

A COMPLETE BEGINNER GUIDE

Created by SimpleLifeCalc.com



THE NEW EBAY SELLER SURVIVAL GUIDE

Everything you need to go from “I’ve never sold anything” to your first sale — and your first month of profit.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- How eBay works (in plain English)
- Pricing research that takes 5 minutes
- Fees explained with real numbers
- Printable checklists, worksheets & action plans
- What to sell first — stuff you already own
- Listings, photos, shipping & packaging
- Scam-proofing your new account
- A complete 30-Day Success Plan

No experience needed · Short sections · Easy to skim · Built for real beginners

Fees and policies change — always confirm current numbers at [ebay.com/help](https://www.ebay.com/help) before relying on them.

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1 What Is eBay?

eBay is one of the world's biggest online marketplaces. Think of it as a giant, always-open garage sale: millions of buyers, and regular people (like you!) selling to them. You don't need a business, a store, or any experience. You need one item, a phone camera, and about 30 minutes.

GOOD TO KNOW · Why eBay is great for beginners

Buyers come to YOU — eBay already has the traffic. You don't build a website, run ads, or find customers. You just list an item and eBay shows it to people searching for it.

2 How eBay Works (60-Second Version)

- **1. You list an item.** Photos + title + description + price. Takes 10–15 minutes once you get the hang of it.
- **2. A buyer purchases it.** Either at your fixed “Buy It Now” price, or by winning an auction.
- **3. You ship it.** Print a label at home, drop the box at the post office. Done.
- **4. You get paid.** eBay deposits money to your bank account, automatically, minus its fees.
- **5. You both leave feedback.** Good feedback builds your reputation so future buyers trust you.

Auction vs. Buy It Now — which should a beginner use?

	BUY IT NOW (fixed price)	AUCTION
Best for	Almost everything — start here	Rare/collectible items
You control price?	Yes — you set it	No — bidders decide
Speed	Sells whenever someone buys	Ends on a set day
Beginner risk	Low	Item can sell for \$0.99

TIP

Use Buy It Now for your first 25+ sales. Auctions look fun, but a no-bid auction or a \$1 winning bid is how beginners lose money on good items.

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How To Create Your Account

Setting up takes about 15 minutes. Do it in this order:

- **Step 1 — Sign up.** Go to ebay.com (or the eBay app) → Register → choose a Personal account. Use an email you actually check — eBay sends important messages there.
- **Step 2 — Pick a username.** Keep it simple and professional-ish. “durham_deals_nc” beats “xXsk8rboi420Xx.” Buyers see it on every sale.
- **Step 3 — Verify your identity.** eBay asks for your name, address, phone, and bank details, plus your SSN/ITIN for tax reporting. This is normal — it's how you get paid.
- **Step 4 — Link your bank account.** This is where eBay deposits your money. Payouts typically arrive within 1–3 business days of the buyer's payment processing.
- **Step 5 — Set up your profile.** Add a simple photo or logo and one friendly sentence. Empty profiles look risky to buyers.
- **Step 6 — Download the eBay app.** You'll use it for photos, messages, and shipping labels. Turn notifications ON so you never miss a buyer question.

WATCH OUT · New-seller limits are normal

eBay limits brand-new accounts (often around 10 items / \$500 per month to start). This protects buyers from scammers. Sell a few items, ship fast, and eBay raises your limits automatically — you can also request increases in Seller Hub.

REAL EXAMPLE

Maria signed up on a Tuesday, listed 5 items from her closet that weekend, and hit her first-month limit by week 3. eBay doubled her limits the next month. Limits are a speed bump, not a wall.

Account setup quick-check

■ BEFORE YOU LIST ANYTHING

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Personal account created | ☐ Bank account linked & verified |
| ☐ Username is simple & clean | ☐ Profile photo + short bio added |
| ☐ eBay app installed | ☐ Notifications turned on |
| ☐ Address & phone confirmed | ☐ Read eBay's prohibited items list |

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What To Sell (Start With Your Own Stuff)

Your first inventory is FREE — it's already in your house. Selling things you own teaches you the whole process with zero risk. Walk through each room with a box and grab anything you haven't used in a year.

Beginner-friendly items hiding in your home

ROOM	LOOK FOR	WHY IT WORKS
Closet	Brand-name shoes, jackets, jeans	Light, easy to ship, always in demand
Garage	Tools, sports gear, car parts	High demand, low competition
Office	Old electronics, cables, keyboards	People search for replacements daily
Kitchen	Small appliances, vintage mugs	Discontinued items sell surprisingly well
Kids' room	Outgrown LEGO, video games, toys	Collectors pay real money
Media shelf	Video games, DVDs box sets, books	Cheap to ship, easy to photograph

What makes a GOOD first item?

- ✓ Worth \$15–\$60 (enough profit to matter, cheap enough that mistakes don't hurt)
- ✓ Smaller than a shoebox and under 2 lbs (cheap, easy shipping)
- ✓ Has a brand name or model number (easy for buyers to find)
- ✓ Not fragile (no heartbreak, no breakage refunds)

What to AVOID as a beginner

- Anything over ~\$100 (scammers target expensive items from new sellers)
- Heavy or huge items (shipping will eat your profit)
- Fragile glass/ceramics (until you've practiced packing)
- Prohibited items — weapons, perfumes w/ restrictions, recalled goods, counterfeits

REAL EXAMPLE

Dev's first 10 sales were all from his own closet and garage: a pair of Nikes (\$38), a cordless drill (\$45), three video games (\$52 total), and old graphing calculator (\$40). Total startup cost: \$0.

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How To Research Prices (The 5-Minute Method)

Never guess a price. eBay shows you exactly what items ACTUALLY sold for — not what hopeful sellers are asking. Asking prices are wishes; SOLD prices are facts.

The Sold-Listings method, step by step

- 1. Search your item on eBay (include brand + model + size/color).
- 2. Tap Filters → turn ON “Sold Items.” Everything you now see actually sold.
- 3. Look at the last 5–10 sales of items in similar condition to yours.
- 4. Ignore the highest and lowest — price in the middle of the rest.
- 5. Note what the best-selling listings did: their photos, titles, and keywords.

REAL EXAMPLE · Pricing a pair of used Air Max 90s, size 10

Sold results: \$62, \$55, \$51, \$48, \$44, \$29 (beat up), \$75 (brand new). Toss the \$29 and \$75 outliers. Your shoes are in average used shape → list at \$49.99. Total research time: 4 minutes.

TIP

Also check the sell-through: if 40 sold in 90 days, it'll move fast. If 2 sold and 80 are still listed, price aggressively or skip it.

Price Research Worksheet

Fill this out for each of your first 10 items. After 10, you'll do it in your head.

Item (brand + model + size):

5 recent SOLD prices: \$_____ \$_____ \$_____ \$_____ \$_____

My item's condition vs. those (better / same / worse):

My price: \$_____ Will I accept offers? YES / NO

Lowest offer I'd take: \$_____

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How To Create Listings That Sell

The title: your 80 most valuable characters

Buyers find you through search, so your title should be keywords — not a sentence. Formula: Brand + Item Type + Model + Size + Color + Condition keyword.

REAL EXAMPLE · Weak vs. strong title

Weak: “Really nice shoes, barely worn!!” → Strong: “Nike Air Max 90 Mens Size 10 White Red Running Shoes Sneakers” — every word is something a buyer might type.

The description: answer questions before they're asked

- **Condition honesty:** Mention EVERY flaw — scuffs, missing pieces, odors. One photographed flaw = trust. One hidden flaw = a return and bad feedback.
- **Measurements:** Clothing buyers need them (pit-to-pit, length). Measuring prevents “doesn't fit” returns.
- **What's included:** Say exactly what's in the box — and what isn't (no charger? say so).
- **Keep it short:** Bullet points beat paragraphs. Most buyers read on a phone.

Settings that help beginners win

- ✓ Use “Buy It Now” + turn ON “Best Offer” — offers start conversations that become sales
- ✓ Fill in ALL item specifics (brand, size, color...) — eBay's search relies on them heavily
- ✓ 1-business-day handling time — fast shippers get search boosts and happy buyers
- ✓ 30-day returns — scary sounding, but it increases buyer trust (and sales) more than it costs

■ LISTING CHECKLIST — RUN THIS BEFORE YOU HIT PUBLISH

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Title uses all ~80 characters of keywords | ☐ Correct category selected |
| ☐ 8+ photos uploaded (see next page) | ☐ Every flaw described AND photographed |
| ☐ All item specifics filled in | ☐ Measurements included (clothing) |
| ☐ Price based on SOLD listings | ☐ Best Offer turned on |
| ☐ Shipping option chosen & weighed | ☐ 1-day handling time set |

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Photography Tips (Phone Camera = Plenty)

Photos sell the item. Buyers can't touch it — your pictures are the product. The good news: a phone, a window, and a plain background beat an expensive camera with bad habits.

The 5 rules of money-making photos

- **1. Natural light.** Shoot near a window during the day. Never use flash — it creates glare and weird colors.
- **2. Plain background.** A white poster board (\$2) or a blank wall. Clutter = amateur = lower offers.
- **3. Fill the frame.** The item should take up 80% of the photo. Crop out empty space.
- **4. Every angle.** Front, back, both sides, top, bottom, label/tag, and inside if it opens.
- **5. Photograph the flaws.** Zoom in on scuffs and stains. It feels wrong — it's actually what builds trust and prevents returns.

TIP · The 12-photo formula

eBay allows 24 photos — use at least 8–12. Clothing: front, back, brand tag, size tag, fabric close-up, flaws, item laid flat with measuring tape visible. Electronics: all sides, every port, screen powered ON, model/serial sticker.

WATCH OUT

Never use stock photos or pictures from other listings. It violates eBay policy, and buyers expect YOUR item — mismatches cause returns and “item not as described” cases.

■ PHOTOGRAPHY CHECKLIST

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Shot in daylight near a window | ☐ Plain, clean background |
| ☐ First photo = best photo (it's the thumbnail) | ☐ All angles: front/back/sides/top/bottom |
| ☐ Brand, size & model tags photographed | ☐ Flaws photographed up close |
| ☐ Electronics shown powered on | ☐ Photos are sharp (tap to focus!) |
| ☐ 8–12 photos minimum uploaded | ☐ No stock photos used |

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Shipping Basics (Less Scary Than It Looks)

Shipping intimidates every new seller — then becomes the easiest part. The magic: you buy labels through eBay at discounted rates, print at home (or show a QR code at the post office), and drop the package off. No waiting in line to pay.

Your 3 main options

SERVICE	BEST FOR	ROUGH COST*
USPS Ground Advantage	Most items under 5 lbs — your default	\$5–12
USPS Priority Mail	Heavier items; free boxes from USPS	\$10–20
eBay Standard Envelope	Cards & flat items under 3 oz	~\$1–2

*Costs vary by weight, size, and distance — eBay shows the exact price before you buy the label.

Who pays for shipping?

- **Free shipping:** You build the cost into your item price. Simple for buyers; great for small, light items.
- **Calculated shipping:** Buyer pays based on their distance. Better for heavy items — you never lose money on a cross-country box.

WATCH OUT · Weigh and measure **BEFORE** you list

Guessing weight is the #1 beginner shipping mistake. A kitchen scale (\$10) pays for itself in a week. Enter weight + box size in the listing so eBay charges the buyer correctly.

■ SHIPPING CHECKLIST — EVERY SINGLE ORDER

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Ship within your handling time (1 day) | ☐ Weight & dimensions match the listing |
| ☐ Label bought through eBay (discounted) | ☐ Tracking automatically uploaded |
| ☐ Old barcodes on reused boxes crossed out | ☐ Label taped flat, fully visible |
| ☐ Drop-off receipt kept (or scan at counter) | ☐ Buyer thanked via quick message |

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Packaging Tips (Cheap, Safe, Professional)

Build a \$0 packing station

- Save every box, bubble mailer, and sheet of bubble wrap that arrives at your house
- Grocery stores & liquor stores give away sturdy boxes free — just ask
- USPS Priority boxes & envelopes are FREE at the post office or shipped to you free
- Buy a tape gun + 2" packing tape (\$12 total) — the one thing worth paying for

The packing method that survives the truck

- **1. Bag it.** Put clothing/soft goods in a clear poly bag or clean plastic bag — boxes get rained on.
- **2. Wrap it.** Fragile or hard items get bubble wrap, with corners doubled.
- **3. Float it.** 2 inches of padding between item and every box wall. Shake the box — if it moves or rattles, add more.
- **4. Seal it.** Tape all seams in an H pattern: one strip along the opening, one across each end.

TIP • The drop test

Before you label it, drop the sealed box from waist height onto the floor. If your stomach drops with it, repack. Carriers are not gentle.

REAL EXAMPLE

Jen shipped a coffee mug in a thin box with one sheet of newspaper. It arrived in pieces — full refund, sad buyer, lost shipping cost. Her next mug went double-boxed with bubble wrap and arrived perfectly. Lesson cost: \$14. This page: free.

Little touches that earn 5-star feedback

- ✓ Clean boxes only — no food boxes, no smells (smoke and pet odors trigger returns)
- ✓ A tiny thank-you note ("Thanks for supporting my small shop!") costs nothing
- ✓ Crisp, flat label — a wrinkled label can become an unscannable label

10 eBay Fees Explained (With Real Numbers)

eBay takes a cut of each sale — that's how the free listings, traffic, and payment processing get paid for. For most categories it works out to roughly 13–15% of the TOTAL the buyer pays (item + shipping), plus a small per-order fee (about \$0.30–\$0.40).

The fees that affect you

- **Final Value Fee:** ~13.6% in most categories for sellers without a store. Charged on item price + shipping. Payment processing is already included — no separate PayPal-style fee.
- **Per-order fee:** A fixed ~\$0.30–\$0.40 on each order.
- **Insertion fees:** Your first 250 listings each month are FREE. You won't pay these for a long time.
- **Promoted Listings (optional):** An ad fee you choose — explained below.

REAL EXAMPLE · What you actually keep on a \$50 sale

Item \$50 + \$8 shipping the buyer pays = \$58 total. Final value fee ~13.6% = \$7.89, plus \$0.40 order fee = \$8.29 in fees. Your label costs \$7.50. You receive $\$58 - \$8.29 - \$7.50 = \42.21 . If the item cost you \$10, profit = \$32.21.

GOOD TO KNOW

Fees vary by category (books are higher, some categories lower) and eBay updates rates periodically. Check eBay's current fee page before pricing thin-margin items — and remember fees apply to shipping too.

FREE EBAY TOOLS

Want to check your numbers before you list an item? Use these free tools at SimpleLifeCalc.com:

- **eBay Fee Calculator** — Estimate fees before listing.
- **eBay Profit Calculator** — See your true profit after fees, shipping, and item costs.
- **eBay Promoted Listings Calculator** — Estimate the impact of promoted listing fees on your profit.

These tools are designed to help eBay sellers make pricing decisions with confidence.

11 Promoted Listings, Explained Simply

Promoted Listings = paying eBay a percentage you choose (often 2–10%) to show your item higher in search. You pay ONLY if the item sells through the ad.

- Skip it for your first 10–20 listings — learn the basics with full margins first
- Use it later for items sitting unsold 30+ days, starting low (2–3%)
- Never promote thin-margin items — the ad fee stacks ON TOP of normal fees

12 Profit Tracking (Know Your Real Numbers)

"I sold it for \$50" is not profit. Profit = what's left after the item cost, fees, shipping, and supplies. Track every sale from day one — a simple notebook or spreadsheet works. It takes 60 seconds per sale and tells you what to keep selling.

The only formula you need

PROFIT = Sale Price + Shipping Collected – Item Cost – eBay Fees – Label – Supplies

Sale tracker — copy this into a notebook or spreadsheet

DATE	ITEM	SOLD \$	COST \$	FEES \$	SHIP \$	PROFIT \$
6/14	Nike Air Max 90 sz 10	49.99	0 (closet)	7.20	7.50	35.29
6/16	Cordless drill	45.00	0 (garage)	6.95	9.10	28.95
6/19	Vintage Pyrex bowl	32.00	4.00 (thrift)	5.12	8.40	14.48

TIP

Review weekly: Which items had the best profit AND sold fastest? Source more of those. Which barely broke even? Stop buying those. Your tracker is your teacher.

GOOD TO KNOW • Taxes, briefly

eBay reports sales to the IRS above certain thresholds via Form 1099-K, and reselling income is taxable. Keep your tracker and receipts — your future self (or accountant) will thank you. When in doubt, ask a tax professional.

13 Common Beginner Mistakes

- **Guessing prices.** Always check SOLD listings. (Page 5 — it takes 5 minutes.)
- **Guessing shipping weight.** Weigh first, list second. Underestimating = you pay the difference.
- **Hiding flaws.** Buyers WILL find them. Disclose everything; honest listings get fewer returns.
- **Slow shipping.** Ship next business day, every time. Speed drives feedback and search rank.
- **Ignoring messages.** Answer within 24 hours — a question is a buyer one nudge from purchasing.
- **Starting with expensive items.** Learn on \$15–\$60 items. Mistakes there are tuition, not disasters.
- **Quitting after a slow week.** Listings build like compound interest. Keep adding — sales follow listings.

14 Avoiding Scams (Your Shield Page)

- **“Text me / pay me off eBay.”** NO. Off-platform deals lose all eBay protection. Real buyers buy on eBay.
- **Fake “eBay” emails.** Phishing emails mimic eBay to steal your login. Never click email links — open the app or type ebay.com yourself.
- **Overpayment / gift card requests.** Nobody legitimate overpays you or pays in gift cards. Ever.
- **“Send to my freight forwarder / a different address.”** Ship ONLY to the address on the eBay order. Anything else voids your seller protection.
- **The empty-box claim on pricey items.** For items over \$100, photograph/video your packing process including the label. Rare, but the receipts protect you.

TIP • The golden rule

Keep EVERYTHING on eBay: messages, payment, labels, tracking. Do that, and eBay's seller protections have your back in nearly every dispute.

15 Getting Your First Sale

The first sale is the slowest — your account has no feedback yet, so eBay shows you to fewer buyers. Totally normal. Here's how to speed it up:

- ✓ List 10 items, not 1 — ten lottery tickets beat one (and eBay rewards active sellers)
- ✓ Price at or slightly UNDER recent sold prices for your first few — buy momentum
- ✓ Turn on Best Offer and accept reasonable ones — a fast \$40 beats a someday \$48
- ✓ Buy a few small things you need on eBay first — feedback as a buyer makes your account look established
- ✓ Send offers to watchers (eBay prompts you) — 5–10% off converts fence-sitters

16 Building Positive Feedback

- **Ship fast.** Next-business-day shipping is the single biggest feedback driver.
- **Describe honestly.** Match or beat expectations — under-promise, over-deliver.
- **Communicate.** Reply quickly and kindly, even to odd questions.
- **Fix problems fast.** Something went wrong? Refund or resolve immediately. A gracious fix often still earns 5 stars.
- **Leave feedback for buyers.** It nudges them to return the favor.

■ FIRST 10 LISTINGS CHECKLIST

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ 10 items gathered from around the house | ☐ Each one researched via SOLD listings |
| ☐ 8–12 photos taken per item | ☐ Titles packed with keywords |
| ☐ Flaws disclosed & photographed | ☐ Weights recorded before listing |
| ☐ Best Offer enabled on all 10 | ☐ All 10 LIVE by end of week 1 |

■ FIRST SALE CHECKLIST — WHEN IT HAPPENS (IT WILL!)

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Celebrate — seriously, you earned it | ☐ Ship next business day |
| ☐ Message buyer: “Shipped — thank you!” | ☐ Confirm tracking shows movement |
| ☐ Leave the buyer positive feedback | ☐ Log the sale in your profit tracker |

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Your 30-Day eBay Success Plan

One month, ~30–60 minutes a day, zero dollars required. Check off each day. By day 30 you'll have a working eBay business in miniature — real listings, real sales, real profit, real skills.

WEEK 1 · SET UP & STOCK UP

- ☐ **Days 1–2** Create account, link bank, set up profile, install app. Read pages 2–3 of this guide.
- ☐ **Days 3–4** House sweep: gather 15+ items into a “sell box.” Pick the 10 easiest (small, branded, \$15–\$60).
- ☐ **Day 5** Research all 10 on sold listings; fill out a pricing worksheet for each.
- ☐ **Days 6–7** Photo session: shoot all 10 items in one daylight batch. 8–12 shots each.

WEEK 2 · GO LIVE

- ☐ **Days 8–10** Write and publish your first 5 listings (2 per day is plenty). Best Offer ON.
- ☐ **Days 11–12** Publish the other 5. You now have 10 live listings — more than most people ever do.
- ☐ **Day 13** Build your packing station: boxes, tape, scale, poly bags. Order free USPS supplies.
- ☐ **Day 14** Review week: answer any messages, send offers to watchers, tweak weakest titles.

WEEK 3 · FIRST SALES & FAST SHIPPING

- ☐ **Days 15–17** Sales start landing. Ship same/next day, message buyers, log every sale in your tracker.
- ☐ **Days 18–19** Send offers to all watchers. Drop prices 10% on anything with zero views.
- ☐ **Day 20** List 3 NEW items — the listing machine never stops.
- ☐ **Day 21** Leave feedback for all buyers. Review your tracker: what sold fastest?

WEEK 4 · LEVEL UP

- ☐ **Days 22–24** First sourcing trip: thrift store or yard sale with a \$20 budget. Only buy what sold-listings prove will 3x your money.
- ☐ **Days 25–27** List your sourced finds. You're now a reseller, not just a decluttering champion.
- ☐ **Day 28** Money check: total profit, best item, worst item. Update your tracker.
- ☐ **Days 29–30** Set next month's goals: listings per week, profit target. Request higher selling limits if you hit yours.

AFTER 30 DAYS, YOU WILL HAVE:

- A verified, working seller account with growing limits
- 10–15 live listings and your first real sales
- A profit tracker showing exactly what you earned
- Photography, pricing, shipping & packing skills most sellers never learn
- Everything you need to scale as big — or stay as small — as you want

You don't need to be great to start. You need to start to become great. Now go list something.

TEAR-OUT QUICK REFERENCE — keep this page by your packing station

PRICING	Filter by SOLD listings. Price in the middle of the last 5–10 sales.
TITLES	Brand + Item + Model + Size + Color. Use all ~80 characters.
PHOTOS	Daylight, plain background, 8–12 shots, photograph every flaw.
FEES (rule of thumb)	Expect eBay to keep roughly 14% of the total the buyer pays.
SHIPPING	Weigh before listing. Buy labels through eBay. Ship next business day.
SAFETY	Keep all messages, payments & labels ON eBay — never go off-platform.

For additional calculators, guides, worksheets, and seller resources, visit SimpleLifeCalc.com.