RESEARCH AND INVENTORY PLANNING

eBay Product Research Workbook

Make the next inventory decision count.

Work each product through demand, competition, sourcing, costs and risk before committing to an inventory test.



RESEARCH · COMPARE · DECIDE

01 Compare ideas with relevant sold evidence.

02 Check costs, shipping and return exposure.

03 Choose a test and plan the first order.

For eBay sellers researching resale, sourcing and inventory opportunities.

20 IDEAS · SOLD-LISTING RESEARCH · SCORING AND INVENTORY TOOLS

YOUR WORKBOOK / CONTENTS

Build a decision you can explain

Compare multiple products, use consistent evidence, check before buying and document the tradeoffs.

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Print and write, or annotate the PDF. All fields are manual. Reuse pages for each product. Set your own research time block; complex items may need more than an hour. Examples and scoring bands are planning aids, not sales guarantees.

01 / WHY RESEARCH MATTERS

Use evidence before inventory

A repeatable sequence helps reveal what is known, what is assumed and what needs a test.

01 Demand

Look for comparable purchases, dates and condition. Historical sales do not guarantee your next sale.

02 Competition

Compare price, presentation, delivery and service without assuming the largest seller is the only model.

03 Costs

Include landed inventory cost, outbound shipping, fees, advertising and expected return losses.

04 Contribution and profit

Contribution covers fixed costs before operating profit. Income tax and owner withdrawals are separate.

05 Decision

Use the scores to organize judgment, then check the budget, unresolved risks and test plan.

Sold-to-active ratio = historical sold count ÷ current active count × 100.
Contribution margin = contribution ÷ seller revenue × 100.
Product risk: 7 factors, maximum 70. Opportunity: 8 factors, maximum 80.

The sold-to-active ratio is not a probability or the share of listings that sold. There is no universal safe margin, demand ratio or score cutoff. The optional house rules later in this workbook require your judgment.

02 / PRODUCT IDEA BRAINSTORM

Explore ideas 1–10

Record the category with each idea and the source you would investigate. Write 1–5 in the rating columns.

Interest: 1 low → 5 high. Difficulty: 1 easy → 5 hard. Profit potential: 1 thin → 5 strong. The profit rating is only an initial hypothesis.

NO.	PRODUCT / CATEGORY	SOURCE	I	D	P
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

USE WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW

Start with hobbies, work experience and items you have bought or sold. Familiarity can help you judge condition, authenticity and value; verify demand and costs independently.

PROMISING CATEGORY OR SOURCE TO EXPLORE

02 / PRODUCT IDEA BRAINSTORM

Explore ideas 11–20

Record the category with each idea and the source you would investigate. Write 1–5 in the rating columns.

Interest: 1 low → 5 high. Difficulty: 1 easy → 5 hard. Profit potential: 1 thin → 5 strong. The profit rating is only an initial hypothesis.

NO.	PRODUCT / CATEGORY	SOURCE	I	D	P
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					

MY FIVE IDEAS TO RESEARCH NEXT

1 / SHORTLISTED IDEA

2 / SHORTLISTED IDEA

3 / SHORTLISTED IDEA

4 / SHORTLISTED IDEA

5 / SHORTLISTED IDEA

Choose high interest and plausible profit with manageable difficulty. Do not add the raw difficulty score as a positive factor. The later opportunity score uses higher = better throughout.

03 / PRODUCT VALIDATION

Clarify the product and the buyer

Choose one shortlisted idea. Your own interest is a starting point to test with independent evidence.

PRODUCT BEING VALIDATED

PROBLEM SOLVED OR WANT SATISFIED

WHO BUYS IT? / SITUATION, HOBBY, PROFESSION OR OCCASION

WHY BUY? / PRICE, QUALITY, CONVENIENCE, STATUS OR GIFTING

- ☐ Year-round
- ☐ Holiday peak
- ☐ Summer
- ☐ Winter
- ☐ Back-to-school
- ☐ Other: _____

WOULD I BUY AT THE GOING PRICE? / WHY / EVIDENCE BEYOND MY OPINION

FLAG THE PRODUCT TYPE EARLY

Fragile: test protection and packing cost. Heavy or oversized: weigh and measure before buying. Seasonal: plan the sales window and remaining stock. Restricted: check the actual item and eBay policy; do not assume a whole category is allowed or banned.

04 / EBAY SEARCH RESEARCH

Make the search comparison consistent

Use the same marketplace, model, condition and filters. Record sold period and active snapshot date.

MARKETPLACE / CURRENCY / FILTERS

SOLD PERIOD / ACTIVE SNAPSHOT DATE

SEARCH TERM	ACTIVE	SOLD	RATIO %	PRICE	SHIP

Price = average comparable sold item price. Ship = average buyer-paid shipping. Ratio = historical sold count ÷ current active count × 100. Record whether counts refer to listings or units; do not mix them.

Example: 120 sold listings over 90 days ÷ 150 active today × 100 = 80%.

READ THE RATIO CORRECTLY

This compares a period’s sales with a point-in-time supply snapshot. It can exceed 100% and is not the percentage of listings that sold. Zero active listings → ratio N/A. See page 8 before making a demand decision.

04 / RESEARCH METRICS

Keep the measure and its meaning together

Choose relevant comparables and record the definition supplied by the tool.

01 Use Product Research for actual prices

eBay Product Research provides up to three years of sales data, including accepted Best Offer prices. Filter by category, condition, product identifiers, location and time period.

02 Keep tool sell-through separate

When eBay displays a sell-through metric, record it with the tool, dates and filters. The homemade sold-to-active ratio on page 7 is a different measure and must not replace it.

03 Check comparability and uncertainty

Separate bundles, parts-only listings, different conditions and shipping terms. More observations help, but a sample is still incomplete and may include seasonal or unusual sales.

TOOL-REPORTED SELL-THROUGH / %

TOOL / DATE RANGE / DEFINITION

FILTERS AND EXCLUSIONS USED

DEMAND EVIDENCE / WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

REPLACE UNIVERSAL THRESHOLDS WITH CONTEXT

The original 50–60% demand target and 20% warning are not validated rules for every category or time window. Compare the same measure over comparable periods, then test price, margin and realistic sales capacity.

05 / SOLD LISTINGS ANALYSIS

Study ten comparable sales

Use Product Research to verify actual prices, including accepted Best Offers.

NO.	ITEM / REFERENCE	SOLD $	SHIP $	CONDITION	SOLD DATE
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

Average sold price = sum of comparable sold prices ÷ observation count.
Example: $15 + $25 + $35 + $45 = $120; $120 ÷ 4 = $30.

MY PRICE SUM / OBSERVATION COUNT

MY AVERAGE PRICE / RANGE

PATTERNS / CONDITION, INCLUDED ITEMS, DELIVERY AND PRICE SPREAD

Compare delivered prices where relevant. Differences may reflect condition, timing, accessories or delivery; price alone does not prove a cause.

06 / COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

Compare three relevant sellers

Choose a mix of seller sizes. Record observed facts, then identify what your offer could improve.

OBSERVATION	SELLER 1	SELLER 2	SELLER 3
Seller name / reference			
Feedback score / date			
Comparable price / shipping			
Photos / count and clarity			
Title / item specifics			
Delivery estimate / handling			
Return policy			
Strengths			
Weaknesses			

MY USEFUL POINT OF DIFFERENCE / EVIDENCE TO TEST

STUDY WITHOUT ASSUMING

A seller’s size or feedback total does not establish profit or current product demand. Evaluate the item and the service promise. Use your own photographs and accurate listing information.

07 / PRODUCT SOURCING

Compare the full landed cost

Record total supplier shipping and your planned usable quantity. Include import charges and nonrecoverable costs where applicable.

SUPPLIER	UNIT $	MIN QTY	SHIP $	LEAD TIME	LANDED $	TRUST

Trust: 1 = unproven, 5 = supported by a reliable track record. Record quote date, currency and the quantity behind each landed-cost estimate.

Landed cost per usable unit = total acquisition cost ÷ usable units.
Total acquisition = purchase + inbound freight + duties + other nonrecoverable costs.

HANDLE WASTE WITHOUT COUNTING IT TWICE

Example: buy 20 units at $10, pay $30 inbound shipping and $10 other acquisition costs. Total = $240. If 18 units are usable, landed cost = $240 ÷ 18 ≈ $13.33. The two unusable units are already in the numerator; do not add their purchase cost again.

PREFERRED SUPPLIER / QUOTE DATE

USABLE QUANTITY / ACQUISITION TOTAL

QUALITY CHECKS / BACKUP SUPPLIER / ASSUMPTIONS

07 / SUPPLIER RISK

Check the supply chain behind the offer

Rate each factor 1–10: 1 = low risk, 10 = high risk. Unknowns need research before a final total.

FACTOR	SCORE / 1–10
Single-supplier dependence	
Unproven reliability	
Long or unpredictable lead time	
Prices may rise or fluctuate	
High minimum order ties up cash	
Quality varies between batches	
TOTAL / maximum 60	

Optional house rubric: under 24 = fewer concerns; 24–39 = develop a backup; 40–60 = substantial supply risk. These bands are judgment aids, not validated reliability measures.

HIGHEST-RISK FACTOR / EVIDENCE

BACKUP SOURCE OR MITIGATION / TARGET DATE

USE EVIDENCE BEHIND THE NUMBER

Check samples, lead times, quote validity and supplier communication. A low total does not remove a critical single-point failure; resolve that issue before relying on the supply for a larger order.

08 / PROFIT WORKSHEET

Count every cost of the order

Use actual fee inputs for the marketplace, category and account. Include outbound shipping even when you offer free shipping.

PER-ORDER ECONOMICS	AMOUNT / CURRENCY
Item price after discounts	
+ Shipping collected	
= Seller revenue / exclude remitted sales tax	
– Purchase cost	
– Allocated inbound freight / import costs	
– Packaging	
– Outbound shipping to the buyer	
– eBay selling fees	
– Promoted Listings / other advertising	
– Expected incremental return loss	
– Other variable costs	
= Contribution before fixed costs and income tax	

Contribution = seller revenue – total variable costs.
Contribution margin = contribution ÷ seller revenue × 100.

MY CONTRIBUTION MARGIN / %

MY MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE MARGIN / %

Zero revenue → margin N/A. Count each cost once. eBay’s final value fee generally includes payment processing. Remitted sales tax is excluded from revenue but can be part of the fee base.

08 / WORKED EXAMPLE

Include outbound shipping

This hypothetical one-item order keeps the original cost inputs and makes outbound shipping explicit.

CALCULATION	AMOUNT
Purchase + inbound freight	$12.00 + $2.00
Packaging + illustrative eBay fees	$1.00 + $5.85
Illustrative ad cost + return allowance	$0.80 + $3.20
Other variable cost	$0.50
Subtotal before outbound shipping	$25.35
+ Outbound shipping / seller pays	$6.00
= Total variable costs	$31.35
Seller revenue / $40 item, $0 shipping	$40.00
Contribution / $40 − $31.35	$8.65
Contribution margin / $8.65 ÷ $40	21.63%

The original $14.65 remainder was before outbound shipping. Adding $6 reduces it to $8.65. The $5.85 fee and $0.80 ad inputs are illustrative, not current quotes. The $3.20 allowance assumes an 8% return probability and $40 incremental loss per return; see page 18.

Monthly operating profit = orders × average contribution − fixed costs.
Example: 20 × $8.65 − $100 = $73 before income tax.

CHOOSE A THRESHOLD THAT FITS THE BUSINESS

The original optional rubric was: at least 25% = meets target; 15% to below 25% = review; below 15% = below target. These are house rules, not universal viability benchmarks. Check dollars, time, cash needs and risk as well as margin.

09 / RISK ASSESSMENT

Make the risks visible

Use page 16’s anchors. Score 1–10; higher means more risk.

FACTOR	SCORE / 1–10
Competition	
Fragility in transit	
Return exposure	
Seasonality	
Storage needs	
Shipping difficulty	
Supplier dependence	
TOTAL / maximum 70	

Optional house rubric: under 30 = fewer combined concerns; 30–49 = mitigation needed; 50–70 = substantial risk. No band guarantees safety, and higher margins do not make an unacceptable risk acceptable.

MOST IMPORTANT RISK / SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

MITIGATION / OWNER / DATE TO VERIFY

KEEP THE SCALE DIRECTION CLEAR

Here, higher = more risk. On the opportunity scorecard, higher = better prospects. Use the meaning of each factor; do not carry a raw risk score into a positive opportunity column.

09 / SCORING GUIDE

Use observable scoring anchors

Use 1–3 for lower risk, 8–10 for higher risk and 4–7 for intermediate evidence. Record uncertainty separately.

FACTOR	LOWER RISK / 1–3	HIGHER RISK / 8–10
Competition	Few relevant rivals; useful gap	Crowded offer; entrenched rivals
Fragility	Sturdy with tested packaging	Breakable and protection untested
Return exposure	Clear fit and condition evidence	Sizing, defects or uncertain descriptions
Seasonality	Demand spread through the year	Narrow selling window
Storage	Small, stable, easy to handle	Bulky, delicate or climate-sensitive
Shipping	Predictable standard parcel	Heavy, unusual dimensions or surcharges
Supplier	Several reliable sources	One uncertain source; long lead time

EVIDENCE SUPPORTING MY HIGHEST SCORES

UNKNOWNS TO RESOLVE BEFORE A PURCHASE

The anchors are illustrative. A product’s material or category alone does not determine its risk; evaluate the actual item, packaging, buyer expectations and fulfillment process.

10 / CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

Find a need you can address

Use public reviews and feedback that are relevant to the same product and condition. Separate product issues from seller service issues.

COMPLAINT	FREQ.	SEVERITY	SOLVE?	OPPORTUNITY

Frequency: 1 = rare in the sample, 5 = frequent. Severity: 1 = minor, 5 = major. Record the sample and date; public complaints are not a reliable denominator for a category return rate.

SOURCE / DATE / SAMPLE SIZE / REPEATED PATTERN

BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY / WHAT I CAN ACTUALLY DELIVER

TURN THE FINDING INTO A VERIFIABLE IMPROVEMENT

For example, repeated transit damage can prompt a packaging test and a clearer protection promise. Claim only what you can deliver. Review positive and neutral evidence too; one complaint does not establish the whole market.

10 / RETURN-COST PLANNING

Plan return losses carefully

Compare returned and kept-order outcomes using actual cohorts or labeled scenarios.

Return rate = returned orders ÷ eligible orders × 100.
Allowance per order = return probability × incremental loss per return.

Incremental loss means the reduction in contribution relative to a kept order. Include refunded seller receipts and extra return/handling costs; subtract eligible fee credits and recovered inventory value. Costs already charged in the kept-order calculation must not be added again.

YOUR CATEGORY / PRODUCT GROUP	OWN RATE / SCENARIO	EVIDENCE / PERIOD
Clothing / shoes / apparel		
Consumer electronics		
Home / garden / tools		
Collectibles / media / parts		

Blank rates replace unsupported industry ranges. Returns vary with item, condition, fit, policy and cohort. Unknown rates need a sensitivity scenario, not a claimed category fact.

ELIGIBLE ORDERS / RETURNED ORDERS

MY RETURN RATE / %

INCREMENTAL LOSS PER RETURN / $

ALLOWANCE PER ORDER / $

PLANNED MONTHLY ORDERS

MONTHLY ALLOWANCE / $

EXAMPLE AND CASH PLANNING

8 returns per 100 orders = 8%. With $40 incremental loss, allowance = 0.08 × $40 = $3.20 per order; 100 orders imply $320. Refund cash needs may differ from economic loss. Reconcile fee credits and recoverable stock with actual records.

11 / OPPORTUNITY SCORECARD

Compare product opportunities

Score 1–10 for each factor. Here 10 always means better prospects. Leave unknowns unresolved until researched.

FACTOR	SCORE / 1–10
Demand evidence / pages 7–9	
Low competition / page 10	
Contribution margin / pages 13–14	
Ease of shipping / pages 15–16	
Ease of sourcing / pages 11–12	
Market stability	
Personal interest	
Growth potential supported by evidence	
TOTAL / maximum 80	

Optional house rubric: 70–80 = stronger candidate; 50–69 = improve weak factors; below 50 = reconsider. These totals rank your assessments; they are not validated sales predictions.

CONSERVATIVE REVIEW TRIGGERS FROM THE ORIGINAL RUBRIC

- ☐ Demand score 4 or below
- ☐ Margin score 4 or below
- ☐ Product risk score 50 or above

DECISION / UNRESOLVED ISSUE / NEXT EVIDENCE TO COLLECT

Pause and investigate any trigger regardless of the total. A prohibited item, authenticity issue or unaffordable loss overrides the score. The sum ranges from 8 to 80 when all eight factors are scored.

12 / INVENTORY PLANNING

Plan the first purchase and the cash

Use a test quantity supported by your budget, evidence and fulfillment capacity.

UNITS TO BUY FIRST

EXPECTED MONTHLY UNIT SALES

REORDER POINT / UNITS REMAINING

REORDER LEAD TIME / DAYS

LANDED COST PER USABLE UNIT / $

CASH AVAILABLE FOR THIS TEST / $

First-order acquisition cash ≈ quantity × landed cost per unit.
Months of stock = units ÷ expected monthly unit sales.
Inventory at cost = usable units on hand × landed cost per unit.

Use a consistent usable-unit basis. Add any deposits, timing differences or other upfront cash needs separately. Zero expected monthly sales → no finite months-of-stock estimate.

EXAMPLE / 20 USABLE UNITS	RESULT
Landed cost $14 each / acquisition cash	20 × $14 = $280
Expected sales 10 units per month	20 ÷ 10 = 2 months
12 units remain / inventory at cost	12 × $14 = $168

MY ACQUISITION CASH / $

MY MONTHS OF STOCK

REORDER LOGIC / EXPECTED DEMAND DURING LEAD TIME / BUFFER

Inventory at cost is money committed to stock, not a guaranteed recoverable sale value. Reorder using observed demand, lead-time variability and cash capacity.

12 / INVENTORY RISK

Test the size of the commitment

Rate 1–10, with 10 = high risk. Revisit the assumptions if a large order is driving the risk.

FACTOR	SCORE / 1–10
Overstock if sales are slower than expected	
Season or style ends before stock sells	
Purchase uses cash needed elsewhere	
Slow sales keep capital committed	
Storage or handling strain	
TOTAL / maximum 50	

Optional house rubric: under 20 = fewer concerns; 20–34 = consider a smaller test; 35–50 = seek stronger evidence before a larger buy. These are planning bands, not validated loss forecasts.

WHAT CHANGES IF SALES ARE HALF MY ESTIMATE?

SMALLER TEST OR ALTERNATIVE PURCHASE PLAN

CASH LIMIT / REVIEW DATE / STOCK EXIT PLAN

KEEP THE DECISION REVERSIBLE WHERE POSSIBLE

Compare the value of a bulk discount with the cash and storage it commits. A smaller test can teach you about actual demand, damage, returns and fulfillment before you scale.

13 / 30-DAY ACTION PLAN

Give the research a workable rhythm

Use four weekly blocks, then reserve the final two days for review and a recorded decision.

DAYS / FOCUS	TASKS	RESULTS / LESSONS
1–7 / brainstorm and shortlist		
8–14 / search, sales and competitors		
15–21 / sourcing, costs and returns		
22–28 / score and plan the test		
29–30 / review and record the decision		

OVERALL NOTES / UNFINISHED WORK TO CARRY FORWARD

WHAT I WILL RESEARCH NEXT MONTH

START DATE

FINAL REVIEW DATE

Adjust the schedule to the product and evidence needed. Completing a research block is useful progress even when the final decision is to revise an idea.

14 / FINAL PRODUCT DECISION

Record the decision and its assumptions

Bring the four headline measures together, then state what the first test is designed to learn.

OPPORTUNITY SCORE / 80

CONTRIBUTION MARGIN / %

PRODUCT RISK SCORE / 70

DEMAND METRIC / VALUE / PERIOD

☐ GO / measured test ☐ NO-GO / revise or pass

PRODUCT CHOSEN / WHY THIS EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THE CHOICE

EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION PER ORDER / $

EXPECTED MONTHLY SELLER REVENUE / $

MAIN RISKS / HOW I WILL MANAGE THEM

FIRST INVENTORY ORDER / SUPPLIER, QUANTITY AND CASH COST

TARGET LAUNCH DATE

REVIEW DATE / ABOUT 30 DAYS LATER

IF NO-GO / THE NEXT IDEA TO RESEARCH

Record whether the demand number is a tool-reported sell-through metric or the sold-to-active ratio. After launch, compare expected contribution and revenue with actual results on the same basis.

15 / MASTER RESEARCH CHECKLIST

Check the foundation before buying

An unresolved point tells you what to verify. A tick means you checked the evidence, not that sales are guaranteed.

- ☐ **Demand investigated**
  Relevant sales evidence and metric definitions recorded.
- ☐ **Sold listings reviewed**
  At least ten comparable observations logged or a smaller sample clearly disclosed.
- ☐ **Competition analyzed**
  Relevant sellers studied and a useful difference identified.
- ☐ **Costs calculated**
  Landed, outbound shipping and all applicable variable costs included once.
- ☐ **Contribution estimated**
  Fee bases, advertising, returns and fixed-cost treatment checked.
- ☐ **Risks reviewed**
  Important concerns have evidence and a mitigation plan.
- ☐ **Supplier checked**
  Reliability and a backup or contingency considered.
- ☐ **Inventory planned**
  Quantity, storage and cash needs fit the test.
- ☐ **Launch strategy prepared**
  Listing, pricing, delivery and results-review plan ready.
- ☐ **Product decision recorded**
  Score, review triggers and evidence support the chosen next step.

Reuse the checklist for every product and update it as actual sales replace assumptions.

COMPANION TOOLS / NEXT STEP

Keep the next decision connected to data



Research becomes more useful when you compare the plan with the actual result.

MY NEXT ACTION / DATE

EVIDENCE I WILL COLLECT DURING THE TEST

eBay Fee Calculator

eBay Profit Calculator

eBay Promoted Listings Calculator

eBay seller hub / calculators, guides and resources

CHECK THE INPUTS AND RECONCILE THE OUTPUT

These tools estimate from entered values. Add costs they omit once, including returns and overhead. Check whether sales tax is included in the fee base; the current Fee Calculator’s displayed formula omits it, while the Profit Calculator has a tax input. A per-order remainder is not take-home income.

FIRST RESULTS-REVIEW DATE

ASSUMPTION TO REVISIT FIRST

REFERENCE / OFFICIAL GUIDANCE

Verify the rules behind the numbers

Official eBay information and companion calculator inputs were reviewed on 13 November 2026.

FEES AND ADVERTISING

Fees vary by marketplace, category, Store plan and account. The US final value fee base generally includes item price, buyer-paid shipping and sales tax. General Promoted Listings uses attributed-sale charges; Priority uses valid-click charges. Account for both if both apply. Verify the current campaign and transaction report.

For US General campaigns, an attributed sale can follow a click by any buyer within 30 days; the item must be promoted at click and sale, with the rate at sale. Do not assume only a click by the purchasing buyer can create a charge.

eBay / Product Research and actual sold prices

eBay / selling fees and calculation bases

eBay / Promoted Listings strategies

eBay / fee credits for refunds and cancellations

eBay / prohibited and restricted items

MARKETPLACE / ACCOUNT / OFFICIAL FEE RECORDS CHECKED

PRODUCT-SPECIFIC RESTRICTIONS OR ASSUMPTIONS TO VERIFY

Research observations, suggested scores and worked examples are planning inputs. Use your actual records to replace them as the test develops.