

LEARNING MADE EASY



10th Edition

eBay[®]

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Get registered and start
finding online bargains

—
Create listings that attract
buyers and big bids

—
Manage efficient transactions
and worry-free shipping

Marsha Collier

Bestselling eBay author and
Top Rated Plus Seller



eBay®

10th Edition

by Marsha Collier

for
dummies®
A Wiley Brand

eBay® For Dummies®, 10th Edition

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Introduction

These days you have a lot of choices when you want to sell online. There are some apps/platforms that may seem easier than eBay . . . but . . . there's only one eBay. You have the opportunity to sell your items to a worldwide audience who may be looking for the things you choose to sell.

Selling on eBay is profitable and empowering if you follow the basics rules. The beginning steps are outlined in this book and can take you to easily bring in \$60,000 a year. You don't need any more to start out than what you read in the pages of this book. After you've mastered the basics, you're on your way to your own part- or full-time e-commerce empire.

This is the *tenth* edition of *eBay For Dummies*. When I wrote the original edition in 1999, eBay had just gone public, and the gross merchandise sales by sellers on the site was estimated at a staggering \$2.8 billion. There has been little change in Internet transactions since eBay pioneered the collaborative economy. In 2018, eBay enabled almost \$95 billion of gross merchandise volume with person-to-person transactions. I had no idea that eBay would become the worldwide marketplace it has — and that this book would become the top-selling book for those wanting to learn about eBay. (Pretty cool, though.)

Literally millions of people have learned how to succeed at an eBay business by reading my books. In your hand you have the book that will get you on the road to your own online business. Heed my words and you'll be getting the no-nonsense facts about eBay from an active user who was selling on eBay almost from day one.

I'm a longtime eBay shopper as well as a Top Rated Seller. My original career was in retail marketing, and since launching my eBay adventure, I've been making money on the site. (I even put my daughter through college on my profits!) I work from home and apply my background successfully to all facets of the site.

My enthusiasm and excitement for shopping and selling on the eBay Marketplace seems to have spread to so many corners of the world. eBay users (like you and me) currently total 182 million active users worldwide — that's quite a community. (In 1999 there were only 10 million registered users.)

It's a community of buyers who enjoy shopping with mom-and-pop businesses (along with many famous celebrities and brand names) worldwide — and of sellers who forage for items to sell online and make a few dollars (or a full-time living). The best part is that eBay is available to anyone who wants to take the time to learn how it works.

The venue is constantly evolving; familiar links may move, but the basics are there. It isn't too hard to master, but just as with any tool, once you know the ins and outs, you're ahead of the game. You can then get the deals when you shop, and make the most money when you sell. You've come to the right place to find out all about eBay. This book is designed to help you understand the basics about buying and selling on eBay, the world's most successful e-commerce community.

You need a firm grasp of the basics before you can succeed in any endeavor. Here are all the tools you need to get moving on eBay, whether you're new to the Internet or a seasoned veteran. You see how to turn your everyday household clutter into cold, hard cash — and how to look for items that you can sell on eBay.

If you're an online shopper, I show you how to figure out how much you should spend and how to get great deals. How much money you earn (or spend) depends entirely on how *often* and how *smartly* you conduct your eBay transactions. *You* decide how often you want to sell items and place bids; I'm here to help with the *smart* part by sharing tips (along with the rules) drawn from my years of experience on eBay.

A website as complex as eBay has many nooks and crannies that may confuse new users. Think of this book as a detailed road map that can help you navigate eBay, getting just as much or as little as you want from it. If there's a specific question you want answered, try looking it up in the index. I bet you'll find a reference that will help.

As you figure out the nuts and bolts, you can start buying and selling stuff. This book is full of terrific strategies that help you get the most out of your transactions. With this book and a little focused effort, you can join the ranks of the millions of people who use the Internet to make a profit. When you get the hang of eBay and feel that it's time to graduate (no cap and gown required) from this book, look for my *eBay Business All-In-One For Dummies* — it'll take you to the next plateau.



Remember one thing. The more items you list for sale, the more profits you make. "Thinking" about listing items brings in no profit; trust me, I've been there. Action = profits.

About This Book

Remember those open-book tests that teachers sprang on you in high school? Well, sometimes you may feel like eBay pop-quizzes you while you're on the site. Think of *eBay For Dummies*, 10th Edition, as your open-book-test cheat sheet with all the answers. You don't have to memorize anything; just keep this book handy to help you get over the confusing parts of eBay. Over the years, some of the top sellers and buyers on the eBay site have visited with me when I'm at a book signing or teaching a seminar just to show me their dog-eared, highlighted, marred copy of an earlier edition of *eBay For Dummies* that got them started. This book will do the same for you.

With all that in mind, I've divided this book into pertinent sections to help you find your answers fast. I'll show you how to

- » Get online and register on eBay.
- » Navigate eBay to do just about anything you can think of — search for items for sale, set up listings, monitor your transactions, and join the social media fun.
- » Bid on and *win* eBay auctions and find low prices at fixed-price sales.
- » Choose an item to sell, pick the right time for your listing, market it so that a bunch of people see it, and make a nice profit.
- » Handle problems with finesse, should they crop up.
- » Become a part of a unique community of people who like to collect, buy, and sell items of just about every type!



REMEMBER

Do not adjust your eyes. To protect the privacy of eBay users, screen images (commonly called *screen shots*) in this book blur user IDs to protect the innocent (or not-so . . .).

Foolish Assumptions

You may have picked up this book because you heard that people are making huge money selling online and you want to find out what's going on. Or you heard about the brand-name bargains and wacky stuff you can find in the world's largest shopping emporium. If either of these assumptions is true, this is the right book for you.

Here are some other foolish assumptions I've made about you:

- » You have, or would like to have, access to the Internet so you can do business on eBay.
- » You have an interest in collecting, selling, or buying, and you want to find out more about doing that online.
- » You want tips and strategies that can save you money when you buy and make you money when you sell. (You too? I can relate. We already have a lot in common.)
- » You're concerned about maintaining your privacy and staying away from people who try to ruin everyone's good time.

Icons Used in This Book

The icons that appear from time to time in the left margin serve some special purposes. I try to throw them in where appropriate to draw your attention to specifics. Here's a rundown of what they mean.



TIP

These are facts that you just *have* to know! Just picture me jumping up and down, just waiting to interrupt your reading with a little extra bonus tidbit. Time is money on eBay. When you see this shortcut or timesaver come your way, read the information and think about all the greenbacks you just saved.



REMEMBER

Think of this icon as a sticky note for your brain. If you forget one of the pearls of wisdom, you can go back and reread it. If you *still* can't remember something here, go ahead and bookmark the page — I won't tell. Even better: Use a yellow highlighter on the print edition.



WARNING

Don't feel my pain. I've done plenty of things wrong on eBay — and really want to save you from my mistakes. I put these warnings out there bright and bold so that you don't have a bad experience. Don't skip these warnings unless you're enthusiastic about masochism.



MARSHA
SAYS

When you see this icon, you know you're in for the real deal. This icon will give you my personal tips as well as war stories and successes I've heard from eBay veterans. They can help you strategize, make money, and avoid the perils faced by others. ("Learn from others' mistakes" is my motto.)

You also see a sidebar now and then — text on a gray background to make the topic stand out. Sometimes these decorative items have important short facts that I want you to know, or they contain an interesting aside.

Beyond the Book

Like everything else in the world, eBay changes. Some of the screen grabs in this edition may look slightly different from what you see on your device. That's just eBay tweaking and improving things on the site. My job is to arm you with everything you need to know to begin conducting transactions. Keep in mind that the table of contents or index of this book is your friend. In this book I either help you solve your problems or let you know where to go for some expert advice.

Although eBay makes its complex website as easy to navigate as possible, you may still need to refer to this book for help. Don't get frustrated if you have to keep reviewing topics before you feel completely comfortable trading on eBay.

After all, Albert Einstein once said, "Don't commit to memory something you can look up." (Although I forget when he said that . . .)

In addition to what you're reading right now, this product also comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet that covers eBay buying terms. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to www.dummies.com and search for "eBay Cheat Sheet" in the Search box.

Where to Go from Here

It's time to open the book and dive in. For updates on this book and to contact me, visit my website:

www.coolebaytools.com

You'll find articles about things going on at eBay, online business, and social media. For small business and technology posts, I also have a blog at

<http://mcollier.blogspot.com>

If you'd like to ask me questions through social media, you can find me on the following networks (I am on more, but a girl only has so much time):

» **Twitter:** @MarshaCollier

<http://twitter.com/MarshaCollier>

» **Facebook:** Marsha Collier

www.facebook.com/MarshaCollierFanPage

» **Instagram:** MarshaCollier

My family, garden, pet, and work pictures

www.instagram.com/marshacollier

» **YouTube:** DealingDiva (Don't judge my ID — I opened that account a long time ago.)

I often post videos to answer questions I receive.

www.youtube.com/user/dealingdiva

You can email me directly from the Contact page on my website. I read all emails and try to answer as many as I can. But please remember that I'm just me. No giant staff, no big office. I write books, research new products to help online citizens, consult with people just like you, run an eBay business, and take time to enjoy my family.

You can also send me tech questions to answer on my podcast. Every Saturday, from noon to 1 p.m. Pacific time, I cohost the *Computer and Technology Show* (#techradio on Twitter) with Marc Cohen. The show is also archived online at www.computerandtechnologyradio.com and on IHEARTRadio (www.iheart.com/podcast/263-computer-and-technol-28119131), Tunein (<https://tunein.com/podcasts/Technology-Podcasts/Computer-and-Technology-Radio-p29078>), Stitcher (www.stitcher.com/podcast/wsradio/computer-and-technology-radio), and iTunes (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/computer-technology-radio/id575805424>).

Thank you for buying this book. Please give me a shout out and let me know about your eBay successes.

1

Getting a Feel for eBay

IN THIS PART . . .

Getting the basics on using eBay

Reviewing the registration process

Organizing eBay transactions and interactions through
your My eBay page

Understanding the Feedback system

- » Learning about eBay
- » Figuring out your buying and selling options
- » Selling stuff for cash
- » Researching items to buy or sell
- » Knowing how eBay is protecting you
- » Using features and fun stuff

Chapter **1**

Why Being on eBay Is Fun on So Many Levels

eBay emerged as *the* marketplace of the 21st century. Way back in 2003, *Wired* magazine predicted that eBay's promise was that "retailing will become the national pastime." Promise fulfilled: In 2018, worldwide online e-commerce sales topped \$2.86 trillion. The founder had a pretty great idea back in 1995 (read about some eBay history in the "eBay's humble beginnings" sidebar, later in this chapter), and the world has taken to shopping and selling online. eBay is a safe and fun place to shop for everything from collectibles to brand-new clothing and tech gadgets, all from the comfort of your home.

Once referred to as an "online garage sale," eBay is now also a marketplace for new merchandise. It's no longer just the destination for locating unusual collectibles and hard-to-find china patterns. These days major brands have signed up; you can purchase new and useful items, such as alarm systems, tablets, lightbulbs, clothing, cars, homes — just about anything you can think of.

Take a look around your house. Nice shoes (that you never wore). Spiffy artwork (that you're bored with). Great-looking clock (souvenir that doesn't match your décor). Not to mention all the other cool stuff you own. All these great fashions, household appliances, and collectibles are fabulous to own, but when was the last

time your clock turned a profit? When you connect to eBay, your PC or mobile device can magically turn into a money machine. Just visit eBay and marvel at all the items that are just a few mouse clicks away from being bought and sold.

In this chapter, I tell you what eBay is and how it works. eBay is today's gas-free alternative to driving and spending hours wandering through boutiques, big-box stores, or outlet malls looking for the perfect bargain or tchotchke. The site can also be your personal shopper for gifts and day-to-day items.

Not only can you buy and sell stuff in the privacy of your home, but through your connections on eBay, you can also meet people who share your interests. Those who use the eBay site are a friendly bunch, and soon you'll be buying, selling, swapping stories, and trading advice with your newfound friends via various social media outlets.

To get to eBay, you need to access the Internet. To access the Internet, you need a Windows PC, a Mac, a tablet with the eBay Mobile app, or simply a smartphone. (Inexpensive brand name Chromebooks can be found for under \$200.)

What Is eBay, and How Does It Work?

The Internet spawned all kinds of online retail marketplaces (known as *e-commerce sites* to Wall Street types), and eBay is the superstar as the people's marketplace. The reason it remains a leader is simple: It's where buyers look to do business with both big brands and small homespun family businesses. It's also where a quick look at the listings can give you a ballpark figure on how much an item is "going for" these days.



REMEMBER

eBay itself *doesn't* sell a thing. Instead, the site is a platform for selling and does what all good markets do: It creates a safe environment that brings together buyers and sellers. You can think of eBay as the person who set you up on your last blind date — except the results are often a lot better. Your matchmaking friend doesn't perform a marriage ceremony but does get you in the same room with your potential soulmate. eBay puts buyers and sellers in an e-commerce environment and lets them conduct their business within the rules that eBay has established.

All you need to do to join eBay is fill out a few forms online and click. Congratulations — you're a member, with no fees or secret handshakes needed (you don't pay a fee until you sell something). After you register, you can buy and sell anything that falls within the eBay rules and regulations. (Chapter 2 eases you through the registration process.)

The eBay home page, shown in Figure 1-1, is your first step to finding all the kick-ass stuff you can see and do on eBay. You can conduct searches, learn about current promotions, and get an instant link to the My eBay page, which helps you keep track of every item you have up for sale or have a bid on. You can read more about the eBay home page in Chapter 3 and find out more about My eBay in Chapter 4.

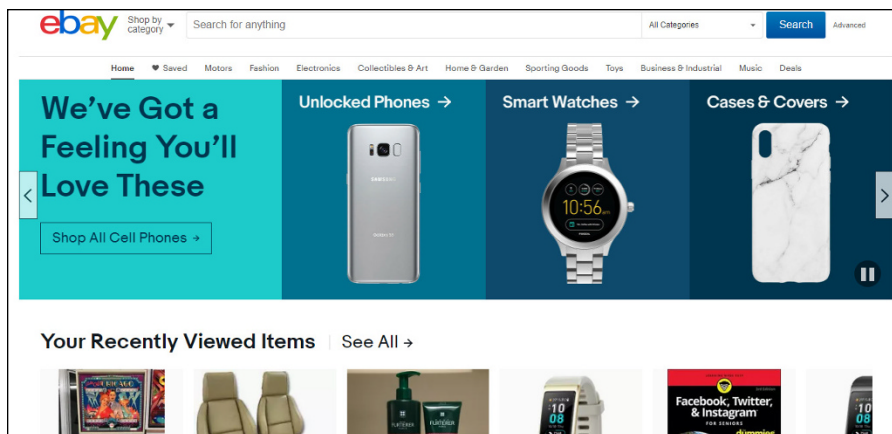


FIGURE 1-1: The eBay home page, your starting point for bargains and for making some serious cash.

Yikes! What happened? The eBay home page on your computer looks nothing like the one in Figure 1-1? Don't rub your eyes — even squinting hard won't help; eBay has a different version of the home page for those who have never registered on eBay — and customizes the page even if you're not signed in. If you have never registered on eBay, someone else who uses the computer may have done so already. Know that whatever version of the eBay home page you view, it has the same basic elements.

eBAY'S HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

The long-standing urban legend says eBay all started with a Pez dispenser. But as romantic as the story is (of the young man who designed the site for his fiancée to trade Pez dispensers), the story is, sadly, public-relations spin. The founder, Pierre Omidyar, had the right vision at the right time, and the first item he sold on the site (which was originally named AuctionWeb) was a broken laser pointer. Day by day, new people were drawn to the site from Internet chatter, including me in 1996. The site eventually grew (hosting 2 million auctions in January 1997) until it began to strain Pierre's ISP server. The ISP charged him more, so he started charging a small listing fee for sellers, just so he could break even. Legend has it that the day \$10,000 in fees arrived in Pierre's mailbox, he quit his day job and embarked on building an Internet legend.

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The screenshot shows the eBay website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for HOME, LISTINGS, BUYERS, SELLERS, SEARCH, HELP, CAFE, and SITE MAP. The eBay logo is prominently displayed on the left. Below the logo, there is a section for 'categories' with a list of various items for sale, including Antiques, Computers, Trading Cards, Dolls, Stamps, Jewelry, Collectibles, Memorabilia, Toys, Coins, Books, and Miscellaneous. In the center, there are several promotional banners: 'List an Item for sale', 'Chat in our café', 'Take our cool tutorial', and 'Register it's free and fun'. On the right side, there is a 'stats' section showing various metrics like the number of items for sale and bids made. At the bottom, there is a 'featurEd' section with a list of featured items and their prices. The page also includes a 'Last updated' timestamp and a Netscape browser icon.

eBay's forerunner, AuctionWeb, was born on Labor Day 1995. The name eBay is taken from Echo Bay, the name Pierre originally wanted for his company. Upon checking with the State of California, he found that the name was taken by another company, so he shortened the name to eBay — and the rest, as they say, is history.

All About Auctions

When it comes to auctions, the value of an item is determined by how much someone is willing to spend to buy it. That's what makes auctions exciting. eBay offers several varieties of auctions, but for the most part, they all work the same way. An *auction* is a unique sales event where the final selling price of the item for sale is not known. As a result, an element of surprise is involved — not only for the bidder (who may end up with a great deal) both from a seller's perspective and a bidder's perspective:

- » **Seller:** A seller may pay a fee, fill out an electronic form, and set up the auction, listing a *minimum bid* he or she is willing to accept for the item. Think of an auctioneer at Sotheby's saying, "The bidding for this diamond necklace begins at \$5,000." You might *want* to bid \$4,000, but the bid won't be accepted. Sellers can also set a *reserve price* — sort of a financial safety net that protects them from losing money on the deal. I explain how all this works later in this section.
- » **Bidder:** Bidders in auctions duke it out over a period of time (the minimum is one day, but most auctions last five days, a week, or even longer) until one comes out victorious. Usually the highest bidder wins. The tricky thing about participating in an auction (and the most exciting aspect) is that no one knows the final price an item goes for until the last second — when, often, the most action occurs.

eBay auctions

Unlike “traditional” live auctions that end with the familiar phrase “Going once, going twice, sold!” eBay auctions are controlled by the clock. The seller lists the item on the site for a predetermined period of time; the highest bidder when the clock runs out takes home the prize.

Reserve-price auctions

Unlike a minimum bid, which is required in any eBay auction, a *reserve price* protects sellers from having to sell an item for less than the minimum amount they want for it. You may be surprised to see a brand-new Tesla up for auction on eBay with a minimum bid of only a dollar. It’s a fair bet that the seller has put a (much higher) reserve price on this car to protect himself from losing money. The reserve price allows sellers to set lower minimum bids, and lower minimum bids attract bidders. Unfortunately, if a seller makes the reserve price too high and it isn’t met by the end of the auction, no one wins.

eBay charges a fee for sellers to run this type of auction. Nobody knows (except the seller and the eBay servers) what the reserve price is until the reserve is met, but you *can* tell from the auction page whether you’re dealing with a reserve-price auction. Reserve-price auctions are in the listings alongside the other items, so you have to click to find out whether it has a reserve. If bids have been made on an item, a message also appears on the page telling you if the reserve price hasn’t been met. You can find out more about bidding on reserve-price auctions in Chapter 6 and setting up a reserve-price auction in Chapter 9.

Restricted-access adult auctions

If you’re over 18 years of age and interested in bidding on items of an adult nature, eBay has an Adult-Only category, which has restricted access. In an effort to respect site visitors, eBay gates the Adult-Only area so members can make a decision as to whether they want to view these kinds of items. Although you can peruse all the other eBay categories without having to submit credit card information, you must have a credit card number on file on eBay to view and bid on items in this category. Restricted-access adult auctions are run like the typical timed auctions. To visit the adult items category, first you need to agree to the conditions listed on a terms-of-use page after you enter your User ID and password. That page pops up automatically when you attempt to access this category. The Adult Only category also hosts fixed-price sale listings.

CHARITY SALES: ALL FOR A GOOD CAUSE

A *charity sale* is a fund-raising auction promoted by eBay for Charity and PayPal Giving Fund, where the proceeds go to a selected charity. Most people don't wake up in the morning wanting to own the shoes that Ron Howard wore when he put his footprints in cement at Mann's Chinese Theater in Hollywood, but one-of-a-kind items like that often are auctioned off in charity auctions from approved 501 3(c) organizations. (In fact, someone did want those shoes badly enough to buy them for a lot of money on eBay.) Charity auctions became popular after the NBC *Today Show* sold an autographed jacket on eBay for over \$11,000 with the proceeds going to Toys for Tots. Charity auctions are run like most other auctions on eBay, but because they're immensely popular, bidding can be fierce, and the dollar amounts can go sky-high.

Many ultrafamous celebrities use eBay to help out their favorite charities. Billionaire Warren Buffett, for example, has auctioned a private lunch yearly — for the past 16 years — to support one of his favorite charities, the Glide Foundation. In 2015, lunch with the Berkshire Hathaway chairman went for \$2.35 million; the record high winning bid occurred in 2012, for \$3,456,789. I suggest that you visit these auctions and bid whenever you can. Charity auctions are a win-win situation for everyone. (You can read more about celebrity auctions in Chapter 18.)



REMEMBER

If you aren't interested in seeing or bidding on items of an adult nature, or if you're worried that your children may be able to gain access to graphic adult material, eBay has solved that problem by excluding adult-content items from easily accessible areas. Children under the age of 18 aren't allowed to register on eBay anyway and should be under an adult's supervision if they do wander onto any part of the site — especially when they log in under an adult's account.

Private (shhh-it's-a-secret) listings

Some sellers choose to hold *private listings* (whether auctions or fixed-price sales) because they know that some buyers may be embarrassed to be seen bidding on a box of racy neckties in front of the rest of the eBay community. Others may go the private route because they're selling big-ticket items and don't want to disclose their bidders' financial status.

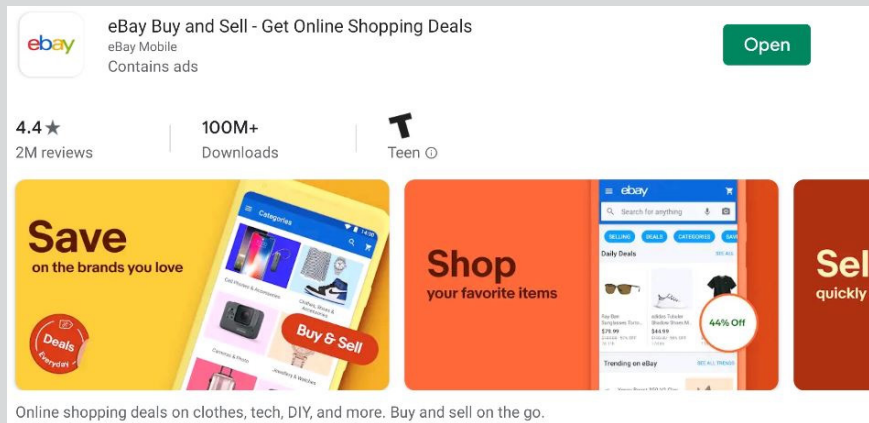
Private auctions are run like typical timed auctions, except during and after the sale, each bidder's identity is kept secret.

“Buy It Now” on eBay

You don’t have to participate in an auction on eBay to buy something. If you want to make a purchase — if it’s something you *must* have — you can usually find the item and buy it immediately. Of course, using *Buy It Now* (BIN in eBay-speak) doesn’t come with the thrill of an auction, but purchasing an item at a fraction of the retail price — without leaving your chair or waiting for an auction to end — has its own warm and fuzzy kind of excitement. If you seek this kind of instant gratification on eBay, click the Buy It Now tab when browsing categories or performing searches.

PREFER TO SHOP ON A MOBILE DEVICE? IT’S YOUR CHOICE

When it comes to buying or selling on eBay, you can choose how you transact your business, whether from your desktop or on the go. If you’re addicted to your tablet or smartphone (who, me?), you can easily download the eBay App from the app store for your mobile operating system. Just type **eBay** into the search bar and you should see an icon for the eBay Mobile App in the results.



Know that I recommend that you still use a laptop or desktop computer with some regularity. As you work more with the eBay platform, you’ll see that there are some functionalities that work best on a big screen.



You may visit an eBay item only to see an option to Buy It Now. It's not an error! The seller has decided on a price at which to sell the item outright. By clicking Buy It Now, you can do an end run around the auction process and buy the item outright. If you bid on an auction that shows the Buy It Now option, the Buy it Now option will disappear unless the seller has placed a reserve price that hasn't been met.

eBay Stores

Visiting eBay Stores is as easy as clicking the *Visit Store* link on any item page. Thousands of eBay sellers have set up these online stores with merchandise meant for you to Buy It Now — and when you find a seller you like, you can visit the store with a click of your mouse. Sellers who open an eBay Store have to meet a certain level of experience on eBay, and when you buy from an eBay Store, you're protected by the same eBay Money Back Guarantee that covers you in any eBay transaction.

Buy It Now and fixed-price sales

More and more sellers are selling items with a Buy It Now option or at a fixed price. These features enable you to buy an item as soon as you see one at a price that suits you. (For more on how these sales work, check out Chapter 6.)

Want to Make Some Cash?

If you're a seller, creating a listing page on eBay is as simple as filling out an online form. You type the name of your item and a short description, add a crisp picture, set your price, and voilà — it's selling time. (Okay, it's a tad more involved than that, but not much.)

eBay allows any seller without an eBay Store to post 50 free auction or fixed-price listings per calendar month (store owners get 100–100,000 free listings per month). Once you exceed the number of free listings, you are charged a fee of \$0.30 (less when you have a store) for the privilege of listing an item for sale. You don't pay an additional penny unless your item sells. You'll find more details on eBay Stores in Chapter 11.

When you list your item, millions of people (eBay has over 162 million active users) from all over the world can take a gander at it and place bids or buy. With a little luck, a bidding war may break out in your auction and drive the bids up high