Buying Items on eBay

Reviewed 6/20/19 by Kathy Handy for Saratoga Springs Public Library (SSPL)

1. Visit [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) and “look” for things you might be interested in by typing items into the search box. Familiarize yourself with the website. Be a window shopper first.

2. Visit the learning center under the help area of eBay. You may find this under the help link. Take about 10-15 minutes to familiarize yourself with the rules. Visit “Buying Basics” by directly clicking here: [http://pages.ebay.com/help/buy/basics.html](http://pages.ebay.com/help/buy/basics.html)

3. **To buy** things on eBay, you most likely will 1) want to have a PayPal account, or pay with a credit card. (Paypal was formerly owned by eBay. The two companies have split since 2014.) 2) Also, you no longer have to, but you may find it easier to buy if you register on eBay.

4. As a buyer, you enjoy more freedoms and protections than you would enjoy as a seller. eBay more or less caters to the buyer, but recent rules have been a little more accommodating to the seller.

5. There are several ways to buy. The primary ways are through 1) auction or 2) “Buy it Now.” You can also buy using 3) “Buy it Now” in conjunction with the shopping cart, or 4) the Classified section where you deal directly with the seller. [https://www.ebay.com/help/buying](https://www.ebay.com/help/buying)

6. To pay for items, you are strongly encouraged to use PayPal or PayPal Credit, a division of PayPal, allowing you to pay over time for an item, often without interest accruing – you need to check because this varies. (“Bill Me Later” was formerly the name of “PayPal Credit.”) Here are the current payment methods accepted: [http://pages.ebay.com/help/policies/accepted-payments-policy.html](http://pages.ebay.com/help/policies/accepted-payments-policy.html)

7. Before you buy or bid, check out...
   a. The seller
   b. The seller’s ratings including stars and percentage points
   c. Pictures on the auction site that detail the item – look them over well.
   d. Descriptions provided by the seller
   e. Postage or shipping costs – buyer is responsible for these, most of the time
   f. Your own pocketbook – what is the MOST you are willing to spend on an item.
   g. When the item is due to arrive after the auction ends
   h. Communications with the seller through protected E-Mail – feel free to ask questions.

8. When you are ready to bid...
   a. Make sure you have money available in your account.
   b. Examine other bids, if any, on the auction of your interest
   c. Examine the remaining time left on an auction.
   d. Decide what amount you would like to bid – remember eBay will “proxy” bid for you – you can put in the MOST you are willing to spend on an item, and eBay will only increase your bid if someone else outbids you, and only by the set increments that eBay has established.
   e. Realize that a bid is a commitment to pay – you cannot renege or go back on your commitment as it is a legal commitment. You CAN, however, retract your bid within a reasonable amount of time after placing it if you placed it in error. Best not to rely on this though. Read the rules.

9. Once you have won an item, be prompt about...
   a. Paying for the item – you will get a receipt through eBay. Paying within 2 days is preferred.

10. Be patient and await the arrival of your “won” item.

11. If your item does not arrive in the set amount of time established by the seller, and you have met your commitment with payment, give the seller the first chance by E-Mailing and asking about the item. If no answer is given or if an answer comes back that is not satisfactory, you can contact eBay about the problem. There is a resolution center. You also have some protection through your credit card or PayPal Account.

12. When your item arrives, go back onto eBay and rate the seller and the whole process including your thoughts on the shipping speed and accuracy in information, etc. This is important. Sellers can also rate buyers.

**Note:** You can examine Jbidwatcher to have a service bid for you (sniping) in case you are absent. Most auctions are won in the last few seconds of the auction. Hard if not impossible to do by hand – a software program that you register for such as Jbidwatcher can help. Visit [www.jbidwatcher.com](http://www.jbidwatcher.com) for information. However, **Sniping Tools** are still allowed on ebay as of 6/20/2019. Visit [https://www.ebay.com/help/buying/auctions-bidding/bid-sniping?id=4224](https://www.ebay.com/help/buying/auctions-bidding/bid-sniping?id=4224)