



*Your guide to online auction success!*

# eBay™

# FOR DUMMIES®

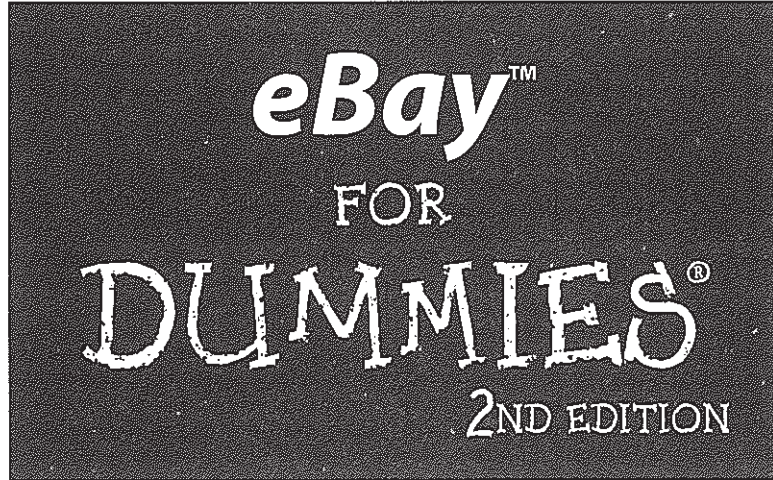
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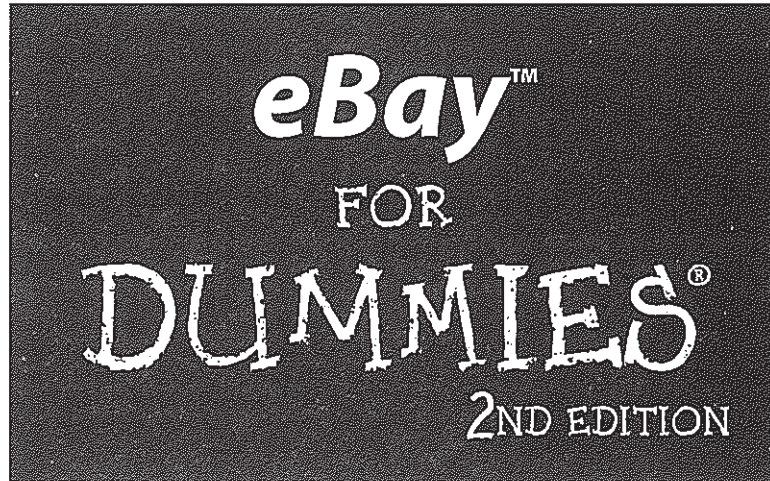
*Packed with savvy tips  
for bidders and  
expert advice for  
sellers!*

***A Reference  
for the  
Rest of Us!®***

**Marsha Collier  
Roland Woerner  
Stephanie Becker**







**by Marsha Collier,  
Roland Woerner, and  
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Hungry Minds™

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## Chapter 4

# My Own Private eBay

.....

### *In This Chapter*

- ▷ Making the My eBay page: a space to call your own
  - ▷ Keeping tabs on what you're buying and selling
  - ▷ Rolling with the feedback that makes the eBay world go 'round (*all* 'round)
- .....

**W**e know eBay is a sensitive kind of company because it gives all users plenty of personal space. This space is called the My eBay page, and it's your private listing of all your activities on eBay — sort of a “This is your eBay life.” We think it's the greatest organizational tool around and want to talk to somebody about getting one for organizing life outside of eBay.

In this chapter, we show you how you can use the My eBay page to keep tabs on what you're buying and selling, find out how much money you've spent, and add categories to your own personalized list so you can get to any favorite eBay place with just a click of your mouse. We give you the ins and outs of feedback — what it is, why it can give you that warm, fuzzy feeling, and how to manage it so all that cyber-positive reinforcement doesn't go to your head.

## *Your My eBay Page*

Using your My eBay page makes keeping track of your eBay life a whole lot easier. And getting there is easy enough. After you register at eBay, you have two easy ways to get to your My eBay page. The most practical way to enter eBay is always through the Sign In link (see Chapter 3). If you haven't signed in, you can access your My eBay page by following these steps:

- 1. On the top of any eBay page, click the My eBay link in the upper-right corner of the page.**

You're sent to the My eBay Sign In page (see Figure 4-1).

home | my eBay | site map | sign in

ebay™

Browse Sell Services Search Help Community

overview registration buying & selling my eBay about me feedback forum safe harbor

Check out [Modern and Contemporary Art](#) on eBay Great Collections.  Search tips

Search titles and descriptions

---

**My eBay** [Update or change information about yourself](#)

Want to keep track of all your bidding and selling activities with one click of the mouse? Considered by many users as one of the best features on the web site, *My eBay* instantly creates an at-a-glance trade activity page accessible only by you. Try it now! It's free and only takes seconds to set up.

Your **User ID**:

You can also use your email address.

Your **Password**:

[Forgot your password?](#)

Save time by signing in. (You may also sign in securely.)

**Figure 4-1:**  
The My  
eBay Sign In  
page.



You don't have to be on the eBay Home page to find My eBay or Sign In. As you maneuver around the Web site, the links follow you like Mona Lisa's eyes.



## 2. Type in your User ID and password.

If you forget your eBay User ID, you can type in your e-mail address instead. Your User ID appears in any search results, posts, or pages that come up using your e-mail address.

Before moving on to the next step, you may want to scroll down to the area that enables you to update your eBay information. At the bottom of the My eBay Sign In page are some extremely handy links. Although (as a new eBay member) you don't need to do all this stuff right away, links are available to

- Change your User ID
- Change your password
- Change your registration information (if you change your address or phone number)
- Report a change of e-mail address
- Change your notification parameters (what e-mails and/or notifications you want eBay to send to your mailbox)
- Create your own About Me page

## 3. Click the Enter button to enter My eBay.

You've arrived at your My eBay page (see Figure 4-2).



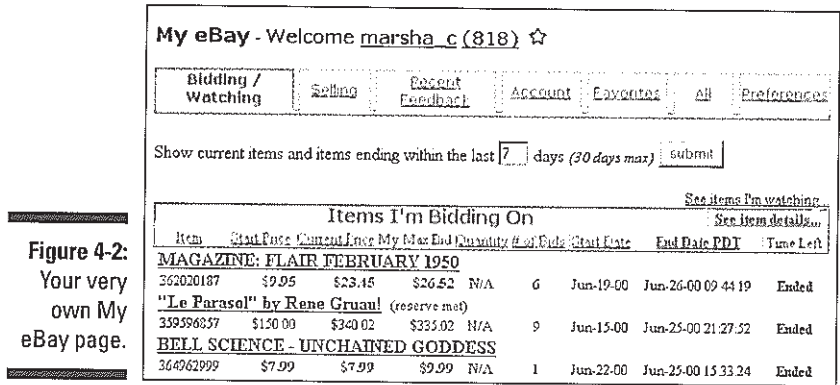


Figure 4-2: Your very own My eBay page.

The My eBay page consists of seven tabs: Bidding/Watching, Selling, Recent Feedback, Account, Favorites, All, and Preferences. Table 4-1 gives you a little scoop about each of the tabs.

Table 4-1	The Display Tabs on Your My eBay Page
Click Here	To See This on Your My eBay Page
Bidding/Watching	Every auction you're currently bidding on items. Further down the page, you find every auction that you've marked to watch.
Selling	Every auction in which you're currently selling items.
Recent Feedback	The last five feedback comments about you and links that send you to all your feedback, all the feedback you've left, and an area where you can respond to feedback.
Account	What you currently owe eBay and links you to locations where you can get info on payment terms, fees and credits, and refunds. It also links to your My Billpoint Account.
Favorites	Links to your favorite item listings.
All	All the tab items from your My eBay page seen in one scrollable page.
Preferences	Lets you select the activities in which you want eBay to remember your password so that you don't have to type it every time (like when selling, bidding, managing items, and so on). It also gives you the option to display e-mail addresses while browsing eBay.



## Houston, we don't have a problem

Here's an item we wish we'd sold: a Neil Armstrong signed NASA portrait w/COA (Certificate of Authenticity). It was a very clean 8-x-10-inch color NASA portrait signed and inscribed by Neil Armstrong, the first human on the moon. In recent years, Armstrong has been very reclusive, and his autographs are difficult to obtain in any form. Many forgeries are being offered, so buyer beware. This portrait came

with a lifetime COA. The starting price was \$10, and the portrait sold on eBay for \$520!

Many believe (including us) that Neil Armstrong's autograph will be among the most important of the twentieth century. Just think of it. He was the first human to step onto another celestial body. This feat may never happen again, and certainly not in our lifetimes.



*Save yourself time and bookmark this page.* eBay lets you view your page from a bookmark. But note that to take advantage of the Sign In feature, you still have to (you guessed it) sign in.



Don't confuse the My eBay page with the About Me page. The About Me page is a personal home page that you can create to let other eBay members know about you. (You don't have to have an About Me page if you don't want to.) We tell you all about the About Me page in Chapter 13.

## Choosing Your My eBay Preferences

One of the tabs at the top of your My eBay page is Preferences. eBay created the Preferences feature to help you avoid having to type your password every time you do certain activities, such as bid, check your account balance, and participate in auctions. The only catch is that you have to sign in before you can set your preferences.

The first time you enter the Preferences page (by clicking the Preferences tab on the My eBay page), you see that eBay requires you to sign in before going any further. So, click on the link above the navigation bar and sign in. After you do so with your User ID and password, a link appears, offering to send you back to the Preferences tab. Click the link, and you're presented with the Sign In and Display Preferences page. The options boxes have checks in them. You can customize those options by clearing the checks from the boxes (one click per box does it). Choosing your options by pointing and clicking is a little like ordering dinner at a Chinese restaurant: Choose what you want and pass the soy sauce.



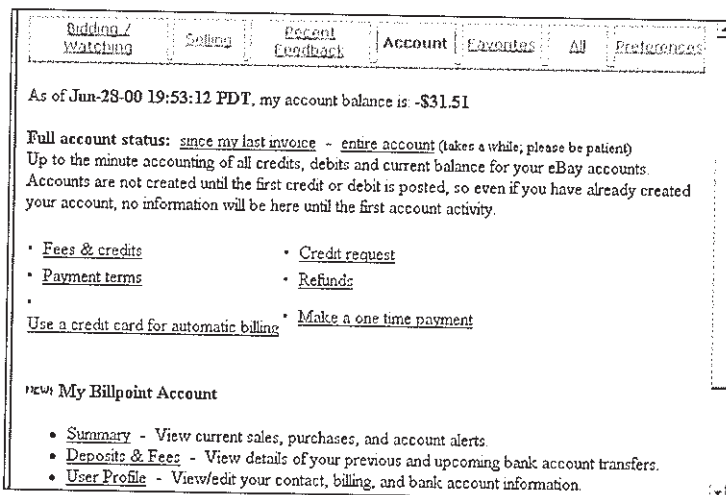
When you finally get to your My eBay page, save yourself a lot of work — use your browser to bookmark your My eBay page as a favorite. Doing so saves you a lot of keystrokes later on. Some folks make their My eBay page their browser home page so they can see it the minute they log in. That's dedication. You still have to Sign In to avoid inputting your User ID and password at every turn.

## Setting Up Your Account

When you first explore your My eBay page, you'll see that your eBay account has not been activated. The eBay folks only charge you a fee when you list something to sell. Even if the item doesn't sell, eBay keeps the fee. It doesn't cost you a nickel in fees to look around or sign up — or even to buy. (For details on how eBay charges you for its services, see Chapter 9.)

Even though you've already become a registered eBay user (if you haven't registered see Chapter 2), you don't have to submit your credit card information until you plan to list an item for auction or until you bid in an auction that has special rules requiring a credit card. You can provide eBay with this credit card information right from your My eBay Account page. Figure 4-3 shows you what the Account section of the My eBay page is all about.

You can look up every detail of your account history, as well as make changes to your personal preferences (such as how and when you want to pay fees). If you think eBay owes you money, you can do a refund request from here as well. Before you jump into the money game, you may want to review the links eBay gives you to manage your money:



**Figure 4-3:**  
The  
Account  
section of  
the My eBay  
page.

## Nice shades!

For the first 30 days after you change your User ID (which you can do anytime, as Chapter 2 shows) — eBay gives you a pair of sunglasses that stays next to your User ID every time it appears on eBay (when you bid, run an auction, or post a message on any of the chat boards).

So why the sunglasses? eBay calls them *shades*. They're sort of a friendly heads-up to others that you are a new user or have changed your User ID. You still have all the privileges that everybody else has on eBay while you're breaking in your new identity. Remember: The shades are nothing personal, just business as usual.



- ✔ **Fees and Credits.** Click here to get a complete explanation of the eBay fee structure.
  - ✔ **Payment Terms.** Click here to get a complete explanation of how eBay collects its fees.
  - ✔ **Use a Credit Card for Automatic Billing.** Although all sellers must provide a credit card, you don't have to use this credit card to pay your monthly fees — unless you're using one of eBay's international sites, which require credit-card payment. You may pay with a check or money order if you wish. Click here and fill in the information. Even though eBay welcomes Visa, you may also use your American Express, Discover, or MasterCard. You can also change credit cards here at any time. Every month, eBay charges your card for fees you incurred the previous month. You can see these charges on your credit card statement as well as on your eBay account.
- When you give eBay your credit card information, eBay attempts to authorize your card immediately. Your credit company's response, either Declined or Approved, appears on your Account Status page.
- ✔ **Credit Request.** If you sell an item and the buyer backs out (usually, this is even rarer than a blue moon), you can at least get a refund on some of the fees that eBay charges you as a seller. These are the *final value fees*, and they're based on the selling price of the item. This link takes you to the Final Value Fee Credit Request page.

Before you can collect a Final Value Fee refund, the following conditions must apply:

- After your auction, you have to allow bidders at least seven business days to contact you.
- After the seven days have elapsed and you have the feeling that you're not going to see your money, you must file a Non-Paying Bidder Alert. After you file this notice, eBay sends you and the bidder a very ominous e-mail reminding the bidder to complete the transaction. You have up to 45 days from the end of the auction to file this alert — and you can't get a Final Value Fee credit without filing this alert.

- The next ten days after you file the Non-Paying Bidder Alert are your “work out” period — the period where you and the bidder hopefully complete your transaction. You may try to give the bidder a call to resolve the situation during this time.
- After the 10 days have passed but no more than 60 days have elapsed since the end of the auction, you may file for a Final Value Fee credit.

✓ **Refunds.** If your account has a credit balance in it of \$1 or more that you’re not planning to use, you can get it back by clicking the Refund link. If you’ve used the Sign In feature, you merely click the box to get to a printable refund request coupon. If you haven’t used the Sign In feature, you have to type your user name and password to access the personalized form. Print out the form on the page, fill it out, and then either fax it or send it by mail to eBay.

✓ **Make a One-Time Payment.** If you’re about to hit your credit limit or you don’t want eBay making monthly charges on your credit card, you can make a one-time payment. Click the link to make a payment. To pay by check, you need an eBay payment coupon, which you can get by typing in your User ID and password (if you’d have used the Sign In feature, you wouldn’t have to do this), clicking either the Check or Money Order payment button, printing out the coupon page, and following the directions. If you want to make a one-time credit card payment, click the credit card box and get to an SSL-secured area to type in your information. Click Submit, and the stuff is sent to eBay for processing. Just that easy, just that simple.

The downside of paying eBay fees by check or money order is that you are charged if you bounce a check, miss a payment, or use Canadian dollars instead of U.S. dollars. You’re supposed to get an e-mail invoice at the end of the month, but even if you don’t, eBay expects to be paid on time. A word to the wise: Keep close tabs on your account status if you choose to pay this way.



No matter what payment option you choose, you can check your account status at any time. Your account status lists all your transactions with eBay over the last two months. If you want a more detailed account, you can click the Entire Account link on your Account page and see a record of every transaction you’ve ever done.



When you choose to see your entire account, eBay may take a little while to put all your transactions on-screen. How long depends on the number of auctions you’ve run at eBay. Don’t be alarmed. eBay’s just sifting through the endless list of completed auctions that have been run on the site. Just another example of why people say the *www* in Web addresses really stands for *World Wide Wait*.

Note that the Account page also has a new feature called Online Payments by Billpoint. If you use the Billpoint service for transactions at eBay, you can use the following links:

- ✓ **Summary.** To see the current sales and purchases on your My Billpoint account.
- ✓ **Deposits & Fees.** For details of your previous and upcoming bank transfers.
- ✓ **User Profile.** To view and edit your personal information.

Check out chapter 10 for more on the Billpoint service.

## Getting Your Favorites Area Together

Part of the fun of eBay is actually searching around for stuff that you'd never in a million years think of looking for. Wacky stuff aside, most eBay users spend their time hunting for specific items — say, Barbies, Elvis memorabilia, or U.S. stamps. That's why eBay came up with the Favorites area of your My eBay page. Whenever you view your My eBay Favorites page, you see a list of four of your favorite categories. Because eBay isn't psychic, you have to tell it what you want listed.



You can only choose four categories to be your favorites, so with over 4,000 categories to choose from, you need to make your choices count. If you're having a hard time narrowing down your category picks, don't worry: Your choices aren't set in stone. You can change your Favorites list whenever you want. (Chapter 3 offers details on eBay categories.)

To choose your favorite categories and list them on your My eBay Favorites page, follow these steps:

- 1. Click the Favorites tab and click the Here link further down the page.**

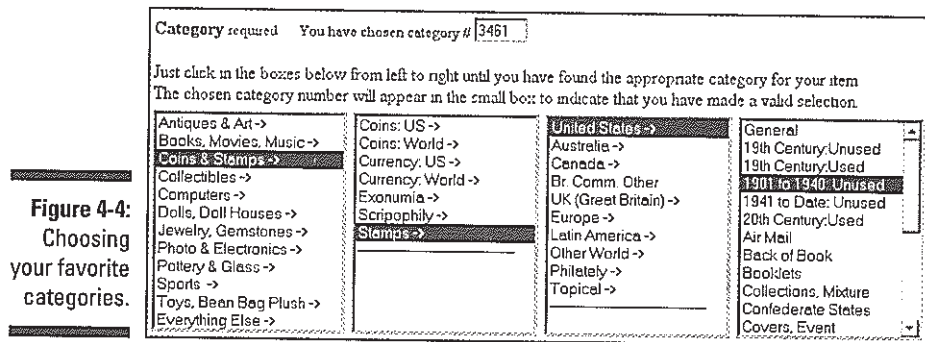
The link takes you to the User Preferences page.

- 2. Scroll down the User Preferences page to the Favorite Category 1 heading.**

You see four separate windows, each containing category listings. These windows contain all of eBay's categories and subcategories and sub-subcategories and sub-sub-subcategories.

**3. In the far left column, click the category you want.**

Automatically, the column to the right changes to reflect more choices based on the main category you selected. Be sure to highlight the categories and subcategories you want, as shown in Figure 4-4.



**4. Continue across from left to right.**

Depending on your choices, you may have to scroll through each window to find the subcategory you're looking for. Once you've completed your choice, a number appears in the window at the top. That's your category number.

**5. Repeat this process for Favorites Category 2 through Category 4.**

If you don't want to use all four choices, just delete any numbers in the chosen category window.

**6. Click the Submit button at the bottom of the page.**

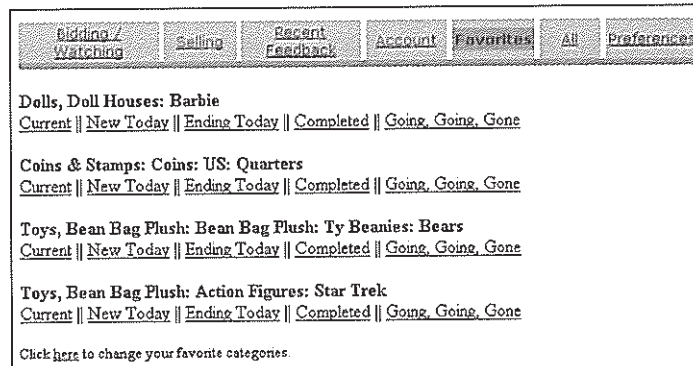
You get an acknowledgment that your changes have been made. Just click the My eBay link at the top of the page, and you see that your new favorite categories are waiting for you.

Remember, if you're not signed in you have to enter your User ID and password.



How specific to get when choosing your favorites depends on how many items you want to see. The more you narrow down your focus, the fewer items you have to wade through. The more general your favorite, the broader the range of items you have to view. Just below each of your favorites are five options for screening your favorites (see Figure 4-5). Which link you choose to view auctions depends on what kind of information you're looking for. Whether you're doing some preliminary searching on a category or monitoring the last few days (or minutes) of an auction, there's a link that sorts auctions and meets your needs best.

**Figure 4-5:**  
The Favorites category display option on the My eBay page shows a few of our favorite places.



Here's a list of the sorting options and when to use them:

- ✔ **Current:** Shows you every item currently being auctioned in the category, with the newest items shown first. If you want to look at all the current auctions for a category, you end up with a gazillion pages of items awaiting sale in a particular category for the next week.
- ✔ **New Today:** Shows you every item that was put up for auction during the past 24 hours. The little rising sun *icon* (picture) next to the item tells you that the item was listed today.
- ✔ **Ending Today:** Shows you every auction that is closing today. The ending time is printed in red if the auction closes within five hours.



If you're pressed for time, we suggest that you use either the category link [New Today](#) or [Ending Today](#). Both of these links automatically narrow down the number of listed auctions to a manageable number. For more information on narrowing down searches at eBay, see Chapter 5.

- ✔ **Completed:** Shows you every auction that ended in the last two days. The Completed link gives you a good idea of how the market is going for an item, which helps you plan your own buying.
- ✔ **Going, Going, Gone:** Shows you every auction that's ending in the next five hours, all the way down to the last few seconds. This link offers a great way to find items you can bid on down to the wire.



When you view auctions from the [Going, Going, Gone](#) link, remember that eBay only updates this page every hour or so, so be sure to read the Auction End time. (Use the eBay time conversion chart on our Web site, [www.coolbaytools.com](http://www.coolbaytools.com), to decipher time differences.) Due to this same hourly update, sometimes the [Going, Going, Gone](#) items actually *are gone* — the auction has ended.





Got the time? eBay does. Click eBay Official Time (you can find it on the far left column of the Site Map or on the page with results of any search). The eBay clock is so accurate that you can set your watch to it. And you may want to, especially if you plan to get a last-second bid in before an auction closes. After all, eBay's official time is, um, *official*. A quick link to the eBay current date and time that you may want to bookmark is

`cgi3.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?TimeShow`

## All Sorts of Sorting: Keeping Track of Your Auction Items

If you want to keep tabs on the items you're selling and bidding on (and why wouldn't you?), start thinking about how to sort them *before* you start looking for the first item you want to bid on. That's also pretty good advice for planning your own first auction.

### Sorting auction items using the My eBay Sign In page

Sometimes it seems that eBay gives you too many options. There are eight — count 'em, *eight* — ways to sort items you're selling and bidding on from the My eBay page. That gives you a lot of options to think about, dwell on, and ponder. Each sorting method does pretty much the same thing, so pick the one that catches your eye and don't lose any sleep over your choice. After all, life's too short — and here you can change anything by clicking your mouse on the option titles. (Wish the rest of life were like that?) Table 4-2 goes into more detail about sorting methods.

<i>Sort by</i>	<i>Does This</i>
Item	Lists items alphabetically by what they're called.
Start Price	Lists items by their opening prices.
Current Price	Lists items by current highest bid. This listing changes often.

(continued)

<b>Sort by</b>	<b>Does This</b>
Reserve	Lists items by the secret reserve price you set when you started the auction (only for items you're selling). For more on reserve auctions, turn to Chapter 10.
Quantity	Lists items according to how many are available. For example, if you're bidding on an item in a Dutch auction, anywhere from 2 to 100 of exactly the same item may be auctioned at the same time (see Chapters 7 and 10 to see how Dutch auctions work).
# of Bids	Lists items by the number of bids they've received.
Start Date	Lists items based on when the auction began.
End Date PDT	Lists items based on when the auction finishes. This is one option that eBay automatically chooses for you if you don't select one on your own. This is the way most people view their lists.

All auctions at eBay are based on Pacific Daylight or Standard Time, depending on the time of year. This is true whether you live in sunny California or Vitamin-C-rich Florida or anywhere else in the world.



One thing you must decide is how long you want eBay to show the information about the items you're buying and selling on your My eBay page. You can show an item's history for as long as 30 days. There's a box on the My eBay page where you can type in how many days of eBay history you want to show on your pages (see Figure 4-6). Just type in the number of days you want to display information and click the Submit button.

## *Staying organized on your own*

Yeah, we're going to bug you about printing stuff out — not because we're in cahoots with the paper industry but because we care. The best way to protect yourself is to keep good records on your own. Don't depend on eBay to cover you — not that eBay *doesn't* care. But this is *your* money, so keep a close eye on it.

Now don't become a pack rat and overdo it, but here's a list of important documents we think you should print and file whether you're a buyer or a seller:

- ✓ Auction pages as they appear when they close
- ✓ Bank statements indicating any payment you receive that doesn't clear
- ✓ Insurance or escrow forms

- ✓ Refund and credit requests
- ✓ Receipts from purchases you make for items to sell on eBay



Always, always, *always* save any and every e-mail message you receive about a transaction, whether you buy or sell. Also save your *EOAs* (End of Auction e-mails) that eBay sends. For more information about EOAs and correspondence etiquette after the auction is over, see Chapters 8 and 11.

Why should you save all this stuff? Here are some reasons:

- ✓ Even if you're buying and selling just a couple of items a month on eBay, you need to keep track of who you owe and who owes you money.
- ✓ Good e-mail correspondence is a learned art, but if you reference item numbers, your e-mail is an instant record. If you put your dates in writing — and follow up — you've got yourself a nice, neat paper trail.
- ✓ Documenting the transaction through e-mail will come in handy if you ever end up in a dispute over the terms of the sale.
- ✓ If you sell specialized items, you can keep track of trends and who your frequent buyers are.
- ✓ Someday the IRS may come knocking on your door, especially if you buy stuff for the purpose of selling it on eBay. Scary but true. For more on where you can get tax information, take a look at Chapter 9.



When it comes to keeping records via e-mail and documents about transactions, we say that after you've received your feedback (positive, of course), you can dump it. If you get negative feedback (how could you?), hang on to your paperwork for a little longer. Use your discretion, but generally you can toss the paperwork from a bad transaction after it's reached some sort of resolution. (You can find out more about feedback in the very next section.)



Once a month, we do a seller search on ourselves and print out our latest eBay history. You can also check your selling history on eBay by using My eBay and printing out items on selling item details by using the Details link. Chapter 5 tells you more about doing seller searches, organizing your searches, and starting files on items you want to track.

## Getting and Giving Feedback

You know how they say you are what you eat? At eBay, you are what your feedback says you are. Your feedback is made up of comments — good, bad, or neutral — that people leave about you (and you leave about others). In effect, folks are commenting on your overall professionalism. (Even if you're an eBay hobbyist with no thought of using it professionally, a little business-like courtesy can ease your transactions with everyone.) These comments are the basis for your eBay reputation.

When you get your first feedback, the number that appears next to your User ID is your feedback rating, which follows you everywhere you go at eBay, even if you change your User ID. It's stuck to you like glue. Click the number next to any User ID and get a complete look at his or her feedback profile. The thinking behind the feedback concept is that you wouldn't be caught dead in a store that has a lousy reputation, so why on Earth would you want to do business on the Internet with someone who has a lousy reputation?



You're not required to leave feedback, but because it's the benchmark by which all eBay users are judged, we think whether you're buying or selling you should always leave feedback comments. Get in the frame of mind that every time you complete a transaction — the minute the check clears if you're a seller and the minute an item you've bid on and won arrives — you should go to eBay and post your feedback.

Every time you get a positive comment from a user who hasn't commented before, you get a point. Every time you get a negative rating, this negative cancels out one of your positives. Neutral comments rate a zero — they have no impact either way. eBay even has what it calls the Star Chart, shown in Figure 4-6, which rewards those with good-and-getting-higher feedback ratings.

**Figure 4-6:**  
Ready for  
your close-  
up? Become  
a star with  
The Star  
Chart.

#### The Star Chart

Stars are awarded for achieving a particular Feedback Profile

A "Yellow Star" (☆) represents a Feedback Profile of 10 to 99.

A "Turquoise Star" (★) represents a Feedback Profile of 100 to 499.

A "Purple Star" (★) represents a Feedback Profile of 500 to 999.

A "Red Star" (★) represents a Feedback Profile of 1,000 to 9,999.

A "Shooting Star" (★) represents a Feedback Profile of 10,000 or higher.



The flip side (or Dark Side to you fans of *Star Wars*) of the star system is negative numbers. Negative comments deduct from your total of positive comments, thereby lowering the number beside your User ID. If you get nailed with enough negative feedback comments, your star is swiped by eBay and you're condemned to hang out with Darth Vader and his gang.

**eBay riddle:** When is more than one still one? Gotcha, huh? The answer is, when you get more than one feedback message from the same person. Confused? This should help: You can sell one person a hundred different items, but even if the buyer gives you a glowing review 100 times, your feedback rating doesn't increase by 100. In this case, the other 99 feedback comments appear in your Feedback Profile, but your rating only increases by one. There's one other thing: Say you sell to the same eBay user twice. The user could give you positive feedback in one case and negative feedback in another case — neutralizing your feedback by netting you a 0 feedback rating from this person. eBay set the system up this way to keep things honest.



Anyone with a -4 rating has his or her eBay membership terminated. Remember, just because a user may have a 750 feedback rating, it doesn't hurt to click the number after the name to double check the person's eBay ID card. Even if someone has a total of 1,000 feedback messages, 250 of them *could* be negative.



You can get to your personal Feedback Profile page right from your My eBay page by clicking the link that says See All Feedback about Me in the Feedback area.

Feedback comes in three exciting flavors:

- ✓ **Positive feedback.** Someone once said, "All you have is your reputation." Reputation is what makes eBay function. If the transaction works well, you get positive feedback; whenever it's warranted, you should give it right back.
- ✓ **Negative feedback.** If there's a glitch (for instance, it takes six months to get your *Charlie's Angels* lunchbox or the seller substitutes a rusty thermos for the one you bid on or you never get the item), you have the right — some would say *obligation* — to leave negative feedback.
- ✓ **Neutral feedback.** Neutral feedback can be left if you feel so-so about a specific transaction. It's the middle-of-the-road comment. Say you bought an item that had a little more wear and tear on it than the seller indicated, but you still like it and want to keep it.

## How to get positive feedback

If you're selling, here's how to get a good rep:

- ✓ Establish contact with the buyer (pronto!) after the auction ends (see Chapter 11).
- ✓ After you've received payment, send out the item quickly (see Chapter 11).
- ✓ Make sure that your item is exactly the way you described it (see Chapter 10).
- ✓ Package the item well and ship it with care (see Chapter 11).
- ✓ React quickly and appropriately to problems — say, the item's lost or damaged in the mail or the buyer is slow in paying (see Chapter 11).

If you're buying, try these good-rep tips:

- ✓ Send your payment out fast (see Chapter 8).
- ✓ Keep in touch via e-mail with the seller (see Chapter 8).
- ✓ Work with the seller to resolve any problems in a courteous manner (see Chapters 8 and 11).

## How to get negative feedback

If you're selling, here's what to do to tarnish your name big time:

- ✔ Tell a major fib in the item description. (Defend truth, justice, and legitimate creative writing — see Chapter 10.)
- ✔ Take the money but “forget” to ship the item. (Who did you say you are? See Chapter 16.)
- ✔ Package the item poorly so that it ends up smashed, squashed, or vaporized during shipping. (To avoid this pathetic fate, see Chapter 11.)

If you're buying, here's how to make your rep a serious mess:

- ✔ Bid on an item, win the auction, and never respond to the seller. (Remember your manners and see Chapter 6.)
- ✔ Send a personal check that bounces and never make good on the payment. (See Chapter 16 — and don't pass Go.)
- ✔ Ask the seller for a refund because you just don't like the item. (Remember how to play fair and see Chapter 8.)

## The Feedback Profile page

At the bottom of the feedback section is a link called See All Feedback about Me. Click it, and you end up at the Feedback Profile page (see Figure 4-7). Think of the Feedback Profile page as your eBay report card. Your goal is to get straight “A”s — in this case, all positive feedback. Unlike a real report card, you don't have to bring it home to be signed.

**Figure 4-7:**  
The Feedback Profile page — your eBay report card.

**Overall profile makeup**

859 positives. 733 are from unique users and count toward the final rating.

1 neutrals. 0 are from users no longer registered.

0 negatives. 0 are from unique users and count toward the final rating.

**eBay ID card** cardking4 (733)

Member since Monday, Sep 21, 1008 ☆

**Summary of Most Recent Comments**

	Past 7 days	Past month	Past 6 mo.
Positive	12	45	325
Neutral	0	0	0
Negative	0	0	0
Total	12	45	325
<u>Bid Retractions</u>	0	0	0

[Auctions](#) by cardking4

You can [leave feedback](#) for this user. Visit the [Feedback Forum](#) for more info on feedback profiles.

If you are cardking4 (733) ☆, you can [respond to comments](#) in this Feedback Profile.

Items 1-25 of 860 total



## Extra, extra, read all about it

Normally, we say, "Keep your business private." But not when it comes to feedback. The default setting is for public viewing of your feedback. This way, everyone at eBay can read all about you.

If you want to make your feedback a private matter, you need to go to the Feedback Forum, click the link [Make Feedback Changes Public or Private](#), and reset it to Private.

We think hiding your feedback is a bad idea. You want people to know that you're trustworthy;

being honest and up-front is the way to go. If you hide your Feedback Profile, people may suspect that you're covering up bad things. It's in your best interest to let the spotlight shine on your feedback history.

It's your rep, your money, and your experience as an eBay member. It's wise to keep in mind that all three are always linked.

Here's what's on the Feedback Profile page:

- ✔ **Your User ID.** Your eBay nickname appears, followed by a number in parentheses — the total number of the feedback comments you've received, minus any negative feedback you may have gotten (but that wouldn't happen to you . . .).
- ✔ **Your overall profile makeup.** This area sums up the positive, negative, and neutral feedback comments people have left for you.
- ✔ **Your eBay ID card with a summary of most recent comments.** This area is a scorecard of your feedback for the last six months. At the bottom of the feedback tote board is a summary of your bid retractions — the times you have retracted bids during an auction.



Be careful when you retract a bid. All bids on eBay are binding, but under what eBay calls "exceptional circumstances," you may retract bids — very sparingly. Here are the circumstances in which it's okay to retract a bid:

- ✔ If you've mistakenly put in the wrong bid amount — say, \$100 instead of \$10
- ✔ If the seller adds to his or her description after you've placed your bid, and the change considerably affects the item
- ✔ If you can't authenticate the seller's identity



You can't retract a bid just because you found the item elsewhere cheaper or you changed your mind or you decided that you really can't afford the item. See Chapter 6 for more information on retracting bids.

## Reading your feedback

Your eBay reputation is at the mercy of the one-liners the buyers and sellers leave for you in the form of feedback comments.

Each feedback box contains these reputation-building (or -trashing) ingredients:

- ✔ The User ID of the person who sent it. The number in parentheses next to the person's name is the number of feedback comments he or she has received.
- ✔ The date and time the feedback was posted.
- ✔ The item number of the transaction that the feedback refers to.
- ✔ Feedback comes in different colors: praise (in green), negative (in red), or neutral (in black).
- ✔ The feedback the person left about you.

## You have the last word — use it!

After reading feedback you've received from others, you may feel compelled to respond. If the feedback is negative, you may want to defend yourself. If it's positive, you may want to say *thank you*.

To respond to feedback:

1. **In the feedback section of your My eBay page (or from the Feedback Forum), click on the Review and Respond to Feedback about Me link.**

You're transported to the Review and Respond to Feedback Comments Left for You page (see Figure 4-8).

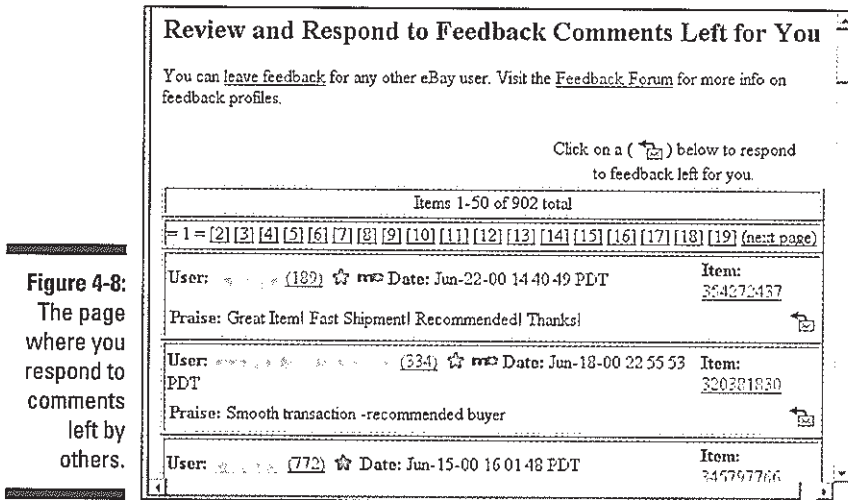
2. **When you find the feedback you want to respond to, click the small icon of an envelope with an arrow.**
3. **If you have not signed in, type your User ID and password into the appropriate boxes.**

Always keep your password a secret. If you suspect somebody may know your password, change it before that person has a chance to sign in as you and ruin your reputation. (For more on selecting and protecting your level of privacy, see Chapters 1 and 14.)

4. **Type in your response.**







**Figure 4-8:**  
The page where you respond to comments left by others.

## Leaving feedback with finesse

Believe it or not, writing feedback well takes some practice. It isn't a matter of saying things; it's a matter of saying *only the appropriate things*. Think carefully about what you want to say because once you submit feedback, it stays with the person for the duration of his or her eBay career. We think you should always leave feedback, especially at the end of a transaction, although doing so isn't mandatory. Think of leaving feedback as voting in an election: If you don't leave feedback, you can't complain about lousy service.

eBay says to make feedback "factual and emotionless." You won't go wrong if you comment on the details (either good or bad) of the transaction. If you have any questions about what eBay says about feedback, click the Services link at the top of every eBay page; then click Feedback Forum on the subnavigation bar that automatically appears (or go to the user agreement by clicking the link at the bottom of almost every eBay page).

In the Feedback Forum, you can perform six feedback-related tasks:

- ✓ **See feedback about an eBay user.**
- ✓ **Leave feedback for many auctions at once.** Here, you see all pending feedback for all transactions within the past 60 days. You are presented with a page of all your transactions for which you haven't left feedback. Fill them in, one at a time, and with one click, you can leave as many as 25 feedback comments at once.

- ✔ Review and respond to existing feedback about you.
- ✔ Review the feedback you have left for others.
- ✔ Make your Feedback Profile public or private. Remember, if you make your Feedback Profile private, you may hinder your future business on eBay.
- ✔ Check the Feedback FAQ to review any changes in the feedback system.



In the real world (at least in the modern American version of it), anybody can sue anybody else for slander or libel at any time; this fact holds true on the Internet, too. It's a good idea to be careful not to make any comments that could be libelous or slanderous. eBay is not responsible for your actions, so if you are sued because of negative feedback (or anything else you've written), you're on your own. The best way to keep yourself safe is to stick to the facts and don't get personal.

## Mincing words: The at-a-glance guide to keeping feedback short

eBay likes to keep things simple. If you want to compliment, complain, or take the middle road, you have to do it in 80 characters or less. That means your comment needs to be short and sweet (or short and sour if it's negative, or sweet and sour if you're mixing drinks or ordering Chinese food). If you have a lot to say but you're stumped about how to say it, here are a few examples for any occasion. String them together or mix and match!

### Positive feedback:

- ✔ Very professional
- ✔ Quick e-mail response
- ✔ Fast service
- ✔ A+++
- ✔ Exactly as described
- ✔ Wonderful merchandise
- ✔ Smooth transaction
- ✔ Would deal with again

- ✔ An asset to eBay
- ✔ Highly recommended

### Negative feedback:

- ✔ Never responded
- ✔ Deadbeat
- ✔ Steer clear!
- ✔ BADI
- ✔ Beware track record
- ✔ Do not do business here
- ✔ Not as described
- ✔ Watch out — you won't get paid

### Neutral feedback:

- ✔ Slow to respond but item as described
- ✔ Item not as described but seller made good
- ✔ Paid w/MO (money order) after check bounced
- ✔ Lousy communication but item came OK



If you're angry, take a breather *before* you type out your complaints and click the Leave Comment button. If you're convinced that negative feedback is necessary, try a cooling-off period before you send comments. Wait an hour or a day; see whether you feel the same. Nasty feedback based on pure emotion can make you look vindictive (even if what you're saying is perfectly true).

### *Safety tips for giving feedback*

And speaking of safety features you should know about feedback, you may want to study up on these:

- ✓ Remember that feedback, whether good or bad, is (above all) *sticky*. eBay won't remove your feedback comment if you change your mind later. Be sure of your facts and consider carefully what you want to say.
- ✓ Before you leave feedback, see what other people had to say about that person. See whether what you're thinking is in line with the comments others have left.
- ✓ Your feedback comment can be left as long as the transaction remains on the eBay server. This is usually within 60 days of the end of the auction. After 60 days have passed, you must have the transaction number to leave feedback.
- ✓ Your comment can only be a maximum of 80 letters long, which is really short when you have a lot to say. Before you start typing, organize your thoughts and use common abbreviations to save precious space.
- ✓ Before posting negative feedback, try to resolve the problem by e-mail or telephone. You may discover that your reaction to the transaction is based on a misunderstanding that can be easily resolved.
- ✓ eBay users generally want to make each other happy, so use negative feedback *only as a last resort*. See Chapters 8 and 10 for more details on how to avoid negative feedback.



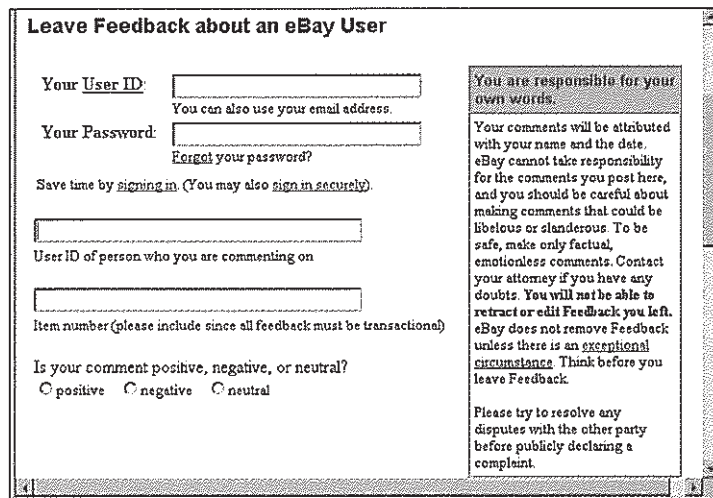
If you do leave a negative comment that you later regret, you can't remove it. You *can't* go back and leave an explanation or a more positive comment (unless you're responding to feedback this person has left about you), so think twice before you blast.

### *The ways to leave feedback*

Several ways are available to leave feedback comments:

- ✓ If you're on the user's Feedback Profile page, click the Leave Feedback link (refer to Figure 4-7). The Leave Feedback page appears (see Figure 4-9).
- ✓ Go to your auction and click the Leave Feedback icon. Then click the To Bidder or the To Seller link. Click the To Seller or To Bidder link below the Leave Feedback icon. Click the Leave Feedback icon to see a list of all your completed auctions from the last 60 days for which you haven't yet left feedback.

- ✓ Click on the Feedback Forum link at the bottom of almost any eBay page.
- ✓ Click the Services link in the main navigation bar and then click Feedback Forum. On the next page that appears, click the link that says Use the Feedback Forum.



**Leave Feedback about an eBay User**

Your User ID:   
You can also use your email address.

Your Password:   
Forget your password?

Save time by [signing in](#). (You may also [sign in securely](#)).

User ID of person who you are commenting on

Item number (please include since all feedback must be transactional)

Is your comment positive, negative, or neutral?  
 positive  negative  neutral

**You are responsible for your own words.**  
Your comments will be attributed with your name and the date. eBay cannot take responsibility for the comments you post here, and you should be careful about making comments that could be libelous or slanderous. To be safe, make only factual, emotionless comments. Contact your attorney if you have any doubts. You will not be able to retract or edit Feedback you left. eBay does not remove Feedback unless there is an exceptional circumstance. Think before you leave Feedback.  
Please try to resolve any disputes with the other party before publicly declaring a complaint.

**Figure 4-9:**  
The Leave  
Feedback  
page.

To leave feedback:

**1. Enter the required information.**

Note that your item number is usually filled in, but if you're placing feedback from the user's Feedback Profile page, you have to have the number at hand.

**2. Choose whether you want your feedback to be positive, negative, or neutral.**

### eBay will consider removing feedback if ...

- ✔ eBay is served with a court order stating that the feedback in question is slanderous, libelous, defamatory, or otherwise illegal. eBay will also accept a settlement agreement from a resolved lawsuit submitted by both attorneys and signed by both parties, as well as a ruling by a certified arbitrator where both parties agreed to submit the issue for binding arbitration.
- ✔ The feedback in question has no relation to eBay — such as comments about transactions outside of eBay or personal comments about users.
- ✔ The feedback contains a link to another page, picture, or Javascript.
- ✔ The feedback is comprised of profane or vulgar language.
- ✔ The feedback contains any personal identifying information about a user.
- ✔ The feedback refers to any investigation, whether by eBay or a law-enforcement organization.
- ✔ The feedback is left by a user who supplied fraudulent information when registering at eBay.
- ✔ The feedback is left by a person who can be identified as a minor.
- ✔ The feedback is left by a user as a part of harassment.
- ✔ The feedback is intended for another user, when eBay has been informed of the situation and the same feedback has been left for the appropriate user.

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## Chapter 6

# Bidding: The Basics

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▷ Getting your plan together before you bid
  - ▷ Knowing the ins and outs of the item page
  - ▷ Watching an auction
  - ▷ Knowing the seller
  - ▷ Avoiding bidder's remorse
- .....

**B**rowsing different categories of eBay, looking for nothing in particular, you spot that must-have item lurking among other Elvis paraphernalia in the Collectibles category. Sure, you *can* live without that faux gold Elvis pocket watch, but life would be so much sweeter *with* it. And even if it doesn't keep good time, at least it'll be right twice a day.

When you bid for items on eBay, you can get that same thrill that you would at Sotheby's or Christie's for a lot less money, and the items you win are likely to be *slightly* more practical than an old Dutch masterpiece you're afraid to leave at the framer's. (Hey, you have to have a watch, and Elvis *is* the King.)

In this chapter, we tell you about the types of auctions available on eBay, run down the nuts and bolts of bidding strategies, and give you some tried-and-true tips that'll give you a leg up on the competition.

## *The Auction Item Page*

Because at any given point you have more than a million pages of auction items that you can look at on eBay, auction item pages are the heart (better yet, the skeleton) of eBay auctions. Figure 6-1 shows a conventional item page.

The screenshot shows the eBay interface for an auction. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'home', 'my eBay', 'site map', and 'sign in'. Below that are buttons for 'Browse', 'Sell', 'Services', 'Search', 'Help', and 'Community'. A 'Show me a tip' icon is also present. The main heading is '2000 Republican Texas Promo Delegate Pass' with item number '#413011206'. The category is 'Collectibles>Political>US President'. The current bid is \$4.99, with 1 bid. The auction ends in 5 days, 8 hours, and 4 minutes. The seller is 'marsha\_c' with a rating of 848. Payment methods include Visa/MasterCard, Money Order, Cashiers Checks, and Personal Checks. Shipping is international.

Currently	\$4.99	First bid	\$4.99
Quantity	1	# of bids	1 <a href="#">bid history</a>   <a href="#">with emails</a>
Time left	5 days, 8 hours +	Location	Los Angeles CA
Started	Aug-17-00 20:09:23 PDT	Country/Region	USA/Los Angeles
Ends	Aug-24-00 20:09:23 PDT		<a href="#">mail this auction to a friend</a>
Seller (Rating)	<a href="#">marsha_c (848)</a> ☆ <a href="#">mpd</a>		<a href="#">watch this item</a>
			<a href="#">view comments in seller's Feedback Profile</a>   <a href="#">view seller's other auctions</a>   <a href="#">ask seller a question</a>
High bid	<a href="#">(287)</a> ☆		
Payment	Visa/MasterCard, Money Order/Cashiers Checks, Personal Checks, Other, See item description for payment methods accepted		
Shipping	Seller ships internationally (worldwide). See item description for shipping charges		

**Figure 6-1:**  
How a  
typical  
auction item  
page looks.

Next to the navigation bar at the top of the page, you'll notice a Show Me How icon. This is an ingenious little piece of technology installed by eBay to help you through the bidding process. If you get confused at any point — although we assume you'll be an expert after you read this chapter — click this icon. When you click it, small windows open up on your screen and step-by-step tips guide you through the process.

Here's a list of other stuff you see on a typical auction item page:



- ✓ **Item title and number:** The title and number identify the item. Keep track of this info for inquiries later on.

If you have an interest in a particular type of item, take note of the key words used in the title (you're likely to see them again in future names). Doing so will help you in narrowing down your searches.

- ✓ **Item category:** Located just below the Item title and number bar, you can click the category listing and do some comparison shopping. (Chapter 5 gives more searching strategies.)

- ✓ **Currently:** This field indicates the dollar amount the bidding has reached, which changes throughout the auction as people place bids. Sometimes, next to the current dollar amount, you see Reserve Not Yet Met or Reserve Met. This means the seller has set a *reserve price* for the item — a secret price that must be reached before the seller will sell the item.



If you don't see this listing on an auction item page, don't be alarmed. Not all auctions have reserve prices.



- ✓ **Quantity:** This field tells how many items are available. If you see a number other than 1 in this place, you're looking at a Dutch auction, which we explain later in this chapter. But, if a seller is selling two Elvis watches for the price of one, the item quantity still shows up as 1 (as in 1 set of 2 watches).
- ✓ **Time Left:** Although the clock never stops ticking at eBay, you must continue to refresh your browser to see the time remaining on the official clock. This field tells you the time remaining in this particular auction.
- ✓ **Started:** The date and time the seller began the auction. By checking this field, you can gauge interest in the auction by comparing the number of bids (or hits on a seller installed counter) to how long the auction has been running.
- ✓ **Ends:** Duhhh. This is the date and time the auction ends.



Timing is the key in an eBay bidding strategy (covered in Chapter 7), so don't forget that because eBay world headquarters is in California, eBay uses Pacific Standard Time or Pacific Daylight Time as the standard, depending on the season.

- ✓ **First Bid:** This is the starting price set by the seller (sometimes called *the minimum bid*). This is the lowest price somebody can bid to get the auction going.
- ✓ **# of Bids:** How many bids have been placed. To use the number of bids to your advantage, you have to read between the lines. You can determine just how "hot" an item is by comparing the number of bids the item has received over time. Based on the amount of interest in an item, you can create a time strategy (which we talk about later in this chapter). Next to the # of Bids are two links: Bid History and With Emails. Click Bid History to find out who is bidding and what date and time bids were placed on this item. The dollar amount of each bid is kept secret until the end of the auction. Click the With Emails link if you want to get the e-mail addresses of bidders.



Bidding is more an art than a science. Sometimes an item gets no bids because everyone's waiting until the last minute. You see a flurry of activity as they all try to outbid each other (called *sniping*, which we explain in Chapter 7). But that's all part of the fun of eBay.

- ✓ **Location:** This field tells where the item is. Factor in the geographic location of a seller when you consider bidding on an item. Knowing exactly where the item is can help you calculate what the shipping charges will be. (We tackle that subject in Chapter 10.)
- ✓ **Country/Region:** This field tells what country the item will ship from. If the item is in Australia, for example, and you're in Vermont, you may decide that you don't need that wrought-iron doorstep. (Remember, you pay the shipping charges.) The region lets you know if the item is included in eBay's regional auction areas.

- ✔ **Mail This Auction to a Friend:** You can tip off a friend on a good find, get some advice from an antique or collecting expert, or run it by a friend who's been around the eBay block a few times and ask for strategy advice.
- ✔ **Watch this Item:** Click the link next to the teeny binoculars, and you're taken to a page that allows you to add the item to the Bidding/Watching tab of your My eBay page so you can keep track of the auction — without actually bidding. If you haven't signed in, you'll have to type in your User ID and password before you can save the auction to your My eBay page.
- ✔ **Seller (Rating):** Gives you information about the seller. *Know thy seller* ranks right after *caveat emptor* as a phrase that pays at eBay. As we tell you a nearly a million times in this book, *Read the feedback rating!* (Okay, maybe not a million — it would drive the editors bonkers.) Human beings come in all shapes, sizes, and levels of honesty, and like any community, eBay has its share of good folks and bad folks. Your best defense is to read the seller's feedback. To the right of the seller's name is a number in parentheses. Click the number to view his or her eBay ID card and entire feedback history just below it. Read, read, and reread all the feedback (hey, we're one closer to a million!) to make sure you feel comfortable doing business with this person. Just below the seller's name is a link to see other auctions he or she may be running — and another link that pops up an e-mail window so that you can send a question. We give you a step-by-step guide on how these links work later in this chapter.
- ✔ **High Bid:** This one shows you the User ID and feedback rating of the current high bidder. It could be you if you've placed a bid!
- ✔ **Payment:** This field tells you the payment terms the seller has set. It lets you know if the seller accepts checks, money orders, credit cards, or online payments by Billpoint. Often, it tells you to read the item description for more details. We explain how to read item descriptions later in this chapter.
- ✔ **Shipping:** Check here to see if the seller is willing to ship to your area. Sometimes sellers will not ship internationally, and they'll let you know here before you place a bid. Also, always check the item description for shipping charges and terms (which, except in rare instances, buyers have to pay).
- ✔ **Description icon:** This icon shoots you directly to the item description, but because you want to know all about the auction, you more than likely won't use this option.
- ✔ **Bid icon:** With a click, the small blue bidding paddle brings you to the bottom of the page — to the bidding form.



Be sure to use the Watch This Item feature. Organization is the name of the game at eBay, especially if you plan to bid on multiple auctions while you're running auctions of your own. We figure you're in the bidding game to win, so start keeping track of items now.

## Beating the Devil in the Details

As with any sale — whether you find it at Joe's Hardware, Bloomingdale's, or Kmart — carefully check out what you are buying. The auction page gives you links to help you know what you're bidding on — and who you're potentially buying from. If you take advantage of them, you won't have many problems. But, if you ignore these essential tips, you may end up unhappy with what you buy, the person you buy it from, and how much you spend.

### Read the item description carefully

The *item description* is the most critical item on the auction item page. This is where the seller lists the details about the item being sold. Read this page carefully and pay close attention to what is, and isn't, written.

Don't judge a book by its cover — but do judge a seller by his or her item description. If the sentences are succinct, detailed, and well structured, you're most likely dealing with an individual who planned and executed the auction with care. It takes time and effort to post a good auction. If you see huge lapses in grammar, convoluted sentences, and misspellings, *you maybe gonna get burnt!* Make sure you feel comfortable dealing with this person; decide for yourself whether he or she is out to sell junk for a quick buck or is part of eBay for the long term.

If a picture is available, take a good look. The majority of eBay sellers jazz up their auctions with photos of their items. The seller should answer a few general questions in the item description. If these questions aren't answered,



### Does the horse know?

One seller offered a bracelet from the mid-1800s — 8 inches in diameter and made from links of woven horsehair (some rather worn but generally in good condition). A horsehair charm

dangled from a foot-long chain of links; the clasp was a woven ball and loop. The opening bid was \$8, and this bracelet sold for \$103.50!

that doesn't necessarily mean that the seller's disreputable — only that if you're really interested, you should e-mail the seller and get those answers before you bid. In particular, ask questions like these:

- ✔ Is the item new or used?
- ✔ Is the item a first edition or a reprint? An original or a reissue? (See Chapter 5 for tips on how to assess what you're buying.)
- ✔ Is the item in its original packaging?
- ✔ Is the item under warranty?



Most sellers spell out in their item descriptions exactly how the item should be paid for and shipped. Check to see whether an actual shipping charge applies — and if so, how much it'll cost you.

- ✔ If you're in a hurry to get the item, are delays likely? If so, what sort and how long?
- ✔ Can the seller guarantee you a refund if the item is broken?
- ✔ What condition is the item in? Is it broken, scratched, flawed, or Mint?



Most experienced collectors know that, depending on the item, a tiny scratch here or there may be worth the risk of making a bid. But a scratch or two may affect your bidding price. (Look at Chapter 5 for more expert collecting advice.)

- ✔ Is this item the genuine article or a reproduction, and if it's the real deal, does the seller have papers certifying its authenticity?
- ✔ What size is the item? (That fiberglass whale may not *fit* in your garage.)



If you win the item and find out the seller lied in the description, you have the right to return the item. But, if you win the item and discover that you overlooked a detail in the description, the seller isn't obligated to take the item back.



The seller is obligated to describe the item honestly and in detail, so if your questions aren't answered in the item description, then for goodness' sake, e-mail the seller for the facts. If a picture is available, is it clear enough that you can see any flaws?

## Get the scoop on the seller

We can't tell you enough that the single most important way you can make an auction go well is to *know who you're dealing with*. Apparently, the eBay folks agree with us; they help you get info on the seller right from the auction item page. We recommend that you take advantage of the links offered there. (Chapter 5 demonstrates how to conduct a thorough By Seller search.)

- ✔ Click the number beside the seller's User ID to get his or her feedback history.
- or
- ✔ Click the Me link next to Seller to view the seller's About Me page.
- and
- ✔ Click View Seller's Other Auctions to take a look at what else that person's selling. (If you win more than one auction from a seller, they will often combine the shipping costs).

### ***Check the seller's feedback (message sound familiar?)***

Check the seller's eBay ID card and feedback history. All together now — *check the feedback*. (Is there an echo in here?) What you find are (for the most part) the honest thoughts and comments of buyers from previous transactions. No eBay user has control over the comments others make, and feedback sticks to you like your high school permanent record.

Read the feedback — the good, the bad, and the neutral — and unless you're prepared to kiss your money good-bye, we recommend that you stay away from anyone with a large percentage of negative comments.

**TIP**

eBay, like life, is full of shades of gray. Some sellers are unfairly hit with negative comments for something that wasn't their fault. If you suspect that a seller's received a bum rap (after you've read all his or her positive feedback), be sure to read the seller's response. (Look at Chapter 4 for more on reading and leaving feedback.)

**WARNING!**

Although scoping out an eBay member's ID card is *just that fast, just that simple*, you still need to take the time to read the feedback. (There's that echo again. Good thing it's a wise echo.) Someone with 500 positive feedback messages may look like a good seller, but if you take a closer look, you may find that his or her most recent 10 feedback messages are negative.

### ***View the seller's other auctions***

To find out what other auctions the seller has going at eBay, all you have to do is click the corresponding link on the item page; you're whisked away to a list of the other auction pies the seller has a finger in. If the seller has no other auctions going and has no current feedback, you may want to do a more thorough investigation and conduct a By Seller search that will show you all that person's completed auctions in the last 30 days (see Chapter 5 for details).



## How Swede it is!

A savvy eBay user we know benefited from a major seller error. The seller titled his auction "Swede Star Trek Cast Jacket." Our friend checked out the item description and found that it was written with bad spelling and incoherent grammar, so she e-mailed the seller for more information. The seller explained that the jacket was a suede cast jacket given to the crew of the movie *Star Trek: Generations*. He had won it in a local radio contest, and it was brand new.

Because of the seller's mistake, there was only one bidder for this lovely green suede (silk-lined!) jacket, which our friend picked up for \$150. Because of its *Star Trek* connection, the jacket is worth upwards of \$400 to collectors. So study the item page carefully. You may get lucky and find that errors can work to your benefit. (And a word to the wise: Check your own spelling and grammar carefully when you put an item up for sale.)

### Ask the seller a question

If anything about the auction is unclear to you, remember this one word: *ask*. Find out all the details about that item before you bid. If you wait until you've won the item before you ask questions, you may get stuck with something you don't want. Double-checking may save you woe and hassle later.



You can find out more about payment options, shipping charges, insurance, and other fun stuff in Chapters 8 and 11.



If you're bidding on a reserve-price auction, don't be afraid to e-mail the seller and ask what the reserve is. Yeah, reserves are customarily kept secret, but there's no harm in asking — and some sellers may even tell you.

To ask a seller a question, follow these steps:

#### 1. Click the Ask Seller a Question link on the item page.

If you *haven't* already signed in, you're automatically taken to the User ID request page (This is beginning to sound as repetitive as checking feedback!) After you fill in your User ID and password and click Enter, you're presented with the seller's e-mail address history.



You can always change your User ID, but your past life (in the form of feedback messages) stays with you at eBay. Along with your feedback from your previous User ID, all your previous User IDs are listed as well.

If you *have* already signed in, a preaddressed e-mail window opens for you.

**2. Click the seller's current e-mail address, fire off your questions, and send the e-mail.**

Expect to hear back from the seller within a day. If it takes the seller more than a day or two to respond, and you get no explanation for the delay, think twice before putting in a bid.



Extend your scam antennae if a seller's reply to your question comes from an e-mail address that's *different* from the one you sent your question to. The seller should include an explanation for a difference in addresses. If you don't see an explanation, ask for one. Fraudulent sellers often use several e-mail addresses to hide their true identity. There may be nothing wrong with having several e-mail addresses, but if you're getting a gut feeling that the seller is playing hide and seek with addresses all over the place, *thank* your gut very much and rethink doing business with that person.

## *Factoring in the Extras*

Before you think about placing a bid on an item, you should factor in the financial obligation you have to make. In every case, the maximum bid you place *won't* be all you spend on an item. We recommend that you look closely at the payment methods the seller's willing to accept and also factor in shipping, insurance, and escrow costs. If you only have \$50 to spend, you shouldn't place a \$50 bid on a fragile item that will be shipped a long distance because often the buyer (that would be you) pays for shipping and insurance. In addition, if you live in the same state as the seller, you may have to pay sales tax if the seller is running an official business.

## *Payment methods*

Several payment options are available, but the seller has the right to refuse some forms of payment. Usually, the form of payment is laid out in the item's description. If it isn't, e-mail the seller and get a clear idea of your additional costs *before* you place a bid.

The forms of payment available to you are these:

- ✓ **Credit card:** Paying with a credit card is our favorite payment option, one that's mainly offered by businesses and dealers. We like paying with credit cards because they are fast and efficient. In addition, using a credit card offers you another ally, your credit card company, if you're not completely satisfied with the transaction.

✓ **eBay Online Payments by Billpoint:** The Billpoint service is a subsidiary of eBay, and Billpoint payments are processed securely through Wells Fargo Bank. Billpoint sellers are identified with a special secure payments icon (a small yellow padlock) and accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover as well as electronic checks. The Billpoint service is integrated directly into eBay auctions, so paying is a mouse click away (see Chapter 9 for more information about online payments by Billpoint). Some international bidders can pay for their eBay auctions from sellers in the United States. To see a current list of Billpoint's international services go to [www.billpoint.com/services/international.html](http://www.billpoint.com/services/international.html).

Billpoint deposits the money directly into the seller's account. The service charges the seller a small transaction fee, so the seller has to absorb the cost.



Your credit card information is only known to the Billpoint service. The seller never sees your credit card info. Another major advantage is that you have your full credit card protection behind you when you use the Billpoint service. And you have the right to dispute charges if the item arrives damaged or doesn't show up at all. Also, if your credit card company offers extended warranties and protections, they are also covered when you use the Billpoint service.



Sometimes sellers use a friend's company to run credit card payments for eBay auctions. So don't be surprised if you buy a vintage Tonka bulldozer and your credit card is billed from Holly's Hair-o-Rama.

✓ **PayPal:** With over three million users, x.com's PayPal is currently the largest Internet-wide payment network. After you register with PayPal to pay for an auction item, PayPal debits your Visa or MasterCard (or your account — if you have earned some money from sales) and sends the payment to the seller's account. There's no charge for the buyer or seller to use the service. It can be used to pay any seller within the United States (although PayPal plans to expand its service internationally in the near future). The service can be accessed through a computer, a Palm device, or a Web-ready telephone.



A benefit of using an online payment system is that the seller never sees your credit card information; it's securely held by the service. Each PayPal customer is protected from unauthorized transactions from Travelers Casualty and Surety Company's SafeWeb Remote Banking Insurance for up to \$100,000. In addition to offering insurance, you're protected with a Buyer Protection Guarantee. If you buy from a Verified PayPal member through the service, your purchase is guaranteed against fraud.

For more details, check out the PayPal Web site ([www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com)).

✓ **Money order:** Our second-favorite method of payment — and the most popular at eBay — is the money order. Sellers love money orders because they don't have to wait for a check to clear.



Money orders are the same as cash. As soon as the seller gets your money order, there's no reason to wait to send the item. You can buy money orders at banks, supermarkets, convenience stores, and your local post office. The average cost is about a dollar. If you're purchasing an item that's being shipped internationally, you can pay with an international money order from the U.S. Post Office, which costs about three dollars. International buyers may purchase a Western Union money order; [www.westernunion.com](http://www.westernunion.com) provides locations in different cities around the world. The United Kingdom alone has hundreds of Western Union agents ready to receive your payment. Western Union money orders are also available online through BidPay.com for \$5.00. The amount is charged to your credit card and BidPay mails the money order to the seller for you.

- ✔ **Personal or cashier's check:** Paying by check is convenient but has its drawbacks. Most sellers won't ship you the goods until after the check clears, which means a lag time as long as a couple of weeks. If a seller takes personal checks, it usually says in the item's description how long the check will be held before the item gets shipped. Unfortunately, that means that while the seller is waiting for your check to clear, your merchandise is collecting dust in a box somewhere. This is no fun for you or for the seller. Cashier's checks are available at your bank but often cost many times more than a money order. It's not worth the extra money — buy more eBay items instead.

Before you send that check, make sure that you have enough money to cover your purchase. A bounced check can earn you negative feedback — too many will bounce you off eBay.

The good news about checks is that you can track whether they've been cashed or not. Personal checks leave a paper trail that you can follow if there's a problem later.

- ✔ **C.O.D.:** No, we're not talking about codfish. We're talking about *Cash on Delivery*. As a buyer, you may like the idea that you only have to pay for an item if it shows up. But paying C.O.D. has two problems:
  - You have to have the money on hand — the exact amount. When was the last time any of us had exact change for anything?
  - Even if you have exact change, if you're not around when the item's delivered, you're out of luck.



If you miss Mr. C.O.D., the shipment heads back to Bolivia or Oblivion or wherever it came from, never to be seen again. And what do you get? A lot of angry e-mails and maybe some bad feedback. No wonder sellers rarely use this option.





Most business at eBay is conducted in U.S. dollars. If you happen to buy an item from an international seller, you may need to convert American dollars into another currency. eBay has a currency converter. Go to Site Map and click the Buyer Guide section in the Help area. On the Buyer Guide page, click International Trading. Then click Buy Globally. Click (in the right column) Currency. You have your choice of two converters. We suggest that you try them both to compare.



Never use a form of payment that doesn't let you keep a paper trail. If a seller asks for cash, quote Nancy Reagan — just say no. Occasionally, we hear of international buyers sending U.S. greenbacks in the mail. But, if a seller asks for cash, chances are that you may never see the item or your money again. And, if a seller asks you to send your payment to a post office box, get a phone number. Many legitimate sellers use post office boxes, but so do the bad guys.

## Using an escrow service

Even though about half of all sales at eBay are for items that cost \$25 or less, occasionally, using an escrow service comes in handy — like when you buy a big-ticket item or something fragile. *Escrow* is a service that allows a buyer and seller to protect a transaction by placing the money in the hands of a third party until a specified set of conditions are met. Sellers note in their item descriptions if they're willing to accept escrow. If you're nervous about sending a lot of money to someone you don't really know (like a user named Clumsy who only has two feedback comments and is shipping you bone china from Broken Hill, Australia), consider using an escrow company.



Using an escrow company is only worthwhile if the item you're bidding on is expensive, fragile, or going a long distance. If you're spending less than \$200 for the item, we recommend that you purchase insurance from your shipper instead — just in case.

eBay has a partnership with an escrow service, i-Escrow. After an auction closes, the buyer sends the payment to the escrow company. After the escrow company receives the money, it e-mails the seller to ship the merchandise. After the buyer receives the item, he or she has an agreed-on period of time (normally two business days) to look it over and let the escrow service know that all's well. If everything's okay, the escrow service sends the payment to the seller. If the buyer is unhappy with the item, he or she must ship it back to the seller. When the escrow service receives word from the seller that the item has been returned, the service returns the payment to the buyer (minus the escrow company's handling fee, equal to between 2 and 4 percent of the item's selling price).

Before you start an escrow transaction, make sure that you and the seller agree on these terms (use e-mail to sort it out). Here are three questions about escrow that you should know the answers to before you bid:

- ✔ Who pays the escrow fee? (Normally, the buyer does, though sometimes the buyer and seller split the cost.)
- ✔ How long is the inspection period? (Routinely, it's two business days after receipt of the merchandise.)
- ✔ Who pays for return shipping if the item is rejected? (The buyer, usually.)



If you use a credit card or bank wire, you can pay return shipping costs right from your computer. If you're not comfortable giving your credit card number online, you can print out the escrow company's credit card form and fax it to the company.

## Shipping and insurance costs

Don't let the sale go down with the shipping. Most auction descriptions end with "buyer to pay shipping charges." If the item is not an odd shape, excessively large, or fragile, experienced sellers calculate the shipping based on Priority Mail at the U.S. Post Office, which is the unofficial eBay standard. Expect to pay \$3.20 for the first 2 pounds and another 35 cents to pay for tracking the item.

It's also become somewhat routine for the seller to add a dollar or so for packing materials like paper, bubble wrap, tape, and such. The cost of these items can run up over time.



You may come across sellers trying to nickel-and-dime their way to a fortune by jacking up the prices on shipping to ridiculous proportions. If you have a question about shipping costs, ask before you bid on the item.



Before bidding on big stuff, like a barber's chair or a sofa, check for something in the item description that says "Buyer Pays Actual Shipping Charges." When you see that, always e-mail the seller prior to your bid to find out what those shipping charges would be to your home. On larger items, you may need to factor in packing and crating charges. The seller may also suggest a specific shipping company.

As the bumper sticker says, (ahem) *stuff* happens. Sometimes to the stuff you buy. But before you give up and just stuff it, consider insuring it. eBay transactions sometimes involve two types of insurance that may have an impact on your pocketbook:

- ✔ **Shipping insurance:** This insurance covers your item as it travels through the U.S. Postal Service, the United Parcel Service, Federal Express, or any of the other carriers.



Although many sellers offer shipping insurance as an option, others don't bother because if the price of the item is low, they'd rather refund your money and keep you happy than go through all that insurance paperwork. Don't forget that if you want shipping insurance, you pay for it. (Chapter 11 is where to look for details on shipping insurance.)

✓ **Fraud insurance:** eBay has some nominal insurance against fraud. eBay has a deal with the world-famous insurer Lloyds of London. eBay insurance pays up to \$175 (a maximum of \$200 minus a \$25 deductible). So if you file a \$50 claim, you get \$25. If you file a \$5,000 claim, you still only get \$175. (All the details of this type of insurance are covered in Chapter 15.)

## Placing Your Bid

Okay, you've found the perfect item to track (say a classy Elvis Presley wrist-watch), and it's in your price range. You're more than interested — you're ready to bid. If this were a live auction, some stodgy-looking guy in a gray suit would see you nod your head and start the bidding at, say, \$2. Then some woman with a severe hairdo would yank on her ear, and the Elvis watch would jump to \$3.

eBay reality is more like this: You're sitting home in your fuzzy slippers, sipping coffee in front of the computer; all the other bidders are cruising cyberspace in their pajamas, too. You just can't see 'em. (Be thankful for little favors.)

When you're ready to jump into the eBay fray, you can find the Bidding form (shown in Figure 6-2) at the bottom of the auction item page (or click the Bid paddle icon at the top of the auction page). The Bidding form restates some vital info that's always good to review before you commit yourself.

**Figure 6-2:** You can find the Bidding form at the bottom of every auction page.

Bidding	
<p>1985 TOPPS TIFFANY MARK MCGWIRE#401, PSA 8 Item #362614424 Current bid: \$450.01 Bid increment: \$5.00 Your maximum bid: <input type="text"/> (Minimum bid: \$455.01) <input type="button" value="Review bid"/></p> <p>eBay will bid incrementally on your behalf up to your maximum bid, which is kept secret from other eBay users. The eBay term for this is <u>proxy bidding</u>.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">How to Bid </p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Register to bid</u> - if you haven't already. It's free!</li> <li>2. <u>Learn about this seller</u> - read feedback comments left by others.</li> <li>3. <u>Know the details</u> - read the item description and payment &amp; shipping terms closely.</li> <li>4. If you have questions - contact the seller <u>cardking4</u> before you bid.</li> <li>5. <u>Place your bid!</u></li> </ol>

To fill out the Bidding form and place a bid, first make sure that you're registered (see Chapter 2 for details) and then follow these steps. After you make your first bid on an item, you can instantly get to auctions you're bidding on from your My eBay page. (If you need some tips on how to set up My eBay, see Chapter 4.)

**1. Enter your maximum bid in the appropriate box.**

The bid needs to be higher than the current minimum bid.

**2. In a Dutch auction, enter the quantity of items that you are bidding on.**

(If it's not a Dutch auction, the quantity is always 1.) Figure 6-3 shows a Dutch auction Bidding form.



You don't need to put in the dollar sign but *do* use a decimal point — unless you really *want* to pay \$104.90 instead of \$10.49. If you make a mistake with an incorrect decimal point, you can retract your bid (see "Retracting your bid" later in this chapter).

**3. Click Review Bid.**

The Review Bid page appears on your screen, filling it with a wealth of legalese. This is your last chance to change your mind: Do you really want the item, and can you really buy it? The bottom line is this: If you bid on it and you win, you buy it. eBay really means it.

**4. Type in your User ID and password in the boxes provided.**

**5. If you agree to the terms, click Place Bid.**

After you agree, the Bid Confirmation screen appears.

**Figure 6-3:**  
The Dutch auction Bidding form requires you to enter the quantity of the items.

Bidding	
<p>6" pot of living Moss for Bonsai tree Dutch Item #366760187</p> <p>Opening bid: \$5.95</p> <p>Quantity of items desired: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Your bid per item: <input type="text"/> (Minimum bid: \$5.95)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="button" value="Review bid"/></p> <p>This is a <u>Dutch Auction</u> (Multiple Item Auction) - it features multiple quantities of an item. All winning bidders pay the same price - the lowest successful bid at the end of the auction. Dutch Auctions (Multiple Item Auctions) do not use proxy bidding.</p> <p>Your bid is a contract - Place a bid only if you're serious about buying the item. If you are the winning bidder, you</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">How to Bid </p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Register to bid</u> - if you haven't already. It's free!</li> <li>2. <u>Learn about this seller</u> - read feedback comments left by others.</li> <li>3. <u>Know the details</u> - read the item description and payment &amp; shipping terms closely.</li> <li>4. If you have questions - contact the seller <u>before</u> you bid.</li> <li>5. Place your bid!</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;">eBay purchases are</p>



When you first start out on eBay, we suggest that you start with a *token bid* — a small bid that won't win you the auction but that can help you keep tabs on the auction's progress.

After you make a bid on an item, the item number and title appear on your My eBay page, listed under (big surprise) Items I'm Bidding On (see Figure 6-4). (See Chapter 4 for more information on My eBay.) The Items I'm Bidding On list makes tracking your auction (or auctions, if you're bidding on multiple items) easy.

**Figure 6-4:** Keep track of items you're bidding on right from your My eBay page.

Items I'm Bidding On										See items I'm watching
Item	Start Price	Current Price	My Max Bid	Quantity	# of Bids	Start Date	End Date PDT	Time Left		See item details
<b>MAGAZINE: FLAIR FEBRUARY 1950</b>										
362020187	\$9.95	\$23.45	\$26.52	N/A	6	Jun-19-00	Jun-26-00 09:44:19	Ended		
<b>"Le Parasol" by Rene Gruau! (reserve met)</b>										
359596857	\$150.00	\$340.02	\$335.02	N/A	9	Jun-15-00	Jun-25-00 21:27:52	Ended		
<b>BELL SCIENCE - UNCHAINED GODDESS</b>										
364062999	\$7.99	\$7.99	\$9.99	N/A	1	Jun-22-00	Jun-25-00 15:33:24	Ended		
<b>BELL SCIENCE - ALPHABET CONSPIRACY</b>										
364961904	\$7.99	\$7.99	\$10.02	N/A	1	Jun-22-00	Jun-25-00 15:31:58	Ended		
<b>American Girl *HEART* Locket Necklace-Alaskid</b>										
363134559	\$1.99	\$3.25	\$5.05	N/A	2	Jun-20-00	Jun-25-00 15:19:23	Ended		
<b>85 - 89 Corvette Original GM Air Coupler</b>										
261360030	\$3.00	\$3.25	\$5.50	N/A	2	Jun-18-00	Jun-25-00 14:57:45	Ended		
Item	Start Price	Current Price	My Max Bid	Quantity	# of Bids	Start Date	End Date PDT	Time Left		
Totals: 6	\$150.92	\$383.92		N/A	21					
Totals: 5	\$20.92	\$42.92		N/A	12					



eBay sends you an e-mail confirming your bid. However, eBay's mail server can be as slow as a tree-sloth marathon (yours would be too if you had a few million auctions to keep track of), so don't rely on eBay to keep track of your auctions. After all, this is your money at stake.



eBay considers a bid on an item to be a binding contract. You can save yourself a lot of heartache if you make a promise to yourself — *never bid on an item you don't intend to buy* — and keep to it. Don't make practice bids, assuming that because you're new to eBay you can't win; if you do that, you'll probably win simply because you've left yourself open to Murphy's Law. Therefore, before you go to the Bidding form, be sure that you're in this auction for the long haul and make yourself another promise — *figure out the maximum you're willing to spend* — and stick to it. (Read the section "The Agony (?) of Buyer's Remorse," later in this chapter, for doleful accounts of what can happen if you bid idly or get buyer's remorse.)

## Bidding to the Max: Proxy Bidding

When you make a maximum bid on the Bidding form, you actually make several small bids — again and again — until the bidding reaches where you told

it to stop. For example, if the current bid is up to \$19.99 and you put in a maximum of \$45.02, your bid automatically increases incrementally so that you're ahead of the competition — at least until your maximum bid is exceeded by someone else's bid. Basically, you bid by *proxy*, which means that your bid rises incrementally in response to other bidders' bids.

No one else knows for sure whether you're bidding by proxy, and no one knows how high your maximum bid is. And the best part is that you can be out having a life of your own while the proxy bid happens automatically. Buyers and sellers have no control over the increments (appropriately called *bid increments*) that eBay sets. The bid increment is the amount of money by which a bid is raised, and eBay's system can work in mysterious ways. The current maximum bid can jump up a nickel or a quarter or even an Andrew Jackson, but there is a method to the madness, even though you may not think so. eBay uses a *bid-increment formula*, which uses the current high bid to determine how much to increase the bid increment. For example:

- ✔ A 5-quart bottle of cold cream has a current high bid of \$14.95. The bid increment is 50 cents — meaning that if you bid by proxy, your proxy will bid \$15.45.
- ✔ But a 5-ounce can of top-notch caviar has a high bid of \$200. The bid increment is \$2.50. If you choose to bid by proxy, your proxy will bid \$202.50.

Table 6-1 shows you what kind of magic happens when you put the proxy system and a bid-increment formula together in the same cyber-room.

<i>Current Bid</i>	<i>Bid Increment</i>	<i>Minimum Bid</i>	<i>eBay Auctioneer</i>	<i>Bidders</i>
\$2.50	\$0.25	\$2.75	"Do I hear \$2.75?"	Joe Bidder tells his proxy that his maximum bid is \$8. He's the current high bidder at \$2.75.
\$2.75	\$0.25	\$3	"Do I hear \$3?"	You tell your proxy your maximum bid is \$25 and take a nice, relaxing bath while your proxy calls out your \$3 bid, making you the current high bidder.

(continued)

**Table 6-1: (continued)**

<i>Current Bid</i>	<i>Bid Increment</i>	<i>Minimum Bid</i>	<i>eBay Auctioneer</i>	<i>Bidders</i>
\$3	\$.025	\$3.25	"I hear \$3 from proxy. Do I proxy hear \$3.25?"	Joe Bidder's proxy bids \$3.25, and while Joe Bidder is walking his dog, he becomes the high bidder.
<i>A heated bidding war ensues between Joe Bidder's proxy and your proxy while the two of you go on with your lives. The bid increment inches from 25 cents to 50 cents as the current high bid increases.</i>				
\$7.50	\$.50	\$8	"Do I hear \$8?"	Joe Bidder's proxy calls out \$8, his final offer.
\$8	\$.50	\$8.50	"The bid is at \$8. Do I hear \$8.50?"	Your proxy calls out \$8.50 on your behalf, and having outbid your opponent, you win the auction.

## Specialized Auction Categories

After you get the hang of bidding at eBay, you may venture to the specialized auction areas. You can purchase fine art from eBay's Great Collections, a car or car parts and accessories from eBay Motors, your own piece of land or a new home in the Real Estate category or office equipment in the Business Exchange. eBay is always adding new specialty areas, so be sure to check the announcements as well as the Home page.

Should you reach the big time bidding, be aware that if you bid over \$15,000 in an auction, you *must* register a credit card with eBay. All items in the special categories are searchable in eBay's search engine, so don't worry about missing your dream Corvette when you use the Search page.

### *eBay Motors*

Visiting the automotive area of eBay is an auto enthusiast's dream. You can also find some great deals in used cars and eBay offers some creative ways to make it easy for you.



- ✔ **Search engine:** If you want to search for cars without coming up with hundreds of die-cast vehicles, eBay motors has its own search available from the eBay Motors home page.
- ✔ **Financing:** Through an agreement with E-LOAN, you can set up your financing online directly from eBay. You can lock in interest rates, get a decision within hours, and get a check draft in a day or so.
- ✔ **Inspections:** Many sellers selling used cars take advantage of the inspection service available through eBay and Saturn. Saturn offers a comprehensive 136-point inspection covering mechanical condition and cosmetic appearance, through a good faith, honest observation by Saturn-trained technicians. Car auctions from sellers who have their cars inspected have their auctions listed with an Inspection icon.
- ✔ **Collector Car Insurance:** A link from the eBay Motors home page takes you to Hagerty Collector Car Insurance. By answering a series of questions about your car, you can purchase car collector insurance online. Your car must be at least 20 years old to qualify for this low-cost insurance.
- ✔ **Vehicle Shipping:** Dependable Auto Shippers, DAS, offers free online quotes for auto shipping. You can ship a car from Manhattan to Los Angeles for as low as \$715.
- ✔ **Escrow:** Escrow.com is one of the safest ways to purchase a vehicle online. Escrow.com verifies and secures the buyer's payment and releases payment to the seller only after the buyer inspects and is completely satisfied with the vehicle.

## *eBay Great Collections*

eBay purchased Butterfields, the famous brick-and-mortar auction house, and through them, you can participate in online auctions for quality fine arts from top auction houses and dealers. To bid in the Great Collections areas, you must change your registration by adding a credit card if you don't already have one on file with eBay.

## *Business Exchange*

The Business Exchange is a themed area that puts all the items relating to business in one area. You can find agricultural, medical, industrial, and restaurant equipment listed here. Also, retail and office equipment is grouped here.

## The Agony (?) of Buyer's Remorse

Maybe you're used to going into a shopping mall and purchasing something that you're not sure you like. What's the worst that could happen? You end up back at the mall, receipt in hand, returning the item. Not so on eBay. Even if you realize you already have a purple feather boa in your closet that's just like the one you won yesterday on eBay, deciding that you don't want to go through with a transaction *is* a big deal. Not only can it earn you some nasty feedback, but it can also give you the reputation of a deadbeat.

It would be a shame to float around eBay with the equivalent of a scarlet D (for *deadbeat*) above your User ID. Okay, eBay uses a kinder term — *nonpaying bidder* — but for many members, it boils down to the same thing. If you won an auction and had to back out of your obligation as the winner — even through no fault of your own — you need some info that can keep you in good (well, okay, *better*) standing. Look no further; you've found it.

### Retracting your bid

Remember, many states consider your bid a binding contract, just like any other contract. You can't retract your bid unless some outstandingly unusual circumstances apply:

- ✔ If your bid is clearly a typographical error (you submitted a bid for \$4,567 when you really meant \$45.67), you may retract your bid.  
You won't get any sympathy if you try to retract an \$18.25 bid by saying you meant to bid \$15.25, so review your bid before you send it.
- ✔ If the seller substantially changes the description of an item after you place a bid (the description of the item changes from "can of tennis balls" to "a tennis ball," for example), you may retract your bid.



If you simply must retract a bid, try to do so long before the auction ends — and have a good reason for your retraction. eBay users are understanding, up to a point. If you have a good explanation, you should come out of the situation all right. So you admit you've made a mistake. Here's how to retract a bid while the auction's still going on:

1. Click the **Services** link on the main navigation bar.
2. Click the **Buying & Selling** link on the subnavigation bar.
3. Scroll down to **Buyer Tools** and click **Retract a Bid**.

The Retracting Bid page appears.



### Buyer's remorse *can* pay off

Sometimes buyer's remorse does pay off. We know one eBay buyer who got a serious case of remorse after winning an auction. She decided to do the right thing and pay for the item even though she didn't want it. After receiving the item, she turned around and *sold* it on eBay for

triple what she paid. If you really don't want the item, think like a seller — see whether you can turn a horrible mistake into a profitable venture. For more information on the benefits of selling, have a look at Chapter 9.

4. Read the legalese and scroll down the page; then type in your User ID, your password, the item number of the auction you're retracting your bid from, and an explanation (in 80 characters or less) in the windows provided.

Take a second to review what you've written because after a bid is retracted, it can't be reinstated.

5. Click the Retract Bid button.

You receive a confirmation of your bid retraction via e-mail. Keep a copy of it until the auction is completed.



The seller may send you an e-mail to ask for a more lengthy explanation of your retraction, especially if the item was a hot seller that received a lot of bids. You may also get e-mails from other bidders. Keep your replies courteous. After you retract one bid on an item, all your lower bids on that item are also retracted and your retraction goes into the bidding history — another good reason to have a really good reason for the retraction. The number of bids you've retracted also goes on your feedback rating scorecard.

### *Avoiding deadbeat (nonpaying bidder) status*

Some bidders are more like kidders — they bid even though they have no intention of buying a thing. But they don't last long on eBay because of all the negative feedback they get. In fact, when honest eBay members spot these ne'er-do-wells, they often post the deadbeats' User IDs on eBay's message boards. Some eBay members have created entire Web sites to warn others

about dealing with the deadbeats . . . ahem . . . *nonpaying bidders*. (Civilized but chilly, isn't it?) Exceptions to the deadbeat (er, sorry, *nonpaying bidder*) rule may include the following human mishaps:

- ✓ A death in the family.
- ✓ Computer failure.
- ✓ A huge misunderstanding.

If you have a good reason to call off your purchase, make sure that eBay knows about it. Figure 6-5 shows you the Non-Paying Bidder Appeal form.

**Figure 6-5:**  
You may succeed at appealing a deadbeat warning if you include good information on this form.

**Non-Paying Bidder Appeal**

To appeal a warning which you feel you have received in error, please provide the following information to eBay, using the message field on this form:

- The reason for your appeal
- Any supporting information

You are signed in as: *marsha\_c*  
(If you are not *marsha\_c*, [click here](#))

Item Number	<input type="text"/>
Message	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>

Here's how to plead your case from just about any eBay page:

- 1. Click the Help link on the main navigation bar.**  
You're taken to the Help Overview page.
- 2. Click the Rules and Safety link in the subnavigation bar.**  
You're taken to the Rules & Safety Overview page.
- 3. Scroll down to the Policies heading and click the Non-Paying Bidder Policy link.**  
You're taken to the Non-Paying Bidder Program page, where you can read eBay's policy and instructions on how to make an appeal.
- 4. Scroll down the page and click the Non-Paying Bidder Appeal Form link.**  
You're taken to the Non-Paying Bidder Appeal form (refer to Figure 6-5).
- 5. On the Non-Paying Bidder Appeal form, fill in your e-mail address.**

**6. In the Message box, write the reasons for your appeal and also include the following information:**

- The transaction number for the item
- Your User ID
- Any supporting information you have to plead your case

**7. Review the information you've given. If you have to change anything you've written, click the Clear All Data button and start over.**

**8. Click the Send Inquiry button.**

All done. Now sit back and cross your fingers.



There's no guarantee that your nonpaying bidder appeal will be accepted. eBay will contact you after an investigation and let you know whether your appeal was successful.

eBay has a message for nonpaying bidders: The policy is *four strikes and you're out*. After the first two complaints about a nonpaying (deadbeat) bidder, eBay gives the bad guy or gal a warning. After the third offense, the nonpaying (deadbeat! deadbeat!) bidder gets a 30-day suspension. If there is a fourth offense, the nonpaying bidder is suspended from eBay for good and becomes *NARU* (Not A Registered User). Nobody's tarred and feathered, but you probably won't see hide nor hair of him or her again on eBay.



## After the auction: Side deals?

If a bidder is outbid on an item that he or she really wants or if the auction's reserve price isn't met, the bidder may send an e-mail to the seller and see if the seller is willing to make another deal. Maybe the seller has another, similar item or is willing to sell the item directly rather than run a whole new auction. You need to know that this could happen — but eBay doesn't sanction this activity.

Our friend Jack collects autographed final scripts from hit television sitcoms. So when the curtain fell on *Seinfeld*, he had to have a script. Not surprisingly, he found one on eBay with a final price tag that was way out of his league. But he knew that by placing a bid, someone else with a signed script to sell might see his name and try to make a deal. And he was right.

After the auction closed, he received an e-mail from a guy who worked on the final show and had a script signed by all the actors. He offered it to Jack for \$1,000 less than the final auction price at eBay. Tempted as he was to take the offer, Jack understood that eBay's rules and regulations wouldn't help him out if the deal turned sour. He was also aware that he wouldn't receive the benefit of feedback (which is the pillar of the eBay community) for the transaction.

If you even *think about* making a side deal, remember that not only does eBay *strictly* prohibit this activity but eBay can suspend you if you are reported for making a side deal. Also, if you're the victim of a side-deal scam, eBay's rules and regulations don't offer you any protection. Our advice? Watch out!



## Chapter 10

# Filling in the Blanks: Cyber Paperwork for the Savvy Seller

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▷ Getting ready to set up your auction
  - ▷ Choosing your item category
  - ▷ Writing your item description
  - ▷ Setting up your options
  - ▷ Making changes after your auction has started
- .....

**A**re you ready to make some money? Yes? (Call it an inspired guess.) You're on the threshold of adding your items to the hundreds of thousands that go up for auction at eBay every day. Some are so hot that the sellers quadruple their investments. Other items, unfortunately, are so stone-cold that they don't even register a single bid.

In this chapter, we explain all the facets of the Sell Your Item page — the page you fill out to get your auction going at eBay. We give you some advice that can increase your odds of making money, and we show you the best way to position your item so buyers can see it and bid on it. We also show you how to modify, extend, or end your auction whenever you need to.

## *Getting Ready to List Your Item*

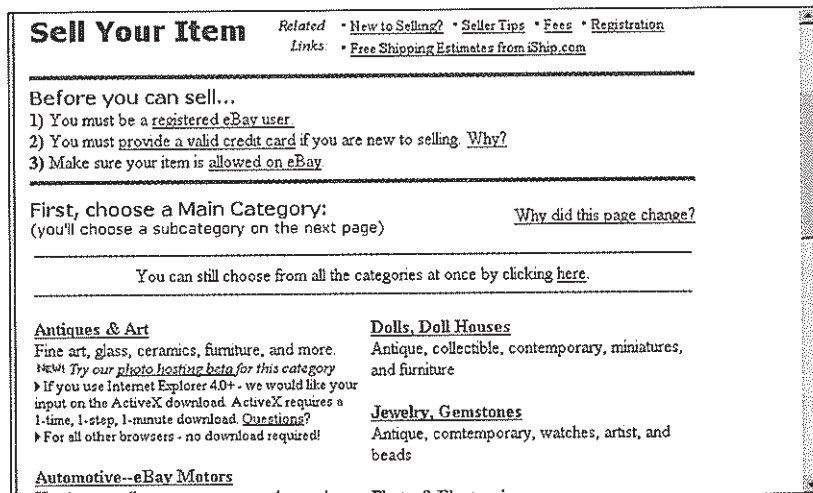
After you decide what you want to sell, find out as much as you can about it, and conduct a little market research. Then, you should have a good idea of the item's popularity and value. To get this info, check out Chapter 9.

Before you list your item, make sure that you've got these bases covered:

- ✓ **The specific category under which you want the item listed.** Ask your friends where they'd look for such an item and remember the categories you saw most frequently when you conducted your market research.
- ✓ **What you want to say in your auction item description.** Jot down your ideas. We know all about writer's block. If you're daunted by the Sell Your Item page but struggle through it anyway, then you've already done the hard work before you even begin.
- ✓ **Whether you want to attach a picture to your description via a uniform resource locator (URL).** Pictures help sell items, but you don't have to use them. (This information won't be on the test, but if you want to know more, see Chapter 13.)
- ✓ **The price at which you think you can sell the item.** Be as realistic as you can. (That's where the market research comes in.)

## Examining the Sell Your Item Page

Figure 10-1 shows the Sell Your Item page, which is where your auction is born. Filling out your auction paperwork requires a couple of minutes of clicking, typing, and answering all kinds of questions. The good news is that when you're done, your auction is up and running and (hopefully) starting to earn you money.



**Figure 10-1:**  
The Sell Your Item page.





Before you begin, you have to be a registered eBay user. If you still need to register, go to Chapter 2 and fill out the preliminary cyber-paperwork. Then you're ready to set up your auction.

To find eBay's Sell Your Item page from the eBay Home page, click the Sell link on the navigation bar at the top of the page and you're whisked there immediately. eBay allows you to select your category and download the actual Sell Your Item page in less than six seconds. You can also start your auction from your My eBay page. Just click the Selling tab and scroll down the page to Related Links. Click the Add an Item link and you're whisked away to the Sell Your Item page.

Here's the info you're asked to fill out (each of these items is discussed in detail later in this chapter):

- ✓ **User ID:** Your User ID (required).
- ✓ **Password:** Your password (required).  
If you've signed in, you see a shaded notation that says: "You are signed in as: username". It will not be necessary to repeatedly input your User ID and password if you have set your My eBay Preferences to remember your password for certain activities.
- ✓ **Title:** The name of your item (required).
- ✓ **Category:** The category that best describes your item (required).
- ✓ **Description:** What you want to tell eBay buyers about your item (required).
- ✓ **Picture URL:** The Web address of any pictures you want to add (optional). Chapter 13 covers using images in your auction.
- ✓ **The Gallery:** You can add your item's picture to eBay's photo gallery (optional). This option is now available for items in every category. eBay charges \$.25 extra to add the item to the Gallery and \$19.95 to make your item a featured auction in the Gallery.
- ✓ **Gallery Image URL:** The Web address of the JPG image you want to place in the Gallery (optional). See Chapter 13.
- ✓ **Boldface Title:** A selling option to make your item listing stand out. eBay charges \$2 extra for this feature (optional).
- ✓ **Home Page Featured (formerly Featured Auction):** You can place your auction in a premium viewing section (optional). eBay charges \$99.95 extra for this feature.
- ✓ **Featured Plus! (formerly Category Featured):** You can have your auction appear at the top of the category in which you list it (optional). eBay charges \$19.95 extra for this feature.



- ✓ **Highlight:** Your item title is highlighted in the auction listings and search listings with a yellow colored band, which draws eBay members eyes' right to your auction (optional). eBay charges \$5 extra for this feature.
- ✓ **Item Location:** The region, zip code, and country from which the item will be shipped (required).
- ✓ **Method(s) of Payment/Shipping Terms:** How you want to be paid and who pays for shipping (optional).
- ✓ **eBay Online Payments by Billpoint:** Fill out this area if you'd like to offer the high bidder the option to pay through the Billpoint service (optional).
- ✓ **Escrow:** If using Escrow is an option you'd like to offer the high bidder, select the option as to who will pay (optional).
- ✓ **Where Will You Ship:** Here's where you can indicate where you are willing to ship an item. If you don't want the hassle of shipping out of the United States, just check off that option. You can individually select different countries, as well (optional).
- ✓ **Who Pays for Shipping:** Select the options that apply to your auction (optional).  

You may want to consider whether you want to be in the international shipping business. Buyers usually pick up the tab, but you have to deal with post office paperwork. If time is money, you may want to skip it entirely — or at least have all the forms filled out before you get in line at the post office. But remember: If you don't ship internationally, you're blocking out a bunch of bidders.
- ✓ **Quantity:** The number of items you're offering in this auction is always one unless you plan to run a Dutch auction (required).
- ✓ **Minimum Bid:** The starting price you set (required).
- ✓ **Duration:** The number of days you want the auction to run (required).
- ✓ **Reserve Price:** The secret price you set that must be met before this item can be sold (optional). eBay charges you a fee for this feature.
- ✓ **Private Auction:** You can keep the identity of all bidders secret with this option (optional).
- ✓ **Remember My Selling Preferences:** With this feature, you won't constantly have to repeat your preferences when you're listing a group of items (optional). This feature is indicated with a yellow pushpin icon.

## *Filling in the Required Blanks*

Yes, the Sell Your Item page looks daunting, but filling out its 22 sections doesn't take as long as you may think. Some of the questions you're asked aren't things you even have to think about; just click an answer and off you

go — unless you forget your password. Other questions ask you to type in information. Don't sweat a thing; we have all the answers you need right here. You can find info on all the required stuff, and later in this chapter, we talk about optional stuff. After you click your main category, you land on the official Sell Your Item page.

## Item title info

After you fill in your User ID and password, eBay wants to get down to the nitty-gritty — what the heck to call that thing you're trying to sell. Think of your item title as a great newspaper headline.



Give the most essential information right away. You want to grab the eye of the reader who's just browsing, and you want to be clear and descriptive enough to get noticed by eBay's search engine. Figure 10-2 shows examples of good titles.

**Figure 10-2:**

These item titles are effective because they're clear, accurate, and easy on the eyes.

<p>Beautiful Summer Sophisticate Barbie NRFB Item #129449952</p>
<p>-- NEW Small Line MAYCO C-30HD Concrete Pump -- Item #128822430</p>
<p>BLAIR WITCH PROJECT Original B 27x40 POSTER Item #139285073</p>

Here are some ideas to help you write your item title:

- ✔ Use the most common name for the item.
- ✔ If the item is rare or hard to find, mention that.
- ✔ Mention the item's condition and mention whether it's new or old.
- ✔ Mention the item's special qualities, like its style, model, or edition.
- ✔ Avoid fancy punctuation or unusual characters, such as \$, hyphens, and L@@K, because they just clutter up the title — buyers rarely search for them.



Don't put any HTML tags in your title. (*HTML* stands for HyperText Markup Language, which in plain English means that it's the special code you use to create Web pages.) We don't even want to go there, so if you want to know more about designing Web pages and using HTML tags, ask a friend who's into that sort of thing or have a look at *HTML 4 For Dummies*, by Ed Tittel and Stephen Nelson James (published by IDG Books Worldwide, Inc).

Ordinarily, we don't throw out French phrases just for the fun of it. But where making a profit is an issue, we definitely have to agree with the French that picking or not picking *le mot juste* can mean the difference between having potential bidders merely see your auction and having an all-out bidding war on your hands. Read on for tips about picking *the best words* to let your auction item shine.

### ***Look for a phrase that pays***

Here's a crash course in eBay lingo that can help bring you up to speed on attracting buyers to your auction. The following words are used frequently in eBay auctions, and they can do wonders to jump-start your title:

- ✓ Very rare
- ✓ One of a kind
- ✓ Vintage
- ✓ Collectible
- ✓ Rare
- ✓ Unique
- ✓ Primitive
- ✓ Well-loved

There's a whole science (called *grading*) to figuring out the value of a collectible. You're ahead of the game if you have a pretty good idea of what most eBay members mean. Do your homework before you assign a grade to your item. If you need more information on what these grades actually mean, Chapter 5 provides a translation.

### ***eBay lingo at a glance***

Common grading terms and the phrases in the preceding section aren't the only marketing standards you have at your eBay disposal. As eBay has grown, so has the lingo that members use as shortcuts to describe their merchandise.

Table 10-1 gives you a handy list of common abbreviations and phrases used to describe items. (*Hint: Mint* means "might as well be brand new," not "cool chocolate treat attached.")

<i>eBay Code</i>	<i>What It Abbreviates</i>	<i>What It Means</i>
MIB	Mint in Box	The item's in the original box, in great shape, and just the way you'd expect to find it in a store.
MIMB	Mint in Mint Box	The box has never been opened and looks like it just left the factory.
MOC	Mint on Card	The item is mounted on its original display card, attached with the original fastenings, in store-new condition.
NRFB	Never Removed from Box	Just what it says, as in "bought but never opened."
COA	Certificate of Authenticity	Documentation that vouches for the genuineness of an item, such as an autograph or painting.
MWBMT	Mint with Both Mint Tags	Refers to stuffed animals, which have a hang tag (usually paper or card) and a tush tag (that's what they call the sewn-on tag — really) in perfect condition with no bends or tears.
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacture	You're selling the item and all the equipment that originally came with it, but you don't have the original box, owner's manual, or instructions.
NR	No Reserve Price	A reserve price is a secret price you can set when you begin your auction. If bids don't meet the reserve, you don't have to sell. Many buyers don't like reserve prices because they don't think that they can get a bargain. If you're not listing a reserve for your item, let bidders know.
HTF	Hard to Find	Out of print, only a few ever made, or people grabbed up all there were. (HTF doesn't mean you spent a week looking for it in the attic.)

Normally, you can rely on eBay slang to get your point across, but make sure that you mean it and that you're using it accurately. Don't label something MIB (Mint in Box) when it looks like it's been Mashed in Box by a meat grinder.

### *More title tips*

Imagine going to a supermarket and asking someone to show you where the stringy stuff that you boil is instead of asking where the spaghetti is. You might end up with mung bean sprouts — delicious to some but hardly what you had in mind. That's why you should check and recheck your spelling. Buyers use the eBay search engine to find merchandise; if the name of your item is spelled wrong, the search engine can't find it. Poor spelling and incomprehensible grammar also reflect badly on you. If you're in competition with another seller, the buyer is likelier to trust the seller *hoo nose gud speling*.



If you've finished writing your item title and you have spaces left over, fight the urge to dress it up with lots of exclamation points and asterisks. No matter how gung-ho you are about your item, the eBay search engine may overlook your item if the title is encrusted with meaningless \*\*\*\* and ! ! ! ! symbols. If bidders do see your title, they may become annoyed by the virtual shrillness and ignore it anyway!!!!!!!! (See what we mean?)

Another distracting habit is overdoing capital letters. To buyers, seeing everything in caps is LIKE SEEING A CRAZED SALESMAN SCREAMING AT THEM TO BUY NOW! All that is considered *shouting*, which is rude and tough on the eyes. Use capitalization SPARINGLY, and only to finesse a point.

## *Choosing a category*

Choosing your item category is an important decision. eBay gives you more than 4,000 categories and subcategories, offering you this wealth of choices in a handy point-and-click way. If you're unfamiliar with the types of items you can actually *find* in those categories, however, you may want to pour over Chapter 3 before you choose one to describe *your* item. Figure 10-3 shows you the category listings on the Sell Your Item page.

To select a category, here's the drill:

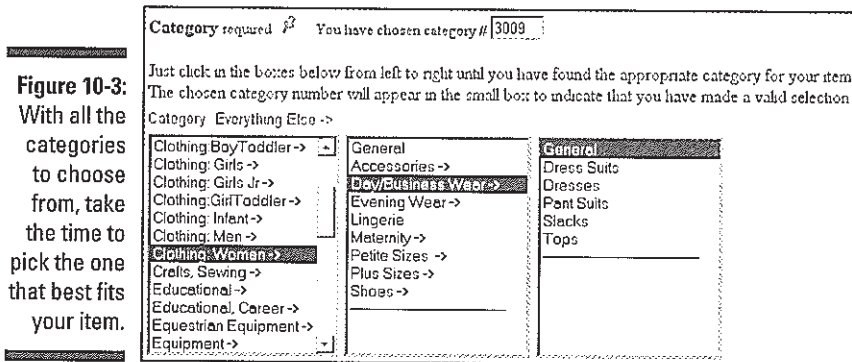
- 1. Click one of the main categories.**

You see a list of subcategories.

- 2. Select the most appropriate subcategory.**

### 3. Continue selecting subcategories until you have narrowed down your item listing as much as possible.

You know you've come to the last subcategory when you don't see any more right-pointing arrows on the category list.



Most bidders scan for specific items in subcategories. For example, if you're selling a Bakelite fruit pin, don't just list it under Jewelry; keep narrowing down your choices. In this case, you can put it in a costume jewelry category that is especially for Bakelite. We guarantee that the real Bakelite jewelry collectors out there know where to look to find the jewelry they love. eBay makes it easy to narrow down the category of your item: Just keep clicking until you hit the end of the line.



If you've chosen to list an item, bid on an item, or even just browse in the Adult/Erotica category, you need to follow separate, specific guidelines because that category contains graphic nudity or sexual content that may offend some members. You must

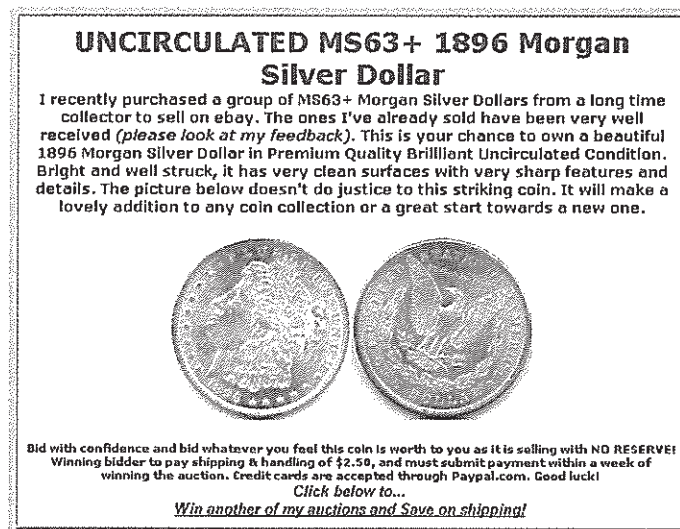
- ✓ Be at least 18 years of age (but you already know that all eBay customers must be 18 or older).
- ✓ Have a valid credit card.
- ✓ Complete a waiver stating that you're voluntarily choosing to access adults-only materials. For more on how to do this (and a handy primer on privacy issues), see Chapter 14.

If you have Adult/Erotica items that you'd like to sell in a private auction, study the section later in this chapter that details the Private Auction option.

## Writing your description

Once you hook potential bidders with your title, reel 'em in with a fabulous description. Don't think Hemingway here; think infomercial (the classier the better). Figure 10-4 shows a great description of some silver dollars. You can write a great description, as well — all you have to do is click in the box and start typing.

**Figure 10-4:**  
Writing a good item description often means the difference between selling success and failure.



Here's a list of suggestions for writing an item description:

- ✓ **Accentuate the positive.** Give the buyer a reason to buy your item and be enthusiastic when you list all the reasons everyone should bid on it. Unlike the title, you can use as much space as you want. Even if you use a photo, be precise in your description — how big it is, what color, what kind of fabric, what design, and so on. Refer to this chapter's "Item title info" section, as well as Table 10-1, for ideas on what to emphasize and how to word your description.
- ✓ **Include the negative.** Don't hide the truth of your item's condition. Trying to conceal flaws costs you in the long run: You'll get tagged with bad feedback. If the item has a scratch, a nick, a dent, a crack, a ding, a tear, a rip, missing pieces, replacement parts, faded color, dirty smudges, or a bad smell (especially if cleaning might damage the item), mention it in the description. If your item has been overhauled, rebuilt, repainted, or hot-rodded (say, a "Pentium computer" that was a 386 till you put in the new motherboard), say so. You don't want the buyer to send back your merchandise because you weren't truthful about imperfections or modifications.



- ✔ **Be precise about all the logistical details of the post-auction transaction.** Even though you're not required to list any special S&H (shipping and handling) or payment requirements in your item description, the majority of eBay users do. Try to figure out the cost of shipping the item in the United States and add that to your description. If you offer shipping insurance, add it to your item description.
- ✔ **Promote your other auctions.** The pros always do a little cross-promotion, and it works. When Jane Pauley on *Dateline NBC* tells you to tune in for the morning news, she's trying to prevent you from turning to the competition. So, if you're selling Furbies *and* Beanie Babies, say something like "Check out my Tabasco the Bull Beanie Baby auction."
- ✔ **While you're at it, promote yourself too.** As you accumulate positive feedback, tell potential bidders about your terrific track record. Add statements like "I'm great to deal with. Check out my feedback section." You can even take it a step further by linking your auction page to your personal Web page (if you have one) or your About Me page. (Chapter 13 gives you some tips on how to make your auction seen by a wider audience.)
- ✔ **Wish your potential bidders well.** Communication is the key to a good transaction, and you can set the tone for your auction and post-auction exchanges by including some simple phrases that show your friendly side. Always end your description by wishing bidders good luck, inviting potential bidders to e-mail you with questions, and offering the option of providing additional photos of the item if you have them.



Occasionally, sellers offer an item as a *pre-sell*, or an item that the seller doesn't yet have in stock but expects to. If you're offering this kind of item, make sure that you spell out all the details in the description. Don't forget to include the actual shipping date. We have found that putting an item up for sale without actually having it in hand is a practice fraught with risk. The item you are expecting may not arrive in time or arrive damaged. We've heard of one too many sellers who had to go out and purchase an item at retail for a buyer in order to preserve their feedback when caught in this position.

Like stores that hang signs that say *No shirt, no shoes, no service*, eBay members can refuse to do business with certain members. You have the right to be selective (within reason and the law, of course) about whom you want as a prospective buyer for your item. The auction is yours, and you can protect your investment any way you want. However, you can't discriminate or break any state or federal laws in your description.

## Filling out the item location

eBay wants you to list the general area and the country in which you live. The idea behind telling the bidder where you live is to give him or her a heads-up on what kind of shipping charges to expect. Don't be esoteric (listing where you live as *The Here and Now* isn't a whole lot of help) but don't go crazy with cross-streets, landmarks, or degrees of latitude. Listing the city and state you live in is enough.

eBay also wants you to indicate in which of its local regions you reside. Doing so allows your auction to be listed under the Regional eBay pages. You also have the option not to be listed. We recommend that, if you live in one of the listed metropolitan areas, you use the benefits of local trading and select your area.



If you live in a big area — say, suburban Los Angeles (who, us?), which sprawls on for miles — you may want to think about narrowing down your region a little. You may find a bidder who lives close to you, which could swing your auction. We suggest that if you do a face-to-face transaction, do it in a public place.

## Listing the payment methods you'll accept

Yeah, sure, eBay's loads of fun, but the bottom line to selling is the phrase *show me the money!* You make the call on what you're willing to take as money from the high bidder of your auction. Just click the payment options eBay offers that you like. They are

- ✓ **Money Orders/Cashier's Check:** The safest method of payment is a money order or cashier's check. It's the closest thing you can get to cash. As a seller, you want to get paid with as little risk as possible.
- ✓ **C.O.D. (Collect on Delivery):** We think that this option is the least attractive for both buyers and sellers. The buyer has to be home with the cash ready to go on the day that the package arrives. Odds are that on the day the item's delivered, your buyer is taking his or her sick pet goldfish to the vet for a gill-cleaning. Then the item ends up back at your door, and you have no sale.
- ✓ **See Item Description:** This option is selected for you by default. We think you should always state in your item description how you want to be paid. Why? Because there's no good reason not to.



Standard practice is to restate and fully explain payment and shipping terms in your item description, but you don't have to.



✔ **Personal Check:** This is an extremely popular option, but it comes with a risk: The check could bounce higher than a lob at Wimbledon. If you accept personal checks, explain in your item description how long you plan to wait for the check to clear before sending the merchandise. The average hold is about five business days. Some sellers wait as long as two weeks.

Cut down on the risk of bad checks by reading the bidder's feedback when the auction's underway. Be wary of accepting checks from people with negative comments. (We explain all about feedback in Chapter 4.) Never ship an item until you're certain the check has cleared.

eBay is trying to take some of the mystery and foreboding out of accepting checks with its ID Verify program, which allows Equifax, a gigantic check-verification company, to run credit checks and present eBay members with a clean bill of health. (For more on ID Verify, see Chapter 15.)

✔ **Online Escrow:** An escrow service acts as a referee, a neutral third party. Unless you're selling an expensive item, however, offering escrow is overkill. Usually, the buyer pays for this service. Escrow companies charge 5 percent of the sale price. On big-ticket items, it may give some bidders an added sense of security. If you do offer escrow, the winning bidder should inform you right after the auction that he or she intends to use escrow. You can find more on escrow in Chapter 6.

✔ **Other:** If you're offering payment options that are not listed here, select this option. Some buyers (mostly international) like to pay in cash, but we think this is way too risky and recommend that you never, ever deal in cash. If a problem arises — for either buyer or seller — no one has evidence that payment was made or received. Avoid it.

✔ **Credit Cards (Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover):** If you accept credit cards, be sure to check off the little boxes next to the ones you accept. If you accept the online payment service by Billpoint or PayPal, be sure to indicate the credit card option here.

If you plan on using the Billpoint service, remember that it charges you a percentage of your final sale.

Some sellers who use credit card services try attaching an additional fee to the final payment. However, that's against the law in California, home of eBay, and therefore against eBay's rules. So forget about it.



Most sellers offer buyers several ways to pay. You can choose as many as you want. When the auction page appears, your choices are noted at the top of the listing. Listing several payment options makes you look like a flexible, easygoing professional.

## Setting shipping terms

Ahoy, matey! Hoist the bid! Okay, not quite. Before you run it up the mast, select your shipping options. You've got these:

- ✔ **Ship to Home Country Only.** This option is selected by default; it means you only ship domestically.
- ✔ **Will Ship Internationally.** The world is your oyster. But make sure that you can afford it.
- ✔ **Will Ship to United States and the Following Regions.** If you are comfortable shipping to certain countries but not to others, make your selections here and they show up on your auction page.



eBay has lots of good international users, so you may want to consider selling your items around the world. If you do, be sure to clearly state in the description all extra shipping costs and customs charges. (See Chapter 11 for more information on how to ship to customers abroad.)

You're also asked who you want to pay for shipping. Choose an option:

- ✔ **Seller Pays:** You're picking up the shipping tab.
- ✔ **Buyer Pays Actual Shipping Cost:** You let the buyer know exactly how much the item costs to ship, and the buyer picks up the tab.
- ✔ **Buyer Pays Fixed Amount:** You state a fixed shipping price in your item description; the buyer agrees to include this amount in the payment for the item.
- ✔ **See Item Description:** This is another option selected by default; we see no reason not to explain your terms in the item description.

We recommend choosing the See Item Description option. Check out Chapter 11 to get more information on each of these options.

## Listing the number of items for sale

Unless you're planning on holding a Dutch auction, the number of items is always 1, which means you're holding a traditional auction. If you need to change the quantity number from 1, just type the number in the box.



A matching set of cufflinks is considered one item, as is the complete 37-volume set of *The Smith Family Ancestry and Genealogical History since 1270*. If you have more than one of the same item, we suggest that you sell them one at a time.

## Going Dutch

If you've got five Dennis Rodman Wedding Dolls, 37 Breathalyzers, or 2,000 commemorative pins, and you want to sell them all at once to as many bidders as possible, sell them in a Dutch auction. Dutch auctions are mainly used by dealers and businesses who want to move lots of items fast.

eBay has requirements for starting a Dutch auction. You have to be an eBay member at least 60

days with a feedback rating of ten or higher. Click on the Dutch auction link for more information on how to conduct this type of auction, and check out Chapter 1 for more info on how a Dutch auction works. If you're interested in bidding on a Dutch auction, take a look at Chapter 6.

Whether you list your items individually in auctions or together in a Dutch auction, eBay won't allow you to list the same item in more than seven auctions at one time.

## Setting a minimum bid — how low can you go?

eBay requires you to set a *minimum bid*, the lowest bid allowed in an auction. What do a baseball autographed by JFK, a used walkie-talkie, and a Jaguar sports car have in common? They all started with a \$1 minimum bid. You may be surprised to see stuff worth tens of thousands of dollars starting at just a buck. These sellers haven't lost their minds. Neither are they worried someone could be tooling down the highway in a \$100,000 sports car for the price of a burger.



Setting an incredibly low minimum (just type it in the box *without* the dollar sign but *with* the decimal point) is a subtle strategy that gives you more bang for your buck. You can use a low minimum bid to attract more bidders, who will drive up the price to the item's real value — especially if, after doing your research, you know that the item is particularly hot. If you are worried about the outcome of the final bid, you can protect your item by using a *reserve price* (the price the bidding needs to reach before the item can be sold). Then you won't have to sell your item for a bargain-basement price because your reserve price protects your investment. The best advice is to set a reserve price that is the lowest amount you'll take for your item and then set a minimum bid that is ridiculously low. Use a reserve only when absolutely necessary because many bidders may pass up a reserve auction. (For more info about setting a reserve price, see the section "Your secret safety net — reserve price," later in this chapter.)

Starting with a low minimum is also good for your pocketbook. eBay charges the seller an insertion, or placement, fee — based on your opening bid. If you keep your opening bid low and set no reserve, you get to keep some more of your money. (See Chapter 9 for more about eBay fees.)

The more bids you get, the more people want to bid on your item because they think the item is hot. eBay actually designates every non-reserve auction item that has 31 bids or more as a Hot item and attaches a Hot icon (a flaming match) to that auction. The item is also listed in the Hot category. A designated Hot item draws bidders the way a magnet attracts paper clips.



Before you set any minimum bid, do your homework and make some savvy marketing decisions. If your auction isn't going as you hoped, you *could* end up selling your Grandma Ethel's Ming vase for a dollar. Once you set your minimum bid, you can't change it, so don't be hasty. Think about your strategy.



When putting in your minimum bid, type in only the numbers and a decimal point. Don't use dollar signs (\$) or cents signs (¢).

## Setting your auction time

How long do you want to run your auction? eBay gives you a choice — 3, 5, 7, or 10 days. Just click the number you want in the box.



Our auction-length strategy depends on the time of year and the item we're selling, and we have great success. If you've got an item that you think will sell pretty well, run a seven-day auction so bidders have time to check it out before they decide to bid. (We almost always run seven-day auctions.)

However, if you know that you've got a red-hot item that's going to fly off the shelves — like a rare Beanie Baby or a hard-to-get Furby — choose a three-day auction. Eager bidders tend to bid higher and more often to beat out their competition if the item's hot and going fast.



No matter how many days you choose to run your auction, it ends at exactly the same time of day as it starts. A seven-day auction that starts on Thursday at 9:03:02 a.m. ends the following Thursday at 9:03:02 a.m.

Although we know the folks at eBay are pretty laid back, they do run on military time. That means they use a 24-hour clock that's set to Pacific Coast time. So 3:30 in the afternoon is 15:30, and one minute after midnight is 00:01. Questions about time conversions? Check out the Cheat Sheet at the front of this book. At ease.

Go to the Site Map for an eBay Official Time link that takes you to a nifty-looking map with the actual time in different parts of the country.



Once a week, eBay conducts a mandatory outage for database maintenance, which means that it closes up shop on Fridays from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. Pacific Time (that's 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. Eastern Time). Never post an auction right after this outage. eBay regulars won't be around to bid on it. Also, search updates are usually 12 to 15 hours behind on Friday and Saturday following scheduled maintenance.

With auctions running 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, you should know when the most bidders are around to take a gander at your wares. Here are some times to think about:



- ✓ **Saturday/Sunday:** Always run an auction over a weekend. People log on and off of eBay all day.

Never start or end your auction on a Saturday or Sunday. Although this advice may seem strange, bidders are busy having lives on weekends, and their schedules are unpredictable. Some eager bidders may log on and place a maximum bid on your auction, but, you can bet they won't be sitting at a computer making a last-minute flurry of competitive bids if they have something better to do on a Saturday or Sunday.



- ✓ **Holiday weekends:** If a holiday weekend's coming up around the time you're setting up your auction, run your auction through the weekend.

Don't end an auction on the last day of a three-day holiday. People in the mood to shop are generally at department stores collecting bargains. If eBay members aren't shopping, they're out enjoying an extra day off.

- ✓ **Time of day:** We think the best time of day to start and end your auction is during eBay's peak hours of operation, which are 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Pacific Time, right after work on the West Coast. Of course, this timing depends on the item you're auctioning and whether 5–9 p.m. Pacific Time is the middle of the night where you live.



Unless you're an insomniac or a vampire and want to sell to werewolves, don't let your auctions close in the middle of the night. There aren't enough bidders around to cause any last-minute bidding that would bump up the price.

## *eBay Options: Ballyhoo on the Cheap*

Although eBay's display options aren't quite as effective as a three-story neon sign in Times Square, they do bring greater attention to your auction. Here are the options:

- ✓ **Bold.** eBay fee: \$2. Bold type does catch your attention, but don't bother using it on items that'll bring in less than \$20. Do use it if you're in hot competition with other similar items and you want yours to stand out.
- ✓ **Highlight.** eBay fee: \$5. Yellow highlighter is what we use to point out the high points in books we read. (You're using one now, aren't you?) The yellow highlight feature can really make your item shine.
- ✓ **Home Page Featured.** eBay fee: \$99.95. As with expensive real estate, you pay a premium for location, location, location. The \$99.95 gives you the highest level of visibility at eBay, and it occasionally appears smack in the middle of the eBay Home page, as well as on the Special Featured auction section and on the individual category pages of the featured items (kinda hard to miss). Figure 10-5 shows the featured auctions on eBay's Home page.

Bidders do browse the Featured Auctions to see what's there, just as you might head directly to the New Releases section of your video store. But, because the vast majority of auctions found at eBay are under \$25, the average seller doesn't use the Featured Auctions option.

- ✓ **Featured Plus!** eBay fee: \$19.95. You want top billing? You can buy it here. This option puts you on the first page of your item category and on search results pages. We like this option for moving special merchandise. Often, bidders just scan the top items; if you want to be seen, you gotta be there. Ask yourself this: Is it worth \$20 to have more people see my item? If yes, then go for it. Figure 10-6 shows how items are listed in the Featured in Category listings.

You need a feedback rating of at least 10 to make it to the Featured Auctions and Featured in Category Auctions.



**Figure 10-5:** High traffic on eBay's Home page means high visibility for featured auctions.





**Figure 10-6:** Items at the top of the Featured in Category listings are very visible to buyers.

Address: <http://listing.ebay.com/aw/Listing/list/category434/index.html>

Sell your item in the Music: Rock-n-Roll: Kiss category Updated: Jul 01, 2000 13:35:01 PDT

Top > [Books, Movies, Music](#) > [Memorabilia](#) > [Music: Rock-n-Roll](#) > [KISS](#) Items located in: [all of eBay - includes all regions](#) Go!

Current Items || [New Today](#) || [Ending Today](#) || [Completed Auctions](#) || [Going, Going, Gone](#)

Related Topics: [Music Theme Page](#) | [Heavy Metal CDs](#) | [Classic Rock CDs](#) | [Hard Rock CDs](#)

2190 Kiss items in All eBay

All Items | All items including Gallery preview | Gallery Item

Status	Featured Items - Current	Price	Bids	Ends PDT
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">KISS GENE SIMMONS Perrin Make Up &amp; Stage Case</a>	\$760.00	2	07/08 19:53
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Kiss: Freely, Chris and Stanley Signed 8:10's</a>	\$31.00	16	07/05 15:00

To find out how to be listed in this section and seen by thousands, please visit this link: [Featured Auctions](#)

Status	Current Items - Current	Price	Bids	Ends PDT
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Paul Stanley Cup™ KISS</a>	\$1.00	-	07/08 13:31
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">STILL SEALED - KISS ALIVE II 8-Track MCN/PAY</a>	\$9.99	-	07/08 13:30
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Kiss destroyer lo</a>	\$5.99	-	07/11 13:27

## Your secret safety net — reserve price

Here's a little secret: The reason sellers list big-ticket items like Ferraris, grand pianos, and high-tech computer equipment with a starting bid of \$1 is because they're protected from losing money with a *reserve price*. The reserve price is the lowest price that must be met before the item can be sold. It's not required by eBay but can protect you. eBay charges an additional fee for this feature that varies depending on how high your reserve is.

For example, say you list a first edition book of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. You set the starting price at \$1, and you set a reserve price at \$80. That means that people can start bidding at \$1, and if at the end of the auction the book hasn't reached the \$80 reserve, you don't have to sell the book.

As with everything in life, using a reserve price for your auctions has an up side and a down side. Choosy bidders and bargain hunters blast past reserve-price auctions because they see a reserve price as a sign that proclaims *No bargains here!* Many bidders figure they can get a better deal on the same item with an auction that proudly declares *NR* (for *no reserve*) in its description. As an enticement to those bidders, you see lots of *NR* listings in auction titles.



On lower priced items, we suggest that you set a higher minimum bid and set no reserve. Otherwise, if you're not sure about the market, set a low minimum bid but set a high reserve to protect yourself.

If bids don't reach a set reserve price, some sellers e-mail the highest bidder and offer the item at what the seller thinks is a fair price. Two caveats:

- ✓ eBay can suspend the seller *and* the buyer if the side deal is reported to Rules & Safety (SafeHarbor). This activity is strictly prohibited.
- ✓ eBay will not protect buyers or sellers if a side deal goes bad.



You can't use a reserve price in a Dutch auction. And reserve-price auctions aren't eligible to have their goods placed in the Hot Items category.

## *I want to be alone: The private auction*

In a private auction, bidders' User IDs are kept under wraps. Sellers usually use this option to protect the identities of bidders during auctions for high-priced big-ticket items (say, that restored World War II fighter). Wealthy eBay users may not want the world to know that they have the resources to buy expensive items. Private auctions are also held for items from the Adult/Erotica category. (Gee, there's a shocker.)



In private auctions, the seller's e-mail address is accessible to bidders in case questions arise. Bidders' e-mail addresses remain unseen.

## *Put me in the Gallery*

The Gallery is a highly specialized auction area that lets you post pictures to a special photo gallery that's accessible from the listings. Many buyers enjoy browsing the Gallery catalog-style, and it's open to all categories. If you choose to go this route, your item is listed in both the Gallery and in the regular text listings. (We explain how to post your pictures in Chapter 13.)

## *Checking Your Work and Starting the Auction*

When you've filled out all the blanks on the Sell Your Item page and you think you're ready to join the world of e-commerce, follow these steps:

### **1. Click the Review button at the bottom of the Sell Your Item page.**

You waft to the Verification page (shown in Figure 10-7), the place where you can catch mistakes before your item is listed. The Verification page shows you a condensed version of all your information and tallies up how much eBay is charging you in fees and options to run this auction.

**Figure 10-7:**

The Verification page is the last place you can review for errors before beginning your auction.

Address: <http://cgi5.ebay.com/3w/cgi/eBay/SAPI.d>

Current account balance before adding this item: -\$31.76

If there are errors in your listing information, please use the back button on your browser to correct the information. Once you are satisfied with your complete listing, please press the submit button below.

Your <u>User ID</u> :	marsha_c
The title of the item:	Louis Teart Litho TWO BEAUTIES Chow Chow Dog
Optional holdface title:	no
Featured auction:	no
Featured category auction:	no
Great Gift auction:	no
Optional Gallery:	no
Optional Featured Gallery:	no
The category of the item:	Collectibles:Animals:Dog
Optional reserve price:	no
Optional private auction:	no
Auction currency:	U.S. dollars
Bidding starts at:	\$9.99
Quantity being offered:	1
Auction duration in days:	10 days
Location of item:	Los Angeles CA
Region:	CA-Los Angeles
Country location of item:	United States
Money order/Cashiers checks:	yes

You also may find the Verification page helpful as a last-minute chance to get your bearings. If you've chosen a very general category, eBay asks you whether you're certain there isn't a more appropriate category. You can go back to the Sell Your Item page by clicking the Back button of your browser. Make category changes or any other changes and additions, and then head for the Verification page again.

## 2. Check for mistakes.

Nit-pick for common, careless errors; you won't be sorry. We've seen eBay members make goofs such as the wrong category listing, spelling and grammatical errors, and missing information about shipping, handling, insurance and about payment methods.

## 3. When you're sure everything's accurate and you're happy with your item listing, click the Submit My Listing button.

An Auction Confirmation page pops up from eBay. At that precise moment, your auction begins, even though it may be a couple of hours before it appears in eBay's search and listings updates.



Print out the Auction Confirmation page and hold on to it for future reference. You also get a confirmation of your auction e-mailed to you within 24 hours. Print that out and hang on to it as well; it's handy if anybody involved in the auction has questions later.

Your auction appears in its category listing within about two hours from when you receive the Auction Confirmation page. If you want to see your auction right away and check for bids, your Auction Confirmation page provides a link for the purpose. Click the link and you're there. You can also keep track of your auctions by using the My eBay page. (To find out how, see Chapter 4.)



All auction pages come with this friendly warning:

Seller assumes all responsibility for listing this item. You should contact the seller to resolve any questions before bidding.

Some eBay veterans just gloss over this warning after they've been wheeling and dealing for a while, but it's an important rule to remember. Whether you're buying or selling, you are responsible for your own actions.



For the first 24 hours after your auction is underway, eBay stamps the Auction item page with a funky sunrise icon next to the listing. Just a little reminder for buyers to come have a look at the latest items on auction.

## *Mid-Course Corrections: Fixing Current Auctions*

Don't worry if you make a mistake filling out the Sell Your Item page but don't notice it until after the auction is up and running. Pencils have erasers, and eBay allows revisions. You can make changes at two stages of the game: before the first bid is placed and after the bidding war is underway. The following sections explain just what you can (and can't) correct — and when you have to accept the little imperfections of your Auction item page.

### *Making changes before bidding begins*

Here's what you can change about your auction before bids have been placed:

- ✓ The title of your auction
- ✓ The item category
- ✓ The item description
- ✓ The URL address of the picture you're including with your auction
- ✓ Accepted payment methods, payment terms, and shipping terms

When you revise an auction, eBay puts a little disclaimer on your auction page that reads Seller revised this item before the first bid. (Think of it as automatic common courtesy.)

To revise an auction before bids have been received:

**1. Go to the auction page and click the Revise link.**

If the item hasn't received any bids, a message appears on your screen to indicate that you may update the item.

You're taken to the Update Item Information Request Form page, where the item number of your auction and your User ID are already entered on the form.

**2. Type your password and click the Submit button.**

You're taken to the Update Your Item Information page.

**3. Make changes to the item information and then click the Verify button at the bottom of the page when you're finished.**

A summary of your newly revised auction page appears on your screen.

**4. If you're happy with your revisions, click the Update button.**

If not, click the Back button of your browser and redo the Update Your Information page.

You're taken to your newly revised auction item page, where you see a disclaimer from eBay that says you've revised the auction before the first bid.

## *Making changes after bidding begins*

If your auction is up and running and already receiving bids, you can still make some slight modifications to it. Newly added information is clearly separated from the original text and pictures. In addition, eBay puts a time stamp on the additional info in case questions from early bidders crop up later.

After your item receives bids, eBay allows you to

- ✓ **Change your item category:** If you think your auction isn't doing well because you listed it in the wrong category, change it. No moving vans or packing is required. You can find a new home for your item faster than you can say *Century 21*.
- ✓ **Add to your item's description:** If you feel you were at a loss for words in writing up your item's description or if a lot of potential bidders are asking the same questions, go ahead and make all the additions you want. But whatever you put there the first time around stays in the description as well.

To change your item's category from the eBay Home page after the item's received bids:

1. **Click the Services link on the navigation bar and then click Buying & Selling on the subnavigation bar.**

You're taken to the Services Overview page.

2. **Click the Change My Item's Category link.**

You're taken to the Changing My Item's Category page.

3. **Type in your User ID and your password, if you haven't signed in, and the item number for the auction item you want to modify; then select the item's new category.**

4. **Click the Change Category button.**

Your auction appears in its new listings in about an hour.

You've discovered that the Apollo 11 cookie jar you thought was a reproduction is really an original? Better change that description before you sell it. To change your item's description from the eBay Home page, follow these steps:

1. **Click the Services link on the navigation bar and then click Buying & Selling on the subnavigation bar.**

You're taken to the Services Overview page.

2. **Scroll down to Buying and Selling Tools and click the Add to My Item's Description link.**

You're taken to the Adding To Your Item Description page.

3. **Type in your User ID, your password, and the item number of the item you want to add to; then click Submit.**

You're taken to a page where you can add any text you want to your item's description in the description window.

4. **Click the Review button to see the additional information attached to your previous description.**

5. **If you like the changes, click the Add To Description button.**

A message appears on your screen, bearing the glad tidings that your addition has been recorded.



Don't let an oversight grow into a failure to communicate, and don't ignore iffy communication until the auction is over. Correct any inaccuracies now to avoid problems later on.

Always check your e-mail to see whether bidders have questions about your item. If a bidder wants to know about flaws, be truthful and courteous when returning e-mails. As you get more familiar with eBay (and with writing auction descriptions), the number of e-mail questions will decrease. If you enjoy good customer service in your day-to-day shopping, here's your chance to give some back.

## Chapter 12

# Troubleshooting Your Auction

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▷ Dealing with a difficult buyer
  - ▷ Handling other auction mishaps
  - ▷ Ending an auction early
  - ▷ Canceling an auction after it ends
  - ▷ Relisting an item
  - ▷ Getting refunds from eBay
- .....

**T**here's no getting around it: The more transactions you conduct at eBay, the more chances you have of facing some potential pitfalls. In this chapter, we give you pointers on how to handle an obnoxious buyer as if he or she is your new best friend (for a little while anyway). In addition, we explain how to keep an honest misunderstanding from blowing up into an e-mail war. We show you how to handle an auction that's (shall we say) on a road to nowhere, how to get some attention, and if it all goes sour, how to relist and get the money you paid eBay back. We don't think all of what we mention here will happen to you, but the more you know, the better off you'll be.

## *Dealing with a Buyer Who Doesn't Respond*

Most of the time, the post-auction transaction between buyers and sellers goes smoothly. However, if you have difficulty communicating with the winner of your auction, you should know the best way to handle the situation.

You've come to the right place if you want help dealing with a potential non-paying bidder (more commonly known as deadbeat bidders, which is how we refer to them). Of course, you should start with good initial post-auction communications; see Chapter 11. (For more information on how to deal with a fraudulent seller, see Chapter 15.)

## Going into nudge mode

Despite our best efforts, sometimes things fall through the cracks. Both buyers and sellers should contact each other within three business days of the close of the auction. Sometimes winners contact sellers immediately, which can save you some trouble, but if you don't hear from the buyer within three business days of your initial contact, our first advice is *don't panic*.

People are busy; they travel, they get sick, computers crash, or sometimes your auction may simply slip the winner's mind. After a week of not hearing from the winner, you need to get into big-time *nudge-nudge mode* — as in, “Mr. X, remember me and your obligation to buy the Tiffany lamp you won at eBay last week?”

Send a friendly-but-firm e-mail letting Mr. X know that when he bid and won your auction, he became obligated to pay and complete the transaction. If Mr. X doesn't intend to buy your item for any reason, he needs to let you know immediately.



Don't threaten your buyer. The last thing you want to do is add insult to injury in case the buyer is facing a real problem. Besides, if the high bidder goes to sleep with the fishes, you'll *never* see your money.

Here's what to include in your nudge-nudge e-mail:

- ✓ A gentle rebuke, such as, “Perhaps this slipped your mind,” or “You may have missed my e-mail to you,” or “I'm sure you didn't mean to ignore my first e-mail.”
- ✓ A gentle reminder that eBay's policy is that every bid is a binding contract. You can even refer the buyer to eBay's rules and regulations if you want.
- ✓ A statement that firmly (but gently) explains that, so far, you've held up your side of the deal and you'd appreciate it if he did the same.
- ✓ A date by which you expect to see payment. Gently explain that if the deadline isn't met, you'll have no other choice but to consider the deal invalid.



Technically, you can nullify the transaction if you don't hear from a buyer within three business days. However, eBay members are a forgiving bunch under the right circumstances. We think you should give your buyer a one-week grace period after the auction ends to get in touch with you and set up a payment plan. If you don't see any real progress towards a closing of the deal at the end of the grace period, say goodnight, Gracie. Consider the deal kaput and go directly to the section “Auction Going Badly? Cut Your Losses” (later in this chapter) to find out what recourse you have.



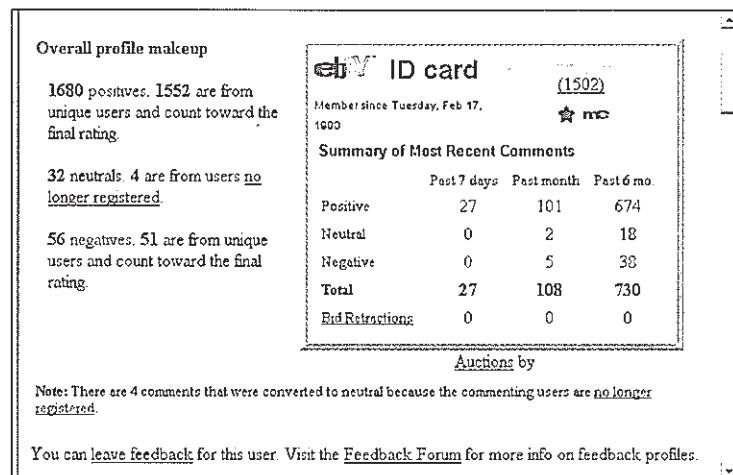


Be sure you're not the one who erred. Did you spell the name right in your winner's e-mail address? If you didn't, that person may not have received your message!

### *Be a secret agent, man*

We won't say history repeats itself; that would be a cliché. (All right, so you caught us, but clichés are memorable because they're so often true.) After you send your polite and gentle nudge-nudge e-mail, but before you decide that the auction is a lost cause, take a look at the bidder's feedback history. Figure 12-1 shows you the Feedback Profile of an eBay user with several negative feedback ratings in the last month. Beware.

**Figure 12-1:**  
You can get an indication of whether the buyer will complete the sale by looking at the user's Feedback Profile.



To check the feedback of a bidder (starting at your auction item page), do the following:

**1. Click the number in parentheses next to your winner's User ID.**

This takes you to the Feedback Profile page of the member.

**2. Scroll down the Feedback Profile page and read the comments.**

Check to see if the bidder has gotten negative feedback from previous sellers. Make a note of it in case you need some support and background information.

**3. Conduct a Bidder search.**

Click Search on the main navigation bar and do a Bidder search to see the buyer's conduct in previous auctions. How many has the buyer won? Click the item number to see the history of the auction. For more info on Bidder searches, check out Chapter 5.



When all else fails, you may want to double-check with some of the bidder's previous sellers. It's okay to e-mail previous sellers who've dealt with the bidder. They're often happy to give you details on how well (or badly) the transaction went.

If there's any indication that the buyer has gone AWOL in the past, start thinking about getting out of the transaction before too much time passes. If the buyer looks to be on the level, continue to give him or her the benefit of the doubt.

Be sure to ask previous sellers that dealt with the bidder the following questions (politely):

- ✓ Did Mr. X pay on time?
- ✓ Did his check clear?
- ✓ Did he communicate well?



When e-mailing a third party about any negative feedback left, choose your words carefully. There's no guarantee that if you trash the bidder, the third party will keep your e-mail private. Make sure you stick to the facts. Writing false or malicious statements can put you in danger of being sued.

## *Step up your nudge a notch*

If you don't hear from the winner after a week, your next course of action is to contact the winner by phone. To get the contact information of an eBay member for transaction purposes only, do the following:

- 1. Click the Search link on the navigation bar at the top of most eBay pages.**  
You see a subdirectory appear below the navigation bar.
- 2. Click the Find Members link and scroll down the page to the Contact Info box.**
- 3. Enter the User ID of the person you're trying to contact.**
- 4. Enter your User ID (or e-mail address) and your password.**
- 5. Click the Submit button.**

eBay e-mails you the contact information of the person with whom you want to be in touch and also sends your contact information to that person.



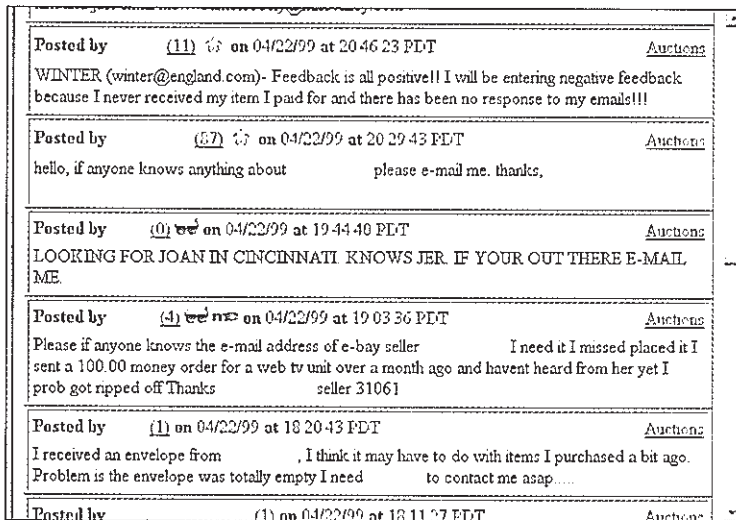
Wait a day before calling the person. We like the last-chance e-mail sent after ten days that says you want to put the item back up at eBay if the buyer is no longer interested. Also, mention that you want to apply for any credits you can get from eBay due to an incomplete transaction. If enough money is involved in the transaction, and you feel it's worth the investment, make the call to the winner. eBay automatically sends your request and your information to the bidder, and that may be enough of a nudge to get some action.

If you do get the person on the phone, keep the conversation like your e-mail — friendly but businesslike. Explain who you are, when the auction closed, and ask if there are any circumstances that have delayed the bidder's reply. Often, the bidder will be so shocked to hear from you that you'll get the check immediately, or you'll know this person is a complete deadbeat.

### *Try a last-ditch emergency effort*

If e-mails and phoning the winner don't work, and you really want to give the buyer one last chance to complete the transaction, check out eBay's Emergency Contact Board. Again, you should decide if the money involved in the cost of the phone call is worth the effort. The Emergency Contact Board is where members who are having trouble contacting buyers and sellers leave word. Don't worry that the buyer may miss your message. A conscientious group of eBay pros man this area and try to help by passing on e-mails to the missing parties. Jump over to Chapter 16 for more information on this Board and its group of regulars. Figure 12-2 shows you what the Emergency Contact Board looks like.

**Figure 12-2:**  
You can make one last attempt to contact your buyer on the Emergency Contact Board.



To post a message on the Emergency Contact Board, do the following:

1. **Click the Community link on the main navigation bar at the top of most eBay pages.**

A submenu with additional links appears.

2. **Click the Chat box on the submenu of the Navigation bar.**

You're taken to the Discussion Help & Chat page, which lists all eBay's chat boards.

3. **Scroll down under General Chat Rooms category and click the Emergency Contact link.**

You're taken to the Emergency User Contact Board.



Before you post a message, scroll through the postings and look for messages from your AWOL buyer. Maybe he or she has been trying to get in touch with you, too.

4. **If you haven't already signed in, type your User ID and password in the appropriate boxes. Then type your message where you want to post it.**



Even though you may feel like the transaction is a lost cause when you get to the point of posting a message on the Emergency Contact Board, keep your message neutral and don't make accusations.

5. **Check your message for errors and click the Click here button.**

Your message is instantly posted.



Not sure what to post on the Emergency Contact Board? Start off by sticking to the facts of the transaction and say what you want your buyer to do. Have the item number and the buyer's User ID handy before you start your posting. Be sure not to post any personal information about the buyer, like their real name and address. That is a violation of the eBay rules.

You can send messages to specific users or post a general cry for help. Here are two examples of short-but-sweet postings that get your message across:

- ✓ Dear Mr. X, I've been trying to reach you through e-mail and phone for two weeks about Item number XXXXX and have had no response. Please contact me by (leave date) or I will invalidate the auction and leave negative feedback.
- ✓ I've been trying to contact Mr. X (mrx@completelybogusbidder.com) for two weeks now regarding an auction. Does anybody know this person or have a new e-mail address for him? Did anybody get burned by this buyer in the past? Thanks.



Your postings aren't very useful if you don't check back often and read other eBay users' postings on the Emergency Contact Board. Check the board to see whether someone has responded to your message. Also, keep your eyes open as you scroll through the board. Although we suggest you don't trash anyone on this board, many people use the Emergency Contact Board to issue an all-points bulletin about bad eBay members.

## And Some Other Auction Problems

We're not quite sure why, but where money is involved, sometimes people act kind of weird. Buyers may suddenly decide that they can't purchase an item after they've made a commitment, or there may be payment problems, or shipping problems. Whatever the problem, look no farther than here to find out how to make things better.

### *The buyer backs out of the transaction*

Every time an eBay member places a bid, he or she makes a commitment to purchase the item in question. In theory, anyway. In the real world, people have second thoughts, despite the rules. You have every right to be angry that you're losing money and wasting your time. Remind the buyer that making a bid is a binding contract. But, unfortunately, if the winner won't pay up, you can't do much except make the winner pay with negative feedback. Jump to Chapter 6 to find out more about buyer's remorse.

#### *Keeping your cool*

By all means, if the winner of one of your auctions tells you that the transaction can't be completed, no matter what the reason — remain professional, despite your anger. For one thing, at least such a would-be buyer has the heart to break the news to you instead of ignoring your e-mail and phone calls.

#### *When Plan A fails, try Plan B, or even C*

You have several options if the winner backs out. You can offer the item to the next highest bidder or relist the item and hope it sells again. In addition, you can request a full or partial Final Value Fee credit. (We give you more information on requesting a Final Value Fee credit, selling your item to the next highest bidder, and relisting your item later in this chapter.) Who knows? This bidder may actually *earn* you money in the long run.



You may feel inclined to offer the item to the next-highest bidder, but watch out — eBay doesn't sanction this activity and you will not be protected by eBay if the deal doesn't work out. If you're reported for doing a side deal you could have your eBay membership revoked.

### Leaving feedback after an imperfect auction experience

If the buyer never materializes, backs out, bounces a check, or moves slower than a glacier to send your payment (but wants the item sent overnight from Boston to Khartoum at your expense), you need to think about how you want to word your feedback. You're well within your rights to leave negative feedback, but that doesn't mean you can go off the deep end. Remember to stick to the facts and don't get personal.

Here are a few feedback tips. For more information, check out Chapters 4 and 6.

- ✔ If the transaction was shaky but everything turned out all right in the end, go ahead and leave neutral feedback.
- ✔ If a blizzard stopped planes out of Chicago for three days and that's why it took a long time to get your check, take a deep breath, blame the fates, and leave positive feedback.
- ✔ If the buyer was a living nightmare, take a long break before leaving negative feedback — and have someone you love and trust read it before you send something into the virtual world that you can't take back.

### *Houston, we have a payment problem*

Lots of things can go wrong where money is concerned. Maybe you never receive the money, or perhaps the check bounces. If the check bounces, contact the seller immediately. Honest winners will be completely embarrassed and make good while unscrupulous winners will offer lame excuses. Either way, insist on a more secure form of payment, like a money order.



If the buyer pays by check, hang on to the check until it clears, and then ship the item.

### *The item you send is busted — and so are you*

Uh-oh! Could it be true? Could you have sent the wrong item? Or is it possible that the crystal vase you thought you packed so well is a sad pile of shards at the bottom of a torn box? If so, read Chapter 11 as soon as you take care of this catastrophe so that you can get some hints on packing and insurance.

It's time to do some serious problem solving. If the buyer met his or her end of the deal, you need to do your best to fix the problem. Your communication skills are your number one asset in this situation, so get to work.

***Picking up the pieces***

No matter how carefully you pack an item, sometimes it arrives on the buyer's doorstep mangled, broken, or squashed. News of this unfortunate event travels back to you fast. The buyer will let you know in about 30 seconds how unhappy he or she is in an e-mail. Tell the buyer to locate the insurance stamp or paper tag that's attached to the package as proof of insurance and then take the whole mangled shebang back to his or her post office.

Here's what happens at the post office:

- ✔ If the item is insured for less than \$50, the buyer immediately gets a postal service money order for the value of the item.
- ✔ If the item is insured for over \$50, the buyer fills out a claim form, and you're contacted to fill out additional forms. You need to show the good people at the post office your insurance receipt. You have to wait 60 to 90 days for the paperwork to be processed before you actually get paid.
- ✔ Of course, the post office won't refund the postage. Hey, they delivered the item, didn't they?

If a package is lost, you'll know it because the delivery confirmation never comes through, or the buyer tells you the package is a no-show. You need to go the post office from which you sent the item to file for insurance. Then the postal service checks around. If your item isn't located in 30 days, it's declared lost, and there's another round of paperwork and processing before you get your money. And no, you don't get a return on the postage either.

***Boxed out of a claim***

In our experience, neither UPS nor the United States Postal Service will pay on an insurance claim if they feel you did a lousy job of packing. So, don't be surprised if your claim is declined. Always use good products, pack carefully, and get ready to plead your case.



Every shipping company has its own procedure for complaints. But the one thing they do have in common: no procedure is hassle-free. Call your shipper as soon as a problem arises.

***You have regrets — seller's remorse***

You've undoubtedly heard about buyer's remorse. Here's a new one for you — *seller's remorse*. If you were selling your velvet Elvis footstool because your spouse said, "It's me or that footstool!" and in the end you realize your spouse should have known how much you revered the King when you went to Graceland on your honeymoon, you can end the auction. Read "Try canceling bids first" and "If all else fails, end your auction early," later in this chapter.

## *Auction Going Badly? Cut Your Losses*

So your auction is cruising along just fine for a couple of days when you notice that same eBay user who didn't pay up on a previous auction is your current high bidder. You don't want to get burned again, do you? Of course not; *cancel* this deadbeat's bid before it's too late. While canceling bids — or, for that matter, entire auctions — isn't easy (you have a load of explaining to do, pardner), eBay does allow it.

If you feel you have to wash your hands of an auction that's given you nothing but grief, it doesn't mean you have to lose money on the deal. Read on to find out the protocol for dumping untrustworthy bidders or (as a last resort) laying a bad auction to rest and beginning anew.

### *Try canceling bids first*

Face the facts: This auction is fast becoming a big-time loser. You did your very best, and things didn't work out. Before you kill an auction completely, see whether you can improve it by canceling bids first.

You may have a million reasons for thinking your auction is a bust, but eBay says your explanation had better be good. Here are some eBay-approved reasons for canceling a bid (or even an entire auction):

- ✔ The high bidder informs you that he or she is retracting the bid.
- ✔ Despite your best efforts to determine who your high bidder is, you can't find out — and you get no response to your e-mails or phone calls.
- ✔ The bidder makes a dollar-amount mistake in the bid.
- ✔ You decide mid-auction that you don't want to sell your item.



We can't drive this point home hard enough: *Say why, and your explanation had better be good.* You can cancel any bid for any reason you want, but if you can't give a good explanation why you did it, you will be sorry. Citing past transaction problems with the current high bidder is okay, but canceling a bidder who lives in Japan because you don't feel like shipping overseas after you said you'd ship internationally could give your feedback history the aroma of week-old sushi.



To cancel a bid (starting from most eBay pages), do the following:

**1. Click the Services link on the navigation bar.**

A submenu with additional links appears.

**2. Click the Buying & Selling link on the submenu.** You're taken to the Buying & Selling Tools page, where you see the Manage Your Items for Sale heading.

**3. Click the Cancel Bids on My Item link.**

You're taken to the Canceling Bids Placed in Your Auction page, as shown in Figure 12-3.

**Figure 12-3:**  
You can remove a bid from one of your auctions by using the Cancel Bid form.

**Cancelling Bids Placed in Your Auction**

You should only cancel bids if you have a good reason to. Also, please remember that bids cannot be reinstated once they've been canceled. Here are a few examples of a legitimate cancellation:

- Bidder contacts you to back out of the bid.
- You cannot verify the identity of the bidder, after trying all reasonable means of contact.
- You want to end your auction early because you no longer want to sell your item. In this case you must cancel all bids on your auction before ending the auction.

Because your cancellation will be put in the bidding history for this auction, bidders may ask you to explain your cancellation. So, please include a one-line explanation of your cancellation for the official record.

To avoid mistakes, please verify your password in order to cancel a bid. If you haven't selected a personal password, or if you've forgotten your password, please [request a new temporary password](#) before proceeding.

You are signed in as: *marsha\_c*  
(If you are not *marsha\_c*, [click here](#))

Item number of auction:

**4. Read all the fine print, and, if you haven't signed in, type your User ID, password, Item Number, and an explanation of why you're canceling a bid, as well as the User ID of the person whose bid you're canceling.**

**5. Click the Cancel Bid button.**



Be sure you really want to cancel a bid before you click the Cancel Bid button. Canceled bids can never be reinstated.

Canceling bids means you removed an individual bidder (or several bidders) from your auction, but the auction itself continues running. If you want to end the auction completely, read on.



eBay says that you can't receive feedback on a transaction that wasn't completed. So, if something in your gut says not to deal with a particular bidder, then don't.

## *If all else fails, end your auction early*

If you put your auction up for a week and the next day your boss says you have to go to China for a month or your landlord says you have to move out immediately so that he can fumigate for a week, you can end your auction early. But, ending an auction early isn't a decision to be taken lightly. You miss all the last-minute bidding action.



eBay makes it clear that ending your auction early does not relieve you of the obligation to sell this item to the highest bidder. To relieve your obligation, you must first cancel all the bids and then end the auction. Of course, if no one has bid, you have nothing to worry about.

When you cancel an auction, you have to write a short explanation (no more than 80 characters) that appears on the bidding history section of your auction page. Anyone who bid on the item may e-mail you for a written explanation. If bidders think your explanation doesn't hold water, don't be surprised if you get some nasty e-mail.



Bidding on your own item is against the rules. Once upon a time, you could cancel an auction by outbidding everyone on your own item and then ending the auction. But some eBay users abused this privilege by bidding on their own items merely to boost the sales price. Shame on them.

To end an auction early (starting at the top of nearly any eBay page), do the following:

**1. Click the Services link on the navigation bar.**

A submenu with additional links appears.

**2. Click the Buying & Selling link of the submenu.**

You're taken to the Buying and Selling Tools page, where you see the Manage Your Items for Sale heading.

**3. Under the Manage Your Items for Sale heading, click the End Your Auction Early link.**

You're taken to the Ending Your Auction form.

**4. If you haven't previously signed in, Type your User ID, password, and the Item Number; click the End Auction button.**

A Verifying Ending Auction page appears.

**5. Click the End Auction link.**

An Ended Auction page appears.

eBay sends an End of Auction Confirmation e-mail to you and to the highest bidder.



If you know when you list the item that you'll be away when an auction ends, let potential bidders know when you plan to contact them in your item description. Bidders who are willing to wait will still be willing to bid. Alerting them to your absence can save you from losing money if you have to cut your auction short.

## Extending your auction (not!)

Is your auction red hot? Bids coming in fast and furious? Wish you could have more time? Well, the answer is no. eBay won't extend auctions under normal conditions.

However, eBay on occasion experiences *hard outages*. That's when the system goes offline and no one can place bids. (Of course, Murphy's Law would put the next hard outage right in the thick of a furious bidding war in the final minutes of *your* auction. Or so it seems.) Outages can last anywhere from 5 minutes to a few hours. Because so many bidders wait until the last minute to bid, this can be a disaster. To make nice, eBay extends auctions by 24 hours if any of these three things happen:

- ✓ The outage is unscheduled and lasts two hours or more.
- ✓ The auction was scheduled to end during the outage.
- ✓ The auction was scheduled to end one hour after the outage.



If your auction was set to end Thursday at 20:10:09 (remember, eBay uses military time, based on the Pacific Time Zone — which would make it 8:10 p.m.), the new ending time is Friday at 20:10:09. Same Bat-time, same Bat-channel, different day.

eBay also refunds all your auction fees for any hard outage that lasts more than two hours. That means the Insertion Fee, Final Value Fee, and any optional fees. You don't have to apply for anything; all refunds are done automatically by eBay.



You can read about any hard outages at eBay's Announcements Board. To get to an outage report, check the bottom of most eBay pages; you'll find an Announcements link.

If the Announcements link isn't there, start at the navigation bar (at the top of most eBay pages) and do the following:

- 1. Click Community on the main navigation bar.**  
You're taken to the Community Overview page.
- 2. Click the Announcements link in the News section.**
- 3. Scroll through the eBay announcements.**



We make it standard operating procedure to check the Announcements Board every time we log into eBay. Sort of like checking the obituary in the morning to make sure you're not listed. More on the Announcements Board in Chapter 16.

## *Filing for a Final Value Fee credit*

Hard outages are not the only time you can collect a refund. If closing a successful auction is the thrill of victory, finding out that your buyer is a non-paying bidder or deadbeat is the agony of defeat. Adding insult to injury, eBay still charges you a Final Value Fee even if the high bidder never sends you a cent. But you can do something about it. You can file for a Final Value Fee credit.

To qualify for a Final Value Fee credit you must prove to eBay one of the following:

- ✓ The winning bidder never responded after numerous e-mail contacts.
- ✓ The winning bidder backed out of the sale.
- ✓ The winning bidder's payment did not clear or was never received.
- ✓ The winning bidder returned the item to you, and you refunded the payment.

So what happens if the sale goes through but for some reason you collect less than the actual listed final sale price? eBay has you covered there, too. But first you may ask, "Wait a second, how can that happen?" Let us count the ways. Here are a few of them:

- ✓ eBay miscalculates the final price (this doesn't happen often, but always check).
- ✓ You renegotiate a lower final sale price with the winning bidder, and eBay still charges you on the basis of the posted high bid.
- ✓ Bidder(s) in your Dutch auction back out.

To apply for a full or partial credit, you must first file a Non-Paying Bidder Alert:

- 1. If 7 days elapse since the end of the auction (and no more than 45 days), click the Services link on the navigation bar at the top of most eBay pages.**

A submenu with additional links appears.

- 2. Click the Buying & Selling Tools link on the submenu.**

You're taken to the Buying & Selling Tools page.

3. Under the Seller Accounts heading, click the Request Final Value Fee Credit link.

You're taken to the Final Value Fee Credit Request page.

4. Read the guidelines for applying for a Final Value Fee credit and click the Non-Paying Bidder Alert link.

You're taken to the Non-Paying Bidder Alert Form page.

5. Since you've already signed in, just Type in the Item Number of the auction in question; click the Submit button.

The instant you file for Non-Paying Bidder Alert credit, eBay shoots off an e-mail to the winner of your auction (they also send you a copy) and warns the eBay user of the non-paying bidder status.

After four non-payment warnings, eBay can boot a deadbeat from the site.

You and your non-paying bidder now have ten days to work out your problems. If you make no progress after ten days, you may file for your Final Value Fee credit.



You need to wait *at least* seven days before you can apply for a Final Value Fee credit. We think it's jumping the gun even at seven days — try to give it two weeks unless the bidder sends you a message about backing out (or you have good cause to believe you've got a deadbeat on your hands). After your credit request is filed, eBay takes three to five business days to process it.

If you still want to file for your Final Value Fee credit after ten days, do the following:

1. Click the Services link on the navigation bar (at the top of most eBay pages).  
A submenu with additional links appears.
2. Click the Buying & Selling link on the submenu.  
You're taken to the Buying & Selling Tools page.
3. Under the Seller Accounts heading, click the Request Final Value Fee Credit link.
4. Click the Final Value Fee Credit Request Form link.
5. If you haven't signed in, enter your User ID, password, and Item Number; click the Submit button.
6. Answer the following questions:
  - Did you receive any money from the bidder? If you answer yes, type the amount in the box; use numerals and a decimal point.

- **Reason for refund.** eBay gives you a drop-down menu of choices. Click the small down arrow on the right of the box and all your options magically appear.
- **Bidder's e-mail address.** Type the e-mail address of the person who was the highest bidder on your auction.

**7. Click the Submit button on the bottom of the page.**

You're taken to the Credit Request Process Completed page, which confirms that your refund is being processed by eBay, as shown in Figure 12-4.

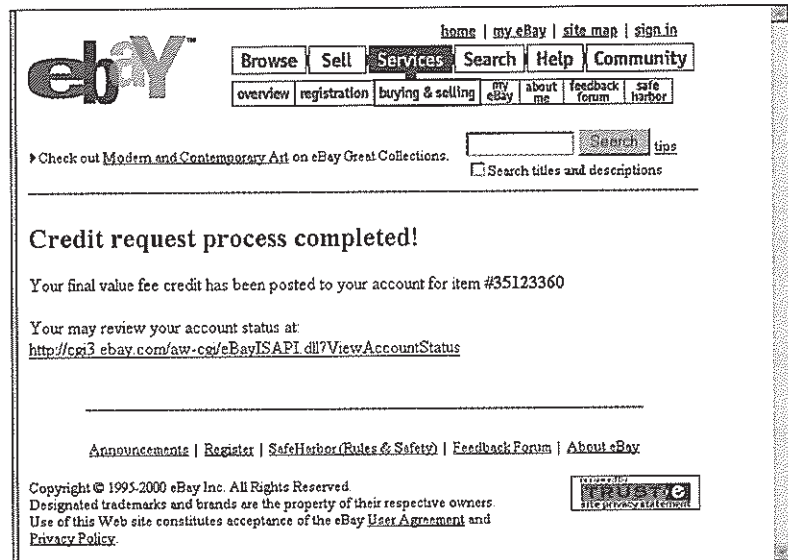


When your auction ends, you have up to 60 days after the auction closes to request a full or partial credit. After 60 days, kiss your refund good-bye; eBay won't process it.



Anyone caught applying for either a full or partial refund on a successful item transaction can be suspended or something worse — after all, this is a pretty clear-cut case of fraud.

**Figure 12-4:**  
eBay processes your Final Value Fee credit and it appears on your account almost immediately.



If you want to verify eBay's accounting, grab your calculator and use Table 12-1 to check the math. (Why couldn't we have had one of those in high-school algebra class?)

Table 12-1 Determining Your Final Value Fee	
Closing Bid	To Find Your Final Value Fee
\$.01–\$25	Multiply the final sale price by 5 percent. If the final sale price is \$25, multiply 25 by 5 percent. You owe eBay \$1.25.
\$25.01–\$1,000	You pay \$1.25 for the first \$25 of the final sale price (which is 5 percent). Subtract \$25 from your final closing bid, and then multiply this amount by 2.5 percent. Add this total to the \$1.25 you owe for the first \$25. The sum is what you owe eBay. If the final sale price is \$1,000, multiply 975 by .025. ( <i>Hint:</i> The answer is \$24.38.) <i>Now</i> , add \$24.38 and \$1.25. You owe eBay \$25.63.
\$1,000.01 and over	You owe \$1.25 for the first \$25 of the final sale price (which is 5 percent). But you also have to pay \$24.38 for the remainder of the price between \$25.01 through \$1,000 (which is 2.5 percent). This amount is \$25.63. <i>Now</i> , subtract \$1,000 from the final sale price (you've calculated those fees above) and multiply the final sale amount that is over \$1,000 by 1.25 percent. Add this amount to \$25.63. The sum is the amount you owe eBay. If the final sales price is \$3,000, multiply \$2,000 by 1.25 percent. ( <i>Hint:</i> The answer is \$25.) Add \$25.63 to \$25. The sum, \$50.63, is what you owe eBay. You will not be graded on this.



Always print out a copy of any refund and credit requests you make. This paper trail can help bail you out later if eBay asks for documentation.

## *Déjà vu — relisting your item*

Despite all your best efforts, sometimes your auction ends with no bids or bids that are not even close to your reserve price. Or maybe a buyer won your auction, but the transaction didn't go through. eBay takes pity on you and offers you the chance to pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start all over again.

The best way to improve your chances of selling a relisted item is by making changes to the auction. eBay says the majority of all the items put up for auction sell. If you sell your item the second time around, eBay rewards you with a refund of your Insertion Fee. You receive your refund after at least one billing cycle. Accept this refund as a reward for learning the ropes.



## But is she a natural blonde?

Here's an example of an item that would have made the seller a bundle if she'd done a little more strategizing up front:

**Platinum Mackie Barbie:** Beautiful Platinum Bob Mackie Barbie. MIB (removed from box once only to scan). The doll comes with shoes, stand, booklet, and Mackie drawing. The original plastic protects her hair and earrings. Buyer adds \$10 for shipping and insurance. Payment must be made within 10 days of auction by MO

or cashier's check only. The starting price was \$9.99, and even though the bidding went to \$256, the seller's reserve price was not met, and the item didn't sell.

When relisting this item, the seller should lower the reserve price and add more description about the importance of the doll. (Unless, of course, \$256 was far below what she wanted to make on the doll.)

To be eligible for a refund of your Insertion Fee, here's the scoop:

- ✓ You must relist no more than 30 days after closing the original auction.
- ✓ You can get credit only if you got no bids in your original auction, or if the bids you got did not equal the reserve in your reserve-price auction.
- ✓ You can change anything about your auction item description, price, duration, and minimum price, but you can't sell a different item.
- ✓ If you set a reserve price in your original auction, you must set the same reserve, lower it, or cancel the reserve altogether. If you set a higher reserve, you're not eligible for a relisting credit.



eBay's generosity has exceptions. They don't offer refunds for any listing options you paid for, such as **bold lettering** or use of the Featured in Category. Also, Dutch auctions aren't covered by this offer. And if you have a deadbeat on your hands, you can relist, but you don't get a return of your Insertion Fee. More bad news: If you don't sell the second time around, you're stuck paying *two* Insertion Fees. So give it your best shot!

To get your second shot at selling, do the following (from the Items I'm Selling section of your My eBay page):

**1. Click the auction item listing that you want to relist.**

You're taken to the main auction page of that item.

**2. Click the Relist this Item link.**

You see a brand new auction page to fill out, following the same directions offered in this chapter (so you're already good at it).





Being as specific as possible with your item title improves your odds of being profitable. If you're selling an old Monopoly game, don't just title it **board game**, call it **1959 Monopoly Game Complete**. For more information about listing items, see Chapter 10.

Here's a list of ideas you can use to improve your auction's odds for success:

- ✓ **Change the item category.** See if the item sold better in another category (see Chapter 3).
- ✓ **Add a picture.** If two identical items are up for auction at the same time, the item with a photo gets more and higher bids. Zoom in on Chapter 13.
- ✓ **Jazz up the title and description.** Make it enticing, and grab those search engines. Breeze on over to Chapter 10.
- ✓ **Set a lower minimum bid.** The first bidders will think they're getting a bargain, and others will want a hot item. Mosey on over to Chapter 10.
- ✓ **Set a lower reserve price or cancel the reserve.** A reserve price often scares away bidders who fear it's too high. See (yup) Chapter 10.
- ✓ **Change the duration of the auction.** Maybe you need some more time. Go to (you guessed it) Chapter 10.



Long-time eBay veterans say that reducing or canceling your reserve price makes your auction very attractive to buyers.

## *Show me the money: Refunds*

It's rare, but some folks rack up enough credits to want a refund. eBay refunds the amount in your account for anything over a buck. To get to the refund form that you must fax to eBay, click Services on the main navigation bar, click Buying & Selling on the subnavigation bar, and then click Cash Out Your Credit Balance. Fill out the form and send it in.

