

# 1000 BEST

## eBay success secrets



### SECRETS FROM A POWERSELLER

- \* Identify eBay-friendly merchandise
- \* Reach a worldwide market
- \* Increase productivity
- \* Boost profits
- \* Make eBay a full-time business

**GREG  
HOLDEN**

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## **Dedication**

To the members of the eBay community, who  
have never failed to give me a boost when I  
needed it and a helping hand when I asked for it.



# Acknowledgments

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It might look like everything in this book came from me alone. Indeed, nearly all of these tips came out of what I have learned by selling on eBay. But I could never have started the project in the first place, much less have seen it through to fruition, on my own. I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to a multitude of people, including my agent Lynn Haller of Studio B, who has guided me to a variety of new opportunities in the past few years; Bethany Brown of Sourcebooks for being very easy to work with; my assistant Ann Lindner; and my eBay friend and mentor Paula Amato, who has helped me learn by doing.



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# Part One:

Before the Sale



# 1.



## Deciding What to Sell on eBay

It's a question I hear all the time from prospective eBay sellers: "What's the best thing I can sell on eBay?" There's no simple answer—the list of desirable items changes with the seasons and as collecting fads come and go. The choice of what to sell is important, however. Take the time to choose items that you'll enjoy selling and handling for the long term. Researching merchandise, finding valuable and productive product lines, and knowing the value of what you want to sell is an ongoing process. If you play your cards right and pick products you enjoy finding and selling, you'll have taken a big first step toward becoming a successful eBay seller.

**1** • Sell something you love. If you have a passion for something, you won't mind the long hours you spend sourcing it. Often you'd be looking at trade magazines and browsing the Web for your field of interest anyhow, so why not have your cake and eat it too by getting paid for having fun?

**2** • If you're already familiar with brand names and model numbers from your collecting or hobbies, you'll find it easy to extend your knowledge into selling on eBay. It will be easier to write descriptions if you really know your topic. Plus, you can tell from a glance at a garage sale or resale shop if an object is something you're likely to be able to resell at a profit.

**3** • Start with some housecleaning and see what types of items interest you. Many sellers discover that one item sells for a surprisingly high amount: that old purse in the back of a closet fetches \$50, or that bottle of perfume from the 1960s sells for \$75. That first sale can turn into a hobby or a sales routine: if you sell one purse, you can sell more. If nothing else, you'll reduce your clutter!

**4** • Follow the classic route to becoming a seller on eBay. First, clean out your closet and garage and discover what you like selling. Next, scrounge around with family and friends for more merchandise, and realize you can sell just about anything. Then, scour flea markets and garage sales for more items to sell. You'll eventually find a wholesale supplier and sell regularly on the site.

**5.** Do you already have a business? Think about expanding to eBay. It's perfect for unloading returned merchandise or overstock you need to clear out. Like many businesspeople, you might find that the online part of your business could become more profitable than your brick-and-mortar component. The two can complement one another.

**6.** Don't try to sell too many different things. Stick to one or two categories that you love rather than six or seven in which you're mildly interested. You need to become an expert in at least one field so you can make wise purchases and price merchandise sensibly. Limiting your options makes it easier for you to gain the knowledge you need.

**7.** Assemble a team of pickers and searchers who will scour your neighborhood for the kinds of items you want to sell. Create a sales booklet with a list of brands and model numbers as well as photos of what your pickers should look for.

**8.** Conventional wisdom holds that if you make a steady income selling on eBay, you need to find a wholesale supplier and sell new merchandise you buy inexpensively. That's a good approach, and you can explore it more in chapter 2, but there's always a market for one-of-a-kind collectibles. It depends on what you can find. If you can find rare collectibles or hard-to-find secondhand items easily, go for it!

**9.** Don't get stuck in a rut with only one product line. Be open to new products and categories that are very different. One PowerSeller I know started out selling Italian charms and branched out to, of all things, home pregnancy tests and condoms. Another sells high-end fountain pens as well as men's socks and underwear.

**10.** Think small. The smaller your merchandise, the easier it will be to transport and sell, and the less expensive it will be to ship. If you sell things like clothing or hardware, you may end up having to find warehouse space. Items like postcards or golf balls can be stored in a more compact space and don't need to be packed so carefully for shipping.

## MARKET RESEARCH

**11.** eBay's Completed Items search is the obvious place to start to search for merchandise that's in demand. But don't overlook eBay's Hot Items reports and specialized services like Terapeak ([www.terapeak.com](http://www.terapeak.com)) which provide detailed records on completed eBay sales.

**12.** You don't have to invent your product line from scratch. Research sellers such as drop-off stores—stores set up especially to sell merchandise on eBay on behalf of their owners—to see what kinds of things they like to sell. Make note of the things that attract the best prices and the highest number of bids, and try to find those items yourself.

**13.** Research brands in your chosen field by looking through catalogs and browsing brick-and-mortar stores. I remember window shopping in Georgetown and writing down the name of an ultra-expensive shoe brand I had never heard of before: Taryn Rose. When I found a pair of used Taryn Rose slippers for \$2, I snapped them up and resold them on eBay for \$132.

**14.** When it comes to figuring out what you want to sell on eBay, think like your customers. Put yourself in their shoes. Browse through the categories in which you want to sell. Read lots of descriptions. Get a feel for which items are most desirable and attract lots of bids.

**15.** Give yourself a week or two, rather than an hour or two, to become an expert in your area of interest. I had someone tell me he researched eBay for three weeks before deciding to sell high-end fountain pens; he's now a PowerSeller and makes a full-time living on eBay.

**16.** As you do your research, think ahead to the descriptions you'll write. When you read other sales descriptions in online catalogs or on eBay, write down some ideas for keywords and phrases that might get shoppers' attention.

**17.** Keep researching completed auctions on eBay every couple of weeks, if not more frequently. eBay only keeps records of completed sales online for about two or three weeks. Compile a database of sales that attracted lots of bids or high prices (or both). Write down the starting bid, the number of bids, the high bid, and whether the sale ended with a Buy It Now or an auction purchase. After a few months, you'll have a database of transaction details you can refer to when you are deciding what to buy or how to price merchandise.

## EVALUATING WHAT YOU HAVE TO SELL

**18.** After you have been selling for a while, you realize that "Like New" or "New" items tend to get the most attention, no matter what they are. Look for items in their original boxes or wrappers, or with their original price tags. These features alone will gain interest for these items on eBay.

**19.** Plenty of businesses offer their services as appraisers. You can even get an appraisal online: you can send in photos of your merchandise, pay a fee, and get back a detailed report on the item's value. Only use these services if you have a work of art, a rare vase or lamp, or other collectible that you suspect is really valuable. Otherwise, take advantage of eBay itself and do your own research.

**20.** For some highly collectible items like coins, stamps, and baseball cards, it's important to get an authentication service to grade the item's condition and certify its authenticity. For coins, check out the Professional Coin Grading Service ([www.pcgs.com](http://www.pcgs.com)); for comic books, try Comics Guaranty, LLC ([www.cgccomics.com](http://www.cgccomics.com)).

**21.** You can also find grading services and professional associations related to collectibles on the category opening page on eBay. A category opening page is a sort of "welcome page" for one of eBay's top-level categories. These are the categories you see listed on the left-hand column of eBay's home page ([www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)). For example, the Stamps opening page ([stamps.ebay.com](http://stamps.ebay.com)) has links to dealers' associations and guidelines for selling stamps.

## FOCUSING YOUR SEARCHES

**22.** Don't focus solely on the U.S. version of eBay when you're researching items to sell. Remember that there are many separate eBay sites around the world. If you speak a foreign language, you have an advantage over other sellers: you can place ads on a foreign site. Even if you don't, you can do a search on the English-speaking versions of eBay around the world, such as eBay UK ([www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk)), eBay Australia ([www.ebay.com.au](http://www.ebay.com.au)), or eBay Canada ([www.ebay.ca](http://www.ebay.ca)).

**23.** If you shop for merchandise in your local area (at flea markets, secondhand stores, or garage sales), find out who your competition is. Do a search of completed sales for items that are similar to the ones you have to sell. Before you click the Search button, though, scroll down the Advanced Search page to the section labeled Items Near Me. Check the Items within . . . box, choose a distance (200 miles or less), and enter your zip code or city. Then click Search. This limits results to transactions of items located near your own home.

**24.** Once you've gathered some names of competitors in your area of interest, save their User IDs in the Favorites section of My eBay. That way, you'll be able to revisit them regularly to see what they have for sale and how many sales they have completed recently.

**25.** Once you've conducted a search with a complex set of variables such as location, currency, and so on, you can save your search to the My Favorite Searches area of My eBay. That way, you don't have to re-enter the search criteria every time you want to do some research. First, conduct the search. Then click the link Add to My Favorite Searches that appears at the top of the search results.

**26.** One of the worst places to look for merchandise you can sell on eBay is eBay itself. Yes, you occasionally find great bargains on eBay, but it's rare for sellers to be able to buy something on the auction site and then turn around and sell it for a profit. This even applies if you are considering making bulk purchases in the Wholesale Lots area of eBay ([pages.ebay.com/catindex/catwholesale.html](https://pages.ebay.com/catindex/catwholesale.html)).

**27.** Buy out of season. Look for Christmas items in late December and January when they're on sale; store them until November or so, when you can sell them at a profit. Try to buy back-to-school clothing and supplies in early summer so you can sell them in the fall. Be patient and wait until a few weeks before the holiday or event, and then sell what you've been saving.

## LOOKING CLOSE TO HOME

**28.** Suppose you have a successful traditional business in a brick-and-mortar store, a wholesale outlet, or another arrangement (you sell collectibles at trade shows and flea markets, for instance). You can use eBay to grow and expand your existing customer base.

**29.** Think of eBay as a way to acquire new business. Send an announcement to your existing customer base. Encourage your brick-and-mortar customers to visit your eBay Store, and offer them discounts if they make purchases there.