

GUIDE TO BUYING & SELLING MUSIC

using eBay and the Internet

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO BUYING AND SELLING CD'S AND RECORDS ONLINE



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Introduction

First off, I would like to thank you for deciding to purchase this eBook; I hope you will be able to take a lot from it. In this book I will try to guide you along a path that will ultimately give you the knowledge and motivation to start your own online music sales business. I like to begin with basics, so I will assume that you have no prior experience of selling on eBay. However, I am sure even the most experienced sellers will be able to apply some methods explained in this book to grow their own eBay business.

Starting an eBay business is not as difficult or as complicated as many people think, the biggest problem is often knowing where to start and having the motivation to stick with it. Hopefully, after reading this eBook your head will be bursting with ideas and you will have the correct methods to put them into practice.

One thing you should know before we get started is that success does not come overnight. It can take months, and even years of hard work and focus to “make it” selling online. However, it is far easier to profit from an online store than a physical shop since you eliminate many expenses like rent, and additional lighting and electricity bills.

One reason many sellers fail is because they simply don't allow time for their business to develop. It is easy to get frustrated when you don't see results in the first few weeks. People tend to get stuck in the cycle of running with an idea for a few weeks then lose interest and move onto something else, then the whole process starts all over again. The only way you will begin to succeed on eBay and the Internet is to take the knowledge you've acquired, and begin to apply it. Of course, we all make mistakes along the way, however what really matters is how you learn from them. I've made both good and bad decisions over the years however I've always gained answers and experience in every situation. I hope this eBook will answer a lot of your questions and minimise the learning process for you. So, let's get up and running!

Getting Started

When starting a new venture, I believe in starting completely fresh. So our first step will be to set-up a new eBay account. eBay's feedback system is a big part of developing your business so it's imperative you keep your buying account separate from your selling account. Would you buy from a seller with negative feedback? Probably not.

Another reason why opening a new account is so beneficial is that you get to choose a brand new name. Most commonly users opt to use their own name with a combination of numbers or obscure characters for their usernames, which is fine for buyers but not very practical for sellers. Try to avoid any names that could make you appear to be an amateur. You'd be surprised how many sellers have "goofball" or "jackass" type phrases in their names! It can make potential customers nervous and prevent sales, a good catchy username WILL generate more sales! So, be creative and try to come up with a short catchy name that'll be easy for your customers to remember. With that said, either browse over to eBay or click below and select Register located at the top of the page to get started.

US and other non-UK residents

<http://www.ebay.com>

UK residents

<http://www.ebay.co.uk>

Follow the online instructions and you should have a new eBay account set-up within minutes. Now you're up and running it's time to do some research on eBay.

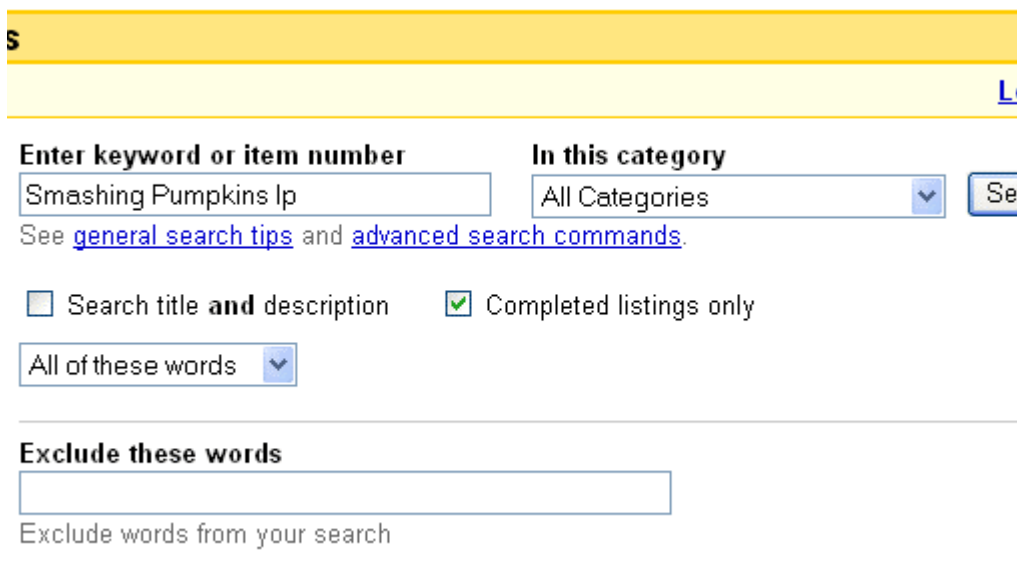
What To Sell

The first obstacle you will encounter to is figuring out what to sell, and knowing where to get it. A lot of this process generally comes from experience and also quite a lot of trial and error. Of course, there are no set items that will always perform well, and one's that don't; so the next section will all be about doing your research.

If you have a collection of records or CD's that you want to sell, this is a great place to start, as it's a product you will have a little background knowledge on. Firstly, create a list of any records and CD's you are looking to sell; don't have a collection? No problem, grab a pen or use a spreadsheet and make a list of bands and artists that you listen to. It's best to stick with what you know to begin with and branch out over time when you become more experienced. Now you've compiled a list it's time to do some research.

eBay has an excellent feature that allows you to search past listings. This is great tool that allows you to see what items have sold, and how much they sold for.

Let's try this out with an actual band and see what results are returned. To search past auctions click on the "Advanced Search" link located at the top right of the screen. You will be presented with the following screen:







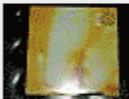


The screenshot shows the eBay Advanced Search page. At the top, there is a yellow header bar with a search icon on the left and a 'Log In' link on the right. Below the header, the search form is divided into two main sections: 'Enter keyword or item number' and 'In this category'. The keyword field contains 'Smashing Pumpkins lp' and the category dropdown is set to 'All Categories'. A 'Search' button is visible to the right of the category dropdown. Below these fields, there are two checkboxes: 'Search title and description' (unchecked) and 'Completed listings only' (checked). A dropdown menu is set to 'All of these words'. At the bottom, there is an 'Exclude these words' section with an empty text input field and the instruction 'Exclude words from your search'.

This is where we begin to search for items that you could potential sell. For this example I've chosen to search for the band Smashing Pumpkins. Below the keyword search field you will see "Exclude The Words", although I have opted against using this function on this particular search, this is great tool to filter out unwanted items.

For example, if we did a general search for Smashing Pumpkins we'd return pages and pages of unwanted results like Smashing Pumpkins tickets, t-shirts and posters. By excluding these words from our search we would filter out the "rubbish" but still return auctions with the following in the titles - LP, CD, Vinyl, EP, Single, Limited Edition, Rare etc.

As we are hoping to form an idea of what items sell, and at what price there is no need to search listings which are currently running, so be sure to tick the "Completed Listings Only" box. When you are happy with your search criteria the "Search" button located to the right.

Our search results:

	Smashing Pumpkins Mellon Collie Infinite Sadness 3 LP	5	US \$255.00	US \$24.25
	Smashing Pumpkins Adore Vinyl LP New & Sealed		Buy It Now US \$16.99	See descri
	Smashing Pumpkins LP-Picture Machina		Buy It Now EUR 20.00	EUR 10.00
	Smashing Pumpkins Siamese Dream New Double Vinyl LP		Buy It Now US \$12.99	See descri
	Smashing Pumpkins Ava Adore Vinyl EP LP -RARE/NUMBERED	0	US \$49.99	US \$14.00
	Smashing Pumpkins Pisces Iscariot LP Vinyl GOLD - RARE	2	US \$102.50	US \$15.00
	SMASHING PUMPKINS Siamese Dream 2-LP COLORED VINYL NM!	1	US \$24.99	See descri
	Smashing Pumpkins PINK Vinyl Double LP - Siamese Dream	5	£68.60	See descri
	Smashing Pumpkins-Gish(KOREA LP,SHEET)	1	US \$24.99	See descri
	Smashing Pumpkins Siamese Dream Dbl LP NEW Vinyl		Buy It Now US \$12.95	See descri

Above are the results from our "Smashing Pumpkins LP" search. I cannot stress enough the importance of this page is in terms of research. Not only can you view sold items, but also auctions that ended with no bids.

By following both sold and unsold items, overtime you will begin to see which items consistently sell and which items will on average, not return a profit. For more in depth research you can click the item link and view the finished auction. This will allow you to see how many users viewed the item and also allows you to view the auctions "sales page" - this will come in extremely handy later when we create our own listings!

Research is a vital part of getting to know the business and will eliminate a large part of the trial and error process when selling. It's important you keep track of your searches to build a log of items that could potentially sell. To do this I use a simple spreadsheet program like as Microsoft Excel. I tend to include the final selling fee, number of bids and how many views the auction generate (if shown, not all listings will display this).

Try searches of your own, remember there are many terms for records and they can vary from seller to seller. So be sure to perform separate searches for LP, vinyl, 12" etc.

If you reach a point where you are struggling to find items that sell, take a look at a few music retailers websites. A great site for this in particular is <http://www.eil.com>

EIL.com is one of the world's biggest online record shops for rare and collectable CDs and vinyl. They have an enormous catalogue of over 250,000 individual items. The idea is to not actually buy your stock from here, but to get an idea of which items you could potential sell, and to also expand your knowledge on the different products that are available.

What products are your competitors selling?

This is where we will incorporate a little "spying" into our research process. The previous section dealt with searching for individual items however another great method for finding items you can potentially sell is to search under eBay Stores.

To browse through the Shop Directory log in to eBay and click on the eBay Shops link. As we're interested in music records we'll scroll down the page and click on the link that says "Music", on the left hand side. You should now be presented with a few choices of category such as, Records, Cassettes, CDs, etc. Click on the Records link.

You are now presented with 100's of eBay Shops that specialise in music records. You can either scroll through these stores looking for a shop sells the genre of music your are interested in, or to dive further into the results you can select what type of record you are interested in, and also the particular genre. To do this we'll use the Shop Directory feature again on the left side of the page. Let's say I want to see what sort of Rock Albums I could potentially sell. I'd select Albums/LPs followed by Rock. The results are shown below:

<input type="text"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Shop name <input type="radio"/> Shops with matching items <input type="text" value="Search Shops"/>	<p>The Red Shop 993 items in Rock New CD's and Vinyl</p> <p>COPTIC TIMES MUSIC 877 items in Rock Dealing in quality vinyl & cd's in the punk,funk,folk,psych,soul,progg kinda thing.all sorts of music from all sorts of places.Music for these Coptic Times.Coptic Times operates out of Belfast,U.K.New...</p> <p>slooshycom 687 items in Rock A collectors on-line store, where things ARE what they used to be... FROM Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th April, FOR ONE WEEK ONLY EVERYTHING ON HERE IS 99p OR LESS!</p> <p>eil esprit 650 items in Rock For 20 years the world leader in rare CDs, vinyl and music memorabilia.</p> <p>hotlove097records 514 items in Rock Welcome to my eBay Shop. I sell . Please add me to your list of favourite sellers and come again.</p> <p>VINYAHOLICS BARGAIN DELIGHTS 480 items in Rock</p> <p>PECALRECORDS 406 items in Rock WE SEARCH HIGH AND LOW IN THE MURKY DENIZENS AND THE GALLERIED AUCTION HOUSES TO BRING TO YOU AN ECLECTIC VARIETY OF MUSICAL SOUNDS</p> <p>foggynotionrarerecords 391 items in Rock Foggy Notion are well established mail-order rare and collectable vinyl record retailers who have been selling to the UK and the rest of the world for more than 15 years. We sell 45s, EPs and LPs from...</p> <p>ENDLESS MUSIC 333 items in Rock WE BUY/SELL VINYL FROM 50's TO NOW: ROCK/POP/SOUL/DANCE/INDIE/METAL/PUNK/NEW WAVE/ETC. HUGE STOCK OF 45s/12"/LP's + IMPORTS/PROMO MATERIAL. ALSO MUSIC/TV & FILM MEMORABILIA: POSTERS/MODELS/AUTOGRAPH...</p> <p>Vinyl Stamps Collectables 318 items in Rock Welcome to my eBay Shop. I sell Vinyl LP records, stamps/philately, comics, maps and collectables. Please add me to your list of favourite sellers and come again.</p> <p>vinyl4you 316 items in Rock Please add me to your list of favourite sellers and come again. I offer some of the best vinyl at the craziest prices.</p> <p>Retrobloke Shop 298 items in Rock We're been selling Records and CDs in our London 'Best World' Shop for over 15 Years and are one of the biggest UK Sellers of</p>
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There are literally hundreds of stores available for me to browse though and gather a list of top selling items. As always, try your own searches with your own search criteria specific to your interests and see what you can find.

Customer Requests

How can you ensure an item you buy will sell? Why not let customers email you with requests or their "wanted" lists. This could be included in your auction sales pages. Just a simple sentence along the lines of:

Can't find the item you're after?

Email us at "youremail@emailaddress.com" your wish list

This way, if you locate the item you know there is already someone willing to buy it. This could also be included after you have made a sale - thank them for purchasing from you and ask if they are interested in any other items you could perhaps find for them.

Buying Records

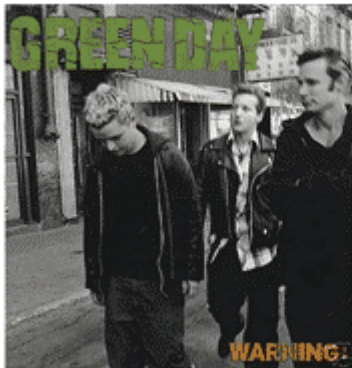
Now you've begun to build a list of potential top selling items its time to start scouting for those records and other similar items. Records and CD's can be found in many places, both online and also away from the Internet. This section will cover the places where you're likely to have the most success.

eBay

Believe it or not but eBay is one of the best places to buy your records and CDs! Can you really make money buying and selling using the same site? You sure can!

If you were to pick any product on the market and browse through eBay you would see multiple sellers offering the same item, right? So who gets the sale? Well you can more often than not spot a simple trend running through the auctions. The items that sell generally have a well-constructed and clear sales page. Compare the two listings below for the same item, which seller do you think would get the sale?

Example One



Green Day WARNING **BRAND NEW GREEN VINYL LP**

Here we have the 2006 "Warning" release from Green Day on Adeline Records. Both the vinyl and sleeve are in mint condition.

The vinyl is BRAND NEW and UNPLAYED

Track Listing:

1. Warning
2. Blood, Sex & Booze
3. Church On Sunday
4. Fashion Victim
5. Castaway
6. Misery
7. Deadbeat Holiday
8. Hold On
9. Jackass
10. Waiting
11. Minority
12. Macy's Day Parade

[Click on the link below to view our other items!](#)

- Description includes all necessary information
- Main selling points highlighted (Brand new & un-played)
- Condition Stated
- Track Listing
- Clear photographs
- Link to other items they are selling
- Clear Layout

Example Two



- Very little information
- No track listing
- No photograph of record
- No order to the listing

As you can see, the sale of the same item can produce two entirely different sales pages. A lot of shoppers would simply dismiss the 2nd auction, it looks very unprofessional and heightens the buyers concerns when purchasing, which is something we do not want to do. It is our mission to put the shopper at ease, and to make them feel comfortable and confident when dealing with us.

Although the two auction sale pages are nothing alike, both are of equal importance to us. The first auction is the look we will be aiming for when we list our items later in the book. The second auction is a perfect example of what to look for when buying an item to resell on eBay. It is likely that the second auction will receive far fewer bids than the first auction, therefore ending for a much lesser amount. Perform your own searches, and try to find auctions with both professional and poorly designed sales pages and see if you spot any recurring trends. I've tried and tested formula many times and it is astounding the difference a good sales page make can make.

- **Misspellings**

This is a small section explaining how you can find certain items on eBay for unbelievably low prices and resell them for a great profit. How can this be? As the section title states, this is all about misspellings.

Each time you list an on eBay you are required to choose a title, most shoppers search for items using eBay's keyword search field, which means if they enter a word that features in your title then your auction will appear. What this basically comes down to is if sellers spell words incorrectly, the auction may not get as many views. It's just a case of sifting through eBay looking for these misspellings to resell.

This really is only just scratching the surface of "misspellings" so be sure to check out my friend's page at the link below. The site offers fully automated software/books that seek out these misspellings and

notify you instantly. Of course you could manually search eBay for misspellings and could return some results however this is long process that could take hours each day. Take a look at some proven examples of misspellings and how you can benefit from them. Remember, this doesn't just apply to music memorabilia; thousands of items each day are listed with misspellings!

<http://www.misspellingsmakemoney.com>

- **Buying Overseas**

eBay now operates in many countries, so why not take advantage and choose to search "Worldwide" when browsing for listings. Many shoppers choose to stay local and only buy within their own country.

This means they are often missing out on bargains that can be found overseas. This however, is great news for us. I often find fantastic bargains when searching for items in Europe, especially Germany and France. Even though the majority do accept secure payment through Paypal it seems that many buyers are still somewhat sceptical about buying abroad.

You will find a lot of European listings will often attempt to list in English, however their use of the English language maybe somewhat broken or limited. Again, this can lose the confidence of a potential buyer. I've bought many items from various none English-speaking countries and have never yet had any problems. Use this lack of confidence of other buyers to find bargains, when you re-list the item in your own country you'll find a lot more interest will be generated.

Record Fairs

Record Fairs are taking place all the time and if you don't know about them you could be missing out on some real rarities. With the majority of sellers at record fairs also being collectors they do know how to price, however you'll find you can usually barter and get reductions for any multiple purchases you make.

Always make sure you inspect any vinyl's closely at record fairs. Check for major faults such as cracks, scratches and chips but also be sure to check if the record is warped. You will see many buyers remove the record from its sleeve and only inspect the surface. However, you should always hold the vinyl horizontally (so you are looking at the edge, across the flat surface of the record) and check for bends and warps that could affect the playback. These warps that can be found are most probably due to improper storage. See the "Caring For Your Records And CDs" section on page 13

Finding local record fairs has never been easier with most fairs now advertising online. Perform a simple search in your main search engine such as Yahoo or Google and you should find a few taking place in the coming

weeks. Independent record stores and music shops often have flyers pinned up or around the counter, so keep your eyes out for those also.

GEMM (Global Electronic Music Marketplace)

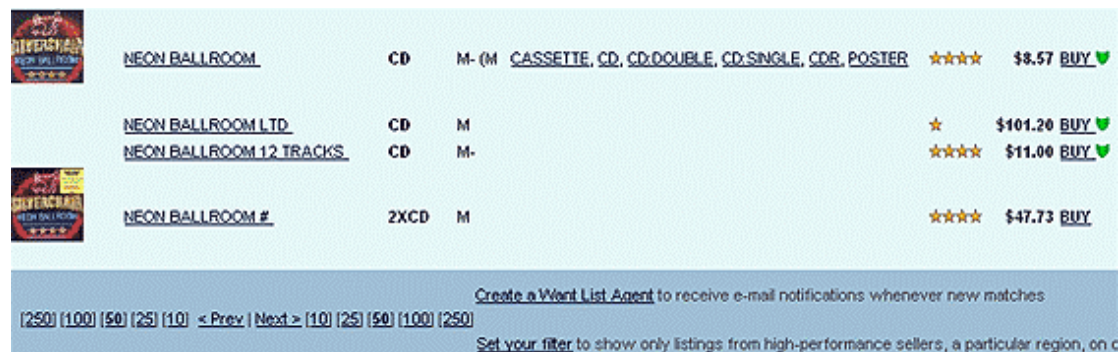
Although not an auction site, www.gemm.com is similar to eBay in that it is not an actual store itself, but a collection of independent sellers. Sellers sign up to Gemm, upload their items and basically use Gemm as a sort of marketplace, just like the sellers on eBay.

With over 26 million items in the Gemm catalogue there's every chance you'll find what you're looking for, and in the words of Rolling Stone Magazine –


“If you can't find it here, fuhgeddaboutit!”

Gemm really couldn't be any easier to use and has some great features that we can take advantage of. To perform a basic search, locate the search field at the top left of the screen and select your search criteria, for example “Artist Or Title”. Keep in mind that you will see multiple copies of many items listed (as with eBay, these are they are from individual sellers, so browse for the lowest price).

Below I've performed a simple search for all items by the band Silverchair.



The screenshot shows search results for Silverchair on the Gemm website. It features a table of items with columns for cover art, title, format, condition, alternative formats, seller rating, and price. Below the table is a pagination bar and a filter link.

	NEON BALLROOM	CD	M- (M CASSETTE , CD , CD:DOUBLE , CD:SINGLE , CDR , POSTER)	★★★★	\$8.57 BUY ♥
	NEON BALLROOM LTD.	CD	M	★	\$101.20 BUY ♥
	NEON BALLROOM 12 TRACKS	CD	M-	★★★★	\$11.00 BUY ♥
	NEON BALLROOM #	2XCD	M	★★★★	\$47.73 BUY

[Create a Want List Agent](#) to receive e-mail notifications whenever new matches

[250] [100] [50] [25] [10] < Prev | Next > [10] [25] [50] [100] [250]

[Set your filter](#) to show only listings from high-performance sellers, a particular region, on c

The display on the results page from left to right is as follows:

- Cover / Artwork (if available)
- Title
- Format
- Condition
- Alternative Formats Available
- Sellers Rating - similar to eBay's feedback. Star system formed by Customer Satisfaction, Grading Accuracy and Time To Ship.

- Price
- Option To “Buy”

Below the search results you will two links.

- Create a Want List Agent
This is a great, automated tool that allows you to add items to a “want list”. Whenever a seller adds the item to the Gemm database you instantly be emailed.
- Set Your Filter
This is where you can customise your search criteria to filter out unwanted items. Not only can you search by location, but also new or used condition, a specific price range and also seller rating.

Record Labels

Why not try to cut out the “middle-man” whenever possible and buy directly from the source. Whilst buying straight from the “big” record labels is generally out the question, unless you are an established company or looking to bulk order obscene quantities, there are however many smaller labels that have excellent online catalogues bursting with stock that can be resold on eBay.

A good way to begin this process is to gather together a few CDs and records you own and see what label they are on. Search the Internet for their respective sites and see if they have an online store or a mail order catalogue available. Over time you’ll find sites that consistently deliver profitable records of your specific genre, again it’s just a case of researching what sells.

Over the years I’ve mainly come to sell a mixture of Hardcore, Emo, Punk and Rock, and found a few great sites that I buy from. If you’re looking to sell similar items be sure to visit some of the following sites labels.

- Victory Records - www.victoryrecords.com
- Reflections Records - www.reflectionsrecords.com/records/index.php
- Hydra Head Records - www.hydrahead.com
- Goodlife Recordings - <http://www.goodliferecordings.com>
- Trust Kill Records - www.trustkill.com/welcome
- Hopeless Records - www.hopelessrecords.com
- Lookout Records - www.lookoutrecords.com

Note:

When buying overseas remember you may be subject to import taxes. Check the Customs and Import sections on your Governments websites for more information as charges can vary. A lot of independent sellers often mark the package down as "Gift" whenever possible to prevent you incurring any customs fee's. It is said that you can double the import allowance by adding another name to the package, for example. Mr A. Smith and Mrs B. Smith. However, it's best to check your Governments website for further details.

Caring for your records and CD's

When your goods arrive make sure you thoroughly check the item for any scratches and bends etc. If you sell the item on with faults it'll be you refunding the customer not the person who you bought it from.

CD's generally take very little looking after, so this section will focus on taking correct care of your vinyl records.

General advice for playing and handling your records:

- Handle records carefully along the edge to avoid fingerprints
- Do not put records on any dusty surface
- Ensure your turntable mat clean. You can use a small vacuum if you have a felt mat
- Always keep the records inner sleeves clean, using antistatic sleeves if possible

One of the best products for cleaning the actual vinyl is Discwasher by RCA. It can easily be found online in both the US and UK by browsing on one of the major search engines. The RCA Discwasher kit includes the cleaning fluid and also a brush for application.

Storing Your Records

Now you've started to get a decent amount of stock together, make sure you handle the records with care and always store them in the correct manner. If you have any highly collectable or limited edition records it might be a good idea to buy some good quality inner sleeves, like the ones found at www.bagsunlimited.com

Records should always be stored upright, not horizontally. Storing records one on top of the other will create major warps which will ruin the play of a record.

Grading Your Records

Grading the records you are selling is absolute crucial, however it can be slightly confusing. Taking the time to grade your records is worth doing, and it's worth doing it right. Always be honest with your grading, as the customer will expect to receive the item in condition you state.

In an advert, a record's grade is listed first, followed by that of the sleeve or the cover. For example, M/VG (the record is in mint condition whilst the cover is in very good condition)

Grading can be tricky; here is a quick guide as a reference:

Mint (M)

- Absolutely perfect in every way
- Never been played and possibly even still sealed

Near Mint (NM or M-)

- A nearly perfect record
- The record should show no obvious signs of wear
- Should have no more than the most minor defects, little signs of handling
- The cover / sleeve should have no creases, folds, seam splits or other noticeable similar defects
- Inserts such as lyric sheets and posters should be of the same condition

Very Good Plus (VG+)

- Record will show signs of play and otherwise handled by a previous owner who took good care of it
- May show very light scratches that don't affect the play of the record
- Sleeve and inner sleeves will have some slight wear, lightly turned up corners, or a slight seam split
- In general, if not for a couple things wrong with it, this would be near mint

Very Good (VG)

- Many of the defects found in a VG+ record will be more pronounced in a VG record
- Surface noise will be evident upon playing
- Light scratches (deep enough to feel with a fingernail) that may affect the sound
- Covers may have tape or stickers (or their residue) attached

Good (G), Good Plus (G+)

- A record in good or good plus condition can be played without skipping
- Will have significant surface noise and scratches and visible wear
- A cover or sleeve will have seam splits, especially at the bottom or on the spine

Poor (P), Fair (F)

- Record is cracked / badly warped, won't play through without skipping or repeating
- The picture sleeve is damaged, split on seams and heavily marred by wear and writing
- Cover barely keeps the LP inside it
- Inner sleeves are split, crinkled, and written upon

What To Include In Your Listing

When listing an item, honesty is always the best policy, never lie or make false promises; it will save you both time and hassle. The customer will expect to receive the item in the exact condition you specified. You've worked hard selling the item so the last thing you want is to have to refund the customers money and start over. If a customer is happy with the purchase they could well be inclined to leave you positive feedback, however, if they are dissatisfied I can guarantee that they will leave a negative without hesitation. It seems that people love to complain!

Why Should A Customer Buy From You?

The big question you need ask yourself is why should a customer buy this particular product from you? How can you separate yourself from another seller? An auction site generally prevents you from being able to offer the item cheaper than anyone else since it's up to the buyer how much they are willing to pay. So, the chance to really sell your item comes in the items description section of your listing.

Your Sales Page/ Listing

This is your chance to really sell your product to your potential customers. Keep everything clear and concise, you should only include things that will help your sale. There is no need to write paragraphs on the history of the artist or air your personal opinion. As for design, we've all seen over the top sales pages, ones designed with a thousand colours and cluttered with little animations whizzing around your screen, so keep things neat and easy to read - more on this in the following section.

eBay's "Reviews & Guides" section is an excellent place for finding little tips and hints. Many of the topics here are from actual collectors, so their advice can be extremely useful when creating listings. Be sure to take advantage of this free review section - you'll be amazed at what some sellers miss from their listings!

Taken from the eBay "Reviews And Guides" section

"...I will not bid on a record, CD, or cassette unless you list the songs that are included on that particular album...when I open your listing and see no list of songs, I immediately close your listing and continue my search for that artist."

The information is right in front of you; it literally takes minutes to copy the track listing from the reverse side of a record or CD sleeve. It may sound like an obvious thing to include to you and I, but you'd surprised how many sellers leave this information off their listings!

eBay's review section can be found here : <http://reviews.ebay.co.uk/>

So, what should you include on your listing?

- Artist and Title of item you are selling - I know, I know, a little too obvious this one!
- Track Listing
Remembering to highlight any special selling points, such as bonus, extended or live tracks that do not appear on the regular release.
- Record Label / Pressing
Make a note of which record label manufactured the record, the year of release and the country of origin. If the record is a re-issue then be sure let the customer know, they might not realise what they are bidding on. Also be sure to check the catalogue / reference number on the record and add this to your listing.
- Format
What media are you selling? LP, EP, CD Single etc.
- Condition
You may find another seller is offering the same item as you, so the condition of the records will play a great role in who gets the sale. See the Grading Your Record section for more information on pages 15-16. You may also wish to include any extra's that are included with the record such as lyrics sheet, booklet or a poster.
- Payment Options
Try to offer your customers as wide a range of payments methods as possible. The most preferred method of payment for both buyers and sellers is Paypal. Paypal is an eBay owned company that can process credit/debit card transaction on your behalf. With eBay and Paypal being so tailor made for one another it literally takes no more than a few minutes to send and receive payments. I personally have almost 1,000 accepted transactions with Paypal and I am yet to experience any problems.

When browsing items the first thing many customers look for is whether you accept Paypal. It saves the customer the hassle of posting payment in the form of a cheque and saves time waiting for the funds to clear.

To create a Paypal Sellers account click below to access the registration page.

<http://www.paypal.com>

Click on "Sign Up Today", select your location from the dropdown menu and select whether you want a Premier Account or a Business Account. On the next screen you are presented with another dropdown

menu, select the “eBay” option. The remaining sections of the signup are basically personal questions and are all fairly straightforward.

<http://www.nochex.com> is a UK based company that offer a very similar package to Paypal. Although Paypal is generally seen as the main payment source, there’s no harm in accepting both.

- Shipping Options & Charges

Always be sure to clearly state the amount of postage/shipping you will be charging your customers. State this somewhere in your description or use the shipping calculator provided by eBay.

The idea is to make everything as easy as possible for the customer as they will get infuriated if they have to email you to ask question after question.

Estimating a rough shipping fee can be a tricky process. The best way to get an accurate figure is to actually package up an item, take it down to your local Post Office and have it weighed. Make a note of the different shipping options, locations and charges. Although it is a tempting idea, and many, many sellers are guilty of this...never overcharge on shipping and postage.

We’ve all seen minimum price listings of \$0.01 to attract buyers, but on closer inspection of the postage fee’s you’ll usually find they are ridiculously inflated. If they are willing to sell the item so cheaply then they must be making their money elsewhere...and I’ll guarantee it’s on postage! You will usually find these items with high shipping fee’s never sell, so be fair and you’ll see more bidding activity on your items. In some cases you might decide to offer free shipping as an incentive to shop with you. Often you will find the bidding rockets and will easily cover the shipping fee’s you incurred.

- Terms / Conditions

If you feel the need to include any terms and conditions in your listing keep them to a minimum and display them at the bottom of the page.

Paragraphs of terms and conditions will set off alarm bells in the mind of your potential customers, and could make you appear to be difficult to deal with. You’ll often see “I am not responsible for lost or stolen goods” included in seller’s terms, DO NOT include this in yours, it will make potential customers feel uncomfortable.

- Photographs

A photograph of your product is an absolute must, and with digital cameras being so cheap these days there is no reason why you shouldn’t be able to provide one. Many shoppers simply don’t even click on listings without a photo, people like to see what they are

bidding on, not just taking your word for it. A lot of sellers upload an image of the cover, which they've downloaded from online retailers such as Amazon. Although this shows what the record is, it gives no indication as to the condition or that you even have the item in your possession.

eBay not only allows photographs in your listing, but also on the results page after a user has performed a search. This is known as a "Gallery" view, and is a great tool to get more exposure. It'll get your listing noticed before the standard auction title text.



Learn From Competing Sellers

This section brings us back to eBay's "Search Completed Auctions" feature. Again, don't bother searching listings that haven't ended yet, these are unreliable as you don't know how they will end.

With that said, click the Advanced Search link and enter some keywords that will return similar listings to your own items. Tick the "Completed Listings Only" box and select to view the results by "Price: Highest First".

Spend a while browsing through the results and see if you can spot any trends that run through the listings. By doing some research on your competitors' items you'll form a good idea of what to include on your own. If they have auctions ending successfully they must be doing something right. See how they market their items, what sort of keywords are they using in their titles etc. Do they offer special bonuses or discounts on shipping?

Right then, now you know what to include on your sales page, it's time to get creative!

Designing Your Listing

Creating a sales page can seem a daunting task however you don't need to be an artist or a master at web design to succeed. Using special web design software we're able to eliminate the task of manually writing HTML (Hypertext Markup Language, the programming language used to create web sites).

This special software is known as WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) software, and allows you to create your pages visually, meaning that, what you see on the screen is how the finished page will look. Whilst it is a good idea to understand the basics of HTML, the use of WYSIWYG software will allow us have the HTML code generated automatically.

For the majority of my own web designs, I use Microsoft's FrontPage and Adobe's Dreamweaver programs. Don't worry if you do not have access to these resources, you can get free trial versions below along with other similar programs.

Microsoft FrontPage

Trial version under "Download" Section

<http://www.microsoft.com/frontpage>

FrontPage provides the features, flexibility, and functionality to help you build better Web sites. It includes the professional design, authoring, data, and publishing tools needed to create dynamic and sophisticated Web sites.

Adobe Dreamweaver

Limited trial version under "Downloads"

<http://www.adobe.com/products/dreamweaver>

With Adobe Dreamweaver software you can quickly and easily design and develop websites from start to finish. With both visual and coding environments Dreamweaver is excellent for both designers and developers.

Coffee Cup HTML Editor

Free Trial

<http://www.coffeecup.com/html-editor>

The CoffeeCup HTML Editor is a great tool if you are looking to create your pages visually. Using the drag and drop features you can quickly create pages without knowing the HTML language. CoffeeCup comes with 25,000

graphics and photos, a DHTML Menu wizard and easy to use Table, Frame, Font, and Form Designers.

Trellian WebPage

Freeware - Full Software

<http://www.trellian.com/webpage>

Trellian WebPage allows you to create your own web pages without having to learn complex HTML scripting. Using their WYSIWYG interface, creating a great looking page is as easy as using a word-processing package.

Appearance

In this section I will explain how to create simple tables to use in your sales page on eBay. For this tutorial I will be using Microsoft Front Page. Hopefully you will have access to FrontPage as it is included in the Microsoft Office Suite, you can however, download a free trial from Microsoft.com.

Before we get started on creating a sales page, lets take a moment to think about the appearance. One thing you should always aim to do is to keep a lot of "white space" around your text. By this I mean you should make good use of bullet points, lists and paragraphs whenever possible and avoid writing lines and lines of text without a break.

Studies by online marketing companies have proven that most people like to scan pages looking for words and images that attract their attention. So bear this in mind and separate your descriptions into clear, digestible portions.

You should also pay attention to different sizes of font. Ideally you should use 11pt - 12pt for the main body of your listing. Whilst any headlines should vary from 14pt - 16pt. Have a play around and see what works best for you.

Also, be aware that not all users have the same fonts installed on their computers. If you use a fancy font you downloaded from the Internet, chances are the person reading it won't have it installed. Their Internet browser will automatically substitute a standard font in its place and could potentially ruin your layout. With that said, stick to standard fonts such as Times New Roman, Arial or even better, Verdana, which has been special created by Microsoft to make reading from a computer screen easier.

Another important factor you should take into consideration is the colour scheme you opt for. For backgrounds neutral colours tend to work well, with contrasting text such as black, dark grey or a dark blue. It astonishes me how many auctions I see with ridiculous colour schemes that make it almost impossible for people to read. Remember, we are trying to make the

customers life as easy as possible. We've thought long and hard about what to include in the listing, so spend just as much time getting the appearance right.

Front Page Tutorial

With all that said, let's see if we can put it into action! What we are aiming for here is something like:

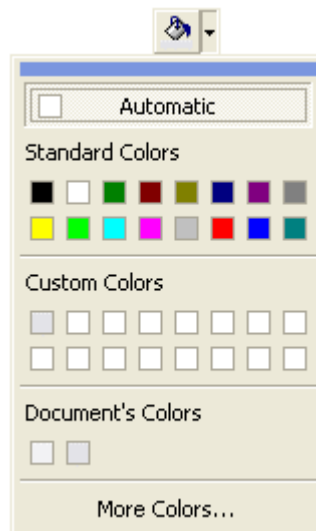
Track Listing	Description
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Get Out Of My Yard2. Hurry Up3. The Curse Of Castle Dragon4. Radiator5. Straight Through The Telephone Pole6. Marine Layer7. Twelve Twelve8. Rusty Old Boat9. The Echo Song10. Full Tank11. My Teeth Are A Drumset12. Haydn Symphony No. 88 Finale13. Three E's For Edward14. You Kids	<p>This is the first all-instrumental CD by guitarist Paul Gilbert, regarded internationally as one of the greatest players in the industry.</p> <p>The release of this record is perfectly timed with a legion of young players who are just now discovering the origins of high performance shred guitar of which Paul Gilbert is one of the true innovators.</p>
	Payment
	USA: Paypal, Check, Money Order Rest Of World: Paypal
	Shipping
	USA: \$0.00 Europe \$0.00 ROW: \$0.00

Open FrontPage, you should be presented with a blank screen, if not, select New then Page. As previously mentioned, we are trying to keep the sections of our listing separate. To do this, we will be using a series of tables embedded in one another. Tables can be a tricky feature to get to grips with but once you've mastered them, they can be used to great effect.

1. From the tabs at the top of the page select Table, then Insert and Table.
2. A new window will appear. Type the following into each field.
 - Rows: 2
 - Columns: 2
 - Alignment: Default
 - Border Size: 0
 - Cell Padding: 5
 - Cell Spacing: 1
 - Specify Width: 100%

Then click OK

3. You should see 4 empty boxes on your screen, that's the main structure of our page created.
4. Click inside the top left box, then create a new table again. This time, choose 2 rows and 1 column. Set the width to 200 pixels and OK that. Select the top window of the newly created table and type "Track Listing". Now select the bottom window of the new table and begin to type in a list of songs. Using the holding the shift and return keys to move to the next line.
5. Highlight all the text you've entered and under "Default Font", top left. Choose Verdana and font size 1. Next click inside the track listing title box and select the fill icon. Click the arrow and choose "More Colours"



A new window appears, into the "Value" field enter **Hex={E3,E3,E8}**. Now click inside the actual track-listing box and follow the same process. This time, enter **Hex={F2,F2,F4}** into the value. Congratulations, that' the first table complete!

6. Now back to the original table. Click inside the bottom left window and select new table. This time, select 5 rows, 4 columns and set the width to 500 pixels.
7. To keep the theme consistent we'll be using the same colours for this table as before. Highlight the entire top row of the table (4 boxes) and fill the boxes in the same manner as before, using the dark grey colour.

Do the same for the 5 boxes along the left edge. Highlight the remaining boxes and fill them with the light grey colour we used before.

So far you have something like this:

Track Listing				
1. First Track				
2. Second Track				
3. Third Track				
4. Fourth Track				
5. Fifth Track				
6. Sixth Track				
7. Seventh Track				
8. Eighth Track				
9. Ninth Track				

8. This newly created table will be used to display our shipping/postage information. Using the same style font and size as before, enter “Shipping Charges” into the top left box. Enter the different destinations you ship to across the top row from left to right, for example. USA, Europe, Rest Of World. The dark grey boxes down the left should be where you enter the different products you are selling. E.g. CD, 7”, 12”, Double LP. The light grey boxes are where you can enter the amount of shipping you charge. The table should now look something like this.

Shipping Rates	USA	Europe	Rest Of World
CD Single	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
7" Vinyl	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
12" Vinyl	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Double LP	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

9. Hopefully you are now beginning to understand the basics of creating a web page, and how you can alter the layout by using tables. Select “File” from the menu at the top and choose save. You can now preview the web page in your Internet browser by selecting File and Preview In Browser. The result should look something like this:

Track Listing
1. Strength Through Wounding
2. Porphyria
3. Exsanguination
4. Malleus Maleficarum
5. Narrative Of Soul Against Soul
6. Clove Smoke Catharsis
7. Lower It (vinyl only track)
8. The Prayer Position
9. No Poetic Device
10. Weathered Tome
11. The Last Kiss
12. At A Glance
13. God Called In Sick Today

Shipping Rates	USA	Europe	Rest Of World
CD Single	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
7" Vinyl	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
12" Vinyl	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Double LP	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Have a play around with your web design programs and see if you can create your own layout with separate tables for item descriptions, payment methods or whatever else you choose to include.

Now you've created a sales page for one item, why not use the same page for everything you sell? All you need do is alter the track listing and description sections and re-save the file; it's a great time saver!

Remember earlier when I said the HTML code is generated automatically? Click on the "HTML" tab at the very bottom of the screen. This is the code that will be entered into the eBay description field. Personally, what I do is save each web page I create as a notepad file so when the time comes to sell the item, all I need to do is copy and paste the HTML onto eBay.

To do this, click view HTML code in FrontPage and press the "Ctrl" and "A" keys. This will select the entire code. Now press Ctrl + C to copy the text. The final step is to open notepad and paste the text by pressing Ctrl + V. Each time you create a new description, save it in the same manner. If you ever sell the same item again you'll already have the item description saved on your computer!

Listing An Item

In this section we will cover the process of listing an item on eBay and all the options that come with this, such as choosing categories, best listing times and much more.

Listing an item for sale on eBay is quite a straight forward process so if you've done this before parts of this section may seem a little slow, however it will still be worth your while to have a quick scan through and see if you can pick up any tips. In this section I will also cover various listing upgrades eBay offer. Remember additional upgrades do cost extra, however eBay do kindly point this out next to each feature.

Let's get started and see what's available.

Firstly, sign in to eBay and select Sell from the menu at the top of the page. At the moment there are two ways to list an item on eBay. You can choose to use either the original "Sell Your Item" form or eBay's new version of the form. I personally find the new method a lot easier, so if you are presented with a choice, select "Start selling with the new version of Sell Your Item form".

Your Auction Category

The first stage of the selling process is to select a category for your auction to reside in. Although most users opt to use the "search" function of eBay when browsing for a product, choosing the correct category is of great importance when trying to generating traffic and getting shoppers to view your auction. It's a simple process that takes seconds to complete, but it can be the difference between a sale and no sale.

To begin this process, type the item you are selling into the "Search For Categories" field. Below I have entered Van Halen LP, and eBay has automatically returned a list of categories the item could fall into. Scroll up and down the page until you find the category you feel the item most belongs in. I have selected "Classic Rock" for this item, and eBay indicates 17% of other sellers also selected this category.

van halen lp

Categories	% item match
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Music > Records > Albums/ LPs > Rock > Classic	17%
<input type="checkbox"/> Music > CDs > Rock > Classic	11%
<input type="checkbox"/> Music > Records > Albums/ LPs > Metal > Heavy Metal	10%
<input type="checkbox"/> Music > Records > Albums/ LPs > Rock > Hard	9%
<input type="checkbox"/> Music > Records > Albums/ LPs > Rock > Progressive	8%
<input type="checkbox"/> Music > Music Memorabilia > Artists/ Groups > Van Halen	7%
<input type="checkbox"/> Books, Comics & Magazines > Magazines > Entertainment > Music > 1990s	6%
<input type="checkbox"/> Music > Records > Albums/ LPs > Rock > Classic	5%

Categories you have selected

- Music > Records > Albums/ LPs > Rock > Classic | [See sample listings](#) | [Remove](#)

If you are unsure which category your item belongs in, search eBay for similar products and see which category they assigned it to. The selected category should be displayed at the top of the page. Once you are happy with the category you selected choose "Save and continue"

Now we move onto the "Describe Your Item" portion of the selling process

Your Auction Title

An absolutely crucial part of the listing process is creating an appropriate auction title; it's the first chance you get to capture a potential customer. Most eBay shoppers search for items by using the keyword search field, and if they can't find your item they can't place a bid.

eBay allows you to use around 55 characters to create your auction title so use as many as you can. You will often see titles with words like "WOW" and "COOL" or a scrambled title full of obscure characters such as @ and #. No shopping will be searching for the word "wow" or "@" so it's pointless to include them in your title. Not only is it a waste of valuable space but also makes the auction appear very amateurish.

Let's say you were selling an LP by the Smashing Pumpkins entitled Siamese Dream. Which title do you think would generate more traffic?

"WOW L@@K SMASHING PUMPKINS LP ##COOL##

Smashing Pumpkins RARE ORANGE Siamese Dream VINYL LP

Hopefully you have chosen the second title. It states exactly what the item is, highlights its key selling points and is also the perfect length at around 52 characters. You'll notice that I've including both "VINYL" and "LP" into the listing, shoppers will enter different terms for records so try to cover as many as possible, if you have spare space why not include 12" or 7".

If a shopping were to search for any of the following keywords, your item would be displayed.

- Smashing Pumpkins
- Smashing Pumpkins Siamese Dream
- Smashing Pumpkins Vinyl
- Smashing Pumpkins LP
- Smashing Pumpkins Rare
- Siamese Dream Vinyl
- ...or any combinations of the above

Also, why not include the condition of the record in the description, if another seller is offering the same item but yours is listing a M/M or VG+ they will be more likely to view your listing first (see pages 15 & 32 for more on Grading)

Records and Abbreviations) Take a peek at several eBay Power Seller's to see how they manage to attract so much attention. It really is a case of listing the items major selling points and capitalising the keywords to grab attention.

- **Subtitle**

A subtitle is an additional option that allows you a little extra space for information you couldn't quite squeeze into your main title. Whilst the main title should generally offer you enough space, this may come in useful if or are selling a particularly sought after item. Here you could enter any further information that could grab the shoppers attention and lure them into viewing your auction.

Adding Photos To Your Listing

The best way to show a buyer what you are selling is to place a clear photograph into your listing. This also shows that you actually have the record in your possession and will give an indication to the condition of it. If you are unfamiliar with taking photographs, a good place to begin is eBay's "How To Add Photos" tutorial. See the link below.

http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/photo_tutorial.html

Once you have a photo ready to upload, select "Add Pictures", a new window will popup. Choose browse, and find the picture you want to upload. eBay allows you to upload 12 photos however only the first is free. For the type of items we are selling, one photo should generally be enough, unless the item is particularly rare. In which case you may want to capture the record and the sleeve on separate photographs.

eBay now offer a variety of different options when adding photographs, however in my opinion the only one worth any value is the "Gallery View". This allows your photograph to be displayed on the search results page as well as inside your listing.

Click "Upload Pictures" when you've selected all the pictures and options you want.

The next section allows you to enter any basic information about the recording, such as genre, record size and new or used condition. Although we've included this information in our own item description you may as well enter it here also.

Description

This is the section where we get to upload our web page we created earlier. By default eBay has selected the "Standard" method of entering a description, which allows you to type in Standard English. To be able to upload our sales page, we need to change this form to HTML format. Then, locate the notepad

file with your HTML code then copy and paste it into the form on eBay using the shortcuts Ctrl+C and Ctrl+V.

Selling Format

This is where we will enter the starting bidding price and the duration of the auction.

Always try to start your listings as low as you feel comfortable with. Keep in mind that eBay is an AUCTION and if you're item is truly sought after then bidding will soon reach the levels you expect. You'll often see many items starting at just \$0.99, which is a great way to get bidders interested in your item. If your starting prices are simply too high you may deter shoppers from even viewing your auction.

The next part we come to is where you select the duration of your auction, and also the start time, should you decide you do not want your auction to start immediately. Whenever you list an item it will end at the same exact time a number days on, so if you list an item at 10am, it will also end 10am... when most people are at work.

There are many theories on what's the best time to have your auctions ending. There have been countless studies and polls carried out on actual eBay sellers, with around 85% stating they found Sunday night was the best time to end auctions. For your auction to end on a Sunday you should look to list your items on a Thursday evening for 10-day auctions, or a Sunday for 7-day auctions.

Having said that, a lot depends on where you are in the world. With eBay operating in a large number of countries, the ending time in one region will be far different to that of another part of the world. For example, if a New Yorker had a listing ending at 8pm their time, buyers in the UK would most probably be nestled in bed by at that time. Think where your target audience is most likely situated and list the auction accordingly.

Another theory is the "24 Hour Window". By this I do not mean list your items for 1-day auctions, but to list items everyday, therefore having items ending every 24 hours.

Why is this such a big deal? Well, let's say you are searching for a popular item on eBay; the returns are over 10 pages worth of items. Do you usually search through every page, or do you check out the first few then stop? Most users tend to scroll through the first few pages; basically, this is the items that have less than 24 hours before they end. Most sellers can tell you that the majority of bids come within the last 24 hours of an auction closing. I can fully understand this, why bother to place a bid on an item that has 7 days left, only to be outbid later on.

Let's assume you have 35 items to ready to list. Instead of listing all 35 on the same day, spread them over the course a week. List 5 items each day until all

the items have been uploaded. This may not seem like a big deal, however you will now constantly have items appearing at the top of the search results, in the 24-hour window I mentioned. The idea behind this is to attract viewers to your auctions, even if they do not bid on the item in the 24-hour slot, they may still choose to “View Sellers Other Items”. It’s a simple process, but one that could really boost sales.

Reserves

Reserves are a hard feature to get right and are usually best left alone unless you are positive the item is of great value or is a highly collectable piece. Reserves can frustrate buyers, as it will often turn into a guessing game, which is why you will notice that a lot of items with reserves will go unsold. If you have a minimum amount in mind that you would sell the item for then create the listing with that figure as the minimum bid amount and forget about inserting a reserve.

Postage

Personally, I tend to leave this section blank as I include all the postage information I want manually in my item description. It’s up to you whichever you feel works best. If you do opt to take advantage of this section, it’s basically just a case of selecting a shipping option from the drop down menu and entering a fee.

Once you are happy with all the information you’ve entered click “Save and continue”. The next page is entitled “Promote and Review Your Listing”. This is the section where eBay throws all the upgrades they have to offer at you.

All these upgrades are optional and it’s entirely up to if you decide to take advantage of any of them. Next to each upgrade, eBay gives a short summary along with the cost.

Scroll further down the page to preview your listing. If you happy with how everything looks, click “List Your Item” and you’re all done!

Abbreviations

Abbreviations are used a lot in the music business, especially when creating an advert. Sellers have a limited space in which to promote their item, weather it be on eBay or in a pay per word advert in a newspaper or magazine.

I've compiled a list of the most commonly used abbreviations for reference. Remember them and use them to save characters when creating your auction title.

2CD Double CD

2LP Double LP

2P Second Pressing

3LP/4LP Triple/Quadruple LP

45 45 RPM Record (Also known as 7 Inch Single)

78 78 RPM Record

AC Acetate – The first item pressed to test the quality

Alt Alternative

B/W Backed With

Boot Bootleg half abbreviation; half slang a bootleg is usually unreleased or live material. An illegal copy of an existing record is called a Pirated copy.

B/S Box Set

cass Cassette

Cat No or Cat # Catalogue Number

CC Cut Corner (a Cut Out or promo item)

CD Compact Disc

CD sing Compact Disc Single

CD3 3" Compact Disc Single

CD5 5" Compact Disc Single

CDR, CD-R CD Recordable

CD-RW CD Re-writable

CDs CD single (size not defined)

CO Cut Out (type of cut out not specified) Used since the 80's for promo items and deletions.

CODH Cut Out Drill hole

comp Compilation

COPH Cut Out Punch Hole

COH Cut Out Hole

C/P Cut out Punch

Del Deleted (This means that the record label will not manufacture this release until further notice)

**Demo Demonstration Copy
flexi, Flx Flexi Disc**

FOC Fold out Cover

FOS Fold out Sleeve

g/f, g/fold, GF Gatefold

Imp Import

Inst Instrumental

intl International

LE Limited Edition

Ltd Limited Edition

M/C Music Cassette (tape)

MD Mini disc

NCR No Cover

No, # Number

No'd Numbered

Obi **Original Band Intact** (refers to paper band on Japanese LPs)

OOP **Out of print** (Release is not yet deleted, but the record company is currently not manufacturing it)

Orig, ORG**Original (pressing)**

OSP**One Sided Pressing**

p/s, PS **Picture Sleeve**

PD, pic disc **Picture Disc**

PO **Poster**

Promo, PR **Promotional Copy**

RE, RI **Re-Issue**

RPM **Revolutions per minute**

RW, R/W **Ring Wear**

SACD **Super Audio CD**

Slv **sleeve**

Pirate **Illegal copies of officially released recordings.**

S/S **Still Sealed**

stkr **sticker**

stkrd, stkred, STK **stickered**

SW **Shrink Wrapped**

UNP **Unplayed, Refers to the condition of record**

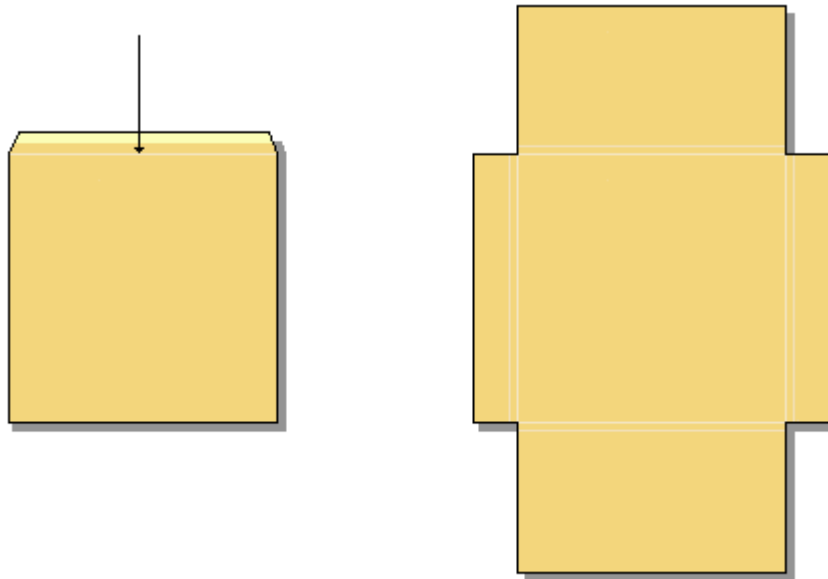
After The Sale

Packaging/Sending Items

When it comes to posting your sales, never overlook packaging. Records are very fragile and quite an unusual shape, and can sometimes be difficult to find a suitable box to mail them. All your hard work pushing and promoting your records is instantly undone when the customer receives a damaged item. The last thing you want is to have to send a replacement record or issue a refund.

Over the years I have seen all types of homemade packages, from cut up cereal boxes through to stuffed pizza boxes! Whilst some of these do manage to do the job there is no substitute for professional mailers.

There are two main types of mailers for vinyl records; an envelope type mailer, and a sturdy cruciform box. Though it is slightly more expensive I personally prefer to use a cruciform mailer, I am yet to encounter any damage when using this particular type of mailer. For added protection I opt to use 2 “stiffeners”, which are additional slides of card that slot either side of the record.



I've tracked down two reliable sources of mailers and packing supplies for the US and the UK. Both have a large selection of card products for vinyl and CD media.

A great selection here for US and Canadian sellers

<http://www.bagsunlimited.com>

An equally impressive selection for sellers in the UK, Ireland and Europe.

<http://www.covers33.co.uk>

When it comes to packing the record, the methods used vary from seller to seller. The most important thing is to prevent the record sliding inside the package, as this can cause the sleeve to spilt. This is a common problem during transit as packages can be handled roughly and often get thrown around. It is a good idea to remove the record from the outer cover but keep the record in its thin, inner paper sleeve to protect from dust and scratches.

If the record is of high value it might also be worth sealing the outer cover with the cling wrap/film. This will prevent any water seeping onto the cover and also protect the edges of the sleeve. With the sleeve and record separate, place the record on top of the cover and wrap both together in either cling film or thin bubble wrap. This method generally works better than keeping the record in its sleeve.

Feedback

One the best selling tools at your disposal is eBay's Feedback system. Feedback allows both the buyer and seller to leave a short sentence regarding the transaction. Three forms of feedback can be left, positive, neutral and negative. Your aim should be to consistently have a rating of 95% - 100% positive feedback, which easily achievable if you follow some simple steps.

After a sale has been made eBay automatically email both parties to confirm the details of the transaction and will include instructions for the buyer to complete the sale. However, I always like to email the buyer to thank them for their custom and to confirm the payment details as it adds a personal touch.

There will always be awkward customers that will complain at everything little thing they can find. It can be extremely infuriating, but still try to reply in a polite civilized manner.

The best way too protect your feedback is to never leave feedback first. You will get one or two customers who leave negative feedback without even contacting you to resolve the problem; this can be very frustrating if you have already left a positive feedback for them. The odd negative feedback here and there really won't damage your reputation too much, just try to keep it around the high 90% mark.

Before a sale, frequently check your emails for questions from potential customers, and try to reply with 24 hours. If it takes days for you to reply to a simple email, how long will it take to physically post an item once a sale has been made? You must value your potential customers, as it's easy to lose them to competitors. If you are unable to reply within 24 hours then always remember to apologise for the delay, more often or not they will understand.

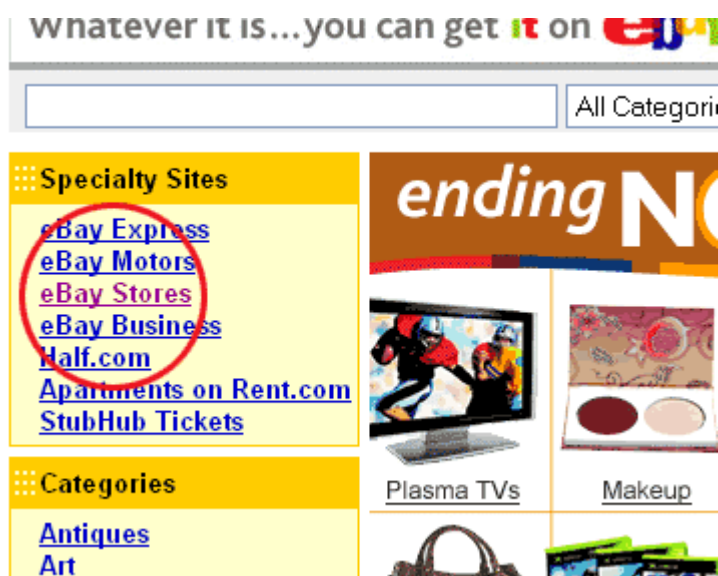
eBay Store

No matter what product you are selling, an eBay store is an absolute must if you are looking to get serious; the benefits are enormous. In this section I will show you the basics of getting an eBay shop up and running, and reveal ways to promote your store and get people visiting it!

Adding an eBay store will give you a more professional look, enable your buyers to browse your items with ease and also give you your own web address to promote, for example www.stores.ebay.com/yourebaystore but more on the benefits later. Let's get a store up and running!

Opening an eBay Store is quite a straightforward process. In this section I will try to guide you from start to finish however if you are having problems then be sure to check eBay's excellent Help section which is a great resource.

1. Once at eBay, take a look down the left hand side of the home page. There should be a link that says "eBay Stores". If you can't find this link click on the Help section at the top and enter eBay Store. This should help you find the required page.



2. Once at the eBay Store homepage you will be presented with a list of shops and links. Browse to the top right and click the "Open A Store" button.

Open a Store

3. On the next screen you will be presented with 3 types of eBay stores. A Basic Shop, a Featured Shop and an Anchor Shop. The one we will be choosing is the first option, a Basic Shop. The next stage is to choose a name for your store. As with the selecting a username, your store name is an important factor. Try to think of something catchy but which could also incorporate the type of product you sell. eBay have rules against certain names and characters so be sure to check the “naming your shop” link.

4. Read through the Terms And Condition on the next page and click “Subscribe”

5. Now it's up to you to give the store your own personal touch by choosing themes and editing the category list. eBay provides online instructions when selecting themes and colours, it's generally a straight forward process. Have a play around and see what you think is most suited to your business. Potential customers will judge your stores appearance so take the time to get it right.

6. The Shop Category section is a fantastic feature of the eBay stores. It's a chance to separate your items into tidy sections allowing your customers to browse your store faster and with more ease. For example, you could create a Rock, or a Jazz category; basically, the same way an actually music store operates.

Try to create as many categories as possible and list items in each. It will make your store appear to be more full and keep potential customers browsing your pages for longer. Each time you list an item you will be required to select a category from you store. Categories can be added and deleted by logging into “My eBay” and clicking on “Manage eBay Store”

Now you've created your store, sit back and ask yourself would you buy from here? Are there any ways you could improve the appearance? Is everything clear, concise and easy to navigate? If you think your store is lacking in someway then be sure to browse around on eBay's Store Help pages for great ways to spice things up. Compare your store with stores of other users, search for top eBay sellers and see how they are using their store, they must be doing something right!

Benefits of having an eBay Store

The great thing about an eBay store is the amount of exposure you can gain, which in turn will generate sales. Once you have created your store, eBay will allocate a web address where the store can be found. The address of your store will look something like www.stores.ebay.com/yourebaystore

Now that you have a unique web address it's just a case of promoting that link and driving people to it. There are countless ways to do this, it's all about being creative! You'll find some great advice on eBay on the "Promote Your Store" pages located under "Manage Your Store".

When you view a listing you'll notice the "View Other Items" or "Visit Members Store" links located in the top right corner. eBay kindly place these in every auction for you however it is still a great idea to add your own link to your store somewhere in your listing. It doesn't have to be fancy, something along the lines of "For more great items see my eBay store". This is great way to tempt customers to your store, they are obviously interested in the item so why wouldn't they want to see more?

Generating traffic to your store

Email

Email is a great, free, way to promote your online store. We all send and receive emails, so why not include a link to your store; it takes only a few minutes to set-up. If you use an email program like Outlook Express you can create a "signature" which will automatically be displayed in every email you send. To do this using Outlook Express click Tools, Options then Signatures. Your Signature could look something like this:

Collect rare CD's and Vinyl? Simply visit www.yourebaystore.com

Note: Never spam you're past customers by sending pointless emails one after the other. I'm sure you hate receiving junk mail, and so will your customers.

Invoices

As with email, this is another free way to generate traffic. This method basically targets repeat customers. When mailing the customers goods why not include a printed invoice and note the address of your store. Although they've bought an item from you, it doesn't always mean they will remember your username/store. If they open the package and see your web address starring them in the eyes what's to stop them logging on and seeing if you

have new stock. They've bought from you once, there's nothing to stop them doing so again.

Paypal also offer's a free invoice service which you should take advantage of. When you sell an item you can you can configure Paypal to automatically sent an invoice to your buyer, mention your eBay Store here.

Message Boards

If you frequently post on a forum or a message boards, why not advertise on your store on there. Although any subject matter will do, the more suited to the specific music you sell the better. As with email, create a signature that will be displayed each time you post a message or comment. Again, it's free so you've got nothing to lose!

Cross-Promoting

Cross-promoting your items is an excellent way to try and sell more than one item to a customer. When a potential customer views your auction, four other items can be promoted at the bottom on the screen, in a display that looks like this:



You can create cross-promotions in any of the following situations:

- When a buyer bids on your item
- When a buyer wins your item
- When a buyer views your listing (eBay Store sellers only)

By logging on to the "Marketing Tools" section in your eBay account you can customise what items are being cross promoted. A customer who purchases one of your items could very well be inclined to purchase a similar item. Spend a little time experimenting with cross-promotions, you may find them to be very effective.

Useful Resources

Mpire.com

Over at mpire.com they offer an absolutely fantastic free researching service that you really should take advantage of. I personally believe it is second to none when it comes to researching eBay, so be sure to check it out.

To begin, browse over to www.mpire.com and scroll to the bottom of the page. Look for a link that says something like “Researcher” or “Researcher Login”



Although the software is 100% free, Mpire do require you to create a login pass. Simply enter your email and choose a password. Don't worry though, you do not have to enter any other personally information and you will not be bombarded with junk or spam emails.

I've logged in and entered the keywords Smashing Pumpkins LP into the search area. The following results were returned.

A screenshot of the Mpire.com search results page. The search bar contains the text "smashing pumpkins lp" and a search button. Below the search bar, there is a "Words to Exclude:" field and a "Show Suggestions" checkbox which is checked. The results section shows "Average Selling Price of Top Selling Listings: \$903.60" and "Percentage Sold of All Listings: 79%". There is also a "Date Range" field. At the bottom, there is a link "What are Top Selling Listings?" and a section header "Top Selling Listing Recommendations".

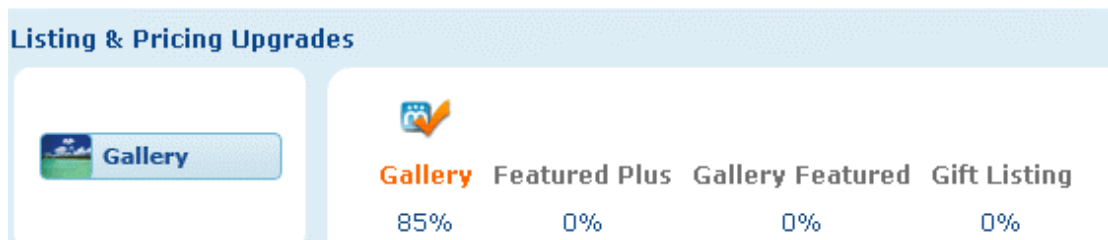
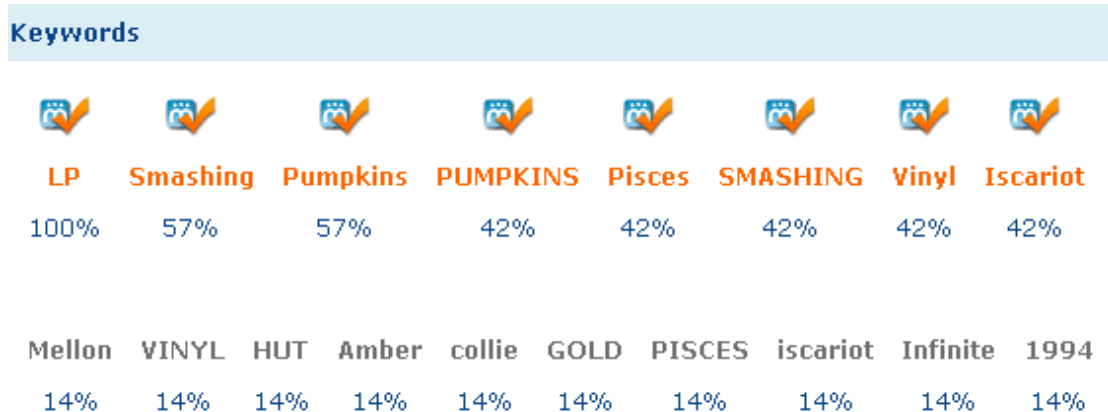
Now according to Mpire, an impressive 79% of all listings containing “Smashing Pumpkins LP” successfully sold, with the highest item ending for a whopping \$903.60. Now to begin with these initial figures can be a deceiving,

for instance the item selling for \$903.60 may have been a bulk auction, where more than one item was included. However if we take a look further down the page we'll get more specific results that we can use.

Further down the results page you'll see the Keywords section, and the Listings & Pricing Upgrades. Below you'll see the keywords that Mpire most recommend, and the keywords that are appearing most frequently in the items that have sold.

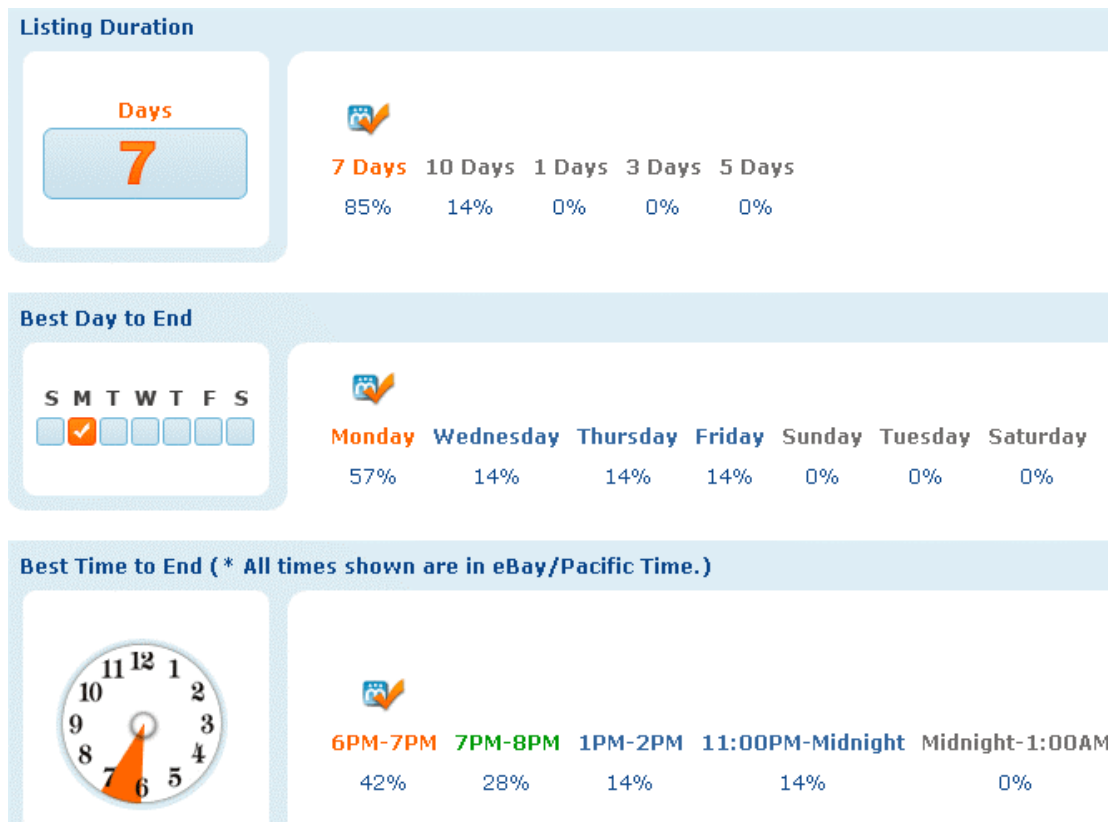
Next is the Listing & Pricing Upgrades, this includes additional features that eBay offer such as, bold text, or adding a border around your listing for more exposure. Using this section we're able to see exactly what features worth taking advantage of when listing your item. The results in this particular search are probably as straightforward as you're likely to see. They clearly show that out of all the auctions that ended successfully, 85% of them choose to have a gallery view instead of just the basic auction image, whilst none of the successful auction opted for any "featured" upgrades" and their auctions still sold.

This is great little tool that really does show you what upgrades are worth using, if any, when listing your item.



The next section is by far the best research tool available in terms of listing times etc. There are so many theories and discussions regarding "best listing times" and "best days to end an auction", many of which are unproven however using this tool we are able to see accurate results in seconds.

If we scroll further down the page you should find some similar looking results:



The first category is the Listing Duration, which shows that all the successful auctions were listed as either 10 or 7 days auctions. Which is quite understandable, as they were visible for a longer period of time.

Onto the “Best Day To End” section, according to the results the best day to end an auction for this particular item was in fact a Monday, followed by a Wednesday. Again, try your own searches with your own items and see if you can come to a clear conclusion.

Finally we come to the “Best Time To End” portion. This is always a tricky aspect of Internet auctions as no matter when your item ends, someone, somewhere else in the world is sleeping. The results here show that the best time to end an auction is between 6pm-7pm in the evening, which again, is understandable as people have come home from work and probably have a little free time.

Again, this resource is 100% free so take advantage by performing several searches before listing an item.

Village Photos & Photo Bucket - Free Image Hosting

Two excellent sites that offer free image hosting for use on online auctions, message boards or anywhere else you can think of.

Both are great places to upload banners and icons for use with your eBay shop. Once uploaded the URL of the image is automatically generated and it's just a case of copy and pasting the text.

www.villagephotos.com

www.photobucket.com

Summary

Congratulations on making it this far, hopefully you've got some great on ideas how to get your own record sales business up and running and picked up some useful tips and resources along the way.

The only people that will succeed are the ones who take action and get started, and remember, it's always too early to quit!

If you've enjoyed this eBook you may want to subscribe to my FREE newsletter packed with selling tips, ideas and opportunities! To subscribe, send a blank email to: usmnewsletter@aweber.com