

## The eBay Buyer's Guide.



**Compliments of Phil Carter**

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### **Do You Make These Mistakes Selling On eBay?**

What's the one thing that will destroy a buyers confidence, ruining any chance he will bid on your item? What is a simple trick with pictures to make your auction stand out and simplify your selling process? Learn the answers to these and 7 other common mistakes right now, by taking the free eBay Auction Sellers Quiz at:

[www.Auction-Revolution.com](http://www.Auction-Revolution.com)

Find out what you didn't know about selling on eBay.

## **About The Author:**

Terry Gibbs has sold over 12,000 items in eBay auctions over the past 6 years. Since it's launch in 1995, eBay has experienced dramatic growth, and very few people are considered experts on making a living using eBay. Terry is one of those few experts. This eBay Buyer's Guide contains specific information gleaned over Mr. Gibbs many years and thousands of hours of experience, both buying and selling on eBay.

Anyone who wants to learn how to sell on eBay or, simply wants to make their eBay auctions more profitable, can learn more at [www.Auction-Revolution.com](http://www.Auction-Revolution.com).

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## Why Buy On eBay?

Ebay is the world's greatest marketplace. You can find almost anything on eBay. From automobiles to homes, collectibles to furniture, airplanes to walking shoes, you can find them all and more on eBay.

In this special report, you will learn how to find items on eBay you might otherwise have missed. You will learn advanced search techniques to find items hidden away on eBay. Also, you will learn how to avoid scammers and lower the risk of losing your money.

### Before You Start Buying

Before you start buying on eBay, you need to understand the risks involved. Everything we do in life has risks and rewards. The amount of risk we are willing to accept is called our risk tolerance.

For example, when we are driving down the freeway at 70 miles an hour, we understand the risks. When we go faster the risks increase. When I was younger, I enjoyed driving my car at high speeds. Today I am not comfortable driving my car faster than 75 miles an hour.

My risk tolerance has changed when it comes to driving fast. This has happened for two reasons:

1. I am older and not as quick to respond anymore.
2. I have been in a few bad accidents over the years and do not want to repeat them.

Ebay is the same way. When first started buying on eBay in 1997, it was new and exciting. I flew across the auctions at top speed buying all kinds of stuff. I got some killer deals, and had a ball.

It was a whole new world. It was like getting my drivers license all over again. Freedom to shop when ever I wanted. The opportunity to buy interesting items from people all over the world. It was an exciting time.

I was in the driver's seat and cruising at top speed.

Then it happened. . .

I found a really special item and bought it for my collection. (I collect electric trains made before 1942.) I sent the seller my money and waited expectantly for my new train to arrive.

When it arrived, I was disappointed. The seller had neglected to tell me the item was repainted. You see, I only collect items with original paint. I have no repainted trains in my collection, and do not buy repaints.

This man had sold me a hundred dollar item for \$350 dollars by listing the train as an original. I sent the seller a note saying this is repainted and I don't buy repaints.

He said too bad, and refused to refund my money. The guy had ripped me off.

Since then, this has happened a few times to me on eBay. Maybe a dozen times out of 1000 purchases, so it is not a high percentage. Later in this guide, you will learn how to lower your risk.

But, right now, I want to talk about your risk tolerance.

I made a decision the third time I got ripped off to define how much I was willing to lose. I call this my risk tolerance.

In order to determine your risk tolerance you must examine all the risks. When you are speeding in your car the risks range from getting a speeding ticket all the way up to injury or death.

When you buy on eBay, you only risk money. You might not get anything, or, like the example I mentioned above, get something other than what you were expecting.

Before you buy on eBay you must know your risk tolerance. Risk tolerance is the ratio of risk to reward. For example, I will buy anything under a hundred dollars without worrying about getting ripped off. If I lose a hundred dollars I can move on without obsessing on it.

This is important. You don't want to buy something and then end up being upset for weeks because the seller lied about the condition or failed to send you anything at all.

Think about what you are willing to lose and keep that in the back of your mind when you are bidding. In the back of this book there is a checklist that will help you avoid scammers.

## **Finding Items On Ebay**

Many buyers start searching on eBay by doing simple searches from the eBay main page. For example, when I first started using eBay I used to type the word Lionel into the search box on the main eBay page and look at what came up.

This was very ineffective. I got thousands of results for Lionel Barrymore prints, Lionel Hutz dolls - he is the lawyer on the Simpson's TV show, Lionel Riche records and more. Mixed in with these undesirable results were some Lionel trains.

This was too much for me to look through. So I went back and searched for Lionel Trains. Still too much to look through and I knew I was missing items because not all sellers were using the words Lionel and trains in their auctions.

After a while, I found a category for Lionel trains made before 1942. I was in heaven. I bookmarked the category so I could look at it every day. This was when I really started buying a lot of items on eBay.

After a few months, I discovered many sellers were not listing their trains in the right categories. These items listed outside the normal categories sold cheaply because fewer eBay searchers knew how to find them. I found really nice trains at incredible prices.

A little later I learned some sellers didn't even know who made the trains or maybe they were just lazy as the name is on most items, and I started doing broad searches within

the different categories these uneducated or lazy sellers were listing in.

You can and should search eBay this way. Today, eBay even makes it easier to find items listed incorrectly. You can see the categories in a list on the left side of the search results page. When you click on these links you will see only the items listed in these categories.

This is important. Once you find a category many sellers are listing items you want in, start browsing the category regularly. You will find some good deals.

Hint: If you are on a dial up modem right click on the link and select open in a new window. Then click on the tab for the original window on the bottom of the screen. This way, you can continue to read the page you started on while the new page loads in the background.

## eBay Search Tips

In these examples the **red text** is the exact term entered into the search box on eBay.

1. Always search by title and description. This is done by checking the box next to search title and description under the input box.
2. Start with general terms, and then narrow your search by limiting items to specific categories. You can select categories with the drop down menu or by clicking on the categories on the left navigation list on the search results page.
3. Try to think of all the different words sellers might use to describe their items. Some sellers do not know how to find the right words to describe their items and will guess. I once bought a rare beer sign from a woman who didn't realize it was a beer sign. She had listed it as a diorama! If you are a seller, you can learn how to find the right keywords to describe any item at:

[www.Auction-Revolution.com](http://www.Auction-Revolution.com)

4. When you search on eBay you can force the search engine to look for words in the exact order you type them in by enclosing them in quotes. **Magic Fingers** will bring up any auctions with either words in the title or description, while "**Magic Fingers**" will bring up only auctions with the two words in the same order.
5. If you are looking for items that can be described with more than one word, you can do two searches, or do one search for auctions with either word. For example, if you are looking for a Leland Monorail You could search for **Leland** and for **monorail**, or do one search like this **(Leland,monorail)** and get all auctions with either word.

This is a great way to find items people do not know how to describe. Use parentheses around the words and commas without spaces to separate the words.

6. You can exclude words from your searches by using a minus sign. For example

I collect toys made by Bing, but do not want to look at Bing Crosby records. So I enter this in the search box: **Bing -Crosby**. To exclude more words use parentheses around excluded words like this: **Bing -(Crosby,cherry,cherries,elvis)** You can exclude up to 20 words this way.

7. You can also search for a few words out of a string of words. For example, say we are looking for a Kitchenaid A9 coffee grinder made by Hobart. (We will leave out the word grinder because it is common, and some sellers might call it a coffee mill. The word coffee with the makers name and model number are enough information.)

A search for **Hobart coffee** will bring up all Hobart coffee machines and a search for **Kitchenaid A9**, will bring up all items with the model name and number. Rather than doing two searches, we can combine them into one search like this: **@1 Hobart coffee Kitchenaid A9**. The @1 tells the search engine to include any item with at least two of the keywords.

It sounds weird, but you want to use one number less than the required number of terms with the @ sign. @1 looks for two words, @2 looks for three words etc.

8. If you find a seller with an item you are interested in, check his other auctions. You should always look at the seller's other auctions because sellers may not know what they are selling, and make the wrong guess.

In fact, many of the best deals I have found on eBay have come from this technique. I once bought a really rare tool kit from a woman who didn't know it went with her train and had listed it in another category.

9. Tell your friends what you are interested in, and ask them to keep an eye out for you. I collect toy wood buildings made in the 1920s. One of my friends collects wood buildings made in the 1950s. I see buildings he might want when I am looking for the ones I want and let him know. He also tells me about items he sees that I might be interested in.

You can send an email directly from the auction page by clicking on the [Mail This Auction](#) to a friend link at the bottom of the auction.

10. Look for people who bid early on the items you want. This is a great way to find items on eBay. Just look at the bidders by clicking on the bid history link in the auction, then copy and paste the bidder's name into the search by bidders box on the eBay old search page:

[eBay's Old Search Page](#)

11. Once you have searches that produce results, save them. You can bookmark your searches within your browser or using eBay's my eBay page. You can add searches to your favorites on your my eBay page by clicking on the Add To Favorites link below the search button, but I find it easier to bookmark the searches in my Internet Explorer Favorites folder.

When you add searches to your Internet Explorer favorites, you can organize them into different folders. I have folders for Bidders, Buy It Now, Sellers, and for many of the types of items I regularly search for.

12. When you are looking for items rarely found on eBay you can have eBay send you an email you when items are listed. To have eBay email you when new items are listed create a tightly focused search, then from the search results page, click on the [Add To Favorites](#) link below the search button.

On the Add To Favorites page, check the box next to "Email me daily whenever there are new items" option and select a period of time to receive emails.

13. Order your searches so you have time to examine and research the items when you find something interesting. You can order searches by price or time. You should order searches based on ending time for items requiring no research and based on listing time for items requiring research. See the [27 Ways To Avoid Ebay Scams Checklist](#) for more information about researching items on eBay.

Once you have found an item you are interested in, you need to do a bit of research before bidding. Your research will help you get the best deal, and lower the possibility you will get ripped off.

### **Spotting and Avoiding eBay Scammers**

While fraud is not as big a problem on eBay as the media would like you to believe, it does happen. Only a very small percentage of eBay listings involve fraud - less than 1/100 of a percent - but statistics will not go do much to comfort you if you are victimized.

A bit of knowledge about how fraud is committed on eBay will help you avoid becoming a victim. Here's a quick list of five common ways people commit fraud on eBay:

1. **Blatant Fraud** - The seller offers items he does not have. You send your money and get nothing.
2. **Condition Exaggeration** - This is the most common scam. Sometimes it is done by unknowing sellers who neglect to mention defects. Other times it is blatant fraud.
3. **Fraudulent Items** - This is where an item is listed and sold as one thing when it is actually another. In some cases a cheaper version has been modified to look like a more expensive one, in other cases it is a reproduction or a refinished item being sold as an original.

Some sellers list common items as rare versions because they don't know how to tell the difference. Here's an example: in 1931, Lionel made some 605 passenger cars in olive green. They also made these cars in dark gray. Some unknowing (maybe I should call them optimistic!) sellers list the gray cars as green cars. Gray cars are worth about 100 dollars each; olive green cars are worth 10-15 times more. That's not fraud because the seller doesn't have an

intent to deceive, but unless the seller allows returns you will still be out your money. In these cases, you need to verify the seller's description.

4. **Stolen Funds** - Buyers pay with a stolen credit card or counterfeit cashier's check. Did you know you can cancel payment on a bank cashier's check? I know one seller who learned this the hard way. This report is more about eBay scams involving bad sellers. So I won't go into that here, but if you are a seller you should treat cashier's checks like personal checks and wait for them to clear. The only thing I know for sure that cannot be canceled is a United States Postal Money order. You can learn more eBay selling tips at:

[www.Auction-Revolution.com](http://www.Auction-Revolution.com)

5. **Triangulation** - Another way sellers commit fraud is through triangulation. A fraudulent seller lists an item like an expensive portable computer, then uses a stolen credit card to buy the item online and has it shipped to the buyer. When the credit card owner sees the bill and challenges it, the online store reports where it was shipped to and the buyer finds out he has a mess to explain.

The best way to avoid becoming a victim is to spend some time researching the seller before you bid. You need to take responsibility for your actions. In most cases, you will be unable to get any help from eBay or the police if you are a victim.

## **27 Ways To Avoid Ebay Scams**

Read through this checklist, and save yourself time and aggravation.

1. Only buy items with photos. The photograph is a good way to insure the seller actually has the item.
2. Check the photo against catalog photos. Many scammers use photos taken from other auctions or from online catalogs. Look for the background and lighting. Professionally taken photos have better lighting, and clearer backgrounds.
3. Check the seller's user history. This is on the feedback page and will say something like this: "Member since: Saturday, Aug 13, 2001 Location: United States" New sellers or sellers who have been members for a long time, but not as active sellers are more likely to be committing scams.
4. Check the seller's feedback. If the seller has few feedbacks or recent feedback as a buyer but not as a seller this may be a clue. It's easy to get feedback by buying cheap items. Check the items the seller has been buying and selling. There are links on the feedback page to the auction the feedback relates to on the right side of the page.
5. Do an eBay search for auctions by the seller including completed auctions. Check to see if he has sold the same thing before. If he has, ask the earlier buyer if they got theirs yet. Here's a link to the search form:

[eBay's Old Search page](#)

6. Make sure the address you send payment to is the same as the seller's registered eBay address. If it's not the same address, it may be a tip off. Here's the link to get the registered address:

[EBay Member Contact Information Request Page](#)

7. If you are buying something expensive call the seller. You can get the telephone number with the link above. You have to bid on the item in order to get the contact information.
8. Ask for advice from knowledgeable sources. If you are buying antiques or collectibles, you should get an idea of the value and rarity before buying. Since most collectibles you see on eBay were mass produced, you will get the chance to buy others.
9. Educate yourself. Learn about the items you are interested in. Go to antiques stores and shows to see what is available. When you factor in shipping costs and uncertainty about the condition many items are cheaper to buy locally. You will also make new friends who share your interests.
10. Have a friend go over and look at the item. I bought some trains last year out of Northern California. I had one of my friends drive over and look at them. He paid the seller and then mailed me the trains. I sent my friend a check to cover the purchase price and then gave him something for his trouble. This is a bit more work, but much safer than sending large sums of money to a stranger.
11. Search for information online. Use Google.com to find out more about the specific item you are interested in. You might discover it cheaper at a store, or find out the item is really common and be able to find one later from a more trustworthy person.
12. Ask the seller questions. This will give you some information about the character of the seller. If you are unsure about the condition, ask for additional photos.
13. Check the payment options. If the seller only takes money orders or wire transfers that could be a clue. If you can pay with a credit card, this will give you additional protection. Almost any- I wanted to all, but am sure there are exceptions- credit card transaction can be reversed by calling the issuing bank.
14. Check the description and the tone of the ad. Does the person sound eager to sell? Does the person sound like they know what they are selling?
15. If the item is valuable because of its color, ask the seller for pictures with a common household item for contrast. My dad bought a rare maroon car that was actually light red. The seller's poor lighting caused the car to appear much darker in the photos. If my dad had asked for a picture of the car next to a can of Campbell's soup he would have seen it was the picture making the car darker because the can would be darker.

16. Ask the seller about his return policy. Many sellers sell as is with no returns, some sell with returns only if the item is not described correctly. Saying the item is sold with no returns in the auction does not allow the seller to misrepresent the item, but will make it harder for you to press a claim.
17. Ask yourself "If I saw the item at a show, would I buy it?" Many times people bid on eBay auctions for items they would otherwise ignore. Some reasons for this are greed, ignorance, and impatience. Greed because "It's a low price, and I can always resell it at a profit." Ignorance is when you buy items without knowing enough about them. Impatience causes buyers to buy when they are ignorant.
18. Remember the seller is selling. Descriptive words like rare, uncommon, and unique are subjective and quite over used. Some items are hard to find, but most eBay auctions are for common or relatively common items. Unique is probably the most overused word in describing collectibles. Unique means there is only one. These descriptions are sales techniques to get higher bids by making you think the item is harder to find than it is. Ignore them.
19. Know in advance what you are willing to lose. I'll buy any train auction for under a hundred dollars without checking the seller out because I won't lose much sleep over a hundred dollars. You need to know your attitude and personality to answer this question.
20. Know when to cut your losses. If you get into a bad deal over a \$50 auction, it's not worth hundreds of hours of lost sleep. I know the scammers count on this attitude to allow them to continue ripping people off, but it's really not worth the time to pursue a small loss. File a complaint with eBay, leave a negative feedback, then move on.
21. Don't leave feedback until the item is received and you are satisfied with it. Feedback is your leverage to get a return if the item is not as described.
22. ALWAYS leave negative feedback when the seller is deceptive or unwilling to correct his mistakes. This is your way to warn other bidders. If you had been warned, you could have saved your money and time. The feedback system won't work unless you are willing to leave negatives for bad transactions.
23. Use separate eBay accounts for buying and selling. This way your selling account won't be damaged by retaliatory feedback when you leave negatives for others. You have to use accurate contact information when creating each account. eBay will remove feedback from accounts without accurate contact information.
24. Don't fall in love with your eBay account. I use a buying account until it gets 30-40 feedbacks and then start a new one. I know I will be using a new account in a few months so I can be honest when leaving feedback. Also, this way no one knows what I am buying, and I can buy items others have listed incorrectly, and resell them with my selling account. This is called eBay Arbitrage and is fully explained within the [www.Auction-Revolution.com](http://www.Auction-Revolution.com) manual.

25. If you have been ripped off do not threaten the seller. Ebay calls this "user to user threats" and will suspend you immediately. Some scammers exploit this policy. They will provoke you into threatening them, then forward the e-mail to eBay and your account will be cancelled. If you have filed a fraud complaint with eBay it will be closed because "eBay does not investigate complaints from non-members."
  
26. If you feel taken by a seller have a friend read your e-mails before you send them. Have your friend make sure they are polite and do not include accusations. Be polite and explain why you are unhappy. Name calling will not help. People make mistakes when listing items, and many sellers will make them right. When you open with an attack, you put the seller in a different frame of mind. For the same reason, don't threaten the seller with negative feedback in the first email.
  
27. Don't try to renegotiate the price after you receive your purchase. Sellers will consider you asking for a partial refund as extortion. Instead, explain clearly and politely why you are unhappy, then tell the seller you would like to return it. Some sellers will offer you a partial refund at this point, but you should always leave it up to the seller to make this offer.

## **An Introduction To Bid Sniping**

Sniping auctions is when you wait until the last few seconds of an auction to bid. There are a few big reasons for sniping:

1. Bidding at the last moment does not allow other bidders to respond to your bid by raising their bids. As an auction sniper, you don't have to worry about another bidder coming in and bidding the auction up because there is no time for additional bids.
2. When you snipe you do not let others know you are interested in bidding on the auction. This means other bidders cannot use you to spot items for them.
3. Being an auction sniper can save you considerable money. I have seen auctions where bidders engage in a bidding war and bid back and forth against each other. I have also seen auctions where someone bids early in the auction, then someone else comes in and bids in ten dollar increments until they beat the earlier bid.
4. Waiting until the last minute to bid on a desirable item listed in the wrong category or with a poor title, will keep the bid count low. This is important because eBay browsers look at the number of bids on an auction to determine if it is worth looking at.

You can snipe manually by waiting to end of the auction to submit your bid, or by using one of the many bid sniping programs available online.

Because the snipe programs change, and I want to give you the most current advice, I have placed the Bid Sniper Review online. Use the link below to learn more about bid sniping programs.

[eBay Auction Sniper Program Review](#)

### **A Final Word Of Advice**

In closing, remember, most items you see on eBay are common. You will see them again and again. Don't jump to purchase something, but rather take your time and wait for the right seller and the right item.

eBay is a great forum for buying interesting items for your collection, and you can get some great deals. In the few instances I have felt ripped off, most of the time it was my greed that caused the problems. If I would have asked the seller some questions and gotten more information before bidding, I would have saved myself some grief. While there are people on eBay seeking to rip off unsuspecting buyers, most sellers are honest and will correct their mistakes.

Have fun buying on eBay, but remember, a bit of caution will do more to protect you than anything else.

Terry Gibbs  
June 13, 2004.

PS. If you are interested in learning how to sell on eBay or making your eBay auctions more profitable, take the Ebay Auction Sellers Quiz and find out how much you really know about selling on eBay. Get started at:

[www.Auction-Revolution.com](http://www.Auction-Revolution.com)

PPS. Much of the material within this book was originally published in my Collector Strategies Newsletter. Every month, I write about antiques, collectibles and eBay in the free emailed newsletter. You can sign up from any page on my collectibles website:

[www.IWantCollectibles.com](http://www.IWantCollectibles.com)