



Warehouse management system for multichannel sellers

TOOLKIT · BOOKSTORE INVENTORY

The bookstore inventory software toolkit

A practical kit for independent bookstores, pop-up sellers and booksellers who sell online who want to choose free or low-cost inventory software with care.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 12-point self-assessment for your store
- Feature checklist for book stock: ISBN, used copies, consignment
- Vendor scoring matrix you can fill in
- Catalog readiness checklist and free plan limits worksheet
- Red flags and questions to ask before you commit
- 90-day rollout plan with the numbers to track

Contents

This toolkit helps a bookstore choose inventory software and put it to work. It follows the order of a real decision: check whether you need a tool now, list the features that matter for books, compare a short list, check the free plan limits, then roll out in 90 days. Print it, or fill it in with the person who runs the counter.

01	Executive summary	2
02	Do you need inventory software now? (self-assessment)	3
03	Bookstore features checklist	4
04	Vendor scoring matrix	6
05	Catalog readiness checklist	7
06	Free plan limits and real cost worksheet	8
07	Red flags and questions to ask	9
08	90-day rollout plan	10
09	About Fiftify	11

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Work through sections 2 and 3 first, alone or with your team. Then shortlist two to four tools and fill in sections 4 and 6 side by side for each one. Section 5 is homework you can start today, whatever tool you pick.

1 Executive summary

The five decisions that decide whether a free tool works

Bookstores carry thousands of low-cost titles on narrow margins. One wrong count, a missed return or a double order ties up cash in books that do not sell. Free inventory software can bring order to this work without a new monthly bill, but only if it fits how books are bought, shelved and sold.

Most free tools look alike on a pricing page. The differences show up later: when two editions of the same title merge into one record, when a used copy and a new copy share an ISBN, or when the online store sells a book that left the shelf an hour ago.

The five decisions that matter most

1. **Book records before features.** A tool must keep ISBN, title, author, publisher, edition, format and condition apart. If records blend, every report built on them is wrong.
2. **One count across the counter and online.** If you sell in the shop and online, stock must sync in real time. A daily sync leaves a window where the same copy sells twice.
3. **Free plan limits against your next 12 months.** Check caps on titles, users, orders and channels against your busiest season, not an average week.
4. **Counter staff decide adoption.** If ringing up a sale or finding a title takes longer than today, staff will work around the system. Test with the people who use it daily.
5. **A clean way out.** Make sure you can export every record, with sales history, to CSV. A free tool you cannot leave is not free.

QUICK WIN

Before you look at any tool, write down the three stock problems that cost you the most in the last quarter, for example lost special orders, oversold online copies or shelves of slow hardcovers. Judge every tool by how well it fixes those three.

2 Do you need inventory software now?

A 12-point self-assessment for bookstore owners

Check every statement that is true for your store today. Then use the scoring guide below to see whether software is premature, warranted or urgent.

SELF-ASSESSMENT: CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

- ☐ We track stock in a spreadsheet, on paper or only in our POS.
- ☐ Shelf counts and system counts often disagree when we check a section.
- ☐ We have bought a title again while copies were still in the back room.
- ☐ Different editions or formats of one title end up in a single record.
- ☐ Used and new copies of the same ISBN are hard to tell apart in our records.
- ☐ Special orders and customer holds live on sticky notes or in an inbox.
- ☐ Consignment books from local authors are tracked by hand.
- ☐ We cannot quickly list titles that have not sold in 180 days.
- ☐ We sell online (own site or marketplace) and have oversold a copy at least once.
- ☐ Event and pop-up stock is counted out and back by hand.
- ☐ Reorders depend on someone noticing a thin shelf.
- ☐ Only one person knows how our stock records really work.

Score	Verdict	What it means and what to do
0-3 boxes	Premature	Your current process mostly works. Tidy your spreadsheet: one row per ISBN and condition, fixed section names, a monthly count of one section.
4-7 boxes	Warranted	A free tool will likely save time and cash. Put ISBN handling and ease of use ahead of advanced features.
8-12 boxes	Urgent	Errors already cost you sales and staff time. Move soon, but score your shortlist on page 6 and check the free plan limits on page 8 first.

3 Bookstore features checklist

Sorted by priority and store stage

Use this checklist to screen product pages and free plan descriptions. Most stores need every **must-have** item, some **nice-to-have** items and only the **advanced** items that match their size.

MUST-HAVE: BASELINE FOR ANY BOOKSTORE

- ☐ ISBN-10 and ISBN-13 records, with title, author, publisher, edition and format
- ☐ Barcode scanning for intake, counter sales, returns and counts (a phone camera is fine to start)
- ☐ Real-time stock sync between the counter and every online channel you use
- ☐ Fast search by ISBN, title, author, section and vendor
- ☐ Low-stock alerts with a reorder point you set per title
- ☐ Sales reports by title, author and section, plus a slow-mover list
- ☐ Section counts without closing the store
- ☐ CSV import and full CSV export of titles, stock and sales history

NICE-TO-HAVE: ADD AS YOU GROW

- ☐ Condition grades and separate prices for used copies of one ISBN
- ☐ Consignment tracking: owner, agreed split and payout due
- ☐ Special orders and customer holds linked to a title record
- ☐ Event and pop-up stock: count out, count back, sold in between
- ☐ Title data lookup from a public source, checked by staff before saving
- ☐ Storage locations for shelves, back room and overflow boxes
- ☐ User roles, so a cashier cannot change prices or delete titles
- ☐ Margin by title, section or vendor

Advanced features

These features rarely matter for a single shop with a few thousand titles. Treat them as a bonus, not a requirement, unless you run several locations or sell a large share online.

ADVANCED: SEVERAL LOCATIONS OR HIGH ONLINE VOLUME

- ☐ One stock pool across several shops and online marketplaces such as Amazon, eBay and Etsy
- ☐ Stock transfers between locations
- ☐ Pick, pack and ship flow for online orders, with tracking sent back to the channel
- ☐ Detailed audit trail of every stock change, by user
- ☐ Demand forecasting for seasonal titles and school lists
- ☐ Purchase orders and vendor return tracking

Quick view: which features matter at your stage

Stage	Typical setup	Priority features
Counter only	One shop, no online sales	ISBN records, barcode scanning, search, low-stock alerts, sales and slow-mover reports
Shop plus online	One shop and one online store	Everything above, plus real-time stock sync, used copy grades, special orders and holds
Multichannel	Shop, own site and one or more marketplaces	One stock pool for all channels, storage locations, pick, pack and ship, user roles
Several locations	Two or more shops or a separate stockroom	Transfers, audit trail, per-location reports, demand forecasting

SCANNING AND SYNC ARE NOT EXTRAS

Barcode scanning and real-time sync belong at every stage where they apply. Scanning is the cheapest way to stop typing errors. Real-time sync is what stops the same copy selling twice once you sell online.

4 Vendor scoring matrix

A weighted template for an objective comparison

Score each tool from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) on every criterion, then multiply by the weight and add up the column. The weights suit a typical independent bookstore. Adjust them to your priorities before you score, not after.

Criterion	Weight	Tool 1	Tool 2	Tool 3	Tool 4
Fit to our daily flow (intake, counter, returns, special orders)	x 3.0				
ISBN, edition and condition handling	x 2.5				
Stock sync with our POS and online channels	x 2.5				
Ease of use for counter staff	x 2.0				
Free plan limits against our 12-month plan	x 1.5				
Reports (slow movers, sections, margin)	x 1.5				
Import and full export (CSV)	x 1.0				
Support on the free plan	x 1.0				
Weighted total	15.0				

HOW TO READ THE SCORE

The weights add up to 15, so the maximum score is 75 (15 x 5). A tool under 45 is unlikely to fit your store whatever its feature list. Aim for your top choice to score at least 56. If two tools are within 5 points, pick the one your counter staff preferred in the trial.

SCORE WITH REAL BOOKS

Score each tool after a trial with 20-50 of your own titles, including one used copy, one consignment book and one special order. Product pages alone rarely show how a tool handles these cases.

5 Catalog readiness checklist

Clean your book data before you import it

Messy records cause more trouble than a missing feature. Go through this list before your first trial import. Every unchecked line is something to fix first, or a risk to plan for.

CATALOG AND DATA READINESS

- ☐ We can export our current titles, stock, cost, price and vendor to one file
- ☐ Every new book has an ISBN-13, and duplicate ISBN rows are merged or removed
- ☐ Older ISBN-10 records are converted or flagged for review
- ☐ Format is set on every record: paperback, hardcover, audiobook, signed copy
- ☐ Used books have a condition grade and our own label code if they have no barcode
- ☐ Consignment titles list the owner and the agreed split
- ☐ Section names follow one fixed list (no "Local History" and "local hist." side by side)
- ☐ Vendor names are spelled one way, and old vendors are marked inactive
- ☐ Open special orders and customer holds are listed in one place
- ☐ We have counted at least one section and know how far the records are off
- ☐ We have decided which system owns the stock count after go-live
- ☐ One person owns the project and has a few hours a week for it

TEST SMALL FIRST

Run a test import of 20-50 records that include the hard cases. Check how each one looks in search, at the counter and in a report before you import the full catalog.

6 Free plan limits and real cost worksheet

What "free" covers, and what it does not

Free plans differ most in their limits. Write down what you need today and at your busiest time of the next 12 months, for example the holiday season or school list weeks. Then check each tool against the busier number.

Limit	Need today	Need at peak	Tool 1	Tool 2
Titles or products				
Users (staff accounts)				
Orders or sales a month				
Sales channels (shop, site, marketplaces)				
Locations (shop, stockroom, events)				
Report depth and export				
Support channel and response time				

Free software still has costs. Fill in the first-year amounts for each tool so you compare the real total.

First-year cost	Tool 1 (USD)	Tool 2 (USD)
Paid plan price if we pass a free limit at peak	\$	\$
Paid add-ons we need (reports, channels, users)	\$	\$
Barcode scanners or phones for staff	\$	\$
Label printer and labels for used books	\$	\$
Staff hours for cleanup, import and training (hours x hourly cost)	\$	\$
First-year total	\$	\$

7 Red flags and questions to ask

Spot trouble before your whole catalog is inside

Red flags during evaluation

- **No full export on the free plan.** If you cannot take titles and sales history out as CSV, switching later means typing it all again.
- **One record per ISBN, no matter what.** Used, signed and new copies need their own price and condition, or your margin reports mix them.
- **Online stock syncs once a day or by hand.** Between syncs, a copy sold at the counter can still sell online.
- **A title cap below your peak season.** A limit that fits in March may block you in December.
- **No record of who changed what.** Without a change history, shrinkage and intake errors stay hidden.
- **Trial data cannot be kept.** If trial records are wiped, your test import is wasted work.

Questions to ask before you commit

- Does the scanner read ISBN-13 barcodes with a price add-on, and can we enter ISBN-10 by hand?
- How do we track a used copy and a new copy of the same ISBN at different prices?
- Can we record consignment owners and see what we owe them each month?
- How do special orders and holds reserve a copy so it does not sell to someone else?
- How fast does a counter sale update stock on our online store or marketplace?
- What happens to our account and data when we pass a free plan limit?
- Which reports and exports are on the free plan, and which need a paid plan?
- How do we reach support on the free plan, and how fast do they reply?

8

90-day rollout plan

A realistic schedule for a small bookstore

A small shop can often switch faster, but 90 days leaves room for cleanup, a pilot and one full count without stress. Avoid starting the full rollout in your busiest month.

PHASE 1**Days 0-21**

- Self-assessment and top three problems
- Shortlist and score 2-4 tools
- Export and clean the catalog
- Fix section and vendor names

PHASE 2**Days 22-45**

- Test import of 20-50 records
- Full catalog import
- Set reorder points for core titles
- Set user roles and train by role

PHASE 3**Days 46-70**

- Pilot one section or channel
- Run the old process alongside for two weeks
- Move special orders and holds in
- Fix issues every week

PHASE 4**Days 71-90**

- Full count, one section a day
- Connect online channels
- Retire the old spreadsheet
- First slow-mover review

PILOT FIRST, NOT ALL AT ONCE

Start with one section, such as new fiction, or with online orders only. Two weeks of real sales in a pilot show more problems than any demo with sample books.

Numbers to measure before and after

- Count accuracy: shelf count against system count, per section
- Oversold online copies a month
- Time from delivery to books on the shelf
- Special orders filled on time
- Share of titles with no sale in 180 days

KEEP IT CLEAN AFTER LAUNCH

Book a weekly 30-minute check: missing ISBNs, duplicate records, negative stock and new slow movers. One person approves new sections and vendor names.

9

About Fiftify

A warehouse management system built for multichannel sellers

Fiftify is a warehouse management system built for multichannel sellers. Inventory, orders and warehouse work run in one simple system across Shopify, Amazon, eBay, Etsy, retail stores and other sales channels. Every channel draws from one stock pool, so a unit sold in one place is counted everywhere.

One stock pool for every channel

Real-time stock sync across your sales channels helps prevent overselling. Listing quantities update once per packed shipment, so a store never shows half-picked counts.

Bins and storage locations

Every unit has a place. The team sees what is on the shelf and where it is.

Barcode scanning

Scans at picking and packing catch the wrong item before the parcel leaves.

Pick, pack and ship

Paid orders turn into pick tasks, then packing and shipping with tracking sent back to the channel.

Mobile app on Android and iOS

Warehouse staff pick and pack with a phone instead of a desktop.

Every plan includes

Unlimited SKUs, sales channels, warehouses and suppliers. Starter is free for up to 100 orders a month.

Receiving and purchase orders are on the roadmap. Fiftify does not run 3PL operations.

Try Fiftify on your own orders

Start on the free Starter plan or take the 7-day full trial, no credit card needed. Support is by chat, and guided onboarding can be booked after sign-up.

[Start free](#)app.fiftify.com

More guides for warehouse operations and multichannel selling: fiftify.com/blog