

eBooks Demystified

If you are only familiar with downloading eBooks from eg Amazon you might be surprised to know there are a quite a lot of other ways to get/read and manage them.

Format

The "official" open source format for eBooks are files called .epub. (very similar to the tools used to make web pages) These files work with most devices ***EXCEPT older Amazon Kindles***. Amazon used to use a proprietary format called .mobi which means they are "walled off" from the free Internet.

Reading

There are two principal ways to read eBooks - on computers/phones/tablets etc or on dedicated eReaders (Amazon Kindle being the best known)

For computers etc there is a wealth of free software for all operating systems: try Favourite Book Reader (www.fbreader.org) or Thorium Reader (www.edrlab.org/)

Readers

Probably 99% of people have a Kindle (but there is another type, called Kobo, www.kobo.com) which adheres to open standards.

Kindle

If you have an older Kindle then you want the .mobi file. Some Kindles provide you with a dedicated email address so you can just email this file to your Kindle. Or you can attach your Kindle to a PC with a USB and load the file off your PC. (Google it). Modern Kindles accept epub files.

Calibre - the Swiss Army Knife

However, for most people the free software Calibre (<https://calibre-ebook.com/>) is the key to a simple experience. This software allows you to swap formats seamlessly, manage your library, read it on a PC etc and manage your Kindle etc all without going anywhere near Amazon! Always a bonus 😊

Finally

eBooks are delivered in a straightforward format, but all eReaders allow you scope to extensively customize your reading experience (fonts, spacing, etc) and some will even read the book to you (in a robotic voice).

Have fun