

THE RESELLER'S GUIDE TO

ROAD TRIP ARBITRAGE



**EXPAND YOUR SOURCING
RADIUS AND INCREASE YOUR
AMAZON FBA PROFITS**

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The Reseller's Guide to Road Trip Arbitrage:

Expand Your Sourcing Radius
and Increase Your Amazon FBA Profits

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Chapter 1 – Introduction | 5 |
| About Us | 5 |
| Why Road Trip Arbitrage..... | 6 |
| Why Amazon FBA | 7 |
| What to Expect in this Book | 9 |
| Disclaimer..... | 9 |
| Chapter 2 - Sourcing on the Road | 10 |
| Sources of Inventory | 10 |
| Thrift stores..... | 10 |
| Garage sales and estate sales..... | 10 |
| Book sales..... | 11 |
| Special events..... | 11 |
| Retail stores | 11 |
| Chapter 3 - Types of Items to Source..... | 13 |
| Determining Factors..... | 13 |
| Items from Garage Sales, Thrift Stores, and Book Sales | 14 |
| Retail Arbitrage..... | 15 |
| RA clearance..... | 16 |
| RA regular price..... | 16 |
| Important Note about Item Condition | 17 |
| Conclusion | 17 |
| Chapter 4 - Researching Your Trip | 18 |
| The Importance of Preparation..... | 18 |
| Decide on an RA Strategy for the Trip | 18 |
| List Your Sourcing Locations | 20 |
| Set a Budget | 20 |
| Conclusion | 23 |
| Chapter 5 - Planning Your Itinerary | 24 |
| Optimizing Your Route | 24 |
| Planning Each Stop on Your Itinerary | 24 |
| Planning for Accommodations..... | 26 |
| Conclusion | 27 |
| Chapter 6 - Shipping to FBA..... | 28 |
| Prepping and Shipping from Your Home Base | 28 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Prepping and Shipping from a Prep Center..... | 29 |
| Prepping and Shipping from the Road..... | 30 |
| Paying Amazon to Prep Your Inventory..... | 30 |
| Temporary Changes to Account Settings..... | 31 |
| Conclusion..... | 32 |
| Chapter 7 - Supplies for Your Trip..... | 33 |
| RA Sourcing Tools..... | 33 |
| Prepping and Shipping Supplies..... | 35 |
| Prep supplies..... | 35 |
| Shipping supplies..... | 36 |
| Conclusion..... | 38 |
| Chapter 8 - Apps for Efficiency on the Road..... | 39 |
| Sourcing Apps..... | 39 |
| Automatically Track Your Mileage..... | 42 |
| Get Cash Back While Sourcing Inventory..... | 43 |
| Using Store Loyalty Cards for More Savings..... | 43 |
| Conclusion..... | 44 |
| Chapter 9 - Bookkeeping on the Road..... | 45 |
| Handling Receipts..... | 45 |
| Protecting Your Profits..... | 46 |
| Tracking Mileage..... | 46 |
| Tracking Your Inventory Numbers..... | 46 |
| Conclusion..... | 47 |
| Chapter 10 - Making Your Trip Fun..... | 49 |
| Day Trip — Close to Home..... | 49 |
| Day Trip — Further from Home..... | 49 |
| Holiday Trip to Visit Family..... | 50 |
| Overnight Trip — Sourcing in the Days, Family Time in the Evenings..... | 51 |
| Overnight Trip — First Half Family Time, Second Half Sourcing..... | 51 |
| Chapter 11 – Conclusion..... | 53 |
| Appendix - List of Bonuses..... | 54 |
| More Resources by Stephen and Rebecca Smotherman..... | 55 |

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Are you ready to take your Amazon arbitrage business on the road to broaden your sourcing horizons? We're excited to share with you the profit potentials you can find for your Amazon FBA business if you think outside your local boundaries.

Amazon FBA is a great way to make a full-time income with only part-time hours, and we have experienced just how much bigger the profits can be when you're willing to venture further away from home than your closest Walmart or Target. By spending just one or two days a month driving to stores or sales outside your home base, you can drastically increase your chances of finding awesome inventory to source for your Amazon business. We can't wait to show you in this book how we have incorporated "road trip arbitrage" into our overall Amazon FBA strategy.

About Us

In 2011 I (Stephen) discovered selling on Amazon via FBA. My whole e-commerce business began to transition from selling on eBay to selling on Amazon. I still sell on eBay, but Amazon gets the bulk of my business. In fact, Amazon has recognized me as a Top Holiday Seller. That means that out of all sellers on Amazon, my sales were in the top 25% as well as having an A+ customer satisfaction rating during the holiday selling season. Amazon no longer awards sellers for being Top Holiday Sellers, but it was a fun honor to receive that award.

Selling on Amazon has helped move my e-commerce business from a hobby to the way I earn a full-time income. I've made a full-time income as an online reseller since 2012, and I absolutely love it. I enjoy being my own boss, working from home, and setting my own hours. I love being able to go treasure hunting and get paid for it. The freedom FBA provides is awesome.

In my personal life, my story changed forever for the good in 2013 when I married Rebecca. She began working part-time with me on my Amazon business shortly before the wedding, and we have loved being partners in life and in business. Rebecca has increasingly taken on more responsibility in our Amazon business, and since 2015 she has been in charge of all of our online arbitrage (OA), while I am responsible for our retail arbitrage (RA) and wholesale sourcing.



Since we are able to earn a full-time income by selling online and spending only part-time hours, we decided to blog about it. If you're ever curious how we are able to sell on Amazon via FBA and earn a full-time income, then come join Rebecca and me over at www.fulltimefba.com. You can subscribe to updates, get a bunch of freebies, and hear our stories. We offer tons of free tips and tricks on how to best manage a full-time FBA business. We update the blog often and are always offering fresh content.

Why Road Trip Arbitrage

Many Amazon sellers get into this business because they're attracted by the thrill of the hunt. They love to find that next big home run item with incredible ROI (return on investment). For book sellers it might be a book from a library sale that can be purchased for 50 cents and is selling on Amazon for \$100 in used condition. For toy sellers it might be the season's hottest hard-to-find toy unexpectedly filling a shelf in a retail store. No matter what you're selling, arbitrage is exciting!

Simply put, **arbitrage** is the process of buying something for a low price and selling it for a high price. **Buy low, sell high.**



Road trip arbitrage allows Amazon FBA sellers to expand their horizons and branch out into areas where they might not normally source. It might be for an out-of-town book sale, or it might be so that you can clear the shelves in a retail store you love, an old favorite in a new town. The possibilities for how to plan your own arbitrage road trip are endless! You can extend your reach beyond your local hunting grounds and expand your profits to include items you wouldn't be able to source on an average day near your home.

The main goal of planning an arbitrage road trip is to get outside your usual sourcing locations and find enough inventory to more than offset the cost of your travel. With careful preparation and detailed research, you should be able to have a fairly good idea ahead of time whether you'll make enough money in profits from your trip to make it worthwhile. We will go through the steps of doing that research later in the book.

It can be easy to get in a sourcing rut when you always go to the same local stores or sales over and over and over again. Road trip arbitrage gives you the ability to get outside your comfort zone and find tons of great profits that are waiting for you to pick them up...all you have to do is get in your car and drive to where they are!

Why Amazon FBA

Before we get much further in this book, we want to make sure you understand that our goal is to show you how we use road trip arbitrage in our Amazon FBA business. You can use many of the methods we cover to find inventory for other ecommerce platforms (Amazon Merchant Fulfilled, eBay, Poshmark, etc), but we highly recommend using Amazon FBA for the greatest profit potential and the greatest ease of setting up a business that requires only part-time hours to make a full-time income.



Hands down, the number one reason you should be selling on Amazon is the FBA program: Fulfillment by Amazon. This amazing program gives you access to sell to all of Amazon's customers, as well as providing those buyers with Amazon's customer service and fulfillment service. **Here are a few aspects of the FBA program that make it so attractive for online sellers:**

- **3rd-party sellers on Amazon** — Many people assume Amazon is the only seller on their website, but 3rd-party sellers make up a significant amount of the sales on Amazon.
- **Over 100 Amazon warehouses/fulfillment centers all over the world** — Amazon's desire as a company is to bring their products to customers in countries across the globe.
- **Amazon packs and ships orders to customers** — This component of the FBA program frees up the time and energy of 3rd-party sellers to focus on other aspects of their business, particularly finding more inventory to ship to Amazon warehouses.
- **Amazon deals with most customer service issues for FBA sellers** — For the most part, FBA sellers do not need to interact with customers and handle any issues that come up related to orders. If the customer has a question about their order, wonders when their order will arrive, and or has any number of other customer service questions, they can address those questions to Amazon's call center. Again, this frees up 3rd-party sellers to focus on other aspects of their business.
- **Amazon deals with returns** — Returns are an inevitable part of doing this type of business, but in general FBA sellers are free from the burden of dealing with returns. Again, Amazon customer service handles all returns for FBA orders on behalf of FBA sellers. Also, Amazon makes returns super easy for their customers, which on the face of it seems like a bad thing for us as sellers — don't we want to avoid returns? But if customers know they can trust the return process if they happen to need it, they will stay loyal to the store, leading to more sales for Amazon and more sales for us as FBA sellers.

Here's how the FBA program works:

1. **You buy inventory.** You can buy your inventory in retail stores, online, garage sales and thrift stores, wholesale distributors, manufacturers — you can even find inventory to send to Amazon sitting around your own house right now!
2. **You ship your inventory to Amazon warehouses.** Amazon has warehouses (or fulfillment centers) all throughout the United States, and they will assign a location where you ship your inventory so it is spread out across the country and convenient for shipping to their customers.
3. **Amazon stores your inventory.** While your inventory is waiting for a sale, Amazon stores it for you for a small monthly fee. No need to have storage space in your garage, closet, or spare room, and no need to find and pay for your own warehouse space! Amazon catalogs your inventory and knows right where it is when a customer buys it.
4. **Customers buy your inventory.** Either through browsing the Amazon catalog or searching for specific items, customers buy your inventory from the Amazon website at the price you set for it.
5. **Amazon ships your inventory to the customer.** When you make an FBA sale, an Amazon warehouse worker picks and packs your inventory and ships it to your customer. No need to ship tons of boxes to customers each day! You ship the inventory once (to the warehouse), and then you sit back and let Amazon take care of the rest.

Before I (Stephen) started selling through the FBA program, I was an eBay Power Seller. I had hundreds of items listed on eBay and stored in my garage. Sometimes when an item sold on eBay, I would sigh and say to myself, “Now I need to go find that thing in the garage.” I was happy for the sale, but I dreaded needing to track that thing down...not to mention needing to find the right size box for shipping it and the right kind of packing materials to keep it safe during shipment, having to print shipping labels, and then hauling all of those items to the post office each day. I was also constantly concerned about whether or not the post office would get that item delivered fast enough to keep the buyer happy.

The same concerns can be said for using Amazon to sell Merchant Fulfilled (MF). It is a ton of work! You have to store, catalog, and ship inventory items yourself, and you have to deal with potential customer service and returns.

Sure, you can make money from eBay or selling via Amazon MF. But selling through FBA really was a game changer for our business. Now we are able to focus solely on buying inventory to sell — and sourcing profitable inventory is where the magic happens with Amazon FBA.

What to Expect in this Book

Our hope for this book is to show you our methods for going on an arbitrage road trip to source great inventory for your Amazon FBA business. For the past few years, one of our FBA business strategies has been to use road trip arbitrage in a few key ways:

- Stephen spends 1-2 days a month doing road trip arbitrage during non-Q4 months
- Stephen and Rebecca go on 2-3 longer arbitrage road trips per year
- Stephen spends as many days as necessary doing arbitrage day trips during Q4

I don't want to assume that everyone reading this book is familiar with the ins and outs of online reselling. **To make the most out of the knowledge in this book, you need to know the basics about buying/selling on Amazon via FBA.** If you don't have this foundational knowledge, check out our popular Amazon seller beginner course, [JumpStart Amazon: Build a Successful Amazon FBA Business](#).

JumpStart Amazon is a combination video course (10+ hours) and ebook (200+ pages) that will teach you everything you need to know to start and succeed with your Amazon FBA business. The content in both the book and videos is almost identical, so you can decide which way you would like to learn best – watching or reading. The ebook and video course are both filled with the content and strategies you need to help you (1) build a solid foundation and then (2) know how to find growth and success on top of the basics. [JumpStart Amazon](#) is the best place to start learning how to build a profitable Amazon FBA business.

To save \$50 off the cost of [JumpStart Amazon](#), use the coupon code **HIGHWAY50**.

Disclaimer

While the purpose of this book is to show you how to plan and carry out an arbitrage road trip for your Amazon FBA business, I know that each person reading this book will have results that are his or her own. The contents of this book are based on my opinions and experiences with selling online and are not a guarantee that the reader will be able to replicate the formulas contained in this book. Unauthorized distribution, reselling, or copying of this material is unlawful. No portion of this book may be copied or resold without explicit permission from the Publisher.

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Chapter 2 - Sourcing on the Road

Taking your Amazon FBA business on the road requires a bit of planning, but in many ways it simply needs to be an extension of how you conduct your everyday FBA business back home. You may be thinking, *"I'm sold on the idea of getting out of town to find new sourcing locations...but where do I begin?"*

Sources of Inventory

Your first step will be to decide *where* you want to source for inventory. Now, in this instance I don't mean "where" as in city, state, and ZIP Code, but "where" as in what types of sources. The easiest place to start is by sourcing at the same types of locations you typically source at home, but you can also branch out and try new sources if an opportunity arises while you're planning your trip. I'll give you a list below of the types of sourcing locations that easily lend themselves to an arbitrage road trip, and you should quickly notice that many of these locations are probably exactly where you are already sourcing.

Thrift stores

Many online sellers like to source at thrift stores for items to resell because of the low buy cost and potential high profits and return on investment (ROI) on both new and used items. Yes, there is the potential to buy new items at thrift stores, if you adhere to strict guidelines for grading conditions.

People may have brand new items lying around their house, either from gifts or purchases they've never used. Eventually those items may end up as donations to thrift stores. You can find all sorts of awesome inventory new, unwrapped, still in factory-sealed condition — everything from housewares to board games to pricey books.

You can also find plenty of items in used or collectible condition that will make good profits on Amazon. Depending on the category, Amazon allows certain items to be sold as *used* and other items to be sold as *collectible*. The Books category allows both used and collectible conditions, while the Toys & Games category allows only collectible, not used.

Garage sales and estate sales

Like thrift stores, garage sales and estate sales are a great place for beginner FBA sellers to source for inventory because the items for sale typically have a low buy cost. When you can purchase items at a low buy cost, you increase your likelihood of bringing back a high ROI.



Garage sales are also a great opportunity for beginners because you can do all your sourcing on the weekends. Many Amazon sellers get started with an FBA business while

they have a part-time or full-time job during the week. Most garage sales are only open on the weekends, with possibly an additional Thursday or Friday morning. Saturday mornings are a perfect time to get out and do some FBA sourcing while you have the day off from your main job.

If you live in a location that doesn't typically have a lot of garage sales, you're in a prime situation to start looking for areas within a decent driving radius that might have more garage sales each weekend. With the right research, you could find a hot garage sale location and start scheduling some road trips to do garage sale arbitrage during your weekend time off from your regular job.

Book sales

Chances are, if you have a bookselling business on Amazon then you know to keep an eye out for upcoming book sales through libraries, schools, charities, and other organizations looking to move large amounts of books at a low price in order to free up space. Book sales can be a great opportunity to take your Amazon FBA business on the road and travel to a new location for a buying opportunity that doesn't come around every day.

Special events

Any number of special one-of-a-kind events can come up that turn out to be great opportunities for buying Amazon FBA inventory. Think **store closings or auctions**, for the types of events that will only happen once and have the potential to be a source of inventory at a low buy cost. Keep an eye on your local and state news to know when big store closings might be happening, and then plan to show up to as many branches of the store closing as possible, as early as possible in the closing period.

Other special events to keep in mind are **large, area-wide garage sales** that can go on for dozens or even hundreds of miles. Perhaps the most famous of these events is the World's Longest Yard Sale, reaching from Alabama to Michigan along Highway 127. You can check out more info about this annual event [at their website](#). Be sure to do a Google search for similar events in your area of the country. Here in Texas we have a couple of such events: the annual (May) US 281 yard sale in the Rio Grande Valley and the twice-yearly (April and October) US 80 sale that stretches from Texas to Georgia.



Retail stores

Any of the above sources of inventory can have great profit potential, but I have found that **the best way to build a sustainable, scalable Amazon FBA business using road trip arbitrage is to source at retail stores**. I began my FBA business at thrift stores and garage sales and built it to earn a full-time income, but I was able to scale my business and reduce

the number of hours it requires to maintain it by switching from thrifting to retail arbitrage (RA).

Eventually I built up large enough Amazon disbursements that I didn't have enough time to spend going to garage sales and thrift stores looking for enough inventory to reinvest all of my sourcing money. It can be time consuming going on a treasure hunt every day, and I needed to find a way to balance my time and my money. When I had more time than money, I needed to go to garage sales and thrift stores. When I started to have more money than time, I needed to expand into RA.

Retail arbitrage has the potential to streamline your Amazon FBA business by allowing you to buy multiples of items, possibly over and over again.

With garage sales and thrift stores, you could spend all day sourcing 50 items, and you will never find those same 50 items again. You will enter those 50 items in your inventory, sell them, and then never need that listing again. But with RA, you can potentially buy 50 of the same item and enter it in your inventory only once. You can potentially find



items through RA that you can go to the same store and buy over and over again to resell on Amazon — or you can go to many branches of the same store to buy as many units of the same item as possible. RA can save a ton of time and energy, both in sourcing and in inventory maintenance.

You likely will not find an item you can buy in multiples of 50 every time you go out to do RA sourcing, but you probably will find things you can buy 5 of, 10 of, 20 of — every time you source! Sometimes you will find those items on the clearance shelf, but other times you can find inventory that is selling full-price in retail stores and can make a profit on Amazon.

Retail stores truly lend themselves to road trip arbitrage, and they have become my bread and butter when it comes to sourcing FBA inventory in person (that is, not through online arbitrage or wholesale sourcing). As I said in the introduction, I typically spend one or two days a month on an all-day driving expedition to source at a regular set of retail stores. I cover a different region on each trip, and I may visit only one type of store or may visit several different chains, depending on the season.

In the next chapter, we'll dive into the specifics for what type of inventory to search for on an arbitrage road trip, no matter the source of inventory you choose for your trip.

Chapter 3 - Types of Items to Source

Determining Factors

Once you have decided which type of sourcing you are ready to do, you need to know which types of items to focus on sourcing in your chosen location. The type of item may vary depending on a number of factors:

How much money you have available for sourcing — If you are limited in available capital, you will need to set a price range for the types of items you can source. If you have \$200 for sourcing, you will make different decisions about buying items than if you have \$2000. With a lower amount of capital, you won't want to buy items with a high buy cost (for instance, shoes or electronics). Instead you will want to buy items with a low buy cost (think books or small toys) so that you can spread out your risk over many items rather than a few.

Which categories you have experience in — When you are on a road trip for arbitrage, you typically do not have an unlimited amount of time at each sourcing location. You likely will want to source in categories where you already have some experience, rather than brand new categories, so that you are able to make solid decisions in a new environment. There is always room for exceptions to this principle, but in general it's a good idea to save learning new categories for a time when you're in a familiar environment.

Which categories/brands you are ungated in — For obvious reasons, you will be limited to sourcing categories and brands that you are already ungated in. Don't forget, though, that you can check your restrictions and apply for auto-approval right from your smart phone while you are sourcing. Check out [this blog post](#) for instructions.

Which season of the year it is — Certain times of the year you might want to focus on different categories than at other times of the year. Although toys sell year round (kids have birthdays every month, right?), Q4 sales of toys go bonkers. You might want to find other seasons to focus on in addition to Q4, like back to school, and source inventory items accordingly.

Whether you are prepping the items yourself or using a prep center — Some of your buying decisions might be determined by who will be prepping the items to send to the FBA warehouse. Does an item need to be polybagged? Do you mind spending the time and supplies to polybag it yourself? Or do you mind paying a prep center to polybag it for you? You will need to think through those types of questions before you decide which items to source.

How much space you have to transport or store the inventory items — You'll need to think through similar issues about prep centers or self-prepping when it comes to how you will transport or store your inventory items before they're sent to the FBA warehouse. Do

you have the space in your vehicle for oversized items, or do you need to stick to standard size? Do you have the space at your home/business to store and prep these items?

Personal preference for Amazon categories — Sometimes your decisions come down to personal preferences, and that is totally OK. Rebecca loves to look through shelves of books, but Stephen prefers to scan the toy aisle. Ultimately you want running your FBA business to be enjoyable, so don't be afraid to make decisions about which items to source based on whether or not you actually like spending time in that section of the store. We agree with Marie Kondo on this one — if it doesn't spark joy for you, tell that Amazon category “thank you” and then move on.

Items from Garage Sales, Thrift Stores, and Book Sales

Most of your finds at garage sales, thrift stores, and book sales are going to be unique — something you will likely only find one time to resell. A lot of times these items are referred to by Amazon sellers as 1-off items. You may find it for a low buy cost and a high selling cost and make a huge profit off of it, and then you won't ever see that item for sale again. The nature of 1-off items gives sourcing at these locations the feel of a treasure hunt. You never know when you're going to find an amazing book that you can buy for a quarter and resell for \$50. You never know when you're going to find a rare board game that you can buy at a thrift store for \$2 and resell for \$100. It's such a rush to scan items at garage sales and thrift stores and come across this kind of buried treasure.

The two main items we look for at garage sales and thrift stores are books and board games.

1. Books — You will start to notice you can find books everywhere. You will find books you've never heard of that sound really weird. You'll find books on topics you would never imagine anyone ever wanting to buy in a million years. Those are the types of books you want to scan.



If you see popular books that everyone is reading, particularly fiction, you aren't likely to find any profit there and can just skip scanning them. Popular books tend to have hundreds, if not thousands, of sellers and will end up costing you money to sell them, rather than making you money. **You are looking for unusual, hard-to-find, niche topic books, particularly non-fiction.**

One word about sourcing books: It isn't wise to try to sell a book in new condition if Amazon has the book in stock. Amazon hogs the buy box 100% of the time on new books, and you will likely never sell your book, even if you are priced at a fraction of Amazon's cost. If we find a book Amazon has in stock as new, we will sell it as used - like new if the

competitive price is high enough for us to make profits. Even if the book is in new condition, you can grade it as like new, and your customer will be pleasantly surprised.

2. Board Games — Many people buy board games or are given them as a gift, and they never open them or play with them. It is not unusual to find board games at garage sales or thrift stores that have never had the shrink-wrap or factory seal removed. You can also find games where the box has been opened, but none of the pieces were removed from their packaging, making the game in collectible - like new condition. You can sell these types of games on Amazon for great profits year round, but particularly at Christmas-time during Q4.



Many sellers assume that used or collectible items are not as profitable as new ones, but you can't operate with that assumption or you'll miss out on big profits. We have sold collectible board games for over \$200 and used books for over \$100. **Don't assume that an item won't be profitable just because it isn't new!**

When it comes to thrift stores, we have found that their donations increase the last week of December and the first two weeks of January. Once Christmas has passed, many people decide to clean up the house and organize their belongings (thank you, Netflix and Marie Kondo...we promise that will be the last Marie Kondo reference in the book). They may need extra space for the new gifts they've bought or received, or they may make a New Year's resolution to become more organized.

All of that stuff they are cleaning out of the house? You guessed it — it ends up on the thrift store shelves. It's too cold to have a garage sale in the winter, so many people decide to just donate their old stuff instead. Many thrift stores have too much new inventory at this time of year and end up needing to throw stuff out or donate it to other charities. I (Stephen) have actually gone to thrift stores at this time of the year and worked a deal with managers who had too much inventory on their hands, and I was able to walk away with great inventory for my business — absolutely free!

Retail Arbitrage

If you have more available capital and you're ready to move beyond the 1-off items of garage sales and thrift stores, RA is a great way to source on an arbitrage road trip. RA gives you the potential to streamline your Amazon FBA business by allowing you to buy multiples of items, possibly over and over again. **Typically, there are two main types of sources for retail arbitrage: RA clearance and RA regular price.**

RA clearance

We love sourcing clearance items at retail stores because they have the potential to give you a super low buy cost. Every store will have clearance items they're trying to get rid of to make space for new inventory. We like to look at the clearance section as our first stop in a retail store because those items are typically the lowest priced items in the entire store, and often they're the most likely to have a good ROI on Amazon.



Each store arranges their clearance items differently, whether it's **on a clearance aisle, on end caps (the ends of aisles), or randomly scattered through the regular inventory**. The more you source in each type of retail store, the more familiar you will become with how each store organizes their clearance merchandise. You will also start to become familiar with different stores' clearance schedules, and you can even develop relationships with managers who can notify you when clearance merchandise has been placed on the shelves.

RA regular price

Another type of inventory we look for in retail stores are popular full-priced items we know are good sellers. Some super popular items (particularly toys) can be difficult for Amazon to keep in stock, so if you can find them in retail stores, they can sell for two, three, four times as much online as the retail price. **We keep a running list of these types of items that we always look for when we're doing RA; this list changes over time, depending on what's hot and what's not.**

You may think to yourself that it's ridiculous for people to pay that much more for an item on Amazon, rather than just going to a brick-and-mortar store and buying it for cheaper — but you have to remember, some people don't live anywhere close to a big name retail store, and other people are very busy and don't want to go to a physical store. These people are willing to pay a premium to get items on Amazon.

We also like to source for local products in retail stores while we're doing road trip arbitrage. Sometimes a person will move away to a new area, and they can no longer find a local or regional product they always bought in their old town. We can buy those products at retail stores on a road trip and sell them on Amazon for a profit. Many times these types of items are grocery items — a particular salsa or barbecue sauce or some other specialty item the area is known for.

Important Note about Item Condition

Regardless of where you source your inventory, **it is extremely important to make sure you are accurately grading the condition of the item before you list it on Amazon.**

When you find an item in new condition, be sure to do your due diligence and ensure the item is truly new. If you are selling an item in used condition, be sure you round down on your grading, not up. You want to leave no shadow of doubt in your customer's mind that the item they receive is in the exact condition they expected — or in better condition.

One of the worst things you can do as an Amazon seller is to list an item as new when it's actually in used condition. Cynthia Stine, author of the book [Suspension Prevention](#), says that a high number of the Amazon account suspension cases her company deals with are due to sellers having too many instances of claiming an item is new when it is actually used.

If you have any doubt whatsoever about whether an item is new, do not list it on Amazon as new. If you think for a second that a customer will question whether an item is new, do not list it on Amazon as new. It is much better to make a lower amount of profits by selling it in like new or very good condition than to damage your seller metrics and potentially have your account suspended.



Conclusion

Hopefully this chapter gave you some important questions to think through as you make plans for your road trip. Each time you start to plan a new trip, we encourage you to look back at the section on “Determining Factors” and think through how you plan to handle your buying decisions for that particular trip. Over time these questions will become natural to you and you won't even need to look at this section, but in the beginning it helps to take the time to write your answers down.

Ultimately each person needs to decide on their own what their strategy is for the types of items to buy on an arbitrage road trip. What works well for us might not be the best idea for you — and what works well for you at one time of the year might not be the best idea for a trip at another time of the year. For the sake of focus, we will spend the rest of this book homing in on how to plan an RA road trip, but the principles we cover can be applied to other types of sourcing-on-the-road as well.

Chapter 4 - Researching Your Trip

Now it's time to get into the details of researching and planning an arbitrage road trip. The next couple of chapters in our book are going to cover the main considerations you'll need to make **before** you head out on the road:

- Researching your trip
- Planning your itinerary

The Importance of Preparation

You might have heard the phrase, "**You make your money on the buy, not the sell.**" Well, when it comes to making money from an arbitrage road trip, we like to think that *you make your money before you leave home, not after you get back*. I know that seems a little counterintuitive, but let me explain.

Going on a road trip to buy Amazon inventory might sound like a fun idea — *"come on, guys, let's jump in the car and drive off into the sunset, buying awesome deals along the way to make amazing profits!"* But there is actually a lot of hard work involved in putting together a **profitable** road trip for retail arbitrage. You can't just drive to any random place and pick any random store and expect to find inventory for your FBA business.



You need to put in the upfront work to do your research, decide on a strategy, decide on your sourcing locations, and work out all the logistics and budget. If you don't do the appropriate research before your trip, you could end up disappointed at not making very much profit from all your effort — or even worse, losing money on the trip.

Decide on an RA Strategy for the Trip

One of the first decisions you need to make for your road trip is what type of RA strategy you are going to use for the duration of the trip. When we spend an entire day (or more) doing RA, we have two main strategies for how we spend our time:

1. Source all the stores in one area

One strategy we use is to **choose an area or a town** where we will focus for the trip. The benefit of using this method is that we can hit a large amount of stores in a small amount of time with minimal driving between stores. We typically use this strategy when we don't have any good leads on items that we already know we want to buy.

After we decide on the area or town, we plan out a route where we go to that town's Walmart, Target, Kohl's, TJMaxx, Marshalls, Walgreens, etc, one after the other. We'll discuss in more detail how to plan a route in the next chapter.

Using this strategy also helps us try out new stores that we've never sourced at before. We might be in a TJMaxx parking lot and see a World Market, and we take the extra effort to go to that store and check it out for the first time.

This particular strategy also allows us to find BOLOs — items that you should “be on the lookout” for. Let's say we're sourcing in Target and find an awesome item we wish we could source more of. That item is now a BOLO for us, and we can search for other Targets nearby to go source that item.

Some towns have more stores than others, so you will need to research the towns within your projected driving radius to figure out which town might have the biggest bang for your buck (that is, the biggest number of stores within the closest proximity to each other).

2. Source multiple locations of one store

The second strategy we use for RA is when we have a good lead on some items to source at one particular retail store. Maybe there's a big store-wide sale going on at a chain of stores, or maybe we have some replens we need to restock.

In these instances we plan our driving route for our road trip to cover a larger radius from our home, but **we only put one or two stores in the route**. For example, we might go to every Target in a 30-mile radius in one day. Depending on where you live, a 30-mile radius might be too many Targets for one day – in that case, using this RA strategy could give you several days worth of work.

We also use this method when we know a chain is doing a big seasonal clearance. We'll even call ahead to the store branches to make sure each one in the chain is already doing the clearance before we drive all the way out there.

And of course, if you have identified a BOLO, you'll want to shop for it at each location of the store while you're out sourcing for the day. In this way, you are combining the first RA strategy with the second RA strategy: source all the stores in one location until you find enough BOLOs at one or two particular stores, and then switch to going to as many locations as possible of those stores with the BOLOs. You can even use the [BrickSeek](#) website to check the inventory levels of your BOLOs at certain chain stores, so that you know ahead of time whether a particular location will have enough units to make your traveling there for a BOLO worthwhile.

Over time you will see that RA finds come in waves. Sometimes one store is hot, so you follow that wave until it runs out. Then suddenly another store is hot, so you hop on that wave and ride it as long as you can. You will begin to get in a routine of finding the best

retail stores for your business model, making the most of the opportunities while you can, and always looking for ways to expand to new stores.

List Your Sourcing Locations

Once you have decided whether you're going to source a variety of stores or stick to only one or two chains of stores on your road trip, it's time to start listing each sourcing location you would like to cover. This doesn't have to be a super formal list, but you want to make sure you have a good, firm idea of how many stops you plan to make along the way, along with the general address of each location.



The easiest way we know to make such a list is to **use Google or a similar search engine to look up all the stores in the town you're traveling to.** You can zoom in and out on Google Maps to get an idea of what kind of shopping centers are in the town and what stores are in each shopping center. If you're using the RA strategy of traveling to multiple branches of the same chain, you can Google that store name with the general location to find a list of all the stores in that area.

For example, you can search for "Target in North Texas" and start your list with the search results. **You could also go straight to the store website and look at their** directory for the branches in your target area, usually on a web page called something like "Find a Store," "Stores Near Me," or "Store Locations."

The point of this list is to get a general idea of the number of stores you can visit throughout your trip. You can then make decisions about the duration of your trip based on the number of available stores: Will you need to spend a night, or can you visit all your planned stops in one day?

Set a Budget

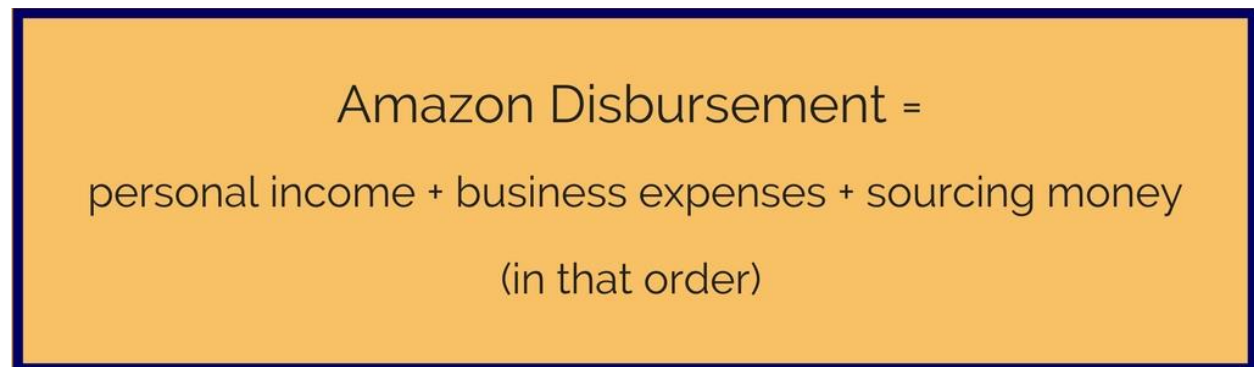
Budget is the "B word" no one likes to talk about, but it can make or break your FBA business. You need to have a firm idea of how much working capital you want to use on your arbitrage road trip and then set your trip budget accordingly.

So how do you know how much money you should set aside for your road trip? A lot of that depends on your overall business model and what stage you're in when it comes to cash flow. Every business is different, so the amount of money for *your* trip budget could vary greatly from *my* budget — but we can both come up with a budget amount based on answers to the same types of questions:

- How much money do I have from my latest Amazon disbursement?
- How much money do I need for personal expenses?

- How much money do I need for business expenses?
- How much money is left over for sourcing?
- What types of sourcing do I include in my business model? RA? OA? Wholesale?
- How much money do I want to use for each type of sourcing in my business model?
- Do I have a good balance of fast turning inventory to make up for long-tail inventory?

In our own FBA business, we have used the same basic formula for the past several years for coming up with our available capital:


$$\text{Amazon Disbursement} = \text{personal income} + \text{business expenses} + \text{sourcing money}$$

(in that order)

Obviously, each portion of this formula can be drilled down into much greater detail, but this formula gives us the foundation for how we divide up our money from our Amazon disbursements. You can then use the amount of your sourcing money to come up with the amount of money you want to budget for your arbitrage road trip.

Please notice that nowhere in this formula...or in this chapter...or in this book...do we talk about using credit cards for financing your arbitrage road trip. Nor do we mention using Amazon loans, Kabbage, Payability, or any other type of debt for buying inventory or building up your FBA business. We know credit can be tempting for sellers, especially in the early stages of running an FBA business when your cash flow is still pretty low, but **we highly discourage going into debt to buy inventory for your business or to finance a road trip.**

We go into more details in [this blog post](#) about why we believe debt is too risky for an FBA business. But for the purposes of this book, please know that we highly encourage you to **only use your cash flow** to pay for your road trip and/or your inventory.

Do we think you should use a credit card to pay for your inventory, gas, hotel, food, etc, to maximize your cash back or travel rewards? Absolutely! As long as you already have the money in your bank account to pay off every penny of those expenses as soon as you swipe your card.

One huge consideration to think through as you're setting your budget for your trip — will you be able to earn enough from the profits of your inventory to more than pay for the trip? **It's a good idea at this point to list out your expected expenses for the trip:**

- Gas
- Tolls
- Lodging
- Food
- Vehicle/trailer rental
- Inventory prep
- Other expenses

You don't have to be super exact, but jot out some conservative estimates for each of the above bullet points and then think about how much inventory you would need to purchase and resell in order to make it worthwhile to spend that amount on a trip. **We've included a bonus PDF budget worksheet for you to use as you develop your arbitrage road trip budget. You can access this PDF by logging into your Full-Time FBA account and checking out the bonus materials for this course.**

Note that one of the items we listed above is “**vehicle/trailer rental.**” This line item will vary for each business and may not even be a factor for you, depending on what type of vehicle you drive on a regular basis. If you are used to doing RA in your local area, you probably have a fairly good idea how much inventory you can fit in your vehicle before you have to head home and empty it out. Here are a few questions to think through related to your road trip vehicle:



- Will you have enough space in your regular vehicle to fit all the inventory you plan to buy on your trip?
- Do you need to rent a van?
- Do you need to rent a small U-Haul-type trailer?

Be sure to thoroughly research the cost of these vehicle expenses as part of your budget process.

Of course, part of your decision for whether or not you'll need a larger vehicle will be determined by **how you plan to prep and ship the inventory from your road trip.** Here

are a few questions to consider as you think about how prepping and shipping for this inventory will impact your road trip budget:

- Will you be prepping on the road and sending in a shipment before you head home?
- Will you be dropping off the inventory at a prep center along the way?
- Will you be buying a truck-load of inventory and then heading back to your own home?

We'll go into more details about prepping and shipping from the road in a later chapter, but you need to start thinking about this decision when you're developing your budget.

Conclusion

Once you have thought through each of the aspects we've covered above, you should have a fairly solid idea of what types of inventory you will buy on your trip, which locations you will source from, and how much money you will need to set aside in your FBA business budget to make the trip a success. In the next chapter, we will go into more detail about how to schedule your route and plan other trip logistics.

There's no way to know completely ahead of time just how much profit you will make from your trip, but you can plan for success and know that you are maximizing your resources. You will have the assurance that you did all the research up front so that you don't waste any time or money when you're on the road — instead, while you're actually on your road trip you can focus all of your efforts on making smart sourcing decisions. You may need to pivot from your original plans, depending on how things come up along the way, but overall you should have a well-researched plan for your trip so that you can set out on the road with confidence.

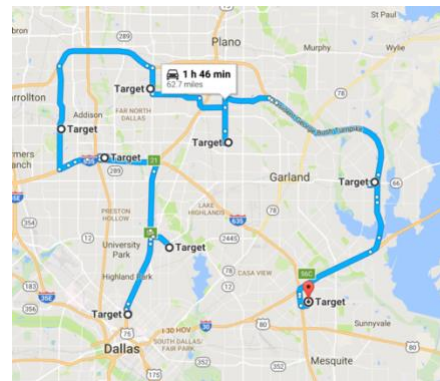
Chapter 5 - Planning Your Itinerary

Optimizing Your Route

Once you've compiled a list of addresses for your arbitrage road trip, you will want to optimize a route for traveling to all of those locations. Since you're going to be away from home for a long period of time, you'll want to make the most of your time while you're out sourcing.

The first thing you need to decide is what kind of route you are planning on making. There are two main types of road trip arbitrage routes you can make:

1. Round Trip in One Day - This route is one that you plan out so that when you're done for the day, you're back at your starting point again. This is best for day-long trips where you plan on coming back home when you're done sourcing for inventory. You want your route to make a "loop" of some sort so that you're making stops both going away from and heading back to your starting point.



2. Overnight Trip - This is the route usually used if your arbitrage road trip is one where you need to stay the night along the way. Maybe you live in one city, but want to plan a sourcing road trip to a new city that's not close enough for a day trip. You can plan strategic stops between both cities that might yield some profitable inventory. This is one of our favorite types of trips because we love sourcing at rural retail stores. Some of these more rural stops have never been sourced by other sellers, so the potential for finding a lot of profitable inventory is increased.

Sometimes, we'll even combine the two strategies above. We'll plan to source some stores in a new city, but we'll also source some rural retail stores along the way. One year, we took an overnight trip to source stores in Kansas City. On day one, we drove from Texas to Kansas City and sourced some rural retail stores along the way. While in Kansas City, we planned two days worth of round trip sourcing all around Kansas City. Then, on the last day, we sourced for inventory at a few places on the way back home to Texas. By the time we were home, we had a mini-van full of profitable inventory to sell on Amazon.

Planning Each Stop on Your Itinerary

When it comes to road trip arbitrage, you want to make the most of your time and money. There are free tools out there that can help you prepare an efficient driving route ahead of time. I (Stephen) use a couple of different methods for optimizing my retail arbitrage routes:

Google Maps — You can type in the addresses from your list of stops or just copy and paste them into Google Maps. Then you can arrange the addresses in the list according to where you're starting off and where you want to end up. One limitation with this method is that Google Maps only allows 10 stops along one route, which can be a problem if you have more than 10 stops you're wanting to make.

Speedy Route — For a more robust route with more than 10 stops, you can use SpeedyRoute.com to make your road trip arbitrage route. You can upload as many stops as you want, give it a starting and ending destination, and it will tell you the most efficient route with the lowest mileage. This helps you save both time (with the best route) and money (with less money spent on gas).



We've included a bonus video about how to plan a sourcing route with multiple stops. You can access this video by logging into your Full-Time FBA account and checking out the bonus materials for this course.

One factor to consider in the planning process is how long you'll be at each stop along the route. If you're planning on going to multiple Walgreens stores during your arbitrage road trip, then think about how much time you usually spend sourcing at Walgreens. Or if you plan on going to many different stores, then think about how long you usually take when sourcing stores in general. Work this time into your schedule as you're making your route. If you don't have any idea how long you spend sourcing at a specific store, then start taking notes now to get a better idea about the time you spend at each store. Sure, one store you might not find much, so it takes you 15 minutes, while other times you may fill up two carts and spend 2 1/2 hours in the store. **But on average, how long do you usually spend when sourcing at a retail store?**

Knowing how much time you usually spend sourcing at each store will impact your plans when it comes to creating your route. If you usually spend one hour per stop, then you do not want to plan 20 stops for a 10 hour sourcing time slot. In addition to sourcing time, you also need to calculate the drive time between stores and include that amount as you're planning the number of stores on your route. Google does a pretty good job of guesstimating the time it takes to go from one stop to the next, so you can use Google Maps to get a good idea of the possible drive time between stops.

I almost always plan for a few more stops than I think I'll be able to actually make in the time I have allowed for my arbitrage road trip. I do this because I'd rather over plan than under plan. If my first few stops go much faster than I expect, then I'll be happy I have more stops planned for the trip to make up for those first few stops. **Being prepared is one of the secrets to being successful at road trip arbitrage.**

On the other hand, I also know that if my first few stops are awesome (meaning, I spent a whole lot more time there than a usual stop) then **I might need to adjust my plans accordingly.** No matter if my plan is a round trip route or an A-B route, I know I might need to skip some of the middle stops in order to still make it home at a decent hour.

Another factor to consider when you're planning your route is whether or not you need to drop off inventory at a prep center along the way. The next chapter will include more details about deciding whether a local prep center is right for you and your business, but just know that if you're going to do an RA drop-off at a prep center, you will also need to include the prep center address in the route you're planning and include the timing of the stop in your overall schedule.

Speaking of being prepared, don't forget to plan meals, plan rest, and plan anything else you can think you might need to do while you're out on the road. If you're trying to be healthy, it's good to even know the exact place you'll eat your meals along the way. If you just "wing it" with your meal planning, you might end up at Wing Stop with a meal that totally wrecks your diet. We usually try to find eating stops along our route where we can make healthier meal choices, like Panera Bread, Zoe's Kitchen, Subway, or even a salad from Chick-Fil-A or Wendy's.

Planning for Accommodations

Sometimes road trip arbitrage can be a one-day route, but to really make the most of your sourcing opportunities you may want to plan for sleeping accommodations along the way. If your road trip takes you to a new town and you're wanting to make the most of your time, pick a place to stay somewhere close by all the stops you're wanting to make both before and after it's time for bed that first night. If there is a huge retail shopping center you plan to hit, then see if you can find a place to stay nearby. If you're planning a trip to a big time neighborhood garage sale, see if there is an affordable AirBnb in or near the neighborhood.

Just be careful on choosing your accommodations that the price is not so high that it eats away at the overall profits from your arbitrage road trip. We like to use websites like Priceline to find cheap deals on hotels. You can usually get the cheapest deal available by booking a "no cancellations, no refunds" rate, if you are absolutely certain your plans won't change. We usually wait until the week of the trip (or even the day of the trip) to make these reservations so that we know for certain we'll be able to check in to the hotel on the day of our booking. You can often save a significant percentage of the room rate by choosing a "no cancellations" booking.



We've included a bonus video about how to sort through the hotels on a travel website to find the best "express deals." You can access this video by logging into your Full-Time FBA account and checking out the bonus materials for this course.

Another way you can maximize your savings on accommodations is to use [Rakuten](#) (formerly Ebates) when making your reservations. Be sure to go through the Rakuten

website or click the Rakuten Chrome extension before you make your reservation on Priceline or other travel website.

Conclusion

When it comes to making the most of your arbitrage road trip, being prepared is key. You'll want to plan ahead as much as you can so when it's time for the trip, you can spend all your mental energy on sourcing for profitable inventory and not waste it on things like where to source, where to eat, or where to stay the night. For you spontaneous folks out there, it might not seem that important to plan ahead like this, but these road trip arbitrage journeys can be pretty exhausting mentally and physically. The more you can focus your mental energy on sourcing, the better buying decisions you'll make.

At the end of the trip, you'll most likely have a full vehicle (or full trailer, if you went that route), and now it's time to know how best to handle all of your inventory. In the next chapter, we'll break down the steps for deciding how to get your inventory ready to send to Amazon.

Chapter 6 - Shipping to FBA

As we mentioned earlier in the book, one of the crucial decisions you need to make before you set out on your road trip is how you plan to ship your inventory to the Amazon FBA warehouse. This decision will affect several other aspects of your trip:

- what size vehicle you need to drive
- how much time you will spend sourcing each day (do you need to save time each day for prepping/shipping from the road?)
- what size inventory you will buy (will larger items fit in your vehicle?)
- what types of inventory you will buy (does it need to be polybagged or bubble-wrapped?)

In the rest of this chapter, we want to discuss several options for how you can prep and ship your road trip inventory to the FBA warehouse. The following chapter will go into more details about the types of supplies you might need for your road trip, both for sourcing and for prepping and shipping.

We highly recommend that you familiarize yourself with Amazon's guidelines for prepping and shipping your inventory to the FBA warehouses. Their guidelines include information on shipping box requirements, labeling your inventory, protecting your inventory from damage at the warehouse, and much more. To read through the guidelines for yourself, you can use our short link to take you directly to the Amazon Seller Central web page: www.fulltimefba.com/prepguidelines.

Prepping and Shipping from Your Home Base

In many instances, the easiest method of prepping and shipping your road trip inventory will be to bring it all back home to prep and ship it just as you would any other RA inventory, whether that's from your home, your office space, or wherever. You can use this method if you're doing a day trip and filling up the back of your vehicle or if you're going on a longer trip, so long as you have enough space in your vehicle to get everything back home safely (without having to leave your travel partner behind to make more space!).

When we use this method, we often like to organize inventory items in our vehicle according to the type of prep necessary for shipment to FBA, as a way to speed up the shipment process when we get back home. Whenever possible, we'll put items requiring similar prep together in the vehicle so that it's easy to grab them by groups back at our work space. **Here's a few ideas for how we might categorize items:**

- Items only requiring a label

- Items requiring a price sticker removed and a label
- Items requiring a poly bag and a label
- Items requiring price sticker removal, poly bag, and label

Even if we don't take the time to organize our car this way, we typically organize the items in these types of categories once we get back to our work space. Sometimes on the road we're in more of a hurry to get to the next sourcing stop, so we don't take the time to be 100% organized. But if we can organize inventory into categories when we get back home, it helps us get a quick shipment out to the FBA warehouse fairly soon after our trip. If we have 100 items that only need a barcode label and no other prep, we like to put those items together in an easy FBA shipment and send it off ASAP, saving the other 200 items that require more prep for a later shipment. This method helps us keep feeding the beast!

For more details on our work space and some tips about prepping inventory, check out these blog posts:

- [The Optimized Full-Time FBA Work & Shipping Station](#)
- [An Insider's Look at the Full-Time FBA Processing Desk](#)
- [Tool Review: Box Sizer – Create the Perfect-Sized Shipping Box](#)
- [How To Use An Impulse Sealer to Poly Bag and Shrink-Wrap Your Inventory](#)
- [The Best \(and Easiest\) Way to Remove Price Stickers From Your Inventory](#)

Prepping and Shipping from a Prep Center

Another great option for processing your road trip inventory is to use a prep center. This method is great for saving time and effort from the work of prepping and shipping inventory, freeing you up to take care of other tasks in your business or your life. Using a prep center for RA inventory comes with a major limitation, however, in that you need to have a way to transport the inventory from where you pick it up to the prep center location.

If you routinely use a prep center for RA drop-offs in your local area, you shouldn't have any problems working out how to drop off a larger RA haul from your arbitrage road trip. If you don't have a local prep center, you might be able to find one within driving distance of your road trip route, and then you can work the prep center drop-off into your return leg of your trip. **Be sure to coordinate with the prep center management to make sure they will be open and available during the time frame of your return trip.**

Another option we've heard folks use is to source a large amount of inventory on a road trip and then ship it via UPS or FedEx to their prep center, so that the prep center can

process it and then send it on to Amazon. Personally, we haven't used this method because the cost of shipping to the prep center is too high and cuts into our profits too much. Remember, when you're shipping your inventory from your place of business to the FBA warehouse, you are able to use Amazon's partner rate for UPS and FedEx. Since you don't get that discounted rate when you're shipping to other locations, the costs can really climb up fast. If you do the math and find that it works for you, then great — but we haven't found it to be a profitable method.

For more information on finding and using a prep center, check out these blog posts:

- [Using a Prep Center for Your Amazon FBA Business](#)
- [How to Choose a Quality Prep Center For Your Amazon FBA Business](#)

Prepping and Shipping from the Road

If you're planning to be on the road for an extended amount of time or your vehicle is limited in the amount of inventory it can carry, **you might consider whether prepping and shipping from the road is a viable option for your trip.** As with many other aspects of planning for your road trip, the decision to prep and ship while you're on the road requires a bit of planning ahead to make it a successful, efficient use of your time and resources. You will need to think through all the supplies needed to prep your inventory, and be sure to bring them with you on the trip or have an alternative way to carry out certain tasks. We'll go into more detail in the next chapter about the types of supplies you will want to bring with you, so we won't cover that topic in length here.



Note: The decision to prep and ship from the road doesn't have to be all or nothing. You can choose to do some tasks on the road and save others for when you get back to your home base. For example, we have chosen on past road trips to bring along a heat gun and Scotty peelers so that we can bring our inventory into our hotel room in the evenings and begin the process of removing price stickers. Then when we get home we can polybag and label the inventory and ship it off to the FBA warehouse. In other cases, we have brought along more supplies so that we can send an entire shipment off from a relative's house. It's up to you how you prefer to divide up your time and how you accomplish these tasks.

Paying Amazon to Prep Your Inventory

In some instances, you might consider shipping your inventory directly to the Amazon FBA warehouse from your road trip and paying to have Amazon prep your inventory for you. In general, we prefer not to pay Amazon for prep services because it's more cost efficient to

do it ourselves or have a 3rd-party prep center do it for us. But sometimes cost isn't the only consideration, and the convenience of sending the inventory directly to Amazon might outweigh the Amazon prep fees. As always, you will need to do your due diligence in investigating ahead of time how much the Amazon fees will be and how that will affect the bottom line of your profits from the inventory you want to send in.

Items in any condition or category are eligible for Amazon FBA prep services as long as they have a scannable barcode with a ISBN, UPC, EAN, or JAN number. When you are creating your shipping plan, you will be given the option to indicate who will prep the inventory items in the shipment; be sure to enable the setting for Amazon to prep your inventory. (Also, don't forget to change this setting back when you are creating your next shipment where you will prep your inventory yourself!)

For more information on having Amazon prep your inventory, including a table with fees for various services, check out this link in Amazon Seller Central.

[<https://sellercentral.amazon.com/gp/help/G201023020>]

Temporary Changes to Account Settings

Depending on the choices you make from the suggestions above, you will possibly need to make a few temporary changes in your Seller Central settings while you're on your road trip. If you do make any changes, be sure to change these settings back (as necessary) when you do your next FBA shipment from your regular home location.

- **Shipping address to FBA warehouse**

If you are shipping from the road or if you are using a prep center, you will need to add a new "shipping from" address to your Amazon seller account. In Seller Central, you can add a new shipping address from within the new shipment you have created. The shipment will automatically default to your business address on file with Amazon, but you can click "Ship from another address" to add your address on the road or the prep center address. If you use InventoryLab to list your inventory, you can add your new shipping address at the time you are creating a new batch.

Again, please note that if you start adding new "shipping from" addresses to your account, you will need to pay close attention to your selections when you create future shipments. The "shipping from" address affects your inbound shipping fees and possibly even the warehouses Amazon sends your inventory to, so you want to make sure you have it set correctly for each of your future shipments.

- **User permissions for prep center**

If you are using a prep center to prep and ship your inventory, you will need to set up user permissions within your Seller Central account so they can list and ship your inventory for you. We suggest that you **keep all permissions set to "None"** except the following:

- Manage FBA Inventory/Shipments set to **View & Edit**
- Manage Inventory/Add a Product set to **View & Edit**

If you're using an account management service to handle your feedback, reimbursements, or other back office tasks, they will need more user permissions. But to list inventory and send shipments, the prep center only needs these very limited permissions, so you will be able to protect sensitive information about your business and personal data held within your account.

- **Inventory Placement or not?**

In some cases, you might choose to turn on the Inventory Placement service to reduce the number of shipping locations for your shipments on the road. You can toggle Inventory Placement on and off for each shipment within Seller Central.

A few points to note about using Inventory Placement:

- Inventory Placement will incur a per-item fee for the inventory in that shipment.
- Certain items (such as over-sized items, clothing, shoes, etc) must go to a special FBA warehouse, so you cannot avoid having those items split into their own shipments, even if you have Inventory Placement turned on.
- Don't forget to turn Inventory Placement back off for your next shipment back home, if you intend to only use it for one shipment on the road.

Conclusion

Hopefully this chapter has given you a thorough idea of the options available to you for prepping and shipping your inventory purchased on an RA road trip. Every business is different, so feel free to proceed with confidence in choosing the option that works best for you — and just know that what works best might change from one trip to the next. You might experiment with one option on your first trip and decide it's not the most efficient method for your business. That's great! Now you can move on to finding an even better option.

Next let's dive in to making sure you have all the supplies you will need to source and possibly prep and ship on your road trip!

Chapter 7 - Supplies for Your Trip

A key component of a successful RA road trip is making sure you have all the necessary supplies before you head out on your sourcing journey. For the sake of this chapter, we're going to divide these supplies into two categories:

- RA Sourcing Tools
- Prepping and Shipping Supplies

You may choose to use all or none of the tools we cover in this chapter. **Our main purpose is to get you thinking ahead of time of items you don't want to forget when you hit the road.** If you use different types of tools for your usual RA sourcing, be sure to take those tools — don't feel like you have to go out and buy the things we're mentioning in this chapter if you already know what you're comfortable with for sourcing. Unless otherwise noted, all of the tools and supplies we cover in this chapter are items that we personally use on a regular basis for our sourcing road trips and wouldn't want to leave home without them.

RA Sourcing Tools

1. Smart phone — You probably are aware by now just how important a smart phone with good wireless service is for your RA sourcing success. Some folks choose to use a tablet instead, but I find them to be too bulky and cumbersome for scanning inventory in stores. We personally use iPhones, but others swear by Android phones. Whichever type of phone you choose, be sure that all the apps you like to use while sourcing are available on that operating system.

2. Car charger and back-up battery power for your phone — I (Stephen) try to make it a habit to plug my phone into the car charger between every stop while I'm driving on an arbitrage road trip. Sometimes, though, I still need more battery power while I'm scanning in a store. I always carry with me a back-up battery power source that I charge up the night before and can easily use to charge my phone in the store while I continue to scan. I've been in a store in the past and watched my battery drain from 90% to 30% after only one or two aisles because there was just so much great clearance inventory to scan. Sometimes I even carry a back-up for my back-up!

3. Water bottle for hydration — We mentioned it briefly in a previous chapter, but your health is an important component of your success in an RA trip, particularly on a long-distance RA trip. You have to make sure you're taking care of yourself and getting enough food and water to keep your energy up during the trip. If you don't drink enough water, in particular, you could end up getting dehydrated and getting a headache, which could bring your road trip to a halt. We always bring along reusable water bottles for the car, and if we

need to refill them we buy a gallon water jug for \$1 at a grocery store or gas station along the way — depending on where you're sourcing, the store you're at may even sell water jugs. Our family loves the Contigo brand of water bottles, and we each have our own color bottle to keep them separate. Stephen prefers the [20-ounce stainless steel](#) bottle, while Rebecca and the boys like the [24-ounce plastic](#) bottles.



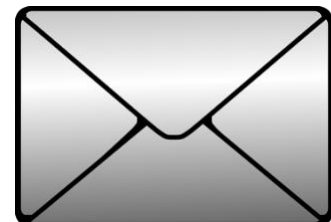
4. [Scotty peeler](#) — You've probably got a few Scotty peelers around your office space to use when you're removing price stickers during the prepping process, but I also like to carry one in my pocket to use in the store when I'm sourcing. Sometimes a store will put a sticker over the UPC barcode of items, and I like to have a Scotty peeler handy to partially peel back that sticker so I can more easily scan the barcode. "Whaaaaat? You partially peel off a sticker *in the store*?" Yep. I'm not shy about. I'm not destroying anything, I'm not stealing anything, I'm not trying to switch stickers. I've never had anyone confront me about it. If someone told me to stop, I would, but there's really nothing wrong with peeling back a sticker a bit — so why not bring along a Scotty peeler to make it easier?

5. [Gift cards](#) — Gift cards can be a great way to increase your ROI on your FBA inventory, if you get those gift cards for a good deal. You can buy discounted gift cards on websites like [Raise](#), and then use those gift cards to make your RA or OA purchases for your business. Be sure to check out Raise or other websites well in advance of your road trip so that if you need to wait for a physical gift card to be mailed to you, you have enough time to receive it before your departure.

6. [Sharpie](#) — Going along with the gift cards, you need to keep a Sharpie or other permanent marker in the glove box of your vehicle so you can mark the current balance on your gift cards as you use them throughout the trip.

7. [Earbuds with a built-in microphone](#) — I like to source in stores with my earbuds hooked up to my phone for a couple of reasons. One, I can use this time to listen to a podcast or audiobook while I'm sourcing, if I'm in a store where I'm not having to do a lot of mental calculations. Two, if I have my earbuds in, I'm able to answer phone calls and use the built-in mic to talk, but I still have the use of both hands to keep scanning inventory or pushing the cart while I'm on the call.

8. [Envelope for receipts](#) — We'll go into more details about receipts in the bookkeeping chapter, but I wanted to mention here that you should bring along an envelope to keep your receipts safe while you're on the road.



Notice that I didn't put a bluetooth scanner on my list. I know lots of RA folks swear by using a bluetooth scanner when they're out sourcing, but I've never used one and feel like it's an unnecessary expense. I'm perfectly happy with the results I get from my iPhone by itself. To each his own, right?

Prepping and Shipping Supplies

The amount of prepping and shipping supplies you need to take on your arbitrage road trip depends on which method you choose for sending your inventory items to the FBA warehouse. If you are planning to bring all of your inventory back to your work space to prep and ship yourself or if you are planning to drop it off at a prep center, you don't really need to bring any supplies along with you, other than a sheet or large drop cloth to cover your inventory in the back of your vehicle to hide it from prying eyes.

If you are planning to prep and ship from the road, you will want to think through which of the following items you will need to bring along with you to get the job done. As I mentioned in the sourcing section above, I'm giving you a list of items I have found to be helpful — you might find that you can get by with fewer supplies than these, or you might have other items you would add to the list. This section is merely a jumping off point so that you can come up with your own must-have packing list for your next arbitrage road trip.

I'm going to sub-divide this section into prep supplies and shipping supplies. If you are going to be doing some light prepping on the road and then ship your items when you get back home, you can make your packing list from the prep supplies. If you're going to do both your prepping and shipping from the road, you will want to check out both the prep supplies and the shipping supplies.

Prep supplies

All of these items can be packed into a medium-sized cardboard box for easy transport in and out of your vehicle.

1. **Scotty Peeler** — One of the most annoying parts of retail arbitrage is taking off the price stickers of your latest inventory purchase. These tools are the perfect way to peel off the stickers from the item without damaging the original package.



2. **Goo Gone spray gel** — If any sticky residue remains on an item after you use a Scotty Peeler to remove a sticker, simply use Goo Gone and scrape off the goo with the Scotty Peeler.

3. **Heat gun** — Some price stickers also need a little help from a heat gun to make them come off more easily. Don't forget to check out [this blog post](#) to see Stephen demonstrate how to remove price stickers quickly and effectively.

4. **Scissors and paper towels** — When you are cleaning sticker residue off of your inventory, you'll need to use paper towels to help wipe up the mess. The scissors are used

for multiple purposes, such as cutting poly bags, opening up boxes, cutting labels, and more.

5. Poly bags — According to [Amazon guidelines](#), there are many items that need to be polybagged if you plan on sending them to a FBA warehouse. These bags protect your inventory from the dirt and dust found in a FBA warehouse. Poly bags come in various sizes and thickness. Be sure you know what minimum requirements Amazon has for poly bags.

6. 2-inch packing tape gun – When I'm prepping inventory items to ship from the road, in the interest of packing lighter, I do not bring along an impulse sealer to close off the poly bags. Instead, I use a piece of 2-inch packing tape to close off the bags.



7. Suffocation labels — Each and every poly bag that you use on a product needs to have a suffocation warning label. Some poly bags come with warnings printed on them, but for the ones that don't, it's a good idea to have these stickers handy. If you use a poly bag and do not make sure there is a suffocation warning on the bag, then you will be in violation of Amazon guidelines.

8. Blank labels — I use these blank Avery labels to cover UPC barcodes while I'm poly bagging my inventory. Always make sure you leave at least one unit with the barcode exposed so you can easily scan it when you're listing your shipment.

Shipping supplies

When it comes to shipping supplies, you need to decide how streamlined you want to be with the items you pack, versus how convenient you want the packing and shipping process to be. Do you want to pack all your shipping boxes to bring along with you so you don't have to spend time searching for them, or do you want to save money and space by finding free boxes while you're out on the road? Do you want to bring along your own printer for your labels, or can you use a printer at your hotel or elsewhere?

You need to weigh the different factors in each instance and decide:

Do I want to pack an item from my office to make the job more convenient while I'm on the road?

OR

Do I want to do a little more work at the job of shipping from the road, but save space in my vehicle by not packing my whole office?

With all that having been said, here's a list of potential shipping supplies you could take for FBA shipments from the road:

1. Laptop — For listing your inventory, either through Seller Central or InventoryLab.

2. [USB barcode scanner](#) — For scanning UPC barcode labels as you list your inventory.



3. [Dymo 450 LabelWriter and labels](#) — For labeling your inventory as you list.

4. Other portable printer — For printing shipping labels or barcode labels.

5. [Avery 5160 labels](#) — Also called 30-up labels, used for barcode labels on your inventory (if you're not using the Dymo 450).

6. [Avery 8126 labels](#) — Used as shipping labels for the boxes going to the FBA warehouses.

7. Boxes for shipping — We use packing boxes from Walmart, Lowes, or The Home Depot.

8. [Shipping scale](#) — We use this mighty little 8"x8" scale that will weigh boxes up to 100lbs with accuracy. The weight is shown on an LCD display connected to the scale with an extendable cord. This means you can put a big, heavy box on the scale, but still see how much it weighs on the separate display.



9. [3-inch tape gun](#) — This was seriously a game changer when it came to optimizing my packing and shipping experience. For years, I'd only used a 2-inch tape gun, but one day I realized I was using about three strips of tape when securing the bottom and top of the box. I was using too much tape and wasting time as well. Now, I just use one strip of 3-inch tape to secure the base of the box and one strip of 3-inch tape to close the top of the box. It saves me both time and money.

10. [Tape measure](#) — When you create your own box sizes, you really need to know the exact dimensions to tell Amazon so you can be charged the right amount for shipping.

11. [Power scissors](#) — You could probably get by with an average utility knife for cutting shipping boxes, but these scissors are simply amazing. They make sizing down a box or creating a custom-sized box very easy.

12. [Box resizer](#) — Along those same lines, I highly recommend using a box resizing tool to create your own custom-sized boxes for shipping to FBA. Cutting your boxes down to size helps save you money in multiple ways: 1) Smaller boxes mean less shipping costs; 2) Smaller boxes mean you need less dunnage to fill boxes; 3) Less dunnage means that the box will weigh less, which saves you money in shipping costs. The tool is easy to handle, and I use it almost daily. For a quick video of the box sizer tool in action, [click here](#).

13. Dunnage — You shouldn't need very much dunnage if you're resizing your shipping boxes, but I wanted to mention it here just in case. In all likelihood, you should be able to get enough plastic shopping bags from your sourcing trip to use as dunnage. If you need even more void fill, you could buy a newspaper to scrunch up and tie inside your plastic shopping bags as dunnage. **Note:** Be sure you don't put newsprint directly in your shipping boxes where it will come in contact with your inventory; always tie up newspaper inside a plastic bag for protection.



Conclusion

Hopefully these lists have given you a start in putting together your own packing list for your arbitrage road trip. Don't forget, these supply lists are merely suggestions — feel free to customize your own packing list and travel as lightly or not lightly as you please.

Also, don't forget to check out these blog posts for our full list of recommended office and work station supplies, some of which work great on the road:

- [The Optimized Full-Time FBA Work & Shipping Station](#)
- [An Insider's Look at the Full-Time FBA Processing Desk](#)

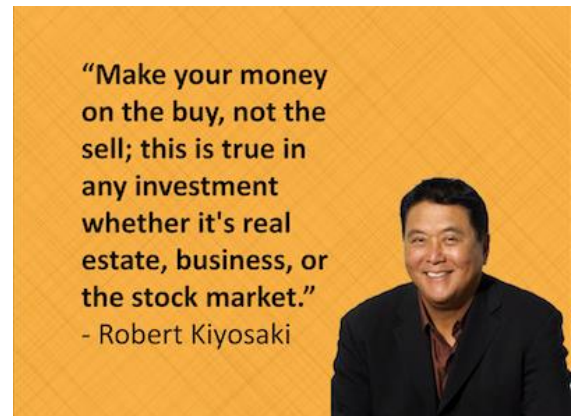
Chapter 8 - Apps for Efficiency on the Road

When you're out on the road, it's important to save as much money as you can in order to stretch your sourcing capital in order to buy more profitable inventory. In this chapter, I'll share with you the top tools and apps I use when I plan an arbitrage road trip.

Sourcing Apps

There are a few key smart phone apps that can make your arbitrage road trip go much smoother than if you tried to do things without them. I'll share with you my top apps that not only help me save a lot of time, but also help me make more profits. Some of the apps I discuss in this chapter are free, but there are also some that come with a fee but are well worth the cost. First, let's talk about my favorite apps that I use to source profitable inventory.

Remember how we mentioned in an earlier chapter that "you make your money when you buy"? When I first heard that idea, it made no sense to me. It seems backwards. But check out what Robert Kiyosaki, author of the *Rich Dad Poor Dad* books, says about this topic: **"Make your money on the buy, not the sell; this is true in any investment whether it's real estate, business, or the stock market."**



When it comes to sourcing decisions in your Amazon FBA business, you want to make sure you are making your money on the buy. Make sure you are making the best decision possible about how to spend your sourcing money, especially when you're doing road trip arbitrage on a limited budget. **Don't focus so much on selling that you don't make a good buy.** You can really end up with some crummy inventory that isn't worth being purchased in the first place, if you aren't careful and make good buying decisions on quality inventory at great prices.

Thankfully, we have available to us as Amazon FBA sellers some great smart phone apps, both free and paid, that make the process of deciding which inventory to buy much easier.

Free: Amazon Seller app

You can scan the UPC barcode of an item with the Amazon Seller app to see vital information about the item on Amazon. You can see the current Amazon sales rank, the product category, the profit (after Amazon fees) if you sell that item at the current price on Amazon, if you're approved to sell the item, as well as other information. When it comes to sourcing inventory, though, the Amazon Seller app provides limited information compared to other 3rd-party apps. The Amazon Seller app is sufficient for just getting started on

Amazon, but if you want to go further with your Amazon business and make smarter sourcing decisions, you will likely want to use a paid sourcing app.

Paid: Scoutify

I (Stephen) use the [Scoutify](#) app every time I go out to do RA, both locally and during my road trip arbitrage trips. The Scoutify app comes bundled with the InventoryLab inventory processing software, which charges a monthly fee. (We'll cover inventory processing and the software you can use for it later in this chapter.) There's no extra charge to use Scoutify if you are using InventoryLab.



When you scan a product with the Scoutify app, you can see the profitability of that item, the current sales rank, the current percentage of where the sales rank stands in comparison to the category (i.e., "Top 1% of the Toys & Games category"), how much the Amazon fees will be, how much your inbound shipping to the FBA warehouse will be, if you're approved to sell the item, if you already have this item in stock, as well as links to more key information for making your best buying decisions.

There are other scanning apps on the market for Amazon sellers, but these are the two (Scoutify and the Amazon Seller app) that I personally use. Each of these apps has similar information when scanning potential inventory, like title of product, sales rank, category, and different pricing options along with your potential profit. I use Scoutify as my main sourcing app and Amazon Seller app for other functions, such as checking sales, responding to buyer emails, and repricing inventory items on the go.

You might be asking, "Why use Scoutify if the Amazon seller app is free?" This is a good question and it has a good answer. **Here are the four biggest reasons I do not use the Amazon Seller app for sourcing:**

1. Scoutify includes links to Keepa graphs that show both pricing and sales rank history.



[Keepa](#) is an online service that tracks the price and sales rank history of almost every item sold on Amazon. Since sales ranks on Amazon are updated hourly and prices change every second, I want to look at the average sales rank and pricing numbers. For example, a toy would have a sales rank of 500,000 at one point in the day and then an hour later, because the item just sold, could have a sales rank of 120,000. Many people would pass on a toy ranked 500,000, but will buy a toy ranked 120,000 all day. At the end of the day, it's the *same toy* that is ranked differently because of recent sales.

Keepa also gives you the buy box price history, which lets Amazon FBA sellers better understand what prices they can expect to sell an item for. Keepa offers both free and paid data subscriptions. The pricing history (and other data points) is free, but the sales rank history, buy box price history, and other data points are part of the paid subscription. I

subscribe to this data, and I find it essential to making the best buying decisions for my business. For more information on Keepa data subscriptions, [click here](#).

2. Scoutify includes a quick link to apply to sell items that you're currently restricted from selling.

There is nothing worse than scanning an item, seeing that it is profitable, but then finding out you're not approved to sell that item on Amazon. Right in the Scoutify app, you can click a few buttons and request approval to sell that item in no time. The longer you've been selling with good seller metrics, the more likely you'll get approved to sell a restricted item. Right in the store, you can request approval and get an instant answer of approval or denial. You won't get approved for every item, but at least you'll know for sure in an instant.

3. The Amazon Seller app does not give you the option to include inbound shipping costs in the calculation of your profit on the item, so the profit calculation it gives you is not accurate.

Every little penny in this business can add up. With Scoutify, you can include your inbound shipping estimated costs so that Scoutify can more accurately calculate your total profits per item you're scanning in the store. It's important to know the entire fee when you're making your sourcing decisions. The size and weight of each item in the Amazon catalog is different, and a larger, heavier item is going to have higher inbound shipping costs, affecting your profit from that item. Leaving out the inbound shipping in your calculations could cause you to buy an item for resale that has lower profit potential than you realize.

4. With Scoutify, I can build a "buy list" that I can upload to InventoryLab for faster processing.

When I find a profitable item while I'm sourcing, I can quickly add that item to my Scoutify Buy List. I can enter in my buy cost, my sell price, the quantity, store I purchased the item from, the condition, the expiration date (if applicable), and anything else I want in the notes section. Then, when I'm ready to send my inventory to Amazon, I can upload that buy list to InventoryLab and my shipment will create itself! No need to re-enter any of the information.

Now, if you're on a tight budget, then you can use the free Amazon Seller app to source for profitable inventory, but just know that you're missing out on more data that will help you make better sourcing decisions. To download the Amazon Seller app, just search for "Amazon Seller" in the app store of your phone. To read our full review of the Amazon Seller app, [click here](#).

To try out Scoutify (which comes bundled with InventoryLab) then you can sign up for a free month [at this link](#). To read my full review about Scoutify, [click here](#).

Automatically Track Your Mileage

Did you know that the miles you drive to source for profitable inventory can be logged as a deductible business expense? Maybe you knew that, but have you ever done a great day of retail arbitrage and forgotten to write down your mileage? I think all resellers have experienced that many times before.

Tracking your business mileage may seem like an inconsequential part of your Amazon business, but in reality those miles can really add up over the course of a year. You don't want to miss out on a single mile if at all possible! Over time you can save a lot of money in your business by writing off the mileage on your tax return that comes from these business trips. Your CPA or tax preparer is going to want to see those miles at the end of the year, and you need a way to smoothly record all of your business related trips, especially when it comes to road tip arbitrage. **Note: Always speak with a CPA or tax professional to make sure that the types of trips you are recording qualify to be written off.**

In the past I've used a number of different solutions for recording my mileage, some of which worked better than others. I started off by carrying a little notebook and pen in my car to write my details down for start mileage, end mileage, destination, and purpose of the trip – but who knows how many times I forgot to write it down over the course of the year! I even left a sticky note on my dashboard for years with the word "MILEAGE" in all caps, in an attempt to remind myself to record my trips. If I didn't manage to remember, I would have to go to Google Maps and try to recreate my trip and estimate my mileage. Then I progressed to using a couple of different smart phone apps to help me record mileage, and they were just OK. They were more convenient than trying to jot things down in a notebook, but they still didn't help me solve my main problem: remembering to record my miles!

Finally I found the [MileIQ app](#), and I landed on an automatic solution that saves me time in recording my mileage and (more importantly!) saves me from having to remember to record it. The way the MileIQ app works is by running in the background as you drive to different destinations throughout the course of your everyday life. The app tracks each trip you make in a vehicle, logs it, and learns how to categorize it.



The app knows when you start and stop a trip, and all you have to do is review your trips at the end of the day and tell the app whether it was a business or personal trip – all with one-swipe classification. Swipe one direction for personal, the other direction for business. There is so much more to just how awesome MileIQ is that you can [click here](#) and read my full review of the app.

Want to try MileIQ out for free? If you go through [this link](#), MileIQ offers a free trial of 40 drives per month and a 20% discount off an annual subscription if you decide to upgrade. The subscription comes out to a few dollars a month, but it could add up to hundreds of dollars saved by logging miles you would otherwise forget.

Get Cash Back While Sourcing Inventory

Many resellers use the free tool [Rakuten](#) (formerly Ebates) in order to get cash back on many of their online purchases, but did you know that Rakuten can also give you cash back on select in-store purchases as well? Simply link your debit/credit card with Rakuten and you'll be getting cash back in no time. It's easy to use! Simply find an offer through Rakuten (on the Rakuten site or in the Rakuten app) and link it to your card. Then go shopping, and soon after you'll see the cash back start to add up in your account. Every quarter, Rakuten will send you a "Big Fat Check" in the mail or via PayPal.

To read my full review about Rakuten, [click here](#). If you're ready to sign up for Rakuten, then click [this link](#) and Rakuten will give you a \$10 bonus, just for using their service. It's free to use, doesn't cost you any more at the checkout register, and helps you rack up cash back. If you're not using Rakuten for online or in-store use, you're throwing away money.

Using Store Loyalty Cards for More Savings

Most retail stores have loyalty or membership programs that offer savings, perks, and special deals. Depending on the store, you might get cheaper prices, limited time coupons, an extended return policy, or possibly an opportunity to rack up points to exchange for store gift cards. Each store is different, so be sure to know what the perks are for each store you source at.

Usually, a loyalty rewards or membership programs comes with a small plastic card with a barcode linked to your account. Sometimes the plastic card can even have a hole in it so that it fits on to your keychain for easy access. The only problem is that carrying too many of these cards on your keychain can be really annoying. And who wants these plastic cards on a keychain anyway? It's great to be signed up for these store loyalty perks, but there must be a better way to organize everything.

Enter the Key Ring app, available on both Android and Apple app stores. Key Ring scans and stores all of your loyalty and membership cards in one place. Need to access your Tuesday Morning Perks card? Simply open the app, scroll down to the Tuesday Morning store logo, and up pops your card's membership number and scannable barcode. Just let the store employee scan your phone's screen (while you're holding the phone) and you get the benefits of the card without having a pocket or purse full of plastic loyalty cards.



If you purchase discount gift cards online (which I highly recommend in order to save even more on you inventory buys) then you can even scan and save your gift cards on this app. No need to look for a plastic gift card or print out an e-gift card anymore. You can save all your gift cards on this app as well.

If you're new to buying discount gift cards, the site I recommend is [Raise](#). I can find gift cards on Raise that are discounted from 2% up to 20% off the face value of the card. For example, I can sometimes get a \$100 gift card from Raise for only \$85. That's \$15 in free money just by buying a discounted gift card. And I can save all my gift cards on the Key Ring app!

Conclusion

These are the main apps and tools we use during road trip arbitrage, as well as during any of our local retail arbitrage trips. Each of these apps help us save time, be better organized, make better buying decisions, and at the end of the day, make more profits. Try some out for yourself to see how well they work for you.

Chapter 9 - Bookkeeping on the Road

One of the top success tips for any type of business is to **know your numbers**. When you know your numbers, you're able to make much better decisions for your business. Keeping track of your business numbers over time helps you know for sure if your business is growing or if there are places for improvement. And, of course, when tax season comes along, knowing your numbers will give you peace of mind that your taxes are taken care of correctly.

But when you're out sourcing on the road, there are a few very important financial matters that might slip through the cracks that could really come back to hurt you financially and possibly even legally. In this chapter, we'll share with you some of the most important bookkeeping tasks that you need to stay on top of while on your arbitrage road trip.

Handling Receipts

You probably already know you need to keep all of the receipts connected with any of your business activity. This is no different when you're doing road trip arbitrage. **Keeping your receipts will help you:**

- prove the items purchased are a true business expense
- prove authenticity of an item in case you ever get a counterfeit or intellectual property (IP) claim from a brand on Amazon
- return an item to a store for a refund in case you need to for one reason or another

Not only should you keep your inventory purchase receipts, you'll also want to keep other receipts from your arbitrage road trip:

- meal receipts
- gas receipts
- hotel/lodging receipts
- any other receipt where you spent money connected to the main purpose of your arbitrage road trip

If you happen to plan a road trip arbitrage trip and one evening and take a break to catch a movie at the theater, then that movie receipt is not deemed as connected to the main work purpose. You can do whatever you want with that receipt (keep it or toss it), but using it as a business expense is not allowed. **As always, speak with a local CPA (certified public accountant) or tax professional for the laws/rules/regulations that apply to you in your state.**

Protecting Your Profits

It's important, especially when you're doing road trip arbitrage, to choose a designated place to keep all of your receipts. I (Stephen) usually bring an envelope with me during my arbitrage road trips, or sometimes I'll designate one of the zippered pouches in my backpack to keep all of my receipts. The important thing is to keep them in one place so that a week after your trip you're not still finding random receipts in your back pocket, in the console of your car, or any other place that a receipt might end up.

You'll also want to **keep these receipts out of the sunlight**. Almost all of the receipts used by stores today do not use ink, but instead use a thermal printer. These printers use heat to make the imprints on the receipts. Over time, the text on thermal receipts fade away. The more time a receipt spends in any light, the faster the print fades away. This is an important fact to remember at all times, not just on road trips. When you get home from your trip, it's important that all of your business receipts are protected from the light. I actually use a small Amazon shipping box to store my current and previous years receipts. I have a different box for each year's receipts. Once each year is over, I tape up the box to be sure it's dark inside permanently.

Tracking Mileage

In Chapter 8, I introduced you to the MileIQ app and showed you just how easy it is to automatically track your mileage, both during an arbitrage road trip and any time when you're taking a business-related drive. The business-related miles you drive are tax deductible, so it's important to track the miles correctly.

In January of every year, [MileIQ](#) emails you a mileage summary for the previous year. You can use that document when you file your tax return, in order to deduct the business-related mileage as a business expense. Every mile and every penny matter when it comes reducing your tax liability, so use MileIQ to automate this part of your business. For my full MileIQ review and how to save money on signing up for it, [click here](#).

Tracking Your Inventory Numbers

We are among the many Amazon sellers who use [InventoryLab](#) to list our inventory on Amazon, and for RA sourcing we use Scoutify, the inventory sourcing app that comes bundled with Inventory Lab. But we also love one of the lesser known functions of InventoryLab: the ability to run some really useful reports to help us run our business in a much more profitable fashion.



We can run **category profitability reports** and know with certainty which Amazon categories are most profitable for our business within a given time period. With this information, we source more items from those profitable categories. Likewise, we can use

supplier profitability reports to see exactly which stores provide the most profitable items for us to sell. Again, we'll spend more of our time sourcing from these stores than the stores where we don't find as many profits. The reports you can see from InventoryLab are incredible...as long as you're using them correctly.

While you're sourcing on your arbitrage road trip, use the Scoutify sourcing app (mentioned in Chapter 8) and be sure to enter in your buy details when you find an item worth reselling on Amazon. It only takes a few seconds to add the store name, the buy cost, your sell price, the quantity you're buying to resell, and the condition. Some of these data points are actually sticky, which means they will stay the same from item to item as you source, and they won't change until you change them. I only have to tell the app I'm buying a *new* product to sell one time, and it remembers for every item I buy, until I find an item that needs a different condition. The same goes for the store name. If I walk into a Walgreens, then I tell Scoutify the items I'm buying for resale are from Walgreens, and I don't need to change that setting until I walk into a different store.

When all is said and done, we can run reports that tell us about the profitability of our inventory, which stores are more profitable, which categories are have the best ROI, and more! Another great feature of InventoryLab is it automatically imports all the Amazon fees when calculating our profits, so we can see our real profit numbers.



A lot of our financial information is automatically pulled into InventoryLab from our Amazon Seller Central account, but InventoryLab also has a place to log and track any other business expenses we have. Purchased *Road Trip Arbitrage* to help grow your Amazon business? You can log that as an office expense fee in InventoryLab. Stayed the night at a motel while doing road trip arbitrage? You can log that as a lodging fee in InventoryLab. The possibilities are endless. Over time, you can run full reports to track the success of your Amazon business with profit and loss reports and more.

The businesses that best know their numbers are the businesses that find success the fastest. If you know your numbers, not only will you find success faster, but you'll also have the peace of mind that you're making the most informed business decisions to lead you toward business growth. When doing road trip arbitrage, it's easy to get lazy and to not track your numbers, but I promise you that you'll be so glad you tracked your numbers once you're back home and ready to look at them more seriously.

Conclusion

Bookkeeping is never a "sexy" topic, but it's 100% essential to growing a successful business that stays compliant with the laws of the land. **I highly recommend looking for a CPA who is based in your hometown (or at the very least, your home state) who understands online selling.** Most CPAs will have this understanding, but some will not. You don't want to waste your time with a CPA who does not understand the financial

implications of reselling items online from your home. It's important to get a CPA who will give you the best advice based on your own local laws.

Not only do I recommend getting a CPA in your hometown, but I also suggest finding a CPA who has the heart of a teacher. You want your CPA to be able to explain in regular, everyday terms what they're doing to best handle your financial numbers. If your CPA is confusing you, find a new CPA.

You want to be sure you're doing all you can to stay compliant with the law as a reseller. You don't want your arbitrage road trip to be ruined because you let a few things slip through the cracks that end up hurting your Amazon business in the long run. As long as you get solid advice from a local CPA and you track as many key numbers as you can, you'll be in a great position to run your Amazon FBA business smoothly and successfully.

Chapter 10 - Making Your Trip Fun

We've spent the majority of this book talking about the nuts and bolts of how to plan an arbitrage road trip and how to make sure you get the most profits for your Amazon FBA inventory. But no road trip arbitrage book would be complete without discussing the fun parts of going on a road trip — how to get the most out of your travel by making FBA profits and also seeing the local sights or spending time with your loved ones.

There are endless ways to combine business with pleasure on an arbitrage road trip, but in the rest of this chapter we're going to give you several examples of ways that we personally have combined sourcing trips with family vacation or other personal trips. This list isn't meant to be exhaustive — there are numerous other ways to combine sourcing with personal trips. But hopefully these ideas will get you started thinking about how you can take your sourcing and your loved ones on the road together.

Personally, we're still working towards the ultimate road trip arbitrage goal: the RV life. No guarantees, but one day when the kids are grown it might be fun to take Full-Time FBA on the road in an RV. In the meantime, it's totally possible to enjoy road trip arbitrage and make great profits from our sourcing without having to downsize into a camper trailer.

Day Trip — Close to Home

In the early, early days of our Amazon business, we liked to spend the day thrifting in a town about 15-20 miles from our house. About once a month, we would drop the kids off at school and then keep driving on a pre-planned route of about 8-10 thrift stores that we didn't normally source at. The stores were familiar, but not the same locations we sourced every week like clockwork.

To make this monthly trip fun, we planned lunch at a different restaurant each time. This particular town is known for having a greater variety of ethnic restaurants than where we live, so we loved being able to try a new type of cuisine each month.

It took a lot of discipline and focus, but we were able to go to several thrift stores, enjoy a delicious lunch, and be back at school in time to pick the kids up in the carpool line.



Day Trip — Further from Home

Another thrifting and RA trip we liked to take in the early days of our business was to a town about 1 1/2 hours from our home (if you're curious, the town we're talking about is Waco in the pre-Magnolia Silos days). We could only do this trip if our kids weren't going to

be spending the night at our house after school, since it meant getting home pretty late in the evening.

On these trips, we planned a sourcing route with several thrift stores and retail stores around town. Rebecca has family that lives here, and sometimes we arranged to meet them for lunch on these days. She also went to college here (Sic 'em, Bears!), so depending on the season we would take in a college baseball or basketball game in the evening after we finished sourcing, before driving home to sleep in our own bed at night.

Holiday Trip to Visit Family

We live in the Fort Worth area, but Stephen's extended family lives several hours away in Houston. Driving to visit with family on holidays or in the summer is a perfect opportunity to source in locations where we don't typically shop. Usually we source inventory and then bring it back to our house to ship out to FBA, but we have also been known to bring along a few office supplies so we can send in a shipment from Houston.

One trip we like to take every year is to drive down to Houston, sourcing at locations along the route, and end up in Houston in time to make it downtown to Minute Maid Park for an Astros baseball game. We may or may not spend the night somewhere on the road before we get to Houston, just depending on our route and the schedule. While we're in town, we also get to spend time visiting with family.

Our kids have become accustomed to making a few stops along the way when we're driving to Houston to visit grandparents, especially at Thanksgiving time. It's so hard to pass up the awesome sales the week of Black Friday! On one memorable trip, we had a BOLO item in mind that we knew we would find at a particular store on the road to Gran's house. We made a plan beforehand so that when we arrived at the store we could maximize the opportunity. We pulled into the parking lot, and Stephen took the oldest kid in with him, while Rebecca stayed in the minivan to entertain/monitor the three younger kids. Stephen and the teenager grabbed a couple of carts, loaded them up with the BOLO, and checked out as fast as they could. Once we got to Gran's house, we set up shop in her study, where one of the younger boys helped us polybag the items using poly bags and packing tape we had brought with us. We used Gran's printer to print sheets of product labels and the shipping labels for our boxes. Gran cooked an awesome Thanksgiving dinner, and we were able to get all of our inventory out to UPS on Black Friday.



Sourcing with our kids in tow is definitely a different experience than when we can go out without them, but sometimes you just have to make do and figure out whether it's more important to make the most of a buying opportunity or to spend that time doing something else with the kids. We do our best to gauge how the kids are handling the situation, and we

don't push them too hard. We always make sure to reward them with a fun meal out at a restaurant or some other treat to show them how much we appreciate their support when we squeeze in a little sourcing on a holiday trip.

Overnight Trip — Sourcing in the Days, Family Time in the Evenings

There are numerous ways to plan your time for overnight arbitrage road trips, but we typically go on two main types of trip. The first one involves driving to a location and sourcing during the day, then spending the evenings having fun family time with sight-seeing or other events.

You probably won't be surprised to learn that these types of trips for us usually involve baseball games. We have taken arbitrage road trips to see such teams as the Houston Astros, the Kansas City Royals, the Baylor Bears, the Corpus Christi Hooks, and the Round Rock Express. We plan our trips so that the teams are playing night games, and we have plenty of time to drive and source during the day, then be at the ballpark in time to eat a hot dog for dinner and root, root, root for the home team.

We like to think we're a good luck charm — both the Astros and the Royals won the World Series in years that we took summer road trips to see them play. Another perk to combining road trip arbitrage with going to baseball games is that you can sell the team giveaway items on eBay and make even more profits. You can plan your trip with the team's promotional calendar in mind so that you maximize the value of your visit to the ballpark. Each team advertises the upcoming promotional giveaways on their website, so



we make sure we're going to games on nights with awesome freebies. In the past we have sold on eBay numerous items with baseball team logos: jerseys, t-shirts, bobble heads, beach towels, fedoras, cowboy hats, Build-a-Bears, and even ticket stubs.

Of course, you don't have to spend your free time on these sourcing road trips going to baseball games. We're just giving you one suggestion based on our own personal experience. Use your imagination and the possibilities are endless!

Overnight Trip — First Half Family Time, Second Half Sourcing

On the second type of overnight arbitrage road trip, we like to spend a few days on vacation, and then we spend one or two days sourcing as we drive back home. You could reverse the order and source first, vacation second — but we prefer to keep the sourcing at the back end of the trip so that we don't have to deal with a bunch of inventory in our vehicle while we're vacationing. That's just a personal preference, though, so it's up to you if you want to reverse the order.

In the past we have seen some wonderful sights and spent some great vacation time together across Texas on this type of arbitrage road trip. We have gone camping in a yurt in Abilene, enjoyed the bluebonnets in spring in Fredericksburg, and hiked in the Davis Mountains — and at the back end of each of those trips, we planned a sourcing route for our road trip home from vacation.



You can take all of the skills covered in the earlier chapters of this book and apply them to planning this type of overnight road trip. Typically, we like to choose our vacation destination first, and then we reverse engineer a schedule and route to get home from that destination. Often we choose to drive on back roads that will take us to rural stores that might not have been over-sourced by other resellers. Once we get home, we either self-prepare our inventory to send it to Amazon, or we drop it off at our local prep center.

Chapter 11 – Conclusion

Are you ready to hit the road and put all of your new knowledge about road trip arbitrage into practice? There's no time like the present! Hopefully you will find a way soon to get out of your local comfort zone and expand your sourcing horizons to a new location.

Whether you decide to start slowly with day trips or go all in on an overnight sourcing extravaganza, we hope you can find amazing profits on your journey. You may live in a large metropolitan area with plenty of sourcing opportunities, or you may live in a remote area with few places to buy inventory. Either way, planning an arbitrage road trip might be just what you need to give your Amazon FBA business a boost.

If you find success along the way, we would love to hear of your travels and your experiences. Feel free to share them in the [Full-Time FBA Facebook](#) group so that everyone can be encouraged by how wonderful road trip arbitrage can be.

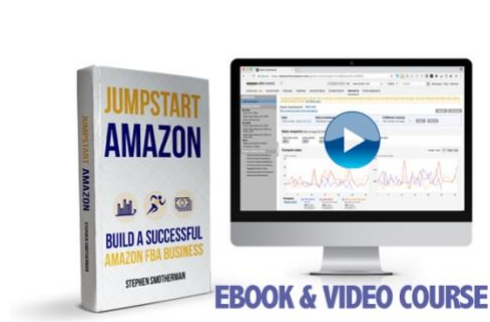
Happy trails to you!

Appendix - List of Bonuses

Please do not forget to check out all the bonus materials that come with your copy of *The Reseller's Guide to Road Trip Arbitrage*. You can log in to your Full-Time FBA account to access the videos and the PDF downloads.

- Road Trip Arbitrage Budget Worksheet (PDF)
- How to Ruin Your Arbitrage Road Trip (video)
- Planning a Sourcing Route with Multiple Stops (video)
- How to Find Great Hotel Deals using Priceline Express Deals (video)

More Resources by Stephen and Rebecca Smotherman



[*JumpStart Amazon: Build a Successful Amazon FBA Business*](#)

Since 2012, I've been able to make a full-time income by only spending part-time hours selling quality merchandise on Amazon... and you can too! Instead of you needing to spend thousands of dollars for me to coach you into an Amazon business, I've instead created an affordable course that will teach you

everything you need to know.

[*JumpStart Amazon*](#) is a combination video course (10+ hours) and ebook (200+ pages). The content in both the book and videos is almost identical, so you can decide which way you would like to learn best – watching or reading. The ebook and video course are both filled with the content and strategies you need to start a successful Amazon business from scratch. This course is set up to help you build a solid foundation and then know how to find growth and success on top of the basics. This course is the best place to start building a profitable Amazon FBA business. Use the coupon code **HIGHWAY50** to get \$50 off [*JumpStart Amazon*](#) today.

[*Next Level Amazon: Make a Full-Time Income with Only Part-Time Hours via Amazon FBA*](#)

Selling on Amazon can be a great way to build up an income to help you reach your long-term goals like supporting your family, paying off your debts, and saving for retirement. But there comes a time in every Amazon seller's business where your growth levels out.



That's why I created the course [*Next Level Amazon: Make a Full-Time Income with Only Part-Time Hours via Amazon FBA*](#). In this course I outline everything you need to know in order to work less, but make more take-home pay. It's a strategy that has helped so many people go from working 60 hour weeks just to make ends meet... to truly only working 20 or so hours each week, while still bringing home a full-time paycheck.

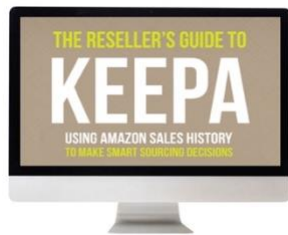
The [*Next Level Amazon*](#) course includes an ebook with over 160 pages of results-oriented content and a video component with 12 content-packed modules featuring a total of 18 videos adding up to over 5 and a half hours of video training. If you are ready to take your Amazon FBA business to the next level, you can use the code **ROAD15** to save \$15 off the [*Next Level Amazon*](#) course today.



[*The Reseller's Guide to a Year in FBA: A Month by Month Guide to a Profitable Amazon Business*](#)

This book is over 220 pages jam-packed with tips, resources, and strategies that will help you have your best Amazon FBA year ever.

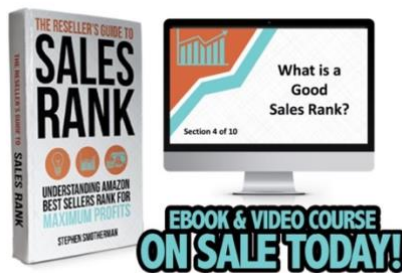
The book covers, month by month, exactly what to expect and what you need to prepare for when it comes to maximizing your profits for selling via Amazon FBA. Don't get left behind on the countless opportunities to grow your Amazon business to the next level. From January to December, [*The Reseller's Guide to a Year in FBA*](#) will help you stay ahead of the game! Use the code **TRIP15** to save \$15 off the cost of the book.



[*The Reseller's Guide to Keepa: Using Amazon Sales History to Make Smart Sourcing Decisions*](#)

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to buy inventory that almost always sells quickly? Do you ever get frustrated because it seems like by the time your inventory arrives at Amazon, your competition has “tanked” the price and you're not able to sell your inventory at the prices you wanted? If it seems like your Amazon sourcing is more of a gamble than a sure thing, then this course is for you.

[*The Reseller's Guide to Keepa*](#) is a full course featuring over 5 hours of video content that will walk you through how to use the valuable online resource Keepa to make smart sourcing decisions. Keepa records vital pricing and sales rank history for almost every item sold on Amazon. When you can properly read a Keepa graph, then you can use the data to make well-informed predictions about the future of prices and sales on Amazon. With this knowledge you can make the best sourcing decisions possible. Use the coupon code **ROADTRIP10** to save \$10 off the cost of [*The Reseller's Guide to Keepa*](#).



[*The Reseller's Guide to Sales Rank: Understanding Amazon Best Sellers Rank for Maximum Profits*](#)

Amazon sales rank is easily one of the most complicated and misunderstood aspects of selling online. Too many Amazon sellers assume if an item on Amazon has a certain “good” sales rank, it will automatically sell quickly. This assumption falls apart when the seller realizes most of their inventory is not selling at all, and to make things worse the prices of their inventory items have tanked.

[*The Reseller's Guide to Sales Rank*](#) mini-course is a combination ebook and video course that will walk you through how to best understand and interpret sales rank numbers on Amazon. The book is over 30 pages filled with teachings and illustrations that will help you understand not only how sales rank works, but also how to best use sales rank info to dramatically improve your inventory sourcing buys. The video course contains about 2 hours of content where you can see every aspect of sales rank explained in detail. [Find out more here](#) and use the code **HIGHWAY20** for 20% off the *Sales Rank* mini-course today.



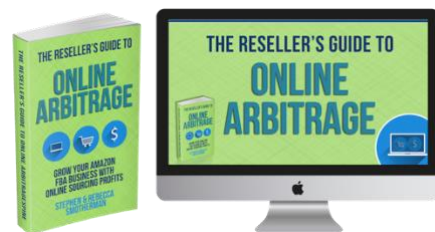
[*The Reseller's Guide to Selling Shoes: Kick Up Your Profits With New Shoes via Amazon FBA*](#)

What would your Amazon business look like if your average selling price (ASP) was \$75? How much larger would your disbursements be if you were selling higher priced items like shoes? If you're ready to kick up your profits with selling new shoes via Amazon FBA, then this course is for you!

[*The Reseller's Guide to Selling Shoes*](#) is a full course featuring a 100+ page ebook and over 4.5 hours of video content that will walk you through how to start selling shoes on Amazon. Including every topic from getting ungated in the Shoes category to finding multiple sources for profitable shoes, from properly prepping and pricing shoes to how to deal with returns (and shoe returns aren't as bad as you've heard), this course teaches you how to become a shoe selling expert. Use coupon code **JOURNEY** to save \$10 off the cost of the *Selling Shoes* course. [Find out more here.](#)

[*The Reseller's Guide to Online Arbitrage: Grow Your Amazon FBA Business with Online Sourcing Profits*](#)

For many Amazon FBA sellers, staying home to source for inventory is an important aspect of the flexibility of running your own business. Online arbitrage (OA) allows you to source for Amazon FBA inventory from the comfort of your own home – or from anywhere in the world!



If you want to add or improve your existing OA sourcing skills, then check out our course: [*The Reseller's Guide to Online Arbitrage: Grow Your Amazon FBA Business With Online Sourcing Profits.*](#)

The course is a combination video course (5+ hours of OA training) and a 100+ page ebook. The videos and book both share the exact same content (so you can pick the format you most like to learn from). The course also comes with six time-saving and money-making bonuses all at no additional charge. For \$20 off *The Reseller's Guide to Online Arbitrage*, use code **OA20** today!



[*The Reseller's Guide to Board Games: How to Turn Play Money into Real Money*](#)

I want to show you just how easy it is to make hundreds of dollars a week selling new and used board games. Selling board games is a great niche to add to your online selling business. Whether you sell on eBay or Amazon, board games can be very profitable, but only if you know what you're doing. I find so many board games to sell that I don't mind sharing with you all of my secrets.

Board games are everywhere. You just need to know where to look to find them. In [*The Reseller's Guide to Board Games*](#), I'll walk you through the complete process of finding, buying, preparing, and selling board games for maximum profits. You'll learn all the tips and tricks I use to find board games that don't just double or triple my money, but actually can take your initial investment and multiply it exponentially. You can use the coupon code **GAMETIME10** to save \$10 on your purchase of [*The Reseller's Guide to Board Games*](#).



[*Married to Reselling: Balancing Family Life With Your Online Business*](#)

Working from home sounds easy, but if you've done it for any amount of time, you know that it can be difficult. There are times at home when you need to be working, but your spouse or kids are demanding your attention. You don't want to ignore them, but sometimes it could really interfere with the work that needs to get done. And the opposite is true as well. Sometimes we can get so caught up in the life of a reseller that we begin to neglect the people we love most, who are often in the next room wondering when we're going to take a break and spend some

time with them.

In [*Married to Reselling*](#), my wife Rebecca and I will walk with you through ways we can all find success in balancing our time with family while working from home. We'll tackle both the business and personal sides of life as a reseller, and we'll help you explore a system that

works best for you and your family. This package includes the book plus some great bonuses (including videos).

If you're looking for ways to balance your family life with your online business and find success with both, then this book is for you. You can use the coupon code **RESELLING10** to save \$10 on your purchase of [Married to Reselling](#).



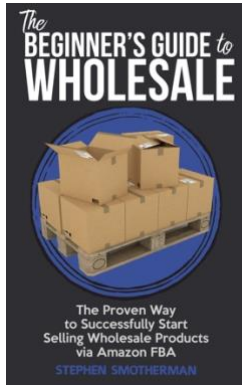
[The Reseller's Guide to Black Friday: The Fool-proof Guide to Rock Black Friday Sales Every Year](#)

I'd love to share with you about making big money on Black Friday. In fact, there is so much I want to tell you, it fills up a whole book on the topic! I decided to ask the Queen of Black Friday herself, Kristin Ostrander, to add in her own strategies, and together we published the definitive guide on Black Friday. It's called [The Reseller's Guide to Black Friday: The Fool-proof Guide to Rock Black Friday Sales Every Year](#).

The Reseller's Guide to Black Friday is a combination ebook and live online master class that will help you be properly prepared for all you need to do (and avoid doing) in order to help you save time and maximize your profits on Black Friday. From the "leaked" pre-Black Friday ads to the big shopping day and beyond, we'll walk you through everything you need to know. Covering important deadlines, multiple sourcing strategies, and how to make the absolute best use of your time and capital, this ebook will help you know how to rock Black Friday sales year in and year out. The ebook also comes with replays of previous years webinars, a Black Friday checklist, and other special bonuses that will help you make Black Friday your best Friday ever.

Notice: This book is only available for a few weeks in November. To access the book, all you need to do is [click here](#). If the book is not available for sale right now, you can sign up for a mailing list to be notified when the book goes on sale again. Those on the Black Friday guide notification mailing list may get an exclusive coupon code to save money when the next version is released.

[The Beginner's Guide to Wholesale: The Proven Way to Successfully Start Selling Wholesale Products via FBA](#)



Selling on Amazon isn't a get-rich-quick scheme; it's a lot of hard work. But with a little guidance, the right mindset, and a good work ethic, you can build an Amazon business to the level where it can provide great profits for the long run. In this Kindle book, I want to share with you how I believe wholesale sourcing is a key component of that long term success, as well as how you can get started finding Amazon inventory through wholesale sources.

[Overcoming Your FBA Fears](#)



Too many times in our FBA businesses, we let our fears hold us back from achieving our fullest potential. In this book we address ten of the most common fears in running an FBA business. The goal of this book is to replace your fears with truths and challenge you to take actions that will propel you further down the road of success. You no longer have to let these fears hold you back as a reseller! Available now for Kindle.

[Overcoming Your FBA Fears, Volume 2](#)



We are back with more on how to overcome your FBA fears! In volume 2, we cover ten more fears that could potentially stall your Amazon FBA business from achieving maximum profits and maximum success. Available now for Kindle.