

A Practical Checklist for Illustrating & Designing a Children's Book

Creating a children's book involves far more than writing and drawing. Illustration, design, and print decisions work together to shape how your story is experienced — on the page and in the reader's hands. This checklist outlines the essential areas your illustrator and designer should be able to guide you through, helping you make thoughtful choices that support your story and goals.

1. Illustration & Artwork

- Establish a clear visual direction for style, with portfolio references or inspiration boards
- Incorporate author-provided references (children, pets, objects, settings) when appropriate
- Explore multiple character options before finalizing a direction
- Ensure consistency in character appearance and details throughout the book
- Create visual variety through changes in layout, scale, setting, emotion, poses, and point of view
- Divide text so page turns will support pacing and engagement
- Clearly define how feedback and revisions are handled at each stage
- Supply web-ready RGB files for promotional use

2. Book Design & Typography

- Create a cover that clearly signals genre, tone, and audience
- Design a title treatment that suits the project — hand-lettered or font-based
- Account for format-specific needs (paperback vs. hardcover, case wraps, spine width)
- Prioritize readability of thoughtful type size, spacing, and layout
- Avoid common text issues such as widows, orphans, and awkward line breaks
- Ensure text remains legible over colorful or illustrated backgrounds
- Account for the gutter so important elements are not lost or distorted

3. Print Process & General Production

- Understand the differences between print-on-demand and offset printing
- Select printers that align with your goals, budget, and distribution plans
- Prepare files using correct trim size, bleed, margins, and spine calculations
- Deliver artwork at proper scale and print resolution (300 dpi)
- Manage color accurately across CMYK and RGB color spaces
- Handle ISBNs, barcodes, and metadata correctly
- Establish a realistic timeline — from original manuscript to printed book

Ready to Talk Through Your Project?

If you'd like guidance through these areas, a second opinion, or want help determining what level of complexity makes sense for your book — I'd be happy to hear about your project.

Visit: www.AHcreations.com/creative-services

Happy Writing!

©2026 APRIL HARTMANN CREATIONS