

# Zines and Tweens

**publishing zines, e-zines & magazines**

by

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a magazine and support network  
for writers, artists, and creative spirits  
[www.ArtellaWordsAndArt.com](http://www.ArtellaWordsAndArt.com)

## What is a zine?

A zine (pronounced “zeen”, like magazine without the maga), or ‘zine, is an independently created publication that generally has a very focused niche, theme, or audience. It is often created by any means necessary and/or available, created out of passion for a subject rather than for intended commercial success.

Zines can be created with word processors, layout and imaging software, or good ole scissors and glue. They can be photocopied, professionally printed, or created entirely by hand.

A zine can be about any subject. Some typical subjects for content include creative writing, art, comics, personal writings, fan-based writings, science fiction, literature, anthologies, reviews of books, movies, films or music. But topics are entirely open and completely up to you!

### Brief History of the zine:

- **1454:** Johann Gutenberg invents the printing press. Pre-Industrial age, only a small percentage of the population was literate. The Printing press was initially used to print the Bible.
- **1700s:** After centuries of struggle in England, printers win the right to publish in the 1700s. Self-publishing was often too expensive for most at this point. However, the amount of books and pamphlets being made increased. Ben Franklin self-published as a youth and later self published “Poor Richard’s Almanac”. Samuel Adams and other Americans (The Pamphleteers) printed works to help bring about the American Revolution. Russians did the same with “Samizdat”. William Blake in England self-published using etched copper plate engraving.
- **Mid-1800s:** Inexpensive small table-top printing-presses (more than toys, but not much) were introduced and "Amateur Journalism" became a popular hobby, especially among boys -- Todd Lincoln published one from the White House, and Lloyd Osbourne did a "zine" with contributions from his step-father Robert Louis Stevenson.
- **Late-1800s:** The Mimeograph was introduced by Edison c.1875 and soon became standard office (& church basement) equipment. Dadaists begin self-publishing in the early 1900’s.
- **1930s:** Readers of science-fiction magazines started communicating by way of mimeographed or spirit-duplicated "fanzines", and still publish them, though most now use xerocopy. The Comet began publishing in 1930 and was basically a science fiction zine composed mostly of articles on science. Other science fiction zines soon followed, including Time Traveler and Science Fiction, which was

edited by Jerome Siegel and Joe Shuster, who later created Superman. Mimeograph technology in the 1930s is used for self-publishing by the beats. In 1938 Chester F. Carlson (born in 1906 in Seattle, WA) obtained the first patents for the photocopier. In 1937 he developed the process of xerography or "dry copy", a copying process based on electrostatic electricity. Xerography comes from the Greek term "Dry Writing". He was turned down by over 20 companies to produce the machine to do this process and it took 6 years of demonstrating it until the Battelle Development Company took interest and was able to produce his invention in 1944. The Haloid Company negotiated commercial rights for the process.

- **1950s:** Haloid later became Xerox and introduced the first office photocopier in 1958. Carlson himself was a self-publisher in High School using mimeograph.
- **1960s:** Underground Comix artists use the photocopier for self-publishing in the 1960's.
- **1970s:** Punks in the 1970s create the form closest to today's zines.
- **1980s:** The zine explosion in the 1980s is documented by Factsheet Five, a defunct zine that reviewed zines. The original editor of it, Mike Gunderloy, originated or popularized the word "zine" and established most of today's "Zine Ethos" (non-profit, trading, do-it-yourself, importance of feedback from readers, etc.), based on his background in the science fiction fanzine tradition
- **1990s:** Technological advances in the 1990s makes professional editing and publishing tools accessible to the general public. Mainstream media becomes interested in zines, which had for the most part remained in obscurity for years. The interest is more as a novelty rather than as an art form or legitimate publication. Retail stores began to carry zines as part of their books or comics or music. Towards the end of the 90s, many people who had published popular zines for years stop publishing or move into more mainstream creative positions or begin to devote their time and creativity towards web sites or online publications called e-zines.
- **The 2000s:** The zine explosion of the 90's made many people aware of zines but an often lack of quality jaded many would-be retailers and readers. The absence of many of the publications that were staples of zinedom and lack of mainstream attention has created a fresh, new, open environment. Many zine publishers have returned to many almost forgotten printing methods such as silk-screening, letter pressing, linoleum cuts, and hand stitched bindings. Zines are being explored as a form of book arts, and art zines are prevalent.

Furthermore, the use of the web has created further-stretching networks of people working within the same medium as well as providing publishers a virtual retail area, increasing reader access to remote locations and allowing more people to see

content than the self-publisher could afford to non-virtually print. Annual conventions have also aided to regenerate public awareness while strengthening relations among self-publishers.

## **Why publish a zine?**

The individual reasons to create are zine are as diverse and unique as the individuals who create zines. Here are a few:

- ❖ To see your work in print
- ❖ To share what you can create
- ❖ To experiment with layout and imagery
- ❖ To encourage others to be creative
- ❖ To find and connect others with similar interests
- ❖ To get mail
- ❖ To make new friends
- ❖ To publish the creative voices of others
- ❖ To create the publication you always wished existed
- ❖ To use the latest publishing technology
- ❖ To teach yourself something new
- ❖ To express your passion about a subject
- ❖ To combine several interests/talents into one endeavor

## **Getting Started!**

In a nutshell, here's the process for creating a zine:

1. Have the desire!
2. Make the time to dedicate to seeing things through to completion. Be realistic when you think about your schedule. How and when will you work on your zine? If your schedule is already very full, what can you eliminate to make room for your new passion? Give yourself plenty of leeway if and when if you announce your first distribution date. It will most likely take longer than you think it will!
3. Come up with the content. You can write it all yourself, or publish the work of contributors, or a combination of both. You can work with a theme, or go for creating an eclectic collection of work. No rules except the one that you make (which, of course, you're allowed to break because it's your zine!)
4. Decide on the format you want. A popular zine format is "half-size" (8.5x11" papers folding in half), but zines can be in any shape or size that you can imagine.
5. Select the content that fits the format, and lay it out.
6. Print the zine.

7. Distribute the zine.

## Format and Layout

Most publications include a front cover, a back cover, contact information, table of contents and page numbers. (Once you have a collating fiasco, you will learn the importance of page numbers).

Whether you're printing your zine yourself, or letting the copy shop/printer do it for you, there are a few things to keep in mind:

**1. Think in page segments.** If you are planning on making your zine out of folded pages, you need to think in four-page segments. For Example, if you create a 24 page piece that you are planning on copying on paper that you will fold in half and staple, it will take 6 pieces of paper for 24 pages, but then two of the pages will be used for the front and back cover. If you include a cover, back cover, contact information, and table of contents, you will need to create one more page of content to go up to 7 pieces of paper and 28 pages.

**2. Make a blank paper mock up of what you would like to create.** Using the example above, if you are using six pieces of paper to create a 24-page publication (including front and back covers), fold six blank sheets of paper, write page numbers on them, and then jot down the content of what will be on each page, in terms of how it flows in the publication. Then take the pages apart so you can see how your master needs to be laid out so that everything ends up in the proper order. This is helpful whether you are doing the layout on the computer or in the "cut and paste" method.

**3. Choose copy machines wisely.** If you are copying the zine yourself, be forewarned that identical or similar machines will have different levels of quality. Search around and find the best quality for your time and money. You can use the "2 pages to 1 double-sided page" feature to transfer your cut and pasted pages to create a master copy. With your master copy, you can feed the machine and use the feature "2 sided to 2 sided". Some machines can collate and separate and some can even fold and staple for you. It depends on the machine. After making your copies, you can fold and staple and then distribute!

**4. Use layout software for maximum flexibility.** If you already own layout software, such as Pagemaker, Quark or InDesign, you can do the layout on your computer, which allows for exact placement and many special layout effects. However, don't invest in expensive software until you have published your first issue and are sure this is something you want to do. Most importantly, make sure that everything you worked on is backed up in more than one place. Have a hard copy somewhere and it is recommended that you store your work somewhere online as well.

### Helpful tips:

- Give yourself a half inch margin of your content on each side to give the photo copier space for variance.
- Color pictures and shading often get slaughtered by a photocopier. When using other's work, this can become a problem. Black and white originals with bold lines often turn out closer to the original on a photocopier. To semi-gauge how a picture will turn out, squint at it until it become blurry. Blues will often disappear or appear light while reds will often copy as black.
- Layout, especially the first time, will take much longer than one would expect. Don't run everything the second the master copy is ready. Make a copy that you can read through and edit. Then re-edit. Once you are really satisfied, print your run. Don't be afraid to step back from your zine for a little bit. Give it room to breathe so that it is right when it is finished. Once it is finished and you send it off, it is on its own.
- The more you do yourself, the cheaper things can get. Your time is worth something. Shop around and explore options.
- Never underestimate the value of a great relationship with your printer.
- Food and other items can be used as barter and bribes to get friends and family to help with the labor-intensive parts like stapling and folding. Invite them over for a zine assembling party.
- Larger volumes can be assembled and even mailed from fulfillment houses. Often, fulfillment houses employ by disabled children and adults who are paid for their labor time. If you have the money to "outsource" a large volume of zines, this can be a great way to get your zines prepared and shipped.

## **Distribution**

Depending on the topic of your zine and your own personal goals, you may want to distribute your zine to friends and family only, distribute it to a subscriber base, extend distribution to retail stores and other venues, or anything else in between. Like everything else in self-publishing, it's up to you!

The best place to start is with your friends and family. Ask them to spread the word about your zine, preferably with sample copies of your first issue in hand. People are much more likely to order future copies once they have actually seen one in person. You can also create an online newsletter to build a mailing list with special announcements related to your zine.

No matter the size and scope of your zine, a simple Web site is a great way to advertise, because it means that anyone can quickly and easily find information about ordering, submissions, etc. Your ISP (Internet Service Provider – the company that provides your email/Internet service) may have an option for free Web space. Or you can build a free Web page at Yahoo! Geocities (<http://geocities.yahoo.com/home/index.html>)

With regard to advertising, consider bartering with other zine publishers for advertising space in their zines. Do some research to find out the advertising rates of “mainstream” magazines and Web sites that attract your audience. With any advertising steps you take, make sure that you have a clear goal that includes WHO you are wanting to target, and WHAT you want them to do.

After you put out your first issue, if you feel certain that you want to continue to publish your zine, you can start taking orders for subscriptions. Be sure that you know, realistically, how often you can publish your zine, because subscribers who pay ahead of time for their issues will expect to receive them in a timely manner. Subscription orders are a great way to bring in some extra cash, but remember, if a person pays for a 4-issue subscription, you won't be receiving any more money from them until their subscription expires. Be sure to budget carefully so that you don't spend all of your subscription money, with nothing left over for future printings. If you do have subscriptions to your zine, be sure to keep good records as to when each person's subscription begins and ends.

If you are accepting payments primary through the mail, you can specify which of the following you will or will not accept: checks, money orders, or well-disguised cash. Keep in mind that you should protect yourself by using a PO Box for accepting payments and submissions by mail.

If you are accepting orders online, the easiest way to process credit card payments is to use Paypal ([www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com)). There is no setup fee, but if you select a “Business” account (which means you will accept credit cards, in addition to eChecks), Paypal deducts 2.9%. Still, this is a very convenient way for people to pay you, so it may help increase your orders. Paypal even has a free “shopping cart” feature where you can set up an online shopping cart for your Web site. Paypal generates all the HTML code...you just copy and paste it in your Web page.

You will need to determine what to charge for your zine, for both individual issues and subscriptions. Again, it's up to you. Unless money is no object, you should aim to cover your expenses so that you don't lose money on your project. Make sure that you remember your mailing costs, printing costs, and general supplies needed.

While many zines are largely a labor of love, it is possible to make a profit publishing zines. If this is your goal, you should start with a more formal business plan, with a financial breakdown of what volume you will need to print in order to make a profit. If you are not sure whether you want to turn your zine into a “commercial” product, try it out for a while and see where your passion lies after a couple of issues. It's never too late to restructure your setup to make that transition from “hobby” to “business”!

Online “blogs” (Web logs) are becoming more and more elaborate, with graphics, sound, and multimedia included. For this reason, these online personal journals are becoming more and more zine-ish and this form of personal expression is a powerful outlet for electronic self-publishing.

You also may envision a publication that seems more like a “magazine” than a “zine”. What’s the difference? There’s no hard and fast rule, but in general, a “magazine” is full-sized, professionally printed, has a subscription base, is distributed in retail stores, and generates a profit. But these are just generally-accepted ideas; you are the one in charge of what you call your publication. You can even use the terms interchangeably, depending on who you’re speaking to, if you like.

A distro is a self-made zine distribution. It is often run by one or two people who will have people mail them their zines and they will sell the zines. Often the zines are sold to the distro on consignment or at half to 60% of cover price. Some distros only need a master copy of your zine and can make their own copies and are on the honor system. If you are interested in the publishing process, but not necessarily wanting to generate a lot of content, launching a distro may be for you.

## **Recommended Resources**

### **Web sites:**

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

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

<http://www.e-zinez.com/>

<http://manuscriptediting.com/selfpublishing.htm>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ArtZineScene/>

### **Books:**

[Make A Zine](#) by Bill Brent

[Starting & Running a Successful Newsletter or Magazine](#) by Cheryl Woodard

### **About the Authors:**

**Matt Holdaway** started making the zine A Multitude of Voices in 1995. He also organizes and emcee's the live version called "A Night of Voices". He has had work appear in over 50 publications and zines. Web site: <http://www.altgeek.net/voices>.

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