

1 Technique

Efficient Searching to Find the Best Deals

Save Time By

- ✔ Making eBay search for value-priced items
- ✔ Finding eBay Search shortcuts
- ✔ Letting Favorite Searches do the work for you
- ✔ Using outside research to find your items

Do you have a friend who always seems to get incredible deals in the brick-and-mortar world, as well as online? Or someone who sells on eBay, buys most of his or her merchandise on eBay, and resells it for a considerably higher price? You can bet that both your friends know the ins and outs of working the eBay search system. This technique shows how you, too, can master the art of finding the golden nuggets on eBay.

Remember: When you're looking to purchase an item, eBay isn't always your only option. (Check out Technique 2 for other worthwhile places to search online.) But eBay's search engine is a technological wonder. It can search for your request in over 14 million auctions in a fraction of a second. Using this technique, you can take advantage of this amazing feature when you're pricing your items.



Most search techniques given here also work with other search engines on the Internet. For example, these methods can be extremely useful for getting the most out of your searches through Google or Yahoo!.

Finding Deals with eBay Search

When bidding on an auction, anyone can easily be carried away with the moment. Ego (or is it greed?) urges us not to be outbid by a few cents, then by a quarter, fifty cents, a few dollars, and sometimes more! The bidding war commences, the item sells for much more than it should, and nobody really ends up a winner. So when you see an auction marching off to the bidding war, you have alternatives to joining the fight. Before you jump into the frantic bidding, consider using eBay Search to see how many more of that item are for sale on the site. It's never the last of its breed to be on eBay. That is, unless the item is a high-dollar rarity, (in which case, stop raising the bid by repeat bidding and read Technique 3 on sniping). There will always be another item like it — sooner or later.



Before placing your bids, be sure to set limits on how much you will spend.

Taking the eBay price-comparison shortcut

Whether you're looking to purchase a *stock commodity* (an item that you could also buy in a retail store) or a collectible, you can always benefit by doing some research. First, try searching for your item on eBay, as I did when I wanted to purchase a Hewlett-Packard DVD recorder: Quite a few sellers on eBay were selling my item. But before checking out specific sales (and sellers' feedback ratings), I looked into just how much my item sold for previously.

Follow these steps to quickly avail yourself of the price-comparison options on eBay:

1. Type your item description's keywords in the basic Search box that appears on most pages on the eBay site and click Search.



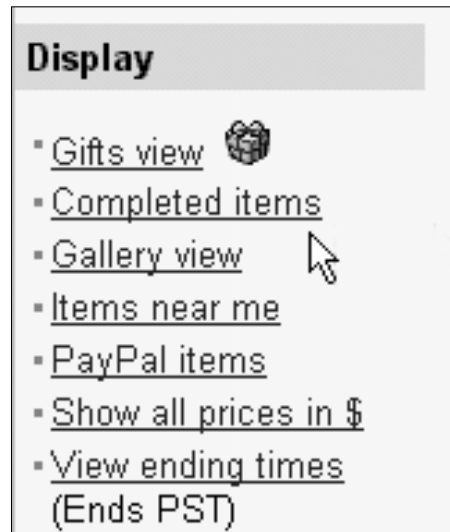
For the best search results, be specific with your item keywords. Because I also knew which model of DVD recorder I was interested in, I searched by typing the term HP DVD and the model number, too.

2. After eBay returns the current sales search results, scroll down the page to find the options boxes on the left.
3. In the Display option box, as shown in Figure 1-1, click the Completed Items link.
4. Click the Price column heading in the resulting list of completed items to sort the list by price.

To see the results as I wanted, I sorted the items by price from low to high. (See Figure 1-2.)



The method described in this step list, is the most efficient way to view pricing and availability information. While making your search, you also get to see how many of the item are currently for sale on eBay — a valuable added piece of information when comparing prices.



• Figure 1-1: The Display option box on the Search results page.

Picture	Item Title	Price ▲	Bids	Ends
	HP DVD Movie Writer DC3000	\$199.99	1	Dec-21 21:52
	HP DVD MOVIE WRITER DC3000 +R +RW CDRW CD	\$227.50	21	Dec-27 07:11
	HP DVD Movie Writer DC3000 New 'Buy it Now'	\$245.00	-	Dec-28 05:20
	HP DC3000 External DVD Burner (NEW)	\$250.00	1	Dec-16 12:29
	HP DC3000 External DVD Burner (NEW)	\$250.00	1	Dec-17 08:52
	HP DVD Movie Writer dc3000 - Brand New! Free Shipping within Canada!	\$340.00	8	Dec-20 03:29
	HP DVD MOVIE WRITER DC3000 +R +RW CDRW CD	\$270.90	13	Dec-16 20:04

• Figure 1-2: A completed item search on eBay, sorted by lowest price first.



You can also perform a Completed Item search directly from eBay's Advanced Search feature, which is accessible from the Search tab in the Navigation bar.

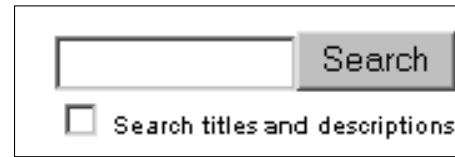
By knowing an item's current high and low price on eBay, you can estimate how much you'll have to pay when you buy. If you're trying for an item in an auction, a quick Completed Item search can give you an idea of how much to place in your proxy bid.



Always factor in the amount that the seller is charging for shipping before bidding or buying! Many sellers charge large "handling" fees disguised as shipping that can add beaucoups bucks to the amount of your item.

Refining your search without missing important data

Using eBay's search engine from the white-box page — a one-stop shop for searching that's shown in Figure 1-3 — is most efficient.



• **Figure 1-3: The innocent-looking (but powerful) white box for searching.**

In the olden days of secretarial duties, secretaries took dictation from their bosses. Because the secretaries couldn't possibly write as fast as their bosses spoke, they used a writing method called *shorthand* to help them record the important points without writing down every word. eBay's search engine also responds to a sort-of shorthand. To get the most out of your white-box searches, use the tricks in Table 1-1 to shorten search time!

TABLE 1-1: TIMESAVING SHORTHAND FOR RAPID SEARCHES

Symbol	Impact on Search	Example
Multiple words	Returns auctions with all included words in the title	reagan letter might return an auction for a mailed message from the former U.S. president, or it might return an auction for a mailed message from Jane Wyman to Ronald Reagan.
Quotes ""	Limits the search to items with the exact phrase inside the quotes	"case of" returns items that come in a case quantity. Quotes don't make the search term case sensitive. You may use either upper- or lowercase to get the same results.
Asterisk *	Serves as a wild card and is especially useful when you're not sure of spelling	budd* returns items that start with budd, such as Beanie Buddy, Beanie Buddies, or Buddy Holly — <i>any</i> word beginning with budd.
Separating comma without spaces (a,b)	Finds items related to either the item before or after the comma	(macys,macy's) returns all Macy's items, no matter in which way the seller listed them.
Minus sign –	Excludes results with the word after the –	Type in box –lunch , and you'd better not be hungry because you may find the box, but lunch won't be included.
Minus symbol and parentheses	Searches for auctions with words before the parentheses but excludes words inside the parentheses	midge –(skipper,barbie) means that auctions with the Midge doll won't have to compete for Ken's attention.
Parentheses	Searches for both versions of the word in parentheses	diamond (pin,pins) searches for both diamond pin or diamond pins.



You can type an auction number into any search box on the white-box page and go directly to the item's page.

Once you get to the Search Results page (as I show you in the preceding section) you have lots more options to refine your search. The left side of the Web page is chock-full of options — with these you can define, redefine, and weed out your searches. I recommend this approach so you don't miss anything. If you predefine your search at the beginning (from eBay's Advanced Search), you may miss some desirable information that may not show up in your "advanced" pre-defined parameters.

You have great tools to further define your search in the Display option box, as pictured in Figure 1-1. To narrow the search, click one of the links you find in the Display options. Here's what they all do:

- ✔ **Gifts View:** Narrows your search to sellers who have listed the item and paid eBay 25 cents for the privilege of showing the Gifts View icon. These sellers will guarantee to offer the options of express shipping, card inclusion, gift wrapping and/or shipping to a recipient other than the buyer. (Note that many eBay sellers do this anyway.) If you want a gift sent to someone else or gift-wrapped — just e-mail the seller prior to bidding. eBay sellers will more than likely help you out; they can be a most accommodating crew.
- ✔ **Completed Items:** Searches for items that have sold in the past 14 days — giving you a history of whether the item is very popular (How many bids did it get? Did the item go unsold?), and at what price it has sold for. (More about this specific search option in the preceding section.)
- ✔ **Gallery View:** Shows you *only* the sellers who have used a Gallery image to give you a better look at their listings. You can also see the Gallery pictures (if you don't see them in your search) by clicking the Show Picture link in the Picture column next to the item title. This is a much more efficient way to view Gallery pictured items among the other listings — you won't miss out on any of the other hundreds of deals from sellers who don't use the Gallery!
- ✔ **Items Near Me:** Takes you to a page where you can select from over 50 regions of the United States. It's a very handy feature if you need something fast or might want to pick it up from the seller.
- ✔ **PayPal Items:** If you want to pay via PayPal, this is a great way to isolate the type of sales you need.
- ✔ **Show All Prices in \$:** If you want to purchase from overseas sellers, but have a problem mentally converting from United Kingdom pounds or Euros to dollars, click this option. When you click this option, prices from sellers selling in other currencies will appear in the search results in U.S. dollars and in *italics*.
- ✔ **View Time Left or View Ending Times:** This is my favorite. Without clicking View Time Left, all you'll see is results with the date and time they end. That's in eBay (or Military Pacific) time. Unless you're a math whiz (or you have my Web site page with the eBay time chart printed out next to you — and you can get it at www.coolbaytools.com), clicking here makes life easier. It converts search results to how many days, hours, and minutes are left in the auction. If you want, you can toggle back and forth between the two viewing methods till you figure which one works best for you.



When you choose View Time Left as a search display option, listings ending within an hour show up in red. The number of minutes left in the listing is followed by the abbreviation *m*. If there is less than a minute left, there will be a "less than" symbol and the number 1: <1.

Finding Your Item in eBay Stores

A little known fact about eBay is that when you search the eBay site for an item, your search will not extend to eBay Stores. Many eBay sellers have eBay stores chock-full of merchandise that's often cheaper than the items you'll find on the regular eBay site. (The listing fees are considerably cheaper in the

stores.) If you want to search eBay Stores only, you can go to eBay's search page and search on the Stores tab, as shown in Figure 1-4.

The screenshot shows the eBay search interface with the 'Stores' tab selected. The search bar contains the text 'Search keywords or item number (required)'. Below the search bar are several filters: 'Search title and description' (unchecked), 'Words to exclude', 'Price range' (Between \$ and \$), 'View results' (Buy It Now items in Stores only), 'Payment method' (Search for items that accept PayPal), 'Search in categories' (All Categories), 'Item location' (All of eBay - include all regions), and 'Sort by' (Items ending first). At the bottom, there is a 'Search for Stores by Store Name' field and a 'Search Stores' button.

• **Figure 1-4:** eBay's main search, showing the tab that searches Stores only.

A quicker way to get to the stores is to use the white-box search method and scroll down the page to those handy links on the left. Near the bottom of the page, you find the More on eBay box, as in Figure 1-5.

The 'More on eBay' box features a header 'Shop eBay Stores' with a '+ stores' button. Below the header is a list of store recommendations: 'Marsha Collier's Fabulous Finds (3)', 'Rich Dads Helpful Books and Audio (2)', and 'Rick's Bargain Outlet (2)'. At the bottom of the list is a link for 'GotMusicStu... (1)'. A link at the bottom of the box reads 'See all matching Stores'.

• **Figure 1-5:** Click a link here to go directly to a store or to find all stores that match your item.



If you find yourself in an eBay Store you particularly like, look for a Save this Store in Favorites link at the top of the store's home page. Click this link to save the store in your My eBay Favorites area.

Saving Time with Favorite Searches

eBay's My eBay page has a tab called Favorite Searches. This button shows up in the sub-navigation bar when you click Search on any eBay page, as shown in Figure 1-6. You can access your favorites directly from your My eBay page or by clicking the pictured Favorite Searches sub-navigation button.



Saving a search as a Favorite is a real time-saver. If you manage to keep your regular eBay searches down to a measly 100, you can store them in one convenient, highly clickable space that's available (through the Favorite Searches tab) from any Search page on eBay. Click the Add to My Favorite Searches link at the top of any Search Results page to turn your regular searches into favorite ones.

The screenshot shows the eBay navigation bar with links for 'home', 'pay', 'sign out', 'services', 'site map', and 'help'. Below these are buttons for 'Browse', 'Search', 'Sell', 'My eBay', and 'Community'. Underneath, there are three sub-navigation buttons: 'find items', 'find members', and 'favorite searches', with 'favorite searches' being the highlighted tab.

• **Figure 1-6:** The eBay navigation bar with the Favorite Searches tab.

Because aluminum Christmas trees are coming into vogue again, I might want to get one for my office for the next holiday season. Unfortunately, all my Internet searches find them at prices over \$300, so eBay is the perfect place to look for my tree. I'm hoping to find one (in good condition) that someone would rather sell than store for another year.

All Categories		Add to My Favorite Searches		
111 items found for tree (xmas,christmas) alum*				
Sort by items: ending first newly listed lowest priced highest priced				
show picture	Item Title	Price	Bids	Ends
	E.S. Swirl Aluminum Taper Christmas Tree Vint	\$46.00	4	in 5 mins
	26" vintage table top aluminum Christmas tree	\$56.00	-	in 24 mins
	Vintage 6' Aluminum Christmas Tree	\$172.50	31	in 34 mins
	Aluminum Sparkler 6 Foot Christmas Tree NR	\$20.50	3	in 54 mins
	Peco 6 Ft. Aluminum Pom Pom Christmas Tree	\$48.56	7	Jan-02 16:15
	VINTAGE 6 FT. ALUMINUM CHRISTMAS TREE	\$24.95	1	Jan-02 16:56

• **Figure 1-7: A search for the very elusive *cheap* aluminum Christmas tree.**

In Figure 1-7, I've performed a search using some eBay search shortcuts (see Table 1-1): `tree alum*` helps me accomplish several things:

- ✓ `tree`: Because I'm looking for a tree, not a stand.
- ✓ `(xmas,Christmas)`: Searches on alternate spellings so that I find *Christmas* even if the seller has spelled it *Xmas*.
- ✓ `alum*`: Correct spelling can be difficult, especially in a word like *aluminum*, so this shortcut also finds any item listed where *aluminum* is misspelled (assuming that the beginning *alum* is correct!).

Note that on the top of the Search Results page, you find a link called Add to My Favorite Searches. Clicking this link takes you to the page shown in Figure 1-8, where you can add the search to your My eBay Favorite Searches area.

Add to My Favorite Searches

Save options: (17 saved, Max: 100)

New search

Replace one of these with my new search:

ketchup chips

murano lamp

grueu

J Ribkoff

(cemetery,cemetery) (plot, plo

Search name: Max:30 characters

Search criteria: **tree (xmas, christmas) alum***

Email preferences: (28 available) Email me daily whenever there are new items.
For how long?

• **Figure 1-8: Adding a Favorite Search to My eBay.**

On this page, you can add a new search or replace an old search. Best of all, notice the option to make use of eBay's e-mail service. Mark this check box if you want eBay to notify you via e-mail daily for up to 30 searches as matching items are listed on the site. You can set the search — and the e-mail notifications — to go on for as long as a year. I've been successful with that option, especially when I'm looking for a rare item that doesn't show up on eBay regularly. Figure 1-9 shows an e-mail message I received, notifying me of new listings that matched a saved favorite search.

New Items Found		eBay		
Dear marsha_c,				
New items have been found on eBay matching your favorite search for:				
Search Criteria: tree (xmas, christmas) alum*				
Email Duration: 6 days left				
Search run at: Jan-07-04 21:40:00 PST				
My Favorite Search Results (10 of 265)		View all search results		
Picture	Item Name	Price	Bids	End Date
	94 POM-POM ALUMINUM TREE BRANCHES	\$32.14	10	Jan-08-04 10:13:55 PST
	4 foot Aluminum Christmas Tree w/box	\$19.45	3	Jan-08-04 14:49:33 PST
	vintage 6ft Alum xmas tree w/color wheel nice	\$82.00	8	Jan-08-04 11:45:09 PST

• **Figure 1-9: An eBay e-mail notifying me of new listings!**

Figure 1-10 shows you my personal My eBay Favorites tab. (No laughing when you see the favorite searches — if you ever meet me, just ask me about them.) This tab is where your favorite search shows up after you’ve recorded one. You can also record a search from this page by clicking the Add New Search link in the top bar.



• Figure 1-10: My eBay Favorite Searches.

Marking Favorite Sellers for Speedy Return Visits

After I’ve had a successful transaction with particular sellers and find that they carry the types of merchandise that I’m interested in, I like to go back and check their items for sale from time to time. I’m in

luck! The My eBay Favorites tab also has a place where I can add my favorite sellers!

Anytime you’re on the eBay site and find a seller whose items you’d like to visit again, follow these simple steps:

1. Go to your My eBay Favorites area.
2. Click the My Favorite Sellers/Stores link and then the link to add a new seller.
3. On the resulting page (as shown in Figure 1-11), fill in the Seller’s User ID or Store Name text box.
4. Click the Save Favorite button to add this new favorite seller.

You can save up to 30 sellers or stores on this page.



• Figure 1-11: Adding a new favorite seller.