

You only get *one* price. This is the protocol for choosing which one.

Two ladders. One descends through geography, the other through time. Both start at a ceiling, both end at the number below which you will not sell, and both answer the same question: is this product a replen?

43%

Share of Amazon products that carry a different Buy Box price depending on where the customer lives. That number is the whole reason there are two ladders instead of one.

BEFORE YOU READ THE REST

This is a recipe, not a rulebook. It is what we do with our own inventory, written down so you can look at it.

We are not telling you how to run your business. If your aim is to get the most profit out of the units you already own, this is the method we follow and the reasoning underneath it. Your cost basis, your cash position, your tolerance for hands-on work and your minimum profit target are all yours to set, and every number below moves when yours do. Take the parts that fit how you operate. Where our answer does not suit you, the reasoning should still hold well enough for you to reach your own.

The constraint everything else follows from

Amazon gives you one listing, one price, fifty states. You cannot price by region. That is not a limitation you can work around, so the protocol does not try.

What you actually control is narrower and more useful than it first appears. Two decisions, and only two:

1. **Which single number do I hold?**
2. **When do I move it?**

Everything below answers one of those two questions. The ladders differ only in where they get the evidence. Round Robin reads the ceiling *across the country right now*. The 4-Week Price Discovery Ladder reads the ceiling *across the last ninety days*. When a product's price varies by geography, the first is the better read. When it does not, the second is the only read available.

THE ORGANIZING IDEA

You are always descending from a ceiling toward your floor. The only question is which ceiling the data supports.

The router: which ladder is this ASIN on?

Before setting a price, we ask one question: **does this ASIN show a different Buy Box in different markets?**

- **Variation present.** Ladder A, Round Robin.
- **No variation.** Ladder B, the 4-Week Price Discovery Ladder.
- **No spread data available.** Ladder B is your primary protocol, not your fallback. It works on its own and predates the spread map entirely.

One caution on reading "no variation." A single flat scan is not proof. Our research found 42.3% of individual scans showed variation while 43.3% of ASINs varied *at least once*, which means variation is intermittent: an ASIN can be flat this morning and spread by Thursday. We take several reads across a few days before committing an item to Ladder B.

We treat the router as a live check rather than a one-time decision, so we look at the spread map before *every* step down. If variability appears while you are descending Ladder B, that is the moment to stop stepping and price for the market instead. An ASIN can graduate to Ladder A mid-ladder, and we let it.

LADDER A • DESCENDS THROUGH GEOGRAPHY

Round Robin

We set our price to the highest Buy Box among the regions our inventory can actually serve, sell that stock at that price, then step down to the next highest box the remaining inventory can reach and take that region.

1. Qualify the ASIN

We look for four things before an item goes on this ladder, and we want all four rather than three.

1. **Confirmed variation**, per the router above.
2. **Spread large enough to be worth the attention.** Manual pricing costs time, and that time has to be paid for somewhere. Our own line sits at a spread of **\$1.96** or more, the 75th percentile of everything we measured. Below that we let the repricer run, though your line will depend on what your time is worth.
3. **More than one unit.** A ladder needs rungs. One unit is a single price decision, not a ladder.
4. **Fee leverage.** Your FBA fee is flat and your cost is fixed, so only the referral fee scales with price. Every extra dollar you capture lands at roughly **85 cents of profit**. The higher the fixed fee relative to the price, the more a small premium moves your margin.

2. Read the reachable ceiling

This is the step that is easiest to misread. You want the highest Buy Box **in a region your inventory can actually serve**. The national figure is a different

number, and so is the highest price in the country.

If your units sit where they can serve New York at \$17.45 but Texas is at \$16.06, we price to \$17.45. If the highest price in the country is in a market you cannot ship to competitively, it is not on your ladder.

Fulfillment center placement is read live and is not retained historically. That means reachability is a judgment you make at the moment you set the price, and it cannot be reconstructed later. We record it in the worksheet at set-time, because after the fact it is simply gone.

3. Set, hold, step down

We hold the price until that stock clears, then read again and step to the next highest reachable box. The point is that you are not chasing the market down. You are walking down a ladder you already mapped, one rung per sell-through. For us, losing the cheap markets is the point rather than the cost of it. You have a finite number of units, and every one sold into a low market is a unit you cannot sell into a high one.

Worked example

Six units of a die-cast car, June 2026. Unit cost \$5.79, referral 15%, FBA fee \$4.09 flat.

STEP	PRICE	UNITS	NAT. BB	NET GAIN	WHAT HAPPENED
1	\$19.99	1	\$16.47	+\$2.99	Peak observed when the shipment went out
2	\$17.07	2	\$16.35 / \$15.20	+\$2.20	Highest reachable regional box the next day
3	\$16.61	2	held it / \$16.45	+\$0.14	Matching a high regional price; national box won as a consequence
4	\$15.58	1	held it	–	Last rung, remaining stock cleared
six units	\$102.93	6	\$96.66	+\$5.33	

Revenue was 6.5% higher than selling all six at the national Buy Box. Profit was **23% higher**, because the flat \$4.09 fee amplifies the premium once it comes out.

Cadence

We read daily, in the morning, before setting. This is the one place Round Robin asks more of you than the 4-Week ladder, and the reason is measured: on this ASIN the regional ceiling moved **\$1.79 inside a single day**, while the national figure barely moved. A weekly touch cannot see that.

Floor and stop

We do not let Round Robin descend below the minimum profit target while the ladder is live. If the highest reachable box in the country falls under your floor, we treat the ladder as finished and move the item to the post-ladder rule below.

LADDER B • DESCENDS THROUGH TIME

The 4-Week Price Discovery Ladder

Formerly delivered as the 4-Week Test. The mechanics are unchanged; the name now says what it does. It is a question asked with inventory, and the answer it returns is whether this product earns a place on your replenishment list.

1. The three inputs

- **Beginning Price.** The ceiling: the highest price observed in the last 90 days. Not the current Buy Box.
- **REPLEN Price.** Your floor: the minimum profit target you have set for your business, typically 20% ROI. Sell at or above this and the product is a replen candidate.
- **Break-even Price.** Cost plus fees. Not a rung on the ladder, but you need it for the post-ladder rule.

In PATH Profit Zones, your minimum profit target is the green dashed line on the chart, and it is editable. Type 30 over the 20 and the line moves if you want to raise your bar.

2. Compute the steps

$$\text{step} = (\text{Beginning Price} - \text{REPLEN Price}) \div 3$$

Three steps, four price points, four weeks. Week 1 sits at the ceiling, Week 4 lands exactly on your floor.

3. Start the clock at the Prime Window, not at "available"

This is the input we see missed most often. Amazon will frequently mark your inventory available the moment UPS takes possession of the shipment, and that is not the start of your test.

START CONDITION

The clock starts when the unit is **shippable by Amazon inside the Prime Window**, meaning a two to three day delivery promise. Until then you are not competing, and any price data you gather is noise.

4. Reset if the item has been sitting

If a product has been sitting at some number that was not set from the ceiling, we do not count that time as ladder time. We reset from the true observed ceiling and restart the clock. Weeks already served at an arbitrary price tell you very little, because no question was being asked.

Worked example

A doll, August 2026. Unit cost \$35. Observed 90-day peak \$65.75. Minimum profit target \$57. Break-even \$48.65. Every market in the country was showing \$55 at the time, so there was no spread to work with and the item routed to Ladder B. It had been sitting at a price the seller had set himself, so the ladder was reset from the peak.

$$\text{step} = (\$65.75 - \$57.00) \div 3 = \$2.92$$

WEEK	PRICE	COMPUTED	WHAT YOU ARE LEARNING
1	\$65.75	\$65.75	What the market bears at its best
2	\$63.00	\$62.83	Where demand starts to respond
3	\$60.00	\$59.92	Narrowing in on where demand lives
4	\$57.00	\$57.00	Does this work at minimum profit?

The worksheet computes exact steps. Rounding to a clean price point, as above, is fine and generally reads better on the listing.

Cadence

We use one decision day per week. Pick a day, Tuesday or Thursday or whatever fits your week, and reprice only on that day. **We turn the automated repricer off for test inventory.** Automated repricing during a test makes the decision before you have seen what the market is telling you, which gives away the entire point of running one.

We check the spread map before each step, per the audible above.

After week four

If it has not sold at your floor, the test is complete and it returned a clear answer. Drop to **the higher of the current Buy Box or your break-even price**. In the doll example that is \$55, since the flat national Buy Box sits above the \$48.65 break-even. If it sells there, liquidate the remaining units and recover the capital.

Breaking even is not a failure. You got the capital back, you got a sale on your account history, and you got a real answer about a product you would otherwise still be guessing about. That is tuition.

DIAGNOSTICS

Read the board before you step

Before any step down, we look at why the price is where it is. Two of these readings will mislead you if you take the chart at face value.

Offer count is the leading indicator. Price is the lagging one. A listing that went from 4 offers to 11 or 12 will drift down, and the offer count told you before the price did. Watching price alone leaves you a step behind.

Three traps in the stock numbers:

- **The "sold" callout on the offer graph does not mean sold.** Hover it and Keepa will tell you it is a stock change. Units decrement when they leave one fulfillment center and increment when they land at another. The real read on whether a competitor is moving inventory is a gradual decline over time, not a single drop.
- **FBM sellers can type any inventory number they want.** A seller showing 500 units may have five.
- **A stock count of 2 may not be a stock count.** Sellers can set a purchase limit, and the limit is what gets reported. A competitor falling from roughly 90 units to 2 overnight looks far more like a limit than a sell-through.

Where the ladders meet

They share a floor and they share an output. Both descend to your minimum profit target, and both are ultimately asking whether this product belongs on the replenishment list. Sold at or above the REPLEN price is a yes. Below it is a no.

They are also not permanent assignments. Spread appears and an item moves to Ladder A. Spread disappears and it falls back to Ladder B. We run the router every time we are about to touch a price, which is daily on one ladder and weekly on the other.

The fine print

- **You are choosing one national number.** Amazon gives you a single price for the whole country, and the entire method operates inside that constraint.
- **This covers a minority of your catalog by design.** On the 57% of products that hold one price nationwide and sit outside an active test, a conventional

repricer already does the job. Leave it running.

- **It trades volume for margin.** You are selling the units you have at the best price the country will pay, rather than every unit the market would take at the lowest number. That is the convenience store rather than the warehouse club, and it is a deliberate choice about which business you are in.
- **The thresholds are ours.** The \$1.96 spread gate is our 75th percentile repurposed as a decision line, and the 20% ROI floor is a common default. Treat both as starting points to test against your own catalog.
- **Every spread figure is the anonymous Buy Box.** A shopper with purchase history can be shown a different price than the one we measure.
- **Different goals should land somewhere else.** This is built to get the most out of units you already own. If you are optimizing for velocity, cash conversion or a hands-off operation, you should reach different answers, and you would be right to.

Derived from two PATH Profit Zones papers: the geographic price variance research (54,779 scans, 28,664 ASINs, 18 markets, 117 days) and the round robin case study (six units, June 2026). Ladder B mechanics follow the 4-Week Test worksheet and its published quick reference. Thresholds marked provisional are inferences from the research, not findings of it. Companion worksheet: Pricing Ladder Worksheet.xlsx.