

How To Create a Tip Sheet

Tip sheets are necessary to provide the buyers a standardized place to find all the pertinent information they need for a book. The information below explains the format required by all the national account buyers.

Overall Requirements:

- It **MUST** be one page maximum. No exceptions! Even the biggest, bestselling book has a single-page tip sheet. If you e-mail it to us, please make sure the formatting is set at one page.
- Another word on formatting—use common fonts (like Times New Roman or Arial), and use the column function (“Format” drop down menu, and “Columns”) in Word rather than using tabs to create columns. When you e-mail your tip sheet to us, odd fonts and spacing may come through garbled, making your tip sheet unusable.
- Do not write in 1st person, or address specific people. This is a fact-sheet about the book, not a letter to us or to our buyers.
- Be objective! Again, this is a fact-sheet and should be persuasive with facts, not opinions.
- Use bullet points. Readability is crucial when a buyer is faced with 100+ tip sheets.
- Do not eliminate any of the requested information. Nothing is superfluous.

Remember your audience! Sales reps and book buyers have little time and a lot of titles.

FORMAT: Tip sheets must be vertical, on 8 ½ x 11 paper, single-sided. **ONE PAGE ONLY!**

TITLE/SUBTITLE/AUTHOR: The tip sheet is also used by data entry staff at our accounts, so it must be accurate and it must match the cover of your book as well as the title template you sent to Biblio—so that all databases will match. (Just a note: Most databases only hold up to 39 characters, so your title should be selected in such a way that you get the important info in first; and series titles should come at the end, not the beginning.) Include the author’s full name (if you have a foreword by someone recognizable, it should be included here).

CONTENT DESCRIPTION: Make this brief and objective—this is where you tell us what the book is about, keeping in mind the limited time and short attention span of your audience. In a nutshell, what is your book about and why would anyone need it?

LEFT COLUMN:

- **ISBN** (with dashes) Include both the ISBN 10 and 13 until 2007 and then you can just include the ISBN 13
- **Category** (please only use category headings that you’ve seen in a major bookstore, if you’re unsure then go to your nearest bookstore store and figure out where your book might be shelved or visit http://www.bisg.org/standards/bisac_subject/index.html). Only include two categories maximum. The book will only be put into one section, so adding multiple categories doesn’t mean your book will end up in more places.
- **U.S. list price**
- **Format** Please use cloth, paper, audio, cloth w/CD, paper w/CD. Do not use any other terminology like softcover, softback, hardback, smyth binding...
- **Trim size** (in inches, i.e. 8 ½ x 11)
- **Special binding** (if applicable, i.e. lay flat, hidden spiral, etc.-do not say “perfect bound”)
- **Number of pages** (do not include cover)
- **Number of illustrations** (indicate if they’re color or black and white, photos or illus. Do not count the cover)
- **Number of recipes** (if applicable)

- **Carton quantity** (Many accounts—especially wholesalers—order in whole carton quantities. This section is important. If you don't know, ask your printer.)
- **City and state where the author lives** (If your author lives in a small town near a larger city, note the metro area. And if he or she teaches at a university, tell us where it is. For example, Joe Smith is a professor at St. Johns College in Annapolis, MD. He lives in Severna Park, MD near Baltimore, MD. Even if you feel sure that your book is a national title, it is still going to be most popular in the metro area in which the author lives (or teaches if he or she is a professor). This is particularly true with small presses—who often, wisely, build momentum in their author's hometown before going national with promotion. Our reps have insisted time and time again that this information is crucial to sales.)
- **ISBN of Previous Edition** (if applicable, also include the pub year and if it's a new paperback edition, include the ISBN of the cloth edition and note is as such "ISBN of Cloth Edition: 1-234567-89-0")
- **List the sales materials you can provide** ("finished books available" or "galleys available")
- **Try and secure endorsements from experts in the field, or similar authors.** Choose the best 10 or fewer words to include on the tip sheet. Never quote a "reader" or family member (unless they also happen to be an expert or known author). You can also provide early reviews and endorsements on a separate sheet.
- You may also include comparative title information here if you don't have room in your right column. Please see info below about comparative titles.

RIGHT COLUMN:

Marketing Plans You must know your plans now! There will be no "later" for a buyer's first impression. Be specific and stick to present and future plans. Nothing older than two weeks should be included. Use bullets to outline your plan and list the details in order of importance. Group like marketing together. For example, if you have a radio tour, then you should say "10-city Radio Tour: Atlanta, San Francisco, Dallas, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, St. Paul/Minneapolis, Washington DC, Denver" and an author's book signing tour should read "5-city Author Tour: New York, Boston, Atlanta, Charlotte, Dallas." We do not need station names—just the cities so that we know where to put the books. If it's a national TV show, it should read "Author appearance on *Live with Regis & Kelly* in February 2007." Also include local, regional and national advertising—no web ads please. And indicate if co-op money is available.) Advertising should specify which publications and what month. If you are using BookSense, specify the White Box Mailing or the Advance Access Program. If you're doing a review copy mailing, specify the # of copies you're mailing out (for example: "Review Copy Mailing to Top 250 Media Outlets").

Sales Handles (List as many concise sales handles as possible. When writing these, think of why the book should be bought and not what the book is about. Explain why the book is unique. Detailed information is also appropriate, for example "There are 3 million people in the U.S. with this affliction." Convincing statistics belong in this section. If it is a paperback edition, then you can include major positive review excerpts and endorsements received.

Specify your audience—if you can't be specific then leave it out—don't say "everyone" or "women" or "anyone who reads." Tell us who your core audience is, even if you firmly believe (as most authors do) that everyone can benefit from reading it. Some examples include: Female Baby Boomers, Men Over the Age of 40, People with Aging Parents, New Mothers, War Veterans, Video Gamers, etc. (*If you can't identify your audience, how will you market to them?*)

Comparative Titles (You can't "fool" our buyers, so it's best to provide accurate comparative title information and show that you are helping them to buy the correct number of books for their stores. Please do not use *The Da Vinci Code* or anything else that's on the *New York Times* bestseller list. The buyers think this is a clear sign of an amateur publisher. Also, if you say "there is no other book like it" then the buyer will assume that there is also no audience for it.

To get started, go to your neighborhood bookstore and check out the section where your book will be sold. Write down any books that are similar to yours—similar in topic, price and format. You can also use

Amazon.com, but you often come up with more obscure titles this way and we're really looking for books that are actually on shelves in the stores. If you have published previously, please include those titles as well.

You should include the title, ISBN, format, price, publisher, pub month/year, and list in this order: 1) any previous edition 2) any other book by the same author 3) any similar book from the same publisher 4) any recent book on the topic.

Also, doing this research may help with your own marketing and seeing what competing titles are doing or not doing that you could improve on.

Please make sure you proofread your tip sheet (and have someone else help—fresh eyes may catch something you didn't). This is the single most important piece of paper when it comes to representing your book. If your tip sheet has errors, then it will be assumed that your book also has errors. If your tip sheet is incomplete, then it will be assumed that your promotion plans are incomplete (a warning sign to book buyers). If your tip sheet is subjective, then it will be assumed that you don't have enough factual information to share, which means there are no good reasons why the book should sell. Finally, if your tip sheet is difficult to read, it will end up in the buyer's trashcan.

At the Bottom:

Please include "Distributed to the Trade by Biblio (an NBN Sister Company) 800-462-6420"