Metadata
Keywords Best Practices

A product's metadata ultimately pitches a product to a target audience. Regardless of what stage they are at in the purchasing decision funnel, the product is only as good as the data that is added on the back end by the brand team managing that product. Any product sold online, in all verticals, requires the muscle of solid metadata as a foundation to ensure that the product is discoverable. In the book industry, a title without the basic metadata is a rudderless ship. Metadata optimization should be a continual process to ensure that the content that reaches the desired target audience remains relevant.

The purpose of using keywords to describe book products is to increase the likelihood that a book may be found by consumers using keyword searches within search engines and on retailer websites. Additionally, keywords enhance search engine optimization (SEO).

These keywords help a web crawler (also known as a web spider or web robot) browse the world wide web in an automated manner, searching for relevant information using algorithms that narrow down the search by finding the closest and most relevant information. This helps the consumers to discover your book faster and more effectively online. A web crawler bot is like someone who goes through all the books in a disorganized library and puts together a card catalog so that anyone who visits the library can quickly and easily find the information they need. To help categorize and sort the library's books by topic, the organizer will read the title, summary, and some of the internal text of each book to figure out what it's about.

However, unlike a library, the internet is not composed of physical piles of books, and that makes it hard to tell if all the necessary information has been indexed properly, or if vast quantities of it are being overlooked. To try to find all the relevant information the internet has to offer, a web crawler bot will start with a certain set of known webpages and then follow hyperlinks from those pages to other pages, follow hyperlinks from those other pages to additional pages, and so on.

Keywords boost your book products searchability and ranking in a highly competitive online retail environment, especially when considering Amazon.. **Here are some tips for guidance with keyword strategies:**

- Include at least 7 keywords, topics, and phrases. No need to limit to only 7 keywords, but avoid overloading with keywords because distribution may fail if there are too many. Amazon has a 160 separate keyword/2000 character limit.

- Keywords should have semicolons (with no spaces) in between words and phrases.

- WordCounter is a tool that can be used to count words and characters: https://wordcounter.net/

- Put the most relevant, important, and "big" ones first.

- Keyword phrases should be likely consumer search terms that highlight the breadth and depth of potential interest in the book.

- Use keyword phrases that complement (but don't replicate) the book descriptive copy.

- Include synonyms.

- You can use all lower case.

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- Don't repeat words within the Search Terms field.

- Don't include your brand or other brand names in Search Terms.

- Don't include ASINs in Search Terms.

- No need for stop words such as "a," "an," "and," "by," "for," "of," "the," "with," and so on.

- Combine keywords in the most logical order. For example, customers may search for "military science fiction," but probably not "fiction science military"

- Try to avoid filler words e.g. "for" "or" "the" etc.

- No need to do plural alternatives. e.g. "vegetable" = "vegetables". Just need one.

- No need to repeat words. For example, if you are using keto as a keyword, you only need to use it once, there's no need to use it again. So, instead of "keto diet; keto cooking" one can just use "keto diet; cooking".

- Perform keyword research— It's a good practice to look at your competitors' listings. Check out their title, photo, and descriptions, including wording and format. Are there things you can use to make your listing competitive with theirs? It can be something as simple as adding a bold type face in your header and paragraphs for a better user experience.

Below is a list of what to avoid per Amazon's best practices guidelines. This is not the complete list but covers important ones as a general checklist:

- Information covered elsewhere in your book's metadata (title, contributors, etc).

- Do not repeat keywords that appear in the initial sentences in your Main Description. Amazon scans the first 500 characters of Main Descriptions in user searches. Therefore, no need to waste characters in your keywords.

- Subjective claims about quality (e.g. "best novel ever").

- Time-sensitive statements ("new," "on sale," "available now").

- Information common to most items in the category ("book").

- Spelling errors.

- No abusive or offensive terms.

- Variants of spacing, punctuation, capitalization, and pluralization ("80GB" and "80 GB," "computer" and "computers", etc.). **Exception:** Words translated in more than one way (e.g. "Mao Zedong" or "Mao Tse-tung," "Hanukkah" or "Chanukah").

- Anything misrepresentative like the name of an author not associated with the book. This kind of information can create a confusing customer experience.

- No need for punctuation, such as: ";", ":", "-". If you enter "complex suspenseful whodunit," only people who type all of those words will find the book. For better results, enter this: complex suspenseful whodunit.

Keywords should be used in a way that most effectively helps consumers find books. Overall, more specific keywords are better.

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Example—Overloaded keyword list to describe *The Hobbit*:

fantasy;mystery;heroes;champions;people;castles;dragsons;wizards;evil;gold;adventure;men;
women;children;giants;trolls;bad guys;good guys;children's books;all ages;J.R.R Tolkien;short book

The above list will be less successful than a more refined keyword strategy with precise targeting for audiences and will also allow for proper categorization:

medieval fantasy;middle-earth;hobbits;dwarves;wizards;epic quest;childrens fantasy novel

Retailer Keyword Metadata Usage:

Y=Accepted (Visible to customer)   **I**=Accepted (Not visible to customer)   **N**=No

- Jet.com = **N**
- Walmart = **N**
- BAM = **I**
- Aerio = **N**
- Indigo = **I**

- Kobo = **I**
- Edelweiss Above the Treeline = **N**
- Apple = **N**
- Amazon = **I**

- Google Play = **N**
- B&N = **Y**
- WHSmith = **N**
- Waterstones = **N**
- Booktopia = **N**

Keyword Development (Subscriptions & Non-Subscription Services):

- Enter phrases at Amazon.com (across the site and specifically in the books vertical)
- Google Keyword Planner (free with Gmail account)
- Google Trends
- LibraryThing tag cloud
- Keyword Explorer
- Soovle.com
- MerchantWords
- Keywords Everywhere
- Moz Keyword Explorer

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