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Kobo™ eReader

FOR DUMMIES®

Learn to:

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- Use Wi-Fi to purchase books
- Sync your bookmarks with your other devices

Corey Sandler

Author of both editions of
Laptops All-in-One For Dummies



Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[About This Book](#)

[Conventions Used in This Book](#)

[Foolish Assumptions](#)

[Icons Used in This Book](#)

[How This Book Is Organized](#)

[Where to Go from Here](#)

[Chapter 1: Go Go Kobo! Getting Started](#)

[Why not take a tablet?](#)

[The Beauty of Single-Mindedness](#)

[E Ink Versus LCD screens](#)

[Inspecting the Box](#)

[Opening the goods](#)

[Saying sayonara to the AC adapter](#)

[Laying Hands on the Kobo eReader](#)

[The top end](#)

[The front](#)

[The left side](#)

[The bottom end](#)

[The back](#)

[The right side](#)

[Charging Up for Reading](#)

[Go Configure: Setting Up Kobo](#)

[Chapter 2: Telling a Book by Its Cover](#)

[Selecting a Book from Your Library](#)

[EPUB](#)

[PDFs](#)

[Opening a Book](#)

[Reading a Book](#)

[Jumping from chapter to chapter](#)

[Zooming through the table of contents](#)

[Changing text size](#)

[Changing the typeface](#)

[Looking up a word in the dictionary](#)

[Closing a book](#)

[Finishing a book](#)

[Browsing Your Collection](#)

[The I'm Reading page](#)

[The Books page](#)

[Chapter 3: Buying \(or Finding\) eBooks](#)

[Accounting On It](#)

[Getting all wired](#)

[Ejection notice: Read before unplugging](#)

[Working without wires](#)

[Working without wires: Bluetooth style](#)

[Adding books using Adobe or Calibre](#)

[Moving eBooks to Your eReader](#)

[Tethering to a computer](#)

[Shopping wirelessly](#)

[Dragging and dropping files from a computer to your eReader](#)

[Copying files directly onto an SD or SDHC card](#)

[Getting in Sync](#)

[Newspaper, Mister?](#)

[Feeding Your eReader with Live News](#)

[Storing Information](#)

[Chapter 4: Troubleshooting, Tips, and Tricks](#)

[Finding a Mis-shelved Book](#)

[Managing Your Documents](#)

[Where are the docs I added myself?](#)

[Can I change the way the eReader sorts documents?](#)

[How do I zoom in to make the page larger?](#)

[Why can't I flip my eReader to make the screen wider?](#)

[Taking Control of Your Library](#)

[How do I delete a book from my Kobo eReader?](#)

[How do I remove a book from the I'm Reading page?](#)

[Do I need to update my eReader?](#)

[How do I make a Kobo eReader go to the Borders site for new books?](#)

[How do I keep the kids away from mom and dad's very special book collection?](#)

[When Your eReader Won't Answer the Call](#)

[Fixing wireless weirdness](#)

[Untangling shopping carts](#)

[Taking almost drastic measures](#)

[Chapter 5: Ten Ways to Spiff Up Your Kobo eReader](#)

[An AC Adapter](#)

[An Emergency Power Source](#)

[A Carrying Case](#)

[An External Light](#)

[A Screen Protector](#)

[An Extended Warranty](#)

[A Rewards Program](#)

[Adobe Digital Editions](#)

[Calibre](#)

[A Flexible Word or Image Processor](#)

[Appendix: 100 Free Books](#)

Kobo™ eReader For Dummies®

by **Corey Sandler**



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About the Author

Corey Sandler is a voracious reader and also an indefatigable author of books. Also magazines, and ages ago, newspapers. He has written more than 160 books at last count and, of those, 52 are about computers and technology. The others are about history, sports, and business. Sandler travels all over the world researching and lecturing and consulting; he is within half a dozen of reaching the real century mark of countries visited: watch out Moldova, Kaliningrad, and Bolivia. You're up next.

Okay, so sometimes he is fatigable. That happens when you carry 150 pounds of luggage including a laptop, three cameras and lenses, a dozen books, and a hogshead of lecture notes printed out and neatly bound to sit on a lectern. And that's why he's a fan of electronic books. It's good for his

back.

Sandler studied journalism (and took some courses to program a gigantic mainframe computer) at Syracuse University. He began his career as a daily newspaper reporter in Ohio and then New York, moving on to a post as a correspondent for The Associated Press. From there he joined Ziff-Davis Publishing as the first executive editor of *PC Magazine*. He wrote his first book about computers in 1983 and hasn't come close to stopping.

When he's not on the road and living on his smartphone and computer, he's at home on Nantucket island 30 miles out to sea off the coast of Massachusetts. He shares his life with his wife Janice; their two grown children have their own careers elsewhere on the continent. You can see Sandler's current list of books on his web site at www.sandlerbooks.com and you can send an e-mail through the links you find there. He promises to respond to courteous inquiries as quickly as he can. Spam, on the other hand, will receive the death penalty.

Dedication

This book, like so many of the 160 I've written, is dedicated to my family. To Janice, who has put up with me for more than 30 years and still laughs at most of my jokes. To my children, William and Tessa, who have progressed from laptops (in diapers) to careers and lives of their own. I am proud to be husband, father, and personal IT consultant to the clan.

Author's Acknowledgments

This book bears just one name on the cover, but that's only part of the story.

Thanks to the smart and capable crew at Wiley, including Katie Mohr and the rest of the editorial and production staff who turned the taps of my keyboard into the book you hold in the electronic device in the palm of your hand.

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I received invaluable assistance — right in the middle of the crazy times of a product launch — from Kelly Peterson, the merchandising manager for EBooks at Borders Books, and from Sean Maurik at Kobo.

And as always, thanks to you for buying this book. Go forth and enjoy your Kobo eReader and the millions of great works of literature and also humble (but I trust valuable) works like this that can reside upon it.

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We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/.

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

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Introduction

I have a serious case of bibliophilia. Been that way for all my life. Thomas Jefferson, one of the greatest minds to occupy a chair in American government, said, “I cannot live without books.” The great Roman philosopher Cicero wrote this more than 2,000 years ago: “A room without books is like a body without a soul.” I know, I know: enough with the philosophical discourse. You want to know how to make the most use out of the Kobo eReader, the latest in a cascade of amazing high-tech devices that have made their way into our consciousness in our ever-quickenning modern time

But here in this introduction I wanted to make one important point: forget for a moment about the technology. The Kobo eReader is merely another way to read the printed word and absorb its content into our souls. In some ways it is inferior to ink on paper. But in other ways it has some remarkable advantages.

As I write this, I am preparing to head out on an international trip. Between my wife and I, we were prepared to pack nearly ten pounds of ink, paper, and cardboard. But that was yesterday; today I loaded all ten pounds onto a Kobo eReader. The device is about the size of an opened passport and weighs slightly less than eight ounces.



Oh, and by the way, the eReader comes from the factory with 100 classic works of literature and can hold nearly one thousand titles before you have to consider using its built-in expansion slot. Cicero would be pleased, as am I.

About This Book

I have written more than 160 books, but this particular one marks my very first completely electronic book: no trees were sacrificed in its creation. And though this title is part of the wondrously successful *For Dummies* collection, it is also one of the first of that series to be published first as an e-book.

Kobo eReader For Dummies follows the same proven formula of the other *For Dummies* books. It is meant for people who are smart enough to know they could use a bit of extra explanation, tips, and hints to get the most out of their new device. And also for people who enjoy a bit of humor, or at least light-hearted writing, as they boldly go where they have not gone before.

I wrote it in what newspapers (remember them?) used to call “inverted pyramid” style. I start out with the broadest, most general information and then get more and more specific. As an electronic book, you can start at the beginning and read through to the end, or you can jump from chapter to chapter with a few well-chosen clicks. You can even read it from back to front.

Conventions Used in This Book

You need no special instruction to make your way through the book. I use standard book style to help make certain bits of information easier to find and simpler to use:

Numbered lists: Start at number 1 and proceed to the last one in the list, in order, to accomplish a particular task.

Bulleted lists: Bulleted lists (you're in the middle of one right now) represent things you should know about or do, but that don't demand being performed in a particular order.

Web addresses: The Kobo eReader doesn't include a Web browser or direct access to the Internet. In a few places in the book I mention addresses you may want to visit using your personal computer or smartphone. When I do, it will be in a form like this:

www.borders.com or Borders.com. Just enter that into the Internet browser to visit a location. If the address happens to be at the end of the sentence, like the one I listed above, do not include the period. That's just one of the places where old typesetting styles and new technologies intersect, and no one has yet figured out how to finish a written sentence without a period, except perhaps for the author James Joyce

When I tell you to *select* a menu item, that means use the Kobo eReader's navigation pad to move the onscreen highlight bars to surround something you want to change or set, and then press the center of the pad. If I suggest you move the pad to the left, that means press the left side of the navigation pad. To move right or up or down: I'll let you guess.

Foolish Assumptions

This book isn't intended as a buying guide, nor does it go into a great deal of detail about how to turn on the Kobo eReader and perform the very simple setup and registration steps it requires. They're all presented right there on the screen and in the Quick Start guide that comes with the device.

I assume that you have a Kobo eReader in your hands and are reading this text on its screen.

Another assumption: Kobo introduced its first eReader in mid 2010, and fewer than six months later it came out with an improved and more advanced model; that model is called the Kobo eReader Wi-Fi (or the Kobo wireless eReader) and it is this version that the company expects to sell as hard as they can. The two models are very similar in design and function, and so I concentrate on the newer version here; where the two models diverge a bit, I point that out.

My final assumptions are that you have access to a personal computer, that it has access to the Internet, and that you have at least a basic understanding of how to get about on the Internet. You can make your connection to that computer using a USB cable (supplied in the box) or by wireless connection. Other than the 100 free classic books that come with the Kobo eReader, the only way

add new titles — from bestsellers to obscure titles to daily newspapers — is to make a connection between your eReader and the Internet. It's not that hard to do, and I'll do my best to make it easy.

Icons Used in This Book

Kobo eReader For Dummies uses a handful of special graphic elements called *icons* to get your attention. Here they are:



Here be dragons. Watch out. Be careful.



In case you missed something earlier on, here's a reminder of important stuff.



Let me tell you something you might not realize about how to use your Kobo eReader.



Not that you absolutely need to know this sort of information, but some of us like to understand a bit about how things work. That's the kind of guy I am. Ask me how to get to the post office, and I'll tell you how a GPS system works.

How This Book Is Organized

In Chapter [1](#), I give you a guided tour of the Kobo eReader and explain how its designers chose to concentrate on just one thing: allowing you to read a book or document or publication.

Chapter [2](#) explains how to read a book on an eReader. It's not all that different from a paper-and-ink book, except that there is no paper and no ink and you turn the pages with clicks of a navigation pad. Things like that.

In Chapter [3](#), you go shopping for books and other publications. I explain the basics of using an online electronic bookstore and I also show how to find free books and how to convert your own files to display on the Kobo eReader.

Chapter [4](#) is the home of tips and tricks and troubleshooting. There is much more of the first thing, a modest amount of the second, and just enough of the third. And if things really go awry, I explain how to wipe the slate clean and start all over as if your Kobo eReader had never been used before.

In Chapter [5](#) I share some ways to extend and expand your Kobo eReader.

The [appendix](#) lists and explains a bit about the 100 free classic books included with your device.

Where to Go from Here

You go reading, of course. And you go out of the house and take your book collection with you. You go on planes, trains, and automobiles (as long as you're not the pilot, engineer, or driver). And you enjoy this newest version of a way to present one of humankind's greatest inventions: the written word.

Go Go Kobo! Getting Started

Congratulations. You are the proud owner of a Kobo eReader. You and I know its purpose, although not everyone else does. So let me help you answer the inevitable question, “A what?”

A Kobo is not a cut of beef. That’s a Kobe, meat taken from Wagyu cattle raised according to ancient traditions in Japan. Tastes great, but is of no use whatsoever when you want to carry a few hundred bestselling books with you to the beach or aboard a transcontinental flight.

And no, it isn’t a six-foot-six-inch NBA shooting guard. That Kobe earns tens of millions of dollars per year playing basketball, but he is not known for ordinarily delivering you a daily newspaper or this week’s bestselling book.

Nor is it a Japanese artist’s workspace, the only actual definition I could find for the letters K O B O.

So here’s the answer: a Kobo eReader is an electronic device that can download and store thousands of full-length books, magazines, newspapers, and other publications. This very same Kobo eReader can display the material a page at a time, on a sharp screen roughly the size of a paperback book page, using a technology called E Ink that comes pretty close to mimicking black ink on white paper.

A lot of green things can be said about this black-and-white device. It saves trees, paper, and energy because books do not have to be printed and packaged and shipped to the bookstore or to your home. It saves *greenbacks* because many books are offered at a discount from their printed version; you also save the cost of a trip to the store.

And when you travel, you’ll save your back, some money, and a lot of inconvenience: you can pack the equivalent of hundreds of pounds of books into an eight-ounce package. And as I show you later, the Kobo eReader can also hold your personal documents: flight itineraries, confirmations, calendars, instruction manuals, and presentations.

Kobo is not the first major company to come to market with this kind of device. That prize goes to the Sony Reader (2006) and the Amazon Kindle (2007). Others have joined the party, including Barnes & Noble in 2009, with its Nook. As you know, though, the prize does not always go to the swiftest or the first to market, but often to the company that takes a good idea and makes a better product. That may well be Kobo, which introduced its first Kobo eReader in mid-2010 and followed it up at the end of the year with an even more advanced model.

Why not take a tablet?

Somewhere out there someone is shouting, “What about the Apple iPad? And the BlackBerry PlayBook?” Someone else is holding up a netbook, saying “What about this?”

Well, here’s the story: the iPad and the PlayBook and the dozens of small portable computers that call themselves netbooks are very capable, very sexy multipurpose devices. They can connect to the Internet and display Web pages, they can send and receive e-mail, they can enable you to play games or listen to music or watch videos on them. And they can display electronic renditions of books and other publications.

That’s all very good, but like any multipurpose device, compromises have to be made. A Swiss Army Knife is a wonderful thing: I’ve seen one with a small knife, tiny fork, teensy scissors, little wrench, and cute corkscrew. Together they’re impressive. Taken individually, none of them are anywhere as useful as a properly engineered single-purpose device. So it is with tablet computers like those from Apple and BlackBerry, or with netbooks from any of a dozen of the major manufacturers. All are amazingly capable — more powerful by miles than my first personal computer and sold at a fraction of the price. But a tablet or netbook computer is less than ideal if you want to use it as an eReader. Some compromises began with the screen and moved on from there.

I describe this in more detail shortly, but here’s the key point: A tablet or a netbook or a personal computer uses an LCD (liquid crystal display) on which it paints a picture or shows characters and words. It uses electrical power to blacken or colorize a dot which then stands out in front of a background that is illuminated from behind. The use of the backlit screen results in relatively high electrical use, a bright screen that can tire your eyes, extra weight, and extra cost. And then there is all the other stuff that makes a tablet or a netbook into a multipurpose device: things like hard drives, large amounts of flash memory, speakers, microphones, video cameras, network adapters, keyboards, and that sort of stuff.

Tablets and netbooks can accept new software (full programs or smaller special-purpose coding called *apps*) that can allow them to do things even the initial designers never envisioned — things that have nothing to do with the basic concept of reading a book.



Kobo backstory

Kobo is a name made up in hopes it will become a memorable brand. The fact that it is an anagram of the word *Book* is apparently just a nifty little inside joke. The company arose out of the Canadian retailer Indigo Books & Music and was originally burdened with a truly forgettable name: Shortcovers. At the end of 2009, it spun off from Indigo as a separate business and subsequently received investments from the U.S.-based bookseller Borders Group, Inc., as well as a Hong Kong investment company called Cheung Kong (Holdings) Ltd. and a major book and entertainment retailer in Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore called REDGroup Retail, which is affiliated with Borders.

The Beauty of Single-Mindedness

So then, what about a dedicated electronic book reader? A Kobo eReader, for instance.

By contrast (pun intended) a single-purpose e-Reader is intended to do one thing, and do it as well as possible: display easy-to-read text on a screen in a device small enough to fit in the breast pocket of my sports jacket or in a small woman's clutch. (That's a small handbag for a woman, not a petite female's tight clasp.)



The Kobo eReader's first model does not include anything unrelated to the book or magazine-reading experience: it cannot play music, show videos, play games, dance the mazurka, or be modified with the addition of programs or apps. To be very specific about it: the Kobo eReader displays only black and white text or images (in as many as 16 shades of gray). It cannot display moving pictures or video. It will not function as a music player. It cannot send and receive e-mail. And it does not communicate with an overhead GPS satellite to give you turn-by-turn directions to the nearest board-certified, left-hander friendly, non-denominational vegan takeout restaurant.



At the heart of the Kobo eReader is its use of an E Ink display. In its first models, the display is about 3.5 inches wide by 4.75 inches tall; measured diagonally, it's 6 inches. (That's nearly identical in size to the screen on the Amazon Kindle, although the Kobo eReader manages to squeeze its display into a slightly smaller package.)

Here's what the design of an eReader means to you:

A device that is roughly the size of a trade paperback novel, although it is thinner and weighs less (about eight ounces).

Relatively little electrical demand, with the battery able to hold a charge for days or even two weeks of ordinary use.

A slightly off-white background and black type that is nearly as easy to read as a printed page.

Photographs and drawings in 16 shades of gray, which allows for an acceptably sharp, detailed image.

A considerable savings in weight because of the doodads left out and the smaller battery.

A lower price at the checkout counter.

The Kobo eReader arrived in mid-2010 with a model that connected by a short cable to a personal computer in order to load books. (It also could communicate by short-range Bluetooth radio to a BlackBerry smartphone for the same purpose.) The slightly newer and improved Wi-Fi model arrived at the end of October in the very same year. The basic functionality and most of the

commands are very similar for both devices.



I concentrate on the Kobo Wireless eReader in this book, but I will point out significant differences that apply to the original model.

But first, check out neat little Table 1-1, which I put together to compare four of the most popular devices for reading electronic books. Actually: three eReaders and a pretender. The Apple iPad is an impressive device but it is a tablet computer. They are arranged, from left to right, in order of complexity, size, and weight and roughly in ascending price. The Kobo eReader comes in at the low end of the scale and the Apple iPad claims high ground and heft and extra added features. (The BlackBerry PlayBook, due to arrive sometime in 2011, would be near Apple's territory as well, albeit with a 7-inch LCD screen rather than a 9.7-inch LCD display.)

Table 1-1: Comparing Popular eReaders

	Kobo eReader	Amazon Kindle	Barnes & Noble NOOK	Apple iPad
Dimensions	4.7 x 7.2 inches (184mm x 120mm)	4.8 x 7.5 inches (190mm x 122mm)	4.9 x 7.7 inches (196mm x 126mm)	7.5 x 9.6 inches (190mm x 243mm)
Thickness	.4 inches (10mm)	.34 inches (8.5mm)	.5 inches (12.8mm)	.5 inches (13.4mm)
Weight	8 ounces (221g)	8.5 ounces (241g)	12.1 ounces (343g)	25.6 ounces (1.6 pounds or 730g) Wi-Fi+3G model
Screen size (diagonal)	6 inches	6 inches	6 inches	9.7 inches
Screen technology	E Ink (16 grayscales)	E Ink Pearl (16 grayscales)	E Ink (16 grayscales)	LED backlit LCD (color)
Screen resolution	600 x 800	600 x 800	600 x 800	1024 x 768
Touchscreen for main display	No	No	No; small color touchscreen below reading screen	Yes; also three-axis accelerometer
Connectivity	USB and Wi-Fi (Original model: USB and Bluetooth)	USB and Wi-Fi, or USB, Wi-Fi, and 3G cellular models	Wi-Fi, or Wi-Fi and 3G cellular models	Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, or Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and cellular
Navigation	4-way directional pad plus center-select	4-way directional pad plus center-select	Touchscreen and back/forward buttons	Touchscreen
Keyboard	Virtual onscreen, using directional pad	Tiny physical buttons on front of device	Virtual onscreen, using touchscreen	Virtual onscreen, using touchscreen
Internal memory	1GB	4GB	2GB	16, 32, and 64GB models
Add-on memory	SD slot accepts cards up to 32GB on wireless model. (Original model: SD cards up to 4GB)	No	microSD slot can accept cards up to 16GB	No
Battery life	About 2 weeks or 10,000 page turns	About 1 month	About 10 days	About 10 hours video; 140 hours audio
File formats supported	ePub, PDF, Adobe DRM	AZW, AZW1, MOBI, PRC, AA, AAX, PDF, DOC, TXT	ePub, PDB, PFF, Adobe DRM	Apple DRM; apps allow PDF and other open formats
Purchase books from any source?	Yes	No	Yes	No

Books sync to other devices?	Apple iPad, iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, smartphones, PC, Mac	Apple iPad, iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, smartphones, PC, Mac	Apple iPad, iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, smartphones, PC, Mac	Through use of Kobo, Amazon Barnes & Noble, or other apps
Audio output?	No	Yes (mono speaker and headphone jack)	Yes (mono speaker and headphone jack)	Yes (two mono speakers and headphone jack)
Text to speech?	No	Yes	No	Yes, with app
Web access?	No	Yes (limited)	Yes (in Wi-Fi mode)	Yes
What comes in the box?	eReader, USB cable	Kindle, USB cable, AC power adapter	Nook, USB cable, AC power adapter	iPad, dock connector to USB cable, AC power adapter

E Ink Versus LCD screens

Here's one of those analogy statements most of us had to master in order to please the college admission gods and goddesses:

E Ink is to Ink and Paper as LCD is to a Flat-Screen TV.

Here's what that means:

An E Ink display does not have its own lighting source. It needs to be illuminated by reflected light. You can shine a reading lamp on it or take it near a window or take it to the great outdoors — just like a real book with ink printed on paper. If you bring an electronic reader that uses an E Ink screen into a dark room, you'll need to turn on a light. If you bring that same reader outdoors on a bright and sunny day, its screen should be perfectly readable, illuminated by direct solar radiation that has traveled about 93 million miles (depending on the time of year) to get to you. At the speed of light, that takes about 8.3 minutes.

An LCD screen requires a lamp to shine through the screen. You can read an LCD in a dark room or in a dimly lit place because it brings its own source of lighting, just like a flat-screen TV. That's the good news. The not-so-good news is that the light is shining right into your eyes, which some people find a strain after a while. And the even-less-good news is that an LCD doesn't generally look all that good under very bright lighting, like you might find near a window or outdoors. The combination of light from behind and light from in front washes out the image.

Inspecting the Box

Is that all there is? Well, yes, and isn't that a wonderful thing. When the Man in Brown came to the door of my office to deliver my Kobo eReader (I was one of the first mere mortals in the United States to receive a finished product), he handed me a package that was about the size of a hardcover book, except it weighed much less.

The box is relatively large but light for two reasons: first, the Kobo eReader itself is less than half a pound. (By the way, a typical hardcover book weighs about a pound or more.) And second, the package is mostly air. Your lovely little Kobo eReader has come all the way from the factory in Taiwan by way of a retailer and has traveled by truck, airplane, conveyor belt, upstairs, downstairs, and every which way you can imagine just to get to you. It deserves a comfortable and safe place with protective padding and shock absorbers and plastic wrap.

Opening the goods

Once you open the box, though, it's just this little, mostly plastic, thing. Small. Light. Handy. Cut it open. Even. Okay, so unbox your own Kobo eReader.

Your first problem: how to open the cardboard carton. Like I said, the box is intended to protect the device from insult on its long journey to your hands. It's not quite as difficult to open as one of those thingamabobs sealed in a hard plastic cocoon at the hardware store. Almost.

1. The inner box sits within a sleeve-like cover. Carefully cut the two plastic pieces of tape on the sides and slide it off.

Take a deep breath and wait for the drum roll to end.

2. Open the box as if it were a book.

The Kobo e-Reader is carefully held in a cardboard frame on the right side, and you'll discover a small compartment on the left side. (Unless, that is, you've somehow managed to open the box upside down, in which case the eReader will be on the left . . . until you rotate the box properly.)



No, that's not a printed piece of paper stuck on the front of your eReader: it's a clear sheet of plastic from when it was turned off at the factory and put in the box.

3. Remove the piece stuck on the front to reveal actual E Ink on the screen.

4. Carefully remove the device from its holding place. Hold it in your hand for a moment to admire its beauty.

One of the things I appreciate most about the Kobo eReader's design is the minimum of clutter. The screen itself takes up most of the real estate. There is a small Kobo logo at the top, four small button labels along the lower left side, and a four-way navigation pad — no bigger than a 25-cent coin — in the lower right.



There is no keyboard. When it becomes necessary to enter characters and numbers to set up an account to buy books or to place an order, you use the navigation pad to peck away at a virtual keyboard on the screen. Or you can also do all of this from the real keyboard of your personal computer and then transfer titles to the Kobo.

5. Check to make sure you have the following:

- A **USB cable** stored in the compartment on the left side of the box.

- **A Quick Start guide.** Models sold directly by Kobo come with the extra added attraction of a version in both English and French, as per Canadian law.
-

Saying sayonara to the AC adapter

What's missing from the box when you get your machine? A full printed manual and an AC adapter.

As Douglas Adams regularly wrote in his wonderfully weird *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* "Don't panic." (And if you haven't read Adams, put one or two of his books on the list of titles to download to your Kobo eReader. They're an indispensable guide to travelers of all species.)



The fact that there is no printed instruction manual should not be surprising. This is, after all, an electronic reader. The official manual, written in a near-simulacrum to English, is available right there on your Kobo eReader.

Of course, there's also this wondrous electronic publication in which you are currently immersed: *Kobo eReader For Dummies*. You can think of this book as a prequel and a sequel to the official instruction manual. It goes beforehand to define the seemingly unexplainable, and it goes afterward to give you some hints and tips and tricks not included in the official publication. Like the other *For Dummies* books (including those I've written), it's for people who are smart enough to know when they need help getting the most out of their complex new toys.



Now about the lack of an AC adapter: as I said earlier on, the folks at Kobo are bound and determined to make this product as simple and inexpensive as possible. And so they include a USB cable that cleverly serves three purposes:

The USB cable connects your Kobo eReader to your desktop or laptop computer, allowing you to order books and magazines online.

The USB cable allows you to transfer other files you may have on your computer to the Kobo eReader. Such files include PDFs (presentations you've saved in that format, instruction manuals, and other documents).

The USB cable can provide electrical power to recharge the eReader's built-in battery. To save a few dollars, no separate AC adapter is included in the box.

The lack of an AC adapter should not make much of a difference to most users in most situations, because a fully charged Kobo eReader should hold a charge (according to the manufacturer) for as much as 8,000 to 10,000 page turns (or two weeks). And if you travel with the little USB cord, you should be able to find a computer somewhere to attach to and recharge the battery.

But as I explain later in this book, you can also directly recharge your eReader by plugging in an AC adapter (with a properly sized USB connector) into the device. Many chargers for cellphones

and other mobile devices will work here.



Hold on to the neat little box that once held your untouched Kobo eReader. If (heaven forbid you should ever have to send in the device for warranty service, this is premade packaging for the purpose. And if you choose to someday regift your eReader to someone else and upgrade to the next wondrous model, it will look so much more impressive if it arrives in its original packaging.

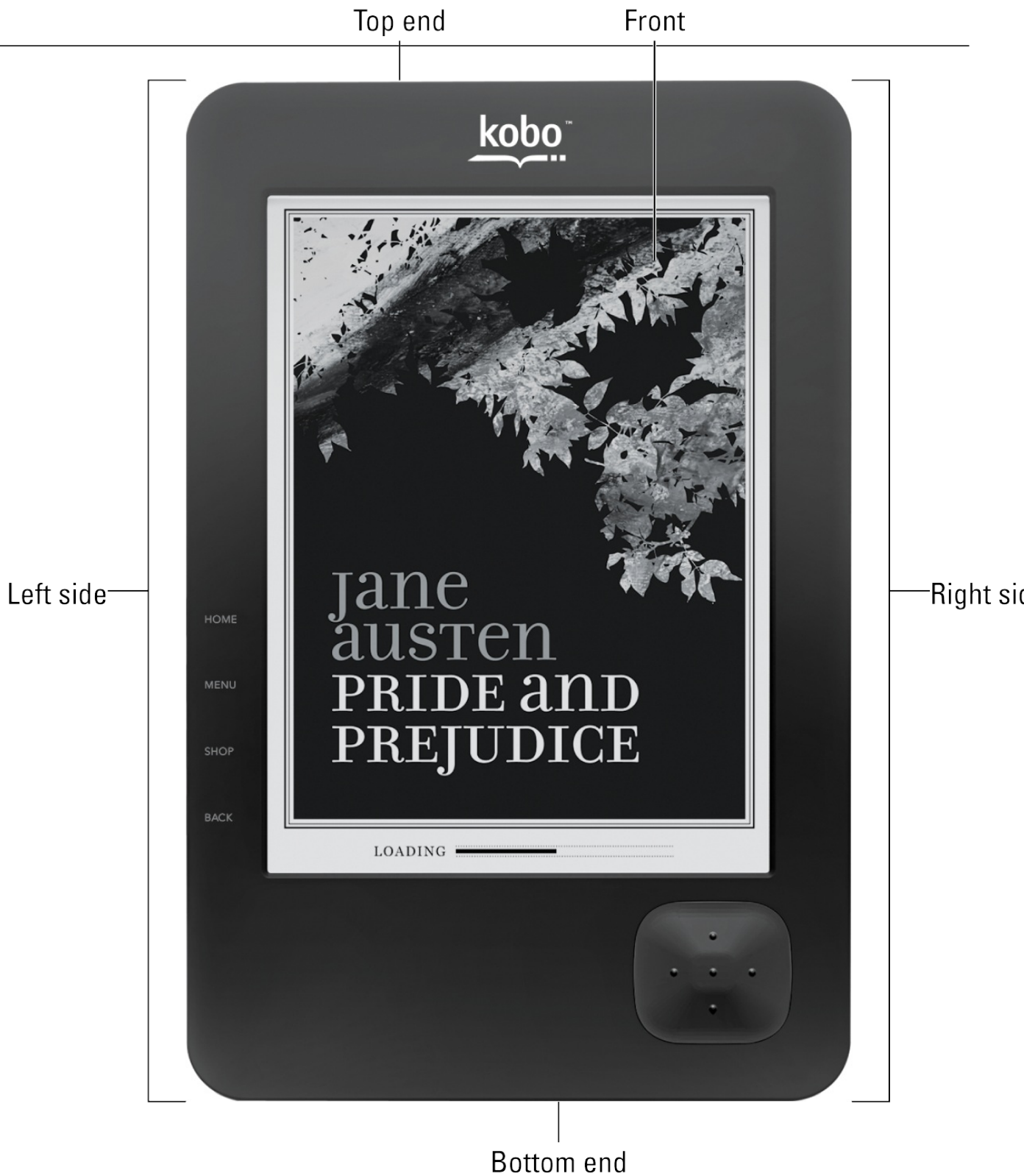
Laying Hands on the Kobo eReader

Now it's time to explore ways to get the most out of your electronic reader. The doctor is in. Let's begin with a physical exam. You're going to devote almost all of your attention to just one face of your Kobo eReader: the part that has the screen.

For your purposes (and according to the basic rules of geometry first defined by the Ancient Greeks and not yet repealed) the three-dimensional rectangular object in front of us has six sides. For simplicity's sake, ignore the fact that its corners are rounded. It's almost a rectangle, okay?

It's easy to figure out the top. That's the end that has the "kobo" logo. (If you've got the unit upside down, it would be at the bottom, and it would read something like "oqok" with a backwards K. I believe that is the Russian word for "oops.")

All of the following descriptions are based on looking at the Kobo eReader with it lying on its back with the logo at the top, as shown in the following figure.



I will call the side that has the screen the **front**. The side that is opposite the screen is the **back**. (The Kobo eReader's backside wears a nice quilt, not to be confused with kilt; although I have yet to see the Scottish version of the device.) The quilt provides a bit of a cushion and a non-slip surface. The narrow thin side at the top, above the logo, I call the **top end**. The narrow thin side at the bottom, beneath the wider margin below the screen shall be dubbed the **bottom end**. The long thin side at the left side of the front is hereby called the **left side**. And I suppose you have guessed that the longer thin side at the right side of the front shall be referred to here, and just once more, as the **right side**.

Now, let me describe the relatively few points of interest on each of these six sides.

The top end

Here you find an essential button and a potentially valuable slot. Their descriptions follow.

The power button

To turn on the unit, press and hold the little rectangular button for a second or so and let go; it will take a few seconds to go through the mental gymnastics all computers need to come to life.

To turn off the unit, press and hold the little rectangular button for about three seconds or so. The screen will change (depending on your settings) to either the cover of the book you were reading or to a mostly blank screen with the Kobo logo. Below the logo a message will read *~Powered Off~* PRESS POWER TO START.



If you just press the power button and immediately release it, your eReader will enter into Sleep Mode. In that case you see either the cover of the book you were reading or a Kobo logo plus a message at the top that says *~Sleep Mode~*PRESS POWER TO START. The advantage of Sleep Mode is that the Kobo eReader stops using its battery, which is good; it jumps to exactly where you were the last time you were paying attention to the device without having to go through all of those gymnastics I mentioned earlier.

Actually, you don't have to turn off your Kobo. If you put it down and walk away or if your eyes close and you drift off into dreamland, the unit enters into Sleep Mode all by itself after 10 minutes of inactivity.

The SD slot

When you buy your Kobo eReader, it comes with built-in memory of 1 gigabyte (1GB); most of that memory is available to hold your collection of books. When you consider that a typical book is less than 1 megabyte in size (1MB) and that a gigabyte is 1,024 megabytes, I figure that you can carry around something close to 1,000 books before running out of space.

But someone, sometime, somewhere is going to run out of space for his or her personal book collection. One of the advantages of the Kobo eReader — a feature not matched by current models of the Amazon Kindle or the Apple iPad and a few other would-be competitors — is this nice little SD slot. Into that slot you can insert a tiny little card with a capacity of as much as 32GB. A 2GB card is shown, front and back, in the following figure. (The original non-wireless model could work with only SD cards and had a top limit of 4GB.)



If you own an original, non-wireless Kobo eReader, I suggest going to the max for that device: a 4GB SD card. Owners of the wireless version should look for the best value on an SD or SDHC card; sometimes it's less expensive to buy two 8GB cards than a single 16GB card. Also, you do not need to pay more for a faster class of card; buy based on the capacity you want, not the speed.

In rough numbers, with a 32GB card installed you could walk around with as many as 32,000 electronic books on the card plus the ones stored in the internal memory of the Kobo eReader. That should be just about enough reading material for a week's vacation by the shore . . . or a roundtrip spaceflight to Mars. But if you want to think of it in other terms, just say you're a mechanical engineer who wants to travel with every possible reference book you might need for a project. Or you're a professor of English literature who wants to have at hand any one of perhaps 32,000 great books in case you need to cite chapter and verse.



The Kobo eReader doesn't come with an SD or SDHC card, which is another way that the initial price tag is kept low. If you don't buy a card to fill up the slot and you are taking your eReader to the beach or if you work in a talcum powder factory or somewhere similar, you might want to put a little piece of tape over the opening.

The front

Here, of course, is the reason we are gathered together for this special occasion. The front holds the screen that displays text. The screen itself is about 3.5 inches wide and 4.75 inches high. That works out to 16.625 square inches of electronic real estate. The other way to measure a screen (and this dates back to the early days of television display tubes) is to measure its diagonal from top left to bottom right. The Kobo eReader screen measures six inches diagonally. (So do the Amazon Kindle, the Barnes & Noble Nook, and a few other devices.)

Red light special

So what else is on the front? Cleverly hidden in the upper-right corner behind a tiny lens is the Status Indicator Light, which glows thusly:

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