

Handout

Adapted from

Carolyn's multi award-winning HowToDoltFrugally series of books including

THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER:

THE FRUGAL EDITOR

And her newest

GETTING GREAT BOOK REVIEWS FRUGALLY AND ETHICALLY

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HANDOUT

PROSPER FRUGALLY IN THE BOOK BIZ IN 2017 THE HOW-TOS FOR NUDGING AMAZON'S SALES RANKINGS

This was excerpted from the third in the multi award-winning HowToDoltFrugally series of books for writers, *Getting Great Book Reviews Frugally and Ethically* and was originally printed in the January issue of my SharingwithWriters newsletter that has been helping writers since 2003 I choose a favorite tip or article for writers like you each January, and this article goes into detail about one of my most important tips, that of getting your book placed in the most advantageous categories! (Subscribe by going to http://HowToDoltFrugally.com/newsletter_&_blogs.htm and fill in the subscription box in the upper right corner of the page.

AMAZON PROVIDES SALES RANKINGS that are dandy little aids for evaluating how your book is selling. Not that you should fixate on that, but having an indicator that your book might need a little boost is nice. And—when those ratings are nurtured—they nudge Amazon's algorithms to do more for your book.

The problem is that most authors and publishers know little if anything about how those rankings come about. That isn't their fault because I doubt if Jeff Bezos, the brains behind the entire Amazon model, knows exactly what his algorithms measure. If they're anything like the rest of the Amazon site, they change from day to day anyway. All you really need to know is how to do it and how to use it effectively. Here's how:

- Find your ranking (or rankings) on your book's buy page under "product details" often called your metadata. Historically these sales ranks are located near your book's metadata (the specifics of your book like ISBN, publisher, number of pages, etc.). (Scroll down a bit to find that section.)
- If you have a ranking of 24,800, that means that 24,799 books listed in your category are selling better than your book and that up to millions of books in your book's category are selling less well.
- If you market and promote, your efforts may lower those rankings (lower is good!). If so, celebrate because this doesn't always happen. Sometimes the marketing you are doing does not affect these ratings at all.

- Don't try to translate a drop in your ratings to the number of books sold. The algorithms are a lot more complicated than that.
- Sales rankings fluctuate (sometimes wildly) during the day.

Warning: Do not spend a lot of time checking your ratings. They should be used as indicators. They shouldn't become an obsession.

- The lower the numerical ranking for your book, the better. You can influence rankings a bit by placing your book in categories that have the least competition as long as those categories truly reflect the content of your book. To find the right category for your e-book on Kindle:
 - Log onto Amazon.com
 - Click on the dropdown box near the search window.
 - Highlight Kindle Stores on the dropdown list and leave the search bar blank. You aren't searching for a specific book's page. It's the Kindle entry page you're after.
 - Hit go. In the left column, you'll see Kindle E-books or Books. There you'll find categories with numbers indicating the number of books registered in each of the categories. Look for the categories that best suit your book AND have the lowest number of books in that category. Click on the categories until you find the smallest subcategory under each of the larger ones. Don't fudge categories too much to get the category with the lowest number or your readers won't find your book when they search on applicable keywords. May I repeat? You are after the categories that describes your book best and have the fewest books competing against yours.
 - Check categories occasionally because the popularity of categories changes and new categories get added from time to time. Generally speaking, new categories are good because they haven't yet accumulated large numbers of book.
 - Follow the subcategories for each choice to the last suitable categories. Some of mine have six. See the example for my *The Frugal Editor* (<http://bit.ly/FrugalEditor>) below.

Once you have suitable categories:

- Go to your Amazon Author Central (also called Author Connect) page and click on "contact us" at the bottom of the page.
- Send the Amazon tech elves an e-mail requesting the two categories made up with a string of individual categories you have chosen for your book. Or better yet, have Amazon call *you!* Tell them which categories to delete and which to add. (You only get two categories, but three often appear.) They seem to take care of these requests within a couple of days.

Here is an example of how those rankings look. I copied this from the buy page of *The Frugal Editor* on a random day: The ratings (category numbers) are often even lower (lower is better!)

Cont'd Other Side of Paper

than this—especially after a reader downloads a new review or I have done a tweet campaign at @frugalbookpromo.

Amazon Best Sellers Rank: #557,109 Paid in Kindle Store ([See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store](#))

- #87 in [Kindle Store](#) > [Kindle eBooks](#) > [Reference](#) > [Writing, Research & Publishing Guides](#) > [Editing](#)
- #255 in [Books](#) > [Reference](#) > [Writing, Research & Publishing Guides](#) > [Writing](#) > [Editing](#)
- #733 in [Kindle Store](#) > [Kindle eBooks](#) > [Reference](#) > [Writing, Research & Publishing Guides](#) > [Publishing & Books](#)

Note #1: The first entry “labeled #87 in . . .” qualified *The Frugal Editor* (bit.ly/FrugalEditor) for inclusion in Amazon’s top 100 books in the Kindle store *in that category*, not in the top books on the whole Amazon site. When your book is in the top 100, it is a bestseller and you can promote that achievement on social networks as long as you add “in its category” to your copy or specify the category. Keep reading for more help on how you might word your new bestseller status.

Note #2: I picked a random day for showing you what the rankings for my *The Frugal Editor* look like. Somehow I got three choices rather than two. Maybe that’s because Denise Cassino helped me with rankings, but it’s more likely that it’s because Amazon changes everything frequently—from the positions of different features on their pages to their policies! Denise is an Amazon expert so if you are looking for a hired hand to help you with this project she is one of the best. Reach her at dencassino@gmail.com.

- When your book does well enough to make the algorithms extremely happy, you qualify for several of the benefits Amazon offers to bring your book to the attention of readers who might be interested. That includes their direct-mail campaigns, their bestseller lists, and discounts.
- When you use Amazon’s Best Seller Rank to market your book, keep it honest and light: Here’s what to be careful with on Twitter (though these guidelines translate to other marketing, too!) Something like this might work for your book.

“Yay, my #TheFrugalEditor is on Amazon’s top 100 editing books today! [Bit.ly/FrugalEditor](http://bit.ly/FrugalEditor)”

- Notice that I use a hashtag in the tweet. It is registered at Trumbo.com. (I talk about that in my new *How To Get Great Book Reviews Frugally and Ethically: The ins and outs of using free reviews to build and sustain a writing career.* <http://bit.ly/GreatBkReviews>).
- Notice that I’m specific about the category that *The Frugal Editor* is “tops” in. It’s not nice to fool Mother Nature—or readers!
- Notice that I use shortened URLs (Web addresses) whenever possible.
- One thing that this example doesn’t show is that I try to use the links (social network icons) found on my book’s Amazon page as often as possible. That may nudge Amazon’s algorithms toward giving me some of the site’s other benefits.

Note: Yes, your reviews are—according to the people most familiar with Amazon’s secrets—part of what those algorithms look at to push your book to even greater stardom.

“Careers that are not fed die as readily
as any living organism given no sustenance.” ~ CHJ

Find more tips and articles on topics like this in my *SharingwithWriters* newsletter and get a free e-book by subscribing at <http://howtodoitfrugally.com>. You'll find a subscribe window in the top right corner of almost every page of the Web Site. Tips like this one:

Tip: You can get free Twitter apps on your iPhone, Android, Blackberry or other smartphone at <https://twitter.com/download>. It lets you keep up with conversations when you are out and about. It saves you “real” computer time.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER

Carolyn Howard-Johnson is the author of the multi award-winning *HowToDoItFrugally* series of books for writers. The first edition of *The Frugal Book Promoter* (bit.ly/FrugalBookPromo) was given USA Book News' "Best Professional Book" and the coveted Irwin Award. The second edition is also a USA Book News award winner. Her *The Frugal Editor* (bit.ly/FrugalEditor) also won a nod from USA Book News and won Readers' Views Literary Award. Her marketing campaign for that book won the marketing award from Next Generation Indie Book Awards.

Carolyn refined marketing skills she learned as a journalist with the *Salt Lake Tribune*), as a publicist in New York, and with marketing she did for her multi award-winning fiction and poetry—genres some say are the hardest of all to promote. She has appeared on TV and hundreds of radio stations nationwide and is a commercial actor.

She is the recipient of the California Legislature's Woman of the Year in Arts and Entertainment Award, the Book Publicists of Southern California's Irwin Award and her community's Character and Ethics Award for her work promoting tolerance with her writing. She was also named to *Pasadena Weekly's* list of fourteen women of "San Gabriel Valley women who make life happen." She was given her community's Diamond Award for Achievement in the Arts and has also been an instructor for UCLA Extension's world-renown Writers' Program for nearly a decade.

Carolyn loves to travel. She has visited eighty one countries with her husband, author of [What Foreigners Need to Know About America from A to Z](http://amzn.to/ForeignersAmericaUS) (<http://amzn.to/ForeignersAmericaUS>) now translated and publishing in China and Ukraine. She has studied writing at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom; Herzen University in St. Petersburg, Russia; and Charles University, Prague. She admits to carrying a pen and journal wherever she goes.

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