How to Format Your Fiction Kindle Ebook

Many authors save the formatting for last. They write their book, then investigate the formatting requirements for any distributor or publisher. If you want to save yourself some energy and a whole lot of time and frustration, it's easier to format your Kindle ebook in advance.

Why format first?

Assuming you're using Microsoft Word to write your content, the formatting doesn't translate perfectly to Kindle, which means that your book will not look like you want it to and it may be difficult to read. Not good, right?

Not to worry. We've included a basic template for you in this zip folder to help you or you can work from scratch if you prefer.

Forget the "normal" way you may be used to working – formatting-as-you-go, when writing. For a Kindle-intended manuscript, set your format options up ahead of time and observe the tips in this guide.

Step 1. _Before_ You Write

Performing the actions in this section will likely take you less than five minutes, and it can eliminate hours of restructuration and hassling with Kindle formatting later.

1. Click the **File** tab and select **Options** from the drop-down menu.

   In the "Word Options" pop-up window that opens, select the **Proofing** hyperlink.
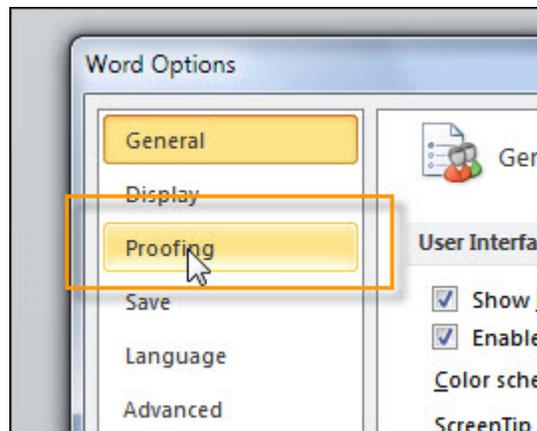
   Select the **Autocorrect** button to the right, which appears after you've pressed "Proofing".

   When the "Autocorrect: English (U.S.)" popup opens up, _**uncheck all the check marks**_ within it. Click **OK**.

   Click **OK** again in the "Word Options" pop up. This will return you to your blank manuscript page.

2. Now set up your **Indents**. It is absolutely vital you set them up this way, and not by using your Tab key or anything else. You are setting indents for the ***first line of every paragraph***.

Click on your **Page Layout** tab, go to the **Paragraph** section and click on the little downward arrow button in the bottom, right-hand corner of that section ⬜ (highlighted below in green, with the orange arrow pointing to it).

Clicking on the little downward arrow will open up the Special drop-down menu: Select "First line".
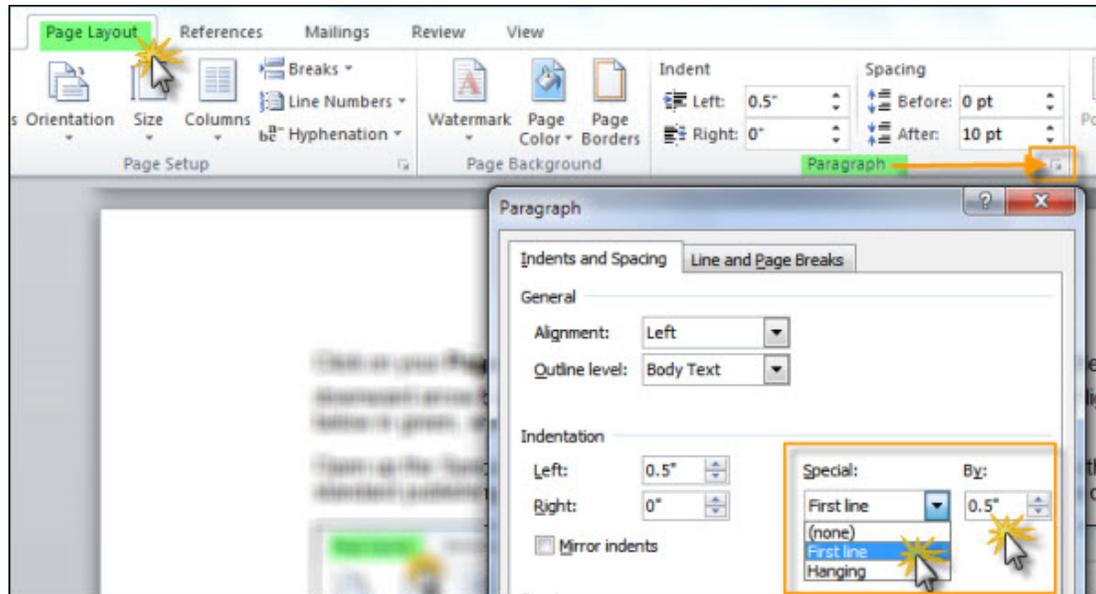

Set your indent to the standard publishing-industry 0.5" indent (or whatever custom indent you want to create).

Click **OK** to close the "Paragraph" popup.

3. Next, set up your **Spacing**. This is for the ***spacing between paragraphs***, so you don't have to manually insert these.

Press your **Page Layout** menu tab again if you need to, and glance over until you find the Spacing section. Reset the **After** option to the standard publishing industry 10-point spacing (or your preferred setting).
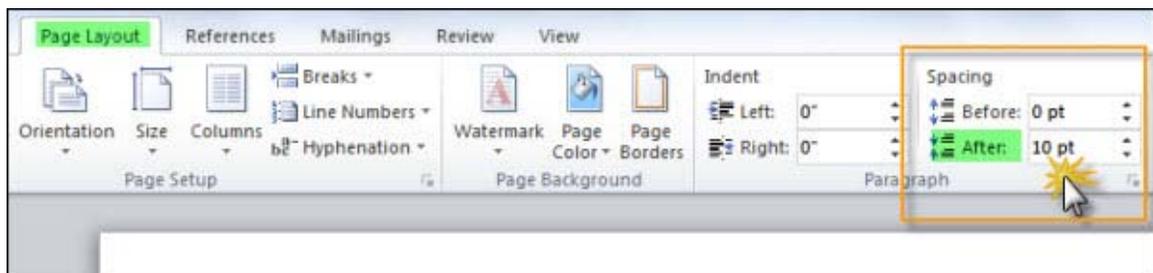

(There will be nothing to close – just return to your manuscript.)

Step 2. What to Do with Images

Most fiction books don't have images or they have very few. However, if you do have images then don't skip this step. Images can be tricky to work with, however these basic guidelines can make them quick and easy.

1. Place your cursor at the point you want to insert an image. Do not leave extra spaces.

    To add images to your manuscript, press the **Insert** menu tab and click on **Picture**. Then select the .jpg filename you want from the correct folder and press the "Insert" button.
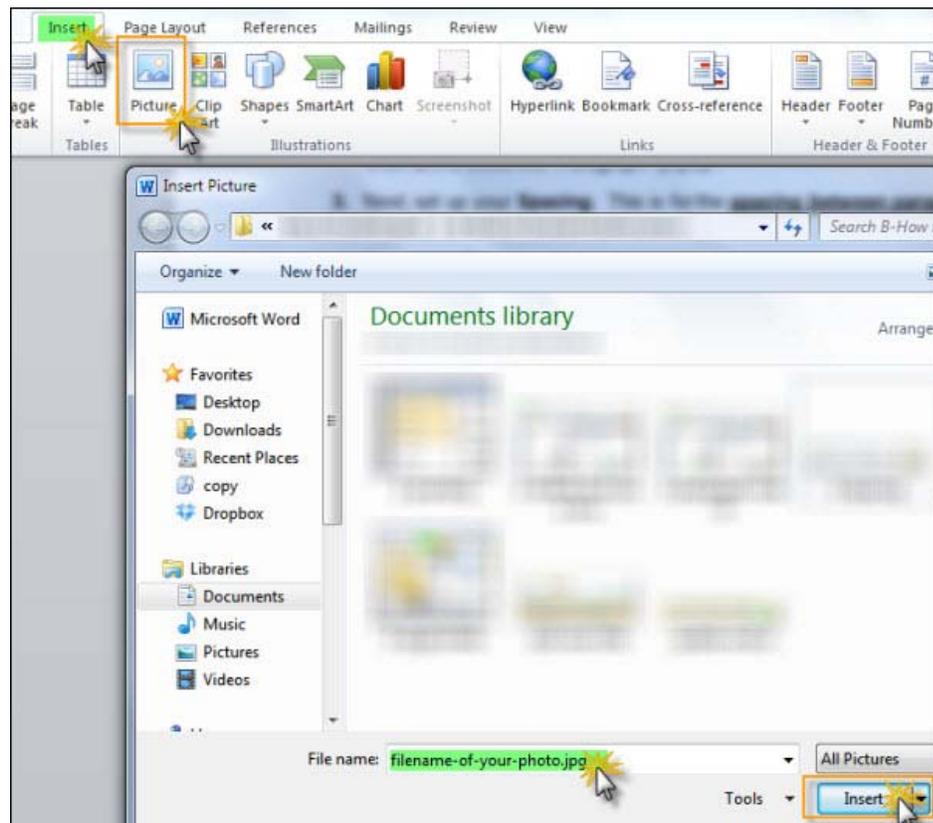

2. All images should be ***center-aligned***.

3. If you have used indents, remove the indent on that paragraph alone (the "paragraph" being your image).

4. Remember that images will display in black and white, so pick ones with clear detail, a minimum of clutter or blur and good contrast

5. Your cover photo should have a minimum size of 600 pixels wide and 1,000 pixels deep. Stick to that ratio.

Step 2. What _Not_ to do…

It helps prevent costly errors if you know the following Kindle formatting prohibitions in advance.

1. **Do not copy-paste images** into your manuscript. Instead, use the Insert menu.

2. **Do not include your Cover photo in your manuscript.** It needs to be uploaded separately.

3. **Do not use headers**, **footers** or **page numbers** (especially in your Table of Contents). Kindle will insert these itself. If you want to type a chapter heading, click on your **Home** menu tab. Then simply highlight your chapter heading and apply your pre-set "Heading 1" from the Styles menu.
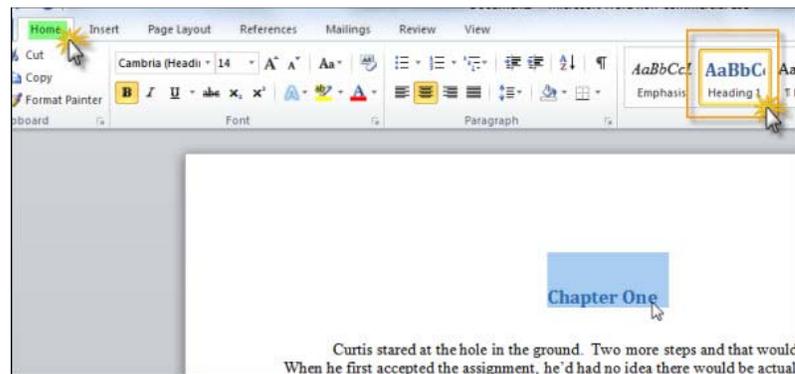
6. **Do not** use three periods at the end of a line. Instead, use a proper ellipsis (CTRL+ALT+period).

7. **Do not** use Upper Case characters while cleaning up your formatting with **Find and Replace**.

8. **Do not** insert **extra spaces**, **tab indents** or **paragraph returns**. Use the **Styles** menu.

   **To reset a Style (e.g. "Heading 1" to your own custom format**:

   ● Highlight your desired element (e.g. "Chapter One")

   ● Right-click on the Style in the **Styles** menu that you are selecting (e.g. "Heading 1")

   ● When the drop-down menu appears, select "Modify"

   ● When the "Modify" popup appears, select your new **font** and **size**. Click **OK**.
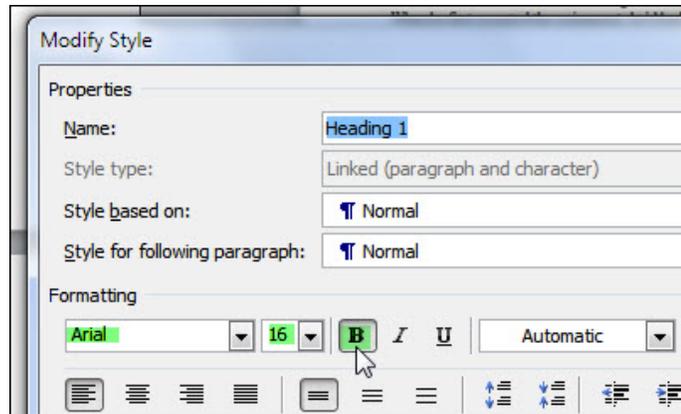
Do not use CTRL+C or the "Enter" key to create a page break at the end of each chapter!

Instead, press the **Insert** menu tab: Then select **Page Break**.

Your end of chapter will then automatically be inserted.

Step 4. Clean Up Your Manuscript Before Uploading

Once your manuscript is finished and the final draft saved…

- Spell-check – even if you've already done this ten times, do it again.

- Proof for readability – make sure your book is easy to read and understand.

- Proof again at least two more times – you won't regret the effort.

Use your spell checker one last time, if you've made any corrections.

Now it's time to eliminate hidden formatting – and prevent those glitches on upload you hear people complaining about.

Step 5. Clean Up Your Formatting

Getting rid of hidden formatting will save you some time and frustration. However, before you can correct hidden formatting, you need to see it.

The easy way to see your formatting instantly is to press **CTRL+SHIFT+8**. You will instantly see formatting marks. (Repeating CTRL+SHIFT+8 switches them off again.)

In the example below, extra spaces that could mess up your Kindle formatting show up as dots: Here, they are highlighted in green.

The most unfamiliar symbol you will see is called a **pilcrow**. It signifies a paragraph return.


Remember, we only want a single paragraph return at the end of each paragraph: Any extra spacing between paragraphs has to be set with your Style before writing – not inserted manually with the Enter key.

Use **Find and Replace** to replace unwanted characters.

Here is the routine you should follow…

Go to your **Home** menu; then select **Replace** for the following actions:

1. ***To remove extra paragraph returns*** (pilcrows): Find **^p^p** – Replace with: **^p**
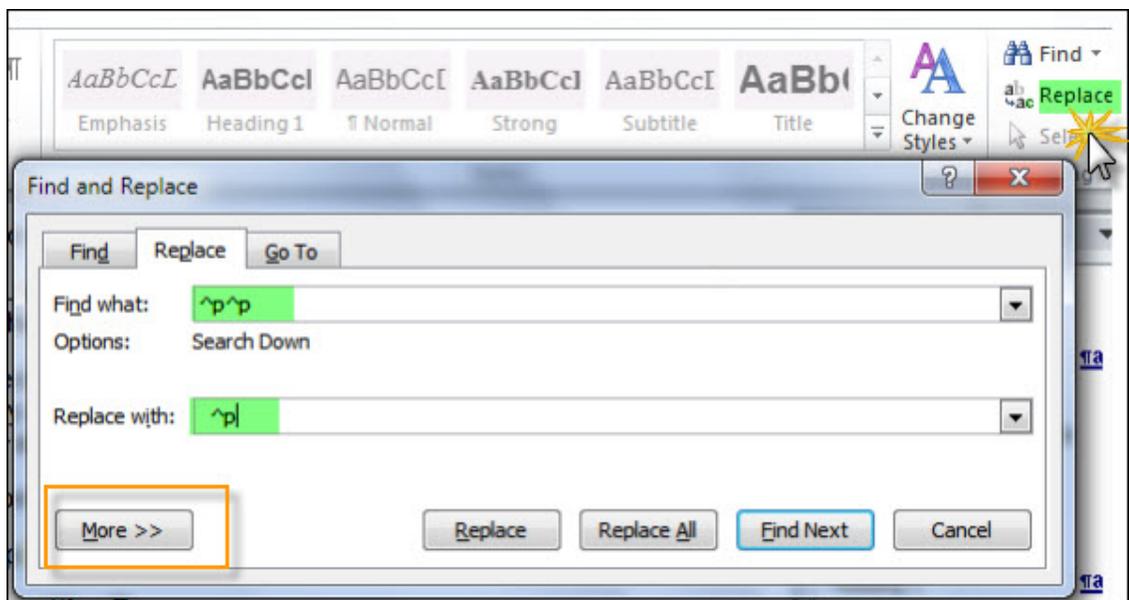
2. ***To remove a tab*** (caret):

    Find **^t** – Replace with: [input nothing].

3. *To replace three periods at end of line* (like this…) *with a proper ellipsis* (…)

    Find **...** – Replace with: CTRL+ALT+**.** (Yes, that was ALT, plus a **period**.)

    Both three dots and an ellipsis may look identical in your MS Word file – but they can really screw up your Kindle formatting, so make sure you use ellipses.

4. ***To replace two spaces with one space***:

Find [input two spaces] Replace with: [input one space].

5. ***To remove manual page breaks***:

   Find **^m** – Replace with [input nothing]

One final thing to always keep in mind…

Finished Kindle text on a Kindle device is fluid, constantly adjusting itself from individual reading device to individual reading device. You will never, ever get your formatting to look exactly the same for every single Kindle device version, so keep your formatting as simple as possible to allow for variations.

(Remember also that Kindle readers can choose to adjust their own font sizes!)

Step 6. Adding Front Pages

But what about those "extra" pages that always precede the body of the book? We're talking about that title page, dedication, and occasionally a fiction book will have a table of contents. If you haven't already included them, insert them into your MS Word file before the main body of your text, separating each one with a Page Break.

You can choose from:

- **A Title Page** – Centered. Title of book, followed by Author name.
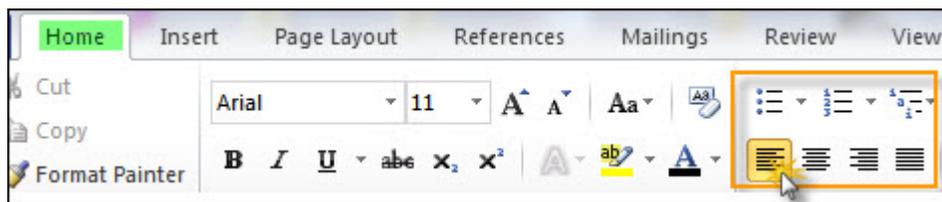
- **Copyright Page** – Centered.

Copyright © 2016 [Your Name]

All Rights Reserved

- **Dedication** – Also centered.

Formatting: For the previous pages, use your Home tab, and select **Center**. After each page, click your **Insert** tab; then click **Page Break**

The following pages should not be centered. Instead, use justified left, ragged margin (the same as your Text body).

- **Legal Disclaimers** – If needed

- **Foreword or Preface**

- **Table of Contents (TOC)**

- **Prologue** – Generally speaking, your prologue if you have one, is part of your manuscript. You don't have to have one.

At the very least, you need a Title Page. (Remember, your finished Cover Page will be uploaded separately.)

Also remember: Don't include page numbers in your TOC: Kindle inserts them automatically, and they will change from physical Kindle viewer model to model.
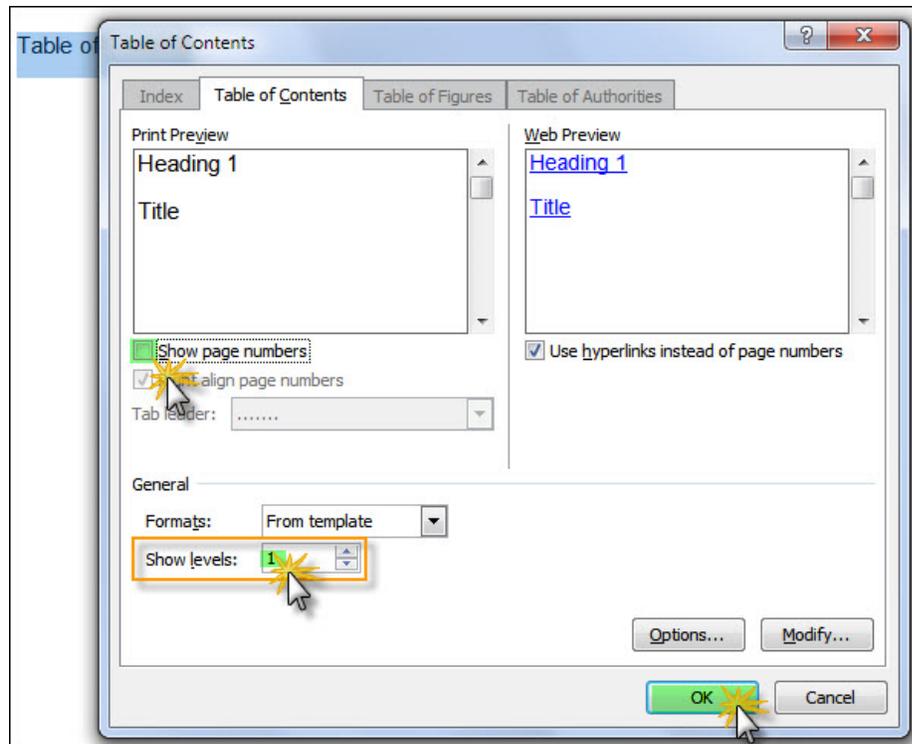
To create a Table of Contents:

Creating a Kindle-correct TOC is easy, if you follow these simple steps. (Remember, you shouldn't attempt to do this until *after* you have completed your manuscript.)

1. On your new page, type "Table of Contents" at the left margin. Press **Enter**.

2. Copy-select what you just typed.

3. Go to your **References** tab and select **Table of Contents**. From the drop-down menu, click on "Insert Table of Contents". You can see that on the next page.
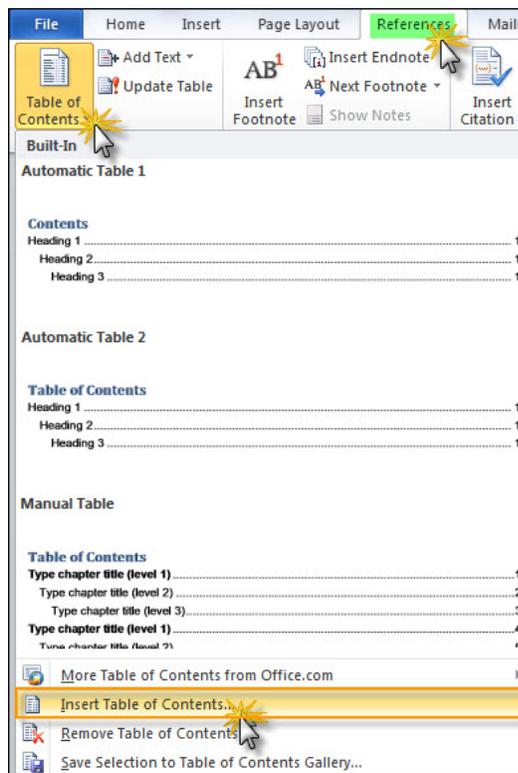
4. Uncheck **Show page numbers**. Set **Show levels:** to 1. Press **OK**.
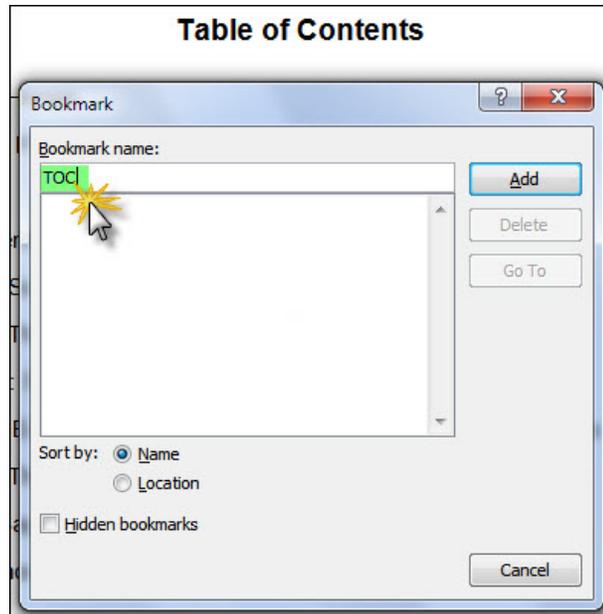
You've created your TOC – but there's one more vital step you have to take!

Set a Bookmark:

1. Copy-select the words "Table of Contents again

2. Go to your **Insert** tab. Select **Bookmark**.

3. A popup will open. In the **Bookmark name** box, type "TOC".

Table of Contents

4. Click the **Add** button.

Step 7. Saving Your File

For your very last Save before proceeding to previewing and upload, save your file as a **Web page, filtered**. (Press the down arrow that appears in the **Save as** popup and select that option from the drop-down menu.)

If it asks about "removing office tags", check the box as a "Yes".

And finally we arrive at the most important step...

Step 8. Compressing Your File

The very last step you have to take: Creating a compressed file. This couldn't be easier.

1. Find your HTML file.

2. Right-click on it, and select "Send to"

3. Choose Compressed File.

And you're ready to preview!

Give your book a good look over and consider asking a few trusted friends and/or family members to look through it. Congratulations! You're just a few short steps away from publishing your Kindle ebook. We hope this gives you the right guidance to help you format your Kindle books.