

How To Sideload Kindle eBooks

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Abstract: If you own or are licensed to use a Kindle eBook that hasn't been purchased through the Amazon Kindle store, there needs to be a way to view it on a Kindle. This document shows how to transfer a Kindle eBook .mobi file so that a Kindle device or Kindle reader application can view it.

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1.1 (2012-11-12) New OS X Kindle content location

Reference: The following text is an excerpt from the 3rd Edition of Ken Whitaker's InDesign to Kindle: Publish Your Book for the Kindle and Print, http://www.leadingswmaniacs.com/resources_ebooks_dtp_ebik.html.

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What is Sideloaded?

First off, **downloading** is a mechanism that takes “content” to transfers it from one device to another while keeping track of its whereabouts. After purchasing an eBook online, for example, as “if by magic” this eBook is transferred from a Web site (the **Cloud**) to your device or application. The miracle about this modern-day form of end-to-end downloading is that companies like Amazon and Apple take care of everything handling the purchase, making sure that the purchase conforms to DRM (Digital Rights Management), to the transfer and even recognition by software, like Kindle or eBooks, on the receiving device. The purchaser has little need to intervene and usually doesn't even know

where the content files are stored—they simply “appear” in your application. Wireless communications isn’t the only way to transfer this content to the device: wired Ethernet or USB can be used depending on the service.

When content is not tracked or purchased through “normal channels,” sideloading is a more manual process that lets you transfer files to a location on the device that will be recognized by the application. For example, in PM University’s eLearning courses, the workbook is available in both .pdf and .mobi (Kindle) formats. The process to make all of this happen is not documented and usually involves copying files to folders that are hidden from view. In fact, the application that reads the content may have to be “tricked” to detect your sideloaded content files! One final note: you’ll transfer this content via USB cable connection or with Bluetooth a memory card.

Why You’ll Want to Sideload

If you own (or are licensed to use) content that you didn’t acquire through normal means, there needs to be a way to copy the appropriate files to specific locations on another device, PC, or Mac. I’ll show you how to transfer a Kindle eBook .mobi file so that a Kindle device or Kindle reader application can view them.

These instructions should work on either a Mac OS X Mountain Lion (10.8) or a PC Windows 7 system.

Note: These instructions are important if you’re writing a Kindle eBook using tools like Adobe InDesign and you want to check out that your content formatting converts the way you hope it will. These steps may also be required with a Kindle eBook file that is part of a download from other sources than purchasing from the Amazon Kindle store.

Surprisingly, you will most likely see different eBook look (even if slightly different) between the Kindle Previewer, Kindle reader applications on OS X or Windows, Kindle Touch, iPad (with the Kindle application), and the Kindle Fire. You’d think they’d be really similar, but they aren’t at all due to different versions of reader software and characteristics of different operating system platforms.

So how do you know what is the Kindle reader standard? Easy: assume that the Kindle device, specifically the Kindle Touch, represents the “gold standard.” Period.

Sideloaded to the Kindle Touch

This is what you’ll need to get started:

- Your Windows or OS X system (desktop or laptop).
- A Kindle device (Kindle Touch, preferably). Our tests were on the 2011 model of the Kindle Touch.
- Kindle USB cable.
- Explorer/Finder file management software.

Here’s the steps to transfer a .mobi file to your Kindle Touch:

1. Connect the Kindle cable into your USB port on your computer. The Kindle should change to USB Drive Mode.

2. With Explorer/Finder, select the device labeled as Kindle (your Kindle may be labeled as SDCARD).
3. Copy the .mobi file to the Kindle's documents folder.
4. Safely eject the Kindle device with Explorer/Finder. The Kindle should immediately switch to the normal Kindle reading mode. Remove the USB cable from the Kindle.
5. The Kindle Touch automatically resynchronizes with the eBooks in the documents folder. Scroll until you see your eBook's title (it should be prefixed with the word New in front of it) and touch the title to view your eBook.

Note: You can re-insert the USB cable into the Kindle and with Explorer/Finder, examine the documents folder. In addition to your .mobi file, there may be other files with the same file name but with different file name extensions (like .sbr). To remove your Kindle document, simply delete the .mobi file (and any others with the same file name, but different file name extensions) with Explorer/Finder. When you're done, don't forget to safely eject the Kindle before powering off the Kindle (required)!

Sideload to the iPad

This is what you'll need to get started:

- Your Windows or OS X system (desktop or laptop).
- An iPad. Our tests were on the 2012 model: the amazing iPad 3.
- Amazon's Kindle iPad application downloaded from Apple's App Store (or from iTunes on your Windows or OS X system).
- Macroplant's iExplorer application from Macroplant (<http://www.macroplant.com/iexplorer>). This is not free, but it is priced quite reasonably (in fact, it is a steal!). By the way, there's another iExplorer available from Zhigang Chen in Apple's App Store. That isn't the same iExplorer!
- Apple iTunes and Quicktime. Yep. In order to access folders and files on an iPad, you'll use the iExplorer application to access files and folders on the iPad. iExplorer requires iTunes and Quicktime to be installed and to have run at least once. (By the way, Quicktime is now an integral part of OS X.)

Here's the steps to transfer a .mobi file to your iPad:

1. Connect the iPad cable into your USB port on your computer. iTunes should recognize your iPad, but Explorer/Finder does not recognize your iPad as a disk drive.
2. Touch to run the iExplorer application and copy your .mobi file to the Kindle's Apps/Kindle/Library/eBooks folder. (Be careful not to put it in the Media subfolder.)
3. Quit iExplorer and eject the Kindle device from iTunes. Remove the USB cable from the iPad.
4. The iPad's Kindle application will not automatically recognize the .mobi file you just copied. To restart the Kindle application, power off the iPad followed by a power up.
5. Run the Kindle application and then tap your eBook's title to view.

Note: You can re-insert the USB cable into the iPad and use iExplorer to examine the Apps/Kindle/Library/eBooks folder and find your .mobi file. To remove your Kindle document, simply delete the .mobi file (and any others beginning with the same file name). When you're done, don't forget to eject and power off the iPad!

Sideload to the Amazon Kindle Fire

This is what you'll need to get started:

- Your Windows or OS X system (desktop or laptop).
- A Kindle Fire tablet. Our tests were on the 2011 model of the Kindle Fire.
- Kindle Fire USB cable.
- Explorer/Finder file management software.

Here's the steps to transfer a .mobi file to your Kindle Fire:

1. Connect the Kindle Fire cable into your USB port on your computer. The Kindle should change to USB transfer file mode. If it doesn't, re-insert the USB cable again.
2. With Explorer/Finder, select the device labeled as SDCARD (your Kindle Fire device may be labeled differently).
3. Copy the .mobi file to the Kindle's Books folder.
4. Safely eject the Kindle Fire device with Explorer/Finder and then click the Disconnect button on the Kindle Fire. The Kindle should immediately switch to the normal Kindle mode of operation. Remove the USB cable from the Kindle Fire.
5. The Kindle Fire should detect your eBook but surprisingly, you won't find it in Books—instead you'll find in Docs. If you don't see it, power off the Kindle Fire then power it back on. Scroll until you see your eBook and touch the cover thumbnail to view your eBook.

Note: You can re-insert the USB cable into the Kindle Fire and with Explorer/Finder, examine the Books folder. In addition to your .mobi file, there may be other files with the same file name but with different file name extensions (like .mbp). To remove your Kindle document, simply delete the .mobi file (and any others with the same file name, but different file name extensions) with Explorer/Finder. When you're done, don't forget to safely eject the Kindle before powering off the Kindle!!

Sideloading to Your Mac

This is what you'll need to get started:

- Your OS X system (desktop or laptop). We tested with Mountain Lion (10.8).
- The latest Kindle reading application available from the Apple App Store or Amazon's Web site.
- Finder file management software.

Here's the steps to transfer a .mobi file to your Kindle reading application:

1. If your Kindle reading application is running, quit it.
2. With Finder, select Go > Go to Folder. Insert the following folder location: ~/Library/Application Support/Kindle/My Kindle Content. (The tilde ~ refers to your home folder).

New as of Oct 2012: With the latest update to OS X Kindle software, the location of your Kindle content has been changed to this:

~/Library/Containers/com.amazon.Kindle/Data/Library/Application Support/Kindle/My Kindle Content

You can always change the location of your Kindle content, but I prefer to accept the Amazon defaults. This change is somewhat lengthy to type in, so consider bookmarking it to your Favorites in Finder.

3. Copy the .mobi file to this folder.
4. Start the Kindle reading application and view your eBook.

Note: Use Finder to examine the Kindle content folder. In addition to your .mobi file, there may be other files with the same file name but with different file name extensions (like .mbp). To remove your Kindle document, quit the Kindle reading application and simply delete the .mobi file (and any others with the same file name, but different file name extensions) with Finder.

Sideloading to Your PC

This is what you'll need to get started:

- Your Windows system (desktop or laptop). We tested with Windows 7 Ultimate (64-bit) and Professional (32-bit).
- The latest Kindle reading application available from Amazon's Web site.
- Explorer file management software.

Here's the steps to transfer a .mobi file to your Kindle reading application:

1. If your Kindle reading application is running, quit it.
2. Use Windows Explorer to go to the location where the Kindle reading application expects to find its books.: Users/<name>/My Documents/My Kindle Content. (Replace your login account name in place of <name>.)

3. Copy the .mobi file to this folder.
4. Start the Kindle reading application and view your eBook.

Note: Use Explorer to examine the Users/<name>/My Documents/My Kindle Content folder. In addition to your .mobi file, there may be other files with the same file name but with different file name extensions (like .mbp). To remove your Kindle document, quit the Kindle reading application and simply delete the .mobi file (and any others with the same file name, but different file name extensions) with Explorer.

A Final Word

With all of the Kindle reading applications and devices available, these instructions are sure to get outdated, so check back on our Web site, http://www.leadingswmaniacs.com/resources_suppl_files_dtp_free.html, frequently for updates.

Bibliography

Whitaker, Ken. InDesign to Kindle: 2nd Edition. Seattle: Leading Software Maniacs, 2011. (<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00506U1O4>).

Bio



Ken Whitaker of Leading Software Maniacs[®] (LSM) has more than twenty-five years of software development executive leadership and training experience in a variety of technology roles and industries. He has led commercial software teams at Software Publishing (remember Harvard Graphics?), Data General, embedded systems software companies, and enterprise software suppliers. Ken is an active PMI[®] member, Project Management Professional (PMP)[®] certified, and a Certified ScrumMaster (CSM). Sources for LSM's material come from case studies, personal leadership experience, the PMI Project Management Book of Knowledge (PMBOK[®] Guide), and Ken's leadership books: *Managing Software Maniacs*, *Principles of Software Development Leadership*, and *I'm Not God, I'm Just a Project Manager*. PM University, <http://www.pmuniversity.com>, is a new addition to Leading Software Maniacs' online, eLearning curriculum focused on pragmatic project management and software leadership courses. Ken is also the creator of PM Chalkboard, <http://www.pmchalkboard.com>—the fastest way to learn basic project management principles with entertaining, no cost tutorial videos.

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