

eBay Strategies Tools and Secrets



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Getting Started On eBay As A Seller

Getting registered with eBay as either a auction seller or buyer is a very simple process. As a buyer, all you need to do is provide some minimal information such as name, address, e-mail address, and create a user ID and password. To register as a seller requires some additional steps, primarily focusing on financial matters, though you'll also be expected to agree upon what you can and cannot put up for auction, and the rules and regulations associated with listing or presenting information regarding the items you intend to auction. It almost goes without saying that you'll be expected to conduct your selling affairs in honest matter, in no way misrepresenting the items you will be listing.

As an eBay auction seller, you'll need to set up an account, as you will be paying fees to have items listed, as well as paying commissions on those items which sell. You do not have to pay a commission on any item you list that does not sell. You have several choices as to how to intend to make any payments due eBay, but in any event, to open an account you will need either a valid credit card, a debit card, or provide your bank account information.

You'll also want to set up a feedback profile. This is especially important if you intend to sell many items at auction. The feedback profile, which is public, is intended to help you the seller, and to give a prospective bidder peace of mind should they choose to bid on a relatively expensive item. The feedback profile serves as a good policeman, hopefully in your case a kind one. A few highly negative feedback comments can be damaging, so you'll want to conduct business in an honest and professional matter.

You'll also need to set up a Q and A feature, so bidders can request further information or clarification about an item you are listing.

You'll want to do some research into how to price items that you'll be placing up for bidding, what category they fall in, and how to list them in a manner that makes them easy for a prospective bidder to locate.

You'll want to research ways to create a listing that will both draw attention to your item, present the item in the best possible light, and describe it correctly and accurately.

You'll want to research into how best to employ options relating to Reserve Prices, Best Offer invitations and Buy It Now invitations. There are certain restrictions which apply that you'll need to know.

You also want to become familiar with calculating shipping costs, as prospective buyers will want to know how much above the purchase price they might be expected to pay for shipping.

That's just a start, but enough to get you started as an eBay auction seller.

Getting Started On eBay As A Buyer

Getting started on eBay is easy, whether you are a buyer or a seller, or as more often than not, eventually do some of both. Getting started as a buyer is by far the easiest (staring as a seller is the subject of another article).

To become an eBay buyer, all you have to do is register. Many web sites require only an e-mail address and password to register. eBay requires a bit more, though not much.

eBay will ask for your name of course, your e-mail address, and your mailing address and phone number. The latter is just in case questions arise, especially if you set up an account. You'll probably never hear from eBay otherwise, as communications will most often be by e-mail, or in some cases, text messaging. You'll then be asked to create your own User ID and also create a password, followed by creating a secret question (and answer) and your date of birth. All of this is for your own protection, so someone else can't sneak into your account and purchase or bid on a number of items "on your behalf".

There are far fewer restrictions placed upon you the buyer, than are placed on the seller. Primarily what is expected of you as an eBay auction buyer is that you make prompt payment on any item you purchase or bid successfully on. The other item you need to be aware of is, given the opportunity to post information on eBay, such as a review or feedback, you are cautioned not to make false or malicious statements, use derogatory language, or post information that is not directly related to your status as a buyer.

Since you would probably not really do anything like that, you can see that becoming an eBay buyer is quite simple, and takes about 5 minutes max.

An excellent piece of advice is to go through the various guides and tutorials eBay offers. This is not only to learn how the bidding process works, which is important, but to see all the tools which are at your disposal to make your bidding experience a positive one. There are many tricks, techniques and strategies you can follow when bidding on items, some of which you will no doubt make up yourself.

Unlike day trading, you don't go through a trial process, using pretend money. If you experiment with bidding and enter what turns out to be the highest bid for an item, you have to pay for it. As you will soon find out, bidding at eBay auctions opens up a whole new world, whether you've participated in auctions in the past or not. Have fun!

eBay Selling - The Opposite Of Buying

If you're both an eBay auction buyer and seller, you're in a sense trying to live in two different worlds at the same time. For a given item, you either try to get it for as little as you can, or sell it for as much as you can. If you can succeed at both, then like many others have done, you can set up a thriving business on eBay.

So instead of being bidder, and employing all the strategies that a good bidder does, what are some of the strategies you should be using as a seller.

A smart bidder likes to participate in an auction that closes on a certain day, such as Tuesday, and a certain time, such as early morning, when traffic is apt to be low and one's final bid is apt to hold up. As a seller you want to be doing the opposite. Time your auction so that it will close on a Sunday, let's say just after dinnertime. That's when traffic tends to be highest, and the item you have for sale might just find itself in the midst of a last minute bidding frenzy. As a buyer,

you'd rather avoid that. If you're competitive juices kick in, you may spend way more than you originally intended, to get the winning bid. If you're a seller, sit back and enjoy.

A smart bidder will often contact the seller of an item to get answers to questions about the item that might arise, or questions regarding shipping costs, time to ship, or how payment is to be made. Since there are different ways to ship an item, and different ways it can be paid for, your job as a seller is to put as much of this information in your listing as possible, so you don't get a flood of questions on a hot selling item. Give the buyer some options if you can. Otherwise, make it clear in your listing how you plan to conduct your end of the transaction.

A bidder likes to see a low initial price. As a seller, you might be tempted to start with the highest price you think you can get away with. This is sometimes a sound strategy, but setting your opening price a lower can pay sometimes off as well. If your price is attractive, to the buyer, it could easily set off a bidding war. In the end you might do end up doing better than would have been the case if you started high. Something to think about.

There are many different seller's strategies, but there are some good ones you might come up with simply by thinking like a buyer, and then turning your thoughts around 180 degrees.

What Turns Off A Prospective eBay Bidder Or Buyer?

As an eBay auction seller you've no doubt taken some steps to create listings that draw attention to the items you wish to sell, and put those items in the best possible light. What can be happening when you think you've done everything right, but are getting poor bidding results?

Here are a half dozen things you can do, or not do , guaranteed to keep bidders away:

Don't charge more for shipping and handling than you really need to. If you're selling an item from home, granted it may take a little effort to carefully package it for shipping. Many "handling fees" are absurd anyway. Consider including that fee in the price you'll accept for the item. At least it will be hidden.

Where possible, provide your shipping charge up front. If you can offer free shipping, for small items, by all means say so! Don't make the customer send an e-mail asking for shipping information, and if that happens , respond quickly, or you'll lose a bid.

Prospective bidders want information, not a sales pitch. Don't use all capitals in your listing for emphasis. That's the Internet equivalent of screaming. We get enough of that from TV commercials. Be careful with font colors as well. Red letters can draw attention. Use too many, and your shouting a warning.

Don't use flashing images in your listings. Have you ever lived near a flashing neon sign? Same effect. Let your words and the image of the item your selling do the speaking for you. Some don't like buying from people who rely on gimmicks.

The image of your item should focus on the item, not on your wife and kids, the cute family dog, or the south wall of your living room. Your image should consist of the item you have up for

auction against a suitable background, and without any distracting elements, as much as is possible.

Be very careful about placing any rules or restrictions on the bidder. If you only accept American Express, you'll lose plenty of business. If you demand immediate payment, or demand anything for that matter, bidders will likely stay away. They may want the item you're have up for bid, but would rather not deal with someone they may view as being an unpleasant or controlling individual.

If you follow these simple rules, or avoid doing most of the things that tend to turn people off, you can expect to get some bids, as long as your item is reasonably priced and somewhat in demand.

Bidding On eBay

Bidding on eBay is a straightforward process. You place your bid, and then get on with other things, checking later to see if you've been successful or not. This sometimes works and sometimes doesn't. It usually doesn't when someone else is willing to pay more for an item listed than you are, or you submitted a very low bid in hopes of "lucking out".

Submit The Most You're Willing To Pay - eBay, and most eBay practitioners, will advise you to submit your maximum bid right off the bat. This seems counterintuitive to the way we usually think we should conduct ourselves at an auction. When in an auction house one doesn't start out by yelling out one's maximum bid. Either someone else is going to bid more, and you get nothing for your efforts, or no one else bids, and you're stuck with what you bid, your maximum. So, you start bidding low, in hope bidding comes to a halt while you're ahead, and the price is still low.

The way eBay works is when you submit your maximum bid, that what you are obligated to pay should you win, your actual bid will be some increment over the next highest bid, yours being the highest, or an increment over the lowest allowable bid, should no one else bid. You aren't necessarily stuck with paying your maximum bid. Your maximum bid is simply the most you would be willing to pay for the item, if it gets to that.

If you wish to, you can stick to the "conventional" practice of bidding, submitting bids from time to time, until either you win, or decide you're no longer interested.

The Reserve Bid - Many items listed in an eBay auction will have what is called a "Reserve Bid". This bid is hidden from view, only the seller knows the amount. This is the minimum amount the seller will accept. If your maximum bid, or any bid for that matter, is less than the reserve bid, your bid will be rejected. This of course protects the seller of something of value from ending up getting only pennies for it.

Other Offers - There are also "Buy It Now" and "Make Best Offer" features available on some, though not all, auction items. This allows you to purchase an item outright at the "Buy It Now" price, or make your best offer. Your best offer may get you the item, it may be rejected, or the seller may make a counter offer. You should make a reasonable offer, since others will probably be doing the same, and the seller, if accepting any best offer, is going to take the highest one.

Bidding on eBay is fun, and doesn't need to be complicated, but you can employ various strategies, and make things more interesting if you so choose, and many do.

Things To Watch Out For When Bidding On eBay

As far as on line auctions are concerned, eBay has a pretty solid reputation, which is a little bit amazing when you consider that the "auctioneers" are not eBay employees but more like people down the street, mostly good honest folks, but there's always the possibility of a rotten apple in the crowd. For the most part you can feel quite safe when bidding for an item on eBay. There are mechanisms in place, such as feedback, which can alert you if complaints or criticisms have been directed at a seller, justified or not.

We often think of a seller at an eBay auction as someone who has just cleaned out his attic, but some are in it as a side- or full-time business. That's OK, but some of these businesses will sell items that are not the genuine article, pirated software, and CDs, or the famous not so genuine Rolex watch. The authenticity of an item can be next to impossible to determine on line. Your best defense is to pay with a credit card. If you find a purchase is not as advertised, you have some recourse. Of course you can always send a scathing feedback message, but informing eBay customer support would be a better tactic.

Some buyers may not accept a personal check, but if one does, and you send the check, don't expect the seller to ship your item promptly. The seller may want to wait until the check clears first, especially if it is for a large amount. This should be expected.

Don't be surprised if you receive an item you've successfully bid on, and have to sign for it to receive it. This is good practice, and protects both buyer and seller from the uncertainty associated with something being "lost in transit".

Overseas sellers are for the most part just as honest as are those nearer home. A problem in dealing with an overseas seller, or a buyer for that matter, is if anything goes wrong, there's sometimes little one can do to make it right.

Probably the main thing to watch out for are statements or claims in a listing that seem either too good to be true or for some reason don't quite make good sense. A well written, straightforward listing usually leads to a transaction that is going to result in a win-win situation for both buyer and seller.

Tracking The Bidding Process

In a traditional auction, you would attend the auction and bid on an item as it came up. Being right in the room you had complete control over your participation in the process, and would be outbid only if another bidder was in the end willing to pay more for an item than you were.

An Introduction To Sniping - Another kind of auction is the silent auction, where you can place a bid any time you want up to the close of bidding. That may be hours or even days earlier. Once placing your bid, you simply check in from time to time to see if your bid is still on top. If not, you

submitted another bid. In a silent auction there would sometimes be the equivalent of what is known as "sniping", in eBay parlance. In the final minute of bidding, someone is observed hanging around the bid board. That person places their bid at the last possible moment, the highest bid, for the item they want. If you really want the item, you have to hang around the bid board too. Some pushing and shoving may result. It's the same way with eBay, though you hang around electronically, and there's no pushing and shoving except what's being done by the electrons.

Keeping Informed - When you bid on an eBay auction item, you'll be informed, if you wish, if or when someone has submitted a bid higher than yours. It used to be that this was done by e-mail. This is still true, but now you can get this information over your mobile phone, through text messaging, and even as an alert on your pager. Then you're in a position to, if you wish, submit a higher bid, instantly.

Tracking the bidding process not only gives you an opportunity to submit a winning bid at the last second ("sniping") but provides information throughout the duration of bidding, which can often prove valuable, both in the present and in the future. The ability to be made aware in the last minute of bidding that you've been outbid, and need to immediately submit a higher bid can be quite an adventure. It could be said, that in many ways eBay is an adventure. Bidding on eBay can certainly be an experience.

Accessing The Tools - There are tools available which are very helpful in tracking bidding, which is even more important if you're bidding on multiple items, or there are items you intend to get, regardless of the cost. Much of this capability is found right on eBay itself. The only thing you have to do is go to their help page to find out what tools are available as far as tracking bidding is concerned, and then go to your account page to change your communication preferences to incorporate those capabilities.

Three eBay Bidding Strategies

There's really only one way to ensure your highest bid will always be the top bid, and that is to place no limit on what you're willing to pay. As the bidding increases on an item, it usually goes up incrementally, unless someone suddenly submits a bid much higher than an incremental bid over the highest bid at the time. That is unlikely to happen, at least by an experienced bidder.

If two bidders used eBay's automated bidding program, and both indicated the sky's the limit, it might well be, though eventually cooler heads would prevail, and at some point in time bidding would be brought to a halt, probably automatically.

To bid without limit on most anything is rather silly, and you certainly don't want to do it on a common or low value item. Let's assume however, there is an item listed that you really want, and it is one that either rarely appears in the listings, or is unlikely to appear again in the foreseeable future. This is where you have to make a tough choice.

You, the prospective buyer, can do one of three things:

Submit the highest bid, the most you are willing to pay for the item.

Submit a bid you think may be sufficient, but be prepared to bid higher if or when needed.

Wait until bidding is nearly closed, and if the item is still affordable, jump in.

There are pros and cons associated with each strategy, though most experienced eBay bidders will advise you to submit your highest bid right off the bat. If someone else submits a higher bid before your bid, your bid won't be accepted. If they submit a higher bid later, you'll be told you've been outbid. In either case, you're done, unless you decide to bid higher than you really wanted to. If you're done, it won't have cost you anything.

Submitting a lower bid might work, but even if it does, it won't have saved you anything. What you'll end up paying, is an increment over the next highest bid. So you'd pay the same even if your opening bid was much higher. This then, isn't really a strategy worth pursuing, unless you don't really have to have the item.

As far as waiting until nearing the end of bidding, you have the opportunity to see how bidding is progressing, both in terms of what the top bid is, and the amount of bidding activity. This might be a good strategy if you're interested in an item, but can easily do without it, if the price is getting too high.

What eBay Auction Tools Can Do For You

There are quite a number of tools available to help participants in eBay auctions get what they want, at prices they are willing to pay. Some automatically submit bids at the last moment, others submit an automatic increase your bid if your previous bid has been exceeded, up to an amount you determine of course. Still others, used mostly by those who participate in eBay auctions on nearly a full time basis, track status of bids, payment sent or received, and in some instances even track when purchased articles have been shipped.

One can invest in tools that send automated e-mail messages to either buyer or seller, thanking that person for their business, or asking when payment is going to be received. When you're constantly bidding on a number of items, it becomes like a business, and those in business are always on the lookout for tools that make what they are doing easier and more profitable. It's no different with eBay auction tools.

Let's say for example, you are selling an item at auction, and you have similar items you eventually plan to sell. A tool that can help you do this is one that automatically sends e-mails to those who have bid on your item but lost. The e-mail can inform them of items you plan to place in a future auction, or simply have for sale. If they missed out this time around, you give them another opportunity, which some will undoubtedly take advantage of. The message in the e-mail can also thank bidders for their interest in what you put up for sale. A thank you is always a nice, personal touch, even if it's automated.

There are tools that track payments received, non-payments, and payment due. If payments for items you've sold at auction are made to PayPal for example, payments received and the amount in your account can be tracked, without you constantly have to log into PayPal. Funds can even be transferred to your local bank account at specified intervals.

This is just a small sampling of the auction tools available, the purpose of which is to make you aware that there are some helpful tools out there. Some you will pay for, others are free. But it's certainly worthwhile to see what you might put in your toolbox that can make participation in eBay auctions, whether as a buyer or a seller, a more enjoyable and profitable venture.

What Does It Cost To Sell At Auction?

Selling something at an auction, be it an eBay auction or any other, usually involves costs or fees. These are normally stated up front, so you can enter into the auction selling process without encountering unpleasant surprises. A conventional auction house will normally charge two fees, a handling fee, and a commission fee, their part of the take when your item sells. In a typical auction house the commission can run anywhere from 15 to 20 percent of the amount sold for. Proceeds from the handling fee are used to cover the costs of storing the item until it's bid upon, preparing the item for the auction, which may include photographing it, and the cost of including it in the auction catalog.

With an eBay auction there's no handling fee since you have possession of the auction item until it is sold. Instead of an auction catalog, there is the eBay listings, and you'll pay an amount, usually quite small, to have your item listed. There are additional fees for extra features you may wish to have incorporated in your listing. These are called 'insertion fees'.

As far as commissions go, eBay is going to get its percentage of the take when an item sells. The commission charged is not a fixed amount, but will vary in accordance with what the final sales value is, as well as the type of the item that was sold. Generally speaking, eBay will charge a commission of somewhere between 6 and 12 percent of the sales value for an item selling for less than 50 dollars. In most cases, as the sales amount increases, the percentage of that amount charged as a commission declines. As an example, for most items, the commission would be 12 percent of the first 50 dollars, 6 percent of any amount over 50 dollars and up to 1,000 dollars, and 2 percent of any amount over 1,000 dollars. An item selling for several thousand dollars then, might be charged a total commission of not much more than 6 per cent.

The best deals, for the seller, come when the items being sold fall into the categories of computers, cameras, and electronics, where the total commission will be 6 percent or in some cases slightly, though not much, more. There is no commission charged if an item doesn't sell.

Insertion fees on the other hand are relatively cheap, running from as low as 15 cents to a maximum 4 dollars for higher priced items, but rarely more than 1 percent. You'll pay a bit more, though usually not much, for a fancier listing, but that may well be worth it if you're putting a valuable and highly priced item up for bidding.

Your Listing's Image Is Important

We've all heard the phrase, "a picture is worth a thousand words", and that's often true in spades when one thinks about how much value a good image can add to an eBay auction listing. If you've viewed enough listings in search of a particular item, you usually are looking for

a best offer. There's no doubt though that the quality of the images found in some of those listings plays a role in your final decision.

The obvious feature you want from a listing's image is one that accurately portrays the item being sold. Still, you'll see images of what are relatively uncomplicated objects, that, do to background clutter, poor lighting, or whatever, leave you wondering just what the item really looks like. Here are three tips that can help you produce an image that will do your listing justice, and attract those bidders who might have otherwise passed you by.

Lighting - Sunlight is usually best, or at least natural outdoor lighting. You don't necessarily need direct sunlight. Outdoor lighting often brings out the most minute features of an object, plus you'll see the object in its natural colors, assuming color is of importance. If moving the object out of doors is inconvenient, or doesn't make sense, invest in a daylight fluorescent bulb, one of those energy savings bulbs, which using only a few watts will produce a bright, natural light. Off-white or the incandescent bulbs which give off light with a yellowish tinge are usually unsatisfactory. Flash will often work, though you may have to be careful about reflections or overexposure.

Background - The background can be almost as important as the object itself. You want to be have a background that enhances the image of the object you're selling. That's usually a plain background, although it doesn't absolutely have to be. If you're taking a picture of a vase, take it against a plain wall, not one cluttered with family pictures, a calendar, or other distractions. Images of furniture and outdoor items all too often are in a setting where surrounding objects compete for the viewer's attention. Try to find a background, or backdrop, that's not too busy and does not contain distractions.

Placement And Position - In photographing an object, try to take the photo from an angle that gives a good depiction of what the object really looks like. You can experiment with shots at different angles to get either a more pleasing or a more dramatic effect. For many objects, a 3/4 view shows much more than does a head on view.

The advent of the digital camera has made better photographers out of most all of us. A simple "snapshot" no longer needs to be the only option. Take your time and try for a number of different shots. The best of the bunch will likely serve its purpose well.

Using HTML To Link To Images And Descriptions

One of the advantages HTML, HyperText Markup Language, provides, is the ability to link to other sites from your eBay auction listing. There are two primary reasons for wanting to do this. If several additional images, beyond what you may have in your listing, will help promote interest or give prospective bidders more information about the item you have up for bid, you can link to those additional images which may be available on your web site or another web site. In the same manner, you can link to a web site which has textual information about your item, be it descriptive, historical, or whatever.

If our are selling a fine saddle for example, you may want to link to several images showing some close-up detail, which can be of great value if it is a show saddle with lots of fancy leather

work and silver trim. If your item is an antique that has an interesting historical background, you can link to a web page which contains relevant information, descriptive detail, or both.

This ability to access additional images or information, using HTML can be a powerful tool for the auction seller. Be aware that anytime you click on a link, it is going to take you out of eBay, and it's always possible to lose a prospective bidder who, through inexperience, may not find his or her way back. This seldom happens, but can easily be avoided by using the HTML command which, when taking someone to another site, simply opens up a new window.

A Note Of Caution - If you do decide to use HTML for the purpose of linking to another web site, bear in mind that the information you are linking to must be primarily for the purpose of providing additional information about the item you have up for bidding. It is strict eBay policy that you do not use the link for commercial purposes, to sell other items, or to introduce a bidder to a business you may be affiliated with. If the item you have up for bid is a horse collar, the information you link to must pertain primarily to that horse collar, whether it be descriptive information such as how to place it on a horse, how to use it as a frame for a mirror, images of close up details, or horse collar history. The focus needs to remain on your horse collar. If you violate eBay's rules on linking to other sites, you'll stand a good chance of having your account canceled, and being banned. It's not worth it.

Using HTML To Improve Auction Listings

When offering a somewhat run-of-the-mill item at auction, a paragraph or two may be all you really need, especially if the item is rather commonplace. If you have an RC-Controlled 1998 Ferrari, still in the original box up for bidding, the title alone will tell a prospective bidder most of what he or she needs to know, at least about the item up for bid.

If you're selling something more exotic, expensive, or unusual, it may just pay to spice up your listing a bit to draw attention to what you have to offer. Browse through listings others have placed and you'll find among other things, changes in font style, size, and color, addition of an image, or a link to another web site which has additional images or a more descriptive information relating to the item up for bidding.

Maybe you've heard of HTML, but unless you've built a few web pages on your own, you may not know what it means or what it does. HTML stands for Hyper Text Markup Language, and is a tool web page builders use to polish and enhance their presentation.

What HTML Can Do - HTML can be used to create paragraphs, creating line breaks (one or several) between paragraphs or sentences, or draw a line across the screen as a means of visual emphasis. With HTML you can easily change the font color, style, or size of a word, sentence, or the entire listing if you wish. You can describe your item in fiery-red, large, bold-faced type, with multiple underlining and exclamation points, which will bring attention, though probably no bidders, and such extremes of style aren't recommended.

The point is, with HTML one can add a bit of polish to an auction listing, placing added emphasis on words or phrases which can enhance your chances of gaining a prospective bidder's interest. HTML makes creating lists easy, whether they be numbered lists or lists comprised of bullets. Instead of using 5 or 6 long sentences to describe your item, its interesting

features, or its condition, a listing created using HTML need only consist of an introductory phrase or title, and maybe 10 or so numbered or bulleted words or phrases to completely describe the item.

The eBay help page for HTML provides the basics, or you can simply type "HTML" into your browser. There is a wealth of tutorials, both basic and advanced, showing you how you can take advantage of what HTML has to offer.

Using HTML To Add A Video To Your Listing

You can use HTML to add a video to your auction listing. This of course will enable you to present the item you have up for bid, in an entirely different light. Your list no longer looks like a classified ad, or even like a classified add that has been jazzed up a bit with an image or various uses of colors sizes, and font styles in the descriptive text.

With a video, you can display your item from all different angles, demonstrate how it is used when appropriate, and give your listing a very personal touch by not only talking about the item, but introducing yourself in the process. You can't use the video as a sales pitch for anything other than the item you have up for bidding. You can't for example, make reference to other things you have for sale, have up for bidding, or plan to sell. If you have a company of your own, you can't refer to that, or any other company, unless that information is of primary importance as it relates to the item you have up for bidding. For example, "If you have a problem using this item, or if something breaks, we can help." - is OK. If the narrative is, "If you like this item, you'll want more, and we have many more just like it." - it's not OK.

There's one other thing about linking to a video, and it's important. While you can link to another site, to provide images or additional descriptive information about the item you have up for bidding, you can't do that to show a video. You can't even link to web site of your own to display a video. For one thing, it's too easy for another web site to change the material that's being shown, either in terms of commercializing it, showing unrelated information, or showing something inappropriate.

What you do is link to sites sponsored by Google or Microsoft, or to MySpace or YouTube. There are others as well. You can put your video up on YouTube for example, and link to it from your listing. Using YouTube, MySpace, or some other source that is approved by eBay isn't really very more difficult. Doing so protects eBay, protects you, and may even in some cases protect the user from having to view something other than what he or she might have been expecting.

How Best To Describe An eBay Auction Item

There are times when an item you put up for auction on eBay needs little in the way of explanation, especially if it's an item in hot demand. The important thing is do your best not to leave out any information that a potential bidder would want to know before submitting a bid. For example, if you're selling an somewhat expensive used item, providing an accurate description

of the condition of the item is a must. A potential bidder is not going to submit a very high bid if he or she has no idea what condition the item might be in when they receive it.

Maybe the item for sale is new, and in its original box or package. If the package has been damaged, but the contents have not been disturbed, you should mention how the package has been damaged, but also note the contents are in pristine condition, if that's indeed the case. Sometimes collectors pay as much attention to the packaging as they do to the contents. They're just that way.

If you've used an item for several years, say so. Don't claim that something has been lightly used when it's been subjected to heavy use. It's OK to say "subjected to heavy use for the past 5 years and still runs like a charm", as long as that's true. Many bidders are looking to save some money by purchasing something that has had some use, as long as it's in reasonable shape. Always think win-win.

If your item is something rare, make that known. It may be a fishing reel in fine condition, but only on the market for a year, or perhaps a vintage LP record with only a few minor scratches. Maybe you have a Civil War item, which has a few dents or scratches, but is still presentable. Describe the defects in detail, and then give a little history of the item. Knowing the soldier, the regiment, or which battles the item may have been involved in could be strong selling points. If the item shows a date and/or place of manufacture, indicate that as well.

Look for any feature you can find that makes what you have to sell appear interesting, useful, or very usable. An eBay auction is part huge antique shop, part flea market, and much more. The only difference is you can't pick up, touch, or feel the items up for bidding. Your description needs to make up for that.

Tips On Writing The Title For Your Auction Listing

A great description of the item you are putting up for auction can significantly enhance your chances of drawing bids. Potential bidders may think they have found what they're looking for when they first spot your listing, but a poor choice of words or poor presentation can easily convince them to look elsewhere.

Brief, But Informative - Let's start with the title. What you say in the title is all important because it's the title that tells a prospective bidder whether he or she needs to read further. On eBay, the title of a listing is limited to 55 characters. That may seem restrictive, but it's 13 characters more than are in the title of this article. It's far worse to have a title that's way too long than one that's way too brief, unless the brief title has nothing to say. Think of your title as a billboard. Billboards seldom contain much text, which is fortunate for those driving, but rely more on catch phrases, images and, well, titles. Think billboard.

Rather than worrying about long or short, your challenge is to get the most bang for the buck out of the 55 characters allotted to you. The keyword or phrase, those words someone will type in their browser to enable a search engine to do its thing, must be in your title, or no one is apt to find your listing. If you're not familiar with what a keyword is, it's basically a search word, and in just about all cases will be the name of the item you have up for auction. The keyword should

also be descriptive enough to allow a prospective bidder to really zero in on your listing, and not have to wade through a hundred other listings.

Generate Some Interest - Selling a painting? "Painting For Sale" isn't going to generate much traffic to your listing, not much interest there. "Old Oil Painting For Sale" won't do much better. How about "Genuine Charlie Russell Painting For Sale"? Name your minimum bid, and you may end up with 10 times that amount before the bidding is over with. Of course, the item had better be a genuine CR painting.

Unlike the descriptive text that will follow, the title doesn't have to be grammatically correct. It should be understandable of course, and make certain there aren't any misspelled words. For many that is a turn off, even if it is a Charlie Russell.

Be Truthful - Finally, avoid putting anything in the title that is either misleading or not covered in the descriptive text which follows. This would be an equivalent to a bait and switch tactic which, on eBay, is rightfully frowned upon. Your best bet is to make certain the title, or a version of it, is repeated somewhere in the listing's text.

Tips On Writing Descriptive Text

There are some rules you need to follow when writing the descriptive text for your eBay auction listing. Most are common sense, unwritten rules, which if not followed usually only detract from the effectiveness of your presentation. Other rules are rules to be obeyed, eBay's rules. These rules make sense and are sensible. Learn them.

No matter what your writing style, the descriptive text should be, for the most part, grammatically correct. There's nothing wrong with a catch phrase that breaks some rule of proper grammar. You can use such a phrase for effect, just don't overdo it. When you're done, check the spelling. A misspelled word or two can make a nice presentation appear unprofessional. Use an on line Spelling checker if you wish, a good one, Spellcheck, is free.

Provide Detail - Describe your item accurately. An accurate description is what the bidder is looking for. If there is any question in the bidder's mind as to whether a particular feature is present, or as to the condition of the item, he or she might not bid on it. In general, the more expensive the item, the more descriptive text will generally be needed. If you need two pages of text, use a little HTML and link to a site that contains the needed information (it might be your own site). Read the rules about linking before you do that though. There is certain information you cannot link to, generally information regarding anything beyond the item you are selling.

Be Truthful - Tell the truth, and avoid half truths. Don't describe a gouge as a "scratch" or a missing leg as a an "imperfection". When writing a description think Win-Win. You want the buyer to be satisfied with the item, and have their winning bid please you at the same time. You don't have to say why you're selling the item, though that sometimes may be helpful. "I have a new model so no longer need this one" is fine, just don't say "I don't want this thing any more", even though that may be true.

Don't use descriptions or adjectives unrelated to the item to "jazz things up". That's really no different than lying, though you might not get called on it.

Don't Copy - In describing your item, be careful not to copy the wording from another source, such as a retailer's web site, or another eBay listing. That could cause you problems. And finally, have an acquaintance proof read and critique your description. If they don't like what they see, neither may a prospective bidder.

Using Keywords In Auction Listings

More and more, when someone is looking to purchase a specific item, they don't just head for eBay to see if that item is up for sale or for bidding. They just type the name of the item in their browser and the whole world is at their disposal. Chances are, among the listings that come up on the screen, there's an eBay listing or two, often on the first page, and sometimes the first item listed, especially if it's something that seldom appears on the marketplace.

More Specific Is Better - You can even be a little specific or creative. Instead of typing in "Hoover vacuum cleaner", try "vintage Hoover vacuum cleaner", if that's what you're looking for, or try "Hoover vacuum cleaners - Buy it now". The latter is almost guaranteed to get you into the eBay listings. If no vacuum cleaners are up for sale or bidding, at least there'll be a substantial list of "Buy It Now" items, should you be interested.

As more and more people place come to understand a bit about how search engines work, more and more have come to appreciate the value of good keywords. A keyword or phrase actually describing a hard to come by item can prove to be invaluable, whether you are selling at auction or bidding at one. Here's a couple of do's and don't's.

Where The Keywords Belong - In your listing it's a good rule of thumb to place the keyword in the title. That will usually be the case anyway, but it's practically mandatory if a potential bidder is going to find your listing. It's also a good idea to have the keyword in the first sentence of your descriptive text. For good measure, use the keyword at least once more in the text, but only if you can do so without making it appear awkward or grammatically silly. In most cases, it's not necessary to use exotic keywords, or look for keywords designed to pull in traffic. The name of the item you are selling, or looking, for will usually suffice.

One thing you don't do is pack your listing with repetitive keywords. Use the keyword in every sentence, and a bidder will find your listing all right, but find your description strange reading and may wonder what kind of a person they're dealing with. We usually don't feel comfortable about exchanging money for goods with someone who appears to have some strange habits.

Keep It Honest - Another thing you don't do is use inappropriate or unrelated keywords in a listing. In describing your vacuum cleaner, don't use the word "sex" five times, or Marilyn Monroe. That's called "spamming" and could get your listing banned, and yourself as well. Describing a vacuum cleaner as "sexy-looking" may be OK, but could also be pushing the envelope a bit.

Knowing the value of, and reason for, a keyword is a valuable piece of information. Don't mess things up by abusing it.

A Tip For Describing An Unusual Item

While this tip for describing an item to be sold at auction is somewhat specific, following it might greatly improve your chances of receiving bids in the range you're hoping for. When an item being sold at auction is not an everyday item, or one difficult to describe, how it is presented can make all the difference in the world.

There were actually two items involved, which were put up for bid several years back. It should be noted that, at the time, the use of video in describing an item was still in its infancy.

Worms on the Floor - There were two items. One was a double harness that would be used by two horses to pull a large carriage or wagon. The other was a single headstall, a bridle if you will. The headstall wasn't too difficult. It was in excellent condition, the leather was nice and shiny, and the image of it hanging on the wall was very descriptive. The harness was another story. If you've ever tried to lay a thick, and somewhat stiff leather horse harness, out on the floor so it looks nice, you know what a challenge that can be. That's what was done though, and the image provided in the listing looked more like a haphazard collection of different sized worms, than a harness worth nearly a thousand dollars. Though there was some interest, it didn't sell. Even a later attempt to "Buy It Now", didn't work. Eventually the harness sold locally.

Show The Item Being Used - Two things. What a difference it might have made if the images showed the headstall and the harness on horses, where the items are actually put to use. What a difference it would have made if the listing had included a short video of the horses under harness, pulling a wagon, or a brief demonstration of harnessing the horses. It might have made all the difference in the world.

You may never have a harness or headstall to sell, though if you're looking to bid one you'll probably agree that the video referred to here might make your decision easier, than "worms on the floor". The idea though, can be applied to any number of things you may wish to put up at auction on eBay. An image, or video, showing the item in actual use can turn a run-of-the mill listing into a powerful presentation.

Tips For Getting The Most Bang For The Buck

It's not difficult to overspend at an auction, especially if you get caught up in the thrill of the chase. eBay is no different in this respect. It's easy to become an auction junkie, and if you're buying more than selling, you can spend a good deal of money on things you really don't need or decide later you really didn't want. Dagwood Bumstead came away from an auction more than once carrying a stuffed moose head because he got "caught up in the action".

When you're participating in an eBay auction, it's good advice to sit back and take a deep breath on occasion, to see where you're at, and where you seem to be going. Here's five buying tips that might just come in handy:

No matter how well an item is described in the listing, there are often times when a little more information would be helpful. If the price is going to be high, but it's still something you really want, the condition of the item can often be a matter of significant importance. If the condition isn't clearly specified, contact the seller and ask questions. This may tell you whether you want to bid or not, plus the seller may provide information that can work to your advantage.

Auctions end at different times of the day. If you find several similar or identical items listed, bid on one which has a bid closing time in the morning, rather than in the early evening. Mornings are usually low traffic times, and you'll be less likely to have to contend with a last minute flurry of bidding.

Make certain you know what the shipping costs will be. Send a message to the seller if need be. No sense paying \$5 shipping for a \$5 item unless you absolutely must have it.

Another thing to look for, especially if there are several of the same items up for auction, is a listing featuring a "Buy It Now" feature, or better yet a "Make Best Offer" feature. You may save some significant money if you check for this rather than bidding on the first item you come across.

Finally, spend some time searching, or let eBay do it for you. Try not to be in a hurry. Most things you might be looking for will be placed at auction more than once, some quite frequently. Be patient until what seems to be a truly good comes around.

Just paying heed to these few simple pieces of advice can pay big dividends over time, and can save you a significant amount of money on occasion.

Tips For Buying And Selling Art On eBay

There's always an abundance of art to be found among the eBay auctions, good news for the buyer, perhaps a bit worrisome for the seller. If you are contemplating selling art at auction, the large number of items available are indicative of the popularity of art, and are usually not indicative of a glut in the marketplace.

There are several things that you the buyer should be aware of when purchasing art, and you, the seller need to make certain these same things are taken into account in your listings. While even a run-of-the-mill poster can command a good price at times, vintage posters, especially if they are originals can bring a very high price. So will limited- edition prints of popular themes or well known artists. Top sellers are usually found among original art, especially oil paintings and watercolors, signed by the artist.

It can be difficult at times to distinguish between an original and a copy or replica, and this fact has hounded art lovers for centuries. A fake of an oil painting done by a master can at times fool the most knowledgeable art experts, and often has. In more recent times, it can be difficult to tell between a real limited edition print and a replica, even when the former is numbered and signed by the artist.

To buy or sell prints or paintings on eBay dictates a certain amount of research is in order. Hopefully the seller does this, as the buyer is in no position to do so until he or she has the item in hand.

Search for the artists signature on an original painting or limited edition print. If you don't know the artist, do a little research. If the name is C.M. Russell, or V. van Gogh, you may be on to

something. If the artist is known, don't despair. Many bid on the item, not the artist. Take the painting or print out of the frame to find a signature, but only if you absolutely have to.

A listing of a print or painting should include the size, the artist (if known) the year (also if known), whether it is original a replica, or limited-edition. Specify the medium, oil on canvas, tempura on masonite, etc..

Take the best possible photo to use as the image in your listing. When possible, take the picture using outdoor lighting. Use a plain background, a white sheet or a black piece of velvet is usually best. Use a colored background with caution as the color may affect how the true colors of the piece appear in the resulting image.

If the item is a replica, say so, and if you aren't sure, say so. Never sell a piece of art as an original unless you know for certain it is. When a print or painting is a replica, the need for deeper research often goes away, although some replicas are in themselves quite valuable.

Check the eBay Guides for additional information and tips on how to go about selling or buying paintings and prints at auction.

Selling Cell Phones And Smart Phones On eBay

If you look at most of the listings for cell phones or smart phones, you'll notice there is usually not a great deal of text. The main reason for this is that when it comes to cell phones and accessories, most searchers already have an idea as to what they want in terms of features, and tend to be knowledgeable as to what models contain what features. The potential bidder is mainly looking for a good price.

Many cell phone users will sell last year's model so they can purchase the latest and greatest. This can be a good deal for you, the seller, as many purchasers of cell phones will be more than happy with last year's model, just as many automobile buyers shop for late model used cars, knowing they can get a fine automobile at a savings.

In placing a listing for a cell phone or smart phone, the basics, besides the make and model would be as follows, designed to answer questions the prospective bidder might have:

Describe the phone's condition. Is it still in the original, unopened box? If used, does it still come with the box and the original manuals and accessories? Is it a refurbished phone?

Is the phone unlocked, or tied to a specific carrier? Is it under contract, and if so what are the terms and the duration of the contract? If under contract, what type of contract? Is the warranty still valid?

What accessories are offered, including any that have been purchased separately from the phone? A bidder might be enticed by the inclusion of car kits or car chargers, stereo head phones, and the like.

If the item is not just a phone but a pocket PC, there can be a host of features to be described, such as screen size, or at least summarized. Make sure to address compatibility if that might be an issue, particularly for smart phones and pocket PCs.

The days are long gone when if one had a phone to sell on eBay, the description would be "Desk Phone – Black Color", and that would suffice. Don't just toss your cell phone, or your fancier land line phone for that matter, when done with it. Chances are good you'll get a decent price selling at auction, providing your phone is still in great condition.

A final tip. If your cell phone or smart phone is one that will command a good price, offer free shipping.

Save By Fixed Price Searching

One way eBay buyers can sometimes save is by doing searches to determine which auction items are not just up for bid, but have fixed price offers as well. One can search among all listings of a particular item, and look to see if there is a good deal out there, or do a search on a given category to see not only what's available but what might be being offered at a special price. Even if you have your mind set on a specific make and model of cell phone for example, a combination cell phone and "buy it now" search may unearth a bargain not worth passing up.

eBay has a powerful and very useful search capability, and as a buyer, it's nice to be given a choice, and be given that choice without having to do a lot of exploring on your own.

What are the three fixed price categories?

The most familiar is "Buy It Now". Sellers often give a Buy It Now price to help sell an item, even though that price is often less than they would hope to get through bidding. It's an option however, and most sellers rely strictly on bidding. "Buy It Now" is often a sign that bidding is slow, and the seller simply wants to sell at a reasonable price. If you respond to a "Best Offer", it's the same as a winning bid. The item is yours, as is the commitment to pay for it.

Occasionally you'll run across a "Best Offer" deal. This more often than not gives you an opportunity to get the most for your money, unless the seller has significantly overpriced his or her item to begin with. A "Best Offer" has temporary status, and usually appears near the end of bidding, and can be a sign of a certain amount of desperation on the part of the seller. It is usually good practice to make what you, the buyer, feel is a reasonable offer. The seller may refuse your offer if it is too low, in which case you are under no further obligation. If your offer is close to what the seller would like to receive, you may get a counteroffer. If the seller accepts your initial offer, or if you accept the seller's counteroffer, the item is yours, and you're obligated to pay for it.

The third fixed price is the Reserve Price. This is the lowest the seller is willing to accept, and is there to protect the seller from having a valuable item sell for pennies. Only the seller and eBay know this price, it is hidden from all others. You can sometimes get an indication of what it is if no other bids are indicated and your bid is rejected. You'll know the reserve price is higher than your bid, though not by how much.

In any event, being on the lookout for “Buy It Now” and “Best Offer” can sometimes save you, the buyer, money.

Selling Antiques On eBay

When it comes to selling items at auction on eBay, and buying them for that matter, antiques make up a rather special niche. Some antiques are very valuable, others are imply old, but even if not overly valuable, may still command a fair price, especially those items sought after by nostalgia buffs.

In describing an antique in a listing, use the word antique. Describing something as being old, whether its a Persian rug, a sliver goblet, or some fine porcelain, won't do a fine antique justice. One might as well call the item a used rug, or a used goblet. Not really particularly exciting. In some instances, the term very old may work for you though, such as a very old map, implying the map, if original, shows things as they were many years, or even centuries ago. Vintage is another term you can use, though this is best used for something of nostalgic interest. A vintage item carries the connotation of something from the turn of the century through the 1950's.

If an antique is particularly valuable, it will pay to have it appraised and possibly authenticated and certified. Bear in mind, some antiques are themselves reproductions, and might not command anywhere near the price of the original. If you're listing a higher priced item, a certificate attesting to its authenticity is practically mandatory. Serious antique collectors are not apt to bid on something they're not certain is genuine, and a photograph usually isn't enough to establish authenticity.

Look for markings, dates, or anything that might indicate the country of origin, or the artist responsible for the article's creation. A piece of porcelain with markings or logos indicating it was produced by Spode, or Royal Copenhagen, will often command a fine price. The popular Danish Christmas plates are easily identified by the Royal Copenhagen or Bing and Grondahl markings, plus the dates of issuance are shown on the plate, making them easy to evaluate. Many items of antique silver have markings, and antique clocks usually least show the manufacturer and sometimes the date.

Selling your antique items can sometimes involve the need for a bit or research on your part, but that can sometimes turn fascinating, occasionally to the point you may decide not to part with the item.

eBay is not in the authentication business, so if the item is not as advertised, you, the seller has to accept any consequences.

It can be worth your while to do a search for similar items on eBay. This may give you a clue as to what you should set as an opening bid, and may also shed some light on how popular an item your antique is apt to be. The Antique Sellers Center on eBay will give information on what antiques are currently the best sellers. Hopefully you'll find your offering among them.

Handy eBay Bidding Tools

There are eBay bidding tools, and bidding tools available from other sources. Some are free, others you'll either pay a fixed fee for, or are tools you subscribe to. It can make sense to at least try the free ones, since they can be very useful. Those that will cost you something often may have more to offer. The decision as to whether to use them is up to you.

If you're using eBay for the first time, bidding on something you would like to have, and can get at a reasonable price, you probably don't need a bidding tool to help you along. You can bid an amount you're comfortable with, increase your bid later on if need be, then stop bidding when you feel the item isn't worth more than your top bid, or you just can't afford to pay more.

You really want to bid on a few items to get into the swing of things, and it's usually good to start small. If you become a frequent bidder, plan to bid on several items at once, see something you simply must have, or something you want, that isn't available for purchase all that often, then using one or more of the bidding tools that are available begins to make sense.

Buy It Now - One of the first bidding tools you're likely to encounter is the "Buy It Now" feature. This is really a bidding tool used by the seller, and not the buyer, and is used most often when a seller really wants to get rid of an item, and in effect is pricing it to sell. This bidding tool allows you to purchase an item before the feature, which is usually there for a short time only, disappears.

Bidding By Proxy - Other tools, and these are free ones a prospective buyer can take advantage of, are tools that track the status of your bids, useful when you are until the maximum amount you're willing to spend has been reached. This tool ensures you'll get what you're bidding on unless someone else is willing to pay more than you are.

It's Called "Sniping" - A related tool is one which submits your bid at the last second, above whatever anyone else has bid as long as it's within your specified bid limit. It's admittedly a little unclear what happens when a number of eBay users use such a tool when bidding on the same item. The bid entered in the last millisecond probably wins.

This is just a sampling of the tools you can use to help make your eBay auction adventure a successful one.