

TechTalk



Navigating the world of technology one gadget at a time

Getting the Most from Your Kindle

Volume 7, Number 9

Introduction

Amazon's Kindle eReaders have been popular with consumers since their introduction in 2007. Undoubtedly, the recent announcement of new models with touch-screen technology should provide sales momentum going into the holiday shopping season. While many Kindle owners are content to purchase and read novels and newspapers from Amazon's electronic bookstore, the devices are capable of much more.

Check out Library eBooks.

In recent weeks, Kindles have joined the list of devices capable of reading eBooks from the Library's collection of thousands of titles. Stop by the Reference Desk to learn more and pick up a free tip sheet for downloading eBooks onto your Kindle.

Get daily news delivered for free.

While it is easy to purchase a newspaper subscription on a Kindle, it is not exactly cheap — national newspapers cost \$10–\$20 per month. If you're satisfied with less in-depth news coverage, you might consider signing up for Kindlefeeder (kindlefeeder.com); a basic subscription is free. This automated service sends you a daily compilation of news summaries from major outlets, including the *Wall Street Journal*, *NPR*, *The Economist* and *BBC News*. Popular blogs are also available for subscription.



Kindlefeeder automatically delivers news to your Kindle once or twice per day.

Read in the dark.

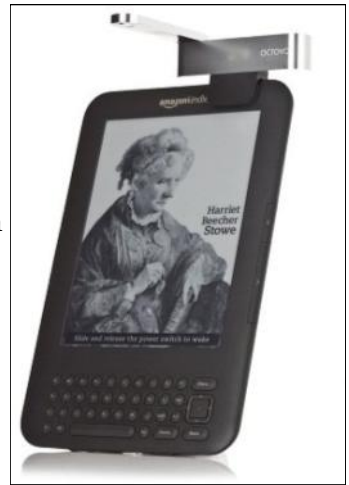
E-Ink Kindles (all models but the recently announced Kindle Fire Tablet) lack backlit screens. While this allows them to achieve incredible battery life (up to two months), it makes for poor bedtime reading. You can easily remedy this deficiency by adding a battery-powered clip-on light (\$15-\$30). Some lights of this type, like the Octovo Solis (*octovo.com*) are sized to fit specific models, while others are universal. Alternatively, some protective cases come with integrated illumination (approximately \$60 at *Amazon.com*).

Get your email and browse the Internet.

Kindles have a bare-bones web browser which can be used for basic Internet access and web-based email. Users of certain Kindles with 3G capabilities (Kindle 1, 2, Dx and 3G Keyboard models) don't even need a Wi-Fi hotspot nearby to browse. Built-in cellular network hardware is able to establish an Internet connection in covered areas, including overseas. Note: web browsing functionality on the recently announced Kindle Touch is reportedly only available via Wi-Fi, not via the always-on 3G connection.

Keep important information at hand.

Upon purchasing a Kindle, you are assigned an email address (e.g. eddie_5150@kindle.com). If you send personal documents as attachments to this address, Amazon will convert and deliver them to your Kindle for a small fee (\$0.15 to \$0.99 per megabyte). If you have a Wi-Fi enabled kindle, you can add "free" after the @ sign in the address (e.g. eddie_5150@free.kindle.com) to have documents sent at no charge over Wi-Fi. The documents must be of a common type (e.g., .txt, .doc, or .rtf) to be converted. They will also attempt to convert PDF files sent via email into a Kindle format, though this



The compact and lightweight Octovo Solis (\$30) eBook light uses an easy-to-find AA battery to illuminate the Kindle's screen.

functionality is experimental, and may provide unpredictable results.

To discover your Kindle's email address, visit www.amazon.com/manageyourkindle and click on Personal Document Settings. While you're on this screen, take a moment to add your home and work email addresses to the *Approved Personal Document E-mail List* so that your incoming emails to the Kindle address aren't treated as spam.

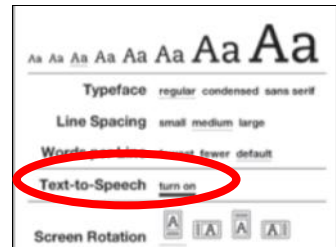
Uses for documents sent to your Kindle include:

- Travel itineraries and reservation confirmation numbers
- A basic phone list of your contacts
- A list of clothing sizes of friends and family for gifts
- Turn-by-turn driving directions to an unfamiliar location

Turn an eBook into an audiobook.

Kindles (aside from the 1st generation model and the newly released non-touch models) can read eBooks to you. The synthesized narration has a slightly robotic quality, but it is nice to have the option, especially for vision-impaired readers. When text-to-speech was originally offered by Amazon, some publishers objected – fearing lower audiobook sales. In response to the outcry, Amazon gave publishers the right to decide whether they would allow this feature on a title-by-title basis.

To turn the audiobook feature on or off, press **Shift + Sym** while you're reading a book. The voice will begin immediately if the publisher has authorized the book to use the feature. Alternatively, you can toggle speech by clicking the **AA** button and selecting the *Text-to-Speech* option. Pressing the spacebar pauses the speech, and manipulating the five-way navigation control (on Keyboard models) alters the gender and speed of the voice.



The text menu allows you to easily turn Text-to-Speech on or off.

Change the way text appears on your Kindle.

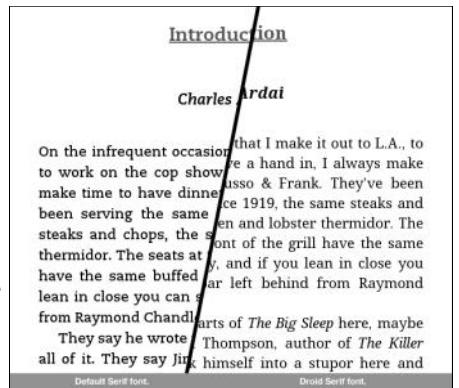
Kindles have a notable degree of customizability in how words appear on the screen, but if you'd like even more flexibility, there are ways to unlock additional text options. Specifically, you can add another font choice and change the width of margins. By making

these changes, you'll be able to fit more words onto a page—subsequently requiring fewer page turns.

If you're comfortable downloading, installing and configuring software on a personal computer, you'll likely be able to complete the process in a half-hour or so. For step-by-step instructions, see booksprung.com/change-the-font-on-your-kindle-without-hacking-it.

Kindle Resources on the Web

- **A Kindle World Blog:** kindleworld.blogspot.com
- **Amazon's Kindle forum:** amazon.com/forum/kindle
- **The Digital Reader:** www.the-digital-reader.com
- **Kindle section on Mobile Reader Forum:** www.mobileread.com/forums/forumdisplay.php?f=140
- **Kindle Nation Daily:** kindlenationdaily.com
- **The Kindle Reader:** kindlereader.blogspot.com
- **I Love My Kindle:** ilmk.wordpress.com/



Installing a different font like Droid Serif (shown at right) allows you to tailor the text on the screen to your individual taste. Image Source: <http://booksprung.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/063011-font-comparison.gif>. Used with permission of Chris Walters ([Booksprung.com](http://booksprung.com)).

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