

WHY YOUR E-BOOK NEEDS AN INDEX....

by Maureen Johnson

You've worked hard to get your ideas down on paper in a coherent, well designed manner so your readers can benefit from your wisdom. An index is a great way to help your audience return to important topics again and again, enabling them to put your ideas into practice.

The Kindle offers search technology that allows you to enter a keyword or phrase and the Kindle will find “every instance in your book.” While this may sound like a feature that renders an index obsolete, Maureen Johnson of Mojo's Indexing Service would argue that such searches are often so user-unfriendly, they make your content difficult to find.

As a professional indexer, Maureen creates a targeted guide to the information provided in your book. She reads each page to distill the content into main and sub-topics that readers can use to efficiently find the information they need. In addition, she creates cross-references between related information, helping readers recognize the availability of additional information they may not have considered.

Readers are very familiar with how an index works. In fact, they are so common to our experience we may not realize how helpful they really are to narrowing a search for information. The four examples below demonstrate how a professionally prepared index is superior to a keyword search.

Click on any of these advantages for more details about how indexes are better than search.

Your index can—

- [Gather relevant information](#)
- [Eliminate search hit overload](#)
- [Point to related topics of interest](#)
- [Sell your book by providing a detailed look inside](#)

GATHER RELEVANT INFORMATION IN ONE PLACE

Let's take a quick look at an index entry from a book on health and wellness.

The topic of nutrition is very broad and often discussed without the word nutrition explicitly written in the text. In fact, in the over 50 pages dealing with nutrition in this book, the word "nutrition" is mentioned less than 6 times, diet was mentioned only 10 times.

To find a complete list of nutritional information, readers would have to think of all the possible keywords listed in this entry.

Instead of trying to imagine all potential keywords, readers can quickly scan the prepared index and determine which of the topics meets their information needs.

[Back to list...](#)

Nutrition, 100
aging and, 393
cancer and, 260–261
carbohydrates, 100, 101–102, 111, 116–117, 144
cholesterol and, 252
dietary diversity, 117–121
dietary reference intakes, 110–114
fats, 100, 102–103, 109, 111, 116–117
food allergies, 122
food guides, 107–108, 110–114, 125
food safety, 121–122, 212–213, 424
grain products, 108–109
heart health and, 246–247
irradiated foods, 424
labeling requirements, 111, 116–117
milk and alternatives, 109
minerals, 100, 103, 106–107
overview, 100
protein, 101, 109, 111, 116–117, 120
supplements, 109–110, 111
vegetables and fruit, 108
vitamins, 103–105, 111
water, 100–101
weight management, 142–144

ELIMINATE SEARCH HIT OVERLOAD

We have all experienced searches that return a large number of hits.

This sample is from a book on health and wellness which included an entire chapter on the topic of depression.

Keyword searches will stop at every usage of the term. It can be a slow and frustrating process.

In this particular book, the search term “depression” stopped

23 times on page 146,
13 times on page 148, and
23 times on page 149

at which point most readers will give up the search.

An index quickly shows users how this large “metatopic” breaks down into subtopics. The index also allows them to locate quickly the depression subtopic that interests them most.

[Back to list...](#)

Depression

cancer and, 161, 162, 169
cardiovascular system, 161, 163–166
causes of, 150–153
characteristics of, 153–155
costs of, 149–150
definition of, 145–148
feeling sad, feeling blue, 169–170
grief and, 149, 167, 332
immune system and, 152, 166–169
longevity and, 161–163
mimicking of medical disease, 160–161
physiological and anatomical effects, 158–161
PMS and, 156, 159, 171
prevalence and manifestations of, 148–150
seasonal affective disorder (SAD), 156–160
strategies for, 170–172

POINT TO RELATED TOPICS OF INTEREST

Another, less obvious, advantage of an index is pointing readers to related topics that appear in a given book. The familiar *See also...* reference in an index lets readers know what other, related information the author has included in this specific book.

These sample index entries show a list of pages where oceans are discussed specifically. The indexer, who reads every page, also knows there is a long list of topics under Aquatic ecosystems.

The ecosystem topic is broader in scope but may have information that is generally applicable to oceans. Information found here would not be included under the oceans heading unless ocean ecosystems were specifically discussed on those pages. The cross reference helps the reader find potentially relevant information on a given topic.

[Back to list...](#)

Oceans, 458–465, 458f, 459f, 460f. *See also*
Aquatic ecosystems

Aquatic ecosystems
climate change, 523, 523f, 524f
foodwebs, 416, 439–440, 440f
invertebrates, 117t
metabolism, 455, 455t
nitrogen cycle, 515
nutrient cycles, 498f
primary production of, 458–465, 458f, 459f,
460f
secondary production, 483–484, 484f, 485t

MOJO'S INDEXING SERVICE

Providing easy access to complex documents.

SELL YOUR BOOK BY PROVIDING A DETAILED LOOK INSIDE

Everyone has their own process for determining if a book is worth their money. Decisions are made by

- looking at the cover,
- reviewing the table of contents,
- reading a sample of pages and finally
- looking at the index to see if a topic of interest is covered and if so to what level of detail.

Institutional purchasers in particular do extensive reviews of indexes to determine how completely a topic is covered and whether or not it will meet their user's needs.

Indexes provide far more detail than a table of contents. Chapter titles are often broad and jargon laden which doesn't help a reader decipher what is actually discussed. Some sample chapters titles from a home business startup book are Preparation, Legal Considerations, Startup Basics. These terms don't tell anyone if the book includes information on how to write a contract or how to determine deductible home office expenses.

A quick look over an index would show readers that not only is a topic covered but it appears in multiple discussions, and is, therefore, covered in great detail.

[Back to list...](#)