

# A GUIDE TO GETTING THE BEST FROM AMAZON

July 2019



Amazon could be considered the biggest shop window in the world for books. Whether you are traditionally published or you self-publish, this guide suggests how to use Amazon to raise your profile and that of your books.

The Guide has been drafted by the Society of Authors and fact-checked by Amazon. For suggestions on how to promote your work more widely, see also our Guide to Publicity and Marketing.

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### 1. Does this Guide apply to me?

If you are conventionally published, some of these activities will need to be coordinated with or will be under the control of your publisher or agent rather than you personally. In particular when it comes to metadata, you should alert your publisher as early as possible (on signature of the contract or delivery of the work, not just a couple of weeks before publication by when it will be too late) to the key points such data should include.

### 2. Amazon Author Central

Author Central can be used to create your Author Page on Amazon.co.uk where you can share up-to-date information about yourself and your works with visitors to the Amazon site. Author Central also enables you to view the Amazon Bestsellers Rank and customer reviews of your titles.

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You can access Author Central for the UK website at [authorcentral.amazon.co.uk](https://authorcentral.amazon.co.uk).

For the US site, Amazon.com (<https://authorcentral.amazon.com/>)

The German site, Amazon.de (<https://authorcentral.amazon.de/>)

The French site, Amazon.fr (<https://authorcentral.amazon.fr/>)

The Japanese site, Amazon.co.jp (<https://authorcentral.amazon.co.jp/>)

## 2a) Amazon Author Pages

This is a free service that allows you to set up a page on Amazon.co.uk to help your readers find your books and learn more about you. Using Author Central you can ensure that all your books are listed on your author page, and you can upload photos and videos and give details of forthcoming events. Your Author Page is, in effect, your author homepage on Amazon and you can link to it from your own website and social media channels.

For more about managing your Author Page profile, [click here](#).

You are strongly advised to keep your author pages up to date, and to make them as appealing to visitors as possible.

## 2b) The 'Follow' button

The Follow button allows your fans to add you to their list of favourite authors and thereby receive emails from Amazon about your new books as they become available. Your followers are also more likely to see your new releases while browsing on Amazon. Feedback from members is that this can have a noticeable effect on sales.

For more about using Author Central in conjunction with the Author Follow feature, [click here](#).

## 2c) Customer reviews

You can see a report of all the Amazon customer reviews of your books, sorted by date, rating and title using Author Central.

## 2d) Amazon sales rank

Author Central also contains reports on the sales rank of all your books, updated on an hourly basis to show the day's trend. You can compare details for each of your titles in the past and now, across the various formats in which your book is available.

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Sales Ranks are based on your book relative to the activity of other books on the website. A book ranking #1 in Romance is the book with the most activity in Amazon's Romance category. Rankings are relative: so, for example, even if your book's level of activity stays the same, its rank might improve if other books see a decrease in activity, or your book's rank might drop if other books see an increase in activity. For traditionally published authors, while rankings do not directly equate to sales, they can fill the gap between the information you will otherwise be sent only six-monthly in your royalty statements.

## 3. Amazon Product Pages

The Amazon Product Page is designed to provide customers with all the information they may need when deciding to buy a product, including reviews and descriptions. For books, the Product Page will include information about all the formats that a book is available in so potential buyers can tell whether an ebook, hardback, paperback and/or audiobook are available. Alongside the new copies that Amazon sells itself (Amazon does not itself directly sell 'new and used' second-hand copies), the Product Page also lists any third party 'new and used' copies that are available from third party sellers. ('New' in this context merely means 'pristine'.) From the Product Page, shoppers can also click on a 'follow' button to follow the author and they can click a link to visit the Author Page.

Traditionally published authors should work with their publisher to ensure that the Product Page is comprehensive and accurate.

KDP authors can help determine the information that appears on their Product Page during the publishing process. More information on submitting book details as you self-publish your book can be found [here](#).

## 4. Goodreads

Goodreads is a reader blogsite (owned by Amazon). You can set up an author profile on Goodreads where you can also see reader feedback and author-generated advice. Successful self-publishing member Ian Moore wrote in *The Author* that: 'Promotional tools include Goodreads Giveaways: for \$119 you get 100 copies of your ebook sent to interested readers. About half of them will become your friends/followers, and roughly a quarter will leave ratings/reviews. You get access to their profiles, and some will communicate with you directly. Another 40 will shelve your book as "to read".'

## 5. Metadata

Metadata is the bibliographic information about your book. It is what influences your work's 'discoverability': whether it will come up when someone is searching online. It is also what retailers, including Amazon, use to categorise your work, connect old and new editions and collate books in a series. Make sure that the metadata supplied to Amazon (by your publisher, or as a self-publisher via KDP) is as detailed as possible so that the Amazon listings are correct and, for instance, the work will be included in appropriate bestseller

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rankings. You can keep updating the metadata – if you are shortlisted for a prize, for instance.

Alongside title, series and synopsis information, metadata also includes keywords that can be used to help customers find your books through an online ‘search’. For keywords, consider terms relevant to your book that may not be covered in other metadata. For example, you may have written a novel set in a particular location (e.g. Bath) or historical period (regency) that isn’t referenced in the title (Northanger Abbey). Including relevant terms in your keywords may help customers searching for that location or historical period find your title.

If you are a traditionally published author, contact your publishers to understand how they manage the metadata for your books. Self-publishing authors using Amazon KDP can use the following metadata help content:

- [Ebook metadata](#)
- [Paperback metadata](#)

## 6. Kindle Unlimited

Reading ebooks via subscription services such as Amazon’s [Kindle Unlimited](#) has become a significant way for readers to discover new authors and titles and to read more of their favourite author’s work. This is particularly the case with genre fiction. Amazon pays the equivalent to a royalty per page for ebooks read (in whole or in part) via Kindle Unlimited.

If you are a traditionally published author, contact your publishers to understand their arrangements for Kindle Unlimited.

If you are a KDP self-publishing author, see point 8(d) on page 5.

## 7. Amazon Advertising

Amazon tells us that advertising is a fast-growing route for authors to promote their titles. Further details can be found at [advertising.amazon.co.uk](http://advertising.amazon.co.uk).

## 8. KDP for self-publishers

KDP is Amazon’s self-publishing service for authors looking to publish Kindle ebooks and paperbacks. Quoting Amazon: ‘KDP enables authors to publish their books themselves quickly and efficiently. Publishing can take less than five minutes and books can appear on Amazon sites worldwide within 24-48 hours. Authors can earn up to 70% royalty on sales and participate in programmes such as Kindle Unlimited and the Kindle Owners’ Lending Library. Authors who publish via KDP keep control of their rights, decide how and when to publish and set their own list prices.’

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- a) KDP offers self-publishers a wide range of advice and information. The [Help Centre](#) includes guidance on things such as supplying the book's metadata; creating the cover (which needs to look good as a thumbnail because that's what most shoppers/visitors to the Amazon site will see); setting the recommended retail price for the book/calculating how various prices will affect your royalties; and what tax formalities you need to meet as a British taxpaying author, author's literary estate or author-as-limited-company.
- b) The KDP University includes webinars, video tutorials, and step by step guides and can be found [here](#).
- c) KDP provides a variety of consolidated and title level reports that can be accessed from the self-publishing author's KDP account page, so you can see how many books have been sold (or Kindle Unlimited pages read) almost in real time. Pre-orders can be tracked and historical reporting for each title is available. Payment reports are also available for all marketplaces in which your titles are available.
- d) [KDP Select](#): Self-publishing authors using KDP can include their digital books into an optional programme called KDP Select. It's free to enrol titles and you can add selected ebooks or your full digital catalogue. Titles are enrolled for 90-day periods and in return for exclusivity on the digital edition during that time, the ebook is included in Kindle Unlimited (KU) and the Kindle Owners' Lending Library (KOLL). Authors also have access to a set of additional promotional tools including Kindle Countdown Deals. While your ebooks are included in KDP Select and participate in KU and the KOLL, you earn a share of the KDP Select Global Fund based on how many pages KU and KOLL customers read of your ebooks. For more on how KDP authors earn royalties from KU and KOLL, [see here](#). In the year to May 2019, Amazon paid \$284.1m to authors participating in KU and KOLL.

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