

How To Select Comparison Titles for Tip Sheets

- Start by collecting a list of “similar” titles. Asking your author to weigh in is an excellent starting point – as is ‘nosing around’ on Amazon and reading the reviews of titles in the same general category.
- Narrow this list by using BookScan. While it is always better to use a title that was published in the last four years, the primary driver is to find a title that was working *at a high level* within the last four years.¹
- What Sales really needs is three Comps – not five, not one, but three. NBN has learned over time that no titles work equally well everywhere – but if we have three we can almost always find one that worked somewhere.
- If possible, try to find Comps that are in the same format and general price range as your new title. If your new book is a \$7.95 mass market paperback, a \$59.95 hardcover Comp from a university press won’t be very useful.
- Compare trade titles with other trade titles -- as much as possible steering clear of academic or short discount titles. Identifying short discount titles is a bit tricky, but here’s a tip – if your comp has a weird price (\$49.37, say), the odds are very good that it is not a trade title.
- Selecting Comps by the same author is fine if there are no other choices or if they are the bestselling titles in the category. Avoid using them, if you can, however.
- For Children’s books, select other titles by the same illustrator providing that the above criteria are relevant (but include them on the tip sheet under “illustrator’s previous books”).
- The closer a Comp is in subject matter and price to the new title, the better the result. However, a general book *with strong sales* is almost always better than a specific book *with poor sales*.
- The reps are required to supply Comps at most large accounts, so never use a phrase such as *A totally unique book – no Comps!* – because that phrase alone almost guarantees a skip. Buyers have almost no tolerance for that statement.
- However, if you can’t find three strong Comps, don’t just settle for something mediocre. If you get to that point, you should call NBN’s Czarina of Analysis, Barbara Pierce (x5531). *If Barbara can’t find three good Comps – well, she can, that’s all.*

Remember – never include more than three Comps, but always include the title, author, pub date (mm/yy), price, format, publisher, and ISBN for all entries.

¹ We have to say something so we say “four years.” However, what’s best for us is to not go back beyond the first year of reported sales in BookScan. This changes every year – but as I write this BookScan is reporting 2003 sales, and that is absolutely fine with us.