



# 13 Ways to Get Kicked Off Amazon: Are You Guilty?



# Don't Get Kicked Off Amazon!

Trust us — it's not pretty, and it's hard to recover from. Here's how to prevent it.

If you're like most retailers, the thought of being suspended from Amazon is terrifying, especially if a substantial portion of your sales come from the marketplace. If you're unaware of how strict Amazon's requirements are for retailers, then there's a fairly good chance you're breaking one (or more). Not following the rules can result in suspension, or even termination, from the marketplace.

Amazon takes great pride in managing a positive and efficient experience for its shoppers from start to finish. From a customer's initial search query to the final receipt of a product to everything in between, Amazon expects its retailers to operate in the same customer-first manner as the marketplace itself.

Considering Amazon is the fastest-growing marketplace — with 23% growth in Q1 2014 alone<sup>1</sup> — you can't afford to be suspended or terminated because you're neglecting (or actively rejecting) the regularly enforced guidelines. And once you get kicked off, it's extremely difficult to get back to an active status.

As you navigate Amazon, pay close attention to these common missteps that retailers make. Do they sound familiar? They may result in your termination, so knowing what they are and avoiding them will ultimately help you sidestep this costly blow to your e-commerce strategy and revenue.

## #1

### YOU DIRECTED AN AMAZON CUSTOMER OFF AMAZON

Amazon has earned its popularity in part by creating a safe, consumer-friendly environment to purchase products. The Amazon brand that shoppers know, trust and return to time and again has been carefully cultivated over the years. And in exchange for access to this large, lucrative customer base, third-party retailers agree to keep customers within the confines of the marketplace itself.

Amazon strictly prohibits any sales transactions, advertising or other means of communication with Amazon shoppers that would direct them off Amazon. This includes references to your website in your description or product text, as well as watermarks, text or other graphics within your product images. Doing any of the above is grounds for removal from Amazon. Note that Amazon Product Ads are the exception to this policy, as you can drive viewers back to your site from your ads.

## #2

### YOU IGNORED AMAZON'S GUIDELINES FOR EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Amazon only allows email communication between retailers and buyers if it pertains to order fulfillment, such as shipping confirmations and customer service inquiries. For this reason, you shouldn't use transactional emails for marketing purposes. Don't include hyperlinks, URLs or other web addresses in your confirmation emails, specifically because they would direct the buyer away from Amazon.

<sup>1</sup> Amazon quarterly earnings



#3

## YOU OPERATED MULTIPLE SELLER ACCOUNTS FOR THE SAME PRODUCT LINE

Amazon doesn't allow a retailer to have more than one account and will terminate both accounts if this restriction is discovered and violated. In very rare cases, a retailer is able to obtain an exemption by going to the Contact Seller Support section and choosing Other Account Issues from the Account Settings section of the form. The only time Amazon will allow multiple accounts is if your business operates two distinct product lines that don't sell any of the same products.

#4

## YOU USED A MISLEADING BUSINESS NAME OR FORMATTED IT INCORRECTLY

Your Amazon business name is your seller ID — it must accurately reflect your business and must not infringe on another company's trademark or other intellectual property. For example, avoid setting your company name as "toy seller" when you actually sell apparel. Furthermore, your seller name shouldn't contain .com, .net, .biz or other suffixes.

#5

## YOU MISMATCHED OR DUPLICATED PRODUCT DETAIL PAGES

Amazon has strict guidelines about product detail pages, set in place to reduce customer confusion. For example, it doesn't tolerate the creation of duplicate pages. When listing items that already exist on Amazon, you must use the correct product detail page that has the same ISBN, UPC or EAN as your product. That page should accurately describe the product and all its attributes. Mismatched or duplicated product detail pages are a common Amazon error. Trust us: The short-term gain that might come from creating a separate page to showcase your product doesn't outweigh the long-term benefit of sharing a page and staying in good standing.

#6

## YOU CHANGED YOUR PRICES POST-CHECKOUT AND USED EXCESSIVE SHIPPING FEES

A quick way to get kicked off Amazon is by misleading the shopper into purchasing an item and then tacking on extra fees, including excessive shipping rates after the checkout process has been completed. Listing clear shipping prices is a best practice we suggest regardless of channel — but it's especially important on Amazon.



## #7

## YOU ABUSED THE RATINGS AND REVIEWS FEATURES

Manipulating or soliciting false information about your products or business is strictly off-limits on Amazon. Whether you're falsifying product reviews or forcing buyers to submit positive feedback and ratings, this fraudulent behavior is another way to lose your selling privileges. You're welcome to solicit feedback and ratings from buyers to help your seller history, but you must allow the buyers to freely express their opinions. Another caveat: Don't include any personal information about a transaction partner within a review or use abusive or inappropriate language.

## #8

## YOU OVERUSED THE AMAZON A-TO-Z GUARANTEE

Because Amazon wants its shoppers to feel confident about their purchases, it will drop any retailer that has an excessive number of A-to-z Guarantee claims. (These claims are factored into the Order Defect Rate, which sellers should aim to keep below 1%.) Customers file A-to-z Guarantee claims when:

- Their order never arrived.
- The product they received was materially different than what they were led to expect. This includes damaged, defective, inaccurately described or misrepresented products, as well as missing parts.
- The retailer agreed to refund the customer and either hasn't done so or refunded the wrong amount.

An A-to-z Guarantee claim is typically the buyer's last resort. Initially, Amazon will direct a buyer to approach the retailer directly. Amazon will likely seek reimbursement from you, the retailer, if it had to reimburse one of your buyers based on the A-to-z Guarantee. Therefore, this infringement could be quite costly. We suggest avoiding this misstep by proactively working with unsatisfied buyers to supply a refund, return or exchange and not relying on the A-to-z Guarantee.

## #9

## YOU SENT STICKERLESS INVENTORY TO FULFILLMENT BY AMAZON

When using Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA), Amazon gives sellers the option of labeling their products with stickers that identify an item as belonging to a seller. A seller can also forgo labels and use stickerless, "commingled" inventory, where all the sellers of the same item have their inventory pooled together. Commingled inventory allows Amazon to ship an item to the buyer from the pooled inventory set that's closest to the buyer geographically.

Even though the process of adding items to FBA is quicker when using stickerless inventory, it puts sellers at risk because pooled inventory can sometimes include counterfeit or subpar-quality items. If your customers are shipped one of these counterfeit items, the complaints, claims and poor feedback you could get as a result put you at risk of an account suspension or total shutdown. Avoid the risk by always using stickered inventory. If you don't have the time, a viable process or the ability to sticker your own inventory, then Amazon offers an FBA Label Service to sticker products for you at a small fee, which is well worth the assurance of avoiding this risky scenario.



**#10****YOU SOLD PRODUCTS AT A LOWER PRICE ON OTHER CHANNELS**

Many sellers are selected to participate in the Professional selling plan on Amazon. Some sellers can receive special consideration, such as more frequent deposits of sales proceeds and lessened or negotiated referral fees. In addition to these benefits, Amazon also may include more stringent policies in some sellers' agreements, including a common clause requiring price parity. Price parity simply requires that sellers' prices on Amazon must be better than or equal to their prices on other channels. Amazon actively enforces this policy, so these retailers should have a plan or e-commerce solution in place for monitoring their prices for compliance. If you want to offer a compelling reason for a customer to shop on another channel and still remain within the Amazon guidelines, consider promotions or discounts that aren't tied to individual products, but are instead based on order value or frequent shopping, like a loyalty program.

**#11****YOU DIDN'T MANAGE RETURNS PROMPTLY**

Delayed returns processing will turn unsatisfied buyers into unhappy buyers. Avoid excessive email inquiries, poor feedback and A-to-z Guarantee claims by keeping your returns department caught up and your buyers informed about the status of their returns. To expedite and simplify returns, add messaging on your invoice with directions for how returns can be made. Then make it an internal priority to resolve returns quickly.

**#12****YOU DRAGGED YOUR FEET WITH CUSTOMER EMAIL COMMUNICATION**

For Amazon, a "perfect" transaction is one that doesn't require email communication at all. However, sometimes questions or correspondence are necessary. In these cases, Amazon wants to see that the interaction was conducted in a timely manner. Compartmentalizing email for certain times of the day may be a helpful strategy for other areas of your life, but it's not good for your seller status on Amazon. Establish a consistent pattern of timely customer responses so you don't hurt your seller standing. Amazon also includes Saturday in its response calculation, so be sure to staff and check email on the weekend to avoid a dip in contact response time (CTR) metrics, which can lead to suspension.

**#13****YOU LISTED FAKE OR WRONG UPCs WITH YOUR PRODUCTS**

To list a product, Amazon requires product identifiers, such as UPCs, in many categories. When your items lack an identifier, it might be tempting to use an invalid or fake UPC to get your product listed, but doing so can be grounds for account suspension, especially if Amazon finds you to be a serial offender. Avoid using any product identifier (e.g., UPC, EAN, ISBN) unless it's absolutely valid. If you lack one of these essential barcodes, look into purchasing them for your items or seek to obtain a UPC Exemption from Amazon to get a pass on this required value.



We hope this guide has illuminated some potential pitfalls and will help you stay aligned with Amazon's listing requirements. It can seem daunting, but maintaining good business practices, staying alert to regular Amazon updates and using an e-commerce platform like ChannelAdvisor Marketplaces will keep your product listings accurate and optimized on Amazon and, most important, in front of millions of potential customers.

For more information about ChannelAdvisor and how we can help you navigate the world of marketplaces, visit us at [www.channeladvisor.com](http://www.channeladvisor.com) or email [info@channeladvisor.com](mailto:info@channeladvisor.com).

## ABOUT CHANNELADVISOR

ChannelAdvisor is a leading provider of cloud-based e-commerce solutions that enable retailers and manufacturers to integrate, manage and optimize their merchandise sales across hundreds of online channels including Amazon, Google, eBay, Facebook and more. Through automation, analytics and optimization, ChannelAdvisor customers can leverage a single inventory feed to more efficiently list and advertise products online, and connect with shoppers to increase sales. Billions of dollars in merchandise value are driven through ChannelAdvisor's platform every year, and thousands of customers use ChannelAdvisor's solutions to help grow their businesses.

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