

10 Secrets to Selling Your Books on Amazon

C. S. Lakin

Marketing a book on Amazon is little different from marketing any product on the Internet. Writers who want to sell well and be discovered need to think like a marketer. Our books are products we are selling to a consumer. As much as we'd like to think our novels or nonfiction books will sell themselves, they won't. With more than a million ebooks competing for attention on Kindle (and other online venues), writers need to learn the secrets (that aren't so secret) to discoverability on Amazon. Needless to say, you need a terrific title and cover design that will be just right for the genre of your book.

There are no guarantees, of course, but following these ten bits of advice will give you much greater odds for your book coming up at the top of the lists when potential customers search for a book to buy. The key to discoverability is having *your* book appear at the top of the search results, preferable on the first page of twenty books listed. This isn't rocket science!

First and foremost: write a great book. Don't think that if you market well, your book will sell big. It may for a short while, but what matters more than anything in the long run is your reputation for crafting great books. Along these lines, all your promotional materials—back cover copy, Amazon descriptions, blurbs—should all reflect quality. This means all content should be edited and proofread to perfection, and that it advertises your book honestly.

10 Top Tips to Discoverability

1. **Use appropriate keywords on your KDP page:** This is the most important factor to selling well on Amazon. Contrary to what Amazon recommends, your keywords should *not* be obscure and they *should* include your genre and subgenre categories. Think what readers will type into the search bar to find a book to read. You want your keyword phrases to be the best ones to connect to your book. Search engines will put at the top of lists the results (products) that have the most relevancy. Use longer, multiple-word phrases. Word order doesn't matter, so don't repeat the same words in a different order, such as "Sweet Historical Western Romance" and "Historical Sweet Romance Western."
2. **Put your main keywords on your Amazon page multiple times.** Make sure you use your keywords over and over in all fields of your product page: Description, reviews, inside flap, about the author, etc. Some of these are accessed via your Author Central (AC) page, but be sure to **ONLY use the KDP portal for your description!** The key is: don't sacrifice legibility for searchability. Don't come across as spamming with keywords. It will turn customers off. AC is the place to get those keywords into the extra sections: Editorial Reviews, From the Author, Inside Flap, Back Cover, About the Author.

3. **The look of your product page matters.** Most writers don't know they can use simple html coding on their product pages. Italics, bold face, bulleted lists, and color all make your page stand out. Think like a marketer, not an author. When potential readers land on your page, you want them to be drawn to read about your book. Google the keywords allowed on Kindle and you will see what is usable, and other articles can explain how to use html. Be sure to download a free text editor (I use EditPad). First create your description in Word, then paste in the text editor, view it as an html page, then, if ready, paste into the KDP description window. That way you'll know it's right.
4. **Write great book description.** People won't buy your book if they can't figure what it's about or what genre it is; the description is vague, flat, or boring; or the writing of the description itself turns them off (errors, clunky writing, hyperbole). This is the section that will sell your book. It's your marketing copy, the label on your package. No book sells itself; you have to sell your book to potential readers. The best way to get an idea of how and what to write is to copy and paste the description of 10-30 best-selling books in your specific genre into a document and study them. Try to match the style, voicing, and structure of the best descriptions and tailor yours accordingly.
5. **Put your description in ONLY through the KDP portal, and use all 4,000 characters!** Your description window on KDP allows for 4,000 characters (about 700 words), and this is prime "real estate." Many authors just throw in a brief description, but this is your chance to shine and capture readers. This is what will sell your book, so use all the space, with your lovely html formatting and gobs of keywords, to promote your book. You can even list all the Amazon categories your book fits in, at the end—which is another great way to bring in those keywords. Note that if you put your description in via Author Central OR change it there, you will only be allowed 2,400 characters (about 420 words). That's a decrease of 40%! You want as much SEO (search engine optimization) as possible. There are other downsides to using Author Central, such as the inability to use pictures in your description, and it's not clear whether Amazon's search engines even indexes the keywords submitted through Author Central, so beware! But DO put in multiple reviews via AC, since there you are given lots of space to do that. If you use all the allowed space in all the fields, that adds up to 6,030 words, in addition to your description field. Use it! And make sure every field has some of your keywords.
6. **Experiment with categories and keywords.** Keep a chart of your sales. After a few weeks, change a couple of the keywords. Chart the results. Play around with keywords as your sales go up and down until you feel you've got all the right ones. If your book can fit in different categories, try changing one category and see what happens.
7. **Experiment with pricing.** There are many opinions on how to price your book, as well as strategies. Start with a price that similar books in your genre have. You may notice the top sellers are all 99 cents, but you may not want to price your book that low. Some feel that implies poor quality. Think of having a regular price of 3.99 and discounting on

occasion for special promotions. However, chart your sales and decide what is more important to you: volume of sales and high rankings (which will generate more sales and reviews) or higher price and fewer sales (but more monthly revenue).

- 8. You don't need a ton of reviews.** The way your product page appears, you only need six reviews, albeit it good ones. Some of the best-selling novels only have a few reviews. Some people might feel a lot of reviews implies a great book, but statistics show there is little correlation between lots of reviews and big sales. Get six people who love your book to each write a thoughtful, helpful review. That's all you need. Don't ever pay money for reviews. Know, though, that bad reviews can hurt sales. And the best prevention to keep from getting bad reviews is to write a great book!
- 9. The "Look Inside" feature leads to sales.** If a potential customer knows nothing about your book and has gotten interested after reading your description and reviews, she will look inside. You don't want her to decide *not* to buy because what she found inside turned her off. This is the moment in which the customer will proceed to purchase or not, so don't have a lot of front matter in your ebook that will get in the way. After your title page, get as quickly into the actual book as possible (move Acknowledgments, Note from the Author, etc., to the back of the book!). Every delayed click is a lost sale.
- 10. Utilize the last pages of your book to generate more sales of this and your other books.** Although this won't affect an initial sale, it's important to capitalize on reader satisfaction. Once someone has finished reading your book, you want them to 1) write a review and 2) read your other books. After "the end" of your ebook, have a page with your bio and ways to connect with you. Share thoughts on your book with your reader, then provide a link to post a review. Say: "If you enjoyed my book, please take a moment to post a review. It's a great way to thank an author." Make sure the link goes directly to the page to post a review for that book. Also add links to your other books. You won't be able to put the review link up in the first ebook version before it goes live, but once it is for sale, you can add this and upload a new version. It will pay off.

Test your results by typing in your keywords into the search bar for Kindle. Try first picking your genre and then see where your book shows up in the results. Do this weekly as you play with your keywords. Eventually you'll have the right ones for the most amount of sales. In addition, start layering promotions to discount your book once a month, to shoot your book back to the top of the lists and Amazon best-seller lists to again aid in discoverability. The key to success is making your books discoverable!

Link to download this document: <http://www.livewritethrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/10-Secrets-to-Selling-Your-Books-on-Amazon.pdf>