

99 Tips for Buying and Selling on eBay®

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Introduction

99 Tips for eBay Buyers and Sellers is a digest of some of the best tips, tricks and secrets used by veteran eBay buyers and sellers. The first 25 tips are for buyers and 26-99 are for sellers.

Some of the information is from my newsletter and some is from my books, The Basic Guide to eBay, Selling Antiques and Collectibles on eBay, The eBay Power Seller's Manual, and The Wholesale Buying System. All of these titles are available at our web site, <http://www.skipmcgrath.com>.

You can also subscribe to our [free newsletter for auction sellers](#) - another source for the tips in this book. (Don't worry we won't spam you or sell your email address).

There are more tips here for sellers than for buyers. But, even if you only buy on eBay and have no interest in becoming a seller, I suggest you read all of the tips as there is plenty of information that will make you a better buyer. I guess it comes under the heading of "walking in someone else's shoes."

The more you know about the process, the more fun and rewarding eBay can be.

If you are a seller, or interested in becoming a seller, I would encourage you to explore our web site. Even if you decide not to purchase any of our educational manuals, there are tons of free resources and excellent informational pages that can add to your selling experience. I would especially encourage you to go through back issues of the newsletters and read some of the articles on our FREE Articles page.

Let's get on with it. The first tip is probably the most important, and many of the other tips relate to it. Imagine, if you went into a shopping mall and every store had a board near the entrance where customers could post notes about the products and services sold in each store –and the store was not allowed to erase the comments. Do you think that would improve customer service? Well, that is what eBay's feedback system is all about. Achieving and keeping a good feedback rating is essential to your long-term success on eBay.

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eBay Tips for Buyers

Almost everyone starts his or her eBay experience as a buyer. Learning how to buy effectively will improve your eBay experience and prepare you for becoming a seller. I recommend you make at least ten successful transactions on eBay before trying to sell. We hope the following tips will make you a better and more successful buyer.

1. Build A Positive Feedback Rating

Give and get good feedback. This is less critical for buyers than for sellers, but having a good feedback rating makes other eBayers comfortable doing business with you. For example, I accept checks for immediate shipment if the buyer has a good feedback rating. If someone has very little feedback (less than 20) or several negative comments, then I hold the checks until they clear before sending an item.

2. How to build feedback quickly?

Here is a quick way to build good feedback: make some purchases for a few lower cost items you use everyday or that you would normally buy at a store. There are plenty of items in the Health & Beauty category that you buy every day such as shampoo and razor blades –often at prices less than you would pay at Wal-Mart.

Pay promptly using PayPal and immediately post feedback for the seller as soon as you get the item. If the seller does not post feedback, send them a short email telling them that you posted feedback for them and you would appreciate them reciprocating.

3. Be generous with your feedback

Post feedback quickly and leave specific comments. Leaving a comment that says: “great seller,” is nice –but it is more helpful to say, “Item arrived quickly in perfect condition, just as described.” Or: “Quick Professional transaction –good email and just what I ordered.” If the seller sells something specific you can mention it such as: “Beautiful Print –I will enjoy for many years.”

This type of feedback is very helpful to future buyers and it tends to get you better feedback comments in return.

4. Use PayPal

Sellers want to be paid quickly and everyone is concerned about fraud. There is no faster or safer way to complete an eBay transaction than PayPal (owned by eBay). PayPal is now used by over 100 Million users around the world and now processes more debit and credit card payments than Citibank. Over 80% of registered eBay users accept PayPal and eBay has fully integrated PayPal into their systems. Take the time to become a verified seller and always give your verified shipping address. This gets you the fraud protection. Go to www.paypal.com .

Did you know you can also use PayPal as a savings account? According to Money Magazine, PayPal now pays the highest rate on ordinary savings accounts. When I wrote this PayPal was paying 4.8% while my bank, Wells Fargo, was only paying 3.3% .

5. Avoid Fraud on Large Purchases

Given the millions of transactions that occur each month, fraud is actually rare on eBay but it does exist. The most common type of fraud on eBay is a seller that offers an expensive item for sale at an unbelievably good price. When you win the item the seller asks to be paid in cash, cashiers check or money order. You send the money and then the seller disappears.

Demanding a cashier's check or a money order only is a red flag. **Never bid on a large purchase if the seller will not take PayPal or a credit card.** Always check the seller's feedback **and** how long they have been registered on eBay.

Most fraudsters set up an eBay account, run a few quick expensive auctions, get the money and either disappears or are kicked off of eBay as soon as they are discovered. Be especially careful if the seller is located outside the U.S.

6. Pay sellers quickly

Paying quickly will help you build feedback faster and you will get your item sooner.

7. Be honest – admit your mistakes

If you forgot about the auction and are late getting a payment off or you forgot to ship something you sold – be up front and honest. Apologize and admit your mistake. People can be very forgiving if they believe you. They can be unforgiving if they think they are being B.S.'ed.

8. Create an About Me page on eBay

EBay allows you to create a page to describe you and your family or even include your pets. You can put a photo on the page, talk about your hobbies, your family

– basically anything you like. The *About Me* page is where a person can get a sense of who you are and if they would like to do business with you. If you have a web site, this is the one place on eBay where it is allowed to direct buyers to your web site.

9. Master the power of searching

According to eBay, about 65% of bidders find their item by searching. Including the exact name of the product you are selling is key to bidders finding your auction. Some sellers place a tilde (~) or a star * next to their auction title to help get attention. Place a space between a tilde (or *) and a word, or the word will not come up in a search.

For example: *Nikon* would not result in any items found, because eBay's search engine sees the * as part of the word. According to Power Seller News, some of the most searched words on eBay are: DVD, Art, BMW, Gucci, Longaberger, Louis Vuitton, Laptop, Playstation 2 and Paintball.

Use eBay's powerful search engine to find items and to see what items are selling and how much they are selling for.

10. Be sure to thank people

Send an email to your seller when the item arrives. Thank them and let them know you posted feedback and are happy with the transaction.

11. Search for misspelled items to find bargains

Finding misspelled items is a great sport on eBay. Remember that 65% of eBay buyers find items by searching. If someone spells an item name incorrectly it will not come up in a search. These items usually get very few bids and this is a great place to shop.

Here are a few misspelled words to try: jewelery, strawberi, Ken Griffy, Porsch, beaney, If you want to buy something specific on eBay, think of how the word could be commonly misspelled and type it into the search box. You will often be surprised how many items come up.

12. Use the .02 or .03 rule.

Most people bid in even numbers. If the bid increment is 50 cents, make your bid .52 or .53. This way you will just outbid someone by a few cents instead of a large increment. This is very important when sniping (see next item)

13. Learn to snipe

EBay's proxy bidding system allows you to set your highest bid and then forget about it. EBay will keep bidding the minimum increment up to your maximum. This is fine if you know exactly how much you want to pay for something. If you are not sure how much you want to bid or if you know an item will be hot, then learn how to snipe at the last minute. Here is how to snipe:

Open one window with the auction description. Open a second window and place the highest amount you will pay for the item and hit "Review Bid." Now enter your username and password –but don't hit "Place Bid" yet. Wait until 15 or 20 seconds before the auction ends. (Refresh your first window to see the time left). At the right moment, hit "Place Bid." With luck your bid will arrive at the perfect time to beat out your competition.

Be sure to synchronize your time with the official eBay time or you could just miss the end of an auction.

You can also purchase a sniping service. I use [BidSlammer](#) which is very inexpensive and can snipe the auctions where I am not around.

14. Use Ending Today

When searching eBay listings and categories, it can become very tiresome because there is so much out there. If you're just browsing for stuff to buy, then select a category, and select *Ending Today*. Items ending in the next 24 hours will be highlighted in red. Here's a tip to find great bargains. Look for items ending after midnight. There aren't as many people up after midnight and those auctions tend to get fewer bids. If you don't want to stay up that late, use BidSlammer to bid for you.

15. Search Completed items

To find out what a product is worth, it doesn't do any good to find prices for on-going auctions as this could change minute by minute. Searching *Completed Items* (from the eBay search box) is the best way to determine an item's worth or value.

16. Check the seller's feedback rating --and the comments

Because you are spending your hard-earned money, it pays to check the feedback left by others about the person from whom you're thinking of buying. When in an item's auction page, select "view seller's feedback."

This will list all comments made by others that have dealt with this person in the past. It can be very revealing. If you see a bunch of negative comments, stay away from this seller. If you see positive, then proceed. Don't let one or two negatives

dissuade you if most of the feedback is positive. Everyone makes mistakes, and things do get lost in the mail. Also there are some people out there who are very difficult to please. Be careful buying expensive items from sellers who are newly registered or have a low feedback score.

17. Be careful about leaving negative feedback

You should always try and work things out with the seller. If a seller is a total fraud, then go ahead and leave negative feedback.

eBay is a community and most people are basically good, although all of us mess up once in a while. Unfortunately there are a few “Crazies” out there. If you leave negative feedback on them, they seek revenge, start flaming email wars, send emails to your bidders and so on. Sometimes leaving negative feedback on these people can cause more trouble than it is worth.

18. Check your email at least twice daily

As a buyer, you want to ensure you win the most bids you can— within your price range, of course. Since eBay will email you whenever you're outbid on an item for which you have an outstanding bid, you want to be sure you know as soon as possible, so you can re-bid if you want to. If you don't check your email, and you receive an outbid notice, by the time you do check email, the auction may be over for that item. Checking your email regularly will keep you informed of the status of your bids.

Also you want to respond quickly to any emails from buyers or sellers relating to your bids or your auctions.

19. How to narrow your search?

Since using a single word for your search can return many, many ads, you may want to narrow the search even more to get down to a more specific need. For example, suppose you are looking specifically for Timex watches as opposed to just any watches. Then use the AND keyword function in your search. In the search field, you'd enter *Timex watch*. This would return a list of all ads with both the words *Timex* and *watch* in them and exclude all ads that do not contain both words.

20. How to narrow your search even more?

Let's say you are looking for ads that include certain phrases, or words that go together in a specific order. For instance, if you are searching for teddy bears, you can use quotation marks. The command you would use is "*teddy bear*". This will return a listing of all ads with the words *teddy bear* in them. The word *bear* must immediately follow the word *teddy* for the listing to show.

21. Finding auctions with multiple words

If you are searching for items that have one of multiple words, you can use the *OR* keyword in your search. For example, if you wanted to find all auctions that have in their title listing the words *cat* or *dog*, then you would enter (*cat, dog*) in the search field. This would return all ads that have either the word *cat* or the word *dog* in their listing.

22. Locating auctions with one word, but not another.

If you are looking for watches, but are not interested in Timex watches then you would use the *AND NOT* keywords. In the search field, you would enter: *watch -timex*. This would return all auctions whose listings included the word *watch*, but excluded the word *Timex*. (Note there is no space between the minus sign and the word *timex*).

23. Don't Fall for Spoof email supposedly from eBay or PayPal

Many emails you receive in your email account from PayPal or eBay are really fakes. If eBay sends you an email to your email address –and they sometimes do, don't open it. Whenever eBay sends you an email they also send it to you're *My Messages* box in you're *My eBay Page*. Just go to you're My eBay Page where you will also see the email if it really came from eBay. You can open it there safely. If you receive an email from PayPal, don't click on any of the links. Instead just log into your PayPal account and you will see any notices on your main account page.

All genuine emails from eBay and/or PayPal will be **always** be addressed to you by name. **If the email says Dear Member --it is a fake!**

24. Be careful using a SPAM filter

Unfortunately once you start buying and selling on eBay, your email gets out there and your volume of spam increases. Eudora has a great free email program called Eudora Lite, free at www.eudora.com, which allows you to direct all your eBay related email into a special mailbox where you can filter it. Microsoft outlook has this feature.

There are also new services available on the Internet to filter out spam –but they are not 100% reliable. They sometimes filter out legitimate messages and still let a lot of spam through. That can be a problem --you might not get legitimate emails from sellers, bidders or buyers. So get in the habit of checking your spam filter regularly.

Also be sure and use the same email address for both your PayPal and your eBay account. Using different email addresses can really confuse people you are doing business with. (However for security reasons always use a different password for your eBay and PayPal account).

25. Know what you are bidding on

Unless the item you are bidding on is clear and unambiguous, be a little careful. If an item description is not complete, or if you are buying a collectible or something used, take the time to email the seller and ask questions or for clarification. If the seller doesn't answer quickly and completely, that is a warning flag and you should be careful.

Be especially careful when bidding on high-priced items.

eBay Tips For Sellers

Whether you just want to have some fun, use eBay to clear out your attic, make a few extra bucks, or even start an eBay business, you will have to master the "basics" to sell successfully on eBay. The following tips are a good start –but you will need to keep learning to master the secrets of eBay success.

26. Learn to sell on eBay

Even if you don't need the extra money and have no interest in building an eBay business, try selling things from time-to-time. Why? It's fun! You will get far more for stuff on eBay than you would from a yard sale.

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.

27. Buy on Overstock.com and other auctions to sell on eBay

eBay is king of the mountain. Overstock.com, and others are good auction sites, but they are not even a close second to eBay. Because Overstock.com auctions do not get as much action, you can often buy good items on Overstock and other auction sites and resell them on eBay for a profit.

28. 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 discovered 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, DVD's, 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 20 Wholesale Sources for eBay Sellers](#). This is a great place to find good wholesale sources that will work with eBay sellers.

Another great item is consumables. The idea here is to get repeat business via your web site 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 password protected access to a member's-only web site where you can access thousands of wholesale companies directly. The web site is updated monthly to add new sources.

29. Search Listings on eBay to see what is selling

Go to: <http://listings.eBay.com> to see what is being listed and sold on eBay. The number in parentheses after the category title is the number of auctions for a given item. In general, the higher the number the more action and sales.

30. 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.

31. Become an expert in your field

Become an authority on what you do in your online auction business. If you sell printer ink cartridges, 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.

32. 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% 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 web site and copy a short line of code that I 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.

33. Get a sales tax number

Contact the sales tax authority in your county or state offices to get a sales tax number. This will allow 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 web site 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 web sites where you can apply on line.

34. 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 upload your auctions at any time or day 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. Vendio is by far, the best service I have used.

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. www.edicia.com is a good resource. You can get a great deal on label printers and scales that integrate right into your computer.

35. 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. See the section above on creating an *About Me Page*. A photo of yourself will humanize the online experience can bring amazing results. One with your dog or cat in the picture is even better.

36. 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 you're 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 showing you 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 you results exponentially without having to spend an extra penny.

37. Use keywords in your auction headline (title) and description

Remember that 65% of eBay bidders find what they are looking for by using the search function. Be sure to use carefully chosen and accurate key words in your title and description. eBay gives you 55 characters in your headline. Be sure to use all of them. This will help you get hits. Important keywords include the brand, color, size, and model number.

38. Stand behind your product and service

We offer an unconditional money-back guarantee on every thing 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 weighted 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. If you have a return policy (and you should) be sure and spell it out clearly at the end of your auction description or in the form eBay gives you to do this.

39. Set up an eBay Store

eBay Store listing fees are very low (much lower than auctions). This is a great place to park merchandise between auctions, to clear out slow moving merchandise, and a place you can promote in your emails, and with various web site promotion techniques. Place a clickable link in your auction item descriptions that invite people to view your store.

I often run promotions where I tell people if they visit my store and buy two items I will give them free shipping. Also, eBay indexes your store listings to search engines such as Froogle. If someone comes to your store from off of eBay (such as from a Google search) and buys something from you, then eBay credits you 75% of the final value fee.

40. Accept personal checks up to \$20 for immediate shipment from anyone with good feedback.

Remember it costs about \$20 these days in bank fees if you bounce a check. Most people will not write a bad check for this reason. I have performed over 10,000 transactions on eBay over the past 5 years and I have only received one bad check – and it was eventually made good by the buyer. I usually offer immediate shipment on receipt of a personal check if the person has a good feedback rating. (At least 20 feedback postings with no negatives). Also, it used to take 5 to 7 days for a check to clear. Banks are now clearing checks in 1-2 days.

41. Set up a PayPal Shop

PayPal offers a service to all of their users called PayPal Shops. A PayPal shop is nothing more than a link to your eBay store or your web site.

PayPal offers users a search engine where they can search PayPal shops for goods offered by merchants who accept PayPal. Occasionally PayPal may feature your shop on their checkout page. If this happens your shop will get thousands of hits a day as long as it is featured.

42. Use an email signature

One great free way to promote your auction business is by using a 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 hyper-link to your eBay store or your about me page.

43. Automate your shipping and save time 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 45 cents to do it at the post office window.

44. Building a High Feedback Rating Quickly

Here is a quick way to build good feedback: Sell something at a very low price, such as an inexpensive baseball card for under a dollar. Put up a Dutch auction 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.

45. 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.

46. Sign Up for BuySafe and SquareTrade

If you sell expensive goods, BuySAFE is a company that provides fraud insurance to your buyers. It cost 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.

SquareTrade is sort of the Better Business Bureau of eBay. Sign up at www.squaretrade.com. They also provide a dispute resolution service for their members and can get bad feedback removed.

47. Get your news from AuctionBytes.com

www.AuctionBytes.com is a great site with lots of free resources for auction 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 weekly free newsletter and plenty of additional free resources. Best of all they have a daily news feed of news about eBay and online auctions.

48. Learn how to write great headlines and auction item descriptions

Our premier book, [The Complete eBay Marketing System](#) has two chapters on writing auction titles (headlines) 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.

49. Use Google AdWords to drive hits to your auctions, eBay Store or your web site.

Google AdWords can get expensive, but if you look for the obscure keywords no one else is bidding on your can really drive hits from out of eBay to your auctions or eBay Store. If you send someone from outside of eBay directly to your store and they buy, eBay credits you 75% of the store fee. If you join eBay's affiliate program and this person was a first-time buyer, then eBay will pay you a commission on top of that. There is a service called Wordtracker that is free to try out and very inexpensive to subscribe to. It will help you find those obscure key words that you can buy very cheaply.

Another place to buy inexpensive pay-per-click advertising is www.miva.com.

50. Learn simple HTML commands to spice up your auctions

Don't be afraid of HTML. Anyone can do it. For example, you should start all of your eBay auction item description with the command: `` 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 `` at the beginning of the bold text and `` where you want it to end.

Go to: <http://www.davesite.com> for a simple and free online tutorial on how to do HTML.

51. Create attractive backgrounds for your auctions

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

52. If you are going to be in this business – you need to know the vocabulary.

Net Lingo at <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.

53. Get a professional auction education

- Attend eBay Live (The next conference is in Las Vegas in Chicago 2008).
- Watch for announcements of eBay University coming to a city near you. (Usually listed on the eBay community page.)
- Use the various eBay online tutorials
- Print out the eBay help files and place them in a 3-ring notebook for easy reference.
- Print this document out (99 tips) out and put it in the same notebook.
- Buy some of the great eBay training books from [The Auction Seller's Resource Bookshop](#)

54. 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 learn 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 LegalZoom.com. 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.

55. Learn how to buy at government auctions

Don't 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/gvmmtauctions.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.

56. 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. Re-read tip number 45 for how to save money on these supplies.

57. 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](#)

58. 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.

59. Write complete auction 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.

What you think is not important – may 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.

60. 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? Do you hold checks until they clear?

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 junior high school principal.

61. Don't get greedy and overcharge for shipping

Overcharging for shipping is one of the leading causes of *negative feedback*. 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.

62. Always include the auction number in your emails

Always include the auction 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.

63. 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.com. 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.

64. What to do when you make a mistake in an auction?

If an auction has not received any bids you can revise it. Click on the link “revise auction” right below your username. If the auction has received bids, you can first cancel the bids and then cancel the auction.

If you go to *My Account* on you're *My eBay Page* there is a link where you can email eBay and ask them to credit the listing fee. Just explain that you cancelled the auction, fixed the mistake and relisted it. Give them the old and the new item number and they will usually –but not always credit you the fee.

65. Why does eBay end auctions?

eBay will only end your auction if you violate the listing guidelines. First of all print out the guidelines and 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. (Yes, there are a lot of busybodies with too much time on their hands).

The most common violations are listing in the wrong category, key word spamming, putting a link to an outside web site in your auction description and featuring items that are not qualified for featuring, i.e. information products.

One way to get your auctions examined is to make a complaint about someone else's auction. Whenever you make a complaint, eBay also examines all the ongoing auctions of the complainer. So unless your auctions are squeaky clean, think again about reporting someone else.

66. 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.

67. Set up a web site and use eBay to drive business to it.

Every eBay seller should have a web site. Remember sales you make from your web site do not incur eBay fees. eBay has cracked down on sellers using auctions to drive hits to their web sites, 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 secrets away here!)

68. Learn how to promote your web site and/or eBay store

Simply the best training course on the web is from [The Internet Marketing Center](#) published by Cory Rudl, a Canadian who has made millions with legitimate web site marketing (None of the multi-level "get rich quick" crap). Corey made a lot of money as a young guy and was an expert at teaching others how to do it too. Tragically, he crashed his Porsche into a wall at a raceway and killed himself at the age of 34. The business was taken over by his partner Derek Ghel.

Profitable! I have been so happy with Derek's material that last year I drove up to Vancouver, Canada to meet him. He was smart, witty and charming and everything he claimed to be

In this 1000+ page Internet marketing bible, you learn every single strategy and technique that you must know if you want to start, build, and grow a successful business on the Internet, from the ground up, including...

- Web page promotion and design
- Getting ranked at the top of search engines

- 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 thru.
- Building a responsive opt-in e-mail 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 Derek will show you. Strategies like...

How he fooled search engines and directories into making him \$51,925 in 14 weeks, and how he still uses them to make \$15,000+ per month. Do this just once, and your job is finished; within 30 days, you'll have a PERMANENT INCOME STREAM that will cover your house payments or rent forever.

This stuff is good and it really works. I have used Derek's techniques to make money year after year from my four web sites. There is also lots of stuff you can apply to eBay.

How to locate thousands of people who are interested in your products, capture their e-mail addresses, and generate repeat sales from them -- all within 48 hours (without ever spamming).

... and this is only a small sampling of the strategies they teach to help 1000's of people start extremely successful businesses on the Internet from scratch!

I personally used the information in Derek's course to increase traffic and sales from my web site 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 web site.**

So if you are interested in starting a business or just increasing your profits from an existing business, Link from our web site or type this URL into your browser <http://tinyurl.com/8vbqs> to visit [The Internet Marketing Center](#) where I have arranged a special offer just for my readers.

69. How to keep your customers happy and generate lots of positive feedback

Customers want three things: instant gratification, clear, fast communications and 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.)

70. 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.

71. Be careful using the 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 RPA. If you know something will sell, then price it slightly lower than the minimum you will take.

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.

72. 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 more readable than long ones. If you write a long sentence, follow it with a short one. Keep your paragraphs to less than 3 or 4 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 and enthusiastic language.

73. Use Bold, and Highlight to increase visibility

These features cost a little so they are not appropriate for low cost items unless you are using a Dutch auction – but it has been proved that they increase both hits and bids.

74. Use a hit counter to track your auction

The most important thing to know about an item that did not sell is: Did it not get hits, or did it get hits and did 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 or your description. If you are not getting hits, then there is either no demand or interest in the item or your headline stinks.

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.

75. 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.

76. 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. Once someone bids on your auction, or sends you an email with a question, then you – not eBay, own that email address and you can communicate with that person in the future.

Whenever you are launching an auction, send your existing customers an email letting them know. (Not every little auction – but for special hard to find items). Because someone actually purchased something from you, you now own that customer so it is not against eBay's regulations to market to them directly through email or from your web site.

77. Create an Opt-in newsletter

If you are operating in some area of specialty such as art, antiques, collectibles, sports, etc., then create an online newsletter for your customers. Instead of sending the newsletter out, just send out the table of contents with a link to a page on your web site where the newsletter is posted. This drives traffic to your web site, which is the whole point. Your newsletter should also include a link to your active auctions. I use a company called Aweber (www.aweber.com) to manage my mailing list and newsletter subscribers.

78. Re-listing Strategies

Did your auction fail? No bids, no hits? You can still re-list for free. Before you hit the re-list button lets look at what happened.

Was the item over-priced? Was it in the correct category? Do you need a better headline or description? Is there any demand for the product you are selling?

You can relist one time for free if an item doesn't sell. If you keep relisting and the item doesn't sell, you are burning up eBay fees. If others are selling your same item, and you are not –go back and reexamine what you are doing.

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

79. Experiment for success

Don't be afraid to try something new. Just be careful, you don't throw a lot of money into something that isn't yet proven. Try new products, new categories, new sources, new headlines, and so on. eBay is no where 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.

80. Choosing a category

Ok, 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; as applies to online auctions, this refers to the category you will list your item(s) in. Considering eBay has over 7,500 categories to choose from, this should be a relatively easy process. But there is one important strategic trick you should know.

Before listing your item in any category, follow these simple steps: First, browse through the eBay categories and write down the ones you feel are relevant to your product. You should be able to find at least 3-5 possible choices. Next, write down

the number of auctions currently online in each of those categories (it will appear next to the category name). An average category has about 4,000, so if there are more than that you may conclude that the category is *active*, If there are less than 2000 you may consider it *inactive*. I consider categories with over 5,000 auctions to be *popular* and those with over 10,000 are **most popular**. Some categories have over 50,000 auctions going at any one time. Using this ranking system, rate the categories that you have chosen for your product.

I recommend listing in the most active categories only because they get the most traffic. If you put your product in an inactive section of eBay, you may get little or no bids, even if you feature it .*Avoid categories with less than 1,000 auctions online unless your product is highly specialized to that category!*

81. List in two categories

eBay has a new feature that allows you to list in two categories. There is a small extra fee – but any feature, highlight or bold fees are doubled. Here is an example: If you were selling a collectible, most collectible buyers also buy books and price guides to their collectibles. So list your collectible in the appropriate category and also list it in the Books>Non-fiction>collectibles and Price guides category.

82. 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. If you are going to take a lot of photos, probably the best, all around auction camera is the Nikon 2100 or 3100. As Nikon has come out with newer models, these two models can be bought very inexpensively and they contain all the features an auction seller needs.

Keep your photos small – in a digital sense. Large image files take forever to load and your buyer will click off to another auction instead of getting a cup of coffee while your 300 K file downloads.

83. 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
- If relevant, show the product being used.
- If size is an issue, show some thing such as a coin or a ruler to indicate dimensions.

My new book, [Online Auction Photo Secrets](#) is a complete manual on taking digital photos for auctions.

84. 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 [OneSource](#). The key word there is source. His directory is a web site 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.

85. Keep track of your fees

You need to be careful with your fees – it's easy to overspend and kill your profits. Be very careful about using the special featured fees. Make sure your margin is adequate to still make a profit. [ProfitCalc](#), is an eBay fee calculator that has really saved me a lot of money.

86. Use Dutch auctions 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 Dutch auctions to make a good living on eBay.

A Dutch Auction 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. Many bidders will bid on more than one item. The person who bids the lowest for the last available quantity sets the price for all winning bidders.

Here is an example: Recently, I had a dozen of the AFLAC talking plush ducks. I tried selling them for \$10 without success. I then ran a Dutch auction with the starting price at \$4.95. I got over 30 bids, some people bidding on as many as three ducks and the price was run up to over \$14.00 each.

87. 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 Hour Sharpening Knives. Another lady wrote a short e-book 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 2007 I came out with a new book called: [How To Create and Sell 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. Don’t confuse this strategy with those people selling 99-cent eBooks on eBay –That is NOT what I am talking about. [Click here](#) to learn how you can make money on eBay with this strategy.

88. Buying at Costco, Sam’s Club 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 calling card (640 minutes for \$19.95) and a pair of Avia running shoes, also for \$19.95. These shoes normally retail for around \$60.

When I got home I decided to go on eBay to see what the calling cards were selling for. I found the same MCI 640 minute calling cards selling on eBay for 24.95 + \$3.50 shipping. (You can ship the cards for 52 cents in an oversized envelope). That is a total profit of \$8.50 per card, or \$850 per week if you sell a hundred cards (less eBay and PayPal fees of course).

I next decided to check out the shoes I bought. Sure enough, there were several pairs selling at prices between \$29 and \$39 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 \$69.00 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 like products. Last year Costco was selling a set of Hoffritz Bar-B-Q tools for \$17.95. We have sold them repeatedly on eBay in Dutch auctions where they went for over \$30 a set.

Another source of goods to sell 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.

89. 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> and 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 <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.

<http://www.AuctionClan.com> is a fairly new membership site that offers forums for sellers and also does very low cost image hosting.

90. 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
- Search eBay stores
http://pages.eBay.com/search/items/search_stores.html
- Announcements and news:
http://pages.eBay.com/search/items/search_stores.html
- Discussion Boards <http://pages.eBay.com/community/boards/index.html>
- Leave Feedback

<http://cgi2.eBay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?LeaveFeedbackShow>

- Rules and policies <http://pages.eBay.com/services/tsindex.html>

- About Me Page setup
<http://members.eBay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?AboutMeLogin>
- End my listing
<http://offer.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?EndingMyAuction&EndingMyAuction=&guest=1>
- eBay Fees
<http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/fees.html>

91. 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 a specified time. If they still don't pay, go to your My eBay Page and find the link to the dispute 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.

There is also another option. In your terms of sale at the end of each auction description, place the statement:

“If you fail to pay within 10 business days, then this auction is cancelled by mutual agreement.” On the eBay Non-payment Bidder page, there is a button you can check that said this auction was cancelled by mutual agreement. If you check this button, then your fee will be immediately refunded without going through all the steps and waiting the full period. (eBay does email the NPB and ask if they agree --but they almost always do so they don't get an unpaid item strike against them).

92. Make money selling things for others.

There are several Power Sellers that 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 it for them and take a commission. Typically you can earn 10-15% on expensive items and up to 35% 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 best selling 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.

93. 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 re-listing and re-listing 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.

94. 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 5. The same seller was selling them individually at \$375. You could buy a lot of 5, keep one for yourself and sell the rest at \$325 and make a small profit.

95. 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 in Dutch auction. Here is an example: Last year the mini RC cars were hot sellers. Today they are all over eBay at \$9.95 each. Most wholesale sites will sell you the cars for \$4.25 in case lots of 24. But you can go to the importer and buy them for \$2.50 each if you buy 10 cases. If you go in with a few friends, you could each buy two or three cases and sell the cars retail at a good markup or at a low wholesale price and turn them over very quickly.

Buying at wholesale and finding wholesalers is very difficult. I know. I had to learn the hard way. Two years ago I wrote a 100 page (printed) book called [The Wholesale Buying System](#) that covers almost everything you need to know about how, what and where to buy wholesale to sell on eBay or your web site. The

instruction manual comes with password access to a web site 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 5,000 copies of the manual to date.

96. 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 and have good visibility into your cost structure.

Here are some of the costs you should be tracking:

- Product cost (including inbound shipping).
- Listing and reserve fees
- Feature 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 Quick Books. The low-cost basic version is fine for most eBay sellers.

97. 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 J. C. Penny, Bloomingdales, and Disney have moved onto eBay in a big way. It is still possible for small sellers to make big profits. The secret is to specialize, seek out the offbeat and to 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 power sellers 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 & used magic tricks and magic supplies, used bubble-pak and Styrofoam peanuts – 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 seller's items listed above buy their goods from garage sales, thrift stores, flea markets, and closeout dealers.

98. More on writing power auction titles (headlines)

This subject, and the next item, is 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 auction description is your front-line salesperson.

Sixty-five percent of eBay bidders find an item by searching. Make sure the item you are selling is described in the headline using a term someone would search for. Be sure to spell the name correctly.

- Use "Power Words" in your head line (see the article below)
- Use all capital letters in your headline to make it stand out
- Use the Bold Face and Highlight 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.

99. Turning Words Into Dollars: Writing Winning Auction Descriptions

You have all seen the difficult-to-read auction descriptions: Small type, run-on sentences and paragraphs, missing information and so on. If you really want the item, you are forced to email the seller to get more information – or you just give up and go on to the next item.

One day, I spent two hours scanning over 100 auctions. In my opinion, only about 12 out of the 100 were well-written, complete and compelling. I am not talking about lacking professional-level writing skills – many of the auctions I saw would not impress a 5th grade teacher.

My own writing skills are no where near the level of a professional writer or journalist, yet I am successful at getting my ideas across to a wide audience. Here are some rules I follow to write winning auction descriptions:

- Use the HTML command `<font-size=+1>` at the beginning of your description or If you use eBay's HTML editor, set it to Medium font size. This will increase the standard eBay type size to make your words readable on any computer screen
- Clearly state what you are selling in the first paragraph. Make your paragraphs short – no more than two or three sentences. There is plenty of research that shows web page readers like to scan text. If you paragraphs are too long, it makes it harder to scan. Place an extra return between paragraphs to create some white space around them.
- Use bullets to describe features and benefits.
- Write short sentences and/or follow a long sentence with a short sentence
- Write complete sentences (i.e. subject and a verb). Avoid complex punctuation and long prepositional phrases
- Don't worry about your auction description being too long. It is more important to include all the information a buyer needs than to have a short description. If your description is easy-to-read, potential bidders will keep reading until they have all the information they need.
- Describe all relevant details such as age, condition, hallmarks, flaws, packaging, size, manufacturer, and so on.
- Use “power words” to create word pictures and emotional responses. A few examples are: New, Rare, Genuine, Beautiful, Original, Charming, First Class, Lovely, Save Money, Bargain, Guaranteed, and Expensive-Looking. Stress any product benefits such as health, beauty, time-saving, ease-of-use, money-saving, etc. (Caution: When using power words, don't exaggerate. For example do not describe something as rare if it is not.)
- Personalize the description. Tell the reader how or where you found the item or how you use it.
- Spell out your shipping and payment terms clearly and completely.

99.5 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 a little 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.