



Getting Your Item Ready for Auction

Having completed your research by looking at other members' auctions, you probably have lots of ideas now about how to put together an auction of your own. If you're still a little unsure about what to do, don't worry. We'll take you through it step by step.

If, when you've finished this lesson, you feel you don't understand any of these concepts, go back and review. Remember it never hurts to review all of the information in these lessons more than once!

1—The Elements of Your Auction

Okay, let's get started! Here is the order of what we will do:

- Take pictures of your auction item.
- Write a title for your auction.
- Write the sales text for your auction.



2—Taking Pictures of Your Item

As was previously discussed we are a visual society and tend to think if we do not see an auction item it does not exist or may exist in a different condition than presented. For most people seeing *is* believing. The better the presentation of what is seen, the more likely buyers are to believe, want, and bid on what they see. Pictures create emo-



LESSON 4—OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the elements of your auction.
2. Taking pictures of your item.
3. The writing process.
4. Writing the headline for your auction.
5. Writing your sales text.
6. Setting the price for your auction.
7. Write the instructions for buying, shipping, and handling.
8. Lesson 4 task list.

tion and you need that working for you in your auctions.

In this section we'll discuss how to make the most of your pictures. Also, we'll show you some slick ways to add additional images of your item into your auction without being charged by eBay. As you know from your eBay education, you can upload one image into your eBay auction without a charge; additional images are charged a fee. However, there are ways to get around paying the additional fees for putting more images on your auction.

What You Want Your Pictures to Do for You

There are several things you want your pictures to do:

- Show your item clearly.
- Show the item from various points of view IF this helps display the item better.
- Show close-ups of details IF that increases the value of the item.
- Show any flaws, marks, damage or blemishes. You don't want any misunderstandings about what members are bidding on or what the winner will get.
- And finally, to help sell your auction item.

Taking Pictures of Your Item

Your best bet when taking pictures is to use a digital camera that will shoot detailed close-ups. Your next best option is to use a film camera that will take similar close-ups. Here's a hint if you have to use a film camera. When you take your film in for developing have them put your pictures on a disk. That way you don't have to scan in your pictures in order to get them into a digital format. The cost is minimal and it makes your job a lot easier. Make sure that your chosen background and camera angles



Digital cameras give you an instant idea of what your picture will look like without having to develop film.

show off the item you are auctioning. You don't have to be a professional photographer, just be aware of these things. Your research from the last lesson should have prepared you to know what will look good and what won't.

Using a Digital Camera

Shooting with a digital camera gives you the luxury of looking at your pictures instantly, either in the camera viewer or on your computer's monitor. Knowing what the image looks like immediately allows you to make corrections by taking more pictures from different angles or with more or less lighting to get the best possible picture.

***Take Your Pictures in JPG***

Many digital cameras will allow you to take pictures in different formats. If your camera will allow different formats select the format for email or JPG. Internet sites only accept certain image formats. They are JPG, GIF and NPG. The JPG format is best suited for pictures.

If you are not sure whether your camera shoots pictures in various formats, read up in your instruction manual or call customer support for your camera. Their number should be listed in the camera's user-guide or online at their website.

Save Your Pictures in JPG

If your camera does not take pictures in various formats then you should have software that you load onto your computer that will allow you to save your pictures into a JPG format. Almost all digital cameras save pictures in the JPG format.

Again, if you are not sure how to do this with your camera and the software, call your camera maker's support line or research in the instruction manual or Internet resources.

Using a Film Camera

If you don't own or have access to a digital camera, you can get by with a standard film camera. The only thing you must have in this case is a scanner for your computer.

Just take your pictures normally and have them developed. Scan them into your computer, being sure to save them as JPG files. As we said earlier, your best option with a film camera is to have your pictures put on a disk. The cost is minimal and the benefits are substantial.

What to Avoid with Your Pictures

- *Blurry or out of focus pictures*—This is particularly dangerous with close-ups.
- *Hot spots*—Bright spots on the image created by the reflection of the camera's flash.
- *Distorted views*—This is when the shot is taken from a steep angle so the part of the item that is furthest away appears smaller. This can easily happen when shooting clothing that is laid out on the floor or table and taking the shot from the bottom up angle.
- *Dark images*—This happens when the image or part of the image is too dark to see clearly.
- *Distorted color*—there are going to be some color differences in your photos from time to time. What we are referring to here is major color distortions where a red looks like an orange or a purple looks like green.

How Many Pictures is Enough?

That's really up to you. Sometimes one picture is enough. If, however, you believe that additional images are necessary, and they often are, to show an accurate portrayal of your item, then do so. This is especially important if additional pictures will make your item more valuable or sellable.

So, for now, take several pictures and save them on your computer. We will review uploading pictures in the next lesson so we'll pick out the best ones then.

Getting Pictures from your Warehouse or Drop Shipper

If you have an association with a warehouse or drop shipper they should supply you with a picture of the item they carry in one of three ways or some combination of the three.

They should have product pictures:

1. Online on their website—right click on the image and save to your computer.

2. On a CD they email you—insert the CD into your computer, open, click on the image and “Save As.” Make sure you save the image as a jpg.

3. In a catalog they mail you—each image will have to be scanned and saved as jpg.

Finding Additional Product Images

To enhance your eBay presentation you may want to find additional pictures of your item. If your warehouse or drop shipper does not have additional images of the product you can use the Internet as a resource. Here are some suggestions:

- Do a search on eBay using the product name and its brand name.
- Go to any of the main search engines and do a search of the product. Click on the links that the search brings up and look through those pages to find product images.
- Go to Google's home page—**www.google.com**, click on image link and enter the name of the item into the search field and research found images.
- Do the above at **www.msn.com**—click on the image link and research the image by the item's name. If you do search for additional images of your item, make certain the image or images are of the same product. Close does not count.

3—The Writing Process

For some people writing is an easy thing. For them, creating sales text is no problem. For most of us, however, writing can be a challenge. The process described here will help simplify the task of writing sales text for your auction. In any case, don't worry. Writing for your auctions will get easier each time you do it.

In the writing process there are six steps. At first, this process will probably slow



down your writing. That's okay. The process will make you more conscious of your writing and teach you how to write better sales text.

As you continue writing your sales text using this writing process, the more confident you will become in your abilities and the better your sales text will be!

In general, here are the steps in the writing process.

The Six Steps in the Writing Process are:

Make a list;

Organize;

Be Methodical;

Cool Off;

Review; and

Finalize.

1. *Make a list*—Put together all of the ideas you want to write about. This doesn't have to be fancy, use single words or short phrases. A good list to start with is the features and benefits of your auction item.

2. *Organize*—Put your ideas into priorities: first, second, third, etc.

3. *Be Methodical*—Take your first idea and write about it, then your second, third and so forth.

4. *Cool Off*—After completing this writing put it aside. Don't go back and make changes or corrections at this time. Let your sales text cool off for a couple of days.

5. *Review*—Following your cool off period, review your sales text and make simple corrections for spelling and grammar. Generally speaking, your first spontaneous writing will be your best, so major rewriting is usually not necessary.

Sometimes you will find that you need to return to step one and come at the presentation from a different angle. Don't be frustrated if this happens. Simply adjust your organization and write again.

6. *Finalize*—Once you're happy with your writing, you're ready to setup your auction.

7. *P.S.*—Another good way to get sales text is to go to the manufacturer's site and find out what they say about their own product. Or, go to a manufacturer's site

of a similar product and get some ideas from them. Fast, easy, professional advice for free.

4—Writing the Title for Your Auction



Once you understand what auction titles are all about, you'll find that writing them is pretty simple. Your titles need to be descriptive, but straightforward. Keep in mind your title is going to serve your auction in two ways.

1. Titles give the eBay search engine the keywords it needs to find your auction. This is how your bidders will find your auctions.

2. After your auction is found through the eBay search, it is listed with other similar auctions. Your title then competes with those other titles for the viewer's attention. So, your title must also motivate the viewer to click on it.

As you will recall from the research you did in Lesson 3, keywords for finding your auction should be used in the title of the auction. As you consider those key words for any auction keep these questions in mind:

- What is the item?
- Who made it?
- What color is it?
- What is it made of?
- How old is it?
- Is it used or new?
- Does it have its original box?
- Is it unopened or still shrink-wrapped?
- What country was it made in?

Finally, if you have the space in your auction title, include a descriptive word or two to grab attention. Keep in mind that space in the title is quite limited. With that

Unique

Beautiful



Mint
Condition

in mind it is often a good idea to use abbreviations or short words. Example. Instead of “Mint Condition” just say, “Mint” or “FAB” instead of “Fabulous.” Etc. Here are some words you might want to consider:

- Beautiful
- Gorgeous
- Unique
- Powerful
- Collectible
- Mint Condition
- Great

If you want some ideas for these kinds of words, there are a couple of books that will be helpful for you. You can find them on Amazon.com.

Words That Sell—by Richard Bayan
Phrases That Sell—by Edward W. Werz,
Sally Germain

5—Writing Your Sales Text

There are two major things you must include in your sales text. We’ve talked about them before: the features and the benefits of your item.

The Features of Your Item

The features of your item are the measurable things about it. This information allows a bidder to justify bidding on your item. Features are the intellectual reasons to buy something.

- Here are various features to consider:
- How big/small is it (give the dimensions if you can)?
 - Its weight.
 - Its color.
 - Its brand.
 - Who made it?
 - How old is it?
 - Retail/appraisal information.

- What it’s made of.
- What it does.
- How it works.
- How it was manufactured.
- Where it comes from.
- The style.
- How fast/slow is it?
- Its popularity.

The Benefits of Your Item

The benefits of your item are all the emotional reasons to buy it. Benefits are all the things that get someone excited to bid on, fight for, and buy your item. From Lesson 3 you should remember that people **buy benefits**. A benefit is what you get from owning something.

As you examine your item for auction which of the benefits listed below would apply to it? Don’t feel you are limited to the benefits listed here. There may be others that would fit your item. These are just to give you some starting ideas.

- It saves you time.
- It makes you money.
- It saves you money.
- It makes your life easier/better.
- It makes you look good.
- It adds value/quality.
- It makes you feel good.
- It adds beauty.
- It is fun/enjoyable.
- It tastes/smells good.
- It’s convenient.
- It gives you control.

Steps to Writing Your Sales Text

There are three steps to writing your sales text. All the sales text will be displayed in the description area of your auction. (The description area is part of the eBay software used to setup your auction.)



*In all of your writing
remember the
principle of KISS*

1. Write your title for the description area—This is a different title from the title written for the listings area of the auction. These are the first words the auction viewer will read in the description area.

2. Write the benefits of your item—These are the words that appear under the title. It is a short “blast” of words, so they should be attention grabbers.

3. Write the features of your item—The features follow the “blast” of benefits. The features can be written in a paragraph and/or listed in bullets.

Writing a Headline for Your Description Section

1. Make a list of grabber words for your auction title.
2. Select the best of your grabber words for your title.
3. Write several versions of your title using the grabber words.
4. Put all versions of your titles to the side to “cool off.”
5. After the “cool off” period finalize your title.

In all of your writing remember the principle of KISS. Keep It Short and Simple, meaning that usually your simplest and most straightforward idea or presentation is going to be the best one.

Write the Benefits for the Description Area

1. Make a list of the benefits of your item.
2. Organize the list of benefits into the order you want to write them.
3. Write the opening “blast” of your auction with the benefits. This can be from 1 to 4 sentences. The simpler the item the shorter the blast needs to be. Conversely, the more there is to the item the longer the

blast. If you need ideas on how to write your opening blast, check your research of other eBay member’s auctions and see how they did it.

4. Let your blast “cool off” for a couple of days.
5. Finalize your opening blast.

Write the Features for the Description Area

- Make a list of the features of your item.
- Organize the list of features into the order you want to write them.
- Decide how you are going to present your item’s benefits.
- As a list.
- As a paragraph.
- As a combination of a paragraph and a list.
- Write your paragraph/list.
- Let your features writing “cool off.”
- Finalize your features writing.

6—Setting Pricing for Your eBay Auction Item

Before you can sell your item, you need to determine what price you are going to ask for it. Obviously, the price will vary based on the item and how it is currently selling. Researching what your product and similar products sell for is your best option. In eBay’s Sell Your Item (SYI) Form you will be given the option to check pricing using the Completed Listing.

The DeepAnalysis Tool

If you have purchased the DeepAnalysis tool, it can be a big help, providing additional information when you set your price.

Setting Your Pricing for Your First Auctions

These first auctions are to teach you how to setup, run, complete, and follow up on auctions. It is not so much about mak-



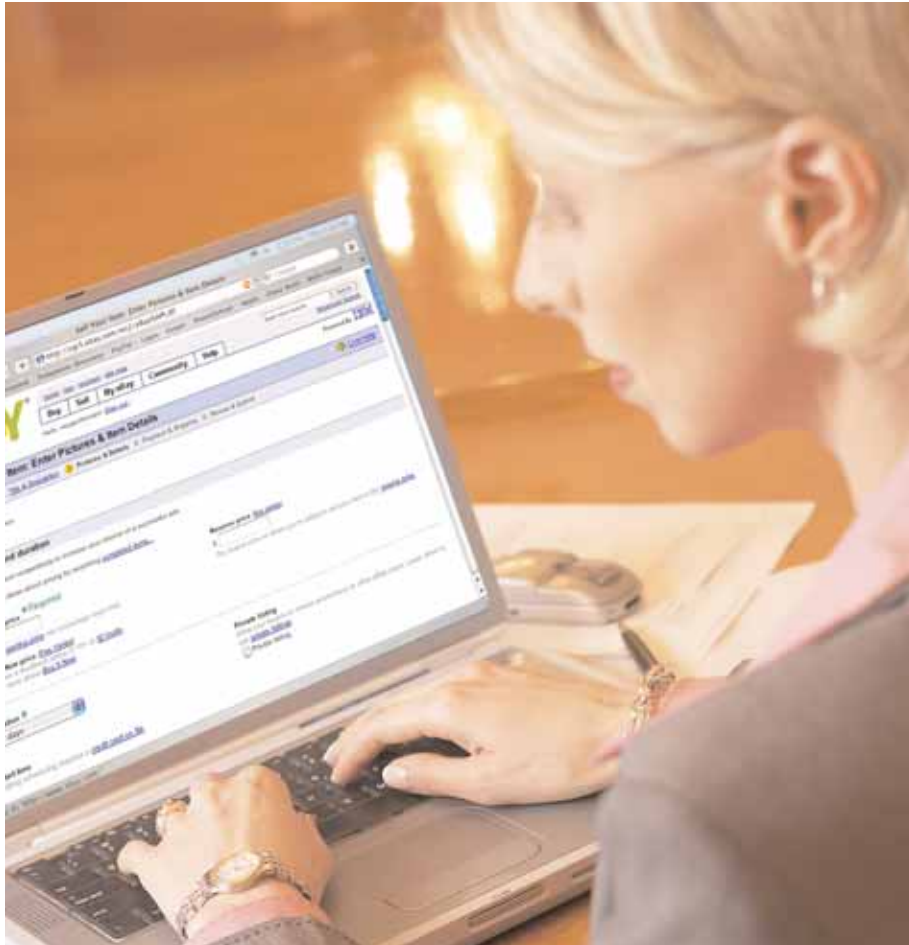
ing money as it is learning the mechanics and skills of auctioning on eBay.

For your first auction:

- Start your auction at \$0.01
- No Reserve (Check on the eBay site to make sure you understand what a Reserve is.

This will encourage eBay members to look at your item and not eliminate it because of the starting bid price or having to meet the reserve. Obviously, this first auction should be run with an item that you don't mind not making much on. Also, don't use the most expensive or nicest of your items on your first auction.

Set a price that will not eliminate potential buyers.



7—Write Your Instructions for Buying and Shipping and Handling



Remember the auctions you have researched. Down at the bottom of each auction page there are instructions for the winner, telling them how to purchase the item and the options for shipping.

When you fill out your eBay information form you will be given the opportunity to fill in this information.

Shipping and Handling

- For shipping and handling you will be given these options:
- USPS—The United States Post Office.
- UPS—United Parcel Services.
- Customize—You can choose how.
- Additional Handling Fee.
- Additional Shipping Options.

Before setting this area, research the approximate costs of each option and how easy they are for you to use. If it is a 30-minute trip to the Post Office, but UPS will come and pick up at your doorstep, you may want to limit your shipping to UPS. Other such variables may exist, so do your research and know them ahead of time.

Setting up Payment Procedure

There are several ways to setup payment for the winner of your auction.

- Personal or Business Check.
- Money Order/Cashiers Check.
- Your own Merchant account.
- PayPal.

Checks and Money Orders

Checks, money orders, and cashier checks are the least preferred ways to get payment. There are several reasons for this. First, you must wait 7-10 days for the check to clear in order to get your money and, if it

doesn't clear, your financial institution may charge you a fee. Second, The winner of your item must wait an additional period of time for the check to clear before the item will be mailed.

In this day and age, when people want what they want now, making someone wait longer than necessary for an item they've won is a real disadvantage. That disadvantage can cost you money.

Your Own Online Merchant Account

Using you own online merchant account is a fine way to process a money transaction. To do so you must, however, have a website setup to process credit cards. You probably don't have that option at this point, but you may want to look into it in the future.

To use a merchant account, you will instruct the winner of your item to go to your website in order to complete the transaction. This may sound easy enough and if you are familiar with setting up a new product page on your website, it can be. You will generally have to set up a product page specifically for the individual

auction item because the selling price of the item will be determined by the winner's bid. This will prohibit you from setting up all of the information ahead of the transaction.

If you have a website set up already, there are positives to processing the money through your merchant account.

1. Bidders can become familiar with your website and what other things you might market on it. You may be able to get the money into your account a little faster than through PayPal.
2. One of the drawbacks to using your own online merchant account is that bidders, don't know if you are trustworthy. This becomes less relevant as you build up positive feedback on eBay where bidders can see and trust your reputation.

Advantages of Using PayPal

Having your own PayPal account will give your auctions additional credibility and safety for members bidding on your item. PayPal is a very common payment method on eBay and members are used to it and comfortable with it.

Through PayPal you can accept payment from:

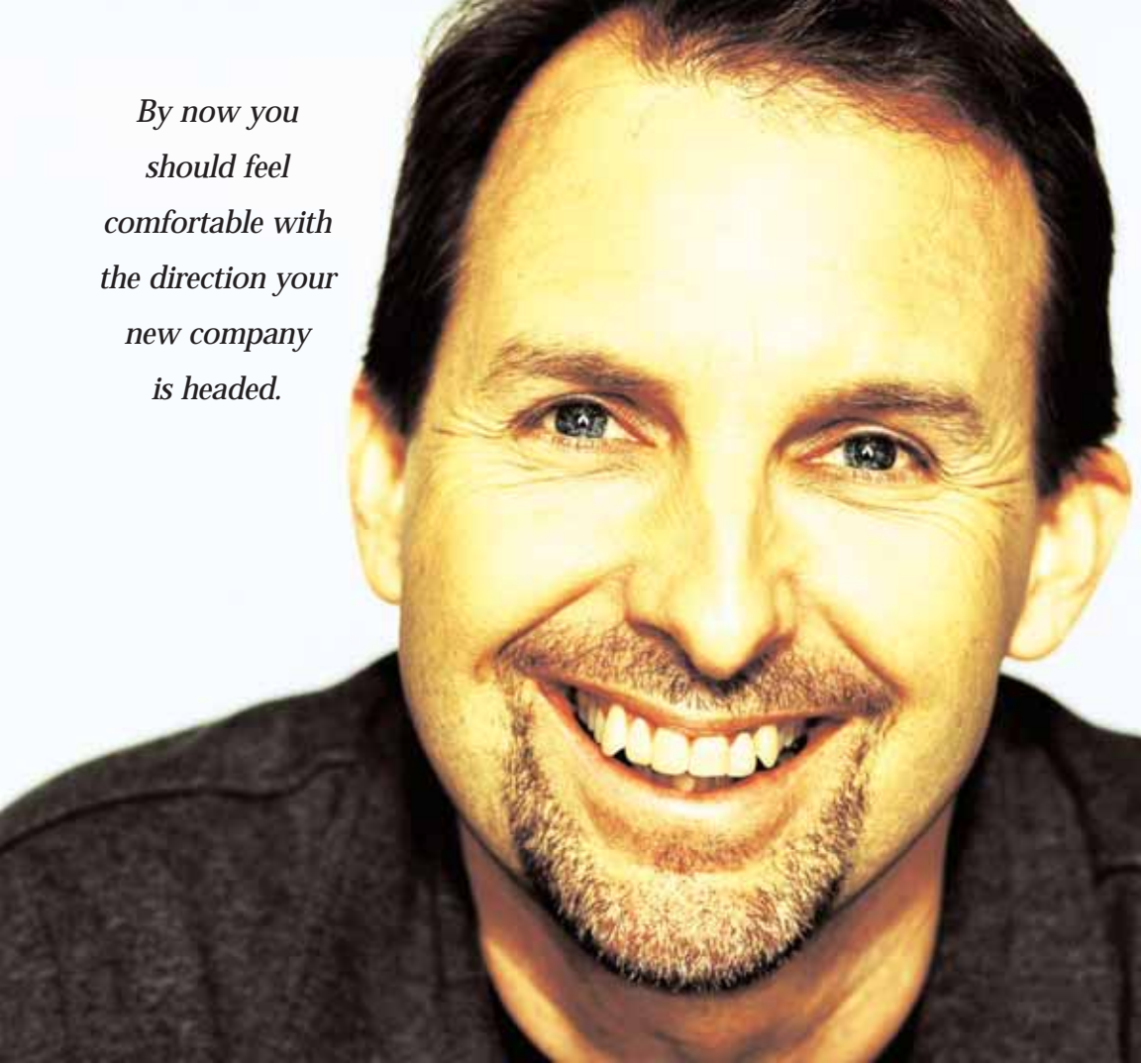
- All four major credit card companies.
- The winner's bank account.
- The winner's PayPal account balance.
- International buyers.

PayPal offers you and the buyer these safety benefits:

- Your bidders know and trust PayPal so they are more willing to do business with you.
- Your buyer is protected up to \$500.



*By now you
should feel
comfortable with
the direction your
new company
is headed.*



- PayPal protects you, the seller, from fraudulent buyers. They monitor auctions watching for such eBay members.
- Buyers can pay you by check through PayPal.
- Buyers don't have to have a PayPal account to pay you.

Lesson Wrap-Up

By now you should be feeling a sense of confidence about your blossoming business skills. Through your studies you've gained important skills, discipline, and a routine that will stay with you as your business grows. All of these things build a solid foundation both for your business and for you as a person.

This lesson was one of preparation. In lesson three you did your study, in this lesson you've prepared and in the next lesson you'll be ready to act on your study and preparation. You're bringing yourself closer to your ultimate goal of a successful and profitable business!

8—Task List for Lesson 4

1. Use your Time Management Plan to schedule and complete the following tasks:
2. Complete your time management list for this week's tasks.
3. Write in your business journal.
4. Review your Business Vision Statement.
5. Take pictures of your auction items and save them to your computer. Take as many as you need in order to get the best possible pictures.
6. Write your auction title.
7. Write your sales text.
8. Write your description.
9. Using your research on your auction items set a starting price for each item.
10. Determine which payment methods you will accept and set your shipping and handling charges.

Review your Commitment Letter and reasons you are going into business for yourself.

When you feel comfortable with the materials in this lesson proceed to lesson 5.

