eBay Product

Research Workbook

A step-by-step system for finding products that actually sell.

Find profitable products before you spend money on inventory. Work each idea through demand, competition, costs, and profit — then let the scorecard, not a hunch, make the call.

FOR	FORMAT	INSIDE	TIME
eBay Sellers	Print & Fill In	14 Worksheets & Scorecards	45–60 min / product

Contents & How to Use

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

1. **Research multiple products.** Don't marry the first idea. Run several through these worksheets so you have real options to compare.
2. **Let the data decide.** Sold listings and sell-through rates tell the truth. Trust the numbers over your gut or a trending video.
3. **Validate before buying inventory.** Every page here costs you time, not money. A bad product caught now saves a garage full of dead stock later.
4. **Compare opportunities objectively.** Score each product the same way, then pick the winner on the numbers — not the hype.

ESTIMATED TIME: 45–60 MINUTES PER SHORTLISTED PRODUCT. Faster on your second and third — the system is the same every time.

WHAT'S INSIDE

01 THE WHY

Why Product Research Matters

Most new sellers fail for one reason: they buy products first and research later. They spot something they like, order a case of it, and only then discover there's no demand, razor-thin margins, or fierce competition. This workbook flips that order.

1 Demand	→	2 Competition	→	3 Costs	→	4 Profit	→	5 Decision
Are people actually buying this — and how many?		How many sellers, and how strong are they?		What will it really cost you, all-in?		What's left after fees, shipping & returns?		Score it, compare it, then commit — or pass.

Work that sequence for every product idea. By the time you reach the scorecard, the right decision is usually obvious — because the data has already made it for you. Research is the cheapest inventory insurance there is.

HOW THE NUMBERS DECIDE · THE FOUR FORMULAS BEHIND THIS SYSTEM

You'll calculate four numbers as you work through the pages. Learn what they mean now, and every worksheet that follows points toward the same clear go / no-go call.

Sell-through rate = Sold ÷ Active × 100	Is there demand? Aim for 50–60%+ · p.6
Profit margin = Profit ÷ Sale price × 100	Worth your time? Aim for 25%+ · p.10
Risk score = sum of 7 factors (1–10)	Out of 70 — under 30 = comfortable · p.11
Opportunity score = sum of 8 factors (1–10)	Out of 80 — 70+ = go · p.13

RESEARCH TIP

Your single best free tool is eBay's own sold listings filter. It shows real prices buyers actually paid and how often — the closest thing to a crystal ball for demand and pricing.

COMMON MISTAKE

Falling for a “trending” product without checking sell-through. A high view count or a viral clip isn't demand — sold listings are. Hype fills your shelves; data empties them at a profit.

02 STEP 1

Product Idea Brainstorm Worksheet

Get every idea out of your head and onto paper. Rate each one quickly from 1–5 so patterns jump out — high interest, low difficulty, high profit potential is the sweet spot.

#	PRODUCT IDEA	CATEGORY	SOURCE	INTEREST	DIFFICULTY	PROFIT
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						

Rate each column 1–5 · 1 = low / hard · 5 = high / easy

SHORTLIST — TOP 5 IDEAS TO RESEARCH

1 ______

2 ______

3 ______

4 ______

5 ______

RESEARCH TIP

Pull ideas from what you already know — hobbies, your day job, things you've sold or bought before. Familiarity is a real edge in spotting items that are mispriced, underserved, or easy for you to authenticate.

03 STEP 2

Product Validation Worksheet

Before you spend an hour on data, gut-check the idea. If you can't answer these clearly, the market probably can't either. Pick one shortlisted product and work through it.

PRODUCT BEING VALIDATED

WHAT PROBLEM DOES THIS PRODUCT SOLVE, OR WHAT WANT DOES IT SATISFY?

WHO BUYS IT? (AGE, SITUATION, HOBBY, PROFESSION)

WHY DO PEOPLE BUY IT — PRICE, QUALITY, CONVENIENCE, STATUS, GIFT?

IS DEMAND SEASONAL?

- [ ] Year-round
- [ ] Holiday peak
- [ ] Summer
- [ ] Winter
- [ ] Back-to-school
- [ ] Other: ________

WOULD YOU BUY IT AT THE GOING PRICE? WHY OR WHY NOT?

FLAG IT EARLY · PRODUCT-TYPE WARNINGS

Fragile
Breaks in transit — budget for double-boxing and expect a higher return rate.

Oversized / heavy
Shipping can eat the whole margin. Weigh and measure before you commit a dollar.

Seasonal
Sells in a narrow window. Don't get caught holding stock through the off-season.

Restricted / gated
eBay limits some categories — certain electronics, branded goods, hazardous items. Confirm you're allowed to list it first.

COMMON MISTAKE

Validating only with yourself. “I'd buy it” is one data point. Confirm a real, repeat audience exists before you trust your own enthusiasm.

04 STEP 3

eBay Search Research Worksheet

Search each product on eBay and record what you find. The sell-through rate is the headline number — it tells you what share of listings actually sell.

SEARCH TERM	TOTAL / ACTIVE	SOLD	STR %	AVG. PRICE	AVG. SHIP

Sell-through rate = Sold listings ÷ Active listings × 100

WORKED EXAMPLE · READING A SELL-THROUGH RATE

Sold listings (last 90 days)	120
Active listings	150
SELL-THROUGH = 120 ÷ 150 × 100	**80%**

RESEARCH TIP

A sell-through rate above ~50–60% signals healthy demand; under ~20% means listings mostly sit unsold. Always read price and sell-through together — a high price with low sell-through is a trap.

05 STEP 4

Sold Listings Analysis Worksheet

Filter eBay to Sold Items and log at least 10 real sales. This is the truest read on what buyers actually pay — and how consistent that price is.

#	ITEM TITLE	SOLD PRICE	SHIPPING	CONDITION	DATE SOLD
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

Average sold price = total of all sold prices ÷ # of listings = ____________

RESEARCH TIP

Note the spread, not just the average. If prices swing from $15 to $45 for the same item, condition, photos, and listing quality are driving it — and that gap is room for you to win.

PATTERNS I NOTICE (PRICE RANGE, BEST CONDITION, WHAT THE TOP SALES DID WELL)

06 STEP 5

Competitor Analysis Worksheet

Study the 3–4 sellers winning this product. They've already tested what works — read their listings for the price, presentation, and service you'll need to match or beat.

	COMPETITOR 1	COMPETITOR 2	COMPETITOR 3
Seller name			
Feedback score			
Price			
Photos (count / quality)			
Title quality			
Shipping speed			
Return policy			
Strengths			
Weaknesses			

COMMON MISTAKE

Only studying the biggest power seller. Their volume and feedback are hard to beat head-on. Also check mid-size sellers — their gaps (slow shipping, weak photos) are where a newcomer actually breaks in.

07 STEP 6

Product Sourcing Worksheet

A product is only profitable if you can source it reliably and cheaply enough. Compare every option side by side — on landed cost, not sticker price — before you commit a single dollar.

SUPPLIER	UNIT COST	MIN QTY	SHIPPING	LEAD TIME	LANDED COST / UNIT	RELIABILITY 1–5

Landed cost / unit = unit cost + (shipping ÷ qty) + import & fees + (minimum-order waste ÷ qty) · Reliability: 5 = proven track record, 1 = unknown / unproven

SUPPLIER RISK EVALUATION · SCORE YOUR BEST SUPPLIER (10 = HIGH RISK)

RISK FACTOR	RATE 1–10 (10 = HIGH RISK)
Single-supplier dependence (no backup lined up)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Unproven track record / unknown reliability	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Long or unpredictable lead time	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Prices likely to rise or fluctuate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
High minimum order ties up cash	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Quality varies between batches	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Total supplier risk	/ 60

Under 24 Dependable	**24–39** Line up a backup	**40+** Too fragile to rely on

COMMON MISTAKE

Depending on a single supplier. If they raise prices, run out, or vanish, your listing dies overnight. Line up a backup before you scale.

08 STEP 7

Profit Calculator Worksheet

The number that decides everything. Add up every cost of getting one unit sold — including a reserve for returns — subtract it from your expected sale price, and see what profit truly remains.

PER-UNIT ECONOMICS		AMOUNT
Purchase cost		
Inbound shipping	+	
Packaging	+	
eBay fees	+	
Promoted listing fees	+	
Returns / defect allowance (sale price × est. return rate, p.12)	+	
Other expenses	+	
TOTAL COST	=	
Expected sale price		
Total cost (above)	–	
EXPECTED PROFIT	=	
Profit margin (profit ÷ sale price)	%	

TURN THE MARGIN INTO A DECISION

Margin vs. the 25% target ☐ Pass (25%+) ☐ Thin (15–25%) ☐ Fail (under 15%)

WORKED EXAMPLE · FLIPPING A $40 ITEM

Purchase cost	$12.00
Inbound shipping	$2.00
Packaging	$1.00
Est. eBay fees	$5.85
Promoted listing fee	$0.80
Returns allowance (8% × $40)	$3.20
Other	$0.50
Total cost	**$25.35**
Expected sale price	$40.00
EXPECTED PROFIT	**$14.65**
Profit margin = $14.65 ÷ $40.00	**37%**

A realistic flip after a returns reserve — still well above the 25% target. Treat 40%+ as a strong case, not the norm.

RESEARCH TIP

eBay's fees vary by category and store plan, and they change. Don't guess — get your exact rate from the eBay Fee Calculator and your ad cost from the Promoted Listings Calculator at SimpleLifeCalc.com.

09 STEP 8

Risk Assessment Worksheet

Profit isn't the whole story — risk eats margins quietly. Rate each factor from 1 (low risk) to 10 (high risk). A high total is a warning to think twice.

RISK FACTOR	RATE 1–10 (10 = HIGH RISK)
Competition	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Fragility (breakage in transit)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Returns risk	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Seasonality	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Storage needs	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Shipping difficulty	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Supplier dependence	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Total risk score	/ 70

Under 30 Low risk — comfortable to pursue	**30–49** Moderate — manageable with a plan	**50+** High — only with strong margins

Note: here 10 = high risk. On the Scorecard (p.13) the scales flip so 10 always means “good for you.”

SCORING GUIDE · ANCHOR EVERY FACTOR

FACTOR	SCORE IT LOW (1–3) WHEN…	SCORE IT HIGH (8–10) WHEN…
Competition	Few sellers, a clear unfilled gap	Saturated; entrenched power sellers
Fragility	Solid, ships safely as-is	Glass, ceramic, screens — breaks in transit
Returns risk	Simple, true-to-photo, no sizing	Apparel & sizing, electronics, “not as described”
Seasonality	Sells year-round	Narrow window; dead stock off-season
Storage needs	Small, stackable, shelf-stable	Bulky or climate-sensitive; fills space fast
Shipping difficulty	Light, sturdy, standard box	Heavy, odd-shaped, oversized surcharges
Supplier dependence	Several sources, quick restock	One source, long lead time, no backup

Customer Complaint Research Worksheet

Read the negative reviews and low feedback on competing products. Every recurring complaint is a gap you can fill — and a reason buyers will choose you instead.

COMMON COMPLAINT	FREQUENCY 1–5	SEVERITY 1–5	CAN I SOLVE IT?	OPPORTUNITY IT CREATES

Frequency: 1 = rare · 5 = very common | Severity: 1 = minor gripe · 5 = deal-breaker

WHERE TO LOOK

Mine competitors' 1–3 star reviews, their negative & neutral feedback, the listing Q&A, and any stated return reasons. Recurring complaints — not one-off rants — are the real gaps.

RESEARCH TIP

Turn complaints into selling points. If buyers complain “arrived broken,” lead your listing with “ships double-boxed & protected.” Solving the common pain is the cheapest competitive edge there is.

BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY I FOUND FROM COMPETITOR COMPLAINTS

ESTIMATING YOUR RETURN RATE · WHAT REFUNDS REALLY COST

Return rate = Returns ÷ Orders × 100. **True cost of a return** = refund + outbound shipping + return shipping + any stock you can't resell.

My estimated return rate ________ % → refunds will cost ≈ ________ / month

TYPICAL RETURN RANGE	RATE
Clothing, shoes & apparel	20–40%
Consumer electronics	10–20%
Home, garden & tools	5–12%
Collectibles, media & parts	3–8%

Rough industry guides — confirm against the real feedback in your category.

11 DECIDE

Product Opportunity Scorecard

Bring it all together. Score each factor 1–10 from everything you researched, then total it. Use the same scorecard for every product so you compare them fairly.

FACTOR	RATE 1–10
Demand · p.6 sell-through	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Competition (10 = low/easy) · p.8	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Profit margin · p.10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Ease of shipping · p.11	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Ease of sourcing · p.9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Market stability	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Personal interest	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Growth potential	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Total score	/ 80

DEAL-BREAKER CHECK · DO THIS BEFORE TRUSTING THE TOTAL

Walk away regardless of the total if any one of these is true:

- [ ] Demand scores 4 or below
- [ ] Profit margin scores 4 or below
- [ ] Risk score (p.11) is 50 or higher

70–80 Strong — move forward with confidence	**50–69** Moderate — workable if you lift weak factors	**Below 50** Avoid — research the next idea

RESEARCH TIP

Score competition and ease so that 10 always means “good for you” (low competition, easy shipping). That keeps every factor pointing the same direction, so a high total reliably means a better product.

Inventory Planning Worksheet

You've chosen a winner — now plan the first buy carefully. Start small enough to prove real sales, large enough to test profitably.

UNITS TO BUY FIRST

____

EXPECTED MONTHLY SALES

____

RESTOCK POINT (UNITS LEFT)

____

REORDER LEAD TIME

____

Cash for first order = units × landed cost/unit = ______________ | **Months of stock** = units ÷ monthly sales = ______________

CASH TIED UP IN INVENTORY · CAPITAL YOU CAN'T TOUCH UNTIL IT SELLS

Capital locked up = units on hand × landed cost/unit = ______________

That figure is real money sitting on your shelf, not in your bank. Until it sells it can't pay for a restock, a hot new product, or a slow month. Keep it low while you're still proving a product works.

INVENTORY RISK SCORE · BEFORE YOU PLACE THE ORDER (10 = HIGH RISK)

RISK FACTOR	RATE 1–10
Could overstock if sales come slower than hoped	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Goes out of season or style before it sells	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Large order locks up cash you may need elsewhere	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Slow sell-through — money sits on the shelf	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Storage strain (space, condition, handling)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Total inventory risk	/ 50

Under 20	20–34	35+
Low — comfortable first buy	Moderate — start smaller	High — prove sales before committing cash

13 MAKE IT HAPPEN

30-Day Research Action Plan

Spread the research across four weeks so it actually gets done. A suggested focus is listed for each week — adjust it to where you are.

WEEK / FOCUS	TASKS	RESULTS & LESSONS LEARNED
Week 1 Brainstorm & shortlist ideas		
Week 2 Search, sold listings & competitors		
Week 3 Sourcing, costs & profit math		
Week 4 Score, decide & plan first order		

RESEARCH TIP

Give every product the same week-by-week treatment. Disciplined, repeatable research is what separates sellers who build a catalog from those who gamble on one lucky find.

OVERALL NOTES & WHAT TO RESEARCH NEXT MONTH

14 COMMIT

Final Product Decision Worksheet

Lock in your decision. Pull the deciding numbers into one place, make the call, then write down the plan it commits you to — and the benchmark you'll measure real results against.

DECISION SUMMARY · PULL YOUR FOUR DECIDING NUMBERS HERE

SCORECARD	PROFIT MARGIN	RISK SCORE	SELL-THROUGH
____/80	____%	____/70	____%

☐ GO ☐ NO-GO

PRODUCT CHOSEN

WHY I SELECTED IT (WHAT THE RESEARCH PROVED)

EXPECTED PROFIT / UNIT

EXPECTED MONTHLY REVENUE

MAIN RISKS & HOW I'LL MANAGE THEM

FIRST INVENTORY ORDER PLAN (SUPPLIER, QUANTITY, COST)

TARGET LAUNCH DATE

IF NO-GO, THE NEXT IDEA I'LL RESEARCH

RESEARCH TIP

Revisit this page 30 days after launch. Compare expected profit and revenue to the actual numbers — that gap is the most valuable lesson for picking your next product.

15 BEFORE YOU BUY

Master Product Research Checklist

Your final gate. Don't spend a dollar on inventory until every box is ticked. If one isn't, go back to that worksheet first.

- [ ] **Demand validated**
  Sold listings & sell-through confirm people buy it.
- [ ] **Competition analyzed**
  Top sellers studied; a clear gap identified.
- [ ] **Profit estimated**
  Healthy margin remains after all fees & a returns reserve.
- [ ] **Supplier verified**
  Reliable source confirmed, with a backup.
- [ ] **Launch strategy created**
  Listing, pricing & shipping plan ready.
- [ ] **Sold listings reviewed**
  At least 10 real sales logged and averaged.
- [ ] **Costs calculated**
  Every per-unit cost captured, landed.
- [ ] **Risks reviewed**
  Risk score acceptable for the margin.
- [ ] **Inventory planned**
  First order size & cash needs set.
- [ ] **Product approved**
  Scorecard says go, deal-breaker check passed — decision recorded.

RESEARCH TIP

Re-run this exact checklist on every future product. It becomes your personal quality standard — and the reason your shelves fill with proven sellers instead of expensive guesses.

Decide With Data, Not Hope

You've taken an idea all the way to a scored, sourced, profit-checked decision — the work most sellers skip. Run this same system on every product and your eBay shop grows on evidence, not luck.

— RUN THE NUMBERS · FREE EBAY SELLER TOOLS —

eBay Fee Calculator

Get your exact fees by category and store plan, so your profit math is real — not a guess.

eBay Profit Calculator

Enter your costs and sale price to see true take-home profit and margin on every unit.

eBay Promoted Listings Calculator

Estimate ad cost and see how promoted listings affect your margin before you turn them on.

Find all three free at SimpleLifeCalc.com.

Simple Life Calculator
Free eBay fee, profit & research tools at SimpleLifeCalc.com
Tools and guidance for smarter reselling decisions. Scan for free calculators, worksheets & seller resources.