

# How to Spot a Fake Review on Amazon

Two Methods: [Spotting a Fake Review](#) [Considering and Reacting to the Reviews](#)

If you use reviews on Amazon.com to make purchasing decisions, be aware that not all reviews are impartial. Friends, relatives, and paid reviewers may leave glowing 5-star reviews, while enemies and rivals may hope to damage the item's reputation with 1-star "put-down" reviews -- all without revealing their personal association, bias, or financial incentive. How can you tell if a review has a hidden agenda?

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## Method 1 of 2: Spotting a Fake Review

### 1 Consider the length and tone of the review:

- If the review is very short, it may be a fake. If the writer just wants to affect the overall score, their main intent may be to vote via the "star" rating, and to boost or lower it. But because one must write a review as well, the review itself may be very short -- 4 or 5 lines at most.
- If the review is vague and doesn't have details about the product itself, it may not be genuine. It uses generalities that could apply to many different books or products.

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**2 Check if the review uses emotional language.** An objective review will usually summarize and critique the content or features of the product. A review with an agenda sidesteps this process.

- If the review was written for a friend, the book or item may be merely described as wonderful, great for everybody, amazing, etc., and the reviewer may say that they're planning to purchase one for everyone they know for the holidays.

- If the review is by an enemy or rival, on the other hand, the item may be called pathetic, ridiculous, or a waste of time. The reviewer may recommend an alternate product or author that "has more credibility" or that you will like better.

**3 See whether the reviewer has written other reviews.** If the person doesn't regularly write reviews, it may not be genuine. Under "see all my reviews" next to the reviewer's name, you discover that this reviewer hasn't written any other reviews -- or they've written only a few other short, gushing, vague reviews (for friends), or hit piece reviews (against rivals).

**4 Beware if the person has submitted a lot of reviews in a short period.** If a book reviewer is being paid to write reviews, they may have written a great number of short, 5-star reviews for self-published or print on demand titles. Check "See all my reviews" next to that person's name to see what else they're reviewing, and to look for a sameness to the reviews.

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**1 Beware if the person has only one review.** It does not necessarily make it fake if the person has only one review. That happens. But if most of the reviewers have only one review, and the their writing style, content and length of the reviews are similar, and the reviews are without any specifics, the reviews are mostly fake.

**2 Be skeptical if the review admits bias.** The reviewer notes that they haven't read the book or tried the product -- so why are reviewing it? The reviewer means to either raise or lower the star-ratings without submitting a substantive review. Sometimes a low-star review will talk about a list of ingredients, or a book theme they find distasteful, without any indication that they have ever tried that specific product or read that book.

**3 You also may want to check if the person has purchased the item.** You can find out if they have purchased the item by looking for the orange verified purchase text in the top right-hand corner of the review under their star rating and name . Just be advised that nowadays sellers have figured out how to make fake reviews "purchase verified". So a "Purchase Verified" review does not necessarily mean the review is real. But if a review is not purchase verified, it is most likely to be fake. The seller can issue a

voucher code that ensures the review is "verified" yet also a free purchase. Pay for review services encourage this but it is actually against amazon policy, so when you see a "verified" review which also states it was free, this is very suspect and not a review that can be trusted.

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## Method 2 of 2: Considering and Reacting to the Reviews

**1 Disregard the highest and lowest ratings.** See what people in the middle say for a more accurate assessment of the book or product.

- One-star reviews should always be suspect, especially in a review of a book by a reputable author and publisher. In today's tight market, very few of these books are bad enough to deserve only one star.

**2 Read many reviews and apply critical thinking.** Does the review sound like something a doting mother would say? Does it sound like something one's high-school enemy would say?

- When reading a review, don't judge it based on whether you share the writer's opinions of the product or book; consider instead if the review is thoughtful, fair, and well-written. Even people who disagree with you may have valid points that warrant a "helpful" click.

**3 Leave feedback to help others who are reading reviews.** If you decide that a review is helpful and objective, on the line at the end that reads "Was this review helpful to you?" click "Yes." This will help raise the review's credibility. If you decide that the review isn't objective or may have a hidden agenda, click "No" to lower that review's status.

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**Give us 3 minutes of knowledge!****Yes****No****Yes****No****Yes****No****Yes****No****Tips**

- If a review includes spam, offensive language, or other wording that is contrary to Amazon.com's review policies, click the link to "Report Abuse" (above the Yes/No buttons for "Was this review helpful to you?"). This allows you to "Report this content as inappropriate" and include a reason if you wish; Amazon.com staff will then evaluate the review and take appropriate action.
- Consider the shape of the five-star review profile especially if there are a large number of reviews.
- Remember the bell curve from your statistics and probability class? A bell curve shape (actually half of a bell curve) of the one to five star ratings is to be expected if the product generally is good. This is a mathematical way of stating the old maxim, "You can't please everyone."

**Warnings**

- If the five-star review profile has a dumbbell shape then the product

- generally is good except that there are quality control issues in the manufacturing that too frequently results in a dud.
- Lastly, if the large number of ratings are heavily or nearly exclusively one star or five stars then the product is exceedingly poor or excellent respectively.

Sources and Citations

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/26/business/book-reviewers-for-hire-meet-a-demand-for-online-raves.html>

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