

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO

eBay



Getting Started



Successful Selling



Finding Bargains



Bidding To Win



Payment Methods



Postage Costs



CLARE McCANN

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BUYING AND SELLING ON eBay
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*For my father John, who always knows
a good deal when he sees one*

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Introduction

In just over a decade, eBay has transformed itself from a niche collector's fair to a massive centre for global commerce. Now professional online retailers sell their goods on eBay alongside mums with second-hand baby clothes.

In the last year more than 50,000 Britons used eBay as a place to make a little extra cash or secure a bargain. My own introduction to eBay began with a two-year-old car with 48,000 miles on the clock. No garage would touch it with a barge pole and adverts in the press had generated no response. In desperation – and, I admit, with little hope of selling it – I put it on eBay. When the auction ended seven days later, and after some bargaining

by e-mail, a lovely couple from East Sussex arrived at my house with £4,000 in cash.

Inspired by the success of this unlikely sale, I next turned my attentions to my £300 Ikea sofa which, though adequate, I wanted to replace with a sofabed. My premise was simple; if I could get someone to take it away, it was worth doing. If I could get someone to pay me and take it away, it was *really* worth doing! I started the auction at £20, hoping it might reach £70. A week later – after several increasingly over-excited phone calls from my sister ('It's gone up again!') – my 6-year-old sofa sold for £160. The new owners did a 150-mile trip in a borrowed van to collect it and I got a hassle-free transaction and a hefty deposit on the furniture to replace it.

It's easy to read these two accounts and wonder if the people involved were, to put it frankly, a little insane, but there are two sides to every sale on eBay. The couple who purchased my car had done their research and knew that that make of car was built to manage a high mileage, plus they only wanted it as a second car and so within a couple of

Introduction

years that high mileage would have averaged out to something more reasonable.

The pair who bought the sofa needed something to furnish a buy-to-let flat they owned. Even the cheapest settee they could buy new would have cost £100 more than the price they bid on mine, so in the end the saving was worthwhile to them.

Whilst one half of eBay activity consists of people happily exchanging the contents of their lofts and garages for cash, the other half involves lucky punters finding the kind of bargains you used to be forced to trawl car boot sales and the classifieds for.

Although I started as a seller on eBay, I quickly became a buyer. For years I'd been trying to track down *The Cosby Show* on DVD. I then found it, but it was only available to members of a movie club in America and to join the club you had to have an address in the United States. I thought I'd reached a dead end until I tried searching for it on eBay and found there was a thriving trade in second-hand copies of the discs.

Now I use eBay as the first port of call for everything I buy. Recently I've bought a second-hand North Face ski jacket which was £185 less than the retail price and a brand new pair of Nike trainers, one of several on sale at a Buy It Now price of £19.99 because they were last year's design.

eBay offers the chance to secure the kind of bargains you feel compelled to tell people about and to find a new home for the most extraordinary of possessions. Now the time has come to introduce you to a website that will (and I don't say this lightly!) change your life and your shopping habits forever. Have fun!

Facts & Figures

The most expensive item sold on the UK website was Lady Thatcher's handbag, which went for £103,000.



PART ONE: eBAY BASICS



How eBay Was Born

Founded just over a decade ago, eBay is the most popular shopping site on the Internet, but contrary to popular belief it wasn't founder Pierre Omidyar's wife's fascination with little plastic sweet dispensers that gave him the idea that was to turn him into one of America's richest men.

The myth that eBay was conceived when Pierre's fiancée (now wife) Pam Wesley remarked on the difficulty she was having finding opportunities to buy and sell Pez dispensers was in fact dreamed up by a publicist looking for a human story behind this massive Internet success. You can still find references to the Pez story all over the Internet, in books and even in eBay's official history on the site, but sadly at best it's a spin on the truth.

The fact is Pierre – an early Internet enthusiast – was looking for a gap in the market. He knew that people needed a simple way to buy and sell all kinds of items on a level playing field and to meet other users with similar interests. He wasn't a hobbyist who stumbled on a brilliant idea, but one of Silicon Valley's canniest entrepreneurs. By the time he came up with the idea for eBay, he was already a self-made millionaire, having sold his business eShop to Microsoft whilst still in his twenties.

Established initially as the American auction site ebay.com, eBay now operates in 33 countries and its founder is worth some \$10.4 billion.

Facts & Figures

**Over half of the UK's
online population
visits the eBay online
marketplace at least
once a month.**



eBay Myths Exploded

I'm not technical – I don't think I could use eBay.

If you've got a computer, you are technical enough to use eBay! It wouldn't be as successful as it is if it wasn't very easy to use.

How does it work? Do you wait for the money before you send something?

Definitely! Once an item sells, the seller waits for payment and only when it's been received should the item be sent out.

What do you do with something that's too big to send in the post?

You list it choosing the 'Will arrange for local pickup only (no postage)' option. The winning

bidder will then either pay in advance of collection, so that funds can clear, or will pay in cash when they collect.

What happens if you pay for something and you never get it?

Two things. You can leave negative feedback so that anyone else who trades on eBay can see that you had problems with the seller; and in most cases you are protected by eBay, so they will refund any losses you have.

How do you find things?

It's just like an Internet search engine – you type in what you are looking for, hit return and eBay finds anything that matches.

How do people pay you?

By the usual old-fashioned methods like cheque or postal order, or most commonly by a simple electronic money transfer system called PayPal.

Weird & Wonderful eBay Sales

A 1926 Coca-Cola advertising sign sold on eBay for \$2,650.

I'm not sure I have anything I could sell.

I am and I've never even met you! One person's trash is another person's treasure. You'll be astonished by what people buy. Start by clearing out the loft, the garage and your wardrobe.

Can I sell my car/table/CDs on eBay?

There are restrictions on what you can sell on eBay but most people won't be affected by them: most of the prohibited items are illegal to trade anywhere, so it's just a matter of exercising some common sense. But you can't sell your pet on eBay, just in case you were thinking of it.



Setting Up an eBay Account

The first thing you'll have to do before you start snapping up bargains on eBay is register. Registration is free and, providing you have the right information at hand, it is pretty straightforward.

Before you start make sure you have the following details handy:

- a credit or debit card
- your bank details
- your full home address including postcode
- an e-mail address you can access easily
- your phone number