

Ad Copy & Taglines Formulas v2

Core Principles: The Six Pillars of Effective Taglines and Copy

Note that some of these can be communicated through the image (e.g., a couple embracing signals that the genre is romance). Remember that the copy / tagline don't operate in isolation.

VERY IMPORTANT: You don't have to include all six elements in *every* ad—and you probably *shouldn't* in 99% of instances. 1 + 1 + 1 does not equal three; it can equal 3,000 or -4. Too many elements competing for attention will dilute the effectiveness of your core message.

When in doubt, simplify.

Genre + speaking to readers in their language + social proof match well with all the other elements.

1. **Genre: Focus the ad on single genre** if the book is a genre mash-up; you can subtly allude to other elements, but focus on one core thread. An ad is a very small space that people are viewing at a 1-second glance. You can test each genre (for example, pitch your book as urban fantasy in one ad and paranormal romance in another) to see which works best.
 - a. Try drilling down to the **sub-genre**, too; not just romance, but sports romance, and even a hockey sports romance. Not just fantasy, but urban fantasy.
2. **Speak to readers in *their* language.** Examine reviews, emails/posts/comments from fans, etc. to identify common words they use and tropes/concepts/hooks they're interested in. Try to use these into your copy.
3. **Character / plot:** You can write copy from a character driven or plot driven angle. Most books are inherently about **characters**. Some are more **plot** driven (thrillers/mysteries often skew this way). Both approaches are worth testing as they will yield different copy angles to test.
4. **Conflict / tension:** these are the foundation of storytelling, which make them extremely effective in ad copy. Focus on a **single strong core conflict** rather than sub-plots; multiple plot threads in an ad creates confusion.
5. **Curiosity:** Perhaps the most powerful question in fiction is **what happens next?** Just as in a book, **curiosity** helps propel the reader to take the next action. In a book, that's flipping the page; with an ad, that's clicking over to Amazon and buying. Intriguing hooks and cliffhangers are powerful in ad copy.
6. **Social proof:** this is massively helpful. **Review content** is much more important than the source. You're looking for reader quotes that are passionate/enthusiastic and also highlight the genre. These work far better than a generic or blasé pullquote from a high quality publication or well-known author.

- **FREE**, if the book is free, should *always* be mentioned—it will be more important than all other elements and drive CPC down the most (Facebook/BookBub only)
- **NEW**, if the book is new, should also usually be mentioned—this is powerful and a hook in and of itself. Humans are drawn to *new* things in general, and books are no different.

Headline & Tagline Formulas

Headlines and taglines are generally 5 – 15 words. They can either be used as the sole text (e.g. on Amazon or BookBub, where space is limited), or as the actual headline (on Facebook) coupled with some longer copy.

These formulas can be combined to create new permutations and longer copy: e.g., Fan of urban fantasy (LIKE)? Don't miss *Lightning Blade*, the debut novel in the *USA Today* Bestselling trilogy (SOCIAL PROOF)—available for free until August 8 (DEAL).

These are just starting points; you can adjust and tweak them. There are an almost infinite number of ways to frame a \$0.99 deal, from simply stating the price to saying *700+ pages of reading for \$0.99!*

Note that if you use Kindle Unlimited based angles for your creative, you will get more page reads and fewer sales. This may be what you want (or not!), so just be aware of that.

1. **DEAL** [Facebook/BookBub only; Amazon doesn't allow prices or dates]
 - a. **PRICE**
 - i. *Demon Rogue* is just \$0.99 until August 8
 - ii. FREE Urban Fantasy book!
 - iii. FREE [emoji] FREE [emoji] FREE
 - b. **PERCENTAGE:** Save 80% on *Demon Rogue* until August 8
 - c. **LESS SPECIFIC:** Grab your discounted copy of *Demon Rogue* for a limited time!
 - d. **KU**
 - i. Free in Kindle Unlimited
 - ii. Complete Urban Fantasy Series Free in Kindle Unlimited
 - iii. Steamy Paranormal Romance Free in Kindle Unlimited (can add emojis)
2. **LIKE/LOVE**
 - a. **IF, THEN:** If you like urban fantasy, then you'll love Kalos Aeon and his snarky companions.
 - b. **QUESTION (genre)**
 - i. Like urban fantasy? Then check out the new magic-filled series from *USA Today* Bestselling author D.N. Erikson.

- ii. Looking for your next psychological thriller? Then try the new Westmont Murder series.
 - c. **QUESTION (author):** Do you love Jim Butcher? Then you'll love Kalos Aeon and his ancient talking dog.
 - d. **YOUR NEXT:** Your next urban fantasy binge read
 - e. **PERFECT:** Perfect for fans of Jim Butcher and Ilona Andrews.
 - f. **MEETS:** *The Hunger Games* meets urban fantasy in this non-stop supernatural thrill-ride.
- 3. SOCIAL PROOF**
- a. **Review Quote**
 - i. Don't miss the series readers are calling "a magical ride with unforgettable characters."
 - ii. "So hot my heart and Kindle melted!!"
 - b. **Accolade (award):** Check out the Nebula-award nominated series that Author McFakington calls "a riveting science fiction romp beyond your wildest imagination."
- 4. HYPE:**
- a. a GRIPPING psychological thriller with a twist you won't see coming
 - b. The most shocking thriller of 2022
- 5. NEW**
- a. Hot New Romance FREE in Kindle Unlimited
 - b. The New Police Procedural Series
 - c. The New Mystery from *New York Times* Bestseller Joe Author
- 6. GENRE SPECIFIC POWER WORDS/ADJECTIVES:** the key here is to speak to readers in *their* language. Look at the reviews for the words they use.
- a. A white-knuckle thrill-ride (thriller)
 - b. An epic magical adventure (epic fantasy)
 - c. A page-turning procedural (mystery)

HOOKS: these sum up the book's key selling point in a few words. You'll have to test a few, as the right angle will trounce the others and make a huge difference in ad performance.

1. **PLOT:** A 7,000 year old half-demon is the world's last hope.
2. **CHARACTER:** Kalos Aeon lives by a simple code. Saving the world might make him break it.
3. **CLIFFHANGER/STAKES:** can Kalos save the world before a Demon King ends it?
4. **CONCEPT:** What if today never ended...and you were the only one who knew?
5. **COMPARISON:** *Groundhog Day* meets urban fantasy
6. **"MOVIE" TAGLINE:** Half-demon, all anarchy.
7. **GENERAL:** There's a storm coming to Texas. The supernatural kind.

Facebook Copy Formulas

Copy only applies Facebook, since it's the only platform that allows you to write more than ~30 – 40 words. Note that you can also use the shorter tagline/headline formulas illustrated above as your main Facebook copy instead.

I'd recommend starting with the blurb, then pulling excerpts, as these tend to convert best and be the easiest to test. The other approaches are good for variety / testing additional approaches.

1. **BLURB:** You can either use the first part of the blurb (the “lead”) or the entire thing. Another alternative is the first sentence + last sentence of the blurb, which usually intros the main character and establishes the stakes.
2. **EXCERPT:** Pull a high-conflict / high-tension excerpt featuring the main character (or two main characters, if this is a romance or book with two leads) and a lot of dialogue (introduces white space and inherently has conflict and shows the characters). End it on a cliffhanger.
 - a. This works because it acts as an unequivocal demonstration for your writing. If people are interested in the excerpt, then they have a good chance of clicking over and picking up a copy.
 - b. This can be short, or it can be an entire chapter. Edit out expletives; these can cause your ad to be rejected.
 - c. You can take the same excerpt and chop off the first 3 – 4 lines so that the words that appear above the fold on Facebook are different. This is an easy way to use the same excerpt to run a bunch of different tests.
 - d. Look at the Most Highlighted on the Kindle App to find excerpts that resonated with readers.
 - e. Ask your social media / newsletter for their favorite scenes
3. **ANTAGONIST-PROTAGANIST:** illustrate the book's core plot/stakes/conflict through the relationship between hero and villain.
 - a. A necromancer is killing public officials. And Ruby Callaway's next on his list.
4. **HERO – HEROINE – CONFLICT/STAKES/QUESTION (romance).** A simple three sentence romance formula. Same general idea as antagonist, protagonist. Can just use hero-heroine part for a two-sentence piece of copy. Often takes a *he's a...she's a...* format.
 - a. He's a real-estate billionaire used to getting his way. She's president of the local preservation society. But when he tries to buy the local forest for his new housing development, he'll finally meet the first thing in his life money can't buy.
 - b. Jax Jones dishes out shots every day on the ice...and takes plenty off them. And team GM Melanie Reynolds is SO done with hard-partying athletes. Or so she thinks...
5. **TEASER: 1 – 2 SENTENCE TEASER – REVIEW QUOTE – CTA**

This is a simple format that's effective across all genres. It's one of my main go-tos. Note that you can use the 1 – 2 sentence teaser all by itself, or end it with a CTA:

1. **TEASER:** establishes the book's core character(s)/stakes in 1 – 2 sentences.
2. **REVIEW:** Next is an enthusiastic review quote (or two) evocative of the genre.
3. **CTA:** End with a call to action (including a link—depending on the retailer, the links can get unwieldy, so you can use a link shortener like bit.ly if the formatting looks hairy).

TEASER EXAMPLE 1

Jax Jones dishes out shots every day on the ice...and takes plenty off them. And team GM Melanie Reynolds is SO done with hard-partying athletes. Or so she thinks...

Don't miss the scorching hot new hockey romance readers are calling "the can't miss sports romance of the year" and said "scored a goal on my heart."

FREE IN KINDLE UNLIMITED > [link]

TEASER EXAMPLE 2

Ruby Callaway has spent two centuries scrapping to survive. But none of that can prepare her for a day that doesn't end.

Check out the magic-packed first novel in the *USA Today Bestselling* urban fantasy series readers are calling "so different that it just works."

TEASER EXAMPLE 3

I'm Kalos Aeon. I've been around for longer than you could know—and most people don't want to know me, being half-demon, and all—but right now I've got a problem. The demon king has returned. And he's more than a little mad about me banishing him hundreds of years ago.

"Page turner which doesn't disappoint"

"I was a bit amazed I would like this as independent authors can be quite hit or miss. This one is a hit!"

READ NOW > [link]

Infinite Creatives

1. The #1 best way to find “new” winning ideas? Look at your old ones. Track your winning images, taglines / headlines, and text, then make sure you’re testing and combining these in various ways across the various ad platforms to get the maximum possible mileage out of them. Often, we have things that worked in the past that aren’t running any more or we haven’t used on another platform. Use them.
2. If something feels like it won’t work or you don’t like it, then run it. The ideas we filter out because they don’t appeal to us are often the very concepts that will resonate with a different part of our target audience.
 - a. **CRITICAL NOTE:** this is about pushing your own preconceived preferences and notions of what will appeal to your audience (e.g., a landscape photo versus a picture of a person), NOT trying to run super-aggressive things that toe the platform’s compliance line or go way over the edge. If you believe something could be a problem with compliance, *don’t* run it.
3. Check out what other authors are running (Facebook Library, BookBub email at bottom) and keep a swipe file of creatives that catch your eye. If someone shares a *confirmed* winner with you (e.g., with the actual stats such as CPC, CTR, ad spend etc.), this is worth its weight in swipe file gold.

Infinite Creatives: Text

1. Ask your mailing list / social media / ARC team what their favorite scene in the book is. Good for engagement + will give you an idea of what your readers like the most in your books, which is helpful from a craft perspective, too.
2. Ask your assistant / spouse / friend etc. to skim the book and see if something stands out.
3. Look at the Most Highlighted passages on the Kindle App or your Kindle. A lot of these will be unusable (e.g., sex scenes), but there’s a lot of gold in here. You generally can’t use this for a new release since the Most Highlighted takes time to populate.
4. When reading your reviews, pull sentences / quotes that stand out to you and put them into a document for later use.
5. 15m copy exercise.
 - a. Set a timer for 15m. Don’t stop writing taglines / teasers / copy / whatever until the timer goes off. Do not optimize for good, optimize for volume + speed. Keep pushing beyond when you feel like you’re scraping the bottom of the barrel.

Infinite Creatives: Images

1. **Hire someone on Fiverr (or get your assistant) to find photos on Deposit Photos** or another stock site and have them send you the links to the stock. You can have Fiverr freelancers do the graphic design, but this is risky in that the price is so low that sometimes they just take unlicensed images. Here, you buy the images you like from what they find, then make the creatives yourself. This eliminates the most time-consuming part of the creative process (sourcing stock) and also ensures that you’re finding images that have a different design aesthetic other than your own.

2. **Hire a graphic designer.** This can get expensive and also can slow down testing, but that can elevate the images a step above the standard stock and give you different options than what the audience might have already seen from 10 other authors. Wouldn't pay more than \$10 - \$25 per creative, otherwise this quickly becomes uneconomical.
3. **Mash up stock photos:** you can cut out the background of a person / couple with Remove BG (www.remove.bg) and then paste it on another stock photo's background using Canva or Photoshop to create something that's immediately unique without the cost of a designer. There are free services that will remove the background (Canva has it built in if you're a paid member), but Remove BG works the best and is the fastest, so if you're testing a lot, it's worth the cost (around ~\$1 per image).