

# 77 Tips and Tools for Selling on The New eBay

By Skip McGrath ©2011

## Free eBay tips and eBay tools and services to help eBay sellers build a profitable eBay business

Whether you're a casual seller, or looking to build an eBay business, you will first need to master the "basics" of successful selling. These tips, techniques, and suggestions are a good start—but it's just the tip of the iceberg of what you can learn to increase your eBay success.

### 1. Buy on eBay before you sell

I get emails from people all the time wanting to know how to make money selling on eBay. The first question I ask them is if they have bought anything on eBay. Amazingly a lot of them say no. You really need to buy on eBay to understand how the platform works and what eBay looks like from the buyer's point of view. You will never be successful selling on eBay until you learn to buy.

### 2. Learn to sell on eBay by selling on eBay

The best way to start selling on eBay is to actually start selling on eBay. Yes, there are some things to learn, but take your time, look at the eBay help files (and these tips) and just start selling. You will make some mistakes—we all do. But don't get frustrated or give up. You will get better with experience.

Also, selling will make you a better buyer. You will understand things from the seller's point of view and learn other ways to spot bargains.

### 3. The best types of products to sell on eBay

Everyone wants to sell the latest consumer product, but the truth is there is a lot of competition from established sellers and even big online companies that have special deals with eBay. The best item to sell on eBay is something used or a very specialized (niche) product that few others are selling.

You can buy virtually anything used: clothing, books, computers, DVDs, Stereo equipment, and so on. If you are going to sell new goods, make sure you can buy them cheaply enough to sell and make a profit. One source is the closeout and liquidation companies that sell overstocks and seasonal items returned by department stores. Here is a link to a [Free Wholesale Search Engine](#). I

also offer an inexpensive product called [My Top 99 Wholesale Sources for eBay Sellers](#). This is a great place to find good wholesale sources that will work with eBay sellers. These are not perfect or complete resources—they are just a place to start. Be a little careful with the Wholesale Search Engine. It is a search engine and I can't control what shows up there. So just because a company comes up in a search that doesn't mean I endorse it.

Another great product area is consumables. The idea here is to get repeat business via your website from customers who buy from you on eBay. One of the best selling products from The Auction Seller's Resource is the [Wholesale Buying System](#) (WBS). This tells you how, what, and where to buy products to sell on eBay. The WBS comes with access to a members-only website where you can access thousands of wholesale companies directly. The website is updated monthly to add new sources.

#### **4. Master niche marketing and specialize for success**

This is home-plate for your success strategy. Find your own niche. Define your market. Then you can know the type of person you're going to be selling to and the types of product you want to sell. You will also have less competition.

Forget trying to sell computers, digital cameras, iPods and plasma TVs. There is no way you can compete with the big guys unless you have tons of money. And those drop ship web sites and programs that claim to have those products are mostly scams. Find a small niche --or several small niches that you can dominate.

Along with being in a superior position to take advantage of repeat business, the benefits from becoming specialized are endless. If you know more about your product area, you will be able to buy at better prices and people who sense you specialize in something will be more comfortable buying from you.

#### **5. Become an expert in your field**

Become an authority on what you do in your online auction business. It doesn't matter if you sell fishing lures, ink cartridges or collectible glass -- you want to be thought of before anyone else.

When you become an authority in your field, a whole new universe of business and opportunity is opened up to you. I buy certain types of things on eBay from the same sellers over and over. I wouldn't dare do business with anyone else, not when they have proven themselves and their product.

You want to earn that same type of position in the minds of eBayers for your niche. Also continue your auction education. Read books and training manuals, visit the chat and message boards, attend an eBay University when it comes to your town, go to *eBay Live*, and keep learning all the time.

#### **6. Increase sales by putting audio in your auctions**

I began using audio (voice) in my auctions in May of 2004. I saw an immediate increase in sales. For example, I sell expensive fire pit barbeques (\$200+). Before using audio, I was selling one or two a week. Once I put audio in my auctions I started selling almost one a day. The same thing happened with my [EZ Cube Photo Studios](#). I was selling about two a week on eBay. When I added audio to my auctions with [Seller's Voice](#), my sales more than doubled. Now I sell at least four and sometimes five or six units a week.

We also sell Starbucks collectibles. I ran a test of identical auctions with and without audio. Every auction with audio got more bidders and sold for a higher price—in some cases as much as 22 percent higher!

I use a company called [Seller's Voice](#) for my audio. It is so easy. I just dial an 800 number, record my message and then go to their website and copy a short line of code to paste into my auction. If you launch your auction first, you can also record the message and just type the auction number into the phone and they will paste it in for you.

## **7. Get a sales tax number**

Contact the sales tax authority in your county or state offices to get a sales tax number. This enables you to buy from many wholesale companies that would not deal with you otherwise.

If you are not sure who to contact in your state, just call your local chamber of commerce and they will advise you or give you the phone number or website address to register. If you go to the FREE Articles page on our web site there is an article on [state sales taxes](#) with a link to all of the state websites where you can apply on line.

## **8. Automate your auctions**

Automate your auctions with an auction management service. I have tried several companies and have finally settled on [Vendio](#). They provide auction templates where you type in your headlines and text, insert your images, set your price, terms, length of auction, and schedule your auctions to launch at any day or time you specify.

These services also track your inventory and sales, send automated emails to customers, provide a PayPal or credit card gateway, and automatically post feedback once payment is received. People are often hesitant to pay a monthly fee to an auction management company, but believe me, over time they really save you money and they are far better than eBay's tools such as Turbo Lister and Selling Manager.

You should also invest in software to print labels. The website [www.edicia.com](http://www.edicia.com) is a good resource. You can get a great deal on label printers and scales that integrate right into your computer.

## **9. Build credibility**

Be trustworthy. Remove every doubt about your credibility. You can do this through presenting yourself positively through your feedback, being passionately devoted to your business and by being an expert. Create an *About Me Page* on eBay. A photo of yourself will humanize the online experience and can bring amazing results. One with your dog or cat in the picture is even better.

## **10. Your auction headline and item description is where it all begins.**

Your headline is your advertising and your item description is your salesperson. On the web, how your potential buyer perceives you and your product is everything.

Be sure to use power words in your auction title (headline). Rare, Unique, Powerful, New, Unusual, Stunning, Top Notch, First Class, etc. Just be sure not to exaggerate. Don't call something "rare" if it is not.

Copy writing is the art of showcasing yourself and what you sell to your buyer in the best possible light. It's the most important thing you have going for you. A carefully crafted sales letter (item description) can increase your results exponentially without having to spend an extra penny.

## **11. Use keywords in your auction headline (title) and description**

Remember that almost all eBay bidders find what they are looking for by using the search function. Be sure to use carefully chosen and accurate keywords in your title and description. eBay gives you 55 characters in your title. Be sure to use all of them. This will help you get hits. Important keywords include the brand, color, size, and model number.

## **12. Stand behind your product and service**

We offer an unconditional money-back guarantee on everything we sell. This has been our practice since our first day on eBay. Now if you are selling cars or houses or "as-is" used goods that may not be a good idea, but the simple offer of a satisfaction guarantee will dramatically increase your sales.

Even unhappy people rarely go to the trouble of sending something back. The cost of providing the few refunds will be far out weighed by the increased volume of your sales. At the very least offer a guarantee that your items are exactly as described and you will give a full refund if they are not. You must spell out your return policy clearly at the end of your auction description and/or in the form eBay gives you to do this. Even if your returns policy is "no returns" eBay requires you to include it.

## **13. Set up an eBay Store**

eBay Store listing fees are lower than for non-stores sellers. The inventory shows up in the main search results (just like any other 30 day fixed price listing). There are many extras that eBay

Stores sellers receive, but based on price alone, you are probably ready for a Store once you are selling 55 or more items through fixed price listings per month. That is the break-even point between the fees and the Store Basic level subscription.

#### **14. Launch more but shorter auctions**

eBay places auctions ending soonest higher in the search results. If you have identical merchandise, run shorter auctions more often. This way you will show up in the Time Ending Soonest and Best Match search orders more often. You will pay a little more in listing fees, but you should make this up by selling more items.

#### **15. Use an email signature**

One great free way to promote your auction business is by using an email signature. Signatures are six to eight line inserts at the end of your email messages. All email programs support them. Your signature should include a description of what you sell and a hyperlink to your eBay store or your about me page. Set it up to automatically put your signature at the end of every email so you don't have to type it each time.

#### **16. Automate your shipping and save time and money at the post office**

If you don't have much time to spend at the post office, and I'm sure you don't, prepare in advance. You can have all of your mailing supplies sent to you by the USPS and UPS.

Visit <http://www.usps.gov> and <http://ups.com> for more details. eBay and PayPal now have an automated shipping system integrated with UPS and USPS right on their site.

If you ship via USPS Priority Mail (a favorite option for eBay sellers) you can use delivery confirmation to track your packages. It is free if you do it on line at <http://www.usps.com> or it costs 70 cents to do it at the post office window. You can use delivery confirmation for parcel post and first class parcels, but it is not free online, and costs 80 cents at the post office.

PayPal now also offers the ability to pay for your shipping online. Also, you get a better rate through the USPS if you pay either online through its site, or through PayPal.

#### **17. Building a high Feedback Score quickly**

Here is a quick way to build good feedback: Sell something at a very low price, such as an inexpensive baseball card for a dollar. Put up a fixed price listing for 50 of the item you are selling. Don't worry about making money; just try to break even. Mail the cards out quickly, post great feedback for each buyer and send each buyer an email politely asking each of them to return the favor. Be sure to include the hyperlink to the feedback post in your email.

#### **18. Where to get free shipping supplies?**

If you send your items via USPS priority mail the post office will give you free envelopes, tape, and boxes. Think this through. If you pay the priority mail fee, and get free boxes, that is often close to what UPS charges when you add in the cost of a box.

Another source for free shipping supplies is your local gift shop or kitchen shop. These merchants receive merchandise in good boxes everyday with plenty of bubble-pak and Styrofoam peanuts that they simply throw away or pay to have recycled. Get friendly with your local gift shop and you can have access to tons of free shipping suppliers.

### **19. Sign Up for BuySafe if you sell expensive products**

If you sell expensive goods, BuySAFE is a company that provides fraud insurance to your buyers. It costs a little to sign up, but BuySAFE has plenty of evidence that shows that using BuySAFE in your auctions will increase your bids and final values much more than the cost of their service. Sign up at [www.buysafe.com](http://www.buysafe.com).

### **20. Sell SquareTrade Warranties**

If you sell electronics or cameras, you can make extra money by offering a warranty on your products through SquareTrade at [www.squaretrade.com](http://www.squaretrade.com).

### **21. How to keep your customers happy and generate lots of positive feedback**

Customers want three things: (1) instant gratification, (2) clear, fast communications and (3) to get what they were promised.

- Use PayPal to get payment quickly and then ship quickly.
- Answer emails immediately.
- Reveal any flaws or shortcomings your item has.
- Never over-promise or over describe an item.
- Package your items carefully and professionally.
- If you can, toss in something for free. (I recently bought a collectible beer mug and the seller included a few free beer coasters.)

### **22. Get your news from AuctionBytes.com**

[www.AuctionBytes.com](http://www.AuctionBytes.com) is a great site with lots of free resources for online sellers. They have an online auction calendar that lists best times to start and end an auction, a free online tutorial on how to take good photos, a daily and a bi-weekly free newsletter, and plenty of additional free resources. Best of all they have a daily news feed of news about eBay and other online venues.

### **23. Learn how to write great titles and item descriptions**

Our premier book, [The Complete eBay Marketing System](#) has two chapters on writing auction titles and item descriptions designed to help you increase hits and bids. Poor titles and descriptions are one of the largest reasons eBay sellers get poor auction results.

## **24. Find Wholesale Products to Sell With Our Free Wholesale Search Engine**

If you click on the link to Web Wholesale Search in the navigation at the top of this page it will take you to a wholesale search engine. Now, as with any search engine there are always people who can scam the results, so there are some companies that will come up who are not true wholesalers and you will get results from companies that claim to be dropshippers but are mostly phony middlemen who make their money off of fees they charge you to sign up. But keep looking as there are many true wholesale suppliers and real distributors that will come up in the results.

## **25. Learn simple HTML commands to spice up your auctions**

eBay has an HTML editor but it is limited. Once you start selling, take the time to learn a little HTML. Don't be afraid of HTML. Anyone can do it. For example, you should start all of your eBay auction item descriptions with the command: `<font size=+1>`. This will make your type larger and easier to read. It helps to break your item description into smaller shorter paragraphs to increase readability. Just use this command to create a new paragraph `<P>`.

You can make your text bold by typing `<B>` at the beginning of the bold text and `</B>` where you want it to end.

Go to: [www.davesite.com](http://www.davesite.com) for a simple and free online tutorial on how to do HTML.

## **26. Create attractive backgrounds for your auctions**

Go to: [www.grsites.com/textures](http://www.grsites.com/textures) to get free background textures for your auction item descriptions. Over 6000 backgrounds are available at no cost.

## **27. If you are going to be in this business, you need to know the vocabulary**

Net Lingo at [www.netlingo.com](http://www.netlingo.com) is a free site that teaches you all the terms and lingo of the world wide web and various online services.

## **28. Get a professional auction education**

- Attend eBay Live
- Attend the online eBay workshops (Look on the announcement board for the schedules)
- Use the various eBay online tutorials
- Bookmark the eBay help files and print out the ones you access very frequently for easy reference

- Print this document out (77 tips) and put it in the same notebook
- Buy some of the great eBay training books from [The Auction Seller's Resource Bookshop](#)

## **29. Incorporate to protect yourself from liability**

Not many people get sued selling stuff on eBay, but it can happen. If you incorporate, the corporation can shield you from most lawsuits. In fact once a lawyer learns that you are incorporated and you don't keep assets in the corporation, a lot of times they will not bother suing because they know your assets are protected. There are also lots of tax benefits to incorporating even if your eBay income is fairly small.

I used a company called [My Corporation](#). They did an excellent job—very personal service and very quick. Best of all they did it right. Some of the online incorporating services are really shoddy and they don't tailor the corporation to what you are doing. (I know a lot of folks like Legal Zoom. I used to recommend them but then I had a bad experience with them, so I now use and recommend My Corporation).

## **30. Learn how to buy at government auctions**

You don't have to pay for this information. Here is a link to our site where everything you need to bid on government auctions is free: [www.skipmcgrath.com/auction\\_sr/gvnmtauctions.shtml](http://www.skipmcgrath.com/auction_sr/gvnmtauctions.shtml).

Government auctions can be a great place to find bargains, but proceed with caution. Make sure you thoroughly inspect anything before you buy it.

## **31. Package your eBay shipments professionally**

No one likes to receive his or her "treasure" in a battered shoe box or an old cereal box. Take the time to pack your sales carefully. Invest in bubble pak, peanuts, tissue paper, and so on. Many of these supplies can be sourced from local gift shops who would have to recycle them. Alternatively, you can find great prices for shipping supplies on eBay.

## **32. Know your fees before you sell**

Here is a great little free tool for eBay sellers. It is an online calculator that calculates eBay and PayPal fees to help you decide the best price and format to list an item on eBay. If you are running an eBay business this is a great little tool to help you figure out the best price to start an item and the most efficient selling format. There are two free calculators that I like: [www.newlifeauctions.com/calc.html](http://www.newlifeauctions.com/calc.html) and [www.ebcalc.com](http://www.ebcalc.com).

## **33. Sell Liquidation Closeouts**

Clothing, accessories, electronics, household goods, toys and sporting goods are some of the hottest sellers on eBay. It can be very hard to source these products new from the distributors.

But many eBay sellers make excellent profits buying these products from Liquidation and Surplus Dealers. One of the largest and easiest to deal with is Liquidation.com. They use an auction format similar to eBay. One word of caution, check the shipping before bidding. [Click here to see the wholesale auctions at Liquidation.com.](#)

### **34. Set your starting bid low to attract hits**

Do you have a good item that you KNOW will sell well? Start it off at a very low price. This will get you healthy early bidding. You want a large group around the item; some will be competitive bidders—people who will pay extra just for the thrill of winning.

You'll usually get more for your item than someone who priced their item higher, because your auction has more bidders watching.

Plus, your first 100 auctions listed with a starting price under \$1 do not have a listing fee. So you have no cost until it actually sells.

### **35. Write complete item descriptions**

Make your item description as complete as possible. Include all relevant details: condition, size, weight, age, collectability, any short-comings or defects, etc.

Something you think isn't important could actually be very important to someone else. Describe your item's condition, talk about its benefits and uses and keep writing until you run out of something to say.

### **36. Use Item Specifics**

The item specifics are drop-down menus shown near the top of the Sell Your Item form. They are category specific and include things like brand, color, size, style, etc. If you are offered Item Specifics, use them fully. Buyers narrow down their results using these options. If you didn't use them, your item goes into the "not specified" group. Very few buyers ever look in there. Also, if you didn't put a keyword in your title, but the item would match based on your item specifics selections, your item will still show up in the search results. So, if you forgot to add that it was red in your title, but in the "color" item specifics menu you selected red, it will still show up if the buyer includes "red" as a search term.

### **37. Have a written sales, payment, and delivery policy to protect yourself and avoid misunderstandings**

Spell out everything you do. How much do you charge for shipping? How will you ship the item? What is your policy on insurance? Do you use escrow for expensive items? When do you post feedback?

The more information you give a buyer the better the buying and selling experience will be for both parties—but don't forget to make it sound friendly. You don't want your auctions to sound like a bunch of rules written by a high school principal.

### **38. Don't get greedy and overcharge for shipping**

Overcharging for shipping is one of the leading causes of *negative feedback*, and low DSR scores. You should only charge what it normally costs you to pack and ship. Buyers are sensitive in this area. They know when you are making a profit on shipping. You can charge a small premium to cover your cost of handling and shipping materials, but it should be reasonable. Always offer to combine shipping costs if a person buys more than one item. Explain your shipping policy in the item description.

There is a game some sellers play whereby they list a \$5 item for 99-cents but the shipping is \$7.99 when it only cost a dollar to ship. eBay will cancel your auction if they catch you doing this as it constitutes fee avoidance.

### **39. Offer combined shipping to entice buyers to purchase more**

Getting a buyer to purchase more than one item from you is called cross-selling. If you specialize in a product niche, this isn't too hard. Offer good combined shipping rates (not just \$1 off the second item) to entice buyers to purchase more. It saves you time and money because you only have to ship one parcel, but it also gives you more feedback opportunities. The buyer can leave feedback for every transaction. So if you sell five items to one person, you could increase your feedback score by five just from that one buyer. If you can get the majority of your buyers to purchase more than one item, you will increase your feedback score much quicker. Plus, buyers who purchase more than one item from you are more likely to add you as a favorite seller and come back for more items.

### **40. Always include the item number in your emails**

Always include the item number with the end of auction notice and any request for payment. Place the number in the subject line so you can easily track emails. People often bid on several items and can get confused. eBay automatically sends a "won" item email which usually gets buyers to pay, but you may need to follow up, so keep this number handy.

### **41. Start and end your auctions at the best times**

Do you always start and end your auctions at the best times? Start and end your auctions at peak traffic periods when traffic is the heaviest.

I like my auctions to end on Sunday or Monday evenings between 5 and 7 PM (Pacific Time). Saturday and Sunday mornings are also good times. Believe it or not, Mondays during the lunch hour are very good also. Remember there can sometimes be a posting delay of up to two hours on eBay during the busy times. Also, don't forget that eBay uses Pacific Time.

This is one of the best reasons to use an auction management service such as [Vendio](#). You can create your auction and schedule it to launch at a specific time or day. eBay also has a scheduling utility but they charge you 10¢ every time you use it. Ten cents sounds like a small amount of money but it can add up over time.

#### **42. What to do when you make a mistake in an auction?**

You may be able to revise your listing depending on the error you need to fix, how long your listing still has to go, and if you have any bids. If it has more than 12 hours until the end, and you don't have any bids yet, you can change your pictures entirely, reduce the starting price, and change any information in your listing except the format (you can't go from auction to fixed price or vice versa). If you do have bids, you can still revise a lot of the listing (add to the item description, add photos, reduce the reserve price, and so on). The buyer has the right to withdraw his bid if your additions to the item description significantly change the item. For example, you said the iPod was black, but then revise it to say it's actually hot pink.

You can cancel the auction entirely if your error is not fixable or if you have less than 12 hours remaining before you caught the error. If you relist it using the "relist" button on the closed listing page, you are eligible for the relist credit if your item sells when you relist it.

#### **43. Why does eBay end auctions?**

eBay will only end your auction if you violate the listing guidelines. Read them carefully. They are written to give eBay wide latitude. eBay rarely discovers a listing violation. They rely mostly on the community to report violations.

The most common violations are listing in the wrong category, keyword spamming, excessive shipping, putting a link to an outside website in your auction description, and not selling a tangible product (such as an eBook download).

#### **44. What to do when eBay ends an auction?**

If you are guilty as sin—just forget it and get on with your life. It's not the end of the world. If you feel you are wronged, then answer the "auction ended" email with a **polite** request for an explanation and/or tell your side of the story.

Please understand the eBay enforcement employees receive hundreds of angry emails a day. It is very easy for them to get "pissy" (excuse my language). A polite and sincere inquiry will often uncover valuable information. Your violation may have been a minor technicality, which can be easily corrected. They will rarely tell you this if you send them an angry or rude email.

#### **45. Set up a website and use eBay to drive business to it**

Every eBay seller should have a website. Remember sales you make from your website do not incur eBay fees. eBay has cracked down on sellers using auctions to drive hits to their websites,

but there are still some loopholes and techniques you can use without running afoul of eBay. These are explained in detail in [The Complete eBay Marketing System](#). (I can't give all my techniques away here!)

#### **46. Learn how to promote your website and/or eBay store**

This tip is really an advertisement, but one that I think you can benefit from as I did.

Simply the best website builder system and training on the web is from a company called [Site Build It](#). This company has been around for 12 years and is very highly respected. Their customers love them so much they are almost cult-like and rave about their service.

People are often frightened by websites because they think they are too technical –but with Site Build It, if you can point, click and type you can build a website and get traffic to it. But most importantly Site Build It comes with tons of free training.

- Getting ranked at the top of search engines
- Web page promotion and design
- Turning leads into lifetime customers with e-mail marketing
- How to get White-listed with major email services such as Yahoo, AOL and MSN so all your email gets through to your customers.
- Building a responsive opt-in email list—FAST
- Exploiting AOL and other online services
- Free and low-cost online classified ads that produce sales
- Dominating your market with affiliate/reseller/associate programs
- Newsgroup promotions
- Snowballing your profits with Auto-responders
- How and when to promote yourself on bulletin boards
- Getting links from high traffic sites
- Sales strategies
- Writing killer ad copy
- Banner ads (tips and tricks)
- Profiting with discussion lists and newsletters
- Completely automating your business
- Getting your own Visa/MasterCard/AmEx account with ZERO COSTS

... and this is just the tip of the iceberg! Even if you are a complete newbie or a seasoned Internet marketer, I guarantee you will benefit from the unconventional tips and tricks that Site Build It can teach you.

I personally used the information I learned with Site Build It to increase traffic and sales from my website by over 400% in less than three months. **There are plenty of techniques you can apply to your eBay business and you will learn ways to develop synergy between your eBay business and a website.**

So if you are interested in starting a business or just increasing your profits from an existing business, visit [Site Build It](#). They even have a [special page for eBay sellers here](#).

#### **47. Brand your business**

If you go on the eBay search engine and type in eBay store design, you will find a number of eBay sellers who will design an eBay store for you with branding and matching auction templates. This will give all of your listings a similar look and feel and help brand your business so people can find you again. If you want a professional company to do this for you, check out [www.frooition.com](http://www.frooition.com).

#### **48. Over-communicate with your buyers**

When an auction ends, send your buyers an immediate email congratulating them and providing clear payment instructions. Send them another email when you ship the item (this really impresses buyers). Send them a follow-up email to see if everything went okay. This email should include the link where they can post feedback.

Make sure you enter the parcel tracking number in My eBay if you didn't purchase the shipping label through PayPal. Buyers look for this to see that the item has actually been shipped. Plus, it can save you from getting a follow up email asking for it. Include the number in your "item shipped" email too and remind them that it is also available in My eBay.

#### **49. Be careful using a Reserve Price Auction (RPA)**

No one likes a reserve. Most people understand the necessity for it, but there are a large percentage of users who will simply not bid on RPAs.

If you are selling a very expensive item, certainly place a reserve on it, but let the potential bidders know what the reserve is. It doesn't have to be a secret. The point of a reserve is to protect you against something selling too cheaply. Being open about your reserve can actually help you get bids.

#### **50. Increase bids by making your auctions readable**

Use a short opening paragraph that promises something, and then deliver on the promise. Describe the product, but also write about its benefits and/or how it is used. If you have personally used the product, describe your experience.

Short sentences are easier to read than long ones. If you write a long sentence, follow it with a short one. Keep your paragraphs to less than three or four lines. **Boldface** important words or phrases. Include attention-getters: questions, news items, a guarantee or a promise. Ask for the bid at the end of the description. Use active verbs, write in the 2nd person, and use enthusiastic language.

## **51. Use Bold and Subtitle to increase visibility**

Boldfacing your title in the search results is pretty expensive and so is not appropriate for low cost items unless you are using a multiple-quantity, fixed-price listing. Adding a subtitle is cheaper, but still not always cost effective. Still, it has been proved that they increase both hits and bids. Plus, these are the only listing upgrades available now so they are more effective than before.

## **52. Use a hit counter to track your auction**

The most important thing to know about an item that didn't sell is did it not get hits, or did it get hits and not get bids? If you are getting hits and not bids, then you know there is demand and interest in the item, but there is something wrong with your price, your photos, your shipping cost, or your description. If you are not getting hits, then there is either no demand or interest in the item or your listing title stinks (i.e. it's not coming up in search and/or buyers are not enticed to click on it).

eBay offers a hit counter option when you list your auction. You should always use it. If you use an auction management service like [Vendio](#) or Auctiva, they also offer a free hit counter.

## **53. Always use a regional listing**

There are some people who only/prefer to buy from their local regions. When you pick a region, it doesn't limit your auction to a region, it just tells sellers from that area that you are nearby. There is no charge to use a regional listing. This is particularly useful for heavier items that the buyer may prefer to pick up rather than have you ship.

## **54. Use Second Chance Offers**

eBay has a feature called Second Chance Offer where you can offer your product to the second best bidder if their bid was high enough to you. This is used when the highest bidder flakes on paying, or if you have more than one item in your inventory and the second highest bidder placed a bid high enough for you to make money. You only pay the Final Value Fee on Second Chance Offers, so you don't incur any other listing fees when you offer this. Note: the person receiving the Second Chance Offer is under no obligation to accept it.

## **55. Build a mailing list of your customers**

If you followed my advice to specialize, then you will be building a base of customers who buy your type or category of product. eBay keeps all email addresses anonymous, however you can offer an opt-in mailing list through eBay. If the buyer says yes, they do want to receive future communications from you, you will get their email address and can then add them to your regular mailing list.

Another tip is to get them to your website with the promise of a freebie document (like this one) and then give them the option to sign up for your newsletter or mailing list there. That way it doesn't matter what they do on eBay—you can then market to them from your website.

## 56. Re-listing Strategies

Did your auction fail? No bids, no hits? You can still relist it and may get an insertion fee credit. Before you hit the relist button let's look at what happened.

Was the item over-priced? Was it in the correct category? Do you need a better title or description? Is there any demand for the product you are selling? Were your shipping costs much higher than your competitors?

When you relist the item (using the link in My eBay or on the closed listing page) you become eligible for a Relist Credit. This is the cost of one insertion fee. Here's the catch—**you only get it if the item sells the second time**. Many people think it is a free relist and don't think about improving their auction before relisting. It's a one-shot deal. If it doesn't sell the second time you list it, you don't get another chance at the relist credit. So, you've now paid two insertion fees, not received a credit for either one, the item still hasn't sold, and you are no longer eligible for the relist credit if it does sell the next time you list it.

So, before you relist, make sure you know why it didn't sell and make improvements to increase the likelihood of it selling this second time. If you didn't research the item properly the first time around and realize there's really no market for the item, don't bother relisting it. You will just end up paying more fees and not getting results.

I use [Vendio](#) to manage my auctions and they have an automatic relisting service.

## 57. Experiment for success

Don't be afraid to try something new. Just be careful that you don't throw a lot of money into something that isn't yet proven. Try new products, new categories, new sources, new titles, and so on. eBay is nowhere near being a mature marketplace. It is still growing and evolving. The rules change weekly. Don't be afraid to be a pioneer—just use a little caution when it comes to spending large amounts of money.

## 58. Choosing a category

Okay, you have put a lot of thought into your product and completed the introspective phase of getting started. You are excited about your merchandise and ready to start selling it. The next step is to find your niche market: this refers to the category you will list your item(s) in. Considering eBay has thousands of categories to choose from, this should be a relatively easy process. But remember, buyers narrow down the search results by categories, and the most relevant with matching keywords show up at the top. So, make sure you are using the most relevant category. When you use the Sell Your Item form, eBay suggests categories for you. Check them out and look at the completed listings to see how many from that category actually

sold. That will help you decide between a couple of matching categories if you are unsure which to choose.

It's very important to be in the right category. eBay will often move (or cancel) your listing if it is in the wrong place.

### **59. List in two categories**

eBay has a feature that allows you to list in two categories. It costs double the insertion fee and any optional upgrades you selected. Here is an example: if you're selling a girls 4T dress, you could sell it in *Baby and Toddler Clothing—Girls Clothing newborn-5T* or *Children's Clothing & Shoes—Girls clothing size 4-16*. Both are in the Clothing, Shoes, and Accessories main category, but buyers only select one to narrow down their results. So, if it was an expensive dress, or even a lot of items being sold together, you might find the extra bids if the listing is in both of these categories is worth the increased fees.

### **60. Use good photos and images in your auctions**

Digital cameras and scanners have become very cheap. My neighbor recently purchased a child's digital camera at Toys-R-Us for under \$50. It takes amazing photos and comes with basic image management software that lets you crop and rotate images, and performs some simple enhancements.

I'm not going to recommend specific models because they change frequently, and there are many cameras that will work for auction photography. I like Nikon or Canon cameras personally, but as I said, you can use pretty much any digital camera. Features to look for are: ability to turn off flash, change white balance, optical zoom (at least 3x), macro feature, at least 2MB photos.

Shoot at a higher resolution because you can always compress it down. eBay does this automatically for you when you upload your photos. By shooting at a higher resolution you don't risk having a grainy photo in your auction. There is an "enlarge" link for buyers beneath your photo on the listing page. If they click that, the image is opened full size in a new window. You want to be able to showcase all the detail, so use a 1-2MB file for upload purposes.

If you need to crop your photo down, use a higher resolution. When you crop it, you reduce the resolution of the image at the same size, so higher is better. But use common sense—don't try to upload a 10MB photo. There's not much difference on the screen once you get over 2MB.

### **61. Take the time to take good photos**

Here are some simple tips to take good digital photos:

- Clean up the area around the subject or use a backdrop
- Always use a tripod to make your photos sharp
- Avoid clutter in the photo

- Shoot outdoors on a cloudy day or in open shade. Don't shoot in direct sunlight, as the contrast is too high
- Indirect window light is also excellent. I often shoot objects on a table next to a window with a white or gray sheet for a backdrop
- Get reasonably close to the object
- Show a close-up of any repairs or defects using the macro feature
- If relevant, show the product being used.
- If size is an issue, show something such as a coin or a ruler to indicate dimensions.

## 62. Learn the right way to drop ship

Let's face it, many of the drop shipping companies who advertise on the web are scams—or if not scams they often don't work. In my opinion it is somewhere between difficult and impossible to make money from these membership sites. You can spend a fortune in eBay listing fees trying to sell products that are priced too high to sell on eBay.

The best way to drop ship profitably is to work with a direct source such as a manufacturer or master distributor. Most general drop shipping companies are just middlemen who buy from distributors, mark up the product and sell it to you. The markup they are getting is the markup you need to make a profit.

Chris Malta, is the product sourcing editor for eBay Radio. He runs a program called the [WorldWide Brands](#). His directory is a website list of **actual manufacturers** that have all been contacted by his staff and they have agreed to drop ship for eBay sellers.

You could probably find all of these same companies by going through the Thomas Directory—but that would take days and weeks. Chris has already done the work for you. I have used his directory to find several drop ship manufacturers that I now work profitably with. This is currently the only wholesale sourcing program I recommend (other than my own that comes with my Wholesale Buying System).

## 63. Use Fixed Price Listings to increase your profits

If you are a Low Volume Seller, or if you sell products with a low dollar margin, you may need to run multiple Fixed price Listings (FPL) to make a good living on eBay.

A FPL is used when you have several identical items for sale. You set the minimum price you are willing to sell for, and specify the quantity for sale. eBay only charges one low listing fee no matter how many items you have for sale within that one listing. When someone buys an item, it sells right away and the balance of the items remain listed until they are all gone or until the listing ends. You can set your listings to run for 30 days with a Good-Til-Cancelled feature so they automatically renew. As I mentioned before, if you consistently sell more than 55 fixed price items per month, you will likely find an eBay Store is a more profitable option. The fees are lower, you get extra perks (such as free photos), and the listings show up in the search results just like other Fixed Price Listings.

## **64. Use Multiple Variations Listings when you have the same item in different sizes/colors**

eBay allows you to offer item variations in a fixed price listing. Let's say you bought a wholesale lot of women's shoes. They are all the same style, but you have different colors and sizes. You could list just one fixed price listing and add variations for size and color. The buyer selects the size and color from drop down menus in your listing. Once they purchase it, that size/color combination is automatically removed from your available stock for that listing. By using one multiple variations listing, you save a fortune in eBay fees. If you had 5 sizes and 4 colors, that's a lot of listings to get all the combinations. This way you just use one. Plus you will get better Best Match placement because you will have more sales within that one listing.

## **65. Learn to sell information products on eBay**

People will pay good money for information they can use. If you can write reasonably well, and you have a topic you have some expertise in, you can probably write a reference guide or "how-to" manual and sell it on eBay and even on the web.

I recently saw one called "How to Make \$30 an Hour Sharpening Knives." Another lady wrote a short eBook explaining how she sells children's clothing on eBay.

You can create an e-book (or a printed book) on almost any topic: Pets, Finance, Bible Studies, Poetry, children's stories, software, computer tips, making money with XYZ and so on. You can also compile information on antiques, collectibles, computer images, recipes, genealogy, etc. Search the non-fiction books category and the information products category on eBay to see what is selling then try to identify a unique niche for a new product or category.

In 2009 I revised my book: [How To Create and Sell Information Products on eBay](#) to include the new eBay regulations about selling information products on eBay. It is a printed manual with three bonus CDs and takes you through all of the steps to create and sell information products on eBay and the Internet. [Click here](#) to learn how you can make money on eBay with this strategy.

## **66. Buying at Costco, Sam's Club, Big Lots, and Outlet Malls to sell on eBay**

Don't laugh. A lot of eBay sellers make money this way. I recently went to Costco to buy a pair of Avia running shoes (for \$19.95). These shoes normally retail for around \$60.

I decided to check out what they were going for on eBay. Sure enough, there were several pairs selling at prices between \$29 and \$49 pair on eBay, and yes, they had bids.

Just before Christmas, my wife spotted a Fitz & Floyd Santa cookie jar selling at Costco for \$39.95. She had seen the same cookie jar in a high-end mail order catalog for over \$100. We bought 10 of them and sold them on eBay for \$69 each right before Christmas.

We have a friend who does flea markets and sidewalk shows. The day before a weekend market he always drops into the local Sam's Club and buys anything he sees that might sell at a profit and buys them. A week before Easter he scored 20 beautiful Easter Baskets full of goodies for \$19.95 that he got \$35 each for at a street fair.

Tools are another good bargain. Costco and Sam's Club always have great values on sets of tools, fire extinguishers, fire detectors, and other similar products. Last year Costco was selling a set of Hoffritz BBQ tools for \$17.95. We have sold them repeatedly on eBay for over \$30 a set.

Another source of goods to resell is Wal-Mart. Watch for their sales where you can often get goods at excellent prices. My wife and I are doing the Atkins Diet program. The Atkins diet bars sell in the supermarket for \$2.29 each, but we watch for the sales at Wal-Mart and buy several boxes at a time for about \$15 for a box of twelve (\$1.25 each). I have also seen people selling these on eBay for as much as \$25 box.

If you live near an outlet mall, you should also check there for sales. I was in Jones New York looking for a gift for my mother when they were having a big sale. A Chinese lady from Vancouver, Canada came in and bought over \$10,000 worth of clothes. I heard the clerk ask her what she was doing. She said she sells them on eBay and sells them to her friends in Canada. She was buying high-end blue blazers for \$40 that retail in Jones New York stores for over \$150.

## **67. Where to get help with your auction questions**

Forums and message posts are one of the quickest and easiest ways to get help answering almost any question that might come up about selling on eBay and other auction sites.

The best, and most used, forums on eBay are of course at eBay's Community section. You can find the discussion boards broken down by subject at:

<http://pages.eBay.com/community/boards/index.html>

There are several category-specific chat rooms at:

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

Another excellent link on eBay is The Answer Center at:

<http://pages.eBay.com/community/answercenter/index.html>

There is an excellent independent forum on Auctionbytes.com at:

[www.auctionbytes.com/forum/phpBB/index.php](http://www.auctionbytes.com/forum/phpBB/index.php)

These forums are moderated by David and Ina Steiner and other experts they recruit. The posts are broken down by subject areas, including an excellent one on fraud.

## **68. Bookmark these eBay links to save time**

Set up a favorites folder marked eBay and place these links in it for easy and quick reference.

- Advanced Search page [http://pages.eBay.com/search/items/search\\_adv.html](http://pages.eBay.com/search/items/search_adv.html)
- Search eBay stores [http://pages.eBay.com/search/items/search\\_stores.html](http://pages.eBay.com/search/items/search_stores.html)
- Announcements and news: <http://announcements.ebay.com>
- Discussion Boards <http://pages.eBay.com/community/boards/index.html>
- Leave Feedback <http://pages.ebay.com/services/forum/feedback.html>
- Rules and policies <http://pages.eBay.com/services/tsindex.html>
- End my listing  
<http://offer.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?EndingMyAuction&EndingMyAuction=&guest=1>
- eBay Fees <http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/fees.html>

## **69. What to do when someone doesn't pay?**

eBay has a defined procedure for bidders that don't pay. Here are the steps:

First send an email requesting payment and warning the buyer you will file a non-payment complaint to eBay if they don't pay within the specified time. If they still don't pay, go to your My eBay Page and find the link to the Resolution Center.

Follow the instructions there to make a claim and file a final value fee credit (to refund your fees)

eBay will contact the buyer and give them a warning (this often gets the buyer to pay) Any bidder that receives a third warning will be indefinitely suspended from eBay.

If you want, you can use the Unpaid Item Assistant to automate this process. You can begin the Unpaid Item Dispute process four days after the listing ends. The UPI Assistant automatically opens the dispute after the time you choose has lapsed, and then completes the process (including closing the claim to receive the final value fee credit) for you. You can go in manually and change the automated settings if the buyer contacts you and you decide to give them more time. This is mostly for high-volume sellers, but can be a useful tool if you find you're getting a lot of non-paying bidders.

## **70. Make money selling things for others**

There are several PowerSellers and Top-Rated Sellers who specialize in consignment sales. Simply put—you find people who have something to sell, but do not have the time or knowledge to sell on eBay. You sell the item for them and take a commission. Typically you can earn 15-20 percent on expensive items and up to 40 percent on lower cost items.

eBay has a program called *Trading Assistant* where you register to help other eBayers sell their goods. You can register [HERE](#). My bestselling book, [How To Start & Run an eBay Consignment Business](#) contains all of the contracts, forms, and ads you need to become a successful Trading Assistant.

## **71. Turn your inventory over often**

How many times you can turn your inventory over is the key to making high profits. Too many sellers get stuck with something that won't sell at a profit and they keep relisting and relisting until some day it eventually sells. In the meantime, they could have sold the dog at cost, and put the money into something that will turn over rapidly. Rapid turnover and re-investing your money back into more products is one of the long-term keys to success on eBay.

## **72. How to get something for free on eBay**

Check out the wholesale lots section on eBay. Often the same people who are selling individual items at auction are selling the same things in wholesale lots for a lot less money each, but you may have to buy 10 items to get the wholesale price. I recently saw an auction for home theater audio systems at \$250 each wholesale in lots of five. The same seller was selling them individually at \$375. You could buy a lot of five, keep one for yourself and quickly sell the rest at \$325 and make a small profit.

## **73. How to buy large wholesale lots with very little money**

I often see goods going for incredible low wholesale prices, but you have to buy a very large quantity to get the great price. Here is where you need friends. Get a group of people together to share the cost of a wholesale lot. Once you get the items, put them up in smaller wholesale lots. Here is an example: A few years ago the mini RC cars were hot sellers. A year later they were all over eBay at \$9.95 each. Most wholesale sites would sell you the cars for \$4.25 in case lots of 24. But those who really made money at it went to the importer and bought them for \$2.50 each with a minimum of 10 cases. You could have gone in with a few friends and each bought two or three cases and sold the cars retail at a good markup or at a low wholesale price and turned them over very quickly. The same is true of any recent hot toy product that's already peaked.

Buying at wholesale and finding wholesalers is very difficult. I know. I had to learn the hard way. My book, [The Wholesale Buying System](#) that covers almost everything you need to know about how, what, and where to buy wholesale to resell on eBay or your website. The printed instruction manual comes with password access to a website that lists hundreds of wholesale sources for eBay sellers and special search engines to help you locate thousands of wholesale products. We have sold over 7,500 copies of the manual to date.

## **74. Know and understand your costs**

It is very easy to sell a lot of goods at auction and not have any money left at the end of the month. If you are going to be successful, it is critical that you track your cost structure.

Here are some of the costs you should be tracking:

- Product cost (including inbound shipping)
- Listing and reserve fees
- Final Value fee (if the item sells)
- Auction Management Service (if you use one)
- Credit card or PayPal service fees
- Internet service or DSL fees
- Shipping costs and materials

Quicken is a very good program for tracking costs and has a sub-set for running a business in the home. As you get more sophisticated, upgrade to QuickBooks. The low-cost basic version is fine for most eBay sellers. These come in very handy around tax time too, since you can track every expense you can deduct.

## **75. More on what to sell and finding a niche market on eBay**

In the early days, you could sell just about anything on eBay and make money. Today, major corporations such as JC Penny, Bloomingdales, and Disney have moved onto eBay in a big way. It is still possible for small sellers to make big profits. The key is to specialize—seek out the offbeat and find used items that are in demand.

While researching another article on eBay, I came across several unusual items for sale. Upon checking, I discovered many of these sellers were PowerSellers and some were shooting stars (feedback over 5,000).

Here are just a few of the unique items I came across: Used radio tubes, used (vintage) hi-fi equipment and parts, juggling supplies, used music and game CD's, old board games (Monopoly, Scrabble, etc.), clown equipment and supplies, used tools, old garden tools and decorative items, used college textbooks, small appliances (blenders, pasta machines, irons, etc.), personalized children's books, collectible fountain pens, new and used magic tricks and magic supplies, used bubble-pak and Styrofoam peanuts, and the list goes on.

The point is you don't have to sell the latest digital camera, Gucci shoes, or expensive diamond jewelry to make money on eBay. Most of the sellers of the items listed above buy their goods from garage sales, thrift stores, flea markets, and closeout dealers.

## **76. More on writing power listing titles**

This subject, and the next item, are so important, I wanted to give you some further tips and strategies to work with. The auction title is your headline. Newspapers and magazines use headlines to attract readers to the story. Advertisers use headlines to pull readers into the sales copy. Remember your headline and your item description is your front-line salesperson.

Almost all eBay bidders find their items by searching and then narrowing down the results. Make sure the item you are selling is described in the title using a term someone would search for. Be sure to spell the name correctly.

- Use all capital letters in your headline to make it stand out.
- Use the Boldface option if your price-point can afford the extra fee.
- Use tildes "~" to set off your headline. (Caution: Make sure there is space between your tilde ~ and any searchable word or eBay's search engine may not recognize it.)
- Avoid goofy characters such as "L@@K," "MUST C" and "SAVE \$\$\$\$\$\$".
- If you are not using a reserve price, say so with "No Reserve" or "NR".

Most of all, be sure your headline is credible and accurately describes what you are offering.

### **77. Last, but not least—have fun!!!**

I think eBay is just the coolest thing to come along since the Wright Brothers proved powered flight was possible. eBay demonstrates just how powerful the Internet can be in bringing people together, finding common interests and yes—you can make some money.

Dive into the whole eBay experience. Buy, sell, chat, post on the message boards, go to live events, and buy an eBay T-shirt or hat. Most of all, when the bidding gets hot and furious, remember it's just a piece of merchandise you are bidding on—it's not the end of the world if someone beats you out.

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