

The Moose Flats Guide To Ebay version 1.0
by Jeff Brzezinski

Ebay doesn't have to seem intimidating. Your identity is protected as well as with any online bank. Your level of responsibility is about the same as ordering something online, or selling something at a swap-meet. Armed with a little knowledge you can be expert at it in no time and reap the benefits.

Setting Up Your Ebay And Paypal Accounts:

Paypal was such a good idea that Ebay bought the company. You'll need both an Ebay and a Paypal account to buy and sell on Ebay. Registering is simply a matter of going to Ebay.com and Paypal.com and filling in the forms. Since you will be transferring money when you buy and sell, you'll have to provide Bank and/or credit-card information. The process is very secure and very much like registering to pay your Gas & Electric bill online. For Ebay you'll make a member username and password. For Paypal, your username is the email address you sign up with. Paypal is a Bank, so keep your passwords safe.

Fees:

To buy on Ebay and pay with Paypal costs nothing in fees. Zip, Nada, Zilch. For sellers, besides a miniscule listing fee, Ebay takes a cut of the selling price and the postage cost. Paypal takes a cut of money you receive through them. The combined total is something like 11 percent, which may sound like a lot, but for the massive, World-Wide exposure your items get, that's damn cheap.

Buying:

The search engine is what makes Ebay work. Don't search in a specific little category. For instance: If you are looking for an Athearn F7, don't search in Athearn, search in HO. That way you'll miss nothing.

A *Bidding-War* only benefits the seller. As a buyer, you want to minimize this. Just save the item in your Watch List for now. With rare exceptions, it's a good idea to wait until the closing seconds of an auction before placing your one bid. When there's a buyer out there who's determined to bid a big wad of cash for something, he's going to win. That's totally beyond your control, so let it go. There are really only two big mistakes in buying: One is driving-up the price and paying more than you have to, and the other is losing an item because you didn't bid what you were really willing to pay for it.

So here's the proven buying strategy:

- 1. Wait until about the last 10 seconds of an auction to place your bid.**
- 2. Always bid what you are really willing to pay for the item.**

The first rule keeps you out of any bidding war and driving up the price; and the second ensures you will never say, "Crap, I should have bid a little more!" **Ebay never uses more of your bid than what it takes to beat the next-highest bidder.** So go ahead and bid the maximum you would pay for the item. You'll almost always end-up paying a lot less.

Selling - Before You List An Item:

Before you go on Ebay and create an auction, you'll need to create your infrastructure for selling and shipping. With a little preparation, you can keep your overhead low.

Go to usps.com and create an account. You'll be able to order **free** Priority Mail boxes and print postage-paid shipping labels on your printer. There's a small online discount that helps offset the Ebay fee, and you get **free** Delivery Confirmation. You'll need an accurate postal scale. You can get excellent ones at low prices on Ebay.

Save packing materials. Reuse boxes and foam peanuts instead of buying them.

You'll need a digital camera and somewhere with a backdrop to take photos of your items. A towel draped over a chair works for small items. Now that Ebay hosts the photos for free, large photos are good.

So, take a photo of your item, put it in an open box and weigh it, and take it over to your computer and create an auction...

Selling - Listing Your Item:

Listing an item is just like filling-in an online form. Take your time with the first one and copy bits of it to speed up your next ones. But, remember Nancy Reagan, "Just say no." Do Not add any of the optional extras to your listing. They are a complete waste of money that buyers never notice anyway. If there's a little charge for something, you don't need it!

Choose one category only. Listing your item in two categories doubles your listing fee. Sellers have to list an item in a specific category, but savvy shoppers know to search in a higher-level tier (Like HO rather than Athearn.)

Choose your title well: The Title's main function is to show-up in buyer's searches. It doesn't have to be good grammar. It's more important to use the limited space for words that might show up in a search. Ask yourself what would you type if you were looking for the item and include those words. The stock number is a good idea if you have room. If there's a road name, include the initials as well as the words.

The other function of the Title is to catch the eye of the casual browser. Words like *Mint*, *Rare* and *New-In-Box* are not searched-for, but if you have room left on the line, they can attract attention to your auction.

Describe the item as if you were talking to someone about it. I have found that items with detailed descriptions sell better than listings with just the item's name and a photo. Be honest about the condition. If, like me, you do not want to accept returns, it's even more important to note the imperfections. The very few unpleasant dealings I've had with sellers have involved their non-disclosure about an item.

The starting price is your choice. This is very subjective and it's hard to give advice about. I've read that auctions with 1-cent starting prices get more traffic and on average, bring a higher selling price. But it's hard to put that brass loco out there for a penny! Just don't slap a retail price on something and expect it to get any bids. You can also set a Reserve Price, but that will add to your listing fee.

Charging a handling fee is weasel behavior and most buyers resent it. I recommend using the Ebay Postage Calculator without an additional handling fee. Use it as a selling point. You know your package weight and your Shipping Infrastructure all ready, so tell the buyers you'll ship within one business day. Once you have your shipping policy written the way you want it, you can cut-and-paste it into your new auctions.

When you are happy with your auction, click the box that says "save as template." This will give you an outline you can start with next time. Now list your auction. You're in business!

Handling Your Customers:

You're already set up for shipping, so it's easy. Ebay will send the winning bidder an Invoice with a click or two. There's a place to include a note, if you wish; something like, "Thank you for your winning bid. I will have the package ready to ship in the morning, pending Paypal payment."

If you click the Ebay/Paypal shipping button, you won't have to fill-in the buyer's address, but you won't get the online discount, either! They're getting enough of the pie; print your label at usps.com instead.

The Ebay feedback system is not perfect, but it's a lot better than it used to be. When a bidder pays, leave them a positive Ebay feedback right away. If a bidder pays on time the only feedback you can leave is positive, so do it early and build some good-will.

You can also send a message when you ship the package. That gives you an opportunity to say, "Enjoy your item. I hope you will leave me some positive Ebay feedback, or let me know if I could have done anything better." This friendliness is a radical approach, but most people respond to it in kind.

Auction Magic or Snipe

Once you become more familiar and comfortable with Ebay, you might find yourself doing most of your shopping there. At the very least you can see what something is going-for before purchasing it elsewhere. For \$10 you can buy a program called Auction Magic. It will handle all your *snipe* bids, at the bid and time you set. This way you don't have to be there at the end of an auction.