Selling Items on eBay (for beginners) updated 06/20/19 by Kathy Handy for SSPL

*eBay is an ever-evolving Internet-based selling tool. Always review the eBay website itself, and perhaps any outside articles or reviews, that can give you further, more current information on policies and rules in place at the time you choose to sell. This handout itself is but a general guide, and cannot be relied upon for permanent, indefinite information on details such as fee schedules and so forth. Links in this handout, however, can be especially helpful for learning general information needed at the time of selling.*

A. **Research First** – Understand this information **BEFORE** actually selling on eBay – this is the research and learning part of the process:

- **eBay is but one tool you can use to sell things via the Internet.** Be aware of other tools on the Internet that can be useful as well.
  - Amazon.com
  - etsy.com
  - Craigslist.org
  - and there are many others.
  
  Each has their own strengths – for example, etsy is great to use if you are a crafter – maybe you make handbags and would like to have an avenue to sell them – etsy can serve you well. **Craigslist** is great if you have big items like furniture, and would like to have a cash and carry policy in place and no worries about shipping. **eBay** can take advantage of this too, but we think of eBay as having more of an audience – the whole country or even extended to the world – and shipping costs are usually incurred. **Amazon.com** can be a great way to sell textbooks and many other things. I know people who prefer Amazon, for example, for ease of use.
  
  - **eBay is an auction-based website**, but you can also have a “store” on eBay and/or you can use a “Buy it Now” tool instead of an auction method. You can also use the “Classifieds” section.
  
  - **To “window shop” on eBay, you do not have to register.** It is well worth it to visit [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) and look at some ongoing auctions to see what things are selling, and for how much. This way you can learn which prices may be guidelines for some of your items of sale.
  
  - **Research any item you wish to sell** – see if it is up for sale on eBay, and what sellers are ASKING. A key is to search for items actually SOLD. Often, people see an item for sale on eBay and mistakenly think that the price ASKED or currently in bid is the value of that item – not necessarily so. A more accurate reflection of the item’s value is what it SOLD FOR at the end of the auction. Use the sidebar on the left of the eBay screen to narrow down a search. Experiment.

  - **Feedback:** Sellers are rated by the buyers, and the idea is to build a good reputation among your buyers so that they will give you a ranking contributing to 100% positive, or a positive in the high 90%. This rating request ties in with the number after your user name, and the color of the star that appears there. Newbies temporarily have a small icon (sun) other than a star next to their name to alert buyers of this status. As you accumulate transactions, these pieces of feedback add to your reputation. People can read your reputation or feedback scores, and it may help them make decisions about whether to bid on your auction or not, or whether to take a chance and buy from you or not. Both buyers and sellers can leave feedback for each other, but eBay says: “**Note:** Buyers can leave sellers negative, neutral, or positive Feedback. Sellers can leave buyers positive Feedback or choose not to leave Feedback.”

  - When you pull up an auction or item for sale, look at the seller information on the right side of the screen, noting the stars and rating given. Click the seller’s name to see even more details about the seller. Click here to see what eBay says about feedback: [http://pages.ebay.com/help/feedback/howitworks.html](http://pages.ebay.com/help/feedback/howitworks.html)

Note: eBay fees are scheduled to change May 1, 2018. See pg. 5 for additional information.
• **Buyers pay shipping.** Sellers provide shipping information and costs, and can use tools on their auction for calculation of shipping, and *eBay* has made efforts recently to reduce attempts on the part of the seller to inflate the shipping price.

• **Buyers have the upper hand.** Usually, buyers are given the benefit of the doubt in most disputes or problems. Always gear a sale carefully and with “the customer comes first” policy in mind.

• **Gain basic photography skills.** Know how to take a digital picture with either a phone or digital camera, and have it **scaled in size** to properly go onto the *eBay* website. A picture is worth a thousand words, and will definitely help your auction. Sometimes a larger sized photo is beneficial for the magnification tool to work properly on your *eBay* auction.

*Understand that *eBay* is an ever-changing program, and before selling, take some time to do a brief tour so you know what to expect when you post an auction. Things can change even in a month or two, so always research.*

**B. Prepare to Sell:** What you need to do BEFORE actually selling things on *eBay:*

• **Register:** To sell on *eBay* (or to buy) you must register or sign up with a user name and password, and some other information. Visit [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) to do this.
  
  o Once registered, you can **WATCH** items of interest to see how they do. This helps you in the research stages of your preparation for a sale.

• **PayPal:** To sell on *eBay*, you would find it beneficial to **establish a payment account** – people usually use PayPal. PayPal is regarded at this time as a pretty reliable and safe payment method and their website is considered secure. *eBay* used to own PayPal, but no longer does; however, *eBay* still maintains a close relationship with PayPal, at least as of 2018.

• **My *eBay***: Once you are enrolled in *eBay*, you can check your settings anytime or you can get a nice summary of your activities on *eBay* by visiting “**My *eBay***.” Go here and become familiar with the areas of interest before you actually put something up for sale.

• **Fees:** Know there are fees involved. *eBay* allows you to see what your fees would be before you actually post your auction. Learn about them through: [http://pages.ebay.com/sellerinformation/howtosell/quickstartguide.html](http://pages.ebay.com/sellerinformation/howtosell/quickstartguide.html) or search for fees in the **customer support** link at the top of the screen. A breakdown of fees: [http://www.fees.ebay.com/feeweb/feecalculator](http://www.fees.ebay.com/feeweb/feecalculator) and also read this information from *eBay’s* help and support section as of 8/30/2017: [http://ocsnext.ebay.com/ocs/sr?query=371&topicName=What+are+the+fees+for+selling%3F&st=6&levelHierarchy=2a3a1](http://ocsnext.ebay.com/ocs/sr?query=371&topicName=What+are+the+fees+for+selling%3F&st=6&levelHierarchy=2a3a1)

There are generally 2 main fees through *eBay* for selling, and another through **PayPal:**

• **Insertion fee:** When you list an item, you're charged an **insertion fee** that's based on your item's starting or reserve price. Insertion fees are free for your first 50 fixed price or auction style listings per calendar month, depending on the listing format and category chosen. Exclusions apply for some categories. (as of 8/30/2017)

• **Final value fee:** When your item sells, you're charged a **final value fee** that's based on what the buyer paid—including shipping and handling costs—minus any sales tax. If your item doesn't sell, you won't be charged.

  Advanced listing upgrades like a **reserve price**, a custom duration, bold text or a second category cost extra whether the item sells or not.

• **Sellers also incur fees from PayPal.** See [https://www.paypal.com/us/webapps/mpp/paypal-fees](https://www.paypal.com/us/webapps/mpp/paypal-fees) for details.
For more help with selling fees, select an option:

- Use the shipping calculator to get an estimate of what to charge for shipping items.
- Get the fee details for an item you sold.
- Check the standard selling fees for an explanation of fees and pricing charts.

- **eBay Help:** Spend time looking through the help provided by eBay here: www.ebay.com and click help and contact and type in (less the quotes) “how to sell.” Explore all the links that give you information about selling. Educate yourself on the current policies of eBay, which can change periodically.

- **Decide how to ship your item and gather shipping materials.** Collect bubble wrap or boxes from stores, or from friends and family. Try to save money by not having to purchase these supplies. Look at www.usps.com and find out how much it would be to send your item to a place such as CA (the furthest continental US State) by putting in a zip code of 90210 for example. You may wish to invest in a postal scale – you can often get a new-in-box scale from eBay for a much lower cost than buying one at Staples. Consider its size, and if you can read the dial when you put the item on the scale. Consider priority shipping. Consider UPS or FedEx as well. Sometimes insurance may be better and included free for delicate items (such as china) using a service such as FedEx or UPS, whereas the Post Office may be more expensive.

- **Selling China or breakable items:** Consider using a UV pen (very inexpensive) of invisible ink to mark things like China. This can prevent scams. Someone could say your item broke upon arrival, and if you ask them to ship it back to you so you can check your mark on the China, under a black light, usually the person will back off.

- **First-time sellers:** Consider selling a small item first and build from there, rather than beginning with a very inexpensive item.

- **Books:** Sometimes, Amazon.com might be a good source for book sales. When using any sites, such as eBay.com, use keywords effectively. Use your own description of your item and your own photos. Never plagiarize.

- **Consider selling only to U.S.** at first, be careful of International sales – if you decide to include International sales, try to avoid sales to Russia and Italy as there have been problems there.

- **Write your own description and photos:** You can get in great trouble for plagiarizing someone else’s photo or description – eBay has taken down auctions that are reported to be plagiarized. (Look at Neetmok’s auctions on the site.) eBay is currently allowing 12 pictures per auction at no charge (as of 2016). Include several pictures to really show your item, including any flaws. Read this article about consequences of using other photos on eBay if they are not yours: http://ebay.about.com/od/mistakestoavoid/qt/ma_stealpic.htm

- **Apps for your Smartphones:** You can download an app for eBay, free of charge, for your iPhone or Android phone to keep abreast with any auctions.

- **Best Times for eBay Auctions:** September through February or maybe March. This is when most people are on eBay looking for deals for the holidays and during the slow months of winter. Be aware, though, that in recent years, eBay sales have dropped. I speculate that the economy is largely to blame, and also many other tools are out there to use, competing with eBay.

C. Select an item and Sell!
Once you have selected an item and have decided to sell it, you can use the **eBay tools to set up your auction.** OR you can use another site to do this such as auctiva, but with auctiva you have to pay for their service. ([www.auctiva.com](http://www.auctiva.com))

Click SELL at the top of the screen, and follow the on-screen prompts to prepare an auction, filling in the form provided. Be ready to upload your photographs, as well. Continue through the process of writing your description and choosing in which category to put your item.

**You might encounter helpful videos** along the way as you progress through completing your selling form. Also, a chat function to ask eBay representatives for assistance.

**You can select a start date** for the launch of your auction, and also how long you want the auction to run. 7 days is typical, and many times, people start the auction on a Sunday night (Pacific Time, remember) and then it would run through the following weekend.

**You can further promote** your auction through **social networking sites** such as Facebook, Twitter, or via e-mail. Notice the icons as you work with the form.

**Watch your e-mail** for messages, and respond to any questions people may send as soon as possible. Keep good customer relations. If people ask to see more pictures of your item, send them.

**Wait and Watch:** It is possible you may not get any bids on your auction. Then again, you might! You might see a bidding war, and sniping used to be a fairly well-accepted practice; however, **Sniping Tools** may end up being blocked by eBay.

**Check E-Mails regularly,** and when an auction finishes, be sure to honor the sale and, after getting your payment through PayPal (allow a day or two but often buyers pay right away) ship the item to the buyer. You will get information including mailing address and so forth once the sale completes.

**Follow up** by checking each step of the process on eBay’s billing detail. eBay Valet service has been discontinued as of March, 2018. Read here for more information: [https://www.ebay.com/help/selling/selling/sell-ebay-valet?id=4130&st=12&pos=1&query=Sell%20it%20for%20me%20(eBay%20valet)&intent=valet](https://www.ebay.com/help/selling/selling/sell-ebay-valet?id=4130&st=12&pos=1&query=Sell%20it%20for%20me%20(eBay%20valet)&intent=valet)

**You can consider using the classified area of eBay** to sell items

Extra Information:

New Changes to eBay in 2019

- 2019 Spring Seller Update (information from eBay)
- 2019 Spring Seller Update Commentary (information and review by ecommercebytes.com)
- “Good ’Till Cancelled” Format for Selling:
- More on the “Good ’Till Cancelled” Format
  and

More about eBay

Fees (changed May 1, 2018):
https://www.ebay.com/help/selling/fees-credits-invoices/selling-fees?id=4364&st=2&pos=-3&query=Selling%20fees&intent=fee%20schedule

*eBay* Information:

How to manage bidders/buyers on your *eBay* auctions:
https://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/manage_bidders_ov.html

How to take a break if you have an *eBay* Store:
Note: You can also set an out-of-office message whether you have a store or not.

eBay star explanation
http://pages.ebay.com/help/feedback/questions/star.html