The 5-Second Cover Test Scorecard

Your 90-Day KDP Publishing Plan — Second Edition | Action Toolkit

PURPOSE

Get objective, uncoached feedback on whether your cover stops thumbs and signals the right genre — before you launch with it.

HOW TO USE THIS

Print one scorecard per cover concept. Show each tester the cover at thumbnail size for exactly 5 seconds, hide it, then record their first answers.

How to run the test

1. Show the cover at thumbnail size (about 1 inch tall) for exactly 5 seconds — use your phone timer.
2. Hide it.
3. Ask the questions below — record FIRST answers only, no coaching.
4. Test 5–10 people who don't know your book.

Scorecard

Score each criterion 1–5 (1 = fails, 5 = excellent). Judge only what you saw in the 5 seconds — no second looks.

Criterion	What to Judge	Score (1–5)
Genre Clarity	Could a stranger tell the genre in 5 seconds?	
Title Readability	Title legible at thumbnail size?	
Emotional Hook	Does it spark curiosity or emotion instantly?	
Professional Quality	Does it look traditionally published, not DIY?	
Differentiation	Stands out vs. top 20 competitors, not blending in?	
TOTAL (/25)	*Add the five scores.*	

Interpret the total (/25)

- **20–25: Launch-ready. Your cover is doing its job. Move on to production with confidence.**
- **15–19: Refine and retest. Fix the weakest criterion, then run the 5-second test again with fresh testers.**

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■ **Below 15: Redesign. Do not launch with this cover. A cover that scores under 15 will quietly cost you clicks, sales, and reviews every single day.**

Tester feedback log

Log each tester's first, uncoached answers. Patterns across testers are gold — one opinion is noise, five opinions are data.

Tester #	First impression (their words)	Genre they guessed	Would click? (Y/N)

Decision: what will you change before launch?

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