

How to gather book reviews

Why are book reviews important?

1. Friends don't let friends read bad books
2. Over 85% of all Amazon Kindle readers rely heavily on book reviews
3. Positive ranking plays into the booksellers algorithm, ESPECIALLY AMAZON
4. An articulate review points out other aspects of the book that the marketing blurb might not have
5. More reviews get authors exposure to other book review sites, blogging communities, and book clubs
6. More reviews can equal more sales for authors
7. Book reviews can help cement your overall reputation as an author

There are 3 methods of reviews you can acquire:

1. Buying them
2. Growing them organically
3. Swapping them

One method doesn't necessarily enhance your status more than the other, although juggling the three certainly can help establish it.

Buying Reviews

There is much debate about whether to purchase reviews or not. On the one side of the debate questions the morality of things. If reviews are bought, does that make them legitimate? There are places where you can buy positive reviews only, (although I still have yet to find those places); however, in my experiences, the reviews I bought were fair because some reviewers revealed their complaints and did not rate my book as high. So to question the legitimacy of bought reviews will depend on the legitimacy of the business itself. Many will state that they will not guarantee positive reviews, for instance, and how long they have been in business will determine if they are legit. There are "fly-by-night" reviewers who at some point will be banned and have their reviews revoked once found out.

The other side of the debate supports buying reviews because it facilitates your reputation and can provide exposure. Some of these places will have diverse outlets such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Goodreads. And that's really the goal all writers wish to achieve: popularity. I started reaching out to bloggers before having at least 8 reviews and only received one reply. After establishing at least 8 reviews, with some bought, in order to acquire credibility, then bloggers started agreeing to review my book for free. That may not be true for everyone, but it was for me.

Places I recommend purchasing reviews

1. Reading Deals- (\$79-\$129 for 10-15 Amazon reviewers) <https://readingdeals.com/reviews>
2. Kindle Book Review-Amazon & Goodreads (\$59-\$110) <http://www.kindlebookreview.net/submitbook.html>
3. Book Pleasures (\$119) <http://www.bookpleasures.com/websitepublisher/pages/Do-You-Need-A-Quick-Review-Of-Your-Book%3F.html#.W4V-mOhKJIU>
4. TBR or Top Book Reviewers (\$99) http://www.topbookreviewers.com/authors/author_info
5. Story Promote (Starting at \$20) <https://storypromote.com/collections/review>
6. Online Book Club (starting at \$97) <https://forums.onlinebookclub.org/authors/request-new-review.php>
7. Writing for Women's Review of Books (\$100) <https://www.wcwonline.org/Women-s-Review-of-Books/writing-for-womens-review-of-books>
8. Book Viral Review (Ask for prices) <http://www.bookviral.com/submit-books-for-review/4592449554>

Other reviewers, although more expensive

1. Indie Reader (\$250- \$325) <https://indiereader.com/indie-book-reviews/>
2. Goodreads Giveaways (\$119) https://www.goodreads.com/giveaway/show_create_options

*Important: to actually obtain book reviews from Goodreads you MUST INCLUDE A LETTER ASKING the winners to review your book, after congratulating them for winning, otherwise they most likely will not leave a review. Sample: Dear So-N-So, I want to congratulate you in the GoodReads giveaways and thank you for entering. I hope that you will find my novel a compelling read. At the end of the book, there is a list of questions to help enhance your reading- if you like. *Eyes Behind Belligerence* was written, designed, produced and published by its author. Because independent publishers and writers should be held to the same high standards as the mainstream publishing industry, I encourage you to post an honest and objective review of this book in the online bookstore of your choice. Such dialogue only serves the cause of good writers and good readers. Thanks again, and happy reading!

3. Kirkus (\$425) Really don't recommend because the reviewers don't always finish your book when then they leave a review, whether a positive or negative one
4. Chanticleer Book Reviews (\$395) <https://www.chantireviews.com/services/Book-Review-p18947256>
5. Foreword Reviews, which include Clarion (\$499) or two sites Clarion and Blue Ink (\$695) <https://publishers.forewordreviews.com/reviews/#service-foreword-review>

Seeking reviewers through Blog Tours

*Blog Tours are an excellent method of collecting book reviews while gaining exposure through interviews and suppling content for other bloggers. Keep in mind that they DO NOT GARTENTEE book sales but the purpose is marketing. You can set one up yourself for free, but if you don't want to spend the time doing so, there are paid tours instead. They can run anywhere from \$50-\$700 (average \$100-\$200)

1. Pump Up Your Book <http://www.pumpupyourbook.com/author-services/>
2. List of Tours <https://www.selfpublishingreview.com/2014/09/27-places-to-get-a-book-tour-and-the-top-ten/>
3. iRead Book Tour <https://www.ireadbooktours.com/tour-packages.html>

Organic Reviews

You can reach out to bloggers and other book reviewers on Amazon and GoodReads for free. Some will ask for pay, but they generally do not because they are readers who have enthusiasm for reading. They are not professional critics, but are intelligent and thoughtful folks who take the time in their busy lives to share their passions.

At one point in my life, I was a real estate agent- briefly- and got out just after the housing market crash. One of the things I learned, which is true in any business, is what's called "the number's game." You reach out to 50 people, and out of the 50 you'll get about 10 people who express interest in your abilities but will only get about 1 or 2 who'll actually commit and sign a contract. On the business side of hunting down reviews, you reach out to 50 book reviewers, and out of 50 you'll get about 10 who express interest in reviewing your work, but will actually get a few who'll actually commit and write a review. Just be psychologically prepared for this, and have realistic expectations.

Don't forget to look and see if they keep a blog roll. If so, then you connect to more bloggers! Keep that ball rolling!

Since they do not get paid, they are often swamped with requests, and therefore may take anywhere from 1-4 months to finally getting around reading and posting a review. Be polite, and take the time to see if they will be a good fit for your book(s). If they agree to review your book and you haven't heard from them in over 3 to 4 months, then send a polite follow-up. DO NOT harass them with frequent emails! This will begin to look like spamming and you will most likely turn them off, and therefore, they will turn off your emails.

How to reach out to bloggers and other indie book reviewers

1. **Do your research (Choose wisely)** – Take a look at a reviewer's blog before you pitch them. Do they review books in your category? Have they specifically mentioned that they do NOT review books in your category? Show the blogger that you've done your due diligence and have taken the time to read their blog, check out the types of books they review and that you are pitching them for a reason and not just because they are on a list that you have handy.
2. **Personalize your pitch** – Mass emails and general inquiries rarely work well. Personalize your pitch. Address it to the blogger directly by name. Mention why you are pitching the blogger, and asking them to take a look at your book. Much like a cover letter or a book query to an agent or publisher, being personal and professional with your pitch to a blogger is important.
3. **Request a review** (But don't require one) – Just announcing the release of your book isn't likely to get the response you're looking for. You really want to offer the blogger an opportunity to request a copy of your book for review. And yes, you're offering your book for free in exchange for consideration of a review. Understand that if and when a blogger requests your book, it really

is in exchange for the possibility of a review. There are likely no guarantees that a blogger or reviewer will review your book (some exceptions may apply). Don't demand or require a review. Simply ask the blogger if they would like a complimentary copy of your book to consider for review.

4. **Offer different formats** – If your book is available in both print and eBook formats, let the book blogger know. Some bloggers and reviewers only review print. Others prefer eBooks. Let the blogger/reviewer know what formats you have available and are willing to send.

Blogger Lists

1. <https://indiebookreviewer.wordpress.com/>
2. <http://www.tanpepperwrites.com/indiewriter-juice.html> (scroll down for blogger list)
3. <http://www.blogmetrics.org/>
4. https://blog.feedspot.com/bookreview_blogs/
5. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/320758974690465/>

List of Top Amazon Reviewers <https://www.amazon.com/review/top-reviewers>

Sample of how to email to a reviewer:

Email header: Complimentary copy of my book

Hi, I'm a historical fiction author and an indie-award finalist, and I am reaching out to you because I noticed you wrote an Amazon review for *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* by Trevor Noah. I wonder if you would be interested in a free review copy pertaining to South Africa's history, even if in fiction form.

How the Water Falls is an elaborate multicultural thriller that illustrates past and present world-wide issues while interweaving fact and fiction for a horrifying look at how South Africa was affected by apartheid. This novel is as complex as apartheid was itself, unlacing fabrics of each character's life to merge into a catalyst downfall. The question of who will survive this downfall will suffice in the courts of truth and reconciliation and whether love is strong enough to preserve peace.

I would be happy to send you an ebook (mobi, epub, or PDF) upon your request. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward hearing from you!

Warm regards,

K.P. Kollenborn www.kpkollenborn.com

How to find GoodReads Reviewers <https://www.indiesunlimited.com/2016/08/22/how-to-get-reviews-via-goodreads/>

1. <https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/105786-goodreads-reviewers-group>
2. <https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/584935-booksirens-book-reviewers>
3. <https://www.goodreads.com/blog/show/1119-an-interview-with-the-most-popular-reviewer-on-goodreads>

*And of course there's your own research. Find books similar to yours, look at the reviewers list, and make a polite inquiry.

Use KDP Kindle Countdown to encourage reviews

On Amazon only, use your free 5 day promo to entice readers to download one of your ebooks. Works great during the holiday season, between Thanksgiving through the New Year, and if you have a series of books where you need to promote the first one. You can either use the entire 5 days, which works best to gain traction, or split it between 2 and 3 days during the 3 month period allowed.

Include this either at the front or the back of your book: "*Your Book Title* was written, designed, produced and published by its author. Because independent publishers and writers should be held to the same high standards as the mainstream publishing industry, I encourage you to post an honest and objective review of this book in the online bookstore of your choice. Such dialogue only serves the cause of good writers and good readers."

The more downloads you have, the higher ranking you'll be featured on Amazon! And yes, they do result into sales.

A list of places to promote your free ebooks either for free or for a small fee: <https://www.adweek.com/galleycat/free-ebook-promotion/53134>

Bookbub.com to do the same

The setup is similar to KDP Countdown by the way of letting people know when your ebook is either discounted or free, but unlike KDP, it's not limited to Amazon and it's VERY costly. It can cost anywhere from \$367-\$1000, depending on how much your ebook is priced and in which genre. <http://dankoboldt.com/bookbub-analysis-update-2018/> To take advantage of this investment, you need at least several ebooks already published, whether a series or multiply ones. Also, they're very picky and your book may not be selected. <https://insights.bookbub.com/common-questions-authors-ask-bookbub/>

SWAPPING REVIEWS

Have you ever been to a swap meet? It's a gathering at which enthusiasts or collectors trade or exchange items of common interest. The same thing can apply when swapping reviews for authors. This method serves two purposes: helping you collect more book reviews while helping others achieve the same goal. You can do so with online author communities as well as helping other writer friends within your own community. This method is a bit more reliable than asking your family and social friends to provide feedback because area of interests are often different, and you most likely will attain a more comprehensive review regarding plot and character development.

*Sidenote: On Amazon, they have been known to delete these kinds of reviews if other authors are within the same genre. Try to find authors with similar interests but avoid identical genres to avoid the chance of having some reviews removed.

List of forums to reach out to other self-published/ indie authors

1. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/smashwordsauthor/>
2. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/mikegeffnerpresentswritershelpingwriters/>
3. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/bookjunkiepromotions/>
4. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/reviewseekers/>
5. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/129536203777715/>

Fake Reviews: The illegitimate critics

What exactly are fake reviews? Fake reviews are anonymous identities that open up phony accounts in order to praise or criticize online books. On the positive side of the spectrum they can either be authors praising themselves, or they are bought reviews from illegitimate businesses. (And I do want to place emphasis on illegitimate businesses because there are legitimate ones that do provide a fair trade. Just do your homework and ask other veteran writers for advice.) On the negative side, they can be either other authors criticizing their opponents, or other people who just simply have malice intent to leave a 1 star review to bring down your review status.

So, revisiting the debate about paid reviews you end up asking yourself: “Do paid reviews in fact represent fake reviews? Or at least on Amazon?” Although the reviews mostly did come in a positive light, but I did not get that perfect 5 star rating, plus the reviewers did mention what they didn’t like or had certain issues with some of the content. All I can stress upon when making that investment is to use common sense, do your research, and ask other seasoned authors for advice.

FREE REVIEWS

Most require a physical copy of the book for review, and there’s no guarantee it will be reviewed.

1. Book Life by Publishers Weekly <https://booklife.com/>
2. Readers Favorite <https://readersfavorite.com/>
3. Shelf Awareness <http://www.shelf-awareness.com/submissionguidelines.html>
4. Midwest Book Review http://www.midwestbookreview.com/get_rev.htm
5. Uncustomary Book Reviews <http://www.uncustomarybookreview.com/book-submission/>
6. Book Goodies <https://bookgoodies.com/submit-your-books-for-review/>
7. Book Browse <https://www.bookbrowse.com/reviewers/>
8. City Book Review <https://citybookreview.com/submission-guidelines/general-submission/>
9. American Book Review <http://americanbookreview.org/FAQ.asp>
10. Rain Taxi <http://www.raintaxi.com/submitadvertise/rain-taxi-submission-guidelines/>
11. Chicago Book Reviewers <https://chicagoreviewofbooks.wordpress.com/meet-the-reviewers/>