official Dungeon Master's Guild Facebook Page](#). These groups are managed by OneBookShelf, the company behind the DM's Guild, DriveThruRPG, and a network of other online storefronts. They're also a great place to get news updates provided directly by Lysa Penrose, the community manager that works as a direct liaison between OBS and the DM's Guild writer community.

Most Facebook pages and groups carry a lot of the same rules that generally boil down to various applications of [Wheaton's Law](#), with particular notes on avoiding real-world political or religious topics. Some groups take special note that positive discussion surrounding minority groups (outlined by the DnD5th group as "racial, gender, people with physical or mental disabilities, neurodivergent") and the power dynamics associated with them, is not an inherently political subject. Always check each group's rules section to see what they might be picky about, and to see if any rules have changed since this list was constructed.

Engaging in regular discussion on these boards *outside of advertising* is vital. If you're only there to advertise, a lot of people will just keep scrolling unless your post is extraordinarily eye-catching. However, if you make friends and become a known figure in a community, they'll be more interested to see what you bring to the table.

Places To Promote

[Dungeons and Dragons 5th Edition](#) - ONE POST PER WEEK, PERIOD. Keep all content at a maximum of PG-13 rating; no excessive violence, profanity, explicit art, or over-sexualized content. You must clearly be able to illustrate how your material relates to 5E, no other systems.

[D&D 5E the "Next" Edition](#) - Open to advertisements for podcasts and products. Laid back rules, they only ask you not to spam them.

[Dungeon Masters Guild Fanclub](#) - This group is designed for you to advertise your DM's Guild products. Fundraising/crowdsourcing posts are only allowed in the product is intended to be marketed via DM's Guild, and they ask you to limit these posts to "once per week". Because the group seems firmly geared toward the DM's Guild, one can assume that DriveThruRPG products (even SRD5 based) are not allowed.

[Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition feedback forum](#) - Another laid back group with no specific rules about advertising. Still, don't abuse it.

[The D&D Adventurer's Guild \(A 5th edition Unofficial Page\)](#) - A bit picky on what they allow links to. No posts about Patreons, Kickstarters or other crowdfunding tools without having received permission first. One can assume they consider DM's Guild and DTRPG under "official products or other company's related products", but they mostly talk about rules for advertising podcasts. One can assume product links will follow the same rules as podcast advertisement, which is to say, 5th edition only, and no spamming.

[All Things DnD](#) - In keeping with their name, they're all about D&D, but they're not picky about edition. On All Things DnD, they ask you to message admins to get permission if you're planning to make self-promotion posts.

Miscellaneous Facebook Tips

- **Check your privacy settings!** You're about to become a (semi-)public figure. Utilize the "Privacy Checkups" feature on your Facebook profile to start, and make sure that you aren't sharing more than you intended. Make certain details like your phone number, personal email address, employer, etc, are hidden from people who aren't on your friends list.
- **A Facebook Page?** You can make a page to promote your works on, but keep in mind that unless you have a *lot* of products and are already developing a fan-following, you probably won't get a lot of visibility. But, if you have a lot of products on various platforms (DM's Guild, DriveThruRPG, Patreon, Kickstarter, etc) it can help you connect your fanbase with *all* of your body of work. Take the time to put good, eye-catching graphics on your page. Having an attractive page can help if you want to invest in...
- **Facebook Ads.** There's nothing wrong with paying Facebook for some advertising space. As for the return you'll get off of it, your mileage may vary. Take the time to read guides on building eye-catching ads that turn impressions into clicks. Most Facebook users report mixed results with Facebook ads, and it's difficult to say how many impressions convert into actual product purchases.
- **Check Your Private Messages.** If someone you're not friends with decides to send you a private message, it can easily be missed! On a semi-regular basis, make sure you open Messenger and click the gear symbol in the upper left hand corner (if you're viewing in a browser, not the app), and then click "Message Requests". This is where those "messages from people you don't know" will collect. It could be a cam-girl bot, it could be a Nigerian prince with a lucrative business venture, or it *could* be someone who wants to discuss your product.

Twitter

Do you know what an “elevator pitch” is? It’s the idea that you’re in an elevator with someone and you want them to be interested in your product. You may have as little as fifteen seconds to catch their attention before the door opens and they walk away. When it comes to Twitter, your “fifteen seconds” is 280 characters. For some people, this is more than enough, but for some, it’s a painfully short window that should also include a product link and the appropriate hashtags. Furthermore, making posts without hashtags when you have no followers is like screaming into the void.

Building A Twitter Presence

- **Seek out creators whose work you enjoy.** Follow them. Seek out D&D podcasts, livestreams, review sites, and anything else that may connect to your subject. Follow them too. With any luck, some of them will follow you back, and you can begin to build an audience.
- **Participate in Follow Fridays.** This is the day of the week when people post lists of their favorite Twitterers, recommending others to follow them. In order to participate on any given Friday, first assemble a list of people you want to recommend. It’s common to list more than one person at a time. Make sure you’re spelling their usernames properly, preceded by the @ symbol so people can mouse-over their names to preview and follow them. Make sure to leave room for a brief introduction, and ALWAYS use the #FF hashtag, as well as #FollowFriday if you’ve got the space. Also, use Follow Fridays as a good opportunity to find other creators and community members that you should be following!
- **Do More Than Advertise.** Following a Twitter handle that only self-promotes is kind of like watching a TV channel with nothing but commercials. You won’t keep interested followers if you don’t give them something worth following. Participate in conversations with other Twitter users that you like. Share things you agree with or like. Talk about your creative process, your recent D&D games, etc.
- **Stay On-Theme.** You don’t have to talk about just your D&D and DM’s Guild work, but it helps to not be too “all over the place”. You can talk about other interests, like your favorite comic books, football, pro wrestling, etc, but remember that if you’re trying to use Twitter to promote your written works, you’ll want to keep the “off subject” chatter to a relative minimum. If most of your posts are about Marvel or the WWE, your D&D based followers may wonder why they followed you.

Who To Follow

Initially, I wanted to avoid adding a “people to follow” section in order to avoid any sort of favoritism toward particular creators. However, the Dungeon Master’s Guild has opened an [official Twitter handle](#), which you should *absolutely* be following. Tagging “@dms_guild” in your posts can help consolidate your content with other creators, and get it in front of the eyes of people with shared interests. However, don’t abuse this option. This is not for your daily “I’m working on my next project for @dms_guild!”, but instead, for making occasional formal announcement/advertisement posts.

Helpful Hashtags

Hashtags are an important part of information circulating on Twitter, as they help to categorize your post with other posts like it.

- #dnd
- #dnd5e
- #dungeonsanddragons
- #rpg
- #ttrpg
- #tabletop
- #tabletopgaming
- #dmtips
- #dmsguild
- #1LineWed - For posting a single line from your current project, only on Wednesdays.

Twitter recommends you use a maximum of two hashtags per post for ideal visibility, and there does seem to be some truth to this, as [a study in 2014](#) found that additional hashtags turned into fewer interactions. Though the exact reasoning for this remains uncertain, you’re probably better off picking one or two hashtags per post, and alternating between different hashtags on different posts. For example, you may make one post on a Tuesday at 2pm using “#dnd” and “#ttrpg”, and next week on Tuesday at 2pm you try “#dnd5e” and “#tabletop”. See what works best for you.

Reviewers

Reaching out to reviewers who have their own fan followings can help give your product the push you need, *if* it strikes their fancy. You'll want to make sure your product is as pristinely polished as you can manage before reaching out to a reviewer, as they may go over it with a fine-toothed comb, and they *will* tell their readers if they find parts of your product to be sub-par or unprofessional. Their responsibility is to their own viewers, not to you, and even if you're giving them a free copy, may not always give you the glowing results you'd hope for. But, if you're confident in your product, they may be able to give you an amazing boost.

When Contacting Reviewers...

- Look at the kinds of reviews they do first. If they only review Adventure League products, don't send them your class options product.
- Pay attention to who you contact. Some larger websites may have reviewers for specific categories (such as Christian Hoffer on Comicbook.com, or Tommy Williams on GeekTyrant). Make sure you reach out to the right person.
- Make sure they're taking reviews. Some reviewers shut down submissions while they work through backlogs.
- Look for their preferred contact method. If they have one, *only use it*.
- Write a message that is crafted for the reviewer you're contacting. Don't copy-paste a form message. Tell them why you think your product may appeal to their tastes.

Lastly, remember that even those who reviews as their career *don't work for you*. You can ask them to review your product, but you are at their mercy, not the other way around, and you cannot expect that everything you submit will get reviewed. Furthermore, asking a reviewer to work around your schedule (IE by sending them an advance copy but asking them to post their review when your product goes live) is a pretty big ask, and makes their lives harder. Don't make their lives harder.

If a reviewer's preferred contact method is known, it will be **bolded and negative**.

Reviewers	Email	Twitch	Facebook	Twitter	Website	YouTube
Bob World Builder (Bob Mason)	Link			Link		Link
Comicbook.com (Christian Hoffer)				Link	Link	
Crit Academy	Link	Link	Link	Link	Link	Link
Dungeon Grumbling (Sam P Hope)	Link					
Eric Watson	Link		Link		Link	Link
GeekTyrant (Tommy Williams)				Link	Link	
Home Brew Crew	Link	Link	Link	Link	Link	Link
Indestructoboy						Link
Mr Tarrasque				Link		Link

Nerd Immersion		Link	Link	Link	Link	Link
Reviewers, Continued	Email	Twitch	Facebook	Twitter	Website	YouTube
Non Zero Sum Games	Link		Link	Link	Link	

Other Places To Promote

Adventure Lookup

[Adventure Lookup](#) is the brainchild of DM [Matthew Colville](#) of YouTube fame, made possible by [Christian Flach](#) and a huge number of contributors. It was designed as a way to look up any adventure module from D&D history by factors like starting level range, what kind of monsters it features, what environments or notable magical items it features, etc. Adventure Lookup also features DM's Guild adventures, which means your adventure *could* be exactly what someone was looking for, and they'd never have heard of it otherwise.

Register on the website, then click the green "Add a new adventure" button in the upper right hand corner of the content. Take the time to fill out *all* of the pertinent details of your adventure. Any one of these could be the hook that draws someone to your adventure over any others. Of course, this is strictly for *adventures*. If you're trying to market other kinds of supplements (character classes, magic item collections, lists of encounters, etc), it's not much use to you.

Reddit

Posting on Reddit is, for many writers, a "hit or miss" subject. Your post may take off, get hundreds of upvotes, thousands of views, and start a variety of fascinating subjects within its comment section. Or, it may get downvoted the second it appears and immediately slide into obscurity, never again to see the light of day. While plenty of creators can make vague guesses as to why this happens, or strategize ways to get attention, there are plenty more who simply don't consider it a viable place to advertise... For every dedicated Redditor out there, there's another person who considers it an internet cesspool. Still, the fact that you could have a hit may make it worth it to you to post.

The following are some great boards to promote on, but be mindful not to spam.

- [r/rpg](#)
- [r/dnd](#)
- [r/dndnext](#)

If you get buried, downvoted, or receive unkind comments in response to your advertisement, just ignore them and consider the post a throw-away, rather than arguing with them. Always be respectful of your potential audience, even if they don't always respect you.

If you ask friends or fellow DM's Guild writers to upvote your post (no shame in this, especially on group-projects!), remember not to link them directly to the post. Instead, tell them the title of the thread and which board it's on. Reddit's algorithms are designed to ignore votes from people who just "show up" directly on the thread they upvote, as they're more likely to be spam or vote manipulation.

Discord

While Discord has a thriving D&D community, it can be difficult to find places that will allow you to advertise. Furthermore, a “chat room” setup can lead to your post being buried under the chatter before most will see it. Still, if you like chat rooms, it’s worth a shot!

DM’s Guild Creative Lounge - The unofficial Discord of the DM’s Guild creators’ community, founded by yours truly. Because this is a Discord that is restricted only to the creators’ community and not to fans and outside viewers, you need to request a link in order to join. However, the Discord is not only an invaluable resource for sharing, networking, and creating with your fellow writers, artists, and more, but the Discord has its own channels for advertising your products. If you would like to receive a Discord invite, please [reach out to me via direct message on Twitter](#).

RPG Writer Workshop - The official Discord channel for [Ashley Warren’s RPG Writer Workshops](#). Not only should you probably be signing up for her workshops, but this can be a great resource for discussing inspiration, brainstorming, worldbuilding, publishing, etc. If you want to advertise here, the specific channel you’re looking for is “#promotion”, filed under the Main category.

DM Mentor’s Guild - A fantastic place to meet fellow dungeon masters, ask questions, get advice, etc. If you want to advertise here, the specific channel you’re looking for is “#community_ads”, filed under the Information category.

DriveThruDiscord - The official Discord of OBS, where you can hear news updates straight from the staff, and even ask publishing service representatives when you have a question. The #promote-your-work channel under the Chatter category can be used to advertise.

Forums

Forums? Are those still a thing? They sure are! The D&D fandom is filled with old fogies who still use message boards, and the two reigning champions for self-promotion are ENWorld’s board for [“Publishers, Promotions, Press Releases, DMs Guild, & Kickstarter Announcements”](#), and RPGnet’s [“Glamorous Unrestrained Hype Machine”](#). Make sure you read each board’s rules, and like with most self-promotion outlets, try to engage in conversation and interact on subjects outside of just discussing your work... But also make sure a link to your work is in your signature across the board!

Universal Advice

When you first start promoting your work, it can be tempting to set up accounts *everywhere*. Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, Wordpress, Patreon... But before you dive in head first, you need to think about how many of these sources you will *realistically* maintain in the course of a week. If you sign up for eight different services and leave all but two to languish, then viewers who stumble on your abandoned pages will assume you're inactive everywhere, rather than searching for where you're still posting. This is especially important on any platform that offers communication; if someone tries to contact you via Twitter and receives no response, they probably won't try another method, and will instead give up on you. Learning a new platform can be a time-consuming process, and you're unlikely to tackle learning two or three new platforms at once.

Any time you're asking your viewers to do something, whether it's free (view this page, download this free PDF, etc) or it will cost them money (donate to my Patreon, buy my PDF, etc), this is known as a "Call To Action", or CTA. You don't want every single one of your posts to be an obvious CTA. In that respect, following your page or social networking handle would be like paying for a cable channel that offered nothing but advertisements. You need to provide some level of entertainment that doesn't require additional action on behalf of your viewers. If you don't feel like you have a lot of entertaining content outside of what you're selling, start by sharing/retweeting content from other creators that you think your audience will find interesting.

If you do decide to maintain multiple platforms, consider how you'll deliver your content differently across them. Twitter requires you to work in brevity, and you'll want to focus on the insertion of hashtags into your content instead of stacking them all at the end. Facebook on the other hand is a more "social" outlet, and better geared toward large posts and starting discussions. Copy-pasting the same material between both websites is fraught with issues, because people consume information differently on them. You may also want to stagger your posts so that you're not posting the same thing at the same time on all of your outlets.

A final note on Facebook: Your friends are not your customers. Repeat after me, *your friends are not your customers*.

It can be easy to fall into the trap of assuming that just because you have 400 Facebook friends, a significant number of them will answer your CTA... Or even that your closest circle of friends will all do it. Even if what you're offering is a free document, and all they need to do to support you is download something for free, you can't count on the fact they'll do it. *And that's okay!* Expecting that the people you play D&D with every week will buy or download your D&D supplements is an easy way to get feelings hurt. Your friends are your friends, and if they decide to help support you, that's awesome, but it shouldn't be a requirement of your relationship.

Pricing Your Work

One of the most common questions for new creators is “how do I price my work”? There is no strict guideline to tell people what their work is worth, because quite frankly, the products you produce for the DM’s Guild are marketed very differently from most products. Whereas a carpenter could calculate a reasonable price for their work based on the cost of materials and an hourly rate, a digital author has fewer guidelines.

Once upon a time, this essay contained a lot of math about starting rates for freelance writers, calculating how many copies you should expect to sell before reaching your “break even” point, and some anecdotal polls about how much people claim they’d be willing to pay for a product. Of course, what people say they’ll pay and what they’ll actually open their wallet for tend to be two very different things.

Once upon a time, the general rule of thumb around the DM’s Guild was 10c per page, rounded to the nearest dollar amount, but it began migrating closer to 20c per page. As production values continue to rise for Guild products, there are additional factors to consider when pricing a document, such as the costs of hiring others for your art, layout, editing, and other duties.

The importance of production value is a gray area for many creators. While some customers may be just fine with a basic B&W Microsoft Word layout as long as the writing is good, another customer may be unsatisfied if the page isn’t full color and features custom art that they haven’t seen in other DM’s Guild products. Furthermore, many new writers (and experienced ones with [imposter syndrome](#)) may struggle with calling their work “good writing”.

A common pitfall for new writers is to dramatically underprice their work for the market average, on the grounds that they are new and want to build up a fan-following. There are several problems with this point of view, chief among them being that when you start off by devaluing your own work, it makes it difficult to convince people later that your work is worth more. Why should *they* have confidence in your product if *you* don’t have confidence in your product? Furthermore, underpricing your work brings down the overall perceived quality of DM’s Guild products as a whole. If “Experienced Author A” puts out an illustrated 30-page book of spells for \$5.99, while “Newbie Author B” puts out a similar product for 99c, it makes Experienced Author A’s product appear overpriced.

Another fear is “I won’t get enough sales if my product is too expensive”. It’s entirely possible that increased prices will reduce your number of sales, but if you’re making more off of every product, then it’s very easy to break even or come out ahead with a more expensive product. You have to sell six 99c products to make up the value of selling a single \$5.99 product, and it’s a lot harder to convince six customers to buy your product than it is to convince

one. It's also worth noting that higher prices gives you more wiggle room to run sales, or be included in bundles with other creators.

I said many months ago "we're still pioneering a lot of new territory when it comes to product pricing", and I still believe it. Pricing your product is never going to be easy, but the good news is that, on the whole, prices are rising and beginning to come closer to being in line with respectable freelance rates. There is no reason to undervalue your work, or anyone else's.

Next, comes the question of free and "Pay What You Want" titles. The idea of Pay What You Want, or PWYW, is a very volatile subject for many people around the DM's Guild. One of the most vocal opponents of the PWYW model is Robert P. Davis, an established writer in our community. He once posted the following on a discussion following a [Twitter thread by Dungeon Commandr](#).

"Your pricing doesn't just affect you. It affects the creators around you who DO rely on their work to eat and put a roof over their family's heads. If you sell your 150-page book for \$1.95 - or worse, PWYW - you literally drive ALL prices down, across the site, which literally takes food out of the mouths of people in this community whom you call "friend." Does that seem right to you?" ~ RP Davis

When you market a product as PWYW, you must understand that what most people *want* is to not pay anything at all. This may sound pessimistic, but the numbers support it.

Working from my own numbers, we'll use the example of two products that I released in November of 2018. The first is The Lovers' Handbook, a 30-page, information-dense product with lots of DM guidance, a light item creation system, price lists, and numerous large rolling charts. I sold it at \$2.95, roughly the perceived going rate of products at the time (keep in mind this is when we all worked off of 10c per page rounded to the nearest dollar, not 20c). The second is The Lovers' Guidebook: Player Edition, released a few days later as a PWYW product. It is also information-dense, but without charts or systems, and comes in at only six pages. The suggested buy rate is 99c, which would be entirely reasonable for a product of that size if I were to price it normally.

Between the products' launch and the end of 2018, I sold 240 copies of The Lovers' Handbook, netting a profit of \$354. I also had 87 purchases of The Lovers' Guidebook: Player Edition, bringing in \$41 from what I consider "donations". However, TLG:PE was also downloaded for free *an additional 839 times*. Now, I cannot reasonably assume that every person who downloaded it for free would have paid for it. In fact, I think it's fair to assume that many people have "bought it and forgot it", having never downloaded or opened the product after adding it to their library.

However, if we assume that a meager 10% of the people who downloaded the product for free were to pay the minimum price of 99c, I would have earned \$42 from it. That is

essentially the same amount I earned by asking people to pay what they wanted. Adding to the people who willingly paid for it, it doubles my income from the document. What did I truly gain by making my product “Pay What You Want”? Well, we could say “exposure”, but every artist or author knows that’s a dirty word.

Now, keep in mind, I stand by my decision of making The Lovers’ Guidebook: Player Edition a PWYW product. I considered it a “low effort” work that only took me a couple of days to bang together, and I felt the information within (concerning “table manners”, being respectful of players, handling a situation if a player makes you uncomfortable, etc) was too important to place behind a price barrier. I felt no one should be prevented from having access to this information based on whether or not they could afford it.

However, this does not apply to run-of-the-mill classes, archetypes, items, spells, feats, etc. I often see writers say “well, I’m just doing this for fun, not to make a profit”. However, they say this while rubbing shoulders with peers who are trying to make writing a part of their income stream to support themselves. If you have put effort into your product, you should be charging a reasonable amount of money for the time.

I’d like to share a final anecdote by document contributor David McDonough.

“I used extracts of my adventures as freebies to attract folks to the paid product. Yet, for a little while, I had them as PWYW. I made a couple of bucks that way - but I found more folks downloaded free rather than PWYW, even if the latter is technically free too. Maybe folks don't want to be bothered with typing in \$0.00 for PWYW or feel bad to do that and so avoid them. But ultimately, if the goal is to increase eyeballs, I'd suggest free over pay.” ~ David McDonough

Given David’s sentiments (which I’ve heard echoed from many other writers), if you’re looking to get attention, “Free” does seem more attractive than PWYW. If you’re hesitant because you’re hoping that your work will merit donations, consider attaching a [Ko-Fi](#) link to your product so that giving souls can consider sending a few bucks your way on the back end, rather than up front.

About The Document Curator

My name is Ashley May and I stumbled into this wild world of DM's Guild writing back in July of 2018. I ran into some pretty severe stumbling blocks, but the helpful advice of the DM's Guild community helped get me back on track. I went from being a meandering newbie who got their first product pulled from the service, to being a quadruple-Platinum writer who is proud to tell people "I'm an author." I want to be able to give the same kind of help to all of the writers who continue to join the Guild and delve into the wonderful world of RPG writing.

If you'd like to support me (besides [buying my books!](#)), I also have a [Ko-Fi](#).