

# How to **Make a Living on eBay**

Separating Truth from Hype



**By Timothy Mina**

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## Introduction

Congratulations! What you're about to read is going to change the way you think about doing business on eBay. It will strike down the hype and tell you the truth. So you can decide if eBay auctions are for you...and if they are, you can learn exactly how to make a living at it.

Making a living on eBay is simple but it is not easy. It requires real, actual work. You must be willing to work for your success and you must be willing to learn how to attain that success. If you promise to bring your own motivation, I will provide all the tools you need.

Why would I write a high-value book like this and give it away for free? Couldn't I sell it for money? Yes, I could...but I'm hoping you will love this book and decide to purchase my [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#). That doesn't mean you have to. This book is absolutely free for you to read and you never have to buy anything.

In fact, I want you to give this book away to as many people as you can, especially if you run a website. It helps us both since you will be providing your visitors with high-value content for free and I will be generating traffic for my website.

If you would like to actually **make money giving this book away**, learn more about my affiliate program at <http://www.online-auction-expert.com/affiliates.html>

To stay up-to-date on eBay news and strategies, join the world's best e-zine for eBay sellers. Sign up for the Online Auction Expert's FREE e-zine at <http://www.online-auction-expert.com/newsletter.html>

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## Section One: The Big Picture – Making a Living on eBay

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Selling on eBay...a term that has been **ridiculously hyped** during the past few years. You've seen e-mails, pop-ups, infomercials, headlines, etc., about people becoming their own boss on eBay.

Is it true or is it all hype? The short answer is that it IS possible to make a living on eBay, but most of what you've heard is false.

You will NOT "make \$5,000 per week in 3-5 hours of work!" or anything close to that. Those promises are lies and eBay is **not a get-rich-quick scheme**.

Making a living on eBay is simple, meaning there isn't a single task you can't easily learn to perform. You don't need a business degree to sell on eBay, that's for sure. But **making a living on eBay is not easy**, meaning it **requires real work**.

Anyone can make a little bit of extra money selling on eBay. But less than 1% of sellers are successful in making a living on eBay.

You must be fully **motivated and committed** to be a successful eBay seller. Additionally, it requires **proper knowledge and the proper mindset**.

**That's what you will learn** from Making a Living on eBay: Separating Truth from Hype. Not only that, but you will learn how to **take control of your business away from eBay** so you are in control of your own destiny and your business can reach its full potential.

Ready? Set? Let's Go!

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## Chapter One: Is eBay the Perfect Opportunity for You?

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The concept of online auctions; **buying and selling millions of products from and to millions of people around the world; 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year**; was a brand new concept just a few short years ago. But because eBay and online auctions in general are a **wonderful and revolutionary concept**, the popularity of online auctions has soared.

Although eBay was born in August of 1995, most of the world was still asking "what the heck is eBay?" as we entered the new millennium. Today, however, **eBay has become a household name**. It is the most popular non-portal (i.e. Google or Yahoo!) website online. There are more than **100 million registered users** and more than **80 million item searches performed on eBay each and every day**.

Everyone has heard of eBay, and I'm sure you've heard stories about people making money on the side or perhaps **even starting a new home business or career with eBay**. You're probably interested in and curious about such opportunities, but you haven't quite known what to do or how to start.

**That's why I started <http://www.online-auction-expert.com>**

eBay is successful because it gives you what you want – people choose to buy online either for price, convenience, or uniqueness. **eBay offers all of this to buyers**. People choose to sell on eBay because it is the perfect place to make money without any special skills.

**The sellers on eBay are regular people like you, not large businesses and corporations.**

People all over the world are *cashing in* successfully on eBay. **And yes, you can too**, whether you want to be your own boss and start your own business on eBay, or you just want to make a few hundred extra dollars per month.

Before you even start to think about selling on eBay, you need to understand that eBay is **not a get rich quick scheme**. If you've seen the "*make \$5,000/week easily in 3-5 hours!*" ads, you've been lied to. I promise that you **will succeed** on eBay – it takes no special

skills and anyone with a computer can do it – but **you must be willing to put forth time and effort**. If you are willing, you follow the advice and strategies in this book, and you set realistic goals, you will succeed.

You want **a simple and enjoyable way to make some extra cash or perhaps even a new career** if you have the ambition, motivation and patience to do so. **eBay is the best opportunity out there:**

- **You set your own hours and you set your own goals.** You can work as much or as little as you want and **whenever you want!** Supplement your income by working a few extra hours per week, or make eBay your full-time job!
- You can **start up in about 5 minutes** and you **don't need any special skills!** I can't stress enough that **anyone** can learn how to do this.
- **There is no risk!** Every other business opportunity you've seen probably requires a large investment. This one essentially costs nothing to start.
- The marketplace is huge. There are **millions of potential customers waiting to buy what you're selling**, 24 hours a day, with the click of a button!
- ...that's right, 24 hours a day: and **you don't have to be at your computer**. In fact, it doesn't even have to be turned on for you to be making money!
- **No stress! No boss!** Yes, there is work involved, but the work can be done at your own pace. You are your own boss and you set your own schedule.
- Most importantly, you can **follow your passion** and **do something you love**. If you sell something you enjoy selling, online auctions aren't just profitable, they're fun and exciting too!

eBay has become so mainstream today that it is now being used as an adverb. If you find an old textbook in your basement, you can give it away, throw it out, donate it to charity, sell it in a garage sale, or...you can **“do it eBay”!**

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## Chapter Two: Why 99% of Sellers Fail on eBay

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Most sellers start buying into the hype before they sell their first item. They have developed a mindset that eBay is a dream business...**and they aren't ready for the work.**

Not only are they not ready for the work, but they're not ready to **learn how to do the work.**

The hype says making money on eBay is easy and brainless. **It's not.**

The hype says drop shipping is innovative and profitable. **It's not.**

The hype says wholesale sources are gold mines. **They're not.**

The hype **underestimates the work required** and overestimates the make-a-lot-of-money-without-a-lot-of-work potential of eBay.

What is the end result? **Most eBay sellers don't have the proper mindset** and are destined for disappointment. They **expect a huge payoff for a small amount of work.**

But can you blame them? The hype has drilled into them a mindset that makes it seem easier than it really is. And as a result, eBay sellers are going to war without a weapon...or armor.

**Yes...**eBay is a good opportunity to make extra money, even in your spare time.

**Yes...**you don't have to be a big business to generate significant income on eBay.

**Yes...**selling on eBay is an incredibly flexible, hands-on and fun experience.

**No...**it's not a get-rich-quick scheme. There is no such thing as a too-good-to-be-true get-rich-scheme that consistently generates significant income. You have to **bring your own motivation and willingness to learn and to work.**



**No...**it's not easy to master. Anyone can make extra money on eBay at least for a short period of time. But the percentage of eBay sellers who are able to make a living through eBay auctions is **under 1%**.

**Yes...**it *IS* possible to be one of the "less than 1%" who "get it right" and make your living on eBay. ***But not if you do the way eBay wants you to do it.*** You must first **take the control of your business away from eBay.**

Before I start to discuss how to be one of the "less than 1%", ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you ready to **commit to a project** for the long haul?
- Are you willing to learn how to **do it the right way?**
- Are you motivated? Are you excited?
- If you already are selling on eBay, are you open-minded and adventurous enough to learn how to expand your horizons to **become more profitable?**

If you didn't answer yes to all four questions, eBay might not be the right opportunity for you. You might just be looking for a way to get rich quickly without a lot of work.

Don't waste your time pursuing unrealistic schemes. Even the rare one in 100 schemes that actually work only work for a short period of time...and then you're stuck looking for another scheme.

If you do have the get-rich-quick mindset, you must first change that mindset and be willing to do real work. Not difficult work, but work nonetheless. Only when you understand that eBay requires work and you're committed to doing that work can I be of any help.

**Are you ready to learn how to be one of the "less than 1%" of eBay sellers who **generates significant, long-term, reliable income?**** I thought you'd say yes! Let's do it...

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## Chapter Three: How to Join the 1% that “Get It”

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**You know** you want to sell on eBay and **you know** it's going to take ***real commitment and motivation***. You're already one step ahead of the average eBay seller.

Following is a list of steps that you **simply can't avoid** if you *really* want to succeed on eBay. And it all leads up to the **#1 most important secret I can possibly give you**.

The rest of this book will expand on each of these topics in turn:

**Tip #1: You must add significant personal value to your items.**

Adding value makes your products unique and it increases your profit margin. You can add personal value in several ways:

- Make ordinary items unique
- Find unutilized niches for products
- Package multiple items into a single, more attractive package
- Offer your own unique knowledge in addition to the product
- Or even create your own products

**Tip #2: You must be the *only person* selling what you sell.**

This very idea sounds crazy when you first hear it, considering there are millions of items on eBay every day. But it's not difficult to do if you find your own, profitable and enjoyable niche to specialize in. What are your hobbies? What are you passionate about? What skills do you have?

**You must find your niche.** Don't worry...[chapter six](#) will help you and show you how DO-able it really is. Specializing in a profitable niche will enable you to easily add personal value to your products, hunt for bargains, effectively sell your items and provide world-class service.

### **Tip #3: You must hunt for bargains.**

You're going to have to buy products to sell (unless you're creating crafts or informational products). And you have to dig deep to find bargains. **You make money when you buy, not when you sell.** *This is why most eBay sellers fail to make money.*

You can't just rely on wholesale guides or drop-shipping sources to find products for you to sell, because those sources are often unreliable and their prices are usually *higher than eBay market values*.

**Most bargains are found offline** rather than online. The more you have to dig to find a source, the more profitable it generally is.

Your specialized knowledge in your niche will help you track down bargains for items related to your theme.

### **Tip #4: You must have web marketing skills to SELL your items.**

You don't need a marketing degree to sell on eBay but you do need to learn critical marketing skills to help you write great sales copy. Most eBay sellers don't take the time to analyze their target audience (*who they're trying to sell to*). But if you do, your sales will increase because your readers will feel that **your ad copy is written just for them.**

If you specialize, you will have a much easier time of understanding your customer's mindset and needs and it will be much easier to write great ads *specifically driven toward your target audience*.

### **Tip #5: You must take great photos of your items.**

Pictures can boost your sales, big time. But poor pictures can actually hurt your sales. You need to know how to take pictures *that sell* and how to get those pictures onto your eBay listings.

### **Tip #6: You must not rely only on eBay to advertise your items.**

The primary benefit of eBay is that it automatically drives targeted traffic to your auctions. But does that mean you should just sit back and let its search engines do their work? No!

If you really want to maximize your profits, you must **aggressively advertise your auctions on and off eBay** (this does *not* mean send

spam e-mail or unwanted advertisements to anyone. If you ever do anything like that, your reputation and YOU are toast).

Advertise your items for sale in your actual listings, at your eBay About Me page, at websites, newsgroups and message boards related to your theme, in specialty and trade magazines related to your theme, *offline* if you find targeted sources, etc., etc.

**Just because eBay brings in traffic doesn't mean you can't do so much more to increase that traffic.**

**Tip #7: You must provide world-class customer service.**

Your reputation and your level of repeat business are two factors that may ultimately determine if you succeed or fail on eBay. If you offer adequate service, your reputation won't be ruined and you will still get business. **But only if you provide *tremendous, world-class customer service will your reputation grow***, word of mouth start to spread and your repeat customer base explode.

This entails answering questions promptly and thoroughly, completing sales quickly and *standing out from the crowd*. If you specialize, you can easily offer small extras or incentives that separate you from other eBay sellers. ***You must be memorable*** for your sales to *really* grow.

**Tip #8: You must know how to do all of the basic auction tasks.**

Contacting customers, collecting payment, packing items, shipping items, navigating eBay, etc. This is all the obvious stuff...and it's what most eBay sellers learn but for some reason they stop there.

**Tip #9: And The #1, Can't Miss, Most Critical Strategy Of All...**

**Diversification = Monetization**

**You must, must, MUST diversify and develop streams of *automated income* in addition to the income you generate from your eBay auctions.**

The only way to do this is to *create your own profitable website*. **Don't let the thought scare you.** Nowadays, you *don't need technical skills or computer skills* because there are hosts that do all of the "technical stuff" so you can focus on building your business.

Your website's purpose is simple. It must provide content related to your niche. People search online for information. **They *don't* search for you.** Any successful website follows a simple 4-step process called **C-T-P-M**, developed by web marketing guru Ken Evoy:

**Content.** Give your readers what they want by converting your knowledge into high-quality, in-demand *content*. In other words, you'll write about topics related to your niche that other people want to learn about and will search for (and it's simple to determine what content is in demand).

**Traffic.** Your in-demand content ranks high at search engines which attracts free, *targeted traffic*...readers who are interested in your content.

**PREsell.** You "OVERdeliver" high-value content to these motivated readers, developing trust and confidence (you "*PREsell*" your readers).

**Monetization.** FINALLY, you're ready to *monetize* your warm, willing-to-buy customers. ***This is when you must diversify.*** *Don't just post a link to your eBay auctions and/or your eBay store.*

Take advantage of additional, **AUTOMATED** monetization models:

- Sell your digital or hard goods to targeted customers
- Add targeted Google ads (you get paid for every click)
- Partner with Amazon.com and link to books related to your theme (you get a commission on every item sold)
- Partner with eBay and get paid every time someone signs up from your site or places a bid after clicking on your link
- Monetize automatically through affiliate programs related to your theme. No hard sale pitches or advertising here. Your *content* sells your readers for you.

What it all comes down to is **you can't rely on eBay to do the work for you.** By diversifying, you will greatly expand your business and increase your profits. And that's how you can make a living on eBay.

So many web businesses failed in the late 1990's because they skipped the first three steps and **tried to monetize first**. And 98% of websites still do it the wrong way today.

***But if you follow the C-T-P-M formula, your eBay business will literally be FORCED to thrive.***

This process can be better explained with an example from an eBay seller who employs this method to his business. Actually, he and his wife both "work" on eBay. Their names are Merle & Pam Long ("gypsytu" and "montanadollady" on eBay). Read about them here:

<http://case-studies.sitesell.com/mina.html#MERLE>

**Doesn't that excite you?** The opportunity to make a living on eBay is right in front of you if you're willing to bring your own motivation and willingness to work. It's simple, but *it's not easy*. Above all, it's very rewarding to succeed doing something you love.

Anyone can make extra money on eBay...but there comes a point where you either *stop making money* or ***you are spending every waking hour on your business*** because there's so much to do.

If you do it the way eBay wants you to do it, when you reach that point, it's lose-lose...you either give up your extra income or you give up your life. **That's why you must seize control of your business from eBay and grow it the right way, not the way eBay wants you to.**

If you're intrigued by the C-T-P-M formula and excited by Merle's story, section five goes into more detail about how to **take control of your business**. Or you can read more on my website:

<http://www.online-auction-expert.com/sbi.html>

**What's Next...**section two covers all the basics you need to know if you're just getting started on eBay. If you have experience on eBay, you can skip ahead to section three and use section two as a reference for any general question you may have about how eBay works.

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## Section Two: eBay Basics - For Beginners Only

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Welcome to eBay! If you've never used eBay before, this section will guide you through the registration process and **teach you how to use the website to browse, bid, and sell.**

If you are an eBay newbie, I highly recommend that you read this section; **it will make the rest of the book so much easier to read and much more useful to you.**

Even if you have already registered and you've been on eBay long enough to know the basics, there is some valuable information in this section that you may want to refer to from time to time, particularly the searching **tips, bidding strategies and safe buying tips** in [chapter five](#).

But unless you're a newbie, you can most likely skip ahead to section three and refer back to this section if you need to brush up on the basics at any time.

The next two chapters are taken directly from my Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay. However, unlike most books about eBay, it doesn't stop there. It teaches you everything you need to know about selling on eBay and takes you way beyond the basics.

Its 350 pages delve into advanced strategies not covered in any other book about eBay (and unfortunately, I didn't have time to cover them all in this booklet). These are the same strategies that have long been used by eBay's most successful power sellers.

The Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay is an indispensable resource for anyone, whether you're already selling on eBay or you're not even registered yet. Check out the new version, revised and expanded in April 2004: <http://www.online-auction-expert.com/bible.html>

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## Chapter Four: How to Register on eBay

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### Take the First Step – Register at <http://www.eBay.com>

In order to participate on eBay, you must first become a registered user. It will only take you 5 minutes or so and it is perfectly safe and 100% free.

Go to <http://www.ebay.com> and select **register now** from the **welcome new users** tab.

On the first page, you will be prompted for the following information – don't worry if you're not sure what your permanent address, phone number or e-mail address will be; you can change this information at any time.

- **Your full name.** If you need help with this one, consult your birth certificate.
- **Your mailing address** – use the address where your customers will send payments and where you will ship items from; most likely your home address.
- **Your phone numbers** – if an eBay member needs to get in touch with you and can't, he or she can request your phone number from eBay
- **Your e-mail address.** I *highly recommend* that you create a new e-mail address ONLY FOR EBAY USE. The e-mail account you use now might be full of personal e-mail and junk e-mail. Things will run more smoothly if you have an e-mail address devoted entirely to your eBay business.
- **Your eBay user ID.** This is your chance to be creative; if you plan to specialize in a particular niche, use your eBay ID to advertise this. For example, if your name is Ken and you're selling coins, try *kenscoins*.

There are more than 70 million users at press time, and the number is growing fast, so your ID is going to have to be original. If you have the perfect idea, i.e. *kenscoins*, and it's



already taken, try adding your favorite number after it, i.e. *kenscoins92*.

One idea is to simply create a user ID similar to your e-mail address, i.e. if your e-mail address is [skippy4743@aol.com](mailto:skippy4743@aol.com), your user ID can be *skippy4743*. You can't use e-mail addresses as your user ID, so leave off the @aol.com.

If you have a website or you plan to get one, you can advertise it in your user ID. For example, if your website is <http://www.eBay.com>, your user ID can be *eBay.com*. eBay policies prevent you from advertising your website anywhere else in your auction ads so this is your only chance on the page to do so.

You can change your user ID at any time, but it's a good idea to keep it the same so you don't confuse repeat customers. ***Make sure your user ID isn't potentially offensive***, or you might alienate potential customers and/or have your account suspended by eBay.

- **Your password.** It is important to choose a secure password that nobody will guess. Combine letters with numbers – i.e. e83k57jq or 73kq8m3e. If you have trouble remembering your password, write it down and tape it to the corner of your monitor.

It is a good idea to change your password every few months as well. I used the same password – which was very easy to guess – for several years, and just a couple weeks before writing this, my account was hacked into.

My user ID was changed and several items were listed and charged to my account. Fortunately, eBay took care of the problem within a few hours and my account was restored and the charges deducted. But the lesson remains – security is important on eBay, so be sure to choose a safe password.

- **Secret question.** If you ever forget your password, eBay will send it to your registered e-mail address if you answer this question; it can be the street you grew up on, your mother's maiden name, etc.

- **Date of birth.** You must be 18 or older to register on eBay. If you're insecure about your age, don't worry; eBay doesn't gossip, so there's no need to say you're 10 years younger than you really are!

**When you've filled in all of this information, click continue.** You will then need to agree to eBay's terms and conditions. It isn't essential to read the terms and conditions word for word, but you should be familiar with eBay's policies.

**After you agree to the terms, eBay will send you an e-mail to your registered address. Open this e-mail and follow the simple instructions to confirm your registration.**

If you have any problems with the registration process, eBay has a guided tour available online. To view the three minute tour, go to <http://ebay.datango.com/navigator/?tour=200013>

**Wow, that was quick!** I told you it would only take a few minutes to get started.

### **Create a Seller's Account**

Your next step is to create a seller's account. You don't have to do this until you actually want to sell something, but **you might as well take care of all the boring registration details all at once.**

Go to <http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?SellerSignIn> and enter your username & ID to sign in. You will need to provide your credit card information to verify your age and billing information to set up your billing plan to pay your seller's fees. eBay will *never, ever give this information out to anyone*, and you will never be charged one penny unless you sell anything.

If you don't want to provide a credit card, or if you don't have one, you can become ID verified instead and you can pay your seller fees using your checking account. There is a \$5.00 fee to become ID verified, and it will take a few minutes. You can do this at <http://pages.ebay.com/services/buyandsell/idverify-login.html>.

### **Sign Up For Paypal**

**Paypal is eBay's #1 payment service.** It allows buyers to pay securely with a credit card or an electronic check. ***It is a must if***

***you're going to sell on eBay*** and it is very highly recommended for making payments if you're going to buy items on eBay.

Go to <http://pages.ebay.com/paypal/seller> to sign up for Paypal. Create a business account if you plan on selling regularly on eBay. There are no fees for sending Paypal payments, but business accounts are charged small fees for accepting payments (the fees are typically 2.9% of the payment plus 25 cents per transaction).

Congratulations, you've taken step one – you're a registered eBay seller. I told you it was easy! The next chapter will teach you all the basics of using eBay.

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## Chapter Five: eBay 101 – The Beginner's Guide to eBay

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Now that you're on eBay, it's time to learn how to bid, buy, sell and use eBay's website. So have a seat; it's time for **eBay Basics 101**. I'm a nice teacher, so feel free to grab a snack or a cup of coffee during class and you may take a break at any time.

### The eBay Auction

So, how the heck does an eBay auction work? A seller lists an item on the site for 3, 5, 7 or 10 days, either in auction format or fixed price format. eBay offers a medium for you to sell your items to more than 70 million registered users. It is the single largest marketplace in the world, online or offline. eBay charges a small commission fee for each of your listings (the fees vary widely and are discussed later in this chapter).

The auction ad is placed in one or two of eBay's thousands of categories and it is added to eBay's searchable database. More than 80 million page searches are performed daily on eBay to find items up for auction or for sale.

In auction format, the seller chooses a minimum bid beforehand and it works just like a regular auction; the highest bidder at the end of the auction wins the item. In fixed price format, the seller chooses a price and the first person who wants it gets it.

The high bidder or buyer pays the seller directly, with a check or money order or using eBay's credit card payment service, Paypal. The payment is made directly to the seller, not to eBay. After receiving payment, the seller ships the item to the customer.

Assuming the transaction goes smoothly, the buyer and seller leave positive feedback for each other, boosting their publicly displayed user ratings.

### How to Browse eBay

There are literally thousands of pages on eBay's website – millions if you count all of the items for sale every day. It could potentially be

very overwhelming. Fortunately, eBay is one of the most user-friendly websites on the net. eBay's layout makes it very easy to navigate.

At the top of every eBay page on the entire site, you will find the navigation bar:

<b>Browse</b>	<b>Search</b>	<b>Sell</b>	<b>My eBay</b>	<b>Community</b>
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No matter where you are on eBay, you can go to the top of the page and click on any one of these five options at any time to take you to eBay's main areas:

**Browse** – takes you to eBay's featured sale/auction listings and a list of item categories; you can also browse by [theme](#), [region](#), [eBay stores](#), or [big ticket items](#).

**Search** – search for items up for sale or for auction: search by title, price, location, date, item number, seller, bidder, store, completed items, etc.

**Sell** – takes you directly to the Sell Your Item form.

**Community** – talk, news, events, and people; the discussion boards are very valuable if you ever need a question answered; there are general discussion boards and category-specific discussion boards

Above the navigation bar, there are several more links in smaller text:

- **Home** – takes you to eBay's main page
- **Sign in/out** – use this link to sign in and out of eBay
- **Services** – loads of tools for buyers and sellers – eBay rules & safety (SafeHarbor) – user-to-user feedback (Feedback Forum) – update your personal information and user preferences.
- **Site map** – a directory of hundreds of eBay's most popular links; very handy if you're having trouble finding a particular page
- **Help** – top questions about registration, personal information, selling, finding items, bidding, buying, and what to do after the auction.

## eBay Language

When you're new to eBay, you'll see all sorts of terms and abbreviations that you probably haven't seen anywhere else. Let's go over the most important terms you should know:

### Different Types of Auctions

*Standard Auction* – by far the most common listing is the classic eBay auction of a single item.

*Buy It Now* – in 2002, eBay launched Buy It Now listings. Instead of the classic auction format, these are fixed price listings; if you like the price, you buy it and the sale is completed. Some classic auctions also have a Buy It Now option which is removed after a bid is placed.

*Private Auction* – this is just like a standard auction, but the identity of the bidders is hidden and only accessible by the seller; this is generally only used for adult items and some high ticket items.

*Dutch Auction* – more than one of the exact same item is offered; eBay only allows 10 identical listings, so if you're selling a large quantity of the same thing, a Dutch auction is the way to go. eBay also allows Dutch Buy It Now listings.

*Reserve Price Auction* – a reserve price protects the seller if the final bid is lower than the amount the seller wants to sell the item for. If the reserve isn't met, the seller isn't obligated to sell the item.

*Featured Auction* – auctions that are featured, either in their specific categories or on eBay's home page. These auctions receive substantially more traffic than other auctions. eBay allows featured Buy It Now listings.

*Live Auction* – items being auctioned off at offline auction events in real time - you can bid on eBay at <http://www.ebayliveauctions.com>.

### Common Abbreviations

It can be confusing to browse through eBay auctions and see all these abbreviations – MWMT, MIB, LMK, NR, COA, HTF, etc. **I know what you're thinking...**



**...What does it all mean!?!?**

The most common abbreviations and acronyms you should be familiar with:

COA – Certificate of Authenticity

EC – Excellent Condition

FN – Fine Condition

G (GD) – Good Condition

HOF – Hall of Famer

HTF – Hard To Find

LBC – Lower Back Cover

LFC – Lower Front Cover

LLBC – Lower Left of Back Cover

LLFC – Lower Left of Front Cover

LRBC – Lower Right of Back Cover

LRFC – Lower Right of Front Cover

MIB – Mint In Box

MIMB – Mint In Mint Box

MIMP – Mint in Mint Package

MIOP – Mint in Opened Package

MIP – Mint in Package

MOC – Mint on Card

MOMC – Mint on Mint Card

MOP – Mother of Pearl

MWMT or MWBMT – Mint With Mint Tags (plush toys)

NIB – New In Box

NR (or NORES) – No Reserve (the auction listing has no reserve price)

NRFB – Never Removed From Box

NWT – New With Tags

OOP – Out Of Print

PIC – Picture

PR – Poor Condition

R – Reprint

RET (RETRD) – Retired

SIG/AUTO – Signature or Autograph

TM – Trademark

TOBC – Top of Back Cover

TOFC – Top of Front Cover

URCF – Upper Right Corner of Front Cover

V/M/D – Visa/Mastercard/Discover

VG – Very Good Condition

VHTF – Very Hard To Find

And then there are those acronyms that web users type all the time. If you're a newcomer, you'll be rolling your eyes in confusion, but it takes almost no time to understand:

BRB – Be right back



BTW – By the way

IMO or IMHO – In my (humble) opinion

LOL – Laughing out loud

TIA – Thanks in advance

TTYL – Talk to you later

Antique Web has a wonderful list of auction abbreviations and acronyms. I've been on eBay since 1996 and I didn't even know a lot of these terms. See <http://www.antiqueweb.com/abbreviations.html> to view the list online.

### **What the Little Icons Mean**

As you're browsing eBay items, you probably notice those little icons after the item titles or seller ID's. Take a minute to learn what they all mean:



The listing is either a Buy It Now listing or it is an auction listing with Buy It Now available if no bids have been received. If it is an auction with Buy It Now available, there will be a hyphen above the Buy It Now icon indicating no bids have been received. If it is a Buy It Now listing rather than an auction, there will be no hyphen.



This is the standard picture icon which indicates the listing includes at least one picture of the item.



The listing includes a picture in eBay's picture gallery. The gallery allows buyers to browse items by their pictures. It is located at <http://pages.ebay.com/buy/gallery.html>.

This icon used to appear after the item's title; now, a thumbnail (smaller size) of the item's picture itself is shown before the listing, which allows buyers to get a glimpse of what you're selling before

clicking on your listing. If you list your item in the gallery, this thumbnail image will replace the standard picture icon above.



This is a gift services icon. Buyers can search specifically for "gift items" by selecting **gift items only** at eBay's advanced search page, [http://pages.ebay.com/search/items/search\\_adv.html](http://pages.ebay.com/search/items/search_adv.html)

The gift services icon promotes that the seller will either gift wrap the item, offer express shipping, and/or ship the item directly to the recipient of the gift rather than to the buyer.



This is the Paypal icon. Paypal is the #1 payment service on eBay – it allows buyers to securely pay sellers with credit cards or electronic checks. Like the gallery icon, this icon isn't listed after the listings, but buyers can use <http://pages.ebay.com/search/items/basicsearch.html>, eBay's basic search page, to search for items you can buy using Paypal. Simply check the **search for items that accept Paypal** box.



This icon indicates that the item has been listed for 24 hours or less. It is automatically added when the auction is listed and automatically removed after 24 hours.



This flaming match icon indicates "hot items" with 30 or more bids.



This icon, which you'll rarely see, indicates live auctions. You can browse the live auction listings at <http://www.ebayliveauctions.com>. You can actually bid on items being auctioned at offline auction houses in real time!



The star after the seller's user ID indicates their rating level. You'll learn about eBay's feedback system in a few minutes, but there are 10 levels of stars, each with a different look. A few examples; a rating of

less than 10 gets no star; a rating of 50-99 gets a blue star; a rating of 500-999 gets the purple star shown above; a rating of 100,000 or more gets a red shooting star. Believe me, there aren't many red shooting stars out there.



If you click on this icon, which is shown after the user's ID & feedback rating, it will take you to that user's About Me page. The About Me page is optional, but many sellers choose to create one to discuss themselves, their auctions and/or their business, and to display some of their feedback and their current auctions.



This icon, listed after an eBay user's ID & feedback rating, indicates that the user is a power seller. A power seller must meet the following requirements:

- Be registered on eBay for at least 90 days
- Feedback of at least 100 with a 98% positive rating
- No outstanding balances on eBay account
- Comply with eBay's listing policies and community values
- List an average of 4 or more listings per month for 3+ months
- Maintain at least \$1,000 in sales every month

There are 5 levels of power sellers:

- Bronze – \$1,000 or more in monthly sales
- Silver – \$3,000 or more in monthly sales
- Gold – \$10,000 or more in monthly sales
- Platinum – \$25,000 or more in monthly sales
- Titanium – \$150,000 or more in monthly sales



This icon is displayed next to the user's ID and indicates that he or she has been registered for 30 days or less.



This icon is displayed next to the user's ID if the user has changed his or her user ID in the last 30 days.



This icon is displayed after a user's ID & feedback rating and indicates that the seller has an eBay store. eBay stores allow for longer listings of 30, 60, 90 or 120 days – or even listings that don't expire. An eBay store also has its own unique URL (web address) on eBay's server. You can browse the stores at <http://www.ebaystores.com>.



eBay displays this icon to highlight new features and services that they offer.

### **Use My eBay to Keep Track of Everything**

My eBay allows you to access everything you need on one page:

- Keep track of auctions you want to watch or you've bid on in the past 30 days
- Keep track of items you are selling or you've sold in the past 30 days
- Send payment reminders and other correspondence to buyers
- Store and view your favorite categories, searchers, sellers, and eBay stores
- Check the status and fees of your eBay account
- See your feedback and leave feedback for others
- Edit your personal information, settings, and preferences

My eBay helps improve your efficiency and organization. If you're bidding on a lot of items or selling a lot of items, you'll probably find yourself checking the My eBay page several times a day to track your bids and sales. It saves time and it is very convenient to have all the information you need organized onto a single page.

The "favorites" page on My eBay is a great tool for buyers. On eBay you can add item categories, searches, sellers, and eBay stores you like to your favorites page. You can then track them all from your My eBay page.

## Using My eBay

You can access your My eBay page from *anywhere* on eBay. Simply go to the top of the page and find the navigation bar and there is a link to My eBay.

At the top of the My eBay page you'll see 7 tabs – bidding/watching, selling, favorites, feedback, accounts, preferences, all – here's what you use them for:

**Bidding/Watching** – keep track of your bids, purchases and auctions you're interested in.

Items I'm Bidding On – track current auctions you've bid on, whether or not you're the current high bidder.

Items I've Won – view your purchases from the last 30 days. Includes links to pay the seller and to leave feedback.

Items I Didn't Win – ended auctions which you didn't finish as the high bidder.

Items I'm Watching – at the top of the page of any listing on eBay, you can select "Watch this item" and My eBay will track it for you here.

**Selling** – keep track of your current auctions and past sales.

Items I'm Selling – your current auctions and their highest bid

Items I've Sold – your ended auctions with final bid price and high bidder information. Leave feedback, send invoices or payment reminders, or re-list your items.

Unsold Items – items that ended without a successful bid. Includes a link to re-list unsold items for free.

Pending Items – items you've listed but are scheduled to start at a later date.

**Favorites** – lists your favorite categories, sellers and searches. You can add or remove favorites from here and track up to 4 categories, 15 sellers and 100 searches.

You can also add favorite searches by selecting "Add to My Favorite Searches" on the right side of the page after making your search.

**Accounts** – view the status of your eBay accounts and make payments for seller fees. You can also set up your account for automatic payments.

**Feedback** – see your feedback profile, respond to comments, leave feedback for others and see feedback you've left for others.

**Preferences** – You can change your personal information and password, your seller preferences, your notification and e-mail preferences (i.e. when and when not to receive e-mails from eBay), your sign-in options, etc.





**All** – view the entire contents of My eBay on one single page.

**[My eBay FAQ Page](#)** - eBay's help for virtually any possible problem or question regarding My eBay.

<http://pages.ebay.com/services/myebay/myebay-faq.html>

## Customizing My eBay

Make My eBay more efficient by selecting the **All** tab to view all of the windows on one page. You can customize this page in several ways:

- Minimize windows you don't use. Use the  button to minimize a window you rarely or never use. It will then only show the heading of the window, and you can restore it at any time by clicking the  button.
- Move the windows you use the most to the top. Use the up arrow  to move a window up and the down arrow  to move a window down.
- Track ended auctions (i.e. items you've won or sold) for as little as 1 day or as long as 30 days. Change the setting at any time by changing the "show items for past 2 days" box (2 days is the default setting). Check the "save this setting" box to keep your changes.

- Sort lists to your preference. Click on a column heading to sort the list by that column. For example, you can sort the "Items I've Won" list by item number, date, end price or seller.

## SafeHarbor

SafeHarbor is eBay's Rules & Safety page. This is where you learn about eBay's policies, fraud protection and prevention, investigations, services that protect users, etc.

**SafeHarbor** – <http://pages.ebay.com/help/community/index.html>

eBay provides insurance for all transactions of up to \$200 (there is a deductible fee, so if you don't receive the item you purchased for \$150 and you never hear from the seller, eBay will refund you \$125). See <http://pages.ebay.com/help/community/insurance.html> for details.

## eBay Feedback

### Feedback Forum

<http://pages.ebay.com/services/forum/feedback.html>

eBay is virtually always safe for buyers and sellers thanks to their revolutionary feedback system. Every time a sale is completed, the buyers and sellers are encouraged (but not forced) to leave public feedback about the other member, which is entered into that member's *feedback profile*. This is eBay's most powerful tool, because buyers and sellers will decide whether or not they want to deal with you based on your **feedback rating**.

Everyone who purchases an item from you or sells an item to you is allowed to leave a comment on your feedback rating, which can be either positive (+1), negative (-1), or neutral (0).

It's so important to provide great customer service to keep your feedback profile in perfect shape. If you have a lot of neutrals or negatives, people will avoid buying from you and you'll lose a lot of business. By the same token, always check other member's feedback profiles before bidding on their items.

The seller's feedback rating is listed to the right of his user ID (i.e. **Skippy (263)**, 263 is the feedback rating). No matter how high the rating is, click on the number to view the entire profile. If the seller has a lot of neutral and/or negative comments, you might be wise to

find another seller to buy from. Don't freak out if you see a couple negatives or neutrals – not even the best sellers on eBay have a *perfect* profile. Take a look at the individual comments and the responses posted by the sellers and ***use your judgment*** to decide whether or not it would be wise to bid.

Although there have been more issues with fraud on eBay since it has become mainstream, the amount of fraudulent deals is only a small fraction of a percent – and if you are a smart buyer, you will likely never encounter any fraudulent sellers.

## How to Find What You're Looking For

I buy items for personal use. I've used eBay for several years now to buy whatever I need or want. Instead of paying full retail prices, I buy CD's, games, vitamins, print cartridges, books, mailing supplies for my business, etc. And once in a while, I'll see something I can't find anywhere else or something I've never seen before that I want to have. In a nutshell, this is exactly why eBay is so successful. You can find great deals on practical stuff you need, and you can find unique items that you won't see anywhere else.

I don't buy items on eBay to resell for a profit. I have done this in the past, and I've come out ahead, but it simply isn't worth the time and effort. There are numerous sources that are far better for bargain shopping for resale on eBay, which are discussed in [chapter seven](#). But if you're looking to save money, eBay is very convenient and you can almost always find what you're looking for, no matter how off the wall it is.

There are two ways to find items on eBay; general browsing or specific searches. eBay's main page for browsing the listings is <http://pages.ebay.com/buy/index.html>. This shows eBay's current featured auctions and a list of eBay's general item categories. This is best if you don't have a specific item in mind and/or you simply wish to browse the listings.

<http://listings.ebay.com/aw/listings/list/category353/overview.html> shows a full list of eBay's categories. Don't be overwhelmed – there are thousands of categories to choose from. This is a great place to start brainstorming ideas for what you might want to sell, which you'll start to think about in [chapter six](#).



Or you can do an item search. The most simple item search you can do is to type in a couple keywords into the search field which is located at the top of most of eBay's pages. You'll quickly learn that it's no joke that there are a lot of items on eBay. A general search like "book" or "Star Wars" will yield an enormous amount of results. Be as specific as possible to find what you're looking for.

### Basic Search Tips

- <http://pages.ebay.com/search/items/basicsearch.html> is eBay's basic search page. Use it for more search options and more targeted searches. You can search by keyword, words to exclude from the search results, price range, category, location, picture, items that accept Paypal, etc.
- Type in a few keywords you would use to describe the item you're searching for. Choose words that best describe the item.
- Be specific to narrow your search results. If your search is too broad, keep adding keywords. If you're looking for a Barbie from the 1977 with a green hat, the search "Barbie" is too broad. Try "Barbie 1977" next. Still too many results? Try "Barbie 1977 green hat".
- If you're looking for an Elvis t-shirt, don't just type Elvis, or you'll have too many results. On the other hand, if you search for a specific item and find no results, you might try removing one or two keywords to broaden your search.
- Try not to use these three words: **and**, **or**, **the**, unless they're part of a search such as "Tom Petty **and the** Heartbreakers". If you use these words, your search may be distorted and/or too broad.
- Be careful with punctuation. It usually isn't necessary in searches, because you're going for keywords, not accurate grammar. **eBay searches are not case sensitive**, so don't worry about capitalization either.
- If you want to get more matches, click on the "search titles and descriptions" option. Only do this if you get little or no results on your initial search.

- You can use the sort menu to rank your search by starting date, ending date, or bid price. The menu is right above your search results. I'll get more into bidding strategies in a few minutes, but if you want to bid on items right as they're ending, search by ending date to find auctions ending soon. However, if you're trying to find items with a certain price range, sort your results by price.
- Search both singular and plural forms to find more items. For example, if you're looking for Bubbles the beanie baby, try "Bubbles beanie baby" first, then try "Bubbles beanie babies". Similarly, if you are searching for an Elvis t-shirt, try "Elvis t-shirt", "Elvis tee shirt", and "Elvis tshirt", because you never know what you'll find. Often times the item that is hardest to find in a search is the item with the best price simply because not as many people have found it.

<http://pages.ebay.com/help/buyerguide/search.html> - eBay offers its own bidding tips here.

### Advanced Searching Tips

- Go to [http://pages.ebay.com/search/items/search\\_adv.html](http://pages.ebay.com/search/items/search_adv.html) for **eBay's advanced search page**. Here you have even more options than with the basic search, such as country, currency, Buy It Now items, gift items, number of items per page, or Dutch auctions.
- **Search for exact phrases.** All you have to do now is select ***Exact Phrase*** under the pull down menu after the search field. The default setting is ***All Of These Words***. This isn't as much of an advanced tip as it used to be since eBay has made it so easy – but it still remains a good trick for making your search results more accurate.
- **Find one word or another.** Type *(Dickau,Jordan,Duncan)*, and you will find items with ANY of these words in the title. If you're looking for basketball cards of these players, you can type:

*card (Dickau,Jordan,Stockton).*

Make sure you put a comma but no space in between the word(s) you wish to include in your either/or search. This will yield results such as "Michael Jordan rookie card", "Tim Duncan

game jersey card" AND "Dan Dickau autograph card" all on the same page.

- **Narrow your search by excluding words.** If you type *Britney Spears -poster*, your search will yield items containing Britney Spears EXCEPT those also containing the word *poster*. Be sure there is no space between the minus sign and the word you wish to exclude.

You can also exclude multiple words, i.e. *Britney Spears - (poster,cd,shirt)*

- **Search for multiple endings with an asterisk.** If you're looking for any issue of Readers Digest magazine from the 1960's, you can type *Readers Digest 196\**. You can also use this with words, i.e. *Bri\* Spears*. Since Britney's name is misspelled often, this will return results such as "Brittnay", "Brittney", "Briteny" and so forth.
- **Find words from a group.** Type *@1 Jordan autographed jersey* to find results with 2 out of the 3 words listed. Your search will yield items with the words "Jordan autographed", "Jordan jersey", and "autographed Jersey". If you want to find 3 out of 4 words, type *@2* followed by the four words.

You can also find words from a group AND another word by typing *@1 Jordan autographed jersey +retired*. This search will narrow the above results by only including items with the word "retired" in the title, along with 2 of the other 3 words.

**The myth of power search secrets.** Back when I wrote the first edition of this book, sellers were selling "power search secrets" all over eBay for \$10. These are rarely advertised anymore, but if you see anything advertising power search secrets, don't waste your time or your money. Even back in the day, the information didn't work well. Now that eBay's search page has so many advanced options, the information is completely and utterly useless.

## **The eBay Toolbar** – [http://pages.ebay.com/ebay\\_toolbar](http://pages.ebay.com/ebay_toolbar)

If you're an avid buyer on eBay, you might want to download the eBay toolbar. It is a toolbar that is added to your web browser and allows you to do eBay searches, track items you're watching, items you've bid on and items you've won and even notifications of auctions that are about to end.

### **Find Something You Like?**

Don't be in too much of a hurry to place a bid. You should first be fully confident that you're getting a good value and that the seller is reputable. It's important to take precautions before placing a bid.

### **Know What You're Bidding On**

Read the item's description carefully and don't ever place a bid if you don't have all the information you need. Some sellers are very careful to provide all relevant details in the description about their item (as should you when you decide to sell). Other sellers leave out information that you might need to know. If you've read the item description in full and you're still unsure of something, such as the quality of the item, the features of the item, the condition of the item, etc., e-mail the seller.

If you're looking at a graphing calculator and it's advertised as "just like new", ask if it comes in its original packing with the user's manual – and ask if it comes with batteries included. If you're looking at a collectible, even if the seller claims it's in "mint" condition, but doesn't go into any detail about it, ask for verification that there are absolutely no flaws. Many sellers don't understand the collectibles grades of condition or will exaggerate the condition or value of their items or simply not tell you the whole story.

Some specific questions you might consider asking the seller if they're not mentioned in the description:

- What is the overall condition of the item? Are there any flaws at all, and if so, can you describe them?
- Is the item new or used? Does it come with any accessories? What condition are the accessories in?

- Does the item come with a warranty?
- What is the size of the item?
- Does the item have its original parts? Does it come in its original packaging?
- Is it authentic or a reproduction? If it's authentic, is there documented proof?
- How old is the item? What is its history?
- Any identifying marks on the item? If so, what are they?
- What are the shipping charges for this item?
- Is the item coming from a smoke-free home?
- Does the seller offer a guarantee if you're not happy with your purchase? What are the terms of the guarantee?

You no doubt want to see a picture of what you buy – so if there is no picture, buyer beware. On the other hand, since others want to see pictures as well, you can find items for lower prices if pictures aren't listed. I wouldn't call this a great bargain though, because the risk of receiving items of poor quality cancels the reward of paying less money.

You get the idea – **never bid unless you are sure you will get what you expect to get.**

To e-mail the seller with questions, go to the top of the listing and look for the blue "seller information" box on the right side of the page. Click on **Ask Seller A Question**. Make sure you read the description first to see if your question is answered, because it is frustrating for sellers to receive questions that are answered in the ad. Don't bid on the item until you get a response from the seller and your questions are answered.

### **Know Who You're Buying From**

Never bid on an item without checking the seller's feedback. Go back to that blue "seller information" box at the top of the page on the right. It displays the user's feedback rating, percentage of positive

feedback, and date of registration. This gives you an idea of how much business the seller has done, how many complaints the seller has had and how long the seller has been on eBay.

If the seller's feedback rating is very low (i.e. less than 10) and/or the seller's positive feedback percentage isn't perfect – even anything under 99% – click on ***read feedback reviews***.

Don't automatically avoid the seller because of a couple negative comments, especially if they have been registered for a long time and have a high feedback rating. Some negatives are not justified, and over a long course of selling on eBay, even the best sellers are going to get a couple of negatives. Sometimes there will be a selfish, impatient customer or a miscommunication. Nobody is perfect.

However, if the seller has a feedback rating of 1200 but has 45 negatives and 79 neutrals, you're definitely taking a risk and you might not be dealing with the classiest seller. Judging by these numbers, the seller might not be too concerned with his customers or his reputation. Even then, take a minute to read the comments and decide for yourself. You need to **use your own judgment** to decide whether or not to bid.

### **Know the Value of the Item**

Unless the item you're bidding on is the only one of its kind on eBay, don't bid on the first item you click on. Take your time and search for the best bargains. Use the basic and advanced search tips above.

If you're not sure of the value of the item you're looking at, go to [http://pages.ebay.com/search/items/search\\_adv.html](http://pages.ebay.com/search/items/search_adv.html), eBay's advanced search page, to search for *completed auctions* to try to find information on past auctions. Find out what the average final bid price was and make sure the items actually received bids. Don't bid higher than the average price of past auctions, assuming the item hasn't risen or fallen in value very recently.

If you can't find any information about the value of items from past eBay auctions, my Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay lists numerous sources for pricing and information about many specific categories – antiques, coins, collectibles, jewelry, music, toys, etc.

Also check out <http://pages.ebay.com/community/library>, the eBay library, which is a great resource to learn about items in various categories – particularly collectible items.

You can even get help of other users by visiting eBay's category-specific chat rooms, part of the vast eBay community. Check out these rooms at <http://pages.ebay.com/community/chat/index.html>.

## **Know the Seller's Terms of Sale**

Don't place a bid until you know the following:

- **Does the seller offer a satisfaction guarantee?** You don't want to get stuck with a product that doesn't work or isn't of the quality you expect. I don't like to buy anything unless my satisfaction is guaranteed. Even then, some "money back guarantees" only apply to damaged items, so if you're not satisfied, you're out of luck. I also like to see details of the guarantee, so if none are listed in the ad, I'll e-mail the seller and ask for details.
- **What are the shipping charges?** How much does the seller charge for shipping? eBay sellers are often infamous for overcharging for shipping. You might think you've found a bargain when you see a poster you want for \$6.95 that is on sale at the mall for \$11.95, but if the seller is charging you \$5.00 for shipping, you're better off just getting the poster at the mall!
- **Will the seller ship to your area?** If you live in a different country than the seller, make sure international bids are welcome. Some sellers might not ship to PO Boxes. If you're buying a large enough item, the seller might only ship to certain parts of the country, such as the region nearest to him – although this is very rare and will probably never be a concern.
- **What types of payments are accepted?** If you want to pay by personal check, the seller might only accept money orders or credit cards. Make sure your preferred payment is accepted.

If you're still not 100% confident about bidding on the item, review the item listing and check out the seller's About Me page if there is one; or if you see that the seller has a website, check it out. These pages might help you get to know the seller better which may give you

more or less confidence. If the seller seems very picky and unfriendly or very sloppy and unorganized, you might want to look elsewhere.

***The bottom line: Don't bid unless you're confident you'll get what you paid for without any problems. Period.***

## **How to Bid**

Below the item description and the shipping & payment terms, you'll find the **ready to bid?** headline. Simply put your maximum bid into the box and click **place bid**. You will then need to enter your username & password if you're not already signed in and then confirm your bid.

You won't necessarily pay your maximum bid price. eBay uses a proxy server to accept bids. If you're not a computer programmer (I'm not either), you probably don't know what that means. In English, the lowest available bid will be entered. This can be better illustrated with an example of an auction:

The minimum bid is \$50.00 and no bids have been received. Joe Buyer places a bid of \$75. The current bid price is now \$50.00 because it is the lowest available bid. Susie Shopper comes along and places a maximum bid of \$65. The bid price is raised to \$66.00 and Joe Buyer is still the high bidder. Then Bobby Bargain comes along and places a maximum bid of \$100.00.

The current bid is raised to \$76.00 to Bobby Bargain. Joe Buyer receives an e-mail from eBay telling him he's been outbid, so he comes back at the last minute and bids his maximum of \$90.00. The current bid is raised to \$91.00 and Bobby Bargain remains the high bidder. Joe Buyer, Susie Shopper and anyone else who has viewed the auction decides not to bid any higher. So Bobby Bargain wins the auction for \$91.00 – even though his maximum bid was \$100.00.

Visit <http://pages.ebay.com/help/buy/proxy-bidding.html> for eBay's explanation if you're still confused.



eBay will e-mail you when you make a successful bid, when you are outbid, when an auction ends, etc. You can change your preferences if you don't want to receive these e-mails. Go to My eBay and select the **preferences** tab. Select ***change my notification preferences***.

You can even set it up so that eBay will send notices to your cell phone! If you start bidding on a lot of items, you might not want your mailbox cluttered with all of the bid notices – especially since you can easily track your bids using My eBay.

Go to <http://pages.ebay.com/help/buyerguide/bidding-how.html> for eBay's bidding tutorial. There is a bidding frequently asked questions page at <http://pages.ebay.com/help/basics/f-bidding.html>.

### **Before You Bid – Do You Need the Item?**

Regardless of your bidding strategy, ***know the maximum price you're willing to pay before you start bidding***, and ***never go beyond your maximum***. This will keep you from getting caught up in a bidding war and paying more than you want to. It sounds silly, but it can be addictive, much like going to a Blackjack table with your weekly paycheck. If you don't specify that you're only going to put \$20 on the table beforehand, you might end up losing a whole lot more money than you expected.

Be sure to factor in shipping charges when deciding the maximum price you're willing to pay. If you decide you're willing to pay \$12 for an auction and you win it for \$11.50 but the shipping charges are \$5.50, you're paying a lot more than you intended.

Before you place your bid, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you really need this item? Will it add to your collection?
- Can you afford to buy this item? Are you sure?
- Are you only bidding on this item because it's in the final hours or minutes of the auction?
- How much are you willing to pay? *Know this beforehand and never bid more than what you're willing to pay!*

- Are you paying more than you have paid for similar items in the past?
- Do you know everything you need to know? If not, contact the seller and ask questions.
- Is the seller reputable? Does she have a good feedback rating?
- Are you fully confident you'll get what you are paying for?

## Bidding Strategies

There are two general strategies for bidding. The first one is simple: bid the maximum you are willing to pay as soon as you decide you're interested. If you win the item, great! If you are outbid, don't get into a bidding war, because the item is going for more than you were originally willing to pay.

The second bidding strategy is known as **sniping**. I've seen this information advertised as "eBay bidding secrets" and sold for as high as \$10 in the past. I almost never see those auctions anymore – I guess people finally realized how silly it is to pay for this simple information.

Instead of bidding as soon as you decide you're interested, hide your interest in the auction by waiting until the end of the auction to place a bid. At the top of the item's page, click on **Watch this item**. You can now track it in My eBay. Come back during the final few minutes of the auction and start watching it.

Place your maximum bid during the final seconds of the auction. By doing this, those also interested in the item won't have time to react to your bid, increasing your chances of winning the item. Not only are you less likely to be outbid, but you'll usually get the item at a lower price than you would by bidding early. Make sure you don't wait too long to bid, though – allow enough time to enter your password (if you're not signed in) and confirm your bid.

If you're really into sniping, select "going going gone" to find items ending within a couple hours when you're browse through eBay's categories. Here's a link you'll love – a list of items that are ending the soonest on all of eBay's categories:

<http://listings.ebay.com/aw/listings/going/index.html#eBayListings>

The only time I would ever bid early for an item is if it is a one of a kind item that I absolutely can't live without. This would ensure that I'd have a chance to win the auction even if the site was temporarily down during the final minutes of the auction. 99.9% of the time I bid on anything, it's at the end of the auction.

## **Free Bid Sniping Software**

There are several free "bid sniping programs" available online that will save time and help you win auctions. They do the last-second bidding for you, so you don't have to sit online and watch auctions as they end. If you're bidding on several auctions, this will save you a lot of time.

Don't pay for one of these programs on eBay or anywhere else. You can find download programs that work great for free:

### **HammerSnipe PowerTool**

<http://www.hammertap.com/powertool/index.html>

A popular bid sniping program. It's easy to use and full of great features to help make winning auctions easy.

### **AuctionInsights**

<http://auctioninsights.auctionstealer.com/home.cfm>

Includes a free sniping tool that can track an unlimited number of auctions. You enter your maximum bid, the quantity desired, and the time to place the bid, and they'll do the rest. Track an unlimited number of auctions.

### **Ratingpal**

<http://ratingpal.auctionstealer.com/faq.cfm#free>

Places your bids for you during the final 3-15 seconds of an auction.

## **More Bidding Tips**

- You are less likely to be outbid if you don't round your bids. Bid a few cents higher than your instincts tell you to; in other words, bid \$20.03 instead of \$20.00.
- The time an auction ends usually affects the final price, and eBay's peak times are in the late afternoon and early evening. To find bargains, look for items that are scheduled to end in the

middle of the night or very early in the morning.

- If you're looking at collectibles that are brand new, unless you're a true diehard and you NEED the item NOW, wait at least a month or maybe even a few months, unless the items are being discontinued or retired. The item is almost sure to go down in value and you'll get a much better deal. The same is true for brand new music or movies or memorabilia.
- More timing strategies – buy off season. Buy your Christmas ornaments during the summer and your swimming accessories during the winter. The effectiveness of this strategy is reduced since there are fewer of these items for sale off season, but it is still a smart strategy. Plan ahead and you'll save money.
- This is more of a bargain shopping strategy than a bidding strategy, but most sellers will combine shipping charges if you purchase multiple items, so you'll usually save money buying two items from one seller instead of from two separate sellers.
- ***Dutch auction strategy.*** Dutch auctions can lead to better bargains than standard auctions; if the seller has 100 of the same item, he might price it somewhat lower than someone who only has one, in order to move his entire inventory.

When you're bidding in a Dutch auction, your goal is the same as when bidding on a regular auction – to be the high bidder. But the rules aren't the same. If the quantity sold is less than the quantity available, it's simple – you win the number of items you bid on for the stated minimum bid (per item). But if more bids are received than there are available items, it gets more complicated.

If there are 10 items available but 25 bids are received, the price will be driven up from the minimum bid, and only the 10 highest bidders will win. But *all ten* high bidders will pay the *same* price – the amount of the *lowest successful bid!* So if you want to be the high bidder, make sure you have the 3rd or 4th lowest successful bid – not the lowest or 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest, or you're likely to be outbid.

And of course, if you want multiples of the item, make sure you have multiple successful bids! If you bid on multiple items in a Dutch auction, you must bid the same price for each item.

## Bid Increments

The seller doesn't set bid increments. They are standardized for eBay's entire website. The increment between the current bid and the next bid depend on the current bid price:

<u>Current Bid</u>	<u>Bid Increment</u>
\$0.01 – \$0.99	\$ 0.05
\$1.00 – \$4.99	\$ 0.25
\$5.00 – \$24.99	\$ 0.50
\$25.00 – \$99.99	\$ 1.00
\$100.00 – \$249.99	\$ 2.50
\$250.00 – \$499.99	\$ 5.00
\$500.00 – \$999.99	\$ 10.00
\$1000.00 – \$2499.99	\$ 25.00
\$2500.00 – \$4999.99	\$ 50.00
\$5000.00 and above	\$100.00

## Don't Retract Your Bids

Don't ever back out of your bids. This will result in negative feedback and it will kill your reputation which ultimately kills your sales as a seller and your chances of buying as a bidder. In fact, you can even be permanently suspended from eBay for retracting bids.

If you make an error, i.e. you bid \$100 instead of \$10 by mistake, you have acceptable grounds for bid retraction. Contact the seller and inform her of the mistake and she'll probably be understanding and allow you to retract the bid. Try to avoid this at all costs too, though, because the number of bids you've retracted is displayed in your feedback profile.

The only other time retracting bids is acceptable is if the seller adds something to the description that completely changes your need for the item or the item's value. In this case, you have a legitimate reason for canceling your bid. Even in a case like this, instead of simply retracing your bid, send a polite e-mail to the seller and ask that he cancels the bid for you. If you have a legitimate reason, the seller should comply, although there are some sellers who are tough to deal with.

Remember to make sure you want and can afford what you're bidding on *before you bid!* Sellers have the right to refuse bids from anyone and if you've retracted a lot of bids, no one will want to sell to you or buy from you.

### **Buy Your First Item!**

You know everything you need to know now, so find something you want. Don't stop until you win an auction. It's a great way to get a feel for the overall process of buying and selling on eBay.

***Pay promptly.*** It goes without saying that you should pay as quickly as you can. It is easier than ever to pay *instantly* after the auction ends now, thanks to Paypal's instant purchase option. After the auction is over, go back to the item's page – if you're the winning bidder and you're signed in, you will see a "Pay Now" button.

***Payment options.*** Your best option is [www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com), eBay's credit card payment service. Most sellers accept Paypal which allows you to securely pay using your credit card or your checking account. You receive your items much faster because the seller receives your payment instantly. You also have more fraud protection when paying with credit cards.

Your other options are money orders or personal checks. Money orders usually cost anywhere from 25 cents to a few dollars. The advantage of a money order over a personal check is that once the seller receives the money order, she'll ship your item out. If you pay by check, most sellers will hold it for 7-10 days until it clears with the bank. ***Never pay in cash***, because it is not safe to send through the mail and if you encounter a bad deal, you have no means for protection. For a more detailed discussion about payment options, read [chapter eleven](#).

***Pay with your credit card whenever possible.*** Use [Paypal](#) at all times if possible. Only 6% of all online fraud is generated from credit card payments, while 87% is generated from personal check, money order or cashier's check payments (says <http://www.fraud.org>). And if you do encounter a bad deal, you generally have more legal recourse and more protection if you pay with a credit card. Paypal's buyer protection program lowers your risk: [https://www.paypal.com/us/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=p/gen/ua/policy\\_buyer\\_complaint](https://www.paypal.com/us/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=p/gen/ua/policy_buyer_complaint).

Paypal's buyer complaint process does not unconditionally guarantee that you will get your money back if you encounter a bad deal, but you have a much better chance than if you had paid by check or money order.

***Mailing options.*** Some sellers are flexible with shipping options and some will only use one shipping method. Unless you're in a big hurry to receive an item, don't pay for expensive shipping; standard first class or priority mail is fine. If you're buying an expensive item, you might consider paying for insurance in case the item is lost or damaged in the mail – although I've found that over the long run, it's not worth the money.

Get a tracking number if possible. Most major carries (UPS, Fed Ex, Airborne Express, etc.) offer free package tracking that you can check from the carrier's website. If the seller ships your items through the post office, however, tracking is optional and additional.

A tracking number helps protect you in case you never receive your item; if your package does have a tracking number, be sure to get it from the seller as soon as your package is mailed.

***Keep records of everything!*** Save the end of auction notice from eBay and all correspondence to and from the seller. If you ever encounter a bad deal, you'll need proof to protect yourself.

***Contact the seller promptly*** if necessary. eBay allows the buyer and seller 3 days to contact each other; if the seller doesn't hear from you after 3 days, she is no longer obligated to complete the sale. If you can't find the seller's address to send a money order to, e-mail her and ask for it. If the shipping charges aren't posted and you can't find them anywhere, e-mail the seller and ask her how much you need to include for shipping. If for some reason, you won't be able to pay for the item right away, e-mail the seller and tell her.

***Leave positive feedback*** if you're satisfied with your purchase and the seller's service. If you're a buyer and you don't get feedback from the seller you know how frustrating it can be; the same is true for sellers.

Go to <http://pages.ebay.com/services/forum/feedback.html> to access eBay's feedback forum. From this page, you can select ***leave feedback for a single transaction or*** you can select ***leave feedback about an eBay user – see all pending comments at***

**once** to see all completed transactions for which you haven't yet left feedback.

## **If You Have a Bad Deal**

If you follow the advice in this chapter and you're a smart shopper, virtually all of your deals will be satisfactory. But if you buy enough items on eBay, you may have a problem you can't fix at some point.

***Is your item late?*** Have you been waiting longer than expected for your item? If so, don't jump to conclusions because several things might have happened. Your package could have been addressed incorrectly; there could be a delay in the mail; or the seller could be behind on his orders.

If you haven't received your item and you've been waiting longer than expected, contact the seller. As a general rule, never ask where your stuff is less than 7 days after you pay, unless you paid for special shipping such as Fed Ex, express shipping, priority mail, etc.

The e-mail you send shouldn't be a threat and it shouldn't be impolite. It should be a simple, professional letter letting your buyer know that you haven't received your merchandise and you'd like an update. Chances are you'll get a good explanation from the seller and you'll eventually receive what you paid for.

***Is your item unsatisfactory?*** Again, contact the seller politely and quickly and request a replacement or a refund.

***If you feel you have been ripped off,*** send one final warning to the seller. Again, it should be professional, because you have nothing to gain by engaging in personal attacks, threats, insults, etc.

My Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay includes sample templates for all of the above customer contact scenarios.

If you don't get a response from the seller, your next step is to **request the seller's registration information on eBay**. Go to <http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?MemberSearchShow> to do this online. eBay will send an e-mail to both you and the seller providing each other with the other's contact information. If this doesn't initiate a reply from the seller, you can give him a call and see if anything is resolved. There is a small chance the seller has had personal problems to attend to and hasn't been online.



**SquareTrade** – <http://www.squaretrade.com> – is a mediation service designed to resolve disputes between buyers and sellers. They may be able to help you out but the cost is \$20 for a mediator – so it's not worth it for small deals. Some buyers like Squaretrade, but personally I've never used it and I never plan to. I figure if the seller hasn't responded by now, he doesn't deserve another chance.

***It's time to take action*** if you still haven't resolved the dispute. The first thing you need to do is *gather your evidence* so you can make the appropriate claims. You need to acquire documented proof that your payment was received by the seller.

This can be in several forms – statements from Paypal that indicate when you paid; cancelled check; or copy of money order. Always save copies of money orders and cancelled checks (which you should get with your bank statement – otherwise you can get a copy from your bank). If you paid with a money order, you can contact the vendor of the money order (you should find a phone number on your receipt) and ask for a copy of the cancelled money order. This isn't free and it will take a while – that's one reason I prefer credit cards or even checks to money orders.

***Post negative feedback for the seller.*** You shouldn't do this until you've done everything possible to contact the seller. But if you know you're getting ripped off, it's your responsibility to other honest users on eBay to leave negative feedback. It's the only way other buyers know to stay away from the seller.

***Don't e-mail bidders of the seller's items to warn them.*** The good citizen in you wants to protect others from a potential bad deal, but it is against eBay's policies to contact bidders of other auctions for such reasons and you can be suspended indefinitely for it. It is also against eBay's rules to post personal information about other eBay members on any eBay message boards

***File an insurance claim*** with eBay within 60 days of the auction's close (up to \$200 protection with a \$25.00 deductible) online at <http://pages.ebay.com/aw/frs-claimform.html>.

***File a buyer complaint form*** if you paid with Paypal. You are not guaranteed to get your money back, but it's definitely worth a shot. [https://www.paypal.com/us/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=\\_contact-submit&flow=md\\_buyer](https://www.paypal.com/us/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_contact-submit&flow=md_buyer)

***File a complaint with the Postal Inspector's Office*** only if you sent your payment via the USPS. To contact your local postal inspector, go to <http://www.usps.gov/ncsc/locators/find-is.html>. You can then fill out a mail fraud form – and once it is filed, it will likely scare the seller into refunding your payment or sending your item.

***File complaints elsewhere online.*** There are many resources for filing reports & complaints against the seller:

- **eBay!** Go to <http://pages.ebay.com/help/basics/select-support.html> to notify eBay of the problem and about all charges and complaints filed with legal authorities. Also send to eBay copies of all e-mail from seller to you, you to seller, and all legal complaints and actions filed by you against the seller to:

eBay Inc.  
Attn: Fraud Prevention  
2145 Hamilton Ave  
San Jose, CA 95125-5905

Complaints About Other Users – be sure not to post any personal details (i.e. address or phone number) about the seller as it is against eBay's policies.

<http://pages.ebay.com/help/myinfo/complaints.html>

- **National Fraud Information Center** – <http://www.fraud.org>

**International Web Police** – <http://www.web-police.org>

**National Consumer Complaint Center for Internet Fraud**  
<http://www.alexanderlaw.com/nccc/cb-ftc.html>

**Federal Trade Commission (FCC)** – <http://www.ftc.gov>

**The District Attorney's Office and the State Attorney General's Office** of both your hometown and the seller's hometown.

**[eBay's fraud protection page](http://pages.ebay.com/help/community/fpp.html)**

<http://pages.ebay.com/help/community/fpp.html>

[Advice for buyers who have problems on eBay auctions](#) is a very useful page filled with advice and step-to-step action to take for buyers who have problems with sellers.

<http://www.mindspring.com/~bookdealers/ripoff.html>

## **The Auction Process from Start to Finish**

It's time to learn how the selling process works! Of course, that's the focus of much of my Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay, and you'll be a ***certified expert*** after you're through reading it. But you might want to experiment and learn something in the meantime.

I'll take you through the basic selling process right now. Your first step is to register, set up a seller's account and sign up to accept Paypal payments – see [chapter four](#) for details. Now, if you want to learn by experience, go ahead and sell something. Go find something in your attic or garage that you never use and want to get rid of. It should be something small and low priced since it's your first listing.

First, fill out the Sell Your Item form – click ***ell*** from the navigation bar at the top of any eBay page. I'll discuss advanced listing strategies in the Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay, so consider this only a very basic tutorial. Here is what you need to do:

- **Choose a selling format.** You're either going to use eBay's standard auction format or the fixed price Buy It Now format. The other options are adding an item to your eBay store or listing a Real Estate ad, but I'm going to assume you're not going to be doing either of these as a beginner.
- **Select a category.** It is important to list your item in the proper category, and there are thousands of categories on eBay. If you can't find a category:

You might want to check a few auctions similar to yours – search for similar completed auctions and check out the auctions with the highest bids. See which categories they are listed in and also notice the titles and anything that stands out in the ads. Don't outright plagiarize another seller's ads, but don't be afraid to take notes about what seems to have worked.

Use eBay's ***Find Suggested Categories*** feature to help. Enter

a few keywords (words that you would use to find your item if you were doing a search) and find the most popular categories for your item.

- **The title.** Your title can only have 55 characters or less, so be concise but try to describe the item as completely as possible. Include keywords that you think your buyers will use to search for your item.

Go to <http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/title.html> for eBay's title tips.

- **Item specifics.** This gives buyers a fast and easy way to search for your items, but it is not available for most categories. If you are prompted to enter item specifics, fill in the details and continue. More information on item specifics is available at [http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/item\\_specifics.html](http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/item_specifics.html).
- **Item description.** Describe your item for your potential bidders. You might want to use a separate program to make your description as neat as possible. I'll discuss this in and I'll teach you how to write great eBay ads in [chapter eight](#).

Be specific about what you're selling – include all relevant details, such as the value (if known), the condition, including any and all flaws, the physical details (i.e. size, color, shape, etc) and the history of the item, if known and relevant. The more you know about your item, the better you can sell it.

Start with a headline centered at the top of your ad that tells what your item is. Make it an 18 point font and keep the rest of your ad at a 12 point font. Use short words, sentences and paragraphs to keep your listing neat. Check your spelling and grammar and DON'T TYPE IN ALL CAPS. Check your spelling and grammar for mistakes.

Learn basic HTML tags to make your auction ad look polished. HTML tags are the “language of the web” and format your ads by adding or changing font style, font color, font size, background, pictures, links, etc.

At the very least, separate your description into paragraphs. To do this, you need to type <p> whenever you want to start a new paragraph. You can view eBay's simple HTML help at:

[http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/html\\_tips.html](http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/html_tips.html).

If you are an expert at HTML and you want to make your auction ad look professional, great – but don't get too fancy. Don't include any large, bright or fancy colors, backgrounds or fonts, music or pictures not related to your item. Keep it simple.

Don't over-hype what you are selling. Talk about the benefits of the item but always remain honest. Thank your readers for viewing your auction and encourage them to bid early and often. Include clickable links to your e-mail, your other auctions and your About Me page.

- **Pricing and duration.** Decide how much you want to start the bidding at – or if you're selling at a fixed price, choose your selling price. You can start the bidding at as low as 1 cent, which will attract more bidders at least initially, or you can set the minimum bid at the lowest price you're willing to sell the item for.  
Unless you're selling in a Dutch auction, it doesn't make much of a difference if you list your item for 3, 5, 7 or 10 days. But you should start your auction at an appropriate time so that it will end when many buyers are online. In general, the best times to end your auction are generally early evening, and Sunday evening is the most popular time. But peak times vary and it depends largely upon what you're selling.
- **Item location.** Enter your city and state and the eBay region nearest to you.
- **Add pictures.** This is the most difficult aspect of selling on eBay for most beginners, unless you are computer savvy. My step by step picture tutorial is found in [chapter nine](#), or you can go to [http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/photo\\_tutorial.html](http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/photo_tutorial.html) for eBay's basic photo tutorial.
- **Listing designer.** The listing designer is a helpful feature for beginners who don't know how to create eBay ads that look good. If you are having trouble making your ad look attractive, give the listing designer a try for 10 cents.
- **Increase your item's visibility.** If you're just starting out, I wouldn't pay too much money for any of these services. If your item is one that your buyer absolutely needs to see a picture of,

such as pottery, art, clothing or jewelry, place your picture in the gallery for just 25 cents. Don't feature your auctions and don't spend money on optional features such as bold or highlight.

In the Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay, I'll discuss the optional features you should and shouldn't use and when to use them, but for now, keep your costs to a minimum.

- **Choose your accepted payment methods.** You should accept Paypal, money orders, cashiers checks and personal checks.
- **Shipping costs.** Charge your customers appropriate shipping fees plus the cost of your mailing supplies – never overcharge customers for shipping. To estimate shipping costs, use eBay's online shipping calculator at <http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?EmitSellerShippingCalculator&itemId=0>.
- **Payment instructions.** Remind your customers how they can pay you and state when you will ship your items after receiving payment. Tell your customers you'll leave positive feedback after you get paid.
- **Ship to locations.** Choose whether you will accept international bidders, domestic bidders only, or if you will only arrange for your item to be picked up (for large items only). You should accept international bids except in extreme cases.
- **Escrow.** Escrow services allow the buyer to pay using a third party service for added security. Don't even consider offering escrow services unless you're selling a very high ticket item.

That's it – if this is the first item you've listed on eBay, it probably took you a while. Don't worry; once you become familiar with the process, it will go much quicker. Plus, eBay saves most of the details you've entered that can be applied to all of your listings, so the process becomes much more automated.

Review your listing before submitting it. Make sure the title and description look like you want it to and make sure your item is listed in the correct category and the features you have chosen are correct. Also make sure your picture is visible.

You can track your items for sale using My eBay. Also check your e-mail every day to see if you receive any questions from users; if you do, answer them thoroughly and promptly.

After the auction is over, the buyer might pay you instantly with Paypal or use eBay's checkout service to pay you. For more info on eBay checkout, go to <http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/checkout.html>. If the buyer doesn't complete the checkout service right away, use checkout to send the buyer an invoice.

If you don't want to use checkout, you can e-mail the seller separately with payment instructions, including your address and the total amount due. Send the buyer an e-mail whether or not you use checkout if you have not heard from him within 3 days after the auction closes.

Go to <http://pages.ebay.com/services/forum/feedback.html> after you get paid, to access the Feedback Forum (or you can get there from the **feedback** tab on My eBay) and leave positive feedback for your buyer. Thank her for the purchase and tell her you'd love for her to buy from you again. If she paid quickly, thank her for the fast payment.

After you receive payment, it's time to package and ship the item. You should hold larger personal checks until they clear your bank.

Package the item safely and ship it to the buyer. Double box fragile items and use A LOT of padding materials. Always mark the package so that your buyer knows who it's from. Include a thank you note with your eBay user ID. Read [chapter twelve..](#) for packaging and shipping tips.

Go to <http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/relist.html> to find out how you can re-list your for free if it doesn't sell. Then read eBay's re-listing tips at <http://cgi5.ebay.com/ws2/eBayISAPI.dll?BetterSeller>.

**[eBay seller's guide](#)** – <http://pages.ebay.com/sell/guide.html>. A directory of helpful tutorials and links for sellers.

Or try <http://pages.ebay.com/sellercentral/index.html>, eBay's seller central, for more advanced selling tips. I especially recommend that you check out the **Sell by Category** section:

<http://pages.ebay.com/sellercentral/sellbycategory.html>

## eBay Seller Fees

eBay charges sellers in four different areas:

**Item listing fees** (insertion fees). The insertion fee depends on the starting bid price:

Starting Bid	Seller Fees
\$0.01 - \$0.99	\$0.30
\$1.00 - \$9.99	\$0.35
\$10.00 - \$24.99	\$0.60
\$25.00 - \$49.99	\$1.20
\$50.00 - \$199.99	\$2.40
\$200.00 - \$499.99	\$3.60
\$500 and up	\$4.80

If you select a reserve price, you will be charged a reserve price fee.

For a reserve under \$50.00, the fee is \$1.00

For a reserve of between \$50.00 and \$199.99, the fee is \$2.00.

For a reserve of \$200 and above, the fee is 1% of the reserve price.

Reserve fees are refunded only if the reserve price is met and the item sells.

**Commission fees** (final value fees). The final value fee depends on the final bid price:

**If your item sells for less than \$25, you are charged 5.25% of the final value.**

– For example, if your item sells for \$20, you will be charged 5.25% of \$20 (\$1.05)

**If your item sells for \$25 – \$1000, you will be charged 5.25% commission for the first \$25 (\$1.31) plus 2.75% of the remaining value.**

– For example, if your item sells for \$325, you will be charged \$1.31 plus 2.75% of \$300 (\$8.25), for a total of \$9.56.

**If your item sells for over \$1000, you will be charged 5.25% commission for the first \$25 (\$1.31) plus 2.75% of \$25-\$1000 (\$26.81) plus 1.50% of the remaining value over \$1000.**



– For example, if your item sells for \$2000, you will be charged \$28.12 for the first \$1,000 (*\$1.31 for the first \$25, \$26.81 for the next \$975*) and \$15.00 (1.5%) of the final \$1000, for a total of \$43.12.

**Optional feature fees.** eBay has fees associated with most optional fees: Buy It Now prices, 10-day auctions, listing designer, gallery, additional pictures using eBay's picture services, featured auctions, gift icons, etc. The optional fees are as follows:

<b>Optional Feature</b>	<b>Associated Fee</b>
Additional pictures using eBay picture services	\$0.15 per picture (the first picture is free)
Home page featured auction	\$39.95 (\$79.95 for Dutch auctions) (fees not doubled for two category auctions)
Category featured auction	\$19.95
Subtitle	\$0.50
Gallery	\$0.25
Gallery featured	\$19.95
Bold	\$1.00
Highlight	\$5.00
Gift services	\$0.25
Listing designer	\$0.10
List in two categories	Double most listing and optional fees
10-day auction	\$0.20
Scheduled listing	\$0.10 (fees not doubled for two category auctions)
Buy it now	\$0.05

**Paypal fees.** Paypal is free for buyers, but the fees for sellers are \$0.30 per transaction plus 2.2% or 2.9% of the total payment amount, depending on your sales volume. Fees are 1% higher for payments from international bidders.

## Dealing with Non-Paying Bidders

There is a small portion of bad apples on eBay who will either bid on your auctions with no intention of paying or, more likely, will change their mind about bids they've placed and/or decide they can't afford the items. These buyers don't usually last long because you're off eBay after you get reported for non-payment 3 times. But they are out there, and no matter what you do, you'll run into a couple of them sooner or later.

Don't lose your cool when dealing with a slow paying or non-paying customer. Be polite and professional at all times. Even if your customer deserves a rude response, wait several hours to cool off and give a professional response. It does you no good to trade insults or make threats to bad customers.

### eBay's Non-Paying Bidder policy

<http://pages.ebay.com/help/community/npb.html>.

Try to call your customer to find out if he intends to pay or not. People often respond to phone calls more seriously than e-mails. eBay will provide you with your customer's address and phone number if you request this information at <http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?MemberSearchShow#ContactInfo>.

Go to <http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?NPBComplaintForm> to **file a non-paying bidder alert**.

Go to <http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?CreditRequest> to **request your Final Value Fee credit**. You must do this within 60 days of your listing's close and eBay will credit your account within 2 days of filing the request. You must wait 10 days after filing a non-paying bidder alert to request your final value fee credit, and you *must* first file a non-paying bidder alert.

To **file a Non-paying Bidder Warning Removal**, go to <http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?RemoveNPBWarningShow>

## Your eBay About Me Page

Once you start selling, you should create an eBay About Me page. This will increase your sales because it will give buyers more confidence in who you are and what you're selling. People like to get to know the people they're buying from. After reading your About Me

page, buyers will be familiar with you and will feel more comfortable dealing with you than with a stranger.

Go to <http://members.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?AboutMeLogin> to create your About Me page. You don't necessarily need any HTML or web-designing knowledge; you can simply choose a layout and type away.

Your About Me page should be focused on your business and your auctions. Tell buyers why you're unique from the rest of your competition – give them reasons to buy from you; **stress benefits**. Update your About Me page as often as possible.

### **What About Taxes?**

If you're serious about selling on eBay, you will have to charge sales tax for buyers in your home state only and you will have to pay income tax for your overall profits. I'll help you plan and prepare for income taxes and I'll talk about other regulations you need to comply with in the Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay.

### **eBay Community & Help**

eBay is a fantastic community and a great place to meet other traders. In addition to selling on eBay, you can be part of a community of other buyers and sellers – and you can make a lot of friends who share your interests.

eBay provides wonderful message boards and chat areas for users to interact.

#### **eBay Chat & Message Boards**

<http://pages.ebay.com/community/chat/index.html>

The above link is a directory of all of the following areas:

*Community Help Boards* – these are separated into several different categories to make it easy to find the answers to your questions.

*Category-Specific Discussion Boards* – the best place to meet people who share your interests or to get specific answers to questions. For example, if you're selling pottery and you want tips for packaging your items, check out the pottery, glass & porcelain board!

*General Discussion Boards* – just sit back and relax and interact with other members!

#### *General Chat Rooms*

**eBay Cafe** - The most general chat room, where you can ask questions, answer questions, or just chat.

<http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewBoard&name=cafe>

**AOL Cafe** (for AOL members).

<http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewBoard&name=aolcafe>

There are more specific chat areas:

**Holiday Board** – celebrate the holidays with other eBay members  
<http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewBoard&name=holiday>

**Giving Board** – where eBay members help others in need.  
<http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewBoard&name=giving>

**Discuss eBay's Newest Features** – a place to give eBay some feedback about recent changes. <http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewBoard&name=uifedback>

**Images/HTML Board** – the many knowledgeable users on this board will help you format your ads or pictures. <http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?MfcISAPICommand=ViewBoard&name=image-html>

**The eBay Q&A** – great place to get help from other eBay members  
<http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewBoard&name=qa>

**The eBay International Board** – allows you to interact with eBay users from all around the globe. <http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewBoard&name=international>

**The Emergency Contact board** – visit here if you're having problems with other users or if you need to get in touch with other users.  
<http://cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewBoard&name=emerg>

*Category-Specific Chat Rooms* – no business; just chat with others who share interests

**[eBay News & Announcements](#)**

<http://pages.ebay.com/community/news>

**[eBay Insider Newsletter](#)** (eBay's monthly newsletter).

<http://pages.ebay.com/community/life/ebay-life-pA1.html>

**[eBay Library](#)** – <http://pages.ebay.com/community/library> – a fantastic resource for sellers (and collectors) who want to learn more about the items they sell (or collect). Tons of fabulous resources, especially for collectibles.

**[eBay Gear](#)** – <http://www.ebaygear.com> – eBay's store for eBay collectibles, clothing, and other fun stuff.

**[Check out the eBay Glossary](#)** – lists the most common terms you'll find on eBay. I've taught you most of these in this chapter.

<http://pages.ebay.com/help/basics/g-index.html>

**[eBay Education](#)** – **a great way to learn the basics!**

<http://pages.ebay.com/education/options/index.html>

If you're having trouble with anything on eBay's site, check out eBay education for guided audio/video tours and written tutorials. There are dozens of helpful topics for beginners and even long-time users. The material covered in the tutorials is explained efficiently and thoroughly by eBay experts.

**[eBay Anything Points](#)** – <http://anythingpoints.ebay.com> – learn how you can earn points from eBay and its partners and use them toward eBay purchases or paying eBay fees.

**[eBay Gift Certificates](#)** – <http://certificates.ebay.com>

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### Section Three: Tips for eBay Sellers from the Pros

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Are you ready to learn essential skills required to be a successful eBay seller? This section takes you through what you need to do, in step-by-step order, to move your eBay business in the right direction.

The next five chapters each cover at least one MUST-HAVE skill:

- [Chapter six](#) shows you how to **choose your own profitable niche** and how to **add personal value to your products**.
- *You make money when you buy, not when you sell.* [Chapter seven](#) teaches you how to **find products at bargain prices**.
- [Chapter eight](#) briefs you on how to **write great ads that sell** to your targeted audience.
- Clear photos can dramatically boost your sales. [Chapter nine](#) tells you how to **take great photos that sell**.
- [Chapter ten](#) covers the basics of **advertising your auctions** to increase traffic and maximize sales.

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## Chapter Six: How to Choose Your Own Profitable Niche

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Don't take the "what should I sell?" decision lightly when you start selling on eBay. You will have trouble making a worthwhile profit unless you sell in-demand, high-profit items.

### *Chapter Six Overview:*

**You must add significant personal value to your items**

**You must be the *only person* selling what you sell**

**Brainstorming and analyzing potential niche ideas**

**Tip #1: You must add significant personal value to your items.**

You can make money on eBay when you first start by selling items you already own that you don't want anymore. That's 100% profit and a great way to get started on eBay.

But after you've sold everything you no longer want, if you want to continue making money, you need to buy more products to resell at a higher price. Which items will lead to great profits and which are a waste of your time? Here's the general rule:

**Unique products are profitable. Ordinary products are not.**

Adding value makes your products unique and it increases your profit margin. You can add personal value in several ways:

- Make ordinary items unique
- Find unutilized niches for products
- Package multiple items into a single, more attractive package
- Offer your own unique knowledge in addition to the product

- Or even create your own products

More specifically, **unique products with added value** are the most profitable items you can sell on eBay.

People buy online for price, convenience and uniqueness. If you try to sell something I can get at a local store, I'm not going to buy it from you unless it's very cheap. But I would be willing to ***pay top dollar for a hard to find or one of a kind item I'm searching for.***

### **Examples of profitable items with added value vs. ordinary unprofitable items:**

- You're not going to make much money if you try to buy CDs from a wholesaler and re-sell them. But if you specialize in *rare and collectible CDs*, you'll get top dollar for your items.
- A gift basket full of food with the proper unique flavor can be a top seller if marketed well. But don't even try selling ordinary food items on eBay...no one is going to buy it.
- Try to sell plain colored baby clothes. You *might* get enough bids to make your money back but you won't make a profit. But if you add your own creative and personal touches to the clothes and make them different than anything available at Wal-Mart, you'll make the sale and you'll make a profit.

The bottom line is, you won't have any luck selling mass-produced items that are available anywhere. But if you add personal value to your items, they will be unique, desirable and profitable.

**Tip #2: You must be the *only person selling what you sell.***

**You must *narrow your focus* and choose a niche or theme of products to specialize in as an eBay seller.** It's the only way to realistically make a living on eBay over the long haul:

- You will be knowledgeable in your area of specialty, enabling you to find bargains for products in order to make a profit.
- You will be able to come up with many profitable ideas for how to add significant personal value to your products.



- You will be able to better target your customers so they will feel you are talking specifically to them.
- You will be able to provide superior customer service and you will separate yourself from other eBay sellers.
- You will be more organized and more efficient.

***You must specialize to be successful as an eBay seller.*** Now let's talk about how to decide what you want to specialize in.

## **Brainstorming & Analyzing Potential Niche Ideas**

What do you enjoy doing? Think about your collections, careers, clubs, activities, hobbies, etc. Make a list of all of the above and choose 3-4 topics that you are most passionate about.

This is where selling on eBay becomes fun. You're ten times as likely to stick to something if you are passionate about it. If you enjoy it. If you love it. If you find the right niche, **you will love selling on eBay and you will be successful.**

Check out [eBay's category listings](#) for additional ideas. Make sure there are categories pertaining to your potential niches and browse around in those categories. See if there appears to be a market for your potential niche.

Even if there aren't many products related to your niche on eBay, there still could be a market. There is a market for virtually anything on eBay with over 70 million users. But if you're not certain, start out very slowly and experiment before you invest a lot of time and money.

## **How to decide EXACTLY what to sell**

Once you've narrowed your choices down to 2-3 potential niches, start brainstorming possible ideas on exactly what to sell:

- What items can you sell that will be one of a kind and have no competition? If none, how can you add personal value to your products to make them unique?
- Can you think of any bizarre item ideas that people interested in your niche would love?

- Is there anything related to your niche that you can entirely create yourself? Can you write a booklet or e-book or create software relating to your product?
- How will your expertise in this field help you? Can you find bargains on products to resell?

My [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](http://www.online-auction-expert.com/bible.html) devotes two full chapters on deciding *exactly* what you want to sell.

It will show you how simple it is (*and how critical to your success it is*) to come up with several profitable ideas.

The book also provides dozens of specific examples on *exactly* how to **add significant personal value to your products**.

Check it out at <http://www.online-auction-expert.com/bible.html>

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## Chapter Seven: How to Find Products at Bargain Prices

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### Tip #3: You must hunt for bargains.

You make money when you buy, not when you sell. You can do everything else perfectly, but if you pay too much for your products, you won't make money. ***This is the single most common reason why the average eBay seller doesn't make a profit.***

#### *Chapter Seven Overview:*

Seven tips for successful bargain shopping

The most profitable bargain sources

### Seven rules for successful bargain shopping

**Rule #1: The most successful eBay sellers do their buying offline and you must also.**

***Bargain shopping online is ineffective.*** The #1 reason people don't make the money they should on eBay is because they buy their items in the wrong places. Most online auctioneers – newcomers and experienced sellers – have trouble finding what they want at a low enough price. They try bargain shopping on newsgroups, wholesale websites, and eBay or other auction sites, and they either give up or they pay too much. That's because they're ***looking in the wrong places.***

Don't get me wrong, there are deals on the Internet and you can find them. But did you know that **you'll find most of the best bargain shopping deals offline?** The best sources are flea markets, garage sales, estate sales, moving sales, closeout stores, live auctions, etc. ***Think about it: how are you going to find great deals online at the major websites that EVERYONE ELSE knows about?***

It is possible to find the occasional bargain through online classifieds, newsgroups, wholesale websites, or online auctions. But it's simply

not the best use of your time. I've never talked to a single eBay power seller who finds products to sell over the Internet.

**Rule #2: If you don't have to dig deep to find a source, it's probably not a very profitable source.**

The general rule: the easier it is to find a source, the less likely it is to be a profitable source. Bargain shopping requires real work.

**Rule #3: The more you know, the more money you make.**

You must become an expert in your area of specialty. If you're selling rare figurines, for example, how are you going to find bargains if you don't know what types of figurines sell well?

***Don't ever stop learning about what you sell.*** Ideally, you shouldn't ever want to stop learning about what you sell, because it should be something that interests you; *something you are passionate about*. The more of an expert you become, the easier it is to find good deals when bargain shopping and the less likely you are to make bad investments.

**Rule #4: Small profit margins are a waste of your time.**

If you're serious about making eBay your full-time job, you're not going to make any substantial income buying and selling items for a profit of a few dollars per item.

When you factor in all costs – travel, storage, eBay & Paypal fees, supplies, and the time involved to find items to buy, inspect the items, list the items on eBay, take pictures of the items, contact your customers, collect payments, ship the items and keep records of everything – you're doing far too much work for such small profit, unless you're having Dutch auctions and selling a large quantity of the same item, which require a considerably smaller investment of your time per item.

My suggestion: ***Don't pay more than 20% of what you expect to sell your items for.*** 20% is the MAXIMUM amount you should be willing to pay.

There's another rule that sounds harsh and impossible. But if you add significant personal value to your products, it is a very attainable goal.

### **Rule #5: Be a disciplined buyer at all times**

Don't get carried away and buy more than you can sell. Don't buy anything you can't sell and don't pay too much for anything when you're bargain shopping. Whether you're at a moving sale, a live auction, or anywhere else, **know the maximum you are willing to pay** and don't go over it for any reason.

### **Rule #6: Build relationships with good suppliers**

If you find that you're making good money from the items you purchased from a particular dealer or supplier, be sure to keep in contact! Your most profitable sources are those that you can buy from multiple times.

After a while, you may have a few suppliers that you use regularly, which is great. But at the same time, always try expand your horizons and look for new bargains.

### **Rule #7: Always keep records of your purchases**

Keep records of every purchase you make, either on your computer (i.e. Microsoft Word) or even a plain, old-fashioned, spiral notebook. Record the following information so you can analyze your shopping habits and your business expenses in the future:

- The name of the item and a brief description
- The price you paid for the item
- The date you purchased the item
- The seller's contact information
- Any additional notes relevant to the item

### **The Most Profitable Bargain Sources**

I might have scared you earlier in this chapter by talking about how you have to find bargains offline, how you have to dig deep to find profitable sources, and so forth.

Here's some good news. Once you start hunting for bargains all the time, you'll develop an eye for them and you'll start to spot them all over the place. Here is a long list of 38 potential bargain sources:

- Thrift Stores**
- Consignment Stores**
- Antique Malls**
- Factory Outlets & Outlet Malls**
- Pawn Shops**
- Clearance & Closeout Sales**
- Garage Sales**
- Flea Markets**
- Home Shopping**
- Newspaper & Magazine Classifieds**
- Traditional Auctions**
- State Government Auctions**
- Federal Government Auctions**
- Department of Defense**
- Department of Treasury**
- Federal Communications Commission**
- Foreclosed Property Auctions**
- Internal Revenue Service**
- Police Auctions**
- Postal Service**
- Resolution Trust Corporation**
- Service Supply Bureau**
- Canadian Auctions**
- Bankruptcies and failed websites**
- Antique & Collectible Shows**
- Conventions & Trade Shows**
- Niche Clubs**
- Local or Regional Niches**
- Town Pick-Up**
- The Dump**
- Unclaimed Items**
- Bulk Discount Sources**
- Internet Newsgroups**
- Online Classifieds**
- Online Auctions**
- Other Online Companies**
- Drop Shipping**
- Commission Selling**

That list just kept going didn't it? Some sources are better than others, but as you can see, you can find bargains almost anywhere.

My [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#) includes a 55-page section on bargain shopping. It analyzes all 38 of the potential sources listed above and shows you *exactly* how to find the best bargains at each one. Countless hours of research have gone into the bargain shopping section which also includes:

- Eight pages of educational reference sources relating to eBay's most popular categories to help you learn about your niche.
- How to make the most of a day of bargain hunting so you don't make mistakes or spend too much money.
- Safe buying tips for shopping online to avoid getting ripped off.
- How to build your list of profitable suppliers. These may be the most important several pages in the book. All the resources you need are provided to save you numerous hours of research and to ensure that you're searching for bargains in the right places.

### Tip #3: You must hunt for bargains.

You're going to have to buy products to sell (unless you're creating crafts or informational products). And you have to dig deep to find bargains. **You make money when you buy, not when you sell.** *This is why most eBay sellers fail to make money.*

You can't just rely on wholesale guides or drop-shipping sources to find products for you to sell, because those sources are often unreliable and their prices are usually *higher than eBay market values*.

Most bargains are found *offline* rather than online. The more you have to dig to find a source, the more profitable it generally is.

Your specialized knowledge in your niche will help you track down bargains for items related to your theme.

### Tip #4: You must have web marketing skills to SELL your items.

You don't need a marketing degree to sell on eBay but you do need to learn critical marketing skills to help you write great sales copy. Most eBay sellers don't take the time to analyze their target audience (*who they're trying to sell to*). But if you do, your sales will increase because your readers will feel that **your ad copy is written just for them**.

If you specialize, you will have a much easier time of understanding your customer's mindset and needs and it will be much easier to write great ads *specifically driven toward your target audience*.

### Tip #5: You must take great photos of your items.

Pictures can boost your sales, big time. But poor pictures can actually hurt your sales. You need to know how to take pictures *that sell* and how to get those pictures onto your eBay listings.

### Tip #6: You must not rely only on eBay to advertise your items.

The primary benefit of eBay is that it automatically drives targeted traffic to your auctions. But does that mean you should just sit back and let its search engines do their work? No!

If you really want to maximize your profits, you must **aggressively advertise your auctions on and off eBay** (this does *not* mean send



#2, people want to know exactly what they're buying and they want to know as much information as possible about it. Additional knowledge about your product or niche increases sales; knowing the history of your item increases sales; offering additional uses for your product increases sales.

Although not all of the following will apply to everything you sell, use your judgment as to what is important to your readers, and include all relevant information and be as specific as possible. If you're not sure whether or not your readers will care about a certain detail, *include it just in case*.

- **Color, shape and size**
- **Brand name, company name, model number, version**
- **Designer, author, creator, etc.**
- **Material**
- **Technique**
- **Country of origin**
- **Copyrights or trademarks**
- **Other markings**
- **Packaging or accessories**
- **Age & Ownership history**
- **Value**
- **Flaws and imperfections**

The [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#) discusses all of these items in more detail and offers more specific examples of what you should include in your ads.

***It is very important to be honest about the condition of your item.*** Explicitly state the positives and the negatives of what you're selling so your bidder knows exactly what she's getting. If you're selling a beanie baby with a creased tag that isn't in great condition,

you might be tempted to call it "mint with mint tags" because you've seen the premiums that items in that condition are getting on eBay. But it's not worth it. All it will do is cause trouble and damage your reputation which will ultimately *kill your sales* if it doesn't get you kicked off of eBay.

If the item comes with any packaging or accessories (or did originally), state whether or not they are included, and describe their condition just as explicitly as you described the condition of the actual item. This is very important to many collectors as well.

### **Make Your Buyers Feel Comfortable**

You must state your terms of sale and close your auction to convert your readers into warm, willing-to-buy customers.

### **State your payment & shipping terms as simply as possible**

Tell your buyer *exactly* what to expect after the auction is over. After the auction tasks are discussed in section four, but for now just know that your eBay ads need to include the following information:

- **Payment methods you accept and any conditions.** Do you accept Paypal? Money orders? Checks? If you accept checks, do you hold them until they clear the bank? *The more payment options you accept, the more sales you'll get, so be flexible.*
- **Payment deadline.** How long does payment need to be received by? This isn't as critical as other details, but it should be noted. Don't be rude about this and turn off your customers.

State this as "*If you are the high bidder, please pay as promptly as possible. Payment is expected within 13 days*". Don't write something like "**PAYMENT DUE IN 13 DAYS OR NEGATIVE FEEDBACK WILL BE LEFT**"

- **Shipping options & fees.** Like payment options, the more shipping choices you give your bidder, the better. List ALL services that you will use to ship your items. Tell your buyer how long each of these options will take and how much they will cost.

You must include this (especially the shipping fees!) in your description to avoid conflict (and several inquiring e-mails while

your auction is running). Also, let your customer how fast you will ship your items (they love to see "will ship within 24 hours" or "same day shipping")

- **Other mailing options.** Do you offer insurance? Delivery confirmation? Tell your buyers if you accept shipping extras such as these, and if so, tell them how much it will cost and state whether it is optional or required.
- **Tell your buyer how you'll contact her when the auction is over.** Will you send her an e-mail invoice within 24 hours of the auction's close? Do you use a service that automatically sends an invoice after the auction ends?
- **Do you ship internationally?** Or only to the United States? Or do you ship to some countries, but not to others?

### **Close your eBay ads convincingly**

There are five things you should do at the end of your eBay ads, and they're all very simple:

#1 **Thank your readers** for viewing your auction

#2 Encourage your readers to **bid early and often**

#3 Tell your readers to **e-mail you if they have any questions** and include a clickable link to your e-mail.

#4 **Always advertise your other auctions.** Always, *always*, include a clickable link to your other auctions and advertise it. This is a no-brainer, because it's free advertising to *extremely* targeted customers. If you're selling several beanie babies, advertise them somewhere at the beginning or the end of your eBay ads. "I have over 25 retired beanie babies up for bid this week - click here to check out my other auctions!"

If you really want to effectively upsell your items, you can consider offering free or discounted shipping for multiple items. "I have over 25 retired beanie babies up for bid this week - buy more than one to get *free shipping!*"

#5 Encourage your readers to visit your **About Me Page** if you've made one.

## Write for Your Target Audience

If you're running your own website, there is a tremendous amount of market research and customer analysis involved to determine where to advertise to generate the most sales. Market research assesses the demand for a product or service and how it might be more marketable.

But you're going to love this part. One of the greatest benefits of selling on eBay is *targeted traffic*. You don't have to do all that extensive market research on eBay because your **target audience**, no matter what it is, is already there! All you have to do to reach your potential customers is list your item in the correct category!

But you're not entirely off the hook. Before you're ready to write your sales copy, you need to understand for *who you're writing that sales copy for* (your target audience or **potential customers**). Who are your customers and what are their needs and resources? Knowing this is essential to the success of any company or individual in the business world. It allows you to:

- Determine if you'll be able to sell your product
- Write specifically for your audience
- Sell to your targeted audience more effectively
- Answer possible customer objections or concerns
- Provide better customer service
- Upsell additional items to your customers
- Get more sales per click

The following five-step brainstorming session will help you to analyze your target audience in order to better write for them:

**First**, you should create a profile of your potential customer for every type of item you sell. This should include age, gender, income, interests, and needs or desires that your product can satisfy. Who are your potential customers? What do they have in common? What is the dominant personality type?

**Second**, make a list of the features and benefits of the product. Don't just make a list of the features. *Focus on the benefits*. If you just list the features of your product, your buyers will say "so what?" unless you explain the benefits.

**Third**, consider the needs – or more importantly, the desires of your customers and how your product satisfies these. Then consider how these benefits emotionally affect your customers. ***People buy from you to satisfy their needs and desires.***

**Fourth**, you need to consider why your customer *won't* buy from you. What are your reader's possible objections? How can you answer these to reassure your reader that she is making a smart decision by buying your product?

**Fifth**, what additional products or services might be offered? You know your reader's interests, needs and desires, and you know how your product can satisfy these. What related interests, needs and desires does your reader have? Is there anything you can offer to help your customer out?

My [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#) expands on this five-step brainstorming session. The book includes a 40+ page section on writing great ads that sell which discusses the following topics:

- A 20-page chapter on advanced copywriting skills that aren't discussed in any other book about eBay
- Eight SALES-KILLING habits to avoid
- How to design ads to make them attractive and easy to read

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## Chapter Nine: How to Take Great Photos that Sell

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**Tip #5: You must take great photos of your items.**

Pictures can give your sales a big-time boost. But poor pictures can actually hurt your sales. You need to know how to take pictures *that sell* and how to get those pictures onto your eBay listings.

**A word of caution:** Pictures are essential, but *they should never take the place of a complete description of your item*. Pictures should be included *in addition* to a thorough and accurate description. *Remember, a good pictures boosts your sales, but it's the words that ultimately decide whether you get the sale or not.*

### Chapter Nine Overview:

#### Four Step eBay Picture Tutorial

### Four Step eBay Picture Tutorial

How do you take a picture of your item and put it in your auction ad? Take it from me, if you're not very computer savvy, this can be frustrating. Nothing else gave me as many headaches as working with eBay pictures when I first started. On the other hand, if you're good with computers it will probably be a breeze. Either way, here's a five step eBay picture tutorial that will teach you how to get that picture from point A to point B, your auction ad:

#### **STEP ONE: Get a picture onto your computer.**

You have several options for getting your pictures onto your computer:

**1. Use a scanner.** First, you're going to have to take your pictures the old fashioned way. Take a picture of the item, get your film developed, and scan the picture.

However, if you're selling items such as baseball cards, autographed photos, tickets, stamps, etc. (items that are flat), or even somewhat

flat items like a calculator or piece of computer equipment, *a scanner is especially ideal*, because you don't need to take any photos - you can scan those items directly. And the **a good scanner will give you higher quality pictures than a run of the mill digital camera.**

If you don't have a scanner, you're going to want to purchase a "flatbed scanner". You can find scanners at your local computer shop, or a place like Best Buy, or, here's an idea: on eBay!

The price range of a quality flatbed scanner is around \$75 to \$150. But don't be afraid to spend more for a high quality scanner if you plan to use it a lot. If you're shopping for a scanner, here are a couple helpful links (but don't do too much research until you read the rest of this chapter and you're sure you need a scanner!):

**Scanner Buying Guide** - a wonderful resource for anyone shopping for a scanner. Talks about what to look for in a scanner (I will tell you right now, if you're going to scan A LOT of items, you should be very concerned with your scanner's *speed*), gives great shopping tips, and provides resourceful links.

[www.viewz.com/aol/guides/scanner3.shtml](http://www.viewz.com/aol/guides/scanner3.shtml)

**Scanners for auction on eBay** - surprise, surprise, you'll find lots of scanners on eBay...make sure you know what you need before you bid!

<http://listings.ebay.com/aw/plistings/list/all/category11205/index.html>

**2. Use a digital camera.** If you're selling a lot of items that aren't "flat" such as those mentioned above, a digital camera is probably a better option than a scanner. You don't have to take pictures and get them developed, which can ultimately save you money over time, and definitely saves you time. All you have to do is take your pictures with your digital camera, and you can instantly upload those pictures directly onto your computer!

If you're lucky, you can find a good digital camera on eBay for between \$100 and \$200. For a higher quality camera, you'll have to pay around \$300 to \$500. I certainly prefer a digital camera, but remember you can find a scanner less money. I used a scanner my first couple years on eBay and although it was more time consuming, it did work. You have to decide whether or not the reward is worth the extra investment. If you find a good deal, I think it is.

**Digital Camera Buying Guide** - this is the place to do your research on digital cameras. The site goes over how they work; things to consider when buying; additional features; advanced features; shopping for digital cameras; and links to reviews for digital cameras and more!

[www.viewz.com/aol/guides/digicam.shtml](http://www.viewz.com/aol/guides/digicam.shtml)

### **Digital Cameras for auction on eBay**

<http://listings.ebay.com/aw/plistings/list/all/category3327/index.html>

***A bad picture is worse than no picture at all.*** Pay attention to detail when you're taking pictures! My [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#) offers several helpful tips for scanning great pictures or taking great pictures with cameras. Also discussed are less commonly used methods of getting photos on eBay such as video capture and photo services.

### **Picture size is important**

If your pictures are too big, they'll take too long to load, and someone viewing your auction ad is likely to lose patience and click on a different ad. A couple guidelines for making your pictures load fast. Your pictures should be **less than 50KB** and they shouldn't take up more than **1/4 of the screen**.

However, these guidelines aren't set in stone. If you are selling a collectible item or something that needs to be shown in a great amount of detail, such as a quilt, you might need to use a larger picture size. In a situation such as this, it is a good idea to include a smaller sized picture so it will load fast and a large picture so your readers can see all the detail they need to see. You can also put the small picture in your ad and include a link to a larger picture.

### **STEP TWO: Edit or process your photos.**

This step isn't mandatory, but I almost always recommend touching up your pictures. If your photo appears too large or too small, too light or too dark, there's unnecessary background, or you just wish to add text to it or make it more clear, it is easy to do with image manipulation software.



You should be creative with this software but be careful **not to distort your image** to the point that it will mislead your readers in any way.

## Image Manipulation Software

[FastPhotos](#) gets my highest recommendation if you're listing a lot of items. It saves hours of time by making it very easy to edit photos – in fact you can customize it to edit your photos with one single click, exactly the way you want it...you can crop, resize, add text and borders, change attributes, etc.

FastPhotos is free for 21 days and then it's \$24.95 to continue using it. It's designed specifically for eBay unlike the others below. But if you're not selling a lot of items make sure the time you save is worth the \$24.95 purchase. If nothing else, try it free for 3 weeks, stop using it if you don't think it's worth the price and try one of the titles below.

[VCW VicMan's Photo Editor](#) is an award-winning graphics editor with an attractive interface and several powerful features (selection by color, lasso, replacement of color, deleting objects, visual tolerance, etc).

[Photo Wizard 1.0](#) lets you manipulate your photos in a variety of ways. You can retouch your photos, or add special effects. Crop and size your pictures to get them just right. Enhance the colors, the brightness, remove "red eye", and more. Even add a customizable frame.

The [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#) goes into more detail about how to edit your photos to help make them look their best. One important note is that although you should make your item look as attractive as possible, do not alter it so much that your buyer will be disappointed when she receives the actual item.

***Important Note:*** After you have finished editing your picture, make sure you convert it to .jpg format. **eBay only allows .jpg images in the picture gallery.** If you aren't adding your item to the picture gallery, pictures such as .bmp or .tif or .gif are allowed, but **you don't want to use .bmp or .tif files because they take up far more space and take too long to load.**

**STEP THREE:** If your picture is not actually uploaded to the web, you will be able to view it on your own computer, but *no one else* will be

able to see it. In the past, eBay required that you use a third party to host your images on the web. Now, *using either Sell Your Item form on eBay's site*, you can use images on your computer that haven't been uploaded. Still, I recommend using a third party to host your images. It gives you a lot more control and flexibility. Some recommended image hosting services:

**STEP FOUR:** If you use eBay picture services, you're done. If you've used an image host, your image is now available on the web for everyone to see. All you have to do to ensure that it will be seen on the auction description at eBay is add the picture's URL on the Sell Your Item form. You need to include the full website location of your picture (i.e., [www.yourimagehost.com/username/image.jpg](http://www.yourimagehost.com/username/image.jpg)).

My [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#) offers a more detailed version of the above eBay picture tutorial and offers many more tips for using photos on eBay.

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## Chapter Ten: How to Advertise Your Auctions

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**Tip #6: You must not rely only on eBay to advertise your items.**

eBay drives traffic to your auctions so that you don't have to advertise on your own. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't. To maximize your profits, you must **aggressively advertise your auctions on and off eBay.**

Advertise your items for sale in your actual listings, at your eBay About Me page, at websites, newsgroups and message boards related to your theme, in specialty and trade magazines related to your theme, *offline* if you find targeted sources, etc., etc.

### *Chapter Ten Overview:*

**Create your eBay about me page**

**Offer additional products with orders**

**Start your own eBay store**

**Build your own profitable website**

### **Create Your eBay About Me Page**

For starters, create your [About Me Page](#) on eBay. This is yet another place to advertise your auctions, your company and your website! Why not take a little bit of time to introduce yourself and your business?

Once you start selling, your first step should be to create an eBay About Me page. This will increase your sales because it will give buyers more confidence in who you are and what you're selling.

People like to get to know the people they're buying from and you can use your About Me page to make you appear as less of a stranger.

Go to <http://members.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?AboutMeLogin> to create your About Me page. You don't necessarily need any HTML or web-designing knowledge – you can simply choose a layout and type your information.

Your About Me page should be focused on your business and your auctions. Don't just talk about yourself, your family, why you sell on eBay, etc. Cover that stuff in one paragraph or less, because *it doesn't sell*. **Tell buyers why you're unique from the rest of your competition – give them reasons to buy from you – stress benefits.**

Update your About Me page as often as possible. ***It's FREE eBay advertising. Provide a link to your website*** from your About Me page. ***Your About Me page is the ONLY place on eBay where you're allowed to advertise your website.***

### **Offer Additional Products with Orders**

Every time you send out an item to your customer, you should include some sort of eBay advertising such as a flyer with information about you and your auctions and items for sale or at the very least a business card with your eBay username and website address.

There are other times when you can do similar eBay advertising. If you use Paypal or an auction management service to send automated e-mails, you can include a note about your other auctions or specials. Or you can include a note on the checkout page. It's free eBay advertising!

### **Start Your Own eBay Store**

An eBay store is another venue to sell your items. It will drive a lot of targeted traffic to your items that you wouldn't otherwise get. Is an eBay store worth the investment? For as little as \$9.95 per month and 5 cents per 30-day listing (plus regular eBay final value fees), you can have your very own eBay store. eBay stores, launched in 2001, were the start of eBay's new fixed price format. Items at your eBay store aren't auctioned – they're simply put up for sale at a fixed price.

**The primary benefits of an eBay store** – It is another venue to sell your items and more traffic and promotions. And if you're selling multiples of the same item, the listing fees are very low cost. Your auctions are also listed at your eBay store for no additional charge.

You can list items in 11 different categories and your store will be placed in directories for each category you list in.

And here's a **new benefit!** eBay now includes eBay store listings along with regular auctions and Buy It Now items for ALL user searches! This is expected to boost traffic and sales for eBay store owners.

**The downside** – If you open an eBay store expecting to dramatically increase your sales, you might be disappointed. Regular auctions are still your best bet. But now that store listings are included with all searches, opening an eBay store just might increase your sales a great deal. Either way, you should start an eBay store to increase your traffic.

**The scoop** - An eBay store is a decent traffic builder and will especially benefit you if you have a niche market and/or you sell certain items in large quantity. If you sell *a lot of items* from a certain category, you'll be listed closer to the top of the search page for that category.

And there are lots of ways to promote your eBay store. Although I haven't personally had my own eBay store, I have had my own website and have had plenty of luck that way. Unfortunately, there's no clear-cut choice here. You need to experiment for yourself and decide if you're more profitable with an eBay store or your own website or both.

To start your own eBay store, you must be ID verified or have a minimum feedback rating of 20 and you must accept Paypal payments.

### **eBay store fees**

There is a monthly fee for running your own eBay store that ranges from \$9.95 (which is probably what you'll want to start out with) to \$49.95 for a featured store to \$499.95 for an anchor store.

For \$49.95 per month, your store is featured which means you receive priority placement on all search and listing pages and your store rotates through the featured section on the eBay stores home page. For \$499.95 per month, you're guaranteed 1 million impressions of your logo on eBay's site. That's a lot of traffic! Always start out with a basic store, since you're only experimenting at this point and you don't want it to turn into a very expensive

experiment. Featured or anchor stores aren't worth the fees unless you're selling to *a lot* of customers.

Listing fees on eBay stores are very low priced. They range from 5 to 20 cents regardless of quantity:

- 3, 5, 7, 10, 20 or 30 day listings are 5 cents
- 60 day listings are 10 cents
- 90 day listings are 15 cents
- 120 day listings are 20 cents

**Final value fees are the same as for regular auctions** – 5.75% up to \$25.00, 2.75% from \$25.01 to \$1000.00 and 1.50% over \$1000.00.

Optional features such as gallery photo, bold text, highlighted title, and featured in search incur the same fees for listings of 30 or fewer days as for regular auctions and are more for 60, 90 and 120 day auctions. See <http://pages.icq.ebay.com/storefronts/pricing.html> for more details on these fees.

After your store is opened, your regular auction listings are shown in your eBay store at no extra cost.

**To start your eBay store, go to the eBay store builder at**  
<http://cgi6.ebay.com/aw-cgi/ebay!SAPI.dll?Storefrontlogin>

## **Promoting your eBay store**

There are many ways to promote your eBay store to generate more traffic:

**Link to your eBay store in your auctions**, and make sure your store items are related to your auction items so traffic is targeted. Several strategies can be implemented here. Go beyond posting a link to your eBay store. For example, post a **link to a specific item** at your eBay store. "Don't want to wait for this auction to end? Click here to buy it now!" My [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#) discusses many additional ways of strategically inserting links into your ad copy.

**Suggest that buyers visit your store in e-mail invoices and other correspondence.** There are two ways to do this:

- **Include a link to your eBay store in your e-mail signature and on your website.** As discussed previously, **SELL** your link by promoting your **unique selling proposition**. Tell your readers why they need to click on the link.
- **Tie in mentions of your eBay store in e-mail communication.** If an eBay user e-mails you with a question about an item or a thank you for an item you send to her, you might drop a note that you have similar items for sale at your eBay store (if you do). Be careful **not to make such e-mails look like an advertisement**. Just some very gentle selling. Mention your eBay store but only if it doesn't disrupt the flow of the e-mail.

**eBay does some promoting of its own for your eBay store:**

- Your store is placed in the eBay stores directory at <http://www.stores.ebay.com>. Listings are prioritized by number of items in each category, so you'll get a lot more traffic if you sell a lot of items in a specific category.
- Your eBay store items are now included in basic eBay item searches.
- On all of your eBay pages, there is a "visit my store" link and an eBay store icon next to your user ID.
- eBay's Merchandising Manager shows buyers a few additional items offered in your eBay store after they bid on one of your items or use checkout on one of your items. This is targeted promotion to current customers.

**Submit keywords to pay-per-click search engines.** Use pay-per-click engines like [www.overture.com](http://www.overture.com) to submit your site. Include keywords that will attract targeted readers. Keep in mind that you *don't want to get as many clicks as possible*. You want to get as many *targeted clicks* as possible. So when submitting to the search engines, make your description attractive only to targeted readers who you believe will purchase items from your eBay store.

**Use eBay's monthly seller report to boost your sales.** eBay provides eBay store owners with free seller reports every month. Use this information to figure out what's working and what isn't, what's selling and what isn't, etc. ***Capitalize what's working and drop what isn't.***

For more information about monthly seller reports, go to eBay's information page at <http://pages.ebay.com/storefronts/seller-reports.html?ssPageName=CMDV:IC3001>

Lastly, keep in mind that while you can use your website to promote eBay stores, you can't use eBay stores to promote your website. The rules are the same for eBay stores as they are for other eBay auctions.

### **Make sure people can find your eBay store**

The eBay store search page works similar to an actual search engine. And your store can be found on actual search engines like Google. So you need to be sure to use appropriate keywords in your eBay store title, your eBay store descriptions and your eBay store item categories:

- Use an eBay store name that describes what you are selling
- For your customized categories, use keywords as names. These should be words your buyers will search for.
- Use keywords in your eBay store description that describes what you are selling (this can include some of your category names). But don't mindlessly start typing keywords one by one. Naturally blend them in with your content so it still looks user-friendly.

### **Build Your Own *Profitable* Website**

If you're serious about making money on eBay, you will greatly benefit from your own profitable website. In [chapter three](#), I talked about the right way to build a website. 98% of websites don't get it right. The final section of this book shows you how simple it is to create your own profitable website and goes into detail to show you *exactly* how to do just that.



## **How else can eBay advertising attract more customers?**

The [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#) discusses almost a dozen additional eBay advertising techniques that can be used to attract customers:

**Link from other people's sites**

**Advertising on appropriate newsgroups**

**Start a mailing list/newsletter for previous customers**

**Offer additional products with shipment**

**eBay's Power Seller program**

**Learn from other sellers**

**Include a signature in your e-mails**

**The simple way – word of mouth**

**Spread the word around town**

**Advertising in specialty magazines**

**Advertising in appropriate mailing lists**

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## Section Four: After the Auction Tasks

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**Tip #7: You must provide world-class customer service.**

**Tip #8: You must know how to do all of the basic auction tasks.**

**You are remembered by your customers for your post-auction tasks.** If you've done everything right up to this point, that's fantastic. But it will all mean nothing unless you provide world-class service to your customers to build your reputation and your repeat customer base. This section will show you how to provide great customer service at every step:

- How and when to contact your customers
- How to collect payment from your customers
- How to package your items to **"wow" your buyers**
- How to ship your items promptly and professionally
- How to **automate your post-sale tasks**

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## Chapter Eleven: Contacting Customers & Collecting Payment

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You must make it easy for your customers to get in touch with you and pay you for the items they purchase from you. And when in contact with your customers, you must act promptly and courteously.

### *Chapter Eleven Overview:*

**Which payment methods to offer buyers**

**How to contact your customers**

**When to contact your customers**

### **Which Payment Methods to Offer to Buyers**

It is best to offer as many payment options as possible to maximize customer service and to avoid losing sales. At the minimum, offer the following payment options to your buyers:

**Personal checks.** Hold larger checks until they clear the bank. As for holding small checks, I don't do it as I have accepted over 2,000 checks without a problem. Some sellers hold all checks for safety purposes. The only downside is slower customer service and a possible loss of potential buyers who want to pay by check but don't want to wait (although most buyers anticipate and understand that many sellers hold checks).

**Money orders or cashier's checks.** Similar to personal checks but your buyer must purchase a money order or cashier's check for a processing fee that ranges anywhere from 25 cents at a local grocery store to 4 dollars at a bank. These are the closest thing to cash and although it is technically possible to cancel a money order, it is virtually unheard of.

**Paypal (for credit cards and electronic checks)** is the #1 payment option on eBay. You can accept Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express and electronic checks for a small fee. Don't try to pass the fees onto your customers. It is against the law in many states and against eBay policies to charge your customers additional surcharges

or "Paypal fees".

Standard Paypal fees are 30 cents plus 2.9% of payment (3.9% internationally). If you do more than \$1,000 in business per month and are registered for at least 90 days, you can upgrade to a merchant account with lower fees of 30 cents plus 2.2% of payment (3.2% internationally).

Paypal is secure, safe and free for buyers, so they love it. It offers fraud protection for sellers and buyers. And it is simply an absolute must to accept Paypal as a seller. Don't even think of not accepting Paypal.

The [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#) discusses in detail how to use Paypal on eBay and also discusses the following less common payment methods:

- Bidpay (international money orders)
- Merchant Account (not recommended – use Paypal)
- E-check software (not recommended – use Paypal)
- Cash on Delivery (COD) (not recommended)
- Escrow services
- Cash

## How to Contact Your Customers

You must contact your customer early and often after the auction ends to develop a solid business relationship.

After the auction, eBay will send an "end of auction" notice to the high bidder. They will typically send this notice within a few hours after the auction ends, but a lot of the time it takes up to 24 hours or longer. This e-mail will tell the buyer how he can pay using checkout.

You should send a separate e-mail invoice to the high bidder within a few hours of the auction's end. There are four ways to do this but you only need to choose one:

## Paypal Winning Bidder Notification

Log onto Paypal at <http://www.paypal.com> and select the **Auction Tools** tab at the top of the page. Select **Winning Bidder Notification** under **Invoicing Your Buyer**.

Paypal automatically e-mails your customers as soon as the auction ends or soon after the sale is completed if it is a Buy it Now or Fixed Price listing. You can customize the e-mails to include your own instructions.

Since a majority of buyers pay with Paypal, these invoices are very effective.

***Some drawbacks:*** Paypal's winning bidder notification is not available for eBay stores or international sellers. It is offered to U.S. sellers only. Invoices for Buy It Now and fixed price listings and for items that end on Friday may be delayed. The invoices are typically sent very promptly, but there are occasional delays.

### **Send Invoices Manually**

You can do it yourself. This is fine if you're not selling a lot of items, but if you start selling 50-100 items or more every week, it gets very time consuming. No power seller that sells hundreds of items per week could possibly get all of her work done if she tried to send invoices manually.

### **eBay Invoices**

You can send invoices from the ***Selling*** tab of My eBay. These link the buyer to eBay's checkout page. They save time over sending invoices manually but you still need to send them yourself so it isn't fully automated.

### **Auction Management Services**

Other than using Paypal's Winning Bidder Notification, your only option for sending automatic invoices is to use an Auction Management Service. eBay has their own services such as Selling Manager and Seller's Assistant, and there are dozens of other programs that help you manage your eBay tasks.

If you are doing a high volume of sales on eBay, you'll almost definitely need an Auction Management Service to stay efficient and organized. I'll discuss and rate the best services in [chapter thirteen](#).

### **When to Contact Your Customers**

There are a few times when you need to contact your customer:

## Immediately After the Auction Ends

You should send an *e-mail invoice* to the high bidder as soon as you possibly can. eBay suggests you contact the buyer within 3 days but you should do it much quicker than that. Use one of the options listed above such as Paypal's Winning Bidder Notification.

*Before you send this invoice out, **double check your item*** and make sure it is in your hands and in the same condition as you described in your ad.

In this e-mail you should include all relevant information your buyer needs to complete the sale, including the following:

- eBay item number and title
- Quantity purchased
- Final bid price
- Shipping costs
- Total charge (bid price + shipping costs)
- Payment options
- Payment instructions – your address for checks or money orders and your Paypal e-mail address for credit card and electronic check payments.

The tone of this e-mail should be very polite. You should greet and congratulate the high bidder, and thank her for bidding. Also, if you're selling anything remotely similar to what she purchased, this is a great opportunity to upsell your items. **Include a link to your other auctions, your eBay store, or your website at the end and encourage her to check out your current items for sale.**

## Payment Receipt Notice

The same day you receive a customer's payment, you should **leave positive feedback** for the buyer and **e-mail the buyer** to let him know payment has been received.

In this e-mail, you should tell your customer when you have sent or

will send the item and you should confirm *how and where* you are shipping it to double check. If the shipping service you use comes with any tracking numbers or other information, insurance confirmation numbers, etc., put these in this e-mail.

## Follow-Up

Very few sellers do this but you should. It will show your customer that you care about her *after the sale is over*, which **separates you from most other sellers**. Your buyer will love the attention and will be much more likely to buy from you again.

Plus, you can **advertise your other auctions** or your website yet again with a link at the end of this e-mail. Just don't make advertising the primary purpose of the e-mail or your customer might not appreciate it.

Send the follow-up e-mail about a week after you have sent your customer's item. By this time, she has probably received it and listened to it, tested it, read it, displayed it, etc., depending on what it is. If she has had any specific problems, she has probably contacted you already. But it is still a great idea to see how she is enjoying her purchase.

My [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#) includes free sample e-mail templates for all of the above situations and also discusses in great detail how and when to leave feedback, how to deal with late payments and non-paying bidders and offers many additional tips on how to provide world-class service to separate yourself from others and make your name memorable to buyers.

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## Chapter Twelve: Packaging & Shipping Your Items

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Your auction is over and you've been paid. Now it's time to package your item (which serves two purposes; to impress your customer and to ensure safe arrival of the item) and ship the package promptly.

### *Chapter Twelve Overview:*

How to package your items

Where to find low-cost supplies

Personalizing and advertising

Which shipping carrier should you use?

How much to charge your customers for shipping

### How to Package Your Items

What type of packaging should you use?

***Padded envelopes*** can be used to ship a variety of items and they're very affordable. If you buy padded envelopes, *make sure they're self-sealing!* You can ship sports cards, coins, stamps, CD's, DVD's, videos, paperbacks, books, magazines, clothing, etc., with padded envelopes. Just make sure it's nothing fragile and make sure your item is well protected!

*Bubble lined padded envelopes* are my favorite kind. **Buy manila envelopes lined with bubble wrap.** It saves you the trouble of having to buy both. Your other options are cardboard padded envelopes or foam padded envelopes.

***Unpadded mailing bags*** shouldn't usually be used because they don't provide enough protection for your items. However, if you're selling documents (papers), for example, they work great.

***Boxes*** with sufficient padding should always be used for irregular or fragile items or anything else that needs more protection than a



padded envelope can provide. My rule of thumb is, when in doubt, use a box and use plenty of padding.

***Mailing tubes*** work great for rolls of paper, fabric, etc. Make sure they're sturdy and wrapped appropriately.

## Padding Materials

Packages get tossed around carelessly and can be buried under much heavier packages. When you're packaging your item **you better make sure it's very securely and safely packed**. This includes always using plenty of padding.

***Bubble wrap*** provides great protection for your items. It's not cheap, so I don't recommend filling your entire package with bubble wrap, but it's a good idea to put some bubble wrap directly around your item in the center of the package. '

Personally, as a buyer I am disappointed when I don't get bubble wrap, because it's just so much fun to pop the bubbles.

***Packing peanuts*** are low cost and are good for filling up your package so there is no empty space. **Your packages should never have empty space.**

Never ship something with packing peanuts as your only padding. They won't be enough to keep your item from shifting, and it will shift to the bottom of the package. Also, packing peanuts shouldn't be used when shipping electronics, as the static electricity can be harmful to your items.

***Newspaper*** is great padding material. It's obviously very easy to find and very cheap. And it works great, especially if you're protecting fragile items. You have to be careful not to put newspaper directly against your item though, because the ink can rub off and damage the items. You should make sure your items are wrapped in bubble wrap or plastic first. If you're using bubble wrap or packing peanuts for padding, you should put newspaper on the outside to help keep your items in place.

***Hard foam*** will keep your heavier items in place better than any other materials. You don't want your item shifting around in its package and if it is something heavy or electronic, regular packaging material might not be enough.

**Plastic bags** should always be used for anything that can be damaged by water (just about anything can). *In addition* to other padding, you should place your item in a Ziploc bag. This will protect it if the package gets wet during shipping (it happens). You can also get static-proof bags with bubble wrap exterior lining (great for mailing electronics).

### Where to Find Low-Cost Supplies

You're going to pay *a lot* of money for shipping materials over the long haul. So be very particular about where you buy them. Don't go to Office Max or any other retail store unless they're having an amazing sale, **because it's easy to find shipping supplies at wholesale**. There are tons of bargain websites and you can also find great deals on eBay. It is a critical eBay OM mistake to spend more money than you have to.

[www.bargainsgalorestore.com](http://www.bargainsgalorestore.com) or eBay user ID **parrothead88**.

Or you can call (800) 981-9064 to order or get a price quote.

Parrothead88 is a legend on eBay – the first seller ever to achieve a 10,000 feedback rating. Great service and *fast shipping*!

Other shipping supply websites:

[www.shippingsupply.com](http://www.shippingsupply.com) [www.gatorpack.com](http://www.gatorpack.com)

[www.uline.com](http://www.uline.com) [www.movewithus.com](http://www.movewithus.com)

[www.papermart.com](http://www.papermart.com) [www.philatelic.com](http://www.philatelic.com)

[www.grovecompany.com](http://www.grovecompany.com) [www.veripack.com](http://www.veripack.com)

[www.amillionboxes.com](http://www.amillionboxes.com) [www.packagingprice.com](http://www.packagingprice.com)

[www.associatedbag.com](http://www.associatedbag.com) [www.needabox.com](http://www.needabox.com)

Shop around these sites to find the best deals. Let's do a quick price comparison. If you go somewhere like Office Max to buy 50 bubble mailers, size 0 (6" x 10"), you'll pay around 55 to 75 cents each. Let's say you're paying 60 cents each. That's 30 dollars. You can get 50 for \$11.99 including shipping from parrothead88. That's 24 cents each. Buy in bulk and you can get 750 for \$125. That's less than 17 cents each - a MAJOR, MAJOR discount.

**Buy shipping supplies in BULK!** If you know you'll need a lot of supplies in the long run, buy them all at once and save money and time. Smart eBay OM decisions like this save you money.

***The Post Office!*** The reason I love the Post Office is the free supplies. If you use Priority or Express mail, the boxes are provided for you free. The post office will also print free return labels (with your address printed).

Plus, you can get all the forms you need in advance, for free, such as delivery confirmation slips, insurance forms, custom forms, etc. That way, you don't have to do all this in line at the post office - you can do it on your own time.

You can order free Priority or Express mailing supplies online at [The Postal Store](#).

***Local area stores.*** Stop by Kinko's, Radioshak or Target – or anywhere – to see if they have any extra boxes. They'll get extra boxes in all the time, and they're just going to throw them out anyway, so they'll almost always be more than happy to give them away. Gift shops are also great. They get tons of boxes, bubble wrap, packing peanuts, etc. They're glad to get rid of it and they'll give it away for free.

My [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#) offers twenty-one **valuable rules and tips for packaging your items**. The tips will help you ensure that your items are packaged safely, efficiently and professionally.

## **Personalizing & Advertising**

Include the following with your package to stand out from the average eBay seller:

- **A sales invoice** (some people buy a lot of items on eBay and need to be reminded exactly what, when and from whom they bought the item)
- **A thank you note** (adds personalization and increases your chance for repeat business)
- **A business card or flyer** (advertises your other items for sale or for auction)

These strategies will help you provide great customer service and increase your chances of receiving positive feedback and repeat business. My [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#)

discusses these and other strategies in detail and includes free templates of a sales invoice and a thank you note that you can copy and use.

### **Which Shipping Carrier Should You Use?**

**Your best choice out of the major mail carriers will depend on what, how much and where you're shipping:**

If you're a low-volume seller, you'll probably prefer the Post Office.

If you're a high-volume seller or you're shipping large packages, you might prefer UPS or Fed Ex.

If you specialize in international shipments, your best choice might be FedEx or DHL.

If you're dealing with items too large for carriers, you'll need to use special freight services such as [www.cratersandfreighters.com](http://www.cratersandfreighters.com), [www.highwayfreight.com](http://www.highwayfreight.com) or [www.vintagetransport.com](http://www.vintagetransport.com)

### **How Much to Charge Your Customers for Shipping**

**Who pays for shipping?** You should always be explicit about your eBay shipping information including all fees on the item listing page. In virtually every eBay transaction, the buyer pays for shipping. As a seller, your three options are to charge the buyer the actual shipping costs; a fixed cost; or pay for shipping yourself:

***Charge a fixed rate.*** If you can easily and accurately estimate shipping charges for your item (this is especially easy if you're selling something weighing less than one pound and you're shipping it through the Post Office), you can list a fixed rate in your auction description.

If you choose to charge a handling fee, **be very explicit about it when posting your shipping details.** For example, "Buyer pays \$5.50 for shipping and handling; item will be shipped via priority mail with delivery confirmation. Insurance is optional and extra" or "Buyer pays \$4.40 for priority shipping with delivery confirmation plus a \$1.10 handling fee. Insurance is optional and extra".

***Charge the actual shipping cost.*** For items sent via priority mail that weigh more than one pound, or items sent through another

carrier, shipping charges usually vary by weight *and* postal zone, making it hard to predict accurately. If this is the case, you should state that the buyer will pay exact shipping charges, and if you can give a rough estimate, do so. For these cases, you should post a link to a shipping calculator so that your buyer can determine his shipping costs.

You should post links to the carriers you accept or to [www.iShip.com](http://www.iShip.com) which figures rates for USPS, UPS, FedEx and Airborne (but you can select which carriers you want it to figure rates for).

***iShip's calculator*** at <http://www.iship.com/sellit/seller.asp> is a great source for eBay shipping information for your customers. You enter the package weight and size and your zip code and then you paste the HTML onto your auction description. All the buyer needs to do is enter her zip code and city (and maybe how she wants her item shipped) and she's got an estimate!

***Pay for shipping yourself.*** This would certainly give you a unique edge over most of your competitors since so few sellers pay for shipping. The question is whether or not you will attract enough bids to make it worthwhile. For Dutch auctions, I *never* recommend offering free shipping, because then your listing fee has to go up and it looks less attractive to buyers. Also, if you start your auctions at a fixed cost, I wouldn't offer free shipping, because you'll be raising your minimum bid.

I personally don't offer free shipping, because when I've tried it, I haven't noticed enough of a difference in bid prices. But you might want to experiment with it.

A great idea is to offer **shipping promotions** such as "free shipping if bidding reaches \$50.00", "free shipping if multiple items are purchased" or "save on shipping if you purchase multiple items". That way you're only paying for shipping if you attract good sales.

A word of caution: if you offer free shipping when the bid price reaches a certain amount, you *must state the exact amount* or you're violating eBay policies. For example, "free shipping if bidding reaches \$50" is allowed, but "free shipping if the bid price is high enough" is not.

**Should you charge a handling fee?** This is one of the most hotly debated topics for eBay buyers and sellers alike. The majority of buyers understand that there is work and costs in packing and

shipping, and you shouldn't feel bad at all about charging a little bit extra for "handling fees". But you *must* explicitly list this in your auction description, and you should never charge too much. Charge the actual (or estimated) shipping costs and if you want, add in fees for your packing material.

**Don't overcharge your customer!** If you've ever heard buyers complaining about eBay, chances are it's the ridiculous shipping prices that are sometimes offered. Don't overcharge your customer on shipping and ***don't try to make a profit on it.***

**Shipping charges should always be revenue neutral.** This means you can charge for shipping costs and for your materials, but don't charge more than you're paying. Not only is it unfair to customers, but you'll lose so many bids by overcharging on shipping that it's not worth it.

My [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](#) discusses more advanced eBay shipping information such as international shipping and why you SHOULD ship internationally, how to combat buyer fraud, and more. The book also compares the major shipping carriers in detail.

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## Chapter Thirteen: Automating Your Post-Sale Tasks

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If you're selling a lot on eBay (keep up the good work!) you will notice that as you continue to increase your sales, you simply don't have time to do everything you need to do. That's when it's time to consider using auction management services to automate your post-sale tasks and make your business more organized and efficient.

### *Chapter Thirteen Overview:*

**What can auction management services do for you?**

**The best auction management services**

### **What Can Auction Management Services Do for You?**

Auction Management Services can make your eBay business more efficient. If you're anything more than a beginner, you'll find that there is even more work than you expected. You have to keep so many records; send invoices; list auctions; send customer e-mails; pack and ship your items, etc.

**There is so much to do.** For a low cost, you might greatly benefit from the assistance of an Auction Management Services. The standard and optional features of a good auction management service are as follows:

**Use auction templates** to save time. If you're listing several items that are similar but not identical, you can save as little or as much information as you want, so it takes less time to list each auction.

**Easily list multiple items.** Do the work once and your auction listings will be saved so you can simply click and post. Your auctions are saved so you can easily re-list them.

**Easily schedule your items to end whenever you want.** If you want your auction to end on Saturday night, you don't have to be online on Saturday night. You can post your auctions anytime and schedule them to end when you choose. *You can do this directly from*

*eBay, but it will cost you 10 cents per item. And you can even schedule your auctions again and again – for example, once every week.*

**Image hosting.** Many auction services offer 100MB to 1GB of storage space. You need somewhere to upload and save your images; you can use your auction service to do so.

**Track your auction listings and pending sales.** Has the item been paid for? Has it been shipped? Has it been received? Has feedback been left? Easily monitor your active auctions and your pending sales. My eBay and Paypal now have pages that will do most of this for you, so it isn't as useful as it used to be.

**Automatically send invoices to customers.** As soon as your auctions end, many services will automatically send custom invoices to your customers. Your customers love this because they find out how to pay within minutes and without having to contact you! Again, Paypal will now do this automatically for you.

**Buyer checkout.** Many services provide online checkout areas for your customer. They simply click on a link from your invoice and choose a payment method, a payment amount, and enter their shipping information, and they pay you – and all of this information is recorded for you. Similar to eBay's checkout.

**Handle other customer contact.** Automatically send notices when payment is received, item is sent, feedback is left, payment reminders, or any other custom template you choose.

**Keep track of inventory, sales, finances and customers.** Your records are recorded automatically which saves hours and hours of time. You know what and when you sold and for how much, who you sold it to, how much you've sold total, and so forth.

**Automatically leave feedback** with the click of a button. You can even set it up so that feedback is left when you mark payment received or item shipped.

**Integrated storefronts.** Some services offer storefronts for sellers too, which can be used to sell more items to your customers. And as you know, it's easier to sell to previous customers than to new customers.



**Research.** Some auction management services will do market research for you to help you determine whether or not you should invest in a product. They may also help you find products to sell based on your preferences.

**Sales Analysis.** Find out what you've been doing that is working and what isn't working. Get specific advice on what to do in order to maximize your profits.

## **The Best Auction Management Services**

Following is a list of the best auction management services in the opinion of the Online Auction Expert. Here's a word of caution: don't choose the service with the most features just because it has the most features. Decide which features you will need and choose a service that meets your needs and is in your price range.

### **#1**

**Shooting Star** – <http://www.foodogsoftware.com> – In a nutshell, this is my favorite auction management service and I rate it as the best value. After using the 30 day trial, I was tremendously impressed with Shooting Star. Their reports, their tracking, and their templates are wonderful. And their customer service is as good as any company I've seen online. E-mail them anytime and you'll get a response within an hour. Another benefit of Shooting Star is the price.

Sign up for a free 30 day trial, and if you like it, you pay \$49.95 to register the software – after that, there are no costs whatsoever. No monthly fees, no percentage of final value fees, nothing. Over time that will save you a lot of money. Shooting Star doesn't offer automated checkout and it is home-based rather than web-based, which means you download the software rather than sign onto a location on the web.

### **#2**

**ChannelAdvisor Pro** – <http://www.channeladvisor.com/pro> – all the features you need plus unlimited image storage. ChannelAdvisor charges a flat fee of \$29.95 per month (or \$270.00 per year) with no listing fees or final value fees.

[http://www.channeladvisor.com/pro/product\\_features/auctions\\_overview.htm](http://www.channeladvisor.com/pro/product_features/auctions_overview.htm) shows a complete list of features. ChannelAdvisor Pro offers a 15 day free trial.

ChannelAdvisor Pro is the best web-based service in terms of value if you're a high-volume seller, because you'll never pay more than \$29.95 in a month and you've got unlimited image storage. If you're not selling a great deal, the \$29.95 is probably too steep of a price.

### #3

**Sold!** – <http://www.timbercreeksoftware.com> – Sold! is another home-based service (like Shooting Star) that I love. There are two different versions of Sold! – the more basic service is a flat \$39.95 fee and the premium service is a flat \$79.95 fee. Like Shooting Star, there are no additional fees, and the customer service is fabulous. Personally, I preferred Shooting Star, but after trying Sold! I'm a big fan of it as well.

### #4

**Auctionworks** – <http://www.auctionworks.com> – Auctionworks pretty much does it all. Plus the website is very user-friendly and the customer service is responsive. The fee structure is 2% of the final value fee with a 10 cent minimum and a \$3.00 maximum per item and a minimum monthly fee of \$14.95 with 100MB of image storage included. Minimum monthly charges range from \$14.95 to \$99.95 for as little as 100MB of storage and as much as 1GB. A full list of features can be found at <http://www.auctionworks.com/features.asp>.

Auctionworks offers a 30 day free trial.

Auctionworks features are second to none, the customer service is excellent and the site is user-friendly. But if you're a high volume seller you might rack up a huge bill. In that case you would definitely be better off with a service like ChannelAdvisor Pro or Vendio Auction Manager:

### #5

**Vendio** – <http://www.vendio.com/buyerseller/seller.html> (formerly **AuctionWatch**) – a full list of features including inventory and listing creation, online stores, merchandising and listing, direct marketing and promotion, and automated check out and fulfillment. No

storefront. Go to <http://www.vendio.com/product.html> for detailed product information.

Go to <http://www.vendio.com/pricing.html> for a complete overview of the many pricing plans offered by Vendio. The plans range from 10 cents per item plus 1% of final value fees to \$12.95 per month plus 20 cents per item and no final value fees to \$250 per year plus 6 cents per item and no final value fees. Vendio offers a free 2-week trial.

## **#6**

**Andale** – <http://www.andale.com> – Andale does everything an auction management service can do. I used to swear by Andale. I loved it, I raved about it, and it was the only service I thought I would ever need. But their customer service has grown worse and worse and their prices have gone up and up. It's now far more costly than most services and while it is very full-featured, the high cost, the somewhat frequent problems with the website, and the poor customer service don't make it the most attractive deal.

On the plus side, Andale now allows you to sign up for as few or as many services as you want. Their services and fees are outlined in detail at their website. They offer research and sales analysis features that could help you boost your profits. If you're doing a lot of buying and selling, you might want to look into these services.

## **#7**

**eBay Selling Manager** – for \$4.99 per month, you can access eBay Selling Manager from your My eBay page. It is not a listing tool (you can use Turbo Lister for listing items). You can use Selling Manager to track and manage your sales after they have been listed. Or for \$15.99 per month, you can use Selling Manager Pro which also includes bulk listing, inventory management, reporting and automated features. [http://pages.ebay.com/selling\\_manager/products.html](http://pages.ebay.com/selling_manager/products.html)

**Turbo Lister** – [http://pages.ebay.com/turbo\\_lister/download.html](http://pages.ebay.com/turbo_lister/download.html) is eBay's own bulk listing tool, and it's free. But it doesn't do a whole lot. It's pretty much just a tool that saves time on listing. It's not your typical auction management service with e-mail templates, record keeping, checkout, etc. If you want to use it as a full service, combine it with eBay Selling Manager.

**eBay's Seller's Assistant** – there are two versions of Seller's Assistant – basic (\$4.99 per month) and Pro (\$15.99 per month). Go to [http://pages.ebay.com/sellers\\_assistant/compare.html](http://pages.ebay.com/sellers_assistant/compare.html) to compare the two. eBay Seller's Assistant offers a 30 day free trial. For details, go to [http://pages.ebay.com/sellers\\_assistant/index.html](http://pages.ebay.com/sellers_assistant/index.html)

My opinion of Seller's Assistant – the customer service isn't very good and it's not the most user friendly service out there. For the amount of features it has, I don't think it's worth the cost. If you want to use something offered by eBay, I'd recommend Selling Manager.

## **#8**

**ManageAuctions** – <http://www.manageauctions.com/index.htm> – I have never personally tried ManageAuctions but the list of features isn't as full as some other services listed. No web checkout and no storefront and only 5MB of image storage. You pay 5 cents per item listing and 5 cents per e-mail invoice (after the sale) with a monthly minimum of \$4.95 and maximum of \$24.95. More image hosting is available for a fee. Their discussion boards provide a good venue for getting your questions answered. ManageAuctions offers a 45 day free trial.

My opinion of ManageAuctions – compared to most web-based services, it is pretty low price. But if you're going to sign up for a service with no storefront and no checkout, you might as well use a home-based service such as AuctionTrakker or Shooting Star, because you only pay for those services one time.

**Remember to decide what you need from your auction management service before you buy anything.**

**Don't buy anything just because it looks good.**

**Only invest in a service if you expect it to increase your productivity and/or your profits.**

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## Section Five: Take Control of Your eBay Business

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**eBay owns your business.** For you to make a living on eBay (that's the title of the book, remember?) you *must* diversify beyond eBay and ***earn multiple sources of automated income.***

***You need your own profitable website.*** The thought might scare you but the fact is, it was scary a few years ago. In 2004, it's not scary in the least. You don't need to worry about any of the technical stuff, computer skills, etc. That stuff is all taken care of you now so you only need to focus on building your business.

I introduced the **C-T-P-M** formula to you in [chapter three](#). It is the formula that any successful website must follow. Let's review it:

**Content.** Give your readers what they want by converting your knowledge into high-quality, in-demand *content*. In other words, you'll write about topics related to your niche that other people want to learn about and will search for (and it's simple to determine what content is in demand).

**Traffic.** Your in-demand content ranks high at search engines which attracts free, *targeted traffic*...readers who are interested in your content.

**PREsell.** You "OVERdeliver" high-value content to these motivated readers, developing trust and confidence (you "PREsell" your readers).

**Monetization.** FINALLY, you're ready to *monetize* your warm, willing-to-buy customers. ***This is when you must diversify.*** *Don't just post a link to your eBay auctions and/or your eBay store.*

Read more about this concept at  
<http://www.online-auction-expert.com/sbi.html>

**eBay is a fun, enjoyable way to make money.** But after reading this section, you'll realize that eBay should be *one of your sources of income*, ***not your only source of income.***

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## Chapter Fourteen: It's Simple to Create a Profitable Website

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The C-T-P-M formula makes a lot of sense, doesn't it? If you try to monetize first, you're a stranger trying to sell to buyers who are skeptical and cautious by nature.

So many web businesses failed in the late 1990's because they skipped the first three steps and **tried to monetize first**. And 98% of websites still do it the wrong way today.

But if you develop trust first ("PREsell" your customers), it's **so much easier to make a sale**. *Employ the C-T-P-M formula and your eBay business will literally be **FORCED** to thrive.*

Don't forget to read about Merle & Pam Long ("montanadollady" and "gypsytu" on eBay) and how [their C-T-P-M website has caused their business to grow to new heights](#).

### *Chapter Fourteen Overview:*

**How to create a profitable C-T-P-M website**

**How to write content for your website**

**How to bring visitors to your website**

**How to monetize your website**

### **How to Create a Profitable C-T-P-M Website**

A profitable website will take your eBay business to the next level.

Your first step is to choose a web host. To compare the top web hosts, go to <http://www.online-auction-expert.com/sbi.html> and click on the "Feature by Feature, Apples-to-Apples..." link. My recommendation is [\*\*Site Build It! \(SBI!\)\*\*](#).

SBI! is the only all-in-one site-building, site-hosting and site-marketing product that makes it easy for you to build a professional, popular and profitable website online.

Thousands of small businesses have used SBI! to create a website that works for them. [Click here to see proof.](#)

SBI! makes it so simple to create your own website. You don't have to worry about HTML, FTP, CGI, graphing or programming skills, search engine know-how, or any other technical issues (although SBI! is compatible with leading HTML editors if you chose to do it that way).

You get all the tools you need to build, market and manage your site effectively, all in one place. SBI delivers results to you regardless of your level of experience. Its proven system saves you thousands of dollars and countless hours of time all while helping grow your business more effectively than any other web host.

### **Expanding Upon the C-T-P-M Formula**

The rest of this chapter explains how to employ the C-T-P-M formula to grow your business. But I've also arranged a deal with SBI! to allow you to download and read the exact same action guide that their website owners use to build their profitable websites.

[Download the action guide for free.](#) It will give you confidence that Site Build It is truly the best option for you.

<http://www.online-auction-expert.com/free-action-guide.html>

### **How to Write Content for Your Website**

It all starts with great content that delivers information your readers want. Since your website relates to your specialty, you already know a lot of information that **others want to know**. But it's easy to research the web for any information you need to help you write good, informative content.

The free action guide will help you brainstorm ideas for content. The **SBI Manager** will show you what content your buyers want to find. The manager automatically shows you the most profitable keywords related to your theme. The most profitable keywords are those that get searched for often but aren't used by many websites.

The manager includes ten matching websites related to each keyword it finds for you, making it much easier to research any information you need to find.

## How to Bring Visitors to Your Website

If you spend time writing good content for profitable keyword specific pages related to your theme, your traffic from the free search engines will explode. The SBI manager makes it easy to do that.

But free search engines are just one way to get targeted traffic. The free action guide discusses several additional ways:

- Pay-per-click search engines
- Newsgroups or e-zines related to your theme
- Publishing your own e-zine
- Internet directories
- Paid search engines
- Paid advertising (usually the least profitable option)
- Your own affiliate program

## How to Monetize Your Website

After you write great content that PREsells your visitors, the hard part is over. **Monetizing your website is simple.** You can monetize your website in many ways:

- Sell your digital or hard goods to targeted customers
- Add targeted Google ads (you get paid for every click)
- Partner with Amazon.com and link to books related to your theme (you get a commission on every item sold)
- Partner with eBay and get paid every time someone signs up from your site or places a bid after clicking on your link
- Monetize automatically through affiliate programs related to your theme. No hard sale pitches or advertising here. Your *content* sells your readers for you.



## My Top Five Affiliate Programs

#1 [Sitesell.com](http://sitesell.com) – as you have learned, Sitesell.com knows how to treat their customers. They know how to treat their affiliates too. They pay 25-30% of each sale and offer **lifetime customer commissions** and **2 tiers of income**.

#2 [Google's Adsense](http://adsense.sitesell.com) – Adsense can be used on any page of any website. It delivers targeted ads (off to the side of your content so it isn't cluttered) and you get paid every time someone clicks. If you want to learn how to implement Adsense for high profitability, check out <http://adsense.sitesell.com>

#3 [eBay.com](http://ebay.com) – you can earn money from eBay in two ways. First, you can include a toolbar somewhere on your page that advertises eBay auctions related to the page's keywords. Second, you can encourage people to sign up for eBay.

You get paid between \$5 and \$16 per new sign-up and you get paid for every bid that is placed from your referral link.

#4 [Amazon.com](http://amazon.com) – everyone loves a good book and Amazon.com is the world's largest book store. You can use a toolbar somewhere on your page that advertises related books. You get up to 10% of the sales for all purchases made from your site.

#5 [Online-auction-expert.com](http://online-auction-expert.com) – yes, I have an affiliate program too. If you refer people to buy the Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay, **you get paid 40% of the money**. I will soon be offering **lifetime commissions** and **2 tiers of income**, the same way they do it at Sitesell.com.

Whether or not you are an affiliate, you can **give away this book** (Making a Living on eBay: Separating Truth from Hype) to anyone as long as it isn't altered.

But in the coming months (perhaps by the time you read this), you will be able to give away the book *with a yours-only link* included. So every time someone decides to purchase my other book from reading this book that they download from you, **you get paid!**

Go to <http://www.online-auction-expert.com/affiliates.html> to sign up.

# Want to learn how to **MAXIMIZE** your affiliate income?

[This FREE download will show you how.](#)

What does affiliate success boil down to? Let's start... **at the beginning!**

**The number #1 challenge for all affiliates...**

**Build** a Web site...

that builds **targeted** traffic...

and that causes visitors to **click through**...

with a warm, **open-to-buy** attitude...

to **merchant sites** that **you** represent.

**How?**

There is an endless labyrinth of possible software and information/advice offered on the Net. I'm not sure which is worse... the **overpriced** products that **underdeliver**, or all the free info available, most of which does **not** work **so** it costs you something more valuable even than money... **your time**.

Wouldn't it be great if the single best approach, explained in detail, was also free?! Here it is...

## **The Affiliate Masters Course.**

This 10-DAY course focuses **100%** on helping you, the affiliate, succeed. It leads you, step by digestible step, day by day, through a flawless process...

from developing a **Site Concept**

to **brainstorming** hundreds of profitable related keywords

to building a **themed site**

to generating motivated, **targeted traffic** that **wants** to click on your recommendations, links to the related products sold by merchants you represent.

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**The most amazing part of this course?**

**It's free!**

Actually, the **"price"** is only the **second** most amazing part. The best thing about the **Masters Course** is the clear, high-quality, step-by-step, day-by-day content that lays out a process that really **works**.

Up until now, it has been available only via e-mail. But now it is available in glorious PDF, too!

[To take the e-mail course  
simply click on this link  
and send a blank e-mail to...](#)

[tamsmina@sitesell.net](mailto:tamsmina@sitesell.net)

-OR-

Finally, the course is available in a beautiful e-book format! Totally updated, and a joy to print and read. To download **The Affiliate Masters Course** e-book...

[Click here to Download the Affiliate Masters Course e-book.](#)

670 Kb - Windows and MacOS

You are about to download a zipped file ("Aff-Masters.zip"). Save it to your desktop. After you have downloaded, unzip it.

- [Windows users need WinZip -- free trial](#)
- [Mac users need Stuffit Expander \(v5.5 or greater\) -- free software](#)

This will unzip a folder called "Affiliate Masters Course" on your desktop (if you do not change the default location). The folder contains two files....

### **1) ReadMeFirst.txt**

Please **do** read this file first -- it will get you to a flying start!

### **2) Affiliate Masters Course.pdf**

This is **it!** The course in e-book format!

The Affiliate Masters Course shows anyone how to become a high-earning affiliate champion. Yes, **anyone...** from newbie to those already enjoying success. It shows you **everything**, nothing held back. **All the info you need** to help you execute every step is included **in one single course**. Actually...

It's better than **any** other affiliate course or book available **anywhere**, at **any** price. **No** exceptions... but it **does** raise a question...

Why would SiteSell.com, the originators of this course, give it all away? Because they're hoping that you'll buy their truly excellent product, **Site Build It! (SBI!)**. You do **not** have to, of course. (As a matter of fact... aside from delivering the course itself, SiteSell will never contact you again!)

All the info you need to execute a powerful, successful strategy **is** contained in the **Masters Course**. Nothing is held back -- I was amazed at the great ideas and the perfect process, laid out in an organized and do-able manner.

And while I **do** totally endorse **SBI!** as **The Perfect Affiliate Business-Builder**, you may well find that the course itself is really all you need -- **SBI!** simply delivers the tools to make it even easier and faster to get the job done.

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To sum it up, **The Affiliate Masters Course** strategy for success is simple...

- 1) Create content that attracts targeted traffic.
- 2) Then convert that traffic into dollars by causing visitors to click-through to the sites of the merchants that you represent.
- 3) Develop multiple streams of income through quality merchants (ours, of course, plus other non-competing ones that fit your theme).

Yes, we've finally found the single best solution, the **total** affiliate solution. You'll graduate as an accomplished affiliate Net marketer, a super-affiliate in the making.

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## Chapter Fifteen: A Final Look at the Big Picture

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**You now know the basics of how to make a living on eBay.** And you know you have to do it your own way rather than the way eBay wants you to do it. ***You must diversify and create automated income streams.*** Your next step is to become an eBay expert.

No matter what your goals are on eBay, my [Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to Selling on eBay](http://www.online-auction-expert.com/bible.html) is an indispensable resource whether you're already selling on eBay or you're not even registered yet.

**It teaches you everything you need to know about selling on eBay and takes you way beyond the basics.**

Its 350 pages delve into advanced strategies not covered in any other book about eBay (and unfortunately, I didn't have time to cover them all in this booklet). These are the same strategies that have long been used by eBay's most successful power sellers. Check out the new version, revised and expanded in April 2004: <http://www.online-auction-expert.com/bible.html>

**NEXT**, it's time to make your business soar by creating your own profitable website. You can read more about Site Build It at my website, <http://www.online-auction-expert.com/sbi.html> or you can check out SBI's home page at <http://auctions.sitesell.com>

**FINALLY**, join the [world's best e-zine for eBay sellers](http://www.online-auction-expert.com/newsletter.html) to stay up to date on the latest eBay strategies and news.

Subscribe to the Online Auction Expert's e-zine absolutely free by going to <http://www.online-auction-expert.com/newsletter.html>

Thank you for reading this book. I sincerely hope it has helped you in your quest to start a profitable eBay business.

*Timothy Mina*

[www.online-auction-expert.com](http://www.online-auction-expert.com)

**The Online Auction Expert's BIBLE to  
Selling on eBay will help maximize your  
efficiency and boost your profits.**



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