

KDP Royalty Calculator: Estimate Your Amazon KDP Earnings

1. Introduction

If you are self-publishing on Amazon, there is one question that matters more than almost any other: *how much money will I actually keep from each sale?*

It sounds like it should have a simple answer. You set a price, Amazon sells the book, you get paid. But Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) royalties are layered. The amount you earn depends on your format, your list price, your royalty option, your printing cost, your file size, and even which Amazon marketplace your reader buys from. Two books priced identically can earn wildly different amounts — and a single cent difference in price can cut your royalty nearly in half.

That is exactly why a **KDP royalty calculator** is one of the most valuable tools in a self-publisher's kit. It lets you model your earnings *before* you publish, so you set the right price the first time instead of discovering months later that you have been earning sixty cents a copy.

This guide is written for the people who most often get blindsided by KDP's math:

- **Self-publishers** launching their first novel or memoir
- **Coloring book creators** who deal with large trim sizes and color costs
- **Low-content publishers** producing journals, planners, notebooks, and logbooks
- **Nonfiction authors** balancing ebook and paperback pricing

By the end, you will understand exactly how Amazon calculates what you earn, the difference between the 35% and 70% royalty options, how printing costs eat into print royalties, what expanded distribution does to your margin, and the formula that ties it all together — with worked examples at every step. All figures here reflect KDP's published US-marketplace rates as of mid-2026. Rates change and vary by marketplace, so always confirm with a live calculator before you hit publish.

2. How Amazon KDP Royalties Work

KDP pays you a **royalty** — a share of your book's list price — every time a copy sells. It does not charge you anything upfront. There are no setup fees, no monthly costs, and no inventory to buy. Instead, Amazon takes its cut (and, for print books, its printing cost) out of each sale and pays you the remainder.

The size of your royalty depends first on your **format**, because each format works differently:

- **Ebooks (Kindle):** You earn either **35% or 70%** of the list price. There is no printing cost (it is a digital file), but the 70% option deducts a small **delivery fee** based on file size.
- **Paperbacks:** You earn a **tiered rate of 50% or 60%** of the list price, **minus a printing cost** that depends on page count, ink, and trim size.
- **Hardcovers:** Same tiered **50%/60%** structure as paperbacks, minus a higher printing cost.

A few universal truths apply across all formats:

- **You never pay printing costs out of pocket for retail sales.** They are deducted from your royalty per sale. You only pay print cost directly when ordering author copies for yourself, and those are sold at cost.
- **List price is the single biggest lever on your earnings.** Everything is a percentage of it.
- **Marketplace matters.** A US sale uses USD rates; a UK sale uses GBP rates with different thresholds. They are not simple currency conversions.
- **Amazon pays roughly 60 days after the end of the month** in which a sale occurs. January royalties arrive near the end of March.

The mental model to hold onto: **ebooks are about choosing the right royalty option and price; print books are about beating the printing cost with a high enough price to clear the better royalty tier.**

3. Understanding 35% vs 70% Royalties

This choice applies only to **ebooks**, and it is the most important pricing decision most Kindle authors make. On the surface, 70% obviously beats 35%. In reality, the 70% option comes with strings attached, and sometimes 35% is the only option available to you.

The 70% royalty option

To earn 70% on a Kindle ebook, your book must meet **all** of these conditions:

- **List price between \$2.99 and \$9.99** (inclusive) in the US, or the equivalent range in other currencies.
- **Sold in an eligible territory.** This includes the US, UK, Canada, Australia, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Japan, Brazil, Mexico, India, and others. Sales outside eligible territories drop to 35%.
- **The ebook is priced at or below your print edition** (Amazon generally requires the ebook to be at least 20% cheaper than the lowest list price of any physical version).

- A **delivery fee** is deducted, calculated at roughly **\$0.15 per megabyte (MB)** in the US.

That delivery fee is the catch that surprises illustrated-book creators. A text-only novel might be under 1 MB, costing you about 15 cents per sale. A children's picture book or image-heavy nonfiction title can be 10-15 MB, eating \$1.50-\$2.25 out of every single sale.

70% formula: $(0.70 \times \text{List Price}) - (\$0.15 \times \text{File Size in MB}) = \text{Royalty}$

The 35% royalty option

The 35% option is the fallback, and it is also a legitimate strategy in specific cases. It applies to:

- Ebooks priced **below \$2.99 or above \$9.99**
- Books sold **outside the 70% eligible territories**
- Authors who want pricing flexibility without exclusivity

The upside: **no delivery fee, and no price restrictions** (you can price anywhere from \$0.99 to \$200).

35% formula: $0.35 \times \text{List Price} = \text{Royalty}$ (no deductions)

Which one actually earns more?

Almost always, 70% wins inside its allowed price band. But the territory and price restrictions create real trade-offs. Consider:

Scenario	Price	Option	Calculation	Royalty
Novel, 1 MB	\$4.99	70%	$(0.70 \times 4.99) - 0.15$	\$3.34
Novel, 1 MB	\$4.99	35%	0.35×4.99	\$1.75
Max in 70% band, 2 MB	\$9.99	70%	$(0.70 \times 9.99) - 0.30$	\$6.69
Just above band	\$12.99	35%	0.35×12.99	\$4.55

Notice the third and fourth rows. A \$9.99 ebook at 70% earns **more** (\$6.69) than a \$12.99 ebook at 35% (\$4.55), even though the second is priced two dollars higher. This is why most authors keep ebooks at or just under \$9.99.

The one-cent trap

Because the 70% band ends exactly at \$9.99 and starts exactly at \$2.99, pricing one cent outside it is brutally expensive:

- **\$2.99 ebook (70%, 1 MB):** $(0.70 \times 2.99) - 0.15 = \mathbf{\$1.94}$
- **\$2.98 ebook (35%):** $0.35 \times 2.98 = \mathbf{\$1.04}$

One cent lower costs you about 90 cents per sale — nearly half your royalty. Always make sure you are landing *inside* the band, not a penny outside it.

4. Printing Costs Explained

Printing cost only applies to **print books** (paperback and hardcover). Ebooks have none. For print, the cost is subtracted from your royalty on every sale, so understanding it is essential for setting a profitable price.

The formula KDP uses is:

$$\mathbf{\text{Fixed Cost} + (\text{Page Count} \times \text{Per-Page Cost}) = \text{Printing Cost}}$$

Both the fixed cost and the per-page cost depend on three things: **ink type, trim size, and page count**. Here are the current US (Amazon.com) figures:

Format & interior	Fixed cost	Per-page cost (regular trim)
Paperback, black ink, 24-110 pages	\$2.30 (flat, no per-page)	—
Paperback, black ink, 110+ pages	\$1.00	\$0.012
Paperback, standard color, 72-600 pages	\$1.00	\$0.0255
Paperback, premium color, 42+ pages	\$1.00	\$0.065
Hardcover, black ink, 110-550 pages	\$5.65	\$0.012
Hardcover, premium color	\$5.65	\$0.065

A few rules that trip people up:

- **"Trim size" works in two tiers.** KDP classifies your book as *regular* trim or *large* trim. Large means wider than 6.12" or taller than 9". Large-trim books pay a higher per-page cost (around \$0.017 for black ink instead of \$0.012). Within a tier, exact dimensions do not matter — a 5"×8" and a 6"×9" cost the same. **This matters enormously for coloring books and workbooks**, which are usually 8.5"×11" (large trim).
- **Cover finish, bleed, and design are free.** Matte vs. glossy makes no difference to cost, and the cover always prints in color even on a black-ink interior.

- **Short black-ink books pay a flat fee.** Under 110 pages, you pay \$2.30 (regular) or \$2.84 (large) regardless of length. A 40-page journal and a 100-page journal cost the same to print. **This is the key number for low-content publishers.**

Quick printing-cost examples

- **200-page black-ink novel (regular trim):** $\$1.00 + (200 \times \$0.012) = \$3.40$
- **300-page black-ink nonfiction (regular trim):** $\$1.00 + (300 \times \$0.012) = \$4.60$
- **60-page coloring book (8.5"×11", black ink, large trim, under 110 pages):** flat **\$2.84**
- **100-page premium-color kids' book (large trim):** $\$1.00 + (100 \times \$0.08) = \$9.00$
- **300-page black-ink hardcover:** $\$5.65 + (300 \times \$0.012) = \$9.25$

That premium-color example is a warning: at \$9.00 printing cost, the book *must* be priced above \$15 just to break even.

5. Royalty Calculation Formula

Here is where everything comes together. The formula differs by format, and as of a **June 2025 change**, print royalties in the US are now **tiered by list price** — a detail many older guides still get wrong.

Ebook royalty

70% option: $(0.70 \times \text{List Price}) - \text{Delivery Fee} = \text{Royalty}$
 35% option: $0.35 \times \text{List Price} = \text{Royalty}$
 Delivery Fee (US) = $\$0.15 \times \text{File Size in MB}$

Print royalty (paperback & hardcover)

$\text{Royalty} = (\text{Royalty Rate} \times \text{List Price}) - \text{Printing Cost}$

Where the **royalty rate is tiered** (US, Amazon.com):

- **60%** if your list price is **\$9.99 or higher**
- **50%** if your list price is **below \$9.99**

Other marketplaces have their own thresholds — for example, Amazon.co.uk uses £7.99 as the cutoff, and Amazon.ca uses CAD \$13.99.

This tiered structure creates the print equivalent of the one-cent ebook trap:

- **220-page paperback at \$9.99 (60%):** $(0.60 \times \$9.99) - \$3.64 = \$2.35$

- **220-page paperback at \$9.98 (50%):** $(0.50 \times \$9.98) - \$3.64 = \$1.35$

One cent of list price is worth a full dollar of royalty here. If you are pricing a paperback anywhere near \$9.99, get to \$9.99 or above.

Minimum list price

KDP will not let you price a print book so low that your royalty would be negative. The floor is:

$$\text{Minimum List Price} = \text{Printing Cost} \div \text{Royalty Rate}$$

For a 300-page paperback (\$4.60 printing cost) at the 60% rate: $\$4.60 \div 0.60 = \7.67 . But notice — at \$7.67 you are below \$9.99, so you would actually be in the 50% tier, which raises the true minimum. This is exactly the kind of interaction a royalty calculator handles for you automatically.

6. Real Examples

Let us walk through realistic scenarios for each type of publisher. All figures are US-marketplace.

Example A — Nonfiction author (ebook + paperback)

A 300-page business book, black-ink paperback, plus a Kindle ebook at 3 MB file size.

Ebook at \$9.99 (70%, 3 MB): $(0.70 \times \$9.99) - (0.15 \times 3) = \$6.99 - \$0.45 = \6.54 per sale

Paperback at \$14.99 (60%, print cost \$4.60): $(0.60 \times \$14.99) - \$4.60 = \$8.99 - \$4.60 = \$4.39$ per sale

Paperback at \$19.99 (60%, print cost \$4.60): $(0.60 \times \$19.99) - \$4.60 = \$11.99 - \$4.60 = \$7.39$ per sale

Takeaway: the ebook is the highest-margin format here, and raising the paperback from \$14.99 to \$19.99 adds \$3.00 per copy. Nonfiction buyers often accept higher prices because they treat the book as reference material.

Example B — Fiction self-publisher

A 250-page novel.

Format	Price	Rate	Calculation	Royalty
Ebook (1 MB)	\$4.99	70%	$(0.70 \times 4.99) - 0.15$	\$3.34
Paperback	\$9.99	60%	$(0.60 \times 9.99) - 4.00$	\$2.00
Paperback	\$8.99	50%	$(0.50 \times 8.99) - 4.00$	\$0.50

The paperback printing cost is $\$1.00 + (250 \times \$0.012) = \$4.00$. Look at the bottom two rows: dropping the paperback from \$9.99 to \$8.99 doesn't just lose a dollar of price — it drops you into the 50% tier and **slashes royalty from \$2.00 to \$0.50**. Pricing paperbacks at \$9.99 or above is almost always correct.

Example C — Coloring book creator

A 60-page adult coloring book, 8.5"×11" (large trim), black-ink line art (under 110 pages = flat printing cost of \$2.84).

Price	Rate	Calculation	Royalty
\$6.99	50%	$(0.50 \times 6.99) - 2.84$	\$0.66
\$9.99	60%	$(0.60 \times 9.99) - 2.84$	\$3.15
\$12.99	60%	$(0.60 \times 12.99) - 2.84$	\$4.95

Coloring books are frequently underpriced at \$5.99–\$7.99, which traps creators in the 50% tier and a sub-dollar royalty. Pushing to \$9.99 nearly **quintuples** earnings per copy here.

Color coloring book warning: if those 60 pages were premium color (large trim, \$0.08/page), printing cost becomes $\$1.00 + (60 \times \$0.08) = \$5.80$, and the minimum viable price climbs well past \$12. Always model color separately.

Example D — Low-content publisher

A 120-page lined journal, 6"×9" (regular trim), black ink. Over 110 pages, so printing cost = $\$1.00 + (120 \times \$0.012) = \$2.44$.

Price	Rate	Calculation	Royalty
\$5.99	50%	$(0.50 \times 5.99) - 2.44$	\$0.56
\$7.99	50%	$(0.50 \times 7.99) - 2.44$	\$1.56
\$9.99	60%	$(0.60 \times 9.99) - 2.44$	\$3.55

Low-content books live and die by volume, but pricing still matters: at \$5.99 you keep 56 cents; at \$9.99 you keep \$3.55. Also note that a **100-page** version of this journal would drop under the 110-page threshold and cost only \$2.30 flat to print — slightly cheaper — so trimming a few pages can help margin.

Example E — Hardcover upsell

A 300-page nonfiction hardcover, black ink (printing cost \$9.25).

At \$24.99 (60%): $(0.60 \times \$24.99) - \$9.25 = \$14.99 - \$9.25 = \mathbf{\$5.74 \text{ per sale}}$

Hardcovers carry a high fixed cost but support premium pricing, making them a strong companion edition alongside a paperback.

Example F — The cost of expanded distribution

Same 200-page paperback at \$14.99 (printing cost \$3.40):

- **Direct Amazon sale (60%):** $(0.60 \times \$14.99) - \$3.40 = \mathbf{\$5.59}$
- **Expanded distribution sale (40%):** $(0.40 \times \$14.99) - \$3.40 = \mathbf{\$2.60}$

The same book earns less than half as much per copy through expanded distribution — which leads to the next section.

7. Expanded Distribution Explained

Expanded Distribution (ED) pushes your paperback beyond Amazon's own store into a wider network: brick-and-mortar bookstores, online retailers, libraries, and academic institutions that order through wholesalers.

The trade-off is your royalty rate. Instead of the standard **60%**, expanded distribution pays **40% of list price minus printing cost**. That lower rate exists because wholesalers and third-party retailers take their own margin.

Using the formula:

$$\text{Expanded Distribution Royalty} = (0.40 \times \text{List Price}) - \text{Printing Cost}$$

Because the rate is lower, ED also requires a **higher minimum list price** (printing cost ÷ 0.40 instead of ÷ 0.60).

Should you enroll? It depends on your goals:

- **Worth it if:** you want availability to libraries and bookstores, you are running a nonfiction or reference title that institutions may order, or you simply want maximum reach and treat ED sales as incremental.
- **Less compelling if:** nearly all your sales come through Amazon anyway (true for most indie authors), in which case ED mostly affects the occasional outside order.

Most self-publishers enable ED for the extra reach while understanding that the bulk of their income still comes from direct Amazon sales at the better 60% rate.

8. Common Royalty Mistakes

Even experienced publishers lose money to these avoidable errors. Watch for all of them.

- **Pricing one cent outside a royalty band.** \$2.98 instead of \$2.99 (ebook) or \$9.98 instead of \$9.99 (paperback) can cut your royalty nearly in half. Always land *inside* the favorable tier.
- **Assuming print royalty is a flat 60%.** Since June 2025, US print books under \$9.99 earn only 50%. Older guides and calculators that still say "flat 60%" will overstate your earnings.
- **Ignoring the ebook delivery fee.** Illustrated ebooks with large files can lose \$1.50+ per sale to the \$0.15/MB delivery fee under the 70% option. Compress images and optimize file size.
- **Underpricing coloring books and journals.** These creators routinely price at \$5.99–\$7.99, trapping themselves in the 50% tier with sub-dollar royalties. Test \$9.99+.
- **Choosing premium color when standard or black ink would do.** Premium color can cost 5× more per page than black ink, forcing high prices just to break even.
- **Forgetting trim size affects cost.** Picking an 8.5"×11" "large" trim when a regular trim would work raises the per-page cost for no benefit.
- **Pricing at the minimum list price.** The minimum only guarantees you don't lose money — it leaves you earning almost nothing. It is a floor to avoid, not a target.
- **Not filing tax forms.** Without a W-9 (US) or W-8BEN (non-US) on file, Amazon withholds 30% of your royalties. Many new authors leave real money on the table here.

- **Comparing formats by price instead of by royalty.** A higher list price does not always mean more profit — a \$12.99 ebook at 35% earns less than a \$9.99 ebook at 70%.
 - **Modeling only one marketplace.** A book profitable on Amazon.com may earn far less on Amazon.co.uk or .ca because both rates and thresholds differ. Check each market you sell in.
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9. FAQ

1. How much does Amazon take from book sales? For ebooks, Amazon keeps 30% (under the 70% option) or 65% (under 35%). For paperbacks and hardcovers, it keeps 40% or 50% of the list price plus the printing cost, depending on your price tier.

2. What is the difference between the 35% and 70% royalty options? The 70% option pays more but requires an ebook priced \$2.99–\$9.99 in eligible territories and deducts a delivery fee based on file size. The 35% option works at any price (\$0.99–\$200), has no delivery fee, and has no territory restriction.

3. What is the KDP delivery fee? Under the 70% ebook option, Amazon deducts roughly **\$0.15 per megabyte (US)** of your file size from each sale. A 5 MB book loses about \$0.75 per sale. The 35% option has no delivery fee.

4. How are paperback royalties calculated?
$$\frac{(\text{Royalty Rate} \times \text{List Price}) - \text{Printing Cost}}{\text{List Price}}$$
 The royalty rate is 60% if your price is \$9.99 or higher, and 50% if it's below — a tiered structure introduced in June 2025 for the US marketplace.

5. Do I pay printing costs upfront? No. KDP prints on demand and deducts printing cost from your royalty per sale. You only pay directly when ordering author copies for yourself, and those are at cost.

6. Why did my paperback royalty drop to 50%? Because your list price is below \$9.99 (US). Amazon's June 2025 change pays only 50% under that threshold. Raise your price to \$9.99 or above to restore the 60% rate.

7. What is the best price for a Kindle ebook? Most authors maximize earnings somewhere in the \$2.99–\$9.99 band to capture the 70% rate. Fiction often sits at \$2.99–\$5.99; nonfiction frequently lands at \$4.99–\$9.99. Test within the band rather than going above \$9.99.

8. How do coloring book royalties work? Coloring books are usually large-trim (8.5"×11") paperbacks. Black-ink line art under 110 pages costs a flat \$2.84 to print. Price at \$9.99+ to reach the 60% tier; sub-\$9.99 prices leave you with very thin margins, and premium color raises costs dramatically.

9. How do low-content books (journals, planners) earn royalties? Exactly like other paperbacks. Black-ink books under 110 pages pay a flat \$2.30 (regular) or \$2.84 (large)

printing cost. Because these books are inexpensive to produce but often underpriced, the 50%/60% tier and list price are the main profit levers.

10. What is expanded distribution and how does it change my royalty? ED makes your paperback available to bookstores, libraries, and other retailers beyond Amazon. The royalty drops from 60% to **40%** of list price minus printing cost, because wholesalers take a share.

11. Does KDP charge me to publish? No. Publishing ebooks, paperbacks, and hardcovers on KDP is free. You only pay if you order author copies or run optional advertising.

12. How does Kindle Unlimited (KDP Select) pay? Instead of a per-sale royalty, KU pays from a monthly Global Fund based on **pages read**, currently around **\$0.004–\$0.005 per KENP page**. It requires 90-day Amazon exclusivity for the ebook and tends to favor longer books and series.

13. When does Amazon pay royalties? Approximately **60 days after the end of the month** in which the sale occurred, via direct deposit or other supported methods. January earnings arrive near the end of March.

14. Why is Amazon withholding 30% of my royalties? You likely haven't completed your tax interview. US authors file a W-9; non-US authors file a W-8BEN and may claim a treaty rate. Without it, Amazon withholds 30% by default.

15. Are royalty rates the same in every country/marketplace? No. Each marketplace has its own currency, printing costs, and tier thresholds. For example, the print 60% threshold is \$9.99 on Amazon.com, £7.99 on Amazon.co.uk, and CAD \$13.99 on Amazon.ca. Model each market separately.

16. Does trim size or cover finish affect my royalty? Trim size affects printing cost through the regular-vs-large classification (large costs more per page). Cover finish (matte/glossy), bleed, and cover design do **not** affect cost at all.

17. Is the ebook or the paperback more profitable? Per copy, ebooks usually win because they have no printing cost — a \$9.99 ebook at 70% can net ~\$6.69, while a \$9.99 paperback nets far less after print costs. But paperbacks reach readers who prefer physical books, so most authors publish both.

10. Conclusion

KDP royalties reward authors who do the math before they publish. As you have seen, the difference between a thriving title and a barely-profitable one often comes down to small decisions: landing inside the 70% ebook band instead of a penny outside it, clearing the \$9.99 paperback threshold for the 60% rate, choosing black ink over premium color,

trimming a few pages, or pricing a coloring book at \$9.99 instead of \$6.99. Each choice moves real money — and they compound across hundreds or thousands of sales.

The challenge is that all these variables interact. Printing cost depends on page count, trim, and ink. Royalty rate depends on price tier. Ebook earnings depend on file size and territory. Trying to juggle them in your head is how authors end up earning sixty cents a copy by accident.

That is precisely what a **KDP royalty calculator** solves. Before you publish, plug in your page count, ink type, trim size, file size, and a few candidate list prices. Let the calculator show you the net royalty for each scenario — ebook at 70% vs. 35%, paperback at \$9.99 vs. \$14.99, with and without expanded distribution. In a couple of minutes you will see exactly where your profit lives, and you can set your price with confidence instead of guesswork.

Run your numbers through a KDP royalty calculator today, compare a few price points side by side, and publish knowing you have priced your book to actually earn. Your future royalty statements will thank you.

All figures reflect KDP's published Amazon.com (US) rates as of mid-2026, including the June 2025 tiered print royalty change. Rates, delivery fees, and thresholds vary by marketplace and change over time. Always verify your specific numbers with KDP's official Printing Cost & Royalty Calculator before setting your price.