

The Site Guide

An instruction manual for doubledutchpublishing.com. Twenty-seven pages on every page we run, every tool on it, and what each one costs.

What this manual is for

Our site does more than it looks like it does. A reader arriving at the front page sees a press with some books for sale. Behind that there is a search engine built on a hand-checked corpus, a translation reference covering fifty-two classics, a printable reading kit, a title analyser, a contracts primer, and a weekly dispatch. None of it shouts.

This manual walks through the site one page at a time. Each entry says what the page is, how to work it, and whether it is free. Where a tool has a quirk worth knowing, the entry says so plainly rather than selling it.

How to use it

Read it front to back once if you are new to us, and the site will stop hiding things from you. Otherwise use the contents overleaf and jump to the page you need. Every entry gives the address, so this works as a printed reference next to a laptop.

What the labels mean

FREE	Open to anyone, no account and no email address.
MEMBERS	Part of Underread+, which is not open yet. There is a waiting list, not a paywall.
PAID	Editorial work we quote for, with the rate table published on the page.

The whole site, in order

THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE

The home page	04
The Underread: what it is	05
The Underread: how to search it	06
The Underread: reading a result	07
Underread+ and the waiting list	08
The catalog	09
Fiction	10
The Readers Room dispatch	11

FOR READERS

Readers Tools: the index	12
The Printable Reading Kit	13
How Long to Read?	14
Build a Search	15
Themed Reading Lists	16
The Translation Finder	17
The Shelf	18

FOR WRITERS

Writers Tools: the index	19
The Title Workshop	20
Rights and Contracts	21
Full-Service Publishing	22
The three tools still to come	23

THE PRESS ITSELF

How we use A.I.	24
About: who we are	25
Support the press	26
Every address in one place	27

The home page

doubledutchpublishing.com • Free

The front page exists to answer one question: what do we do that nobody else does. The answer sits at the top, and everything below it is a door to a different part of the house.

What is on it, top to bottom

- 1 **The opening line and the two buttons.** One sends you to the search engine, the other to the books we publish ourselves.
- 2 **A working preview of The Underread.** Type a search there and it runs; the page hands the query to the engine rather than making you start again.
- 3 **The Underread+ band.** What membership will include, at \$13.99 a month, with a waiting list while it is being built.
- 4 **Cards for the catalog, the two tool indexes and the Readers Room.** These are the four rooms most people want.
- 5 **This manual.** The section headed "An instruction manual for this website" is where the guide you are holding lives.
- 6 **The dispatch sign-up, the reader-funded band, and why we exist.** Then the footer, which carries every link on the site including the donation page.

The black banner at the very top

Every page carries a strip reading "This site was written for humans by humans." It links to our A.I. policy, which names each place a machine touches this site and each place it does not. Page 24 covers it.

The navigation bar under the logo is the same on every page, so you can leave any room the way you came in.

The Underread: what it is

/the-underread · Free

A search engine for books almost nobody has told you about. You describe what you want in your own words and a clerk goes and finds it, working from a corpus we assembled and checked by hand.

The word underread means beyond bestsellers, measured by how many people have read a book rather than by how famous its author happens to be. A well-known writer's forgotten fourth novel qualifies. A debut that sold nine hundred copies qualifies. Last year's prize winner does not.

Why it does not recommend what everything else recommends

Retail engines rank by sales, so they hand back the same forty books to everyone. Ours cannot do that, because those books are not in the corpus. The trade-off is honest: you will not see the title you already saw in an airport, and occasionally the clerk will find nothing at all rather than pad the answer.

What it will never do

- ! Invent a book. Every title it returns exists, with a real author and a real press behind it.
- ! Sell a placement. No publisher can pay to appear in a result, and none has asked twice.
- ! Keep your search to sell to somebody. Queries are logged in aggregate so we know which appetites keep coming up; they are not attached to you.

WORTH KNOWING

Hundreds of titles sit in the corpus today and it grows every week. Nothing enters it without a person reading enough of the book to say why it is worth someone's evening.

The Underread: how to search it

/the-underread • Free • 300 characters per search

There are two ways in, and the engine picks between them by reading your words. Put a book or an author in the box and it goes looking for read-alikes. Describe a situation, a feeling or a subject and it searches on theme instead.

Searches that work

a woman living completely alone after a catastrophe

THEME SEARCH. SPECIFIC SITUATION, NO TITLE NAMED.

something like The Rings of Saturn but shorter

READ-ALIKE. THE WORD "LIKE" IS WHAT FLIPS IT INTO THAT MODE.

quiet novels set in hotels, nothing sentimental, ideally translated from Japanese

LONG QUERIES ARE FINE. THREE OR FOUR CONDITIONS LAND BETTER THAN ONE.

Searches that disappoint

good books

NOTHING TO MATCH ON. NAME A SUBJECT, A MOOD OR A BOOK YOU LOVED.

bestsellers 2026

THE CORPUS EXCLUDES THEM BY DESIGN, SO THE SHELF IS EMPTY HERE.

Under the box sits a ticker of recent searches from other readers. It is there to show the range of what people ask, and it is a good source of phrasing when your own search is coming back thin.

If writing the search is the hard part, the Build a Search tool on page 15 will write one for you from nine questions.

The Underread: reading a result

/the-underread · Free

Each result is one book, laid out the same way every time. Here is what the four parts mean.

The Ice Palace

1963

Tarjei Vesaas

PETER OWEN PUBLISHERS

"Two girls, a frozen waterfall, and a silence the book never breaks. Read it for the cold prose, which does more with less than almost anything else of its decade."

TITLE, YEAR	Both come from the corpus record, not from the clerk's memory.
THE PRESS	Named on purpose. Half the pleasure of reading this way is finding a small publisher whose whole list suits you.
THE WHY	One or two sentences on what the book is doing and who it suits. This is the part worth reading before you decide.
THE LINK	Goes to Amazon with our affiliate tag, which costs you nothing extra and sends a small commission here.

When it returns nothing

An empty shelf means the corpus has no honest match, so try a different angle rather than the same search again. If the clerk reports being flustered, that is a server error on our side; wait a moment and search again.

Found something good? The Readers Room dispatch on page 11 sends one of these a week without you having to search.

Underread+ and the waiting list

/the-underread#plus • Members • \$13.99 a month when it opens

Membership is not open. There is a waiting list at the bottom of The Underread page, and joining it costs nothing and commits you to nothing. We would rather have a hundred readers using a finished thing than a thousand paying for a half-built one.

What it will include

- + **The Shelf.** A record of what you have read, how long each book took, and the pattern that comes out of it. Page 18.
- + **Saved searches and saved results.** The searches you keep rerunning, kept for you, with new corpus entries surfacing against them.
- + **The three writers tools held back for members.** Query Letter Check, the Opening Page Diagnostic and the Blurb Builder. Page 23.
- + **A deeper clerk.** Longer searches, more results per search, and the reasoning behind each pick.

What stays free whatever happens

The search engine itself, the catalog, the fiction, the Readers Room dispatch, the printable kit, the reading-speed calculator, the themed lists, the translation reference, the Title Workshop and the contracts primer. A paid tier is there to fund the free one, and we will say so plainly if that ever stops being true.

HOW TO JOIN THE LIST

Go to /the-underread, scroll to the Underread+ band, and leave an email address. One message when it opens, and nothing else.

The catalog

/catalog · Free to browse

The books we publish ourselves. A small list on purpose: we take on few titles so that each one gets a real edit and a real launch rather than a slot on a conveyor.

How the page works

Each title shows a cover and a synopsis. A book with more to say carries a "More" link, which opens its listing where you can buy it. Covers with a small plus mark have a synopsis waiting behind them.

Purchases route through Amazon with our affiliate tag. Buying a book of ours anywhere is welcome; buying it through the link sends a commission back to the press at no extra cost to you.

Double Dutch Kids

Our children's titles carry their own badge on the catalog page. They are written and illustrated to the same standard as the adult list, and they are the part of the catalog most often bought twice, once for a child and once for the adult reading aloud.

Submitting to us

The submissions note sits at the foot of the Fiction page rather than here. We open for submissions in windows rather than year round, because a one-desk press that reads everything cannot read everything at once.

Our own titles also sit in the corpus, marked as ours. The clerk does not favour them.

Fiction

/fiction • Free to read

Short fiction published on the site, free and complete, with no signup between you and the story. The page is laid out like a literary magazine because that is what it is.

The shape of the page

MASTHEAD	An editorial line on what we are looking for in a story, which changes as our taste does.
LEAD STORY	The current piece, given the space a lead deserves.
THE INDEX	Everything published so far, numbered, with author and date. Nothing is retired.
THE FOOT	Submission terms on one side, the Readers Room sign-up on the other.

Submitting a story

Terms are printed at the foot of the page: what we pay, what rights we take, how long we hold a piece before answering. We take first publication rights and nothing beyond them, and the story stays yours.

Stories under the name T. H. Hammer are the founder's own. Everything else is by writers who sent it in.

THE SUNDAY BAND

New fiction and the weekly dispatch both go out Sunday at noon, Eastern time. The band at the foot of this page and the Readers Room says so.

The Readers Room dispatch

/readers-room • Free • Sunday, 12pm EST

One email a week. An overlooked novel with the case for reading it, whatever came out of the week's searches, and occasionally a piece of writing from the desk. No product launches dressed as letters.

The archive

Every dispatch stays on the page, so you can read backwards before deciding whether to subscribe. The filter bar at the top sorts the archive by kind: the novel picks, the essays, and the pieces cross-posted from our Substack.

Subscribing

The form sits at the top of the page and on the home page, and both go to the same list. An address is all we ask for; there is no name field, no survey, and no welcome sequence beyond a single confirmation.

Unsubscribing takes one click from any dispatch, and we do not send a message asking you to reconsider.

Substack readers

Some of this writing appears on our Substack too. The site is where a piece is published first; the Substack version carries a credit back here.

If a signup form says the newsletter is not configured yet, an email key is missing on our side. Try again later; your address was not lost, because it was never taken.

Readers Tools: the index

/readers • Free, except The Shelf

Six tools, built as reasons to come back between books rather than as a funnel. The index lists them with a badge each, so you can see before clicking what is open and what is not.

Printable Reading Kit

Five sheets to print. Page 13.

DOWNLOAD

How Long to Read?

Time one page, get the whole book. Page 14.

LIVE

Build a Search

Nine questions become a query. Page 15.

TOOL

Themed Reading Lists

Nine lists, forty-one books. Page 16.

CURATED

Translation Finder

Fifty-two classics, best English versions. Page 17.

CURATED

The Shelf

Your reading record. Page 18.

MEMBERS

None of these ask for an email address. The Shelf needs an account because it stores your reading, and that is the only reason.

The Printable Reading Kit

/readers/printables • Free • Five sheets, letter size

Paper for people who would rather not log their reading in an app. Print the sheets you want and ignore the rest; each one stands alone.

Sheet one • The reading log

Title, author, dates started and finished, and a line for what you thought while it was still fresh.

Sheet two • The to-be-read list

Room for who recommended each book, which is the field every app leaves out and the one that decides what you pick up next.

Sheets three and four • The year planner

Weeks one to twenty-six, then twenty-seven to fifty-two. One line a week, which is enough to see a habit forming or collapsing.

Sheet five • The book-club sheet

Questions that get a group past whether they liked it, plus space for the argument that follows.

Printing it

The page has an export button that produces a PDF, one sheet per page, sized for letter paper. A4 works without changes; the margins are generous enough to absorb the difference.

Designed to be written on with a pen, so the rules are dark enough to see and the boxes are big enough for real handwriting.

How Long to Read?

/readers/how-long-to-read • Free

Most reading-speed tests hand you a generic passage and a number that means nothing, because a page of Saramago and a page of a mass-market thriller are not the same page. This one times a page of the book in your hands, so type size and leading are already in the answer.

Working it

- 1 Open your book anywhere, start the timer, read one page properly, stop the timer.
- 2 Your words-per-minute appears straight away, with a line on what that speed means.
- 3 Enter the page count and the tool converts it into hours, evenings and commutes.
- 4 A comparison shelf of nine well-known books shows what your speed does to each of them.

Details that matter

No book to hand. There is a 278-word passage built into the page to time yourself on. Most readers take forty to seventy seconds over it.

Words per page. A slider from 180 to 420 words. Count one page of your own book if you want the honest figure; 280 is a fair default for a trade paperback.

A twenty-second floor. Anything faster than that is a mistimed page rather than a reading speed, so the tool refuses to compute it.

Skipping the timer. If you already know your speed, enter it. The range runs from 50 to 1200 words a minute, and the default sits at 250.

The point of the tool is not speed. It is knowing whether the book on your table is a weekend or a month, before you commit.

Build a Search

/readers/build-a-search · Free

A blank search box is hard. This asks nine questions instead, then writes the query for you and hands it to The Underread, which runs it the moment you arrive.

What it asks

Mood, subject, voice, era, length, setting, how much plot you want, whether translation appeals, and what you have loved recently. Skip any of them; an unanswered question simply stays out of the query.

Why the query reads the way it does

The wording it produces uses librarian vocabulary on purpose, because the engine scores your words against the theme tags on each corpus record. A sentence written in that register matches more of the shelf than the same request in casual phrasing.

You can edit the finished sentence before it runs. Editing it is encouraged, and mentioning a book you loved will flip the engine into read-alike mode.

This replaced the old quiz

There used to be a What to Read Next quiz here that guessed at a genre and returned a canned list. The search builder does the same job with the real engine behind it, and the old address redirects.

TIP

Answer the mood and subject questions carefully and rush the rest. Those two carry most of the weight in the scoring.

Themed Reading Lists

/readers/themed-reading-lists • Free • Nine lists, forty-one books

Lists built by hand around the appetites our searches keep turning up. Every book on them has been read by someone here, and each entry says why it earned its place rather than restating the blurb.

Using the page

Jump links at the top take you straight to a list. Each card holds its books in reading order rather than ranked order, so the first title is the one to start with, not the one we rate highest.

Why a list changes

These are revised as we read. A book gets dropped when a better one arrives for the same appetite, and the date stamp on the page shows when it was last touched. A list that has not moved in a year is a list nobody is reading behind.

Suggesting a book

Reply to any dispatch with a title and the list it belongs on. We read every suggestion; we add the ones we can vouch for after reading, which takes as long as it takes.

Four of the nine lists have been here since the site opened. Five were added after the searches told us what people actually wanted.

The Translation Finder

/readers/translation-finder • Free • Fifty-two works

Which English translation to read, for fifty-two classics that exist in several. The wrong translation has put more readers off Russian and French literature than the books themselves ever did.

What each entry gives you

THE WORK	Original title, author, language and date.
THE PICK	The translation worth your money, its translator, and a line on what that version does better.
THE FREE ONE	Where an out-of-copyright version exists, it is named, along with what you give up by reading it.

Filtering

A search box takes a title, an author or a translator's name. The language filter narrows the table to one original language, which is the fastest way through if you are working along a single tradition.

How the picks are made

Read against each other where we could, and against translator interviews and reviews where we could not. Where two versions are both defensible, the entry says so and tells you which reader each suits.

A CAUTION

A free public-domain translation is often a hundred years old, and it reads like it. For Dostoevsky and Proust especially, the modern version is worth paying for.

The Shelf

/readers/the-shelf · Members · Not open yet

A record of your reading that belongs to you rather than to a social network. What you finished, when, how long it took, and what the accumulated record says about your taste.

Planned for it

- + Books finished, with dates, page counts and the hours they actually took.
- + Your reading speed tracked over time, book by book, since it changes with the prose.
- + Where your reading actually comes from: which presses, which decades, which languages.
- + Export of everything you have entered, in a plain file, whenever you ask.

What it will not do

No followers, no feed, no streaks, and no notifications telling you that you are behind. A reading tracker that shames you into reading is a worse tool than a paper log.

Until it opens, sheets one to four of the Printable Reading Kit do the same job on paper, and nothing about that is a downgrade.

Writers Tools: the index

/writers • Three open now

Titles, query letters, first pages, jacket copy and contracts. These are the parts of publishing nobody teaches, and the parts where a bad decision is expensive and quiet.

Title Workshop

Page 20.

NEW

Query Letter Check

Page 23.

SOON

Opening Page Diagnostic

Page 23.

SOON

Blurb Builder

Page 23.

SOON

Rights and Contracts, in Plain English

Page 21.

NEW

Full-Service Publishing

Page 22.

PAID

Written for both kinds of writer: the one submitting to houses and the one publishing the book alone.

The Title Workshop

/writers/title-workshop • Free • Runs in your browser

Type a working title and get three readings of it: whether a search engine can find it, whether it gives a reader a picture, and what genre it signals. No account, no model call, nothing sent anywhere.

Findability

It counts the distinctive words: longer than three letters and not a common word. None means the title is hard to find; one means findable with effort; two or more means easy. The chips underneath show which of your words are doing that work and which are words every other book also owns.

Image or idea

It sorts your nouns into things a reader can see and ideas a reader cannot. A title made of concepts has nothing to hold on to, and the tool names the specific word to consider swapping. A title carrying one physical thing and one abstraction is the classic literary shape.

Genre signals and workshop notes

Five keyword sets flag which shelf your title is signalling. The notes cover length, trope words having a long moment, subtitles, and the effect of opening with "The".

Comparing two

Open the second field and both titles are read side by side, with a line underneath on which is stronger and why. You almost never have one title; you have the safe one and the one you want.

ITS HONEST LIMIT

It reads words, not books. A title can fail every check and still be right, and the page says so at the bottom.

Rights and Contracts

/writers/rights-and-contracts • Free • Eight clauses

A publishing contract is a list of rights you own and a list of the ones you are handing over, for how long and where. The page walks the eight clauses that decide whether a deal is fair.

- I Grant of rights.** The sentence that matters most. Watch for "all rights" and for media not yet invented.
- II Territory.** Where they may sell. Match it to where they actually sell.
- III Term.** Life of copyright is the norm and the clause most worth pushing on.
- IV Subsidiary rights.** Audio, film, translation, and the machine-training licence. Each is separate.
- V Royalties and advance.** Cover price or net receipts, and where the rate drops.
- VI Reversion.** The door out. Ask for a sales number and a date, never the phrase "out of print".
- VII Option on the next book.** Fair when capped, unfair when open-ended.
- VIII Warranties and indemnity.** What you promise, and what it costs if the promise fails.

The page ends with five questions to ask before signing, written so you can read them down a phone line to an editor.

NOT LEGAL ADVICE

This is a reading guide. Have a publishing lawyer or an authors' society read the contract itself; the fee is small next to the term of a bad grant of rights.

Full-Service Publishing

/writers/full-service • Paid • Founding rates

Editorial work with a real editor, quoted from a rate table printed on the page. There is a calculator: set your word count, tick the passes you want, and the price appears with the market range it sits inside.

The five passes

Beta reading. Story feedback, no line work.	\$0.001-0.008
Developmental editing. Structure and plot.	\$0.06-0.15
Line editing. Rhythm and voice.	\$0.04-0.10
Copyediting. Grammar, consistency, house style.	\$0.02-0.06
Proofreading. Final polish on typeset pages.	\$0.013-0.03

How the quote is built

Word count times the midpoint of each band you tick. Two or more passes earn a bundle discount, rising to thirty percent at five, because the second read of a manuscript is faster than the first. A rush turnaround adds thirty percent. A deposit of a quarter books the slot.

The rates are founding rates for our first list of authors, which is why they sit below the market band. A quoted price holds for that book whatever happens to our rates afterwards.

A sample edit of 1,500 words is free and comes before any invoice. Cover, typesetting and listing work are quoted separately once the manuscript is final.

We take no share of your royalties and no rights in exchange for editorial work. You pay a fee; the book stays yours.

The three tools still to come

/writers • Coming soon

Three tools are built but not open, because they arrive with Underread+ and memberships are not open yet. Their rows on the Writers Tools index are marked and stay unclickable until then.

Query Letter Check

Paste the letter you are about to send. It marks the paragraph an editor stops reading at, and the sentence that should have been first. Most rejected queries bury the book under two paragraphs of throat-clearing.

Opening Page Diagnostic

The first 250 words read the way a stranger in a bookshop reads them: where attention holds, where it wanders, and what the page promises about the rest of the book.

Blurb Builder

Jacket copy in the shape publishers actually use: the situation, the turn, what it costs the character, and the line that sends someone to the till.

Joining the Underread+ list on page 8 is how you hear when these open. Nothing else arrives from it.

How we use A.I.

/p/how-we-use-ai • Free • Linked from every page

The black strip at the top of every page reads "This site was written for humans by humans", and this is the page that has to earn it. It names each place a machine is involved and each place it is not.

HUMAN

Every word of site copy, every book note in the corpus, every dispatch, every editorial judgement about what belongs on the list.

MACHINE

The clerk behind The Underread. It matches your words against a corpus a person wrote; it does not generate books or opinions.

ASSISTED

A handful of illustrations, marked as such on the page where they appear, and drafting help on functional copy that a person then rewrote.

What we will not do

Publish machine-written fiction or essays under a human name. Run an author's manuscript through a model and call it an edit. Fabricate a book, a press, or a quotation. Let a machine decide what enters the corpus.

Hold us to it

The page ends with an invitation to challenge anything on the site that reads as though a person did not write it. That is a standing offer, and the address to use is on it.

About: who we are

/about • Free

The About page opens with a letter from the founder explaining why a press like this exists at all, then introduces the three people behind it. Photographs, names, and what each person actually does.

A one-desk press

Double Dutch is small by choice. No investors, no board, and no placements for sale. That size is why our list is short, why submissions open in windows, and why the search engine can afford to ignore what sells.

The founder

Thamer Al Hejailan founded the press and edits the list. He writes fiction as T. H. Hammer, which is the name on the stories of his that appear on the Fiction page. The letter at the top of the About page is his, in the first person; the biography further down is not.

Reaching a person

Replying to any dispatch reaches the desk directly. There is no support queue and no ticket number, which is the advantage of a press this size and occasionally the reason a reply takes a few days.

WHERE TO FIND IT

doubledutchpublishing.com/about, or the About tab in the navigation bar on any page.

Support the press

/donate • Free to read, obviously

The search engine costs money to run, the authors get paid, and no advertiser is covering either. Three ways to keep the room open, in ascending order of how much they help.

Way I • Buy through our links

Every book link on the site carries our affiliate tag. It costs you nothing extra and sends a small commission here.

Way II • Leave a donation

A one-time entry in the ledger, through Ko-fi. Four tiers, from a coffee for the clerk to underwriting the next title on the list.

Way III • Join the Underread+ list

Free while it is being built. Membership is what will eventually fund the free half of the site.

Where an entry goes

- 01 **The clerk.** Compute behind every search.
- 02 **The corpus.** Sourcing and checking the ledger of overlooked books.
- 03 **The authors.** Advances and royalties for the Double Dutch list.
- 04 **The room.** Hosting, and keeping The Underread free.

THE DONATION PAGE

doubledutchpublishing.com/donate

KO-FI, WHERE THE TIERS LIVE

ko-fi.com/doubledutchpublishing

Every address in one place

Home	/
The Underread	/the-underread
Underread+ waiting list	/the-underread#plus
Catalog	/catalog
Fiction	/fiction
Readers Room	/readers-room
Readers Tools	/readers
Printable Reading Kit	/readers/printables
How Long to Read?	/readers/how-long-to-read
Build a Search	/readers/build-a-search
Themed Reading Lists	/readers/themed-reading-lists
Translation Finder	/readers/translation-finder
The Shelf	/readers/the-shelf
Writers Tools	/writers
Title Workshop	/writers/title-workshop
Rights and Contracts	/writers/rights-and-contracts
Full-Service Publishing	/writers/full-service
How we use A.I.	/p/how-we-use-ai
About	/about
Support the press	/donate
Ko-fi	ko-fi.com/doubledutchpublishing