

Stock Smart:

The Indian Book Retailer's Guide to Choosing Titles That Sell

10 essential questions every retailer & distributor should ask before adding a new publisher to their catalogue.

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Why This Guide?

Stocking books is not just about filling shelves — it is about turning shelf space into revenue. Every title you choose is a bet: on the author, the publisher, the price point, and the demand in your local market.

Yet most retailers still select titles based on rep relationships or gut feel alone. This guide gives you a simple, repeatable framework — 10 questions — to evaluate any new publisher or title before you commit shelf space or working capital.

How to use this guide:

- Run through the 10 questions whenever a rep or publisher pitches you new stock.
- Score each answer 1–3. A total of 20+ means strong candidate. Below 15? Pass or trial only.
- Keep this sheet at your buying desk.

01

Is there a proven local demand for this subject?

Check your own sales data first. What subject categories move fastest in your store or territory? Educational, competitive exam, religious, regional language, or trade books each have very different velocity profiles. English Language books are a category worth particular attention — demand is consistent, crosses age groups, and unlike exam guides, the content does not expire.

Pro tip: Ask the publisher for sell-through data from at least two comparable markets. Good publishers share this openly.

02

What is the trade discount — and is it consistent?

Standard Indian trade discounts range from 25% to 40% depending on volume and channel. Textbook and institutional publishers often offer lower discounts but with assured bulk orders. Trade publishers typically offer higher discounts but lower minimums.

Pro tip: Watch for hidden conditions — discounts that only apply above a minimum order quantity you can rarely hit.

03

Does the publisher right-size your orders — or push you to take more than you need?

A publisher who is confident in their titles has no need to push large opening orders. We would rather a retailer takes 10 copies five times than 50 copies once. That approach keeps working capital free on both sides, keeps the relationship honest, and means every reorder is a genuine vote of confidence in the title.

Right-sized ordering also means the publisher stays closely in touch with actual sell-through in your store — which makes them a more useful partner over time, not less.

***Pro tip:** Ask the publisher directly: 'What is the smallest opening order you are comfortable with?' A confident publisher with good titles will welcome the question.*

04

How is the book priced relative to competing titles?

A higher-priced title on the same shelf needs a compelling reason to sell — better content, stronger author, or superior production. Price relativity matters more than absolute price. Be cautious of very low-priced books: cheap paper, thin binding, and rushed content are often the trade-off, and they generate customer complaints that land back on you.

***Pro tip:** Look up 2–3 competing titles on Amazon.in or Flipkart to benchmark before your meeting.*

05

How does the publisher manage replenishment and communication?

Speed of replenishment matters, but it is only one part of the picture. What matters more is whether the publisher treats you as a partner or a transaction. A publisher with good planning and honest communication will flag a stock delay before you run out — not after you call them in frustration.

The best publisher relationships are genuinely two-way. The publisher asks which titles you are being asked for, which areas of a book customers find confusing, and what formats or price points would work better in your market. That feedback loop produces better books — and better sales for both of you.

***Pro tip:** Ask: 'How do you communicate with your retail partners — and how do you take their feedback on titles?' A publisher who listens is a publisher worth stocking.*

06

Does the publisher invest in consumer marketing?

Publishers who invest in advertising, social media, and outreach generate pull demand — customers come to you asking for the book by name. Publishers who rely entirely on push mechanisms shift all the selling effort onto you.

Marketing capability is worth probing carefully: does the publisher have genuine marketing expertise, or are they simply printing flyers? A publisher with international marketing experience and a clear plan to build demand is a better long-term partner than one who has been running the same school visit programme for twenty years.

***Pro tip:** Ask: 'What marketing activity is planned for the next 6–12 months, and how will it drive customers to retail?' Plans and track record both matter.*

07

Is the production quality consistent?

Poor binding, smudged print, or flimsy covers generate returns and damage your reputation with customers. Quality must be consistent across every reprint — not just the samples.

The most reliable way to check production quality independently is to read verified customer reviews on Amazon.in, Flipkart, and Goodreads. These are written by actual readers and are hard to fake at scale. A publisher with consistently high ratings across multiple reprints is telling you something important about their quality control.

***Pro tip:** Search the publisher's titles on Amazon.in and Flipkart before your first order. Sort by oldest reviews to see whether quality has been maintained over time, not just for recent print runs.*

08

What is the publisher's track record — and can they give you a retailer reference?

An established publisher with decades of continuous reprints on the same title is telling you something important: real customers keep buying it, year after year, cohort after cohort. That kind of longevity cannot be manufactured.

The most direct way to verify a publisher's reliability is to ask for a referral — the contact details of another retailer who stocks their titles. A publisher confident in their trade relationships will give you a name without hesitation. That retailer can tell you about order fulfilment, communication, and whether the publisher does what they say they will.

***Pro tip:** Ask: 'Can you give me the name of a retailer who has stocked your titles for several years?' If the answer is a referral, that is a very good sign. If it is a deflection, take note.*

09

What are the payment terms?

Most publishers in India offer 30–60 day credit terms to established accounts. New relationships may begin with pro-forma or 50% advance. Know your cash flow before committing to large orders on tight terms.

Pro tip: *Negotiate terms upfront. Even a 15-day extension on payment can make a meaningful difference to your working capital.*

10

Is this a publisher you can build a relationship with?

The best retail partnerships in the book trade are not transactional — they are long-term, collaborative, and mutually invested. A publisher who knows your market, respects your feedback, communicates proactively, and never pressures you into stock you do not need is a publisher worth committing shelf space to.

Conversely, a publisher who only calls when they have a new title to push, who is vague about returns and quality issues, and who measures success purely by cases shipped is one who will eventually cause you problems.

Pro tip: *Trust your instincts after the first meeting. Did they ask more questions than they answered? Did they want to understand your customers and your market? If yes, that is a good sign.*

Quick Scoring Card

Score each question 1 (poor), 2 (acceptable), or 3 (excellent). Add up your total.

#	Question	Score (1–3)
1	Is there proven local demand for this subject?	
2	Is the trade discount competitive and transparent?	
3	Does the publisher right-size orders rather than push overstock?	
4	Is the book priced competitively relative to alternatives?	
5	Is replenishment and communication reliable and two-way?	
6	Does the publisher have real marketing capability and plans?	
7	Is production quality verified by independent reviews?	
8	Does the title have a strong track record and long shelf life?	
9	Are payment terms workable for your cash flow?	
10	Is this a publisher you can build a long-term relationship with?	
TOTAL		/ 30

Score	Recommendation
25 – 30	Strong candidate — proceed with a solid opening order
18 – 24	Promising — start with a trial order, review in 60 days
12 – 17	Risky — consider a very small trial only
Below 12	Decline — the risk outweighs the potential upside

Why Retailers Choose Dhillon Publications

Founded in 1978 and publishing continuously for nearly five decades, Dhillon Publications Pvt Ltd is a Delhi-based house specialising in English Language titles for the Indian market. Our flagship title, the *English Improvement Course*, has been in continuous print for over 40 years — with multiple reprints every year. That kind of longevity does not happen by accident.

No-push, right-sized ordering

We do not offer returns — and we are proud of it. We would rather you order 10 copies five times than 50 copies once. Our titles have an almost unlimited shelf life, so unsold stock is never a problem — only a timing question. We keep the trade clean.

Transparent, two-way partnership

We treat our retailers as genuine partners. We actively seek your feedback on which titles to develop, which topics your customers ask for, and how we can improve. Your insight shapes our publishing decisions.

A growing marketing capability

We are building a serious marketing function — with international marketing expertise at the leadership level and concrete plans to invest in demand generation. Retailers who stock our titles now will benefit as we grow brand pull.

Independently verified quality

Our titles carry strong, verified reviews on Amazon.in, Flipkart, and Goodreads — from real readers. Check them before you order. That transparency is intentional.

Nearly 50 years of proven titles

The English Improvement Course has been reprinted every year for over four decades. English Language books do not go out of date. Stocking them is one of the lowest-risk decisions in book retail.

Ready to explore our catalogue?

Visit dhillonpublications.com to see our full title list and read independent reviews of our books — or reach out directly and one of our team will respond within 24 hours.

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Email	contact@dhillonpublications.com
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