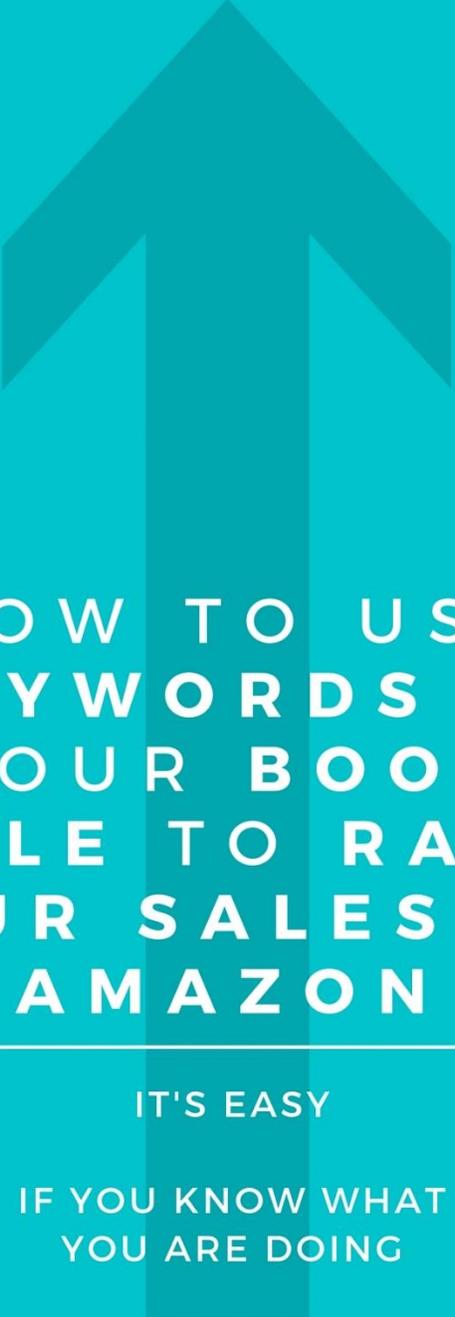


A TIFFANY WRITING PUBLICATION



HOW TO USE
KEYWORDS IN
YOUR BOOK
TITLE TO RAMP
YOUR SALES ON
AMAZON

IT'S EASY

IF YOU KNOW WHAT
YOU ARE DOING

ALLEN TIFFANY
AN AMAZON BESTSELLING AUTHOR

HOW TO USE KEYWORDS IN YOUR BOOK TITLE TO RAMP YOUR SALES ON AMAZON

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Everything presented in this document was confirmed true and accurate at the time of publication. However, much of the content herein speaks to search engine behaviors. Owners of those search engines (Amazon, Google, Bing and others) can change how they operate at any time, which could invalidate some of the things stated here.

All questions and comments should be sent to the author at SaltLake62@gmail.com.

More information on how to optimize your book for sales and writing and publishing insights can be found at www.allentiffany.com. To be sure to get future updates on this topic and related topics, please go to my website and subscribe to the newsletter.

Second Edition, March 2016

HOW TO USE KEYWORDS IN YOUR BOOK TITLE TO RAMP YOUR SALES ON AMAZON

Who am I?

So who am I that I can help you ramp sales of your book? Though I have been writing for a long time, I did not publish my first book until March of 2015. It has repeatedly made it to the top 10 of several Amazon bestseller lists.

I've published a short story, a number of professional articles, and I have been a newspaper columnist. I also have an MA in Creative Writing, and I'm one of the all-time most active members of the online writing workshop CritiqueCircle. Though I know a lot about how to write a good story, and I've been doing marketing for over 20 years in high-tech, when I published my short novel, I didn't know a thing about how to ramp sales of my book. Not at first.

I am, though, very deterministic in figuring out how things work, and I did a ton of tinkering and research about how search engines work. Some of it was reading blogs and boards. Some of what I read was helpful, some of it was not. I have been surprised at how much misinformation and bad assumptions are out there.

So most of my research was doing my own testing (I did some damage to my own sales more than a few times, unfortunately). In the end, though, I went from clueless to having a book I can now call a "bestseller". When it is not in the top 10, my book has hovered near the top twenty of several Amazon lists for months. Below is a screen shot of just one time my book was in the top 10 as proof.

As I said, there is a lot of bad info floating around that you might have seen. To prove that I know what I'm talking about, and to allow you to prove to yourself that you can also dramatically increase traffic to your book, I'm going to step you through detailed examples that you can replicate at your desk that will prove to you how Amazon works and therefore how you can do this yourself. It is not a magic bullet, and it will take you more than a couple hours, but once you do the things I'll step you through you will have traffic coming to your book for years – *years* – to come. And this is actually better than it seems because when you publish your second book, it will benefit from the traffic your first book is pulling in. It's all good. I'll show you how it works. 😊



Finishing up a "Double Century" bike ride...I only made it 172 miles in the allotted 15 hours (in Maryland in July, no less), but it was a heck of a day and accomplishment! I did not start riding until 3 years before this event. It reminded me that at any age you can take on and succeed in new endeavors...

I have no bonus content, I don't sell any courses, and I have no affiliate relationship. I'm sharing everything I know about how to ramp your sales by optimizing your title here in this one article which I make available free to subscribers to my blog.

My only ask is that in return for what I share here you forward my website to another writer that could benefit from what I share because we are all part of a the same writing community. We are all in this together.

Everything I'm going to show you below is equally relevant to fiction and non-fiction books. And it does not matter what the topic is – it all works the same. Everything I will share with you is aligned with Amazon's rules, and with how to best help potential customers find your book. I do not promote nor will I encourage anything that is inappropriate or lacking in integrity. Zero tolerance. If you are looking for unethical ways to get ahead, you have come to the wrong place and you can stop reading now. We need to be on the same page before we go any farther.

First, a bit of proof so know I'm for real:

Amazon Best Sellers
Our most popular products based on sales. Updated hourly.

Any Department
Kindle Store
Kindle eBooks
History
Military
Aviation
Canada
Intelligence & Espionage
Korean War
Military Science
Napoleonic Wars
Naval
Other
Pictorials
Regiments
Special Forces
Strategy
Uniforms
United States
Vietnam War
Weapons & Warfare
World War I
World War II

Best Sellers in Vietnam War History
Top 100 Paid Top 100 Free

- LOOK INSIDE!**
FLASHING SABER
Flashing Saber : Three Years in Vietnam
by Matthew Brennan
★★★★★ (164)
Kindle Edition
\$2.99
- LOOK INSIDE!**
Da Nang Diary
Da Nang Diary: A Forward Air Controll...
by Tom Yarroworth
★★★★★ (138)
Kindle Edition
\$1.99
- LOOK INSIDE!**
GUNSHIP PILOT
Gunship Pilot: An Attack Helicopter W...
by Robert F. Hartley
★★★★★ (117)
Kindle Edition
\$3.99
- LOOK INSIDE!**
WE WERE SOLDIERS ONCE AND YOUNG
We Were Soldiers Once... and Young...
by Harold G. Moore
★★★★★ (789)
Kindle Edition
\$7.19
- LOOK INSIDE!**
LOW LEVEL HELL
Low Level Hell: A Scout Pilot in the...
by Hugh Mills
★★★★★ (153)
Kindle Edition
\$1.99
- LOOK INSIDE!**
Youth In Asia: 1968. The Vietnam War...
Youth In Asia: 1968. The Vietnam War...
by Allen Tiffany
★★★★★ (27)
Kindle Edition
\$2.99

INTEL
inside
CORE i5

This is real, so let's get started...

We all hear about the importance of blurbs to capture the interest of potential readers when they stop by our Amazon sales pages. And that is correct. Potential buyers want to gain insight into our stories. They are looking for something exciting to read before they spend their money. But this only speaks to readers that are on our page.

How do we get more traffic to our page in the first place? Keywords!

Keywords, or search terms, are what readers load into search engines to help them find what they are looking for. We all know this. But let's be precise about how we talk about keywords because they don't all show up where you think they do. There are some funny things in play... Let's get clear on where keywords show up.

Amazon has its own search engines

A lot of people know this but don't really internalize what this means. It means that the folks who run Amazon have defined what the Amazon search engine can and cannot see. They do this by coding different blocks of content on your Amazon sales page as either readable or blocked. To further complicate this, Amazon's search engines see different things if you search from the "Kindle" or "Book" department.

For instance, things that the Amazon Kindle search engine can see are: Your keywords, the title, and the subtitle. Full stop. That is all Amazon's Kindle search engine can see. So anything written as a blurb, an Editorial Review, any reader's review, etc., cannot be seen and, therefore, will not drive traffic to your site via the Amazon Kindle search engine.

Google and Bing, on the other hand, can see anything on your page, but they can't see the keywords you loaded for your book. I'll talk about what this means for keywords not in your title in a separate article. Here I'm going to help you sell more books by optimizing your title to get more traffic on Amazon's Kindle site. The Amazon Book search engine can see these blocks, but it also filters out some common use words. For the purposes of this article, we are just focusing on words in the title, which the two search engines treat the same way.

How the different search engines operate makes good sense. Google and Bing are constantly scouring the entire internet (excepting sites from which they are manually blocked). Amazon, on the other hand, is helping their customers by offering up only results that are specific to what shoppers on the Amazon site are looking for. And most shoppers are even more precise: They can select which “department” of the Amazon store in which to search.

Keywords in your Title and Subtitle

In this article, all my examples for title keywords are done with searches in the “book” department, but 100% of what I cover about keywords in titles is also true for the “kindle” department. The keywords you will get back from the “auto complete” process I detail below might be slightly different between the two, but they will be ~95% the same, but if you think the bulk of your sales will be of an ebook, then do all your searches on the “kindle” department. All the processes and everything else I say below are exactly the same.



To illustrate what is going on, let’s pretend you wrote a book about revolutionary war leaders such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams, John Paul Jones, etc. Let’s say that it is essentially short bios of these leaders that are loosely connected, but highlight the most exciting times and events of their lives. And let’s say you’re working title is: America’s First and Finest: Washington, Jefferson and twenty of their most influential peers. This might seem like kind of a long title, but as someone who knows what the book is about, it makes sense. We’ll come back to the length a bit later.

Though “revolutionary war” should be capitalized, I am not going to do so for the sake of consistency. Amazon’s search engine does not capitalize any words, so to make my text and screen shots consistent I have not capitalized “revolutionary war”.

As you read that title again, it is clear to us what the book is about. But is it clear to a search engine that will bring potential customers to your site?

Let’s say someone who knows nothing about your book but is interested in buying such a book goes to Google and types in a reasonable search term that they hope will show them such books. Let’s say they type in “revolutionary war leaders.” They will get a lot of results, but few will be books. The day I did it, I did not have a book returned in the search results until the 15th entry. Note that our search term was in the book’s title:

[Ethan Allen \(Rwl\) \(Revolutionary War Leaders\): Virginia ...](#)
[www.amazon.com](#) > ... > [Regional US](#) > [New England](#) ▼ [Amazon.com, Inc.](#) ▼
[Ethan Allen \(Rwl\) \(Revolutionary War Leaders\) \[Virginia Aronson\] on Amazon.com.](#)
FREE shipping on qualifying offers. – Compelling portraits of American ...

It's worth noting that the next three entries were books, and each had our search term in the *title*. Please take note of this: The search term was in the *title*. No other books showed up for this search term except for books that had this search term in the title. That is a big hint about where we are headed.

[William Howe: British General \(Revolutionary War Leaders ...](#)
[www.amazon.com](#) > ... > [Colonial & Revolutionary](#) ▼ [Amazon.com, Inc.](#) ▼
[William Howe: British General \(Revolutionary War Leaders\) \[Bruce Adelson, Arthur Meier, Jr. Schlesinger\] on Amazon.com.](#) *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers ...

[Francis Marion \(Revolutionary War Leaders\): Kay Cornelius ...](#)
[www.amazon.com](#) > ... > [Colonial & Revolutionary](#) ▼ [Amazon.com, Inc.](#) ▼
[Francis Marion \(Revolutionary War Leaders\) \[Kay Cornelius, Arthur Meier, Jr. Schlesinger\] on Amazon.com.](#) *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. - Compelling ...

[Triangle Histories of the Revolutionary War: Leaders ...](#)
[www.amazon.com](#) > ... > [US Presidents & First Ladies](#) ▼ [Amazon.com, Inc.](#) ▼
[Triangle Histories of the Revolutionary War: Leaders - Abigail Adams \[Kate Davis\] on Amazon.com.](#) *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Abigail Adams became ...

So now let's go to Amazon and see what we find. If you search on "revolutionary war leaders" on Amazon, after first picking "books" to the left of the search window, what do you get? 2,514 books about revolutionary war leaders. At least, we are getting only books now. Here is a screen shot of what came up. Note what I highlighted in yellow.

Book Format: [Paperback](#) | [Kindle Edition](#)



John Paul Jones (Revolutionary War Leaders) Jan 2000

by Norma Jean Lutz

Hardcover

\$0.01 used & new (25 offers)

Paperback

\$3.10 used & new (17 offers)



Nathan Hale (Revolutionary War Leaders) Jan 2000

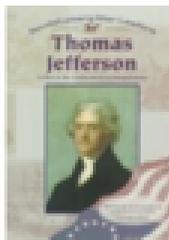
by Lones Lough

Library Binding

\$9.32 used & new (19 offers)

Paperback

\$3.21 used & new (15 offers)



Thomas Jefferson (Revolutionary War Leaders) Mar 2000

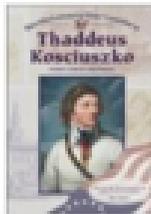
by Veda Boyd Jones and Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr.

Paperback

\$1.11 used & new (17 offers)

Library Binding

\$2.90 used & new (20 offers)



Thaddeus Kosciuszko (Rwl) (Revolutionary War Leaders) Dec 2001

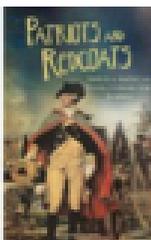
by Mag Greene

Library Binding

\$0.48 used & new (14 offers)

Paperback

\$4.43 used & new (25 offers)



Patriots and Redcoats (The Revolutionary War) Feb 1, 2015

by Steven Gifkins

Kindle Edition

\$3.95

Auto-delivered wirelessly

Paperback

\$3.95 Prime

Only 7 left in stock - order soon.

More Buying Choices

\$3.88 used & new (37 offers)

Other Formats: [Library Binding](#)



Betsy Ross (Revolutionary War Leaders) Sep 1999

by Susan Martini Miller

Library Binding

\$1.88 used & new (20 offers)

Paperback

\$3.28 used & new (19 offers)

You might think that this is not much of a revelation. Actually, it has profound implications for your book's sales!

Here is what is really important if you want to sell more books: If you do not include this search term in the title of your book, and your book is about a leader in the revolutionary war, don't expect your book to show up in search results, so don't expect to sell many copies.

You might think that you are in good shape because you wrote a really compelling blurb that includes this phrase. Does not matter. *The Amazon Kindle search engine cannot see it.*

Or perhaps you wrote a nice summary of your book on the "inside flap" box that Amazon provides. Nope. *The Amazon Kindle search engine won't look there.*

You even got a 5-star review titled, "Best book ever about our revolutionary war leaders!" from the head of the history department at Harvard. ...yawn... It does not matter. *Amazon's Kindle search engine won't see it.*

Though I will talk about it more in my next article, even the Amazon Book search engine will not help you much.

Below is a graphic that summarizes what the various search engines can see on an Amazon page.

Only the title and subtitle are visible to Amazon's search engine



Youth In Asia: A Story of Life, Death and Infantry Combat with the 173rd Airborne Brigade during The Vietnam War's 1968 Tet Offensive in The Central Highlands: Young men will change. Some will Die. Kindle Edition

4.5 out of 5 stars (33 customer reviews)

See all 2 formats and editions

Kindle \$0.00 <small>with unlimited</small>	Paperback \$5.99 <small>with Prime</small>
Subscribers need not pay \$1.49 to buy	4 Used from \$4.99 13 New from \$3.91

A new story of infantry combat in the Vietnam War

Read the highly rated story of US Army soldiers in battle from which half of all proceeds go to organizations that support our veterans.

[Read more](#)

Length: 98 pages

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Neatness Price: \$0.00 (What's this?)



Editorial Reviews

Review

- "...It's a gut-wrenching suspenseful story... It's some of the best war fiction that I've read." — **L. Chambers HALL OF FAME, TOP 50 REVIEWER, May 2015**
- "Tiffany is a bright new voice... His style is strong, growing close to the bone." — **Grady Harp HALL OF FAME, TOP 100 REVIEWER, VINE VOICE, April 2015**
- "...a disturbing rendering of the war in Vietnam through the eyes of an innocent man... It's gripping tale that will stick with you long after you finish with it... a great story." — **Devon Walker TOP 500 REVIEWER, June 2015**
- "There are many action/adventure stories on the market that feature the 'super soldier' that almost emerges victorious... In this case, the victory is merely staying alive." — **Charles Adhachan HALL OF FAME, TOP 500 REVIEWER, VINE VOICE, June 2015**
- "This is not the stuff of hero's (although there will be heroes), this is the stuff of real men of war and the courage that they will face... for those who were there (I want) or those who lost friends (I did) you can't read this without it bringing back many memories." — **William D. Cornell TOP 1000 REVIEWER, VINE VOICE, June 2015**
- "...I was impressed how Tiffany maintained high dramatic tension throughout... I was also impressed by how many names were woven into the story... As for Tiffany's account of small infantry units in the 'heat of battle,' it's top." — **John P. Jones III TOP 1000 REVIEWER, VINE VOICE, April 2015**
- "I pair it with Satchel Stone than Peace, The 120th Airlift and Sand in the Wind as some of the best fiction to come out of the war." — **James M. Doney TOP 1000 REVIEWER, VINE VOICE, June 2015**
- "This story is engaging and worth reading in a single sitting - it's short, but with a profound message." — **John Podowski, author of Cherries - a Vietnam War novel, April 2015**

From the Inside Flap

The war in French Indochina, the Vietnam War. Call it what you will. In America's military experience, it was sandwiched between the Korean War and The Persian Gulf War. America bled into it without a clear understanding of why we were even there and no understanding of how to win. Like the war in Korea, it was expensive at best. More importantly it was a failure that took untold lives and devastated many of the soldiers that survived. The war also horrifically scarred Vietnam and devastated its population. It was arguably the US military's most unsuccessful campaign, and it deeply damaged the Army and Marine Corps who were at the forefront (as after the, caught in firefights in obscure battles with names like Operation Delacour, Lam Son 719, and Junction City. Or that were fought at Cu Chi, Ia Drang, the A Shau valley, Dak To, the Mekong Delta, Hue, Air Base and the Iron Triangle. Please God Americans have never heard of, but God Americans do remember of the war is Americans held in a terrible prison called the Hanoi Hilton, some obscure chemical called Agent Orange and that people who confront extended periods of stress - such as our soldiers - struggled with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) long after the battles are over.

For the combatants all wars are very small. Real wars rage within a few feet of the soldier and also out in a few seconds. A few men on a patrol deep in a jungle can find themselves alone and without communication, surrounded with enemy soldiers. War has no meaning then. There is no war. There is no tactical doctrine. There is no policy guidance from men in suits a million miles away. There is only a few young men trying to stay alive. What they will think of each other years later does not matter now.

About the Author

Allen Tiffany is a retired Army Infantry Officer and has graduated from the Army's Airborne and Ranger schools and the Command and General Staff College. He has also earned his graduate degree in Creative Writing and has published a number of professional articles, a short story, has been a newspaper columnist, and he has been a fiction editor for a campus literature magazine. Allen was born in Kansas and has lived in Georgia, California, Texas and Singapore. When he is not working in the high-tech industry, he spends his time with his wife and four daughters or writing. He also enjoys long distance biking.

These sections are visible to Google and Bing's search engines

Title Keywords and CreateSpace

If you are wondering about CreateSpace or some of the other book sellers, let me say that I'm only going to speak to CreateSpace briefly for a couple reason. First, everything I say in this article is *generally* true for CreateSpace, but CreateSpace actually has many different downstream distribution partners, and when I spoke to a CreateSpace customer representatives as I was writing this article they made very clear to me that they don't know how all their partners' search their various data fields. I have seen similar behavior on Barnes & Nobel's' site as I will detail below, but I cannot promise these other search engines work exactly as Amazon's done. On the other hand, Amazon accounts for the bulk of book sales, so let's keep our focus on Amazon.

How do you know which search term to include in your title?

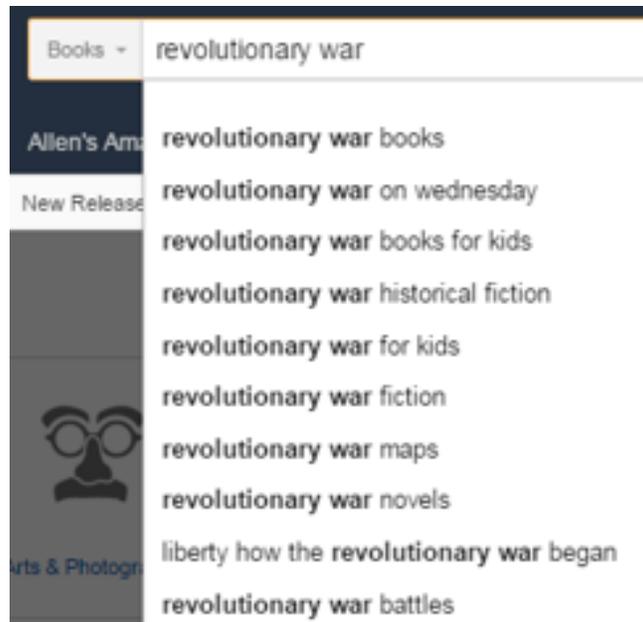
I hope you now understand how important it is to get the right keywords into your title and how different search engines see different blocks of content on Amazon. So for this discussion, we are going to focus on keywords in your title. I'll soon publish another booklet about how to use keywords in other ways to further ramp your sales. You will be able to find it at my website, www.allentiffany.com, and you can sign up there to receive occasional notices about when I publish new articles you will find helpful as you continue to ramp your sales.

So now that we know *where* to put our search terms, there are literally trillions of possible search terms. How do you pick the ones that are most popular on Amazon *and* most helpful at getting potential buyers to your book? The good news is that it is easy. *Amazon tells you* what they are if you just know where to look.

How to find the best keywords for your title.

Let me show you how Amazon tells you which are the most popular search terms. Go to Amazon's search engine for the book department (you'll get almost the same results if you prefer to search from the kindle department). Type in "revolutionary war" and add a space after the last letter and then hesitate for a second, Amazon will then show you a list of the most popular terms that start with "revolutionary war". This is called "auto-complete". Amazon is doing this to guide you to the most popular search terms. See below...

Sweet! We have a starting point. Let's see what we got:



Look at these additional words carefully. Which ones are closely related to and descriptive of the book you wrote?

- Books – Yes, what you wrote is a book, but we are in the book department so this is not very helpful.
- On Wednesday – I don't think so. I confess, I have no idea what this one means.
- Books for kids – This is relevant depending on how you define “kids” and the target audience for your book.
- Historical fiction – No. It is not fiction.
- For kids – This is essentially a repeat.
- Fiction – Nope.
- Maps – Yes, if your book includes any maps.
- Novels – No, still not fiction.
- Liberty how the ... began – No.
- Battles – Yes.

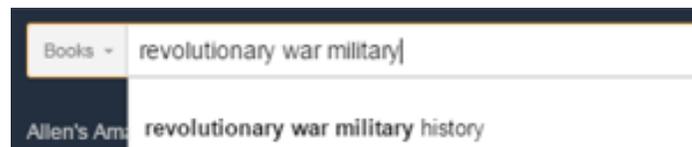
So from this list, we found about 3 words that could help you pull in traffic if they were in your title.

Your book, though, is about *leaders* of the revolutionary war. So let's try this again, but this time we'll add “leaders” to the end of the phrase. This is what we got back:



What happened? The process is working; this is not a mistake or bad news. What it is telling us is that there is not much search traffic for anything beyond those three words. So let's keep this in mind and try another approach.

Your book is about revolutionary war leaders who were to various degrees military men, politicians, thought leaders, and public figures. The heart of your book is that they were all actors in the revolutionary war, so let's keep that as our starting two words and see what else we come up with. Let's start by adding "military" to our two words.



So "military history" has a material amount of search traffic according to Amazon. Add "history" to your growing list of keywords.

Now let's try "politicians". Amazon threw us another curve ball, but this is also good info. When I typed "revolutionary war politicians" and added a space I got no additional search terms. That tells us that there are no popular search terms that add a fourth word to our three-word phrase of "revolutionary war politicians". But I searched for it anyway. Look at what came up: 121 results, including books about leaders that you included in your book.

The screenshot shows the Amazon website interface. At the top, the search bar contains the text "revolutionary war politicians" with a magnifying glass icon to the right. Below the search bar, there are navigation links for "Books", "Advanced Search", "New Releases", "Best Sellers", "The New York Times® Best Sellers", "Children's Books", "Textbooks", "Textbook Rentals", "Sell Us Your Books", and "Best Books of the M". The main content area displays "1-12 of 121 results for Books : 'revolutionary war politicians'". On the left side, there is a "Show results for" section with a list of categories and their respective counts: Books (28), U.S. State & Local History (18), United States (28), U.S. Revolution & Founding History (35), History (83), Political (17), American Revolution (25), Arts & Photography (3), Biographies & Memoirs (36), Business & Money (2), Children's Books (4), Christian Books & Bibles (1), Computers & Technology (1), Cookbooks, Food & Wine (3), Crafts, Hobbies & Home (3), Education & Teaching (1), Engineering & Transportation (2), Health, Fitness & Dieting (4), Humor & Entertainment (4), Law (4), Literature & Fiction (6), Medical Books (2), Mystery, Thriller & Suspense (1), and Politics & Social Sciences (30). The main results area shows three book listings. The first listing is "Richard Varick: A Forgotten Founding Father: Revolutionary War Soldier, Federalist Politician" by Paul Cushman. It features a book cover with a portrait of Richard Varick. The listing includes the title, author, a "Kindle Edition" price of \$24.65, a "Hardcover" price of \$129.99, and a 5-star rating. The second listing is "Silas Deane, Revolutionary War Diplomat and Politician" by Milton C. Van Vlack. It features a book cover with a portrait of Silas Deane. The listing includes the title, author, a "Paperback" price of \$40.00, a "Kindle Edition" price of \$14.74, and a note that only 1 copy is left in stock. The third listing is "Samuel Adams: Patriot and Statesman (Signature Lives: Revolutionary War Era)" by Michael Burgan. It features a book cover with the name "ADAMS" in large letters. The listing includes the title, author, and a "Paperback" price of \$5.95.

There are two other extremely important aspects of what is going on here that we need to understand.

Again, books that come up at the top of the results have the search term in the title

This is crazy important. Remember it. We'll come back to it.

Look closely at the first book that came up. As noted, our search words are in the title, but did you notice how many reviews this first book has gotten? One. So the leading book for this search term has only one review. *One*. How do you think its sales rank is? Let's check.

Product Details

File Size: 3219 KB
Print Length: 322 pages
Page Numbers Source ISBN: 0977233766
Publisher: SUNY Press (February 1, 2010)
Publication Date: February 1, 2010
Sold by: Amazon Digital Services, Inc.
Language: English
ASIN: B0051UTT6K
Text-to-Speech: Enabled
X-Ray: Not Enabled
Word Wise: Enabled
Lending: Not Enabled
Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled
Amazon Best Sellers Rank: #2,490,705 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store)
#2064 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > **American Revolution**
#2071 in **Kindle Store** > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > **Revolution & Founding**
#3779 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > **United States**

A sales rank of #2,490,705 million. It is hard to say with precision but based on my research that probably means it is selling one copy a month (if that). You can –and will! – do better than that. And if you do, *your book will be at the top of the page when people search for “revolutionary war politicians”*...and people tend to buy what they see first.

So you can use this technique to review all the keyword phrases that you can create with your starting two words of “revolutionary war”. You might also consider switching things up and trying a different starting phrase such as “American military leaders” and then add “revolutionary war” or something similar and relevant.

The truth is this is a relatively arcane topic, which is both good news and bad. The good news is that you can probably land high on pages in these categories, which is extremely important and I’ll come back to this in a moment. The bad news is that it is just not a wildly popular topic. As an alternative, you could try starting your search term with a phrase that is popular, for instance, “hot sex”. That will certainly get your book showing up in far more searches than you are getting by starting with “revolutionary war”. Of course, you won’t sell anything to those who found your book looking for erotica, and you’ll just antagonize Amazon’s customers, which is a bad thing to do. You’ll probably also provoke a response from Amazon if they catch on to it. But most importantly, it won’t help you sell any books.

Only use search terms that are relevant, descriptive and helpful to shoppers.

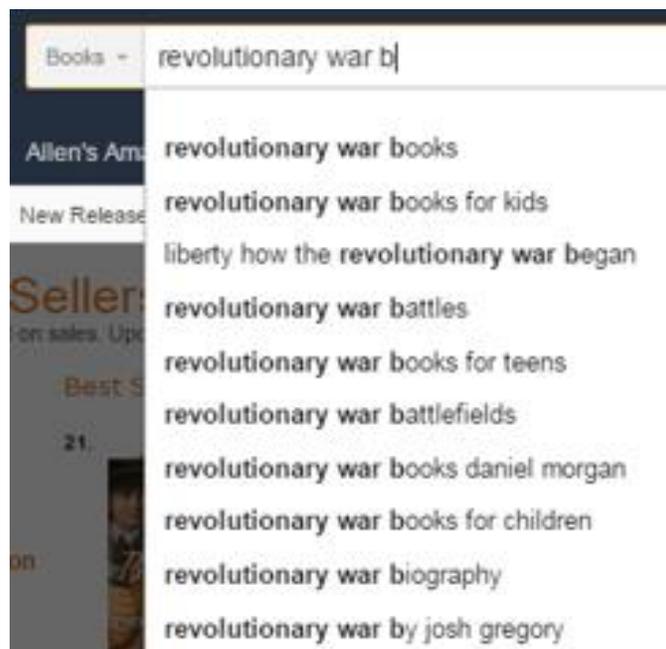
Let’s continue building your keyword search list after you have identified the top words that follow “revolutionary war”: Go to Amazon, select “books” or “kindle” as the department in which you will

search, and then type in “revolutionary war a”. What Amazon returns is the most popular search words for phrases that start with “revolutionary war” plus words that start with the letter “a”. This is what comes back, at least today as I write this:



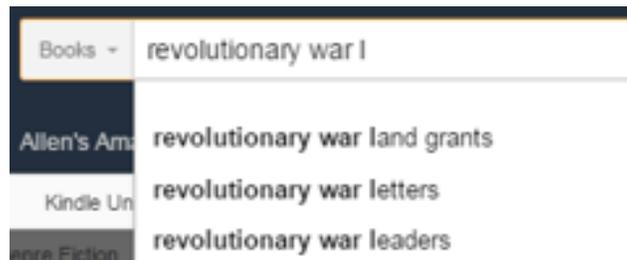
Review this list and write down any word that starts with “a” that looks like it is relevant to your book. “American history” would be one.

Let’s try this again with the letter “b”. So the search and results would look like this:



We have already seen a couple of these, but there are a few more good results here: “books for teens”, “battlefields”, and “biography”. Write down all of these. Your list of potential keywords is growing now. Do this for every letter of the alphabet. Remember that customers don’t want to be misled, so only keep keywords that are truly relevant to your book.

For the sake of completeness, remember earlier when we tried “revolutionary war leaders” and nothing else came up? That told us that “leaders” is probably not a hugely popular additional search word when added to “revolutionary war”. But let’s check and see what happens when we type in “revolutionary war l” (that’s a small case “L” on the end, not a capital i).



What we see is that “leaders” is a search term that does generate enough traffic for Amazon to add it to its autocomplete suggestions, but it is pretty far down the list of popular terms. Nonetheless, it is very descriptive of your book and it does have some popularity, so you should keep it on your list.

After you have gathered all the relevant keywords starting with every letter of the alphabet, let’s now go back to the search results on the book we looked at earlier.

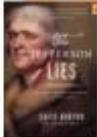
Notice the categories for which this book is listed: “Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > American Revolution”. Let’s see what we find when we click on that link:

Amazon Best Sellers
Our most popular products based on sales. Updated hourly.

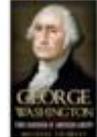
Any Department
Books
Biographies & Memoirs
Historical
United States
American Revolution
Civil War
US Presidents

Best Sellers in American Revolution Biographies

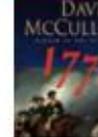
- LOOK INSIDE!**



The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myth...
by David Barton
★★★★☆ (21)
Kindle Edition
\$6.49
- LOOK INSIDE!**



George Washington: First Guardian of...
by Michael Cranley
★★★★☆ (18)
Kindle Edition
\$6.99
- LOOK INSIDE!**



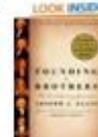
1776
by David McCullough
★★★★☆ (1,448)
Audiobook Edition
\$29.95
10 new from \$29.95
- LOOK INSIDE!**



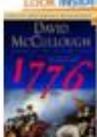
Lafayette in the Stormwind, United States
by Sarah Vowell
★★★★☆ (148)
Audiobook Edition
\$17.95
- LOOK INSIDE!**



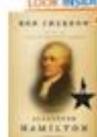
Benjamin Franklin: An American Life
by Walter Isaacson
★★★★☆ (158)
Audiobook Edition
\$43.95
10 new from \$43.95
- LOOK INSIDE!**



Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary...
by Joseph J. Ellis
★★★★☆ (825)
Paperback
\$9.25
840 used & new from \$11.01
- LOOK INSIDE!**



1776
by David McCullough
★★★★☆ (1,448)
Paperback
\$13.00
555 used & new from \$11.11
- LOOK INSIDE!**



Alexander Hamilton
by Ron Chernow
★★★★☆ (180)
Hardcover
\$20.93
93 used & new from \$15.17
- LOOK INSIDE!**



Lafayette in the Stormwind, United States
by Sarah Vowell
★★★★☆ (148)
Hardcover
\$17.04
70 used & new from \$13.25

When we click on that link, Amazon takes us to the top 20 books in that category (in the screen shot above, I am only showing the top nine – I did not include the next 11 or it would have been too small to read).

So what do we learn here? We learn a lot! Scan the titles. See what words come up frequently. Record any word that you see show up more than once that are relevant to and descriptive of the contents of your book.

By now you should have a pretty long list of potential keywords that are also search terms. *This list is gold, but not until you put these words where the Amazon search engine can see them.*

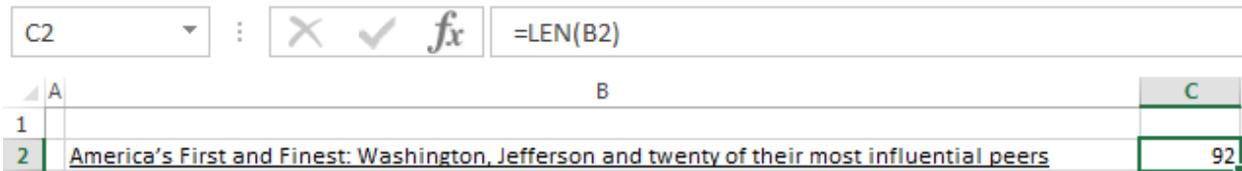
Where is the most important place to load these keywords? Exactly. The title!

If you are a New York Times bestselling author you can title your book anything you want and it will still be a bestseller. And you would probably want a short, memorable title. For instance, if you wrote a book about leaders in the revolutionary war, you could simply call it “Tea” in reference to the “Boston Tea Party”.

Unfortunately, few of us have achieved the stature of a New York Times bestselling author yet. So we need titles that are both descriptive and easily understood by search engines *and* customers. Earlier we said the working title of your book was: America’s First and Finest: Washington, Jefferson and twenty of their most influential peers.

Before we start rewriting it, how much room do we really have? Earlier we thought this seemed like a long title, but is it? As Amazon states [here](#), your title and subtitle can be 200 characters. Our current title is just 92 characters, so we have lots of room to play with.

By the way, so you don’t have to manually count characters, if you have access to Microsoft Excel, it has an easy way to count characters with the “length” function. See an example below. In cell B2, I pasted our title. In cell C2 I typed in a function “=LEN(B2)”. This will now instantly tell me how many characters are in what I loaded into the target cell (B2). Simple.



It is time to create a new title that is descriptive and accurate about your book’s content, but also uses the most popular search terms such as “battles” and “biographies” while staying under Amazon’s 200 character limit. We obviously don’t want our title to become ridiculously convoluted, but we do need to get some high payoff keywords in there that will attract buyers.

For instance we could try something like: From early America’s History: Short biographies of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams and twenty of their most influential peers across battlefields and through statehouses as you have never seen our Founding Fathers

Excel tells me that is 231 characters, so we need to shorten it. How about this:

America’s revolutionary war leaders: Short biographies of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams and twenty more from battles to statehouses as you have never seen our Founding Fathers

That one is 195 characters, so Amazon is okay with it. *I will guarantee you is that it will draw far more search traffic than the original.*

When you look at the first title you came up with, it makes sense to us because we know what the book is about. But to a search engine does it really say much about your book? Only the words “America”, “Washington” and “Jefferson” are specific, and they only make sense in the context of each other and words like “first...leaders”. So unless someone wanting a book like yours searches on specific search terms in your title, your book will never be found. Or worse, it will come up in unexpected searches such as “Washington State, America,” or for other odd things.

Remember that developing a keyword list for use in your title is done the same way no matter if your book is fiction or non-fiction and no matter the topic. Zombies, bike repair, erotica, science fiction, how-to, children’s books, coloring books, big books, little books, etc. Amazon’s search engine works the same no matter what kind of book you have written.

Also, note that this title is broken into two portions. One is short (America’s revolutionary war leaders) and one is long (Short biographies of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams and twenty more from battles to statehouses as you have never seen our Founding Fathers). You want to use a similar structure so you have an easy to say, short title for people to talk about when they are standing around the water cooler at work telling each other about the amazing book they read over the weekend. “Hey, have you read, America’s revolutionary war leaders? I read it this weekend. It was *good.*”

Let me be blunt: Your book will rarely show up in search results and, therefore, won’t sell much unless your title has highly popular and relevant keywords.

It does not matter how well you wrote your book, it does matter that you graduated first in your class, it does matter that your parents and lover think it the best thing ever written. *If no one can find it, no one will buy it, no one will read it, and no one will review it.*

Without a title that is descriptive, relevant and has some high-traffic keywords you and your book will likely suffer the most embarrassing fate a writer and a book can suffer: obscurity. It does not have to be this way. If you write well and used these techniques your book can become a big seller, possibly a bestseller!

Are there exceptions? Have unknown writers exploded onto bestseller list with obscure or short titles? Yes. It happens. The Martian and Fifty Shades of Grey are two that come to mind. But those books are extreme exceptions, and they were successful because they developed tremendous momentum for other reasons. Those books could have been titled This Book Sucks and they still would have been runaway bestsellers for reasons that have nothing to do with their titles. For 99.9% of the rest of us, we’d be smarter to make sure we have optimized our title to help customers find our books. Of course, there are other things writers should do to help ramp their sales, as I detail on my blog, but for this article, we are going to stay focused on how to optimize our title.

Let's look at your new title again, and I'll put in bold all the phrases that are popular or likely search terms: America's **revolutionary war** leaders: Short **biographies** of **George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams** and twenty more from **battles** to statehouses as you have never seen our **Founding Fathers**

Of the words I highlighted above, not all are equal in how much traffic they will drive. One of them is special. Do you know which one is special? Think back to the words Amazon auto-populated when we typed in just "revolutionary war". There were four words from that list we recorded. Those four are the most used search terms we found. One of the words was "battles". In our new title I found a way to include that word. This is a key point. The auto-populated words are the most powerful. Every word has a different "value", which is something we'll learn how to sort out in my next article. For now, though just remember that the words you most want in your title are the ones that Amazon auto-populates.

Not only are these highlighted phrases popular search terms on their own, but when combined, they are even more powerful. Additionally, "America" and "leaders" could be relevant search terms in conjunction with some of the other keywords.

Here are just a few of the possible search terms for which your book will now show up:

- George Washington Biographies
- Thomas Jefferson Biographies
- Samuel Adams Biographies
- Revolutionary War battles
- Founding Fathers George Washington
- George Washington Battles
- American Revolutionary War
- American Battles
- America's Battles
- American Wars
- America's Wars

I'm sure there are dozens if not hundreds more. One good thing to know is that minor variations of spellings generally are seen as the same word by Amazon's search engine. So "American" and "America's", and "biography" and "biographies" will likely be seen as the same word by Amazon. This means that someone can search on one of the words but get results back for all similar variations. Read more about this from Amazon [here](#).

So your task is to create a fresh, exciting title that is descriptive but is also created from the most powerful keywords in the Amazon search engine. You should prioritize using words that auto-populate first, as I described above. If you do this well, Amazon will deliver a lot of potential buyers to your sales page. If you don't do this...you and your book will languish in obscurity, and you will forever wonder what went wrong.

“Keyword Stuffing” – Don’t do it.

Let’s take a moment to talk about a great way to kill your sales and look really stupid. Some authors are too lazy to actually write a descriptive title for their book. Instead, they just line up all the keywords they come up with in one long list. Doing so will allow them to load more keywords than you can get in a thoughtful, descriptive title that potential readers will find helpful. Such a title may, in fact, bring more traffic to your book, but customers are not idiots. They will see such a title and immediately look elsewhere for something to read. Who wants to read a book by someone who is too lazy to even write a coherent title? Then what happens is that such a book falls in the rankings even for those keywords because no one buys it.

So don’t do it. Don’t do anything to cut corners or try and cheat the system. Don’t stuff keywords into your title, don’t buy reviews, and don’t try any other “black hat SEO” techniques. Even if such tricks might buy you momentary success, in the end, you lose.

Always think about your customers and treat them as you would want to be treated: With integrity and honesty. Deliver to them your best product, and you will win over loyal fans that will follow you forever.

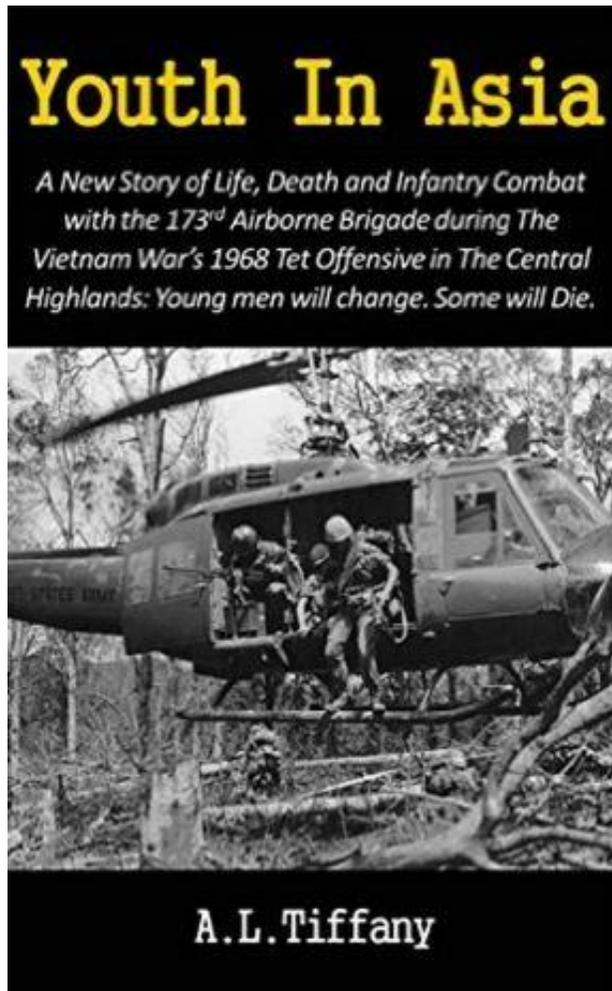
Now...back to the fun stuff...

Your title and subtitle have to be on the cover. *WHAT?*

Before you head off to write a 200-character title, you need to understand that your entire title must be on the cover of your book. Both Amazon and CreateSpace have mechanisms in place to make sure the title on your cover matches what you load in the data fields. It can be an artistic challenge to get a 200-character title on the cover of a book, but it is possible. For example, in the case of the title we created, you could put “America’s Revolution War Leaders” in a big font across the top. Then you could put the rest in a smaller font across the bottom. In between you could place a picture of a battlefield, perhaps, or an early American flag. I don’t know. I’m not much of an artist, but I must highlight that you have to have all the words on the front page. You will need to work with whoever is doing your cover to figure out how to make it attractive.

Now as you look at your list of keywords, you obviously only used a few of them. *Do not throw away your list!* We are going to come back to it in the next article on keywords. There is a lot more gold in your keyword list. We just have to dig it out and figure out how to load it. There are some subtle but extremely powerful methods of doing so that I’ll detail in my next article.

As I have gotten smarter about all this with my own novel, my subtitle has gone through three iterations. Each time it got more descriptive and helpful to potential readers until it now looks like this:



You could argue that it is a bit long, but it is *very* clear and descriptive of the story; everyone who sees my cover is sure about the contents. And search engines seem to like it, too. My daily sales have climbed from about 1 copy a day when I started and had no idea of what I was doing to now averaging more than 7 a day. Let me add that a few months after I started selling my book *I raised the price from \$.99 to \$1.49 and sales kept increasing!*

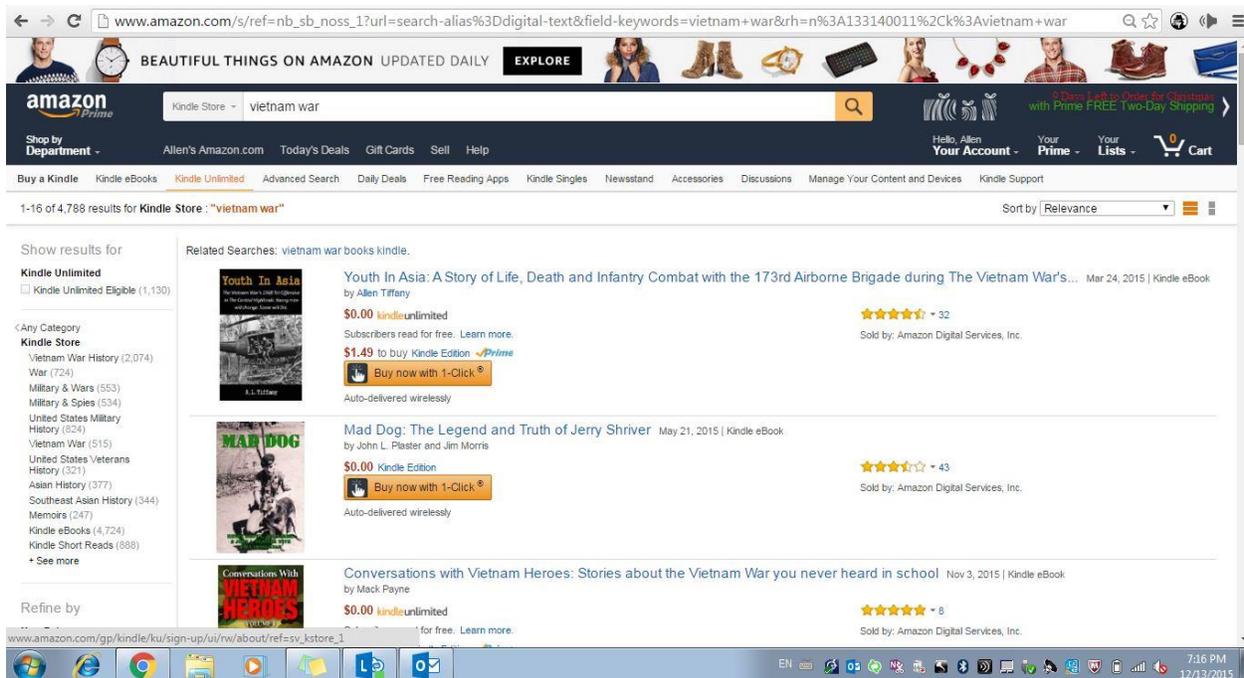
[I really was clueless when I started. You don't have to be.](#)

When I first published my book, I had a simple, obscure title, a short subtitled which I did not even load into Amazon's metadata field, and seven keywords. I did not do any research on the keywords I typed

in...I just wrote down what came to mind as I uploaded my novel. Like many new authors, I was so exciting to be on the verge of publishing my first book that I did not even think about my keywords.

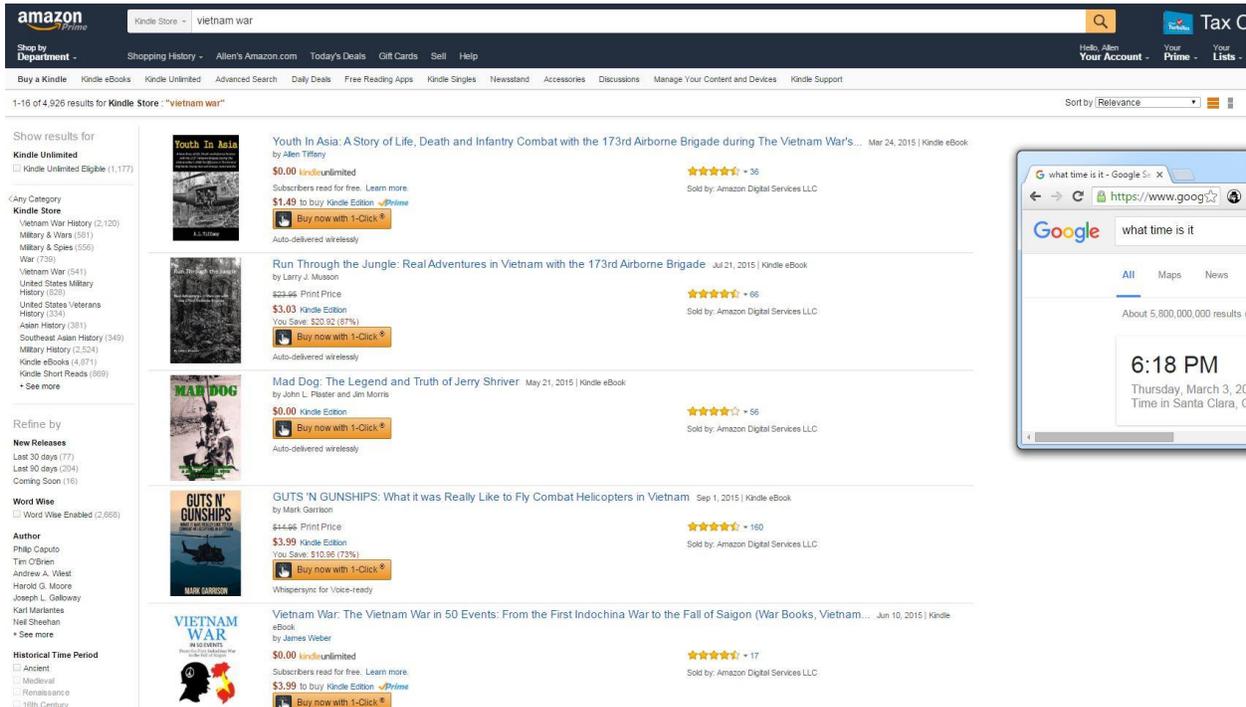
I got smarter over time as I tested and tweaked, and over time, my sales started ramping. This is very unusual. Book sales almost always decline over time, and I'm sure mine will also drop eventually. But right now they are still ramping, and last month was the biggest month ever (by far) for my book sales.

Of course, this increase in daily sales is not exclusively due to changes in the title, but it has certainly helped. The main thing I was doing, though, was tweaking my keywords. And as I did everything I have described in this paper, my novel became #1 for the search "Vietnam War" in the Kindle department of Amazon. See the screen shot below from mid-December.



This is BIG – My book is #1 out of almost 5,000!

Yes, when your book is the first thing buyers see, you sell more books (more on the importance of this below). What do you think being #1 did for my sales? And with more sales came more reviews, and with more reviews more sales. Three months later, after drifting down to #14, it popped up to #1 again recently, and this time the competition is even stiffer: In the upper left corner of the screenshot above, you'll see that my book was #1 out of 4,788. Below, it is #1 out of 4,926.



Understanding the “Fold”

There is a hard reality here that you need to understand: Your book must be “above the fold” for popular searches for a material number of people to see it and to buy it.

The “fold” is a reference to the bottom of your computer screen. “Above the fold” refers to what you can see on your computer screen when a page comes up. What is “below the fold” is what you cannot see and you only get to if you scroll down.

There is overwhelming evidence that shoppers almost always buy what is “above the fold”. If you want to read more about it, here are a couple good articles, one by [Jakob Nielsen](#), and one by [Rebecca Maynes at MOZ](#). Let me summarize what you will read in these detailed and statistically rich articles: Between 80% and 90% of shoppers will buy what is above the fold.

Of course, getting above the fold is cause *and* effect. You stay above the fold due to sales. So you can get above the fold – in part – through optimizing your title, great cover art, interesting blurb, etc. But staying there is a result of great writing, great editing, and eventually, positive reviews from legitimate customers that drive sales over the long-term.

Your book must be above the fold if you want to ramp sales

On Amazon Kindle pages, 16 books are returned for each search (assuming there are at least 16 relevant books, which there almost always are). Oddly, when you search on the “books” page only 12 titles come back.

In short, on Kindle or book pages, for a given search term being #1 is best. In the top four is great. Between five and 16 (or 12 on book pages) is not good. Ranked lower than 16 (or 12) is bad, really bad.

Below is a summary of where my book is showing up from a few of the search terms created from the words in my title and subtitle. We have already seen where by book is for “Vietnam War”, so these words are tacked onto “Vietnam War” for more specific search. All are pulled from my title and subtitle. The first number indicates how far down my book is listed. The second number is how many books came up for that search term. For example, for the first one – “Vietnam War Youth” – my book is 1st out of 15. Not bad, though that is not a very popular search term. Look at “Vietnam War 1968”. That is a popular search term and my book is #3. 😊

- Youth – 1/15
- Life – 6/270
- Death – 4/92
- Die – 3/27
- Infantry – 5/85
- Combat – 12/372
- Infantry Combat – 2/22
- 173rd Airborne – 1/8
- Airborne Brigade – 1/2
- Airborne – 2/45
- 1968 – 3/150 →
- 1968 Tet Offensive – 3/37
- Tet Offensive – 5/101
- Central Highlands – 1/11
- Young men – 1/25

The screenshot shows the Amazon Kindle Store search results for the query "vietnam war 1968". The search results are displayed in a grid format. The first result is "The Vietnam War: The Tet Offensive 1968 (Modern Warfare)" by Anthony Jones, priced at \$10.99. The second result is "Vietnam War Diary February 1968: The TET Offensive (Vietnam War Diaries)" by Don Dennis, priced at \$3.99. The third result is "Youth In Asia: A Story of Life, Death and Infantry Combat with the 173rd Airborne Brigade during The Vietnam War" by Allen Tiffany, priced at \$1.49. The search results are filtered by "Kindle Unlimited" and "Kindle Unlimited Eligible (18)". The search results are also filtered by "Any Category" and "Kindle Store". The search results are also filtered by "New Releases" and "Historical Time Period".

Look at that list and think about how many times my book will be on someone’s computer screen (that is, above the fold) when they search for books about the Vietnam War.

As I mentioned, there are lots of additional combinations of these words and phrases. In my next article, I’ll show how there are thousands – yes, *thousands!* – more combinations when you add *high-value* keywords into the Amazon metadata field for such things and those words combine with the words from

your title. However, we are going to have to get a lot smarter about figuring out how to value keywords for *our book* before we do that. I'll show you how to do it next time. I found these additional high-payoff words and started using these super valuable new keywords along with the words in my title and subtitle, my book showed up in the *top 4 of hundreds of search terms*. And this keeps the sales rolling which in turn keeps my book near the top of several categories.

If you have written a great book, getting your title right can help you ramp sales. This stuff works. Earlier I showed you a screenshot of my book at #6. Here is a screenshot of it at #8 *on an entirely different list*.



So when I publish my next book, I can honestly report that the book buyers have repeatedly pushed my book into the top 10 of several of Amazon's bestseller lists, and into a few top 20 lists worldwide. That is the social proof that will give potential customers the confidence to buy my next novel, further ramping my sales.

Additionally, and also of note, keeping my first book above the fold in so many categories works like “evergreen” blog content that will keep pulling in readers who will find the subsequent books that I write, which in turn will increase traffic and (hopefully) sales of those books.

Good writing matters most!

Last I want to emphasize something else. Go back to the screenshot above that shows the bestsellers in the category “Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > American Revolution” and look at the “star” rating for these books. Look again at the books near mine on the various bestseller lists I’ve shown you. And randomly pick a few other categories and look at the top sellers and the star rating they have. Notice a pattern?

All bestsellers have at least a 4-star rating. Most are 4.5 stars or higher. They all have lots of reviews, some from Amazon’s top reviewers.

You must write well if you hope to sell many copies of your book. I can help you get traffic to your book, but if your book is not well written, and not well edited (two very different things), then the only thing traffic will get you is negative reviews. And in the future, buyers will see the negative reviews so they won’t buy your book. That is the reality of it, and I don’t want to create the impression that insights and techniques can replace good writing. They cannot. Getting positive reviews from influential reviewers is hugely important especially if your book is well written. [I’ve already written an article on how to get great reviews from highly rated reviewers.](#) If you have written well, you do get good reviews, and you optimize your title to get more traffic you will find yourself in a very happy place with ramping sales. Well done!

How to optimize your keywords in Amazon and CreateSpace’s keyword field is another detailed discussion and also very important, but I’ll save that for next time.

I hope this information helps! Please write me and let me know if you have any questions, thoughts or other observations. If you would like to be notified when I publish future such articles, sign up for my newsletter at www.allentiffany.com. I post about once every three weeks. I will not spam you or sell or give away your email address.

And please do return the favor of the free information I have shared here by passing on the link to my website to another writer who can benefit from the things I write about.

Best of luck with your writing!

Allen