

# Unit 1 – E-commerce

## Reading 1

Skills:

- Details
- Make inferences
- Vocabulary in context

**Getting started:** Do you know important online stores? Brainstorm some names.

### A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF AMAZON: THE EVERYTHING STORE



In terms of profits, Amazon is the biggest internet-based company in the world. When it started out selling books online in 1994, Jeff Bezos (*/ˈbeɪzəʊs/*) knew the only way to succeed online was to grow big and fast. Today the company sells everything from books to e-readers or container houses. It has become an essential shop and has many plans for its future.

Amazon, or more correctly Amazon.com, was first incorporated by Jeff Bezos in July of 1994. At the time, he was a Wall Street executive. When Bezos and his then-wife, MacKenzie Tuttle started to think of some possible domain names for their potential new business, they first considered the domain names Awake.com, Browse.com, and Bookmall.com. After scrolling through a dictionary for some inspiration, he found the word Amazon. Jeff thought this was particularly suitable as he envisioned his online store becoming the greatest in the world, much like the Amazon is one of the biggest rivers and jungles on the planet.

At the time he knew he wanted to build some form of an online retailer but wasn't sure what to sell. After some research, he chose books as they were relatively easy to package and distribute directly to the customer's address. As we all know today, Amazon.com is about a lot more than just books today. This was part of the plan, according to Bezos. For him, Amazon was not just an online retailer selling consumer products. Bezos **pictured** the company being a technology company whose real business was to simplify online transactions for its customers.

In 1996, Amazon launched its now highly lucrative Affiliate Program. By joining the program, other companies advertised Amazon's merchandise for sale on their own platforms. Amazon would then fulfill the order and pay a commission (win, win). The program proved to be a smart business decision. It grew from one Associate in 1996 to well over 350,000 by the close of 1999.

After following Bezos' initial business plan, the company expanded into selling computer games and music in 1998. At about the same time, Amazon also expanded its services internationally by purchasing other online bookstores in the UK and Germany. By the turn of the millennium, Amazon had further expanded into selling consumer electronics, video games, software, home-improvement items, toys, games, and much more.

2007 saw the unveiling of the first Kindle e-readers. These relatively low-cost tablets would reinvigorate the book market and by 2012 the Kindle would constitute around 50% of all Android-operated tablet sales. The Kindle was so successful that it led to Amazon entering the book publishing market in 2011 with its Amazon Publishing service. That same year Amazon announced that e-book sales were **outselling** traditional printed books.

Since then, Amazon has continued to expand into many other services. These include shipping fresh produce, drone delivery, and many more innovations. They are even planning on building their own airport. Amazon's success is based, like many other successful companies, on the service that they offer. This has gained them significant customer loyalty, and as a result, big profits in the long run.

*\*Adapted from <https://interestingengineering.com/a-very-brief-history-of-amazon-the-everything-store>*

**Answer the following questions:**

1. What is implied about Jeff Bezos in paragraph 1?
  - a. He's a modest person.
  - b. He's an ambitious person.
  - c. He's a writer.
  - d. He's an engineer.
2. In paragraph 2, what can be inferred about Bezos and Tuttle?
  - a. They are divorced.
  - b. They married in 1994.
  - c. They are Amazon's CEOs.
  - d. They invest on Wall Street.
3. According to the text, Bezos chose the name Amazon because it
  - a. is associated to the nature.
  - b. symbolizes something huge.
  - c. is an example of a place he likes to visit.
  - d. Relates to the place where he opened his first store.
4. The word **pictured** in paragraph 3 can be replaced by
  - a. photographed
  - b. drew
  - c. imagined
  - d. showed
5. What is stated about the Affiliate Program in paragraph 4?
  - a. It was a really clever strategy.
  - b. It was created after the Kindle was launched.
  - c. It made Amazon win \$350,000 by the end of the decade.
  - d. It involved Amazon promoting other companies' products.

6. It is implied that Amazon began selling household products around
- 1996
  - 1998
  - 1999
  - 2000
7. What is NOT stated about the Kindle in paragraph 6?
- Thanks to its success, Amazon started releasing their own books.
  - Kindle was the leading device in the tablet market by 2012.
  - These tablets were initially sold at a high price.
  - Book sales increased thanks to the Kindle.
8. The word **outselling** in paragraph 6 means
- selling outdoors
  - selling more than
  - selling specific items
  - selling in other countries

**What do you think?**

Have you ever shopped online? Was it a positive or negative experience?