



The Basics of Buying and Selling on eBay

By Keren Fleshler, Catalog Librarian

New York Society Library

October 2nd, 2007

To register: click "register" on main eBay page, fill in basic personal information, and choose a username and password you will use to log in and bid on items.

Ebay offers:

Auctions: the user who offers the highest bid within a specified time frame wins the item.

 **Buy-it-now:** Buyers can choose to pay for the item at a fixed price. Often times, sellers offer items as Buy-it-Now as well as a lower initial auction bid price. Once a bid has been placed, the buy-it-now option is no longer available on the item, and the highest bidder wins the item, as usual.

 **Best Offer:** Buyers can pay the fixed "Buy It Now" price or contact the seller with their own offer.

Want it Now: Lets you post what you want to a forum in the hopes that a seller offers what you need.

My eBay

*can be accessed from the main eBay page.

Summary: sums up all bidding, buying, and selling activity on one web page.

All Buying

Watching: the bidding activity of items you are watching, but have not bid on yet.

Bidding: items you have already bid on.

Bid Assistant: Lets you choose a group of items and bids on your behalf until one item from group is won.

Best Offers: items for which you have submitted offers.

Won: items you have recently won; gives you payment and feedback status for each item.

Didn't Win: items you have been outbid on, and the auction is now closed.

All Selling

Scheduled: items you have scheduled to be listed at specific date and time.

Selling: items you are currently selling.

Sold: items you have sold successfully.

Unsold: items that were not bid on, and the auction has ended.

Regular vs. Advanced Searching

You can find most items on eBay using basic search keywords.

Additional search commands Search commands for more specific searches include:

1. Use quotations around words that you would to be searched in direct order.



A screenshot of an eBay search bar. The search input field contains the text "New York" in quotes. To the right of the input field is a dropdown menu with "All Categories" selected. Further right is a "Search" button.

2. Use minus sign in front of words you want to exclude from searches. A minus sign may be added to multiple words you want to exclude.



A screenshot of an eBay search bar. The search input field contains the text "blue blouse -silk -ruffle". To the right of the input field is a dropdown menu with "All Categories" selected. Further right is a "Search" button.

3. If you want to search for either of two words, enter them in parentheses.



A screenshot of an eBay search bar. The search input field contains the text "(purse, handbag, pocketbook)". To the right of the input field is a dropdown menu with "All Categories" selected. Further right is a "Search" button.

4. To search for various endings on a word, use an asterisk, ex: myster* book* - searches the keywords book and books, as well as mystery and mysteries. This is also helpful if you are unsure of the spelling of a word.



A screenshot of an eBay search bar. The search input field contains the text "myster* book*". To the right of the input field is a dropdown menu with "All Categories" selected. Further right is a "Search" button.

5. To search for only a specific spelling of a word, add parentheses, ex: Florida "keys" will pull up titles with the word "keys," but not the word key.

florida "keys" All Categories Search

A combined search example:

Antique* 193*-1934 All Categories

This search will pull up all instances of the words "antique" or "antiques," in addition to all instances of "1930's," "1930s" and specific years in the 1930s except for 1934.

OTHER search options for buyers and sellers:

To find helpful other keywords for items you are interested, carefully look at the keywords used in seller's listings. If you notice a user bidding on many of the same items as you, you can check the user's buying history (through their feedback page) and see what other sellers they are buying from.

If you are the seller, find the exact item you are trying to sell, or something very similar, and review how other sellers have described it. Here, a "completed listing" search would help because you could also see the final price of the item.

Tip: use specific search words, try keyword and category searches together and separately, use the "save search" feature once you find a search that works well for you.

Advanced Search: choose specific buyer locations, find members, or search for "completed listings," or auctions that have already ended.

Ebay acronyms:

<http://pages.ebay.com/help/newtoebay/acronyms.html>

Common acronyms used in titles or descriptions include:

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| B&W: Black and white | HTF: Hard to find |
| NWT: New with tags | LTD: Limited Edition |
| NWOT: New without tags | OOP: Out of Print |
| NIB: New in box | VHTF: Very hard to find |
| NRFB: Never removed from box | |

Anatomy of a Listing

[Back to list of items](#) Listed in category: [Collectibles](#) > [Lamps, Lighting](#) > [Lamps: Electric](#) > [Table Lamps](#)

ART DECO BRONZE IVORY LIKE FIGURE LAMP WOMAN Item number: 290165720732

Bidder or seller of this item? [Sign in](#) for your status [Watch this item](#) in My eBay



[View larger picture](#)

Current bid: **US \$166.35** [Place Bid >](#)

End time: **Oct-03-07 18:40:20 PDT (3 days)**

Shipping costs: **US \$11.66**
UPS Ground
Service to [11103, United States](#)

Ships to: N. and S. America, Europe, Australia, Japan

Item location: Waterford, Michigan, United States

History: [5 bids](#)

High bidder: [lerbia1000](#) ([938](#) ★)

You can also: [Watch This Item](#)
Get [mobile](#) or [IM](#) alerts | [Email to a friend](#)

Meet the seller

Seller: [bbhbob](#) ([6369](#) ★)  **Power Seller**

Feedback: **99.8% Positive**

Member: since Apr-07-99 in United States

- [Read feedback comments](#)
- [Ask seller a question](#)
- [Add to Favorite Sellers](#)
- [View seller's other items](#)

Buy safely

1. **Check the seller's reputation**
Score: 6369 | 99.8% Positive
[Read feedback comments](#)

2. **Check how you're protected**

PayPal Up to \$2,000 in buyer protection. [See eligibility.](#)

Listing and payment details: [Show](#)

Description

How to Bid

You may bid for an item at any time during the auction by clicking on "Place Bid" on the item page. You will then be prompted to place your bid amount. You may place a bid at a minimum increment or at the maximum you are willing to pay. eBay will keep your **maximum bid** private until someone has outbid you.

Example: The current bid on an item is \$48.50, with the lowest next bid at \$50. You place a maximum bid of \$90, but eBay will publicly display \$50 as the highest bid. Someone bids \$75. You remain the highest bidder, and other bidders will have continue bidding and surpass your \$90 bid to become the highest bidder.

Based on your account settings, you may receive emails letting you know when you have been **outbid**. You may also receive outbid alerts on your cell phone or have them messaged to you via Skype, Yahoo, Windows Live, or AOL.

Reserve: Some sellers offer a low starting bid, but place a reserve price on item offers a minimum actual selling price. If the bids have not reached the reserve price by the end of the auction, the seller

Bidding Tips:

1. Watch an item, and bid closer to the end of an auction
2. Bid in odd increments. Many buyers bid in whole numbers, therefore sometimes a few extra cents in your maximum bid may result in a win.
3. Research similar items on eBay and get a sense of how much you should bid.
4. Use proxy bidding when possible.

Retracting or canceling bids: Retracting bids can be done under certain circumstances, such as accidentally typing in the wrong amount or the description of the item has changed. Sellers reserve the right to cancel bids.

Shill bidding: is the deliberate placing of bids to artificially raise the price of an item. This is against eBay guidelines.

Private Listings: some auctions are selected by sellers to be private listings, protecting the identities of the bidders.

Proxy Bidding

While eBay currently offers the Bid Assistant option for bidding on items on your behalf, there are online services outside of eBay that assist in proxy bidding without some of the limitations of the Bid Assistant, for a nominal fee. These services include:

Auction Sniper: www.auctionsniper.com

Sign up with your eBay username and password, and Auction Sniper will bid on your behalf seconds before the end of the auction, at interval increments. Current fees: 1% of the final auction price, with a minimum of 25 cents and a maximum of \$9.95 for each auction that you win.

BidNapper: <http://www.bidnapper.com/>

BidNapper is another well-known proxy bidding website, with services similar to that of Auction Sniper, and with pricing for unlimited monthly

sniping (ex. \$8-\$11 for one month) or per-snipe use (10 snipes for \$20-22).

Tip! The best strategy is to snipe the *maximum* amount you are willing to spend. Your actual payment may be less, depending on the bids of others. By using proxy bidding, you will not get caught up in the heat of a bidding war and spend more money than planned, nor will you have to wait by your computer as the auction ends.

Tip! Even when using proxy bidding, occasionally check in and make sure you have not been outbid. Even though you should receive an email from Auction Sniper or Bidnapper, a delay in receiving the email could cost you a win.

Tip! Even when bidding through these proxy bidding sites, it is helpful to “watch” the item through eBay and receive reminders before the auction ends. Also, this way you have a record of what you are sniping on your eBay account as well.

How to pay

Always consult seller notes for payment information details.

Many sellers accept money orders and checks, but the majority of eBay transactions are made using **Paypal**, <http://www.paypal.com>, a third party service that allows for secure online credit card or bank payments between two parties without sharing financial information. Upon winning an auction, you will receive an email or may go to the item in your “My eBay” folder, click “

Bidpay, <http://www.bidpay.com>, is another online payment option, but is generally less popular among sellers than Paypal.

How to Sell

What typically sells on eBay?

Technically, anything can be sold- from key chains to real estate. The most lucrative auctions for sellers are typically antiques and collectibles, designer clothing and accessories, electronics, event tickets, and musical

instruments, among others. If you are looking to make more money, it is best to find your niche market on eBay and use it.

Before you list:

1. To estimate the selling price of the item you would to list, research the same or similar items on eBay. Some items are simply not worth selling, or may be more worthwhile to sell as part of a lot. Ex: one pair of pants may not sell, but a lot of 5 pairs of pants in the same size may.

2. When listing your item, make sure the auction ends at a time convenient for buyers to be at their computers. Weekday evenings are typically the best times to end auctions, but you may want research the times similar successful auctions end, and see if you notice a pattern.

The **seller fees** on eBay are calculated based on insertion and final-value fee schedules. <http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/fees.html>

Other options include dropping off your items at companies that will sell your items for you on eBay, such as **iSold it**, <http://www.i-soldit.com>. These companies will photograph, list, and mail your items for you in exchange for a commission.

Leaving and receiving comments

Feedback is important for both buyers and sellers in order to build up the confidence of other eBay users. Before purchasing, a buyer may want to check comments left for a seller by other buyers, as well as the comments the seller made for other buyers.

Sellers are allowed to cancel bids from buyers with negative feedback, or no feedback at all.

Once you have received your item, you may leave positive, neutral, or negative feedback for the seller. You may do so by finding the item in "My eBay" and clicking on "Leave Feedback." In turn, the seller will leave you feedback based on your payment speed and other communications.

Before placing negative feedback, users normally try to resolve the issue by contacting the seller or buyer. All users may respond to negative feedback, and mutual negative feedback may be withdrawn, but the

feedback page will still display that feedback comments have been mutually withdrawn.

mariejil (152 ☆) Contact member View items for sale More options ▾
 Member since Mar-16-04 in Canada

Feedback Score: **152**
 Positive Feedback: **100%**

Members who left a positive: 152
 Members who left a negative: 0
 All positive Feedback: 166
[Find out what these numbers mean](#)

| Recent Feedback Ratings (last 12 months) ? | | | |
|--|---------|----------|-----------|
| | 1 month | 6 months | 12 months |
| Positive | 0 | 19 | 75 |
| Neutral | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Negative | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| Detailed Seller Ratings (since May 2007) ? | | |
|--|----------------|-------------------|
| Criteria | Average rating | Number of ratings |
| Item as described | ★★★★★ | 14 |
| Communication | ★★★★★ | 14 |
| Shipping time | ★★★★★ | 14 |
| Shipping and handling charges | ★★★★★ | 14 |

Feedback as a seller | [Feedback as a buyer](#) | [All Feedback](#) | [Feedback left for others](#)

Ratings mutually withdrawn: 0

169 Feedback received Page 1 of 7

| Feedback / Item | From Buyer / Price | Date / Time |
|--|---|--|
| + great lamp- needs some rewiring for it to work MID-CENTURY MOD SPACE AGE CHROME DESK / TABLE LAMP (#320123977055) | agrinney (271 ☆) US \$24.99 | Aug-16-07 13:28 View Item |
| + great find! fast delivery!! perfect packaging! thank-you! VINTAGE DANISH MODERN 3 SHADES TABLE LAMP EAMES ERA (#320123984789) | kathysgotacloset (1008 ★) US \$77.25 | Jul-12-07 16:25 View Item |
| + Seller was very helpful in tracking lost item; it was received due to her help. MID-CENTURY PLASTIC MOD DESK / TABLE LAMP EAMES ERA (#320113052454) | judithann921 (254 ☆) US \$9.99 | Jul-03-07 11:45 View Item |
| + great seller!!!! good communication!!!! PRETTY LITTLE DANISH MODERN WOOD TABLE LAMP EAMES ERA! (#320123984690) | clarke_1974 (6) US \$16.49 | Jul-01-07 20:24 View Item |

Also available: Ebay Live Auctions: <http://www.ebayliveauctions.com/>

Additional assistance:

Live Help: allows users to communicate with eBay customer support via online messaging. It can be accessed from the main eBay page.

EBay University Learning Center: offers audio-visual and self-paced tutorials on the basics, as well as advanced selling techniques.

Auction Bytes: <http://www.auctionbytes.com>

Website of The Independent Trade Publication for Online Merchants, offers helpful articles and eBay feature updates.