

Knowing your character counts helps you write to the length you need. Since copy text is short, I always use “Characters with Spaces (CWS)” instead a typical word count for the sake of precision. Here are some simple guidelines:

- Online Copy

Amazon sets the standard, and other retailers follow. The elements are:

Headline: Max. **300** CWS.

The headline helps skimming readers get a quick idea of the book.

Body Copy: Max. **2000** CWS.

This is roughly the same length of a blurb you would find on the flaps of a hardcover book.

- Trade Copy

Bookstores and retailers have their own databases. If you’re working on a blurb to go in one of these databases, here is a good guideline for copy length (my publisher uses these lengths based on the standards built into a common trade app called Edelweiss):

Headline: Max. **140** CWS.

The headline helps skimming readers get a quick idea of the book.

Body Copy: Max. **1400** CWS.

Note that this character count assumes the copy is split into three paragraphs. Reduce your count by about 95 CWS per extra line break beyond three.

Author Bio: Max. **500** CWS.

Note that retailers are interested in promoting local authors. Add your state and/or city/town, and you can get their attention!

- Synopsis (or the Brief Marketing Statement)

It’s often valuable to have a short and snappy blurb available. This is especially useful when someone else (like a blogger, ezine, etc.) wants to feature your story on their site with a quick description. My suggested length is:

Synopsis: Max. **350** CWS.

- What About Physical Books?

There are just too many variables to give you useful character counts on a physical copy of a book. Talk to your designer about how they envision the cover. Here’s what I consider a good priority list for the elements to include on your cover:

1. **Descriptive Blurb**—Length is variable, but you *must* have a blurb.
2. **Accolades**—This refers to reviews, endorsements, and awards. Choose the best ones, do not let them crowd out a good descriptive blurb.
3. **Series Name**—If this story is an installment in a series, say so on the cover. This is often best placed on the front cover.
4. **Headline**—Optional on book covers, but I like it.
5. **Author Bio**—The bio is a staple for non-fiction, but optional in fiction. If you’ve got popular books that fans might recognize, the bio is a good place to mention them.

Final Note: These guidelines are to help you from going over the word count limit, but they aren’t targets for some kind of ideal blurb length. You don’t have to fill up the whole space for any copy—if you can write a shorter blurb that’s compelling, do it!