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FOR DUMMIES®

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- **Bolster your income by selling items on eBay**
- **Pack items for safe shipping**

Marsha Collier

Bestselling author of eBay For Dummies



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by Marsha Collier



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About the Author

Marsha Collier spends a good deal of time on eBay. She loves buying and selling (she's a PowerSeller with her own eBay store) as well as meeting eBay users from around the world. As a columnist, an author of three best-selling books on eBay, and an invited lecturer at eBay Live, she shares her knowledge of eBay with millions of online sellers. *eBay For Dummies* is published in special versions for the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, China, and Australia. Currently, she has 15 books in print on her favorite subject — eBay.

Marsha is one of the foremost eBay experts and educators in the world, and the top-selling eBay author. In 1999, Marsha created the first edition of *eBay For Dummies*, the bestselling book for eBay beginners. She followed up the success of the first book with *Starting an eBay Business For Dummies*, a book targeting individuals interested in making e-commerce their full-time profession. That book became an instant nationwide hit, making several notable best seller lists. These books are updated regularly to keep up with site and market changes.

Marsha's books have sold over 1,000,000 copies (including the special editions in foreign countries — two in Australia, two in Canada, and two in the United Kingdom — as well as translations in Spanish, French, Italian, Chinese, and German).

Along with her writing, Marsha is an experienced e-commerce educator. She was the lead instructor at eBay University (teaching seminars all over the United States), as well as a regular presenter at the eBay Live national convention since its inception. Marsha also hosted "Make Your Fortune Online," a PBS special on online business that premiered in 2005. The show was the basis for her PBS premium five DVD set, "Your Online Business Plan." In 2006, she was invited to address the Innovations Conference in Singapore to present the ideas of e-commerce to a new market. In 2008, she was dubbed one of twenty influential iCitizens in

Kelly Mooney's *The Open Brand: When Push Comes to Pull in a Web-Made World*, and was invited to speak at a leading e-commerce conference attended by representatives of Coca-Cola, Hewlett Packard, Procter & Gamble, Victoria's Secret, and prominent e-commerce leaders.

During the holiday season, she does several national satellite-media tours to explain the safety of shopping online. She hosts Computer & Technology Radio on KTRB 860 AM in San Francisco as well as on the Web at www.computerandtechnologyradio.com. She also makes regular appearances on television, radio, and in print to discuss customer needs and online commerce.

Marsha currently resides in Los Angeles, CA. She can be reached via her Web site, www.marshacollier.com. Or find her on Twitter @MarshaCollier.

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I can't forget Andy Cummings, my publisher, who, after all these years still takes my calls and puts up with my idiosyncrasies!

Thank you all!

Dedication

In all my years teaching eBay, the most serious students have always been those “of a certain age.” And let’s face it! Who has more stuff to sell than those who have been around long enough to accumulate a bunch of really great stuff?

I dedicate this book to all those of us out there who need a little bit larger print; those who want just the facts and no BS to get them straight to making money. This book is dedicated to you.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our online registration form located at <http://dummies.custhelp.com>. For other comments, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

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I've been teaching, writing, and selling on eBay for over 12 years. I've taught thousands of people how to use eBay and to succeed doing it. Some of the most pointed questions I've been asked come from some of the sharpest students I've ever taught — those of a "certain age." People with a little graying. I don't like the word *senior*; I prefer the word *experienced*.

After all, who has more experience on this planet? Who has bought more merchandise in their lifetime? Who knows a good deal from a lousy one? Who has a better idea of what good customer service is like? That's right, you do, not those cocky kids. Living longer — and experiencing more — gives us an advantage in this world.

Lessons learned from the school of hard knocks leave impressions on us; good and bad. Hopefully we've learned that certain things just don't work in the long run. But here we are, in the Digital World, with an entirely new set of rules (just when we thought we had it all figured out)! Who knew we'd want to know how to buy and sell online?

Each day goes by and we realize there's something cool out there that we're not part of. We don't like that. Not one bit.



Introduction

Anyone born before 1960 grew up in an analog age. Televisions were big bulky affairs, and the first remote controls ca-chunked each time you changed the channel (and they had only four buttons). We woke up and went to sleep seeing a test pattern. Cameras (the good ones) were solid, heavy devices, and movie cameras whirled along with a comfortable mechanical hum. Typewriters clacked in a danceable rhythm.

Then life turned digital without our permission, sometimes even without our noticing until after it happened. Many comfortable mechanical sounds went away, replaced with electronic buzzing, beeping, and twittering. Everything got more complex: The button count on my remote control went from four to a gazillion! Everything got smaller — some of those little cameras look so small and cheesy that I'm shocked they can take good pictures, but they do. (They take great ones.) Even, it seems, type on a page has shrunk, which is why my publisher has graciously set this book in a type that's easy on the eyes so you can read something on the page and then glance at your computer without having to pick your glasses off the top of your head.

If you count yourself among those business-savvy, experienced, gray-ing folks who still feel some trepidation on the Internet — especially when selling on eBay — you've come to the right place.

Why eBay?

Excitement for shopping and selling on eBay has spread to so many corners of the world. The site has become part of our culture. It's a safe place to buy and sell, unlike some of those online classified sites with no built-in security. eBay users (such as you and I) total close to 200 million — that's quite a community. It's a community of buyers who don't have the time to find discounts locally — and of shrewd sellers who find used and wholesale items to sell online and supplement their income — or even make a full-time living. This makes eBay the one-and-only international marketplace that combines this kind of access, consistency, and safety; the best part is that eBay is available to anyone who wants to take the time to figure out how it works.

In this book, you get the goods on how to make money on eBay, whether you're new to the Internet or already Web-savvy. 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 looking to save money buying items you need, I show you how to find the bargains, how to make smart bids, and how to win the auctions.



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 run sales and make purchases; I'm here to help with the *smart* part by sharing tips I've learned over my past 12 years on eBay.

I'm writing this book so you can add eBay savvy to your list of successes. Read this book closely — it gives you everything you need to know to get your business done without getting outsmarted by the kids. (And don't tell them you read it. Make 'em think you've always been just too cool!) And remember...

- ➡ eBay is a constantly evolving Web site. It isn't too hard to master, but it's just like any tool — when you know the ins and outs, you're ahead of the game. You can get the deals when you shop, and you can 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 trading community.
- ➡ A Web site as complex as eBay has many nooks and crannies that may confuse users. Think of this book as a roadmap that can help you find your way on eBay, getting just as much or as little as you want from it. Unlike an actual road map, however, you won't have to fold it back to its original shape (whew). Just close the book and come back any time you need a question answered.

I have five other eBay books available for you, and this is the one to start with. This book gives you the solid foundation you need to go on to my other, more advanced books on eBay selling.

About This Book

Remember those open-book tests that teachers sprang on you in high school? Well, sometimes you may feel like eBay is pop-quizzing you while you're online. Think of *eBay For Seniors For Dummies* as your open-book-test cheat sheet with the answers. You don't have to memorize anything; just keep this book handy and follow along as you need to.

With all this 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 to do business on eBay and PayPal.
- ➡ Bid on and *win* eBay auctions.
- ➡ Choose an item to sell, pick the right time for your listing, market it so that a bunch of bidders see it, and make a nice profit.
- ➡ Communicate well and close deals without problems, whether you're a buyer or a seller.
- ➡ 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!



If you see a blur where a name should be in a figure, don't reach for your glasses. To shield the privacy of eBay users, screen images (commonly called *screen shots*) that I've used in this book blur user IDs to protect the innocent (or not-so . . .).

Foolish Assumptions

I'm thinking that you've picked up this book because you've heard that people are making huge money selling on eBay, and you want to find out how to cash in. Or perhaps you heard about the bargains you can find. 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 (I'm famous for my foolish assumptions — you too?):

- ➡ You have access to a computer and the Internet so that you can do business on eBay.
- ➡ You have an interest in selling or buying stuff, and you want to find out more about doing that online.
- ➡ You want tips to help save money when you bid or buy, and to make money when you sell. (You too? I can relate. We have a lot in common.)
- ➡ You're concerned about maintaining your privacy and staying away from scammers.

How This Book Is Organized

This book has four parts. The chapters stand on their own, meaning you can read what you need — say, skim Chapter 5 after you read Chapter 10 or skip Chapter 3 altogether. Whatever works. It's all up to you.

If you've already dipped your toe into the eBay pool, you can fly ahead to get good tips on advanced strategies to enhance your sales. Don't wait for permission from me — feel free to go for it.

Part I: Joining the Crowd on eBay

In Part I, I tell you what eBay is and set you up to use it. I take you through the registration process on both eBay and PayPal, guide your way through the many links and pages of the eBay Web site, and help you organize your eBay transactions and interactions using the My eBay page.

Part II: Shopping at the eBay Marketplace

If you're ready to start shopping, check out Part II, which gives you the lowdown on searching for exactly what you want, buying, and winning auctions.

That old cliché, "Let the buyer beware," (*caveat emptor* for the literati among you) *became* a cliché because even today (er, especially today?) it's sound advice. Use my tips to help you decide when to buy or bid — and when to take a pass on an offered item.

Part III: Making Your Mark on eBay

Becoming a buyer or seller on eBay makes you part of an online community. In this part, I tip you off to the interesting parts of the site, as well as some of the rules. You've no doubt heard about feedback; it's the core of the eBay community. I show you how to boost your own. As in life, so on eBay: Your reputation is everything.

Part IV: Taking the Plunge: Running a Sale

In Part IV, it's time to take off the gloves and find your first item for sale. I show you how to get the goods out of your house and put cash in your pocket. I take you through all the different forms of sales on eBay and show you how to take the best advantage of each and every one.

I also show you how to make your item photography and shipping (two of the tasks that sellers rue the most) a simple, quick part of your selling day.

Get Going, Already!

Like everything else in the world, eBay changes. (Wow, isn't that annoying?) eBay tries to improve things — such as the look of the site and its ease-of-use — on a regular basis. My job is to arm you with a feel for the soul of eBay so you won't be thrown by any minor course corrections on eBay's part. If you hit rough waters, just look up the problem in the index in this book. I either help you solve it or let you know where to go on eBay for some expert advice.

Most of all, don't get frustrated! Keep reviewing topics so you feel fully comfortable to take the plunge on eBay. After all, I've heard that Albert Einstein once said something about never committing to memory what you can look up in a book (though I forget when he said that . . .). Now you've got the book.

Feedback, Please

I'd love to hear from you: your successes and your comments. Contact me at talk2marsha@coolebaytools.com. I can't answer each and every question you send. But do know that I promise to read each e-mail and answer when I can.

Check out my Web site at www.coolebaytools.com. And follow me on Twitter.com for my seller tips and comments; <http://twitter.com/marshacollier>.

You can also call in and speak to me live on my radio show. Every Saturday from noon to 2:00 p.m. Pacific Time, I co-host the *Computer and Technology Show* with Marc Cohen. Call 877-474-3302 if we can ever help you with your computer problems. The show is live on KTRB 860 AM in San Francisco, live online at www.computerandtechnolgyradio.com, and archived on iTunes.

Part I

Joining the Crowd on eBay

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Guess who found a Kiss merchandise blowout
on eBay while you were gone?"

Getting Comfy with the Spirit of eBay

The online world is spawning all kinds of businesses (known as *e-commerce* to the technorati), and eBay is the superstar. You've probably got the drift about eBay by now. Since its beginnings in Pierre Omidyar's kitchen, eBay has become a household word. Even if you're not into pop culture, you still find mentions of eBay all over the place. Pierre and his buddy, Jeff Skoll, had a pretty great idea back in 1995; they created a safe and fun place for folks to shop from the comfort of their homes.

Originally, the site grew — person by person — across the country (and soon around the world) as people peddled their own stuff from their homes and collections. Now, eBay is also a marketplace for new merchandise. People figured out a way to buy at wholesale and resell merchandise online for a profit. Nowadays you can purchase new and useful items, such as alarm systems, fancy electronic toothbrushes, batteries, clothing, cars, homes — just about anything you can think of.

Chapter 1

Get ready to...

- ➡ Check Out What Happens on eBay 12
- ➡ Know eBay's Role in the Action 16
- ➡ Understanding the Auction Process 17
- ➡ Know How a Reserve Price Works 19
- ➡ Discover Listings That Not Everyone Sees 20
- ➡ Bypass Bidding with Buy It Now 21

Take a look around your house. Vintage designer dresses? Elegant antique shaving set? Great-looking clock! Not to mention all the other way 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 Mac 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 clue you in to what eBay is and how it works. Not only can you buy and sell stuff in the privacy of your home, but you can also meet people who share your interests. The people who use the eBay site are a friendly bunch, and soon you'll be buying, selling, swapping stories, and trading advice with the best of them. It's like Cousin Joyce's giant online potluck party — but instead of bringing a dish, you sell it!

Check Out What Happens on eBay

1. Start with this important fact: eBay *doesn't* sell a thing. Instead, the site does what all good hosts do: It creates a comfy environment that brings together people with common interests. eBay puts buyers and sellers in an online store and lets them transact business safely within its established rules.



Think of eBay as the buddy who set you up on your last blind date — except the results may be a lot better. Your matchmaking friend doesn't perform a marriage ceremony but does get you in the same room with your potential soul mate.

2. Join eBay's online marketplace; all you need to do is fill out a few forms online and click. You can become a member with no big fees, silly hats, or secret handshakes. After you register, you can buy and sell anything that falls within the eBay rules and regulations. (Chapter 2 guides you through the registration process.)

3. Understand that the eBay home page is where the general public first visits eBay. The visitors conduct searches, find out what's happening, and begin to browse the site. Because you're *not* the GP, I show you my favorite place to start the day on eBay: the My eBay page, shown in **Figure 1-1**. From the My eBay page that you create, you can keep track of every item you have up for sale or have a bid on.

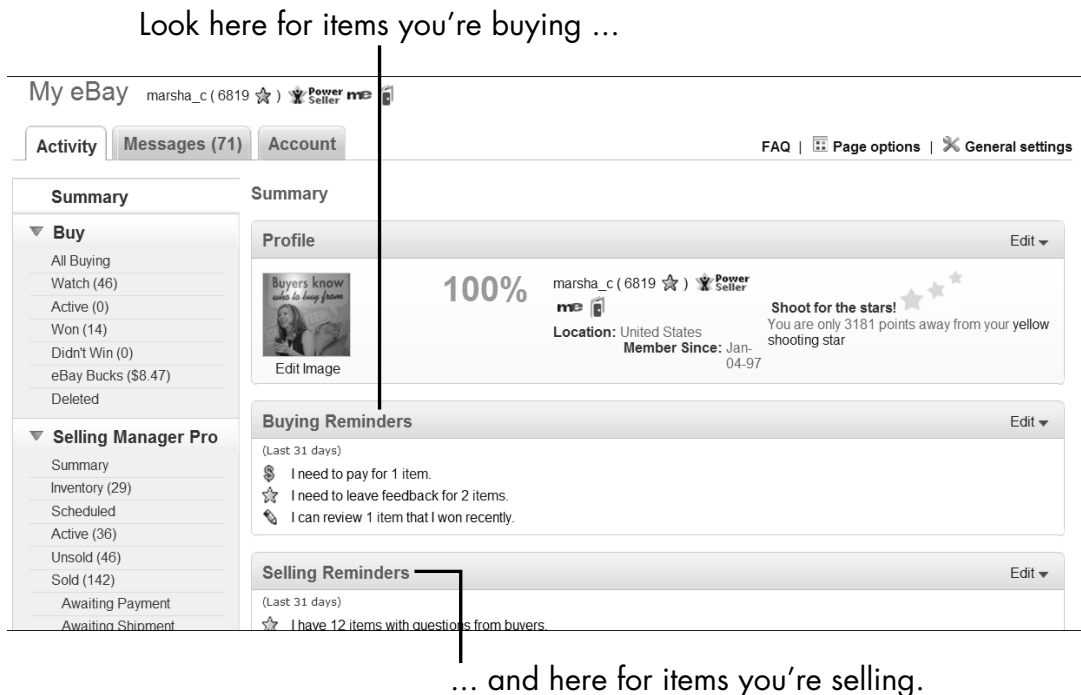


Figure 1-1



You can read more about the eBay home page and find out more about My eBay in Chapter 3.

4. Embrace item listings; you see lots of those on eBay (and one example in **Figure 1-2**). If you're looking to become a seller, creating an item listing page on eBay is as simple as filling out a form. (Maybe not *so* simple, but that's why you bought this book. Chapters 12 and 13 run you through the entire process.) Merely type the name of

your item and a short description, add a crisp digital picture, set your price, and voilà — it's money time. Keep in mind these characteristics of selling an item:

- **eBay charges a small fee** (sometimes it's even free during promotions) for the privilege of putting your item on the site. When you list your item, millions of people (eBay has over 100 million registered users) from all over the world can check out your goods and buy or place bids if you've listed an auction.
 - **Other eBay members must bid on your item** for you to make money on an auction listing. With a little luck, a bidding war may break out and drive the bids up high enough for you to turn a nice profit. After the auction, you deal directly with the buyer, who sends you the payment either through a PayPal or with a credit card through a payment service. Then you ship the item. Abracadabra — you just turned your item (everyday clutter, no doubt) into cold, hard cash.
 - **You can run as many listings as you want**, all at the same time. To get info on deciding what to sell, leaf through Chapter 11, and to find out how to set up a listing, jump to Chapter 13.
- 5.** Discover the process for finding what you want on eBay. If you're a collector or you just like to shop for bargains on everyday goods, you can browse 24 hours a day through the items up for auction in eBay's tens of thousands of categories, which range from Antiques to Writing Instruments (see **Figure 1-3**). Use eBay's search feature — available from any eBay page — to find the item you want. Then do a little research on what you're buying and who's selling it, place your bid, and keep an eye on it until the auction closes.

Chapter 1: Getting Comfy with the Spirit of eBay

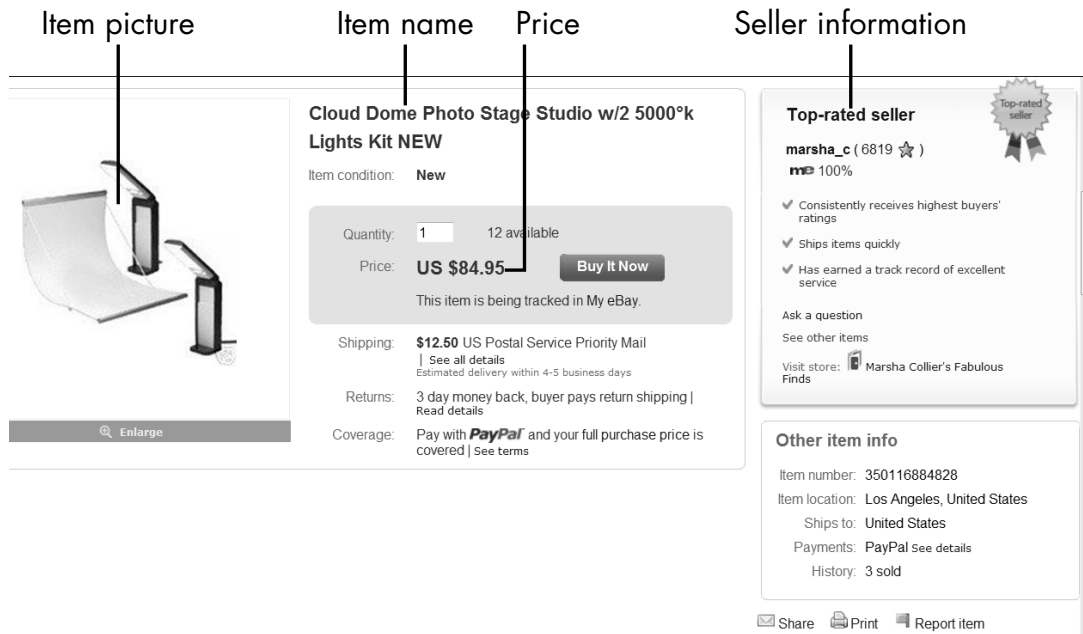


Figure 1-2

Click any More button for more categories.

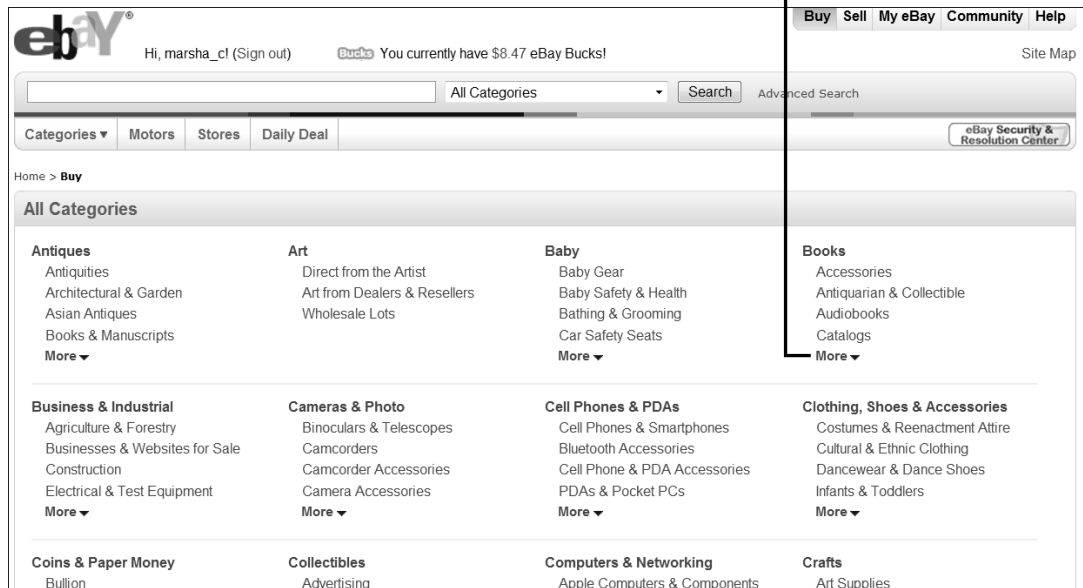


Figure 1-3



When I wrote *Santa Shops on eBay* (Wiley), I had a great time visiting the different categories and buying a little something here and there — it's amazing just how varied the selection is. I even bought some parts for my pool cleaner!



Take a look at Chapter 4 for the easy way to find items to buy. When you see an item you like, you can set up a bidding strategy and let the games begin. Chapter 6 gives you bidding strategies that can make you the winner.

Know eBay's Role in the Action

1. Recognize eBay as your online auctioneer. Throughout the auction process, eBay's computers keep tabs on what's going on. When the auction or sale is over, eBay takes a percentage of the final selling price and enables the buyer to check out and pay for the item. At this point, eBay's job is pretty much over, and eBay steps aside.
2. Use eBay's expertise to find solutions. Most of the time, everything works great, everybody's happy, and eBay never has to step back into the picture. But if you happen to run into trouble in paradise, eBay can help you settle the problem, whether you're the buyer or the seller.
3. Get familiar with eBay's feedback system. eBay regulates members with a detailed system of checks and balances known as member-to-member *feedback*, which I describe in Chapter 5. The grand plan is that the community polices itself under eBay's guidance, as follows:
 - eBay jumps in when shady activity comes to light. But those who keep eBay most safe are the community members, the buyers and sellers who have a common stake in conducting business honestly and fairly.

- Every time you sell something or buy an item, eBay members have a chance to leave a comment about you. You should do the same for them. If they're happy, the feedback is positive; otherwise, the feedback is negative. Either way, your feedback sticks to you like glue. As a preview, posted feedback looks like **Figure 1-4**.

All positive feedback!

7,650 Feedback received (viewing 1-25)		Revised Feedback: 0	
Feedback	From / Price	Date / Time	
Cool product. A+++ Museum Putty QUAKE HOLD Wax Quakehold Earthquake LARGE (#360171729835)	Buyer: (403 ☆) US \$7.75	Aug-19-09 09:20 View Item	
Just beautiful. Fast shipping. Pleasure to do business with. --	Buyer: (195 ☆) --	Aug-16-09 16:51 Private	
Just beautiful! Fast and great shipping. Pleasure to do business with. MINT Vintag Barbie Repro SILKEN FLAME 977 RED FLARE 939 (#360172612674)	Buyer: (195 ☆) US \$24.99	Aug-16-09 16:39 View Item	
Thank you Museum Putty QUAKE HOLD Wax Quakehold Earthquake LARGE (#360171729835)	Buyer: (227 ☆) US \$7.75	Aug-13-09 19:01 View Item	
Arrived well packed & quickly - autographed to ME!! WOW! D :) NEW 2009 eBay For Dummies 6 MARSHA COLLIER Signed Book (#350236161863)	Buyer: (82 ☆) US \$24.99	Aug-13-09 11:17 View Item	
Great selling experience, great product!!! Museum Putty QUAKE HOLD Wax Quakehold Earthquake LARGE (#360171729835)	Buyer: (100 ☆) US \$7.75	Aug-13-09 09:33 View Item	
I am crazy for this stuff! Everything is finally straight and secure. Museum Putty QUAKE HOLD Wax Quakehold Earthquake LARGE (#360171729835)	Buyer: (395 ☆) US \$7.75	Aug-13-09 07:11 View Item	
This stuff can do anything. All pictures in house are now straight!!!!	Buyer: (395 ☆)	Aug-13-09 07:09	

Figure 1-4



Building a great reputation with positive feedback ensures a long and profitable eBay career. Negative feedback, like multiple convictions, is a real turnoff to buyers and can make it hard to do future business on eBay.

Understand the Auction Process

1. eBay offers several kinds of auctions, but for the most part, they all work the same way. An *auction* is a unique sales event where the exact value of the item for sale is

Part I: Joining the Crowd on eBay

not known (it's determined by how much someone is willing to spend), as shown in **Figure 1-5**. As a result, an element of surprise is involved — not only for the bidder (who may end up with a great deal) but also for the seller (who may end up making a killing).

There's still time to beat this bid.

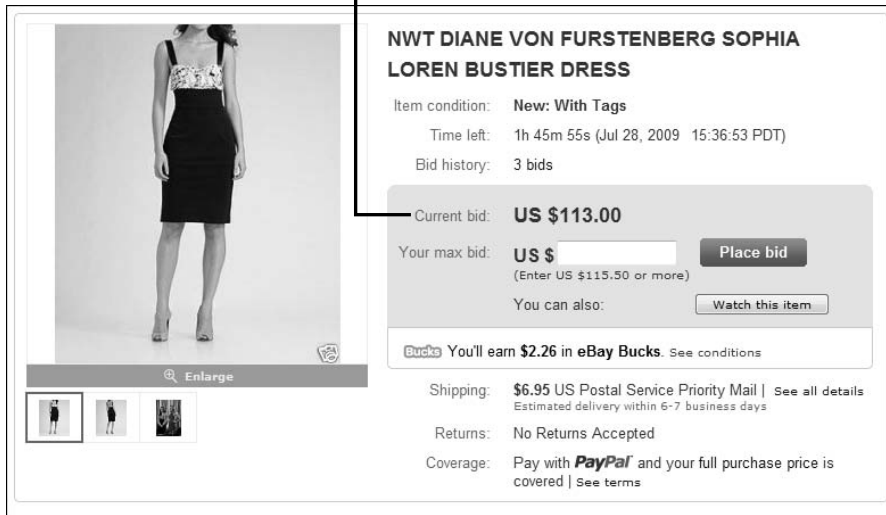


Figure 1-5

2. See how an auction works from both the seller's and bidder's perspective:
 - **Seller:** A seller pays a fee, fills out a form, and sets 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 safety net that protects them from losing money on the deal.
 - **Bidder:** Bidders duke it out over a period of time (the minimum is one day, but most auctions last a week or even longer) until one comes out victorious.