

***eBay® Bargain  
Shopping***  
FOR  
**DUMMIES®**

**Marsha Collier**

*Author of Starting an eBay Business For Dummies*



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*eBay® Bargain  
Shopping*

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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 Power Seller), as well as meeting eBay users from around the world. As a columnist, author of two best-selling books on eBay, and guest lecturer at eBay University, Marsha shares her knowledge of eBay with millions of online shoppers.

Out of college, Marsha worked in fashion advertising for the *Miami Herald*; then she worked as Special Projects Coordinator for the *Los Angeles Daily News*. Upon the birth of her daughter in 1984, she founded a home-based advertising and marketing business. Her successful business, the Collier Company, Inc., was featured by *Entrepreneur* magazine in 1985, and in 1990, Marsha's company received the Small Business of the Year award from her California State Assemblyman and the Northridge Chamber of Commerce.

More than anything, Marsha loves to get a great deal — that's what drew her to eBay in 1996 — and that's what keeps her busy at the site now. She buys everything from replacement toothbrush heads to parts for pool equipment to designer dresses. Marsha knows how to *work* eBay, and in this book she shares that knowledge with you.





## ***Dedication***

For my Mother, Claire Berg, who taught me how to shop for quality on a budget, and who I miss every day.

For my daughter Susan Dickman, who continues to help me perfect that talent.

## ***Author's Acknowledgments***

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# Introduction

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Recently I called a store to find out if it had a specific item in stock. “Oh yes,” the sales clerk replied, “We have it, but we can’t quote the price over the phone — you’ll have to come into the store to find out the price.”

So I went to the store. Not only didn’t the store have what I was looking for, but the sales clerk tried to sell me a completely different product than the one I came in for. There is nothing worse than knowing that your time is being wasted.

I went back to my office, ran a search at eBay, ordered exactly what I needed — at 40 percent off the retail price — and it arrived in the mail three days later. I should have tried eBay first. eBay has become the world’s online marketplace. It’s mine now and it should be yours.

eBay found its way onto my computer in 1996, very early on. My daughter’s hobby at the time was replacing her *She-Ra Princess of Power* action figures, which I had long previously sold at a garage sale. eBay saved my reputation as the mother who got rid of her collection. We replaced every figure with action figures that were MOC (that is, mint on card). I wasn’t the only one shopping for action figures at eBay. In fact, the company attributes its initial growth to the Beanie Baby craze!

But as the eBay user base grew, savvy sellers tried to merchandise more than just collectibles. Today, eBay has gone past its status as an online auction house — it’s now an international marketplace for everything, new and old. Famous manufacturers have their own outlets on the site, side by side the small mom-and-pop specialty boutiques.

I won’t bore you with my entire shopping list, but as you can see, I’ve found a store that’s open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can afford to purchase things at eBay that you wouldn’t ordinarily have the time to seek out or even afford in the bricks-and-mortar world.

## About This Book

I've written this book so that you, too, can learn to take advantage of the megastore that is eBay. This book shows you how to get the bargains and stay safe in every major category of merchandise eBay offers.

Keep this book in your hands to help you feel at ease at eBay. I'd like to call it *eBay For Dummies Light*, but my publisher won't let me mess with the trademark. And really, it's not an accurate name. This book is just as packed with information as my larger *For Dummies* books, *eBay For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, and *Starting an eBay Business For Dummies*. The information in this book is simply targeted toward your interest in hunting for bargains.

There are great bargains to find, and down the road there's always the chance for you to sell some of the knick knacks that are collecting dust in your own closet. But the goal of this book is to help you reach your comfort zone to buy the things you want and need in your life, without dragging yourself all over town or spending wads of cash.

In this book, you'll find out

- ✔ How the eBay megastore (Web site) is laid out
- ✔ How to browse for your item by category and theme
- ✔ How to set up the search engine to sniff out the best deals
- ✔ What to look for when shopping for a particular item
- ✔ How to stay safe and protect your hard-earned money

## Foolish Assumptions

If you've been intimidated by eBay in the past, your buying this book tells me a few things about you. First, I assume that you'd like to spend less time and money shopping for things that you'd like to own; second, I assume that you'd like to get in on all those bargains your neighbor keeps telling you he gets at eBay — but you don't want to make a career of buying and selling at eBay.

Here are some additional assumptions I've made:

- ✔ You have a computer with an Internet connection, or plan on getting one in the very near future.
- ✔ You are short on time and don't want to struggle through pages of techno-babble or dig around at the eBay Web site getting up to speed.
- ✔ You want to take your time and read this book at your leisure.
- ✔ You're nervous about possible fraud and want to know about the dangers of online shopping (without the hype) so that you can stay safe. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.
- ✔ You don't want to pay retail prices.

If you can say a resounding *yes!* to most of these assumptions, then this is the book for you. Read on!

## How to Use This Book

This book is written so that you can read it in the fashion most comfortable to you. You can pick it up and read a bit, then put it down and pick it up again later. If you have a specific need or question, use the index or the Table of Contents to narrow down to just what you're looking for and go there.

This book is not written in *linear* style, which means that my editor double-checks to see that each chapter carries its own message; and you don't *have* to jump around; but if you want to, you can read Chapter 7, move on to Chapter 4, and skip ahead to Chapter 19, depending on your interests.



I do recommend that you read Chapter 1 before you get too far along so that you can find out what you need to know to become a registered eBay user.

## How This Book Is Organized

Each part of this book covers an individual area of eBay. You should be able to find just what you're looking for in the specific chapters. If any task requires prior knowledge, I will point to the particular chapter where you will find the nuggets you need to know.

## ***Part I: Opening Up the Bargain-Filled World of eBay***

In this part, I explain the basic layout of eBay — where to find what and how, and how to blast through the registration and bidding process. I also show you how to use eBay's online tools to keep your shopping organized.

You can find how to make your way through the site — and when you're through with this part, you should be comfortable with shopping at eBay.

## ***Part II: Staying Safe While Shopping at eBay***

Perhaps the reason you haven't added eBay to your shopping repertoire is because you've thought of eBay as a big scary place. You've read enough stories in the media about online transaction problems and you certainly don't want to become a victim of some notorious scammer. In this part, I show you how to stay safe and tell you what to do if you think you've got a problem.

In this part I also show you the safest ways to pay for your eBay purchases and protect your identity online.

## ***Part III: Searching eBay***

This section hones in on how eBay organizes the items for sale, and shows you how to cruise eBay's categories for something you didn't know you needed.

I'll teach you some special tricks (previously known only to geeks and eBay pros) to tweak eBay's search engine so you can locate the exact item you're looking for.

## ***Part IV: Shopping for Specific Items***

By wending your way through the eBay categories, you can do most of your shopping from the privacy of your own home. You won't believe some of the fun and unusual items that I've found at eBay. The chapters in this part reveal what a great place eBay is to



shop; I guarantee that you will discover an item or two you never would have expected were for sale at eBay.

## ***Part V: Specialty Shopping***

One of the wonderful things about eBay is that it lets you shop your way. First, there are the specialty sites, such as Sothebys.com, which allow you to bid (or simply watch the auction action from the sidelines) in more high-stakes auctions. Also, if you like the products sold by a particular seller, find out whether the seller has his or her own store.

One of the best ways to shop your own way is to stay close to home. Of course, you could always buy that piano from 2,000 miles away (and pay for the shipping), but you might also check the Regional page to find out if there's a Steinway available in the next town over.

If you like browsing aisle after aisle of closeouts, then the online version of the bricks-and-mortar liquidation stores, provided by eBay, is right up your alley. Have fun, but be sure you read the fine print. I tell you everything you need to know in Chapter 17.

## ***Part VI: Going for the Gold***

eBay is far more than a collectibles auction venue these days. High-dollar items make up a large part of the daily transactions at eBay.

Did you know that more cars are sold at eBay than almost anywhere else? Think about it. If you're looking for a special vintage car, or even a good reliable car to take you to work, you've got everything from certified pre-owned cars to brand-new cars straight from the dealers' lots to the cars that were only driven to church on Sundays by the little old lady down the way.

There's also a tremendous market in real estate — open land in Colorado; homes in North Carolina; timeshares in Florida.

Own your own piece of America from your armchair — right here at eBay. This part gives you tips on what to look for and tells you what questions to ask.

Fine jewelry has become de rigueur at eBay for the cognoscenti. (That means the smart folks are getting the good stuff at eBay for bargain basement prices!) I'll show you how to join them and know just how to find the deals.

## *Part VII: The Part of Tens*

The Part of Tens is the most-fun part of an already very fun book. I've listed my ten favorite reasons that shopping at eBay is fun. And I asked several eBay sellers to advise new eBay bidders on the things they need to know to be savvy bargain hunters at eBay.

### *Icons Used in This Book*



When you see this icon, check for information that shortens your learning cycle. These tips enable you to bypass some of the more onerous tasks and complete your goal in a more direct manner.



Remember when Mom would wag her finger at you, while repeating an oft-heard phrase, just to drive home an important truism? Same thing here. Although I try not to be a nag, the important nuggets you find in these icons are things you should not forget.



This small icon signifies some piece of information that, ignored, could get you into a bit of trouble. By following this warning symbol, you'll stay on the side of safety.

### *Graphics and Screen Images*

eBay is a graphically driven Web site. eBay programmers and product people work night and day tweaking and improving the site for eBay users. In other words, sometimes what you see on-screen may not match the screen images in the printed book. As hard as my editor and I try, no printed book can ever keep up with the sharp minds of this nimble crew.

Pages at eBay may change, but the philosophies in this book will remain intact. Once you master the information in this book, no matter what changes are made to the site, you will be able to follow what's going on on-screen.

We've also made this book a convenient size so that you can tuck it discreetly into your meeting notes or into your purse. That calls for some creativity on our part so that we can show you only what's worth seeing. I trimmed all evidence of the Internet browser out of the on-screen images. You all know what your browser looks like, so I won't bore you with details that aren't needed.

---

## *Where to Go from Here*

The beginning is a very good place to start. If you're already registered at eBay, and are ready to jump in, find a spot in the book that covers something new to you and start there.

Once you've got some of the basics under your belt, take your Web browser to [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) and poke around. I highly recommend poking around before actually buying something — you won't miss the best bargain to come along in the century — there's always another up at eBay!

Please visit my Web site, [www.cool ebaytools.com](http://www.cool ebaytools.com). (Cool eBay Tools, get it?) See if there's some additional information there that can help you. I always enjoy readers' comments and suggestions, so you can also send e-mail to me from my site.

*Happy shopping!*



# Part I

# Opening Up the Bargain-Filled World of eBay

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"It's a Weber PalmPit Pro Handheld barbeque with a 24 btu, rechargeable battery pack, and applications for roasting, smoking, and open-flame cooking. Can you believe there was no reserve?"