

My Weekly GUIDE TO EBAY

Daunted by online auctions? Then follow our easy guide to using eBay and bag yourself some bargains!

HOW DID IT START?

Launched in 1995 eBay started out as little more than an online garage sale, set up by Pierre Omidyar from his home in San Jose, California.

Amazingly, it now has over 200million users across the globe, with around five million items listed daily.

For many people the main attractions are the low prices and vast range of products on offer and now eBay is so popular, many people even earn a regular income from trading on the site. The company has always encouraged a sense of community by installing a feedback system that allows users to show they are trustworthy and, equally, exposes unreliable traders who should be avoided.

As a nation of bargain hunters we love scouring car boot sales and charity shops, desperately seeking the satisfaction of getting that longed for item at a knock-down price. In recent years, eBay, the massive online auction website, has brought bargain hunting into the 21st century and anything from cars to designer clothes to miniature collectables are up for sale – often at fantastic, low prices.

So how do you get started?

Getting started is relatively easy. Anyone can browse items for sale but if you want to buy or sell then you need to register with eBay. Once you have followed the easy step-by-step process for registering, you are ready to start exploring the site and can begin looking for all those bargains!

Want to buy?

When you have found an item you want to buy you need to check all the details very carefully and also review the feedback the seller has had from previous buyers. This should give you a reasonably good indication of how reliable the seller is.

Decide what price you want to pay and place your bid – some items have a Buy It Now option for a set price which means you can choose to purchase instantly. Pay for the item and leave some positive feedback if you are happy with your purchase.

So, how exactly do you bid?

This is the exciting bit, although it may seem complicated and a little bit daunting at first! The important thing is to decide on the maximum price you are prepared to pay. eBay can bid on your behalf at fixed amounts to keep you as the highest bidder, unless, of course, a higher amount is bid. If this is the case, you will receive an email to tell you that you have been outbid. It is then up to you whether you want to 'up' your bid, or 'walk away'.

The amount of time you have left to bid is shown in days and hours and bidding can continue to take place right up until the closing seconds!



How do you sell?

If you are selling, then you'll need to set up an

account. eBay

charge a small fee to sell your items, depending on how much the item is actually sold for. Starting at just 15p, it goes up to a £2 charge to list one item for sale at £100 or more. If your item sells then a reasonable charge of around 5% is made.

Once your account is set up and you're fully aware of the charges, decide on how much

Decide what you want to pay and place your bid – this is the exciting bit!