

eBay vs Etsy: Which Marketplace Makes More Money?

If you're deciding where to sell online, eBay and Etsy are two of the biggest names — but they're built for almost opposite purposes. eBay is a sprawling general marketplace where you can sell virtually anything, new or used, to a massive global audience. Etsy is a curated marketplace for handmade goods, vintage items, and craft supplies, with buyers who come specifically looking for unique, original products.

So which one actually makes you more money? The honest answer is that it depends entirely on *what you sell* — and this guide will show you exactly how to figure out which platform is right for your products. We'll compare the fees side by side (with a surprising finding about which is actually cheaper), examine the very different audiences, break down which products thrive where, run real profit examples, and compare the day-to-day seller experience.

All fee figures reflect each platform's official US-marketplace rates as of mid-2026. Both platforms update their fees periodically, so before committing, run your specific products through each platform's fee calculator to see your true net on a real sale.

1. Platform Overview

To understand which makes more money, you first need to understand what each platform fundamentally *is*, because they serve different sellers and buyers.

What is eBay?

eBay is one of the world's largest online marketplaces — a general-purpose store where almost anything can be sold. Its defining traits:

- **Sell almost anything:** new, used, refurbished, vintage, collectible, parts, electronics, clothing, and far more.
- **Two selling formats:** fixed-price ("Buy It Now") listings and auctions, the latter useful for rare or hard-to-price items.
- **Enormous, global audience** spanning every category and price point.
- **Built for volume and variety**, attracting both casual sellers clearing out clutter and full-time businesses moving thousands of items.

eBay's buyers are looking for *deals, specific items, and selection* — the right part, the best price, a hard-to-find collectible. It's transactional and price-competitive.

What is Etsy?

Etsy is a curated, niche marketplace focused on a specific kind of product. Its defining

traits:

- **Restricted to three categories:** handmade goods (made or designed by the seller), vintage items (at least 20 years old), and craft supplies. Digital downloads (which are handmade-eligible) are also hugely popular.
- **Buyers seeking unique, original, personalized, or artisan products** — they're shopping for something they *can't* get at a big-box store.
- **A large, engaged buyer base** (Etsy reported around 86.6 million active buyers as of late 2025), all primed for handmade and unique goods.
- **Brand- and story-friendly**, rewarding sellers who build a recognizable shop identity.

Etsy's buyers are looking for *craftsmanship, uniqueness, and personal touch* — and crucially, they expect to pay more for it. This is the key economic difference: Etsy shoppers are generally less price-sensitive than eBay shoppers, because they're buying things that aren't interchangeable commodities.

The fundamental difference

eBay competes largely on **selection and price**; Etsy competes on **uniqueness and craftsmanship**. That single distinction drives everything else — the fees, the achievable margins, and which products belong where. A mass-produced phone charger thrives on eBay and isn't even allowed on Etsy; a hand-poured artisan candle commands a premium on Etsy and gets lost among commodity listings on eBay. Keep this in mind as we compare the numbers.

2. Fee Comparison

Here's where it gets interesting, because the conventional wisdom ("Etsy is the cheap one for small sellers, eBay takes a big cut") is only half right. Let's lay out both fee structures precisely.

eBay's fees (US, standard category)

- **Insertion (listing) fee:** 250 free listings per month, then \$0.35 each.
- **Final value fee: 13.6%** of the total sale (most categories), on the amount up to \$7,500.
- **Per-order fee:** \$0.30 for orders \leq \$10, \$0.40 for orders $>$ \$10.
- **Payment processing: included** in the final value fee — no separate charge.
- **Fee base:** the total buyer pays, **including shipping and sales tax**.
- **Optional:** Promoted Listings (seller-set ad rate, pay-on-sale); Store subscription (drops the fee to 12.7% in most categories).

Etsy's fees (US)

- **Listing fee: \$0.20** per listing, lasting 4 months or until sold, and auto-renewing (\$0.20 again) on renewal or each unit sold from a multi-quantity listing — charged whether or not the item sells.
- **Transaction fee: 6.5%** of the total (item + shipping + gift wrap + personalization). In the US, this is **not** charged on sales tax.
- **Payment processing fee: 3% + \$0.25** per order (US), charged separately — and this one *does* apply to the tax portion.
- **Offsite Ads fee: 15%** of an attributed sale for shops under \$10,000 in trailing-12-month sales (optional, can opt out), or **12%** for shops at or above \$10,000 (**mandatory, cannot opt out, locked in permanently**). Only charged when a buyer reaches your shop via an Etsy-placed external ad and buys within 30 days. Capped at \$100 per order.
- **Optional:** Etsy Ads (onsite, pay-per-click); Etsy Plus subscription (\$10/month); a one-time new-shop setup fee (\$15-\$29).

Side-by-side

Fee	eBay	Etsy
Listing fee	250 free/month, then \$0.35	\$0.20 per listing (renews)
Main commission	13.6% final value fee	6.5% transaction fee
Payment processing	Included in the 13.6%	Separate: 3% + \$0.25
Fixed per-order charge	\$0.30-\$0.40	\$0.25 (within processing)
Charged on shipping?	Yes	Yes
Charged on sales tax?	Yes	Processing yes; transaction no (US)
Advertising	Optional (seller-set)	Optional onsite + Offsite Ads 12-15%
Subscription	Optional Store	Optional Etsy Plus (\$10/mo)

The surprising finding: Etsy's base fees are lower

Stack up the *mandatory* fees and Etsy is actually cheaper per sale than eBay. Compare a **\$100 sale** (free shipping, US, standard):

- **eBay:** $13.6\% \times \$100 = \$13.60 + \$0.40 = \mathbf{\$14.00}$ (14% effective)

- **Etsy:** $\$0.20$ listing + $6.5\% \times \$100$ ($\$6.50$) + $(3\% \times \$100 + \$0.25 = \$3.25) = \mathbf{\$9.95}$ (about 10% effective)

And a **\$30 sale + \$5 shipping** (\$35 total):

- **eBay:** $13.6\% \times \$35 = \$4.76 + \$0.40 = \mathbf{\$5.16}$
- **Etsy:** $\$0.20 + 6.5\% \times \35 ($\$2.28$) + $(3\% \times \$35 + \$0.25 = \$1.30) = \mathbf{\$3.78}$

On base fees alone, **Etsy costs roughly 10–11% versus eBay's ~14%**. That's the opposite of what many sellers assume.

The catch: Offsite Ads

Etsy's lower base fee comes with a big asterisk — **Offsite Ads**. When a sale is attributed to an Etsy-placed external ad, you pay an extra 12–15% on top. For shops over \$10,000/year this is *mandatory and unavoidable*. On that same \$100 sale, an offsite-attributed order under \$10k jumps to $\$9.95 + \$15.00 = \mathbf{\$24.95}$ (25%) — suddenly far more expensive than eBay. eBay has no equivalent mandatory ad fee; its Promoted Listings are entirely optional and seller-set.

So the accurate fee verdict is: **Etsy is cheaper on standard sales, but its Offsite Ads program can make it more expensive on ad-driven sales** — and you lose the ability to opt out once you grow past \$10,000 a year. Model both with a fee calculator, factoring in a realistic share of offsite-attributed sales.

3. Profit Comparison

Fees are only half of profit. The other half is **how much you can charge** — and this is where the platforms' different audiences change everything.

▮ **Profit = Sale Price – Item Cost – Fees – Shipping**

The key insight: Etsy buyers tolerate **higher prices** for unique, handmade, and personalized goods, while eBay buyers, shopping a competitive commodity market, push prices **down**. So the right comparison isn't just "which has lower fees" — it's "where can this specific product earn the most after fees."

Example 1 — A handmade candle (Etsy's home turf)

A hand-poured candle, cost \$6 to make. On Etsy, the artisan audience supports a \$25 price; on eBay, competing against mass-produced candles, it might only fetch \$15.

- **Etsy at \$25 (no offsite ad):** fees $\approx \$0.20 + \$1.63 + \$1.00 = \2.83 . Profit = $\$25 - \$2.83 - \$6 = \mathbf{\$16.17}$
- **Etsy at \$25 (offsite-attributed, 15%):** fees $\approx \$2.83 + \$3.75 = \$6.58$. Profit = $\mathbf{\$12.42}$

- **eBay at \$15:** fees = $13.6\% \times \$15 + \$0.40 = \$2.44$. Profit = $\$15 - \$2.44 - \$6 = \6.56

Even with Etsy's offsite ad fee, the handmade candle earns far more on Etsy — because the *price* it commands there is so much higher. The audience, not the fee rate, decides this one.

Example 2 — A used smartphone (eBay's home turf)

A used phone, cost \$100. This isn't even eligible on Etsy (not handmade, vintage, or a craft supply), so eBay wins by default — but it illustrates the point:

- **eBay at \$200:** fees = $13.6\% \times \$200 + \$0.40 = \$27.60$. Profit = $\$200 - \$27.60 - \$100 = \72.40
- **Etsy:** not allowed.

For commodity, used, and mass-market goods, eBay is the only real option of the two — and its huge buyer base for such items makes it the money-maker there.

Example 3 — A vintage item (the overlap zone)

A genuine 1970s ceramic vase, cost \$10, that qualifies as "vintage" on both platforms (Etsy allows 20+ year-old items). Suppose it sells for \$60 on either.

- **Etsy at \$60 (no offsite):** fees $\approx \$0.20 + \$3.90 + \$2.05 = \6.15 . Profit = $\$60 - \$6.15 - \$10 = \43.85
- **eBay at \$60:** fees = $13.6\% \times \$60 + \$0.40 = \$8.56$. Profit = $\$60 - \$8.56 - \$10 = \41.44

In the overlap zone, the lower base fees give Etsy a slight edge per sale — *unless* Etsy's offsite ads kick in, or eBay's larger collector audience sells it faster or for more. Here the decision comes down to where the item sells better, not just fees.

The profit verdict

- For **handmade, personalized, and artisan goods**, Etsy almost always makes more money — its audience pays premiums eBay's never would, and its base fees are lower.
- For **used, commodity, electronics, and mass-market goods**, eBay makes more money (and is often the only option), thanks to its vast buyer base for exactly those items.
- In the **vintage/collectible overlap**, it's a genuine toss-up decided by where your specific item finds the better audience and price — worth testing both.

Profit follows product-market fit far more than it follows the fee schedule. Sell the right thing on the right platform and the fees become a footnote.

4. Product Suitability

Because Etsy restricts what you can sell and eBay doesn't, product type is often the *deciding* factor. Here's what thrives where.

What sells best on Etsy

Etsy only permits handmade goods, vintage items (20+ years old), and craft supplies — and within those, certain things shine:

- **Handmade and artisan goods:** jewelry, candles, soap, ceramics, woodworking, textiles, home décor.
- **Personalized and custom items:** engraved gifts, custom portraits, monogrammed goods, wedding and party items.
- **Digital downloads:** printables, planners, SVG cut files, templates, art prints, patterns — extremely popular because there's no inventory or shipping.
- **Craft and DIY supplies:** beads, fabric, yarn, tools, materials.
- **Vintage:** clothing, jewelry, home goods, and collectibles at least 20 years old.
- **Art and stationery:** prints, paintings, cards, custom designs.

Etsy is ideal when your product is **unique, creative, giftable, or personalized**, and when you want to build a recognizable brand.

What sells best on eBay

eBay's open marketplace suits a far wider range:

- **Used and second-hand goods:** clothing, electronics, books, media.
- **Electronics and tech:** phones, computers, components, accessories.
- **Collectibles:** trading cards, coins, comics, memorabilia (with category-specific fees).
- **Auto parts and accessories:** a strong, lower-competition eBay niche.
- **New retail and wholesale goods:** retail arbitrage, liquidation, bulk inventory.
- **Replacement parts and hard-to-find items:** where buyers search urgently.
- **Rare and auction-worthy items:** eBay's auction format helps price the truly unique.

eBay is ideal when your product is a **commodity, used, mass-produced, a part, or anything that doesn't fit Etsy's handmade/vintage/supply rules**.

The overlap

The two genuinely overlap on **vintage items** (20+ years), some **collectibles**, and **craft supplies**. For these, you can legitimately choose — or list on both. For everything else, the

product usually picks the platform for you: a handmade quilt isn't right for eBay's bargain hunters, and a used laptop isn't allowed on Etsy at all.

Bottom line: before comparing fees, check whether your product even fits Etsy's rules. If it's not handmade, vintage, or a craft supply, eBay is your platform by default. If it *is* handmade or unique, Etsy's audience and lower base fees usually win.

5. Seller Experience

Beyond fees and products, the day-to-day experience and what it takes to succeed differ meaningfully between the platforms.

Audience and discovery

- **eBay** drives sales through its enormous search-and-browse traffic and competitive pricing. Buyers often compare multiple identical listings, so price and seller rating matter a lot. Discovery is about ranking in search for the specific item.
- **Etsy** drives sales through its own search (Etsy SEO — tags, titles, attributes) and its reputation as *the* handmade destination. Buyers browse for inspiration and uniqueness, so strong photos, branding, and keywords matter. Etsy's Offsite Ads also push your items onto Google and social platforms (for that 12–15% fee).

Competition

- **eBay:** competition is often head-to-head on identical or similar items, frequently on price. Standing out means competitive pricing, fast shipping, and strong feedback.
- **Etsy:** competition is on creativity, design, branding, and presentation. With millions of shops, differentiation comes from a distinct product and aesthetic rather than undercutting on price.

Buyer expectations

- **eBay buyers** expect accurate descriptions, fair prices, and fast, reliable shipping. The relationship is transactional.
- **Etsy buyers** expect craftsmanship, a personal touch, thoughtful packaging, and often communication with the maker (especially for custom work). They're buying an experience as much as a product, and they reward it with higher prices and loyalty — but also expect more.

Branding and business-building

- **Etsy** is built for brand-building: a customizable storefront, shop story, and an audience

that follows makers. It rewards sellers who develop a recognizable identity and repeat customers.

- **eBay** is more transactional and less brand-centric, though Stores and consistent service do build repeat buyers. It excels at moving volume and variety rather than cultivating a boutique brand.

Effort and operations

- **Etsy** often involves making or sourcing unique products (more upfront creative effort), plus customer communication for custom orders — but inventory can be simpler, and digital products eliminate shipping entirely.
- **eBay** often involves sourcing and processing high volumes of varied items (photographing, describing, shipping each), which is operationally heavier but scales with volume.

Which suits which seller

Choose **Etsy** if you're a maker, artist, designer, or vintage curator who wants to build a brand around unique products and command premium prices. Choose **eBay** if you're a reseller, flipper, or retailer moving volume and variety, especially used, commodity, or mass-market goods. Many sellers ultimately use **both** — Etsy for handmade/branded lines, eBay for everything else — and a cross-listing approach can capture the strengths of each.

6. FAQ

Which is cheaper, eBay or Etsy? On standard (non-ad) sales, Etsy's base fees are lower — roughly 10-11% (6.5% transaction + 3% + \$0.25 processing + \$0.20 listing) versus eBay's ~14% (13.6% final value fee + per-order fee). But Etsy's Offsite Ads fee (12-15%) can make ad-driven sales much more expensive.

Which platform makes more money? It depends on what you sell. Handmade, personalized, and artisan goods usually earn more on Etsy thanks to premium pricing and lower base fees. Used, commodity, and mass-market goods earn more on eBay, which often is the only option for them.

Does Etsy charge fees on shipping? Yes. Etsy's 6.5% transaction fee and the 3% payment processing fee both apply to the shipping you charge, just as eBay's final value fee does. Factor shipping into your fee math on both platforms.

What is Etsy's Offsite Ads fee and can I avoid it? It's a 12-15% fee on sales that come from Etsy-placed external ads. Shops under \$10,000 in annual sales pay 15% and can opt out; shops at or above \$10,000 pay 12% and cannot opt out. It's one of Etsy's biggest potential costs.

Does eBay have a fee like Offsite Ads? No mandatory equivalent. eBay's Promoted Listings are entirely optional and let you set your own ad rate, paying only on attributed sales. There's no forced advertising fee at any sales level.

Can I sell anything on Etsy? No. Etsy only allows handmade goods (made or designed by you), vintage items at least 20 years old, and craft supplies. Mass-produced or used commodity goods (like a used phone) aren't permitted. eBay, by contrast, allows almost anything.

Is payment processing a separate fee on each platform? On eBay, payment processing is bundled into the final value fee — no separate charge. On Etsy, it's a separate fee (3% + \$0.25 in the US) on top of the transaction fee.

Which is better for beginners? Etsy is simpler if you make unique products and want to build a brand, with straightforward fees and a focused audience. eBay is better if you want to sell varied or used items and aren't restricted to handmade/vintage. Many beginners start on whichever fits their first products.

Do both charge listing fees? eBay gives 250 free listings a month, then \$0.35 each. Etsy charges \$0.20 per listing regardless, and it renews (another \$0.20) every four months or each time a unit sells. For large catalogs, Etsy's per-listing fees add up.

Which has more buyers? eBay has a far larger overall buyer base across all categories. Etsy has a large, focused audience (around 86.6 million active buyers in late 2025) specifically seeking handmade, vintage, and unique goods. eBay wins on raw scale; Etsy wins on targeted intent for its niche.

Can I sell on both eBay and Etsy? Yes, and many sellers do — using Etsy for handmade or branded products and eBay for used, commodity, or overlap items like vintage. Cross-listing tools can help manage inventory across both.

Which platform has higher profit margins? For products that fit Etsy (handmade, unique, personalized), Etsy typically allows higher margins because buyers pay premiums and base fees are lower. For commodity goods, eBay's larger market is where the money is, though margins there are squeezed by price competition.

Are digital products good on Etsy? Yes — digital downloads (printables, templates, art, patterns) are extremely popular on Etsy, with no inventory or shipping and high margins. eBay also allows some digital items but isn't known for them the way Etsy is.

Does Etsy require a subscription? No. A basic Etsy shop is free to open (aside from a one-time setup fee for new shops); you pay per listing and per sale. Etsy Plus (\$10/month) is optional. Similarly, eBay doesn't require a subscription, though a Store subscription is optional.

How do I decide between them for my product? First check if your product fits Etsy's rules (handmade, vintage 20+ years, or craft supply). If not, use eBay. If it does, compare expected selling prices and run both platforms' fee calculators — Etsy usually wins for unique goods, eBay for commodities.

7. Conclusion

"Which marketplace makes more money?" has a clear answer once you stop thinking about the platforms in the abstract and start thinking about your *product*. eBay and Etsy aren't really competitors for most items — they serve different goods and different buyers, and the right choice is usually obvious once you know what you're selling.

If you make **handmade, personalized, or artisan products**, or sell digital downloads, Etsy is almost always the bigger money-maker: its buyers happily pay premium prices for uniqueness, and — contrary to popular belief — its base fees (~10-11%) are actually *lower* than eBay's (~14%). Just price with the Offsite Ads fee in mind, since it becomes mandatory and unavoidable once you pass \$10,000 in annual sales. If you sell **used, commodity, electronics, or mass-market goods**, eBay is your platform — often the only one of the two that allows the item, and the one with the vast buyer base that makes such sales profitable.

For the genuine overlap — vintage and some collectibles — test both and let the results decide; the lower base fees favor Etsy slightly, while eBay's larger audience and auction format can win for the right item. And remember that the smartest sellers often use *both*, matching each product to the platform where it earns most.

Before you commit, do the one thing that turns this comparison into a decision: take a real product, estimate the price it would fetch on each platform, and run the numbers through each platform's fee calculator — including a realistic allowance for Etsy's Offsite Ads. Subtract fees and costs, compare the net, and you'll know exactly where *your* products make more money. Match the product to the marketplace, price for the fees, and let the math, not the hype, guide where you sell.

All fees reflect eBay's and Etsy's official US-marketplace seller fees as of mid-2026. eBay: ~13.6% final value fee (most categories) plus a \$0.30-\$0.40 per-order fee, payment processing included, 250 free listings/month. Etsy: \$0.20 listing fee, 6.5% transaction fee, 3% + \$0.25 payment processing, and a 12-15% Offsite Ads fee on attributed sales. Both platforms update fees periodically, rates vary by category and circumstance, and additional or international fees may apply. Always verify current rates on each platform's official fee pages and calculate your specific net with a fee calculator before deciding where to sell.