

Introduction

Book reviews are probably the most potent of all marketing activities. There is no such thing as having too many reviews. What's great about a good review is that it tells potential buyers that someone else read and liked the book. A good book review is a powerful marketing tool. You can use it by posting it on your blog. You can also share it by using the social media links.

In this session I'll cover:

- Advance review copies
- ◆ Previous reviewers
- ◆ Friends and family
- ◆ Social media requests
- ◆ Book Review Buzz
- ◆ Goodreads reviews
- ◆ Kindle Review Service
- ◆ Librarything reviews
- ◆ Reader's Favorite
- ◆ Booksprout
- ◆ Netgalley
- ◆ Reedsy
- ◆ Self-publishing Reviews

I have heard (but haven't experienced) that Amazon helps you advertise your book if the book gets 50 or more reviews. Trust me, that ain't easy to do, but it is a great goal to have.

There are several strategies you can use to acquire more reviews.

Goodreads groups are a fertile area to request reviews. Use these groups as your first recourse. A few such groups are listed later in this chapter.

Another approach is to contact a review site. These come in two flavors. One will review your book, usually for a fee. *Self-publishing Reviews* is such a site. So is *Booklife*. Some sites will review your book for free. *Reader's Favorite* is one although it will prompt you to upgrade to a paid review.

The second type of review site won't actually review your book, but will make it available to a number of potential reviews. I list a few of these later in the chapter. There are many more besides the ones I mention, but I only included ones I'm familiar with. A simple search will give you a list of more sites offering to get book reviews in return for a price. Let me be clear: if you use one of these services, you are not buying a review like you would with the *Self-publishing Review* site. You're paying for a review service that will put your book in front of many potential reviewers who may or may not elect to review your book. Reviewers who chose to read your book are not paid by the review service. What you are paying for when you sign up for a review service is access to all the potential reviewers on its list.

Some of the review services will not deliver the goods. They talk a good story about the many reviewers they have on their email list, but you won't get the number of reviews you signed up for. Some of these sites simply don't have enough readers on their list to deliver the reviews. Others, a small number, are just scammers looking to rip off authors.

Another strategy is to give away copies of your book, hopefully in exchange for a promise to review it. You can use your social media contacts here. Ask if anyone wants a free ebook review copy. I've found this tactic to be marginally effective. The main reason is that some people ask for a review copy only because it's free and they have no intention of ever writing a review. Also some readers won't like the book and won't write a negative review. My experience is that between 25% to 50% of these readers will write a review. However, ebooks don't cost you anything to send to potential reviewers so you aren't incurring any costs.

Some readers might be reluctant to write a review because they aren't sure how to go about doing it. You can help them out by sending along a list of questions that will assist those people in putting together a review. I have lists of questions at the end of this chapter. There are two lists: one of fiction and one for non-fiction.

There are also reputable sites you can use to get prestigious reviews, such as *Kirkus Reviews*. You can find it here: [Kirkusreviews.com](https://kirkusreviews.com). This is a site that will review your book, but it requires a large fee (\$425 at this writing). Once you pay, you will get a review and you'll see it before it's published. You can then decide if you want it to go public or not. This prevents a stinker of a review from seeing the light of day. If you agree to let it go public, the review will appear on the website and will attract attention. A Kirkus review also looks great on Amazon and other seller websites. Since you paid for it, Amazon does not allow the review to be posted against your book like all the other reviews. However, you can add it to the book on your Amazon Central page under "editorial reviews."

Booklife is part of Publishers Weekly <https://booklife.com>. It offers a review service. It is expensive (\$399 right now) but it provides a detailed review of the book in several categories.

There are many more review sites than the ones listed in this section. I only listed ones I'm familiar with. To find others, you'll have to do a web search. But be careful! Read all the fine print before committing to use a review site.

Advanced Review copies

Advanced Review Copies (or ARCs) are a great boon to getting early reviews besides being an opportunity to catch a few additional typos. Once you get ARCs, you can offer them to book reviewers to read before the book becomes available. Getting them is a bit tricky depending upon who your

ebook packager is. If you use Smashwords to package and distribute your ebook, you can download an ebook in epub or other format at any time. You are then free to give out copies of these as you see fit.

If your packager is Kindle, the situation is quite different. You have one chance to get a copy of the mobi format.

That chance happens when you upload the manuscript to Kindle. At some point in the process, you will be asked if you wish to review the ebook file on your computer. Answer yes and Kindle will send a mobi edition to your computer for your review. This is your Kindle ARC and it's the only one you will get from Kindle unless you upload a revised copy (or pretend to upload a revised copy and merely re-upload the original file).

If Kindle is your only packager, then having only a mobi version limits your ability to engage with reviewers who need an epub or pdf edition. You can develop your own pdf edition by exporting the final version of your manuscript from your word processor file.

There are websites that offer to convert a mobi edition to other formats such as epub. The sites offer the reverse also: epub to mobi. Many of these sites will require an account to use it and some require a subscription. One site you can use free is <https://www.zamzar.com>.

With print books, you'll be required to order one and review it before it will be become available for sale. You will then have to approve it or send a revised manuscript. Unlike ebooks, you will be charged production and mailing costs for the ARC. However, if you are confident the book is good shape, you can order more than a single copy. These then become your Advanced Review Copies.

Previous Reviewers

If this isn't your first book, you should contact readers who reviewed your previous books. They may be willing to review your new one. This is especially true if they liked your other book.

Unfortunately, if the review is on Amazon only, it may be difficult to find an email address for the reviewer. If the review is on Goodreads, you will be able to contact the reviewer although the site discourages this practice.

Friends and Family

Your list of contacts and friends are a good source of potential reviewers. If you contacted them about the book when it was published, now is a good time to contact them again and ask if they are interested in reviewing it. If so, send them a complimentary copy of the ebook.

You can also ask them to forward your email the review request to their contact list.

Social Media Requests

You can use your social media accounts to ask for reviews. Simply post the book blurb and the cover and ask if anyone would like a review copy. The main issue here is that most of the responses will come from total strangers. You literally do not know who you are sending a copy of the book to. It might be a pirate site for all you know. If it is a pirate, your book will end up on a site which is selling it and not paying you royalties.

Some other responders will simply ask for the review copy with no intention of ever writing a review. That's life.

Book Review Buzz

<http://bookreviewbuzz.com> is a book review site. For a small fee, the site will add your book and promote it to their contacts who may or may not

chose to review the book. The site sends out a weekly newsletter with new books available to review.

Like almost all book review sites, this one deals only with ebooks, not print books.

The site has several price options for reviews. In the least expensive, you provide the reviewers with a copy of the book. The site will provide the book copy for a higher service fee. They also have an expensive option in which your book will appear on the NetGalley site.

The site also offers book publishing services. Actually, what the site does is transfer you to a publisher. With all links like this, be careful you don't fall into the clutches of a vanity press. You should use caution and do a web search before approaching this or any publisher.

Goodreads Review Groups

One great feature about Goodreads is that there are millions of readers on it, and those readers love to get free books to read and review. There are a number of groups that actively seek authors looking for reviews.

One such group is called *Advanced Copies for Review & Book Giveaways*. Here is a link to it: <https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/58575-advanced-copies-for-review-book-giveaways>

A second group is: *Authors and Reviewers*: <https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/103713-authors-reviewers>

There are more such groups on Goodreads, but these are the two that I have used to get book reviews.

When you request a review (your book must be on Goodreads), use your book blurb. You can also use your short synopsis. If group members are interested in your book, they will leave a message for you.

Browse these groups and read the review requests. If you see a book that sounds interesting, request a copy. Interactions like this increase your

exposure within the group and the other author may return the favor of a review.

At one time, Goodreads had a great service in which an author could give away a certain number of copies of an ebook. So you could set up a giveaway for say 10 copies and Goodreads would run the promotion and collect names of members who applied for the book. It was a raffle. After the raffle completed, Goodreads randomly selected the winners and set you an email with the names.

Then Amazon bought Goodreads and the free giveaway suddenly turned into an expensive giveaway. Currently there are two offerings to give away 100 copies of the ebook. One costs \$119 and the second \$599.

Services like this are called ripoffs for good reason. That's my personal opinion. However, for a different perspective, here is what author Elizabeth Craig says:

What is your favorite or most successful marketing tactic?

My favorite and I feel most-successful marketing tactic is the Goodreads Giveaway. I do the \$119 one.

How do you use it?

I use the giveaway to add awareness of and visibility for my series. If I have a new release coming up, I'll run a giveaway for the first book of the series. The giveaway is for as many as 100 ebooks, although you can give away as few as 10. Goodreads handles everything: they notify the winners and distribute the ebooks. I pay for the giveaway through my Amazon account. The coolest thing is that everyone who enters the giveaway has my book added to their "want to read" list, which also shows up in their friends' feeds on the site.

So there you have it: once again, you face a decision. To buy a giveaway or not to buy a giveaway.

Kindle Review Service

This is a review site that restricts its service to books that are available through Kindle. You can find it here: <https://www.ireviewkindlebooks.com/amazon-services/>

Despite the name, the site is not part of Amazon or Kindle, but they are an Amazon affiliate and receive compensation on Amazon purchases made through the site.

The site will review your book either before or after the publication date. It charges a fee to review the book. The site also offers other services such as a book assessment. Naturally these extra services have additional fees.

Apparently, you won't find out the price until after you submit the book for review.

Librarything

This is a site that has many similarities to Goodreads. It is also quite different. It's much smaller than Goodreads. You can find the website here: <https://www.librarything.com>

Once you sign up and identify yourself as an author, you can put your books on the site and request reviews.

Reader's Favorite

Yet another review site: <https://readersfavorite.com>

You can send them a copy of your book and request a free review. The book will be shown to their extensive list of reviewers who select what books they want to review. A free review, if selected by a reviewer, will take up to eight weeks or more. After a few months you may get an email saying that no one wanted to review it.

The site also offers guaranteed reviews for a fee. That means reviews from this site can't be posted on Amazon like most reviews are. This applies

whether you received a free review or if you paid for it. You can however add it to your Amazon Central page where it will show up under editorial reviews.

Reader's Favorite also runs a large contest once a year.

Booksprout

This one is a free review site. <https://booksprout.co>. Once you have an account, you can upload your book and request reviews. You can do this before or after the book is launched. The site will allow up to twenty readers to request a copy. That doesn't mean to imply your book will get that many requests. You may only receive a handful of requests and not all of the them will post a review. Still, you'll probably get a few reviews. A neat feature of this site is that the reviews won't just show up on Amazon. They will also appear on Goodreads and other book sellers such as Barnes & Noble.

NetGalley

Part of Smith Publicity, it is a vast site used by publishers to solicit readers and reviewers to take a look at advanced review copies of the book. You can find it here: <https://www.netgalley.com>

NetGalley is used by many traditional publishers and small indie press houses. There is a cost to offering a book for review but the results may be worth the expense

Reedsy

This is another site that will submit your book to a large list of reviewers in return for a fee. You can find the website here: <https://reedsy.com/discovery>

The site specializes in books that aren't yet launched or were recently launched. As such, getting a good review here can supplement your launch promotions.

Self-publishing Reviews

This is a sprawling site with many options including a link to get your book published from what appears to be a vanity press. Editing and other pre-publishing services are offered. The site will review your book and it has several levels of reviews coupled with promotions. The reviews start at \$89 at this time.

Go to <https://www.selfpublishingreview.com/get-reviewed> to learn more.

Book Review Questionnaire

It's my observation that many people don't write reviews for books they enjoy because they aren't sure how to go about writing one. To alleviate this problem I wrote up a series of questions to help readers compose a short, simple book review. There are two versions of this: one for fiction and one for nonfiction. When asking someone to review your book or when sending along an ebook copy for review, paste the questions into the email or you can create a document and attach it to the email.

Fiction Book Review Questionnaire:

On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest) how would rate this book?

- 1) Did you like or dislike the book?
- 2) Please explain why you answered 2) as you did.

If you liked the book, please answer the following questions:

- 3) Why did you like the book?
- 4) What didn't you like about the book?
- 5) Did the main characters seem real and believable to you?
- 6) Did you want the book to continue beyond the ending?

Use your answers to these questions to write a few sentences about the book. Hint: don't write a brief synopsis.

Non-fiction Book Review Questionnaire:

How many stars, from 1 to 5 would you give this book? (Five is the highest rating)

- 1) What did you like about the book? (if anything)
- 2) What didn't you like about the book? (if anything)
- 3) Did you get the information the author promised in the book blurb and other promotional material?
- 4) Did the book contain information you weren't expected or didn't know about?
- 5) Would you recommend this book to others?

Use your answers to these questions to write a few sentences about the book.