

Chapter 1

Smart Searching on eBay

With millions of items for sale on eBay, and more appearing every day, finding what you want can be very time-consuming. Good search skills can help you to find bargains and save time.












Although you can sort through listings using the eBay Browse feature, the huge number of items in many categories can be overwhelming. Because of this, many people prefer to use searches rather than to browse on eBay.

You can use some tips and tricks to make your searches more effective. The eBay search pages feature different parameters that narrow down your hunt for a specific type of item, and you can even combine browsing and searching as a search strategy.

In addition to eBay's search features, you can use third-party tools such as timeBLASTER, to save time and more easily narrow down the items that you seek among the millions of eBay listings. For information about using timeBLASTER to search both eBay Stores and regular auction listings at once, see Task #111.

You can benefit from eBay's search features as both a buyer and a seller. As a buyer, you can use search tricks, such as searching for listings with typos and transpositions, to find items that other buyers may overlook. As a seller, you can use parameters, such as Completed Items only, to research items that are similar to those that you sell. Because eBay shoppers expect good deals, it is critical to know what kind of sales prices you can expect for your items. As a result, you know what you can afford to spend on inventory and still make a reasonable profit.

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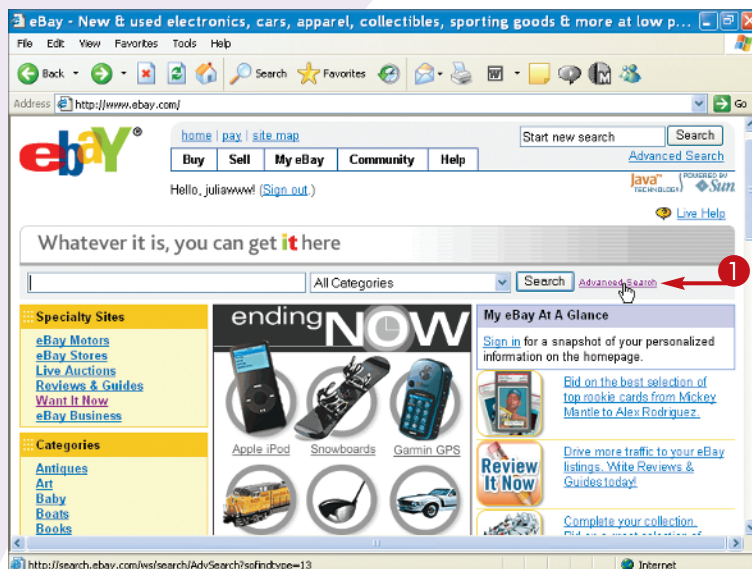
Expand your SEARCH DEPTH

You can increase the number of search hits that you receive by looking for items by both title and description. The Search title and description option on the eBay Basic Search tab allows you to retrieve items that contain keywords in both the item description and the item title.

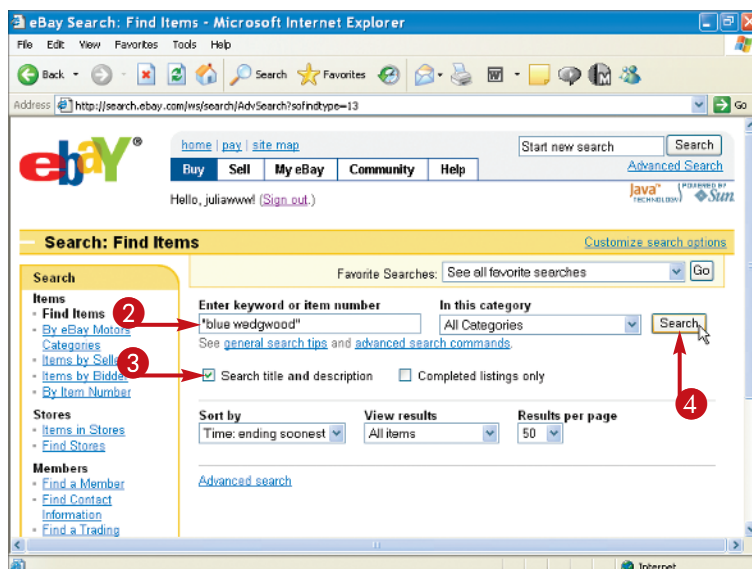
If you search using titles only, then you may miss a large percentage of the available items. For example, in one search for blue Wedgwood — a popular type of collectible china — with the title and description option activated, the search results produced 50

items. A similar search using the titles-only option resulted in only 19 items, missing more than half of the available items.

You may miss items when you use the titles-only search because sellers do not always include the keywords that you expect in their titles. This occurs when sellers do not have enough space to fully describe their item in the title, do not choose the most appropriate words, or have several ways to describe the item.



- 1 In the main eBay home page, click the Advanced Search link.

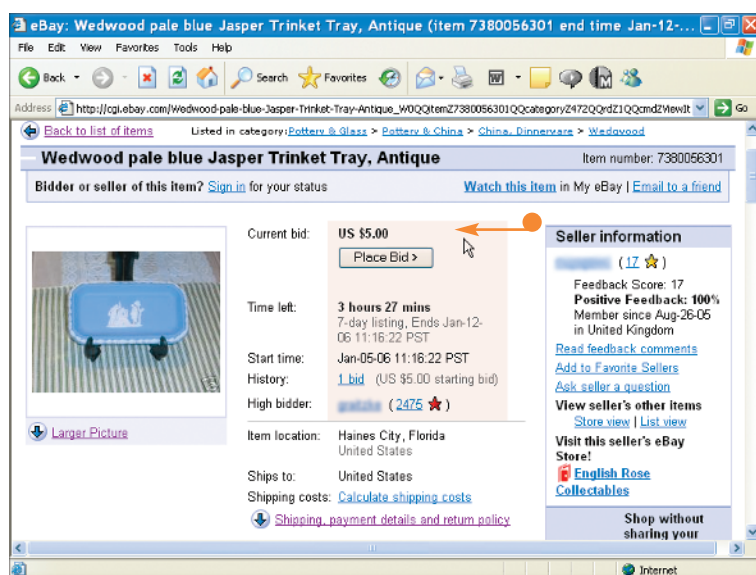
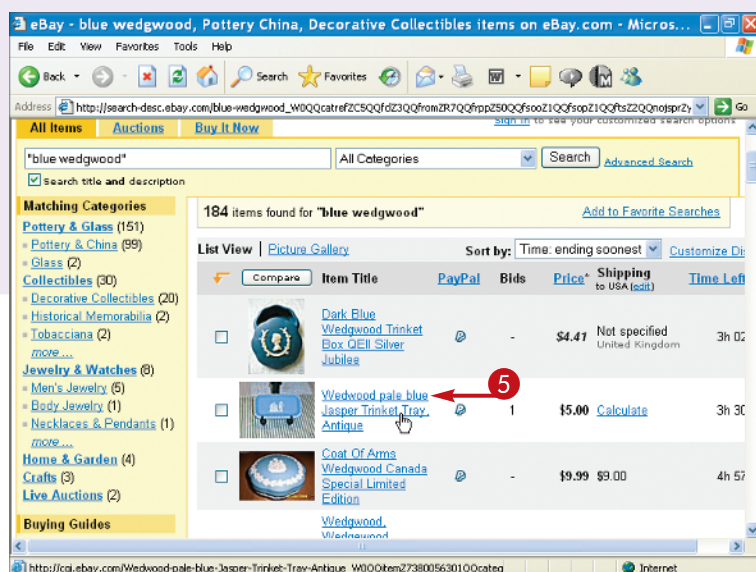


The Search page appears.

- 2 Type the keywords that describe the item you want, leaving spaces between each keyword, and placing quotation marks around all of the words.
- 3 Click to select the Search title and description option.
- 4 Click Search.

eBay retrieves and displays all items with titles or item descriptions that contain your keywords.

- Click a listing.



The details page appears for the listing.

- The page contains information that includes the item's current bid, the time left in the auction, how many bids the item has received, and the identity of the current high bidder.

TIPS

Buyer Beware!

Carefully read the descriptions of items on which you intend to bid. Although your keywords may appear in an item description, you may not want the item. For example, the parameters "blue Wedgwood" may return an ottoman of blue Wedgwood color, as well as blue Wedgwood china.

Did You Know?

You can also access the Advanced Search page by clicking the Advanced Search link on the upper right of the eBay home page, below and to the right of the Start new search field. If you want to perform only a simple title search, then you can type your search words into the text box on the main eBay home page, to the left of the All Categories drop-down box; or into the text box above the Advanced Search link.

Perform an ADVANCED SEARCH

You can perform a more powerful search by using eBay's Advanced Search feature, which contains many parameters that you can use to narrow down your search.

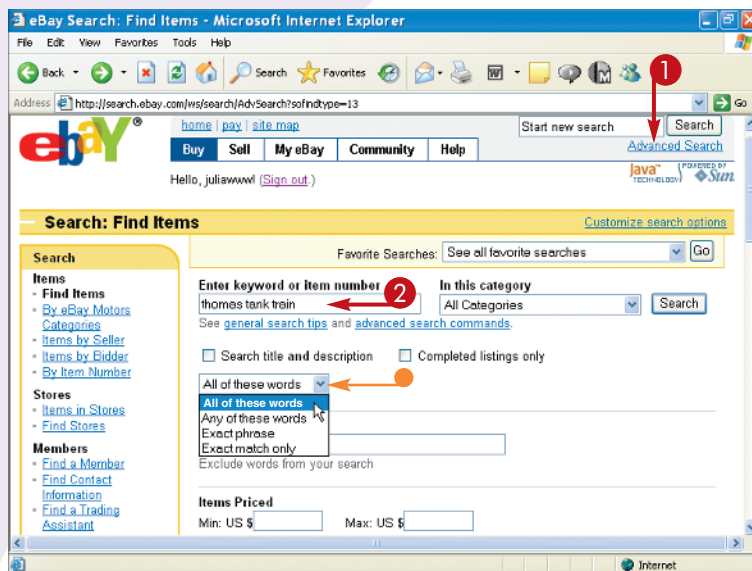
Although you can combine some of these parameters to optimize your search, using too many of them together may severely limit your search results. For this reason, it is important to understand how each option can benefit you.

The Exclude these words text box allows you to eliminate certain keywords from the search. For

example, if you know that you want metal and not wooden toy trains, then you can type **wooden** in this text box.

The Show only Buy It Now Items option displays items for immediate purchase, and is especially useful if you see a bargain. For more on this feature, see Tasks #9 and #43.

The Show only Gift Items option yields listings that the sellers designate as gifts. In some cases, the seller may even offer gift wrapping and shipping to the gift recipient.

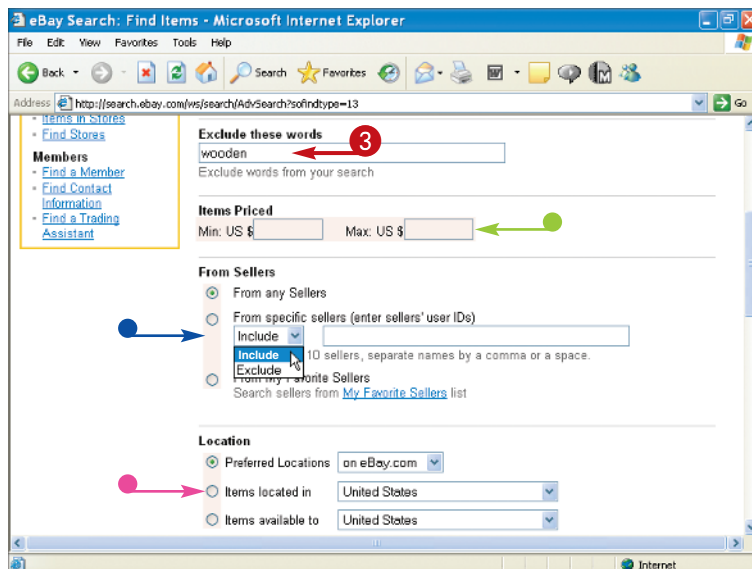


- 1 In the eBay home page, click the Advanced Search link.

The Advanced Search page appears.

- 2 Type the word or phrase for the item that you want to find.

- You can click here and select a search option.



- 3 Type the word or words that you want to exclude.

- You can type a minimum and a maximum price.
- You can select a From Sellers option.
- You can select a Location option.

You may need to scroll your screen to view all of the options.

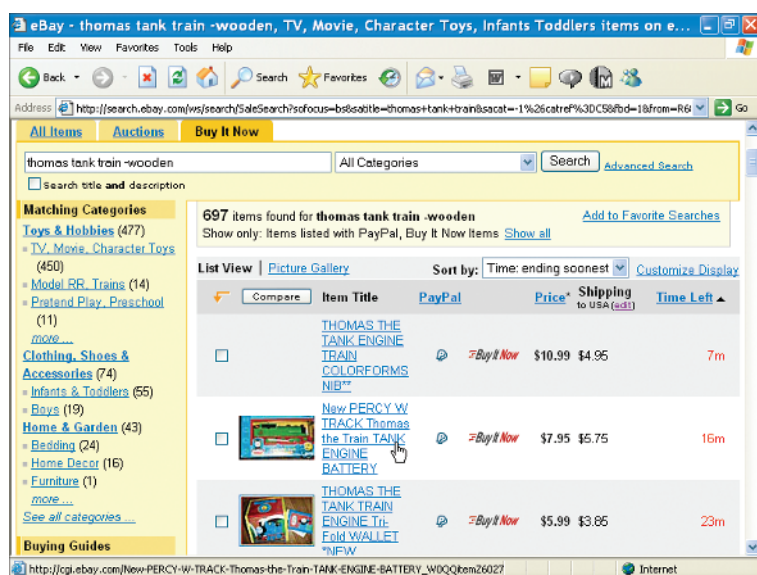
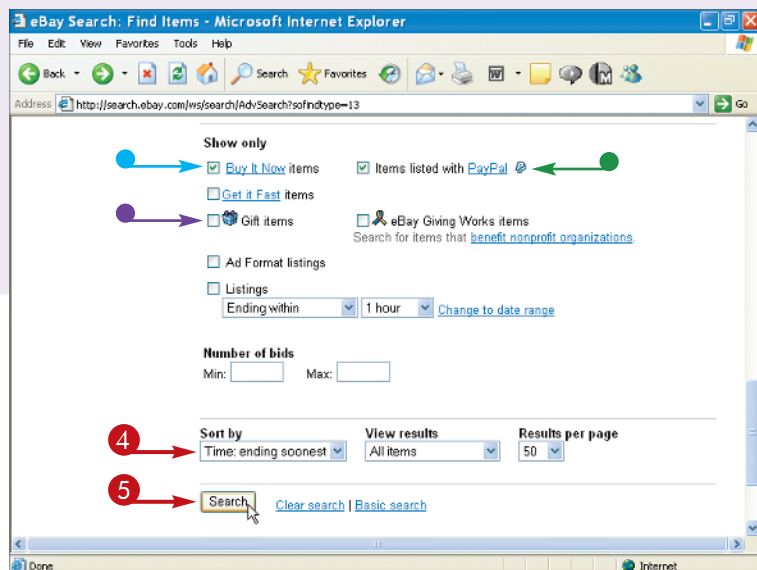
#2

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

- You can select the Show only Buy It Now items option to show items for immediate purchase.
- You can click the Show only Gift items option.
- You can select the Show only Items listed with PayPal option.
- 4 Select a Sort by option. You may need to scroll your screen.
- 5 Click Search.

The search results appear.

This example lists all Buy It Now, non-wooden Thomas Tank train items that are payable by PayPal, with auctions that end first at the top of the list.



TIPS

More Options!

When you select the Completed listings only option, you receive hits for auctions that have ended. This is useful when you want to research how past items have sold. For more information on this option, see Task #3.

More Options!

In the Sort by list, you can select these options: the Time: ending soonest option lists auctions that are about to end first; the Time: newly listed option displays auctions that have just gone live first, followed by those that are about to end; the Price: lowest first option shows items from the cheapest to the most expensive; the Price: highest first option shows items from the most expensive to the cheapest. You can also choose an option to sort by distance and payment type.

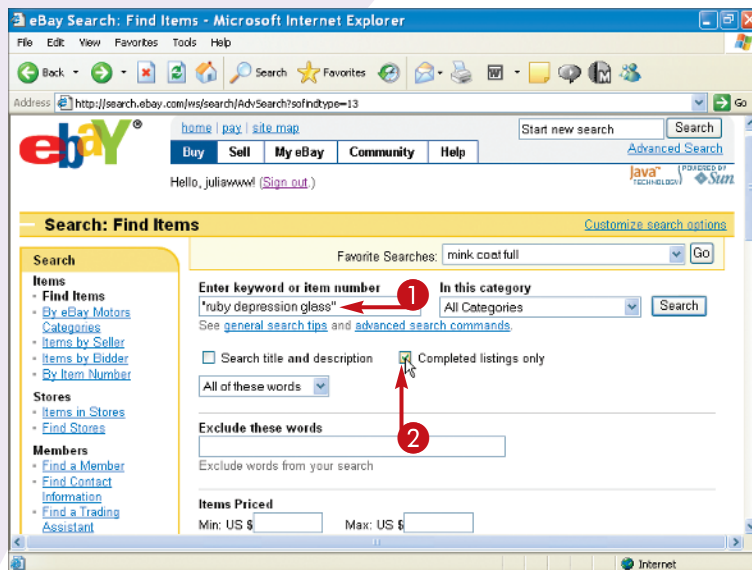
FIND MARKET PRICES

for completed items

You can use the Completed listings only option in the Advanced Search page to research the final selling prices for different types of items from the last two weeks. As a buyer, this information gives you an idea of what to expect as a final bid. As a seller, this information allows you to estimate what market prices you can expect for your own, similar items. Knowing an item's recent market price helps you to avoid buying inventory at a price that is too high to yield a profit.

To see what has sold for the most and least money, you can use the Sort by menu to select either the Price: highest first or Price: lowest first option. Viewing the highest prices shows you the items that can make you the most money; viewing the lowest prices shows you what items to avoid selling.

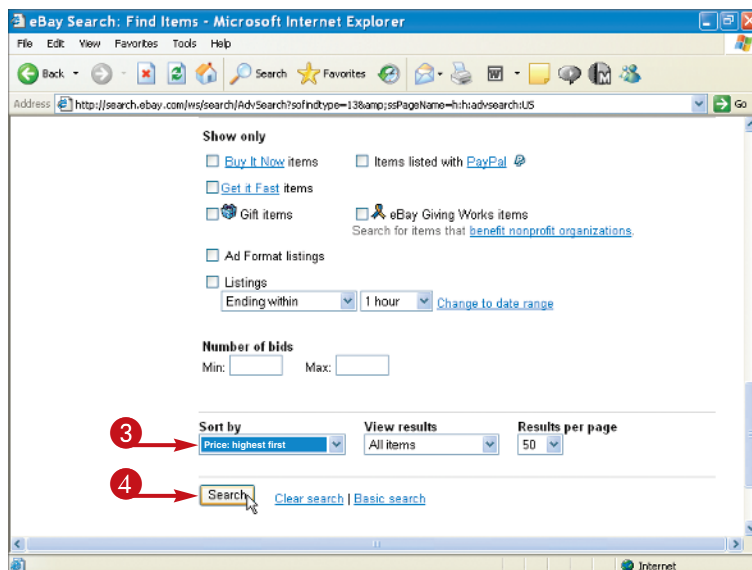
Keep in mind that items that do not meet their reserve, or asking prices, are not necessarily good reflections of a particular item's market value, nor should you use them for research purposes.



- 1 In the Advanced Search page, type a keyword or phrase.

Note: See Task #2 for more information on the Advanced Search page.

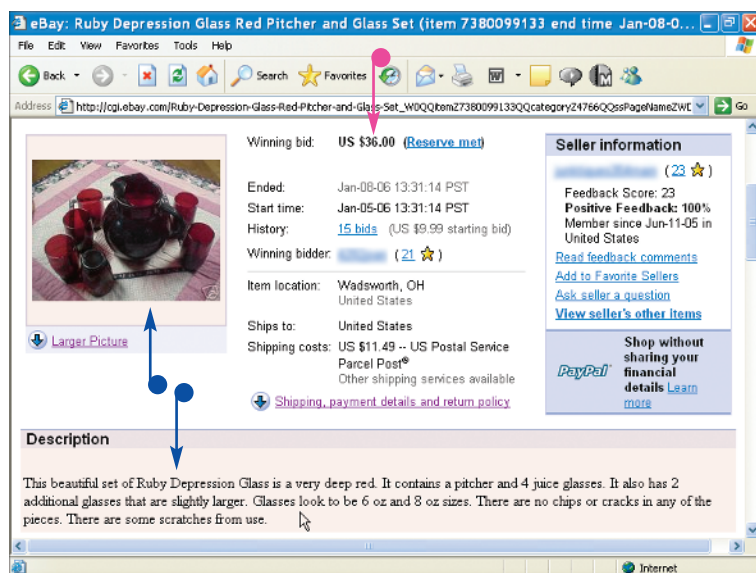
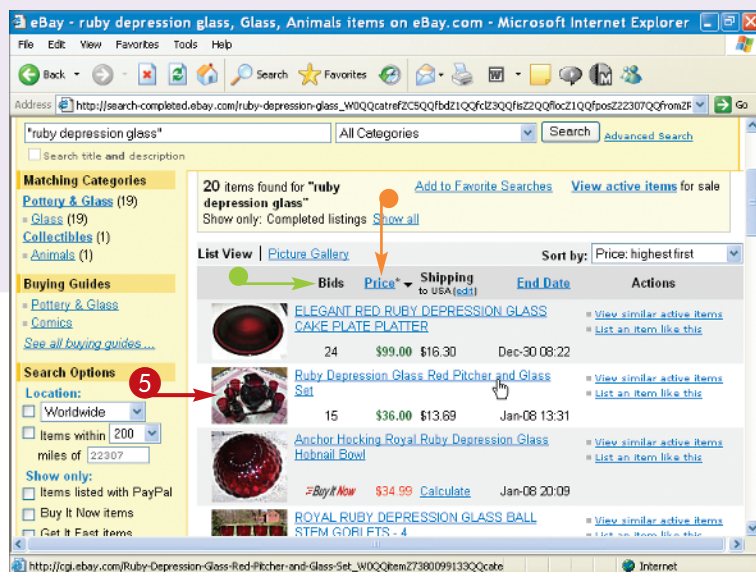
- 2 Click to select the Completed listings only option.



- 3 Click here and select the Price: highest first option.

You may have to scroll to see this option.

- 4 Click Search.



The search results appear.

- You can scan the Price column to see which items resulted in the highest prices.

- You can scan the Bids column for the highest number of bids, which indicates a popular item.

- Click a listing.

- The details page appears for the item and contains a photo and a detailed description.

You should review the listing carefully to learn why the item sold for such a high price or had the highest number of bids.

- This example shows an item that met its reserve price.

Items that do not meet the reserve price are not necessarily accurate reflections of a market price.

#3



TIPS

Savvy eBaying!

For a thorough search, try different word combinations for items. For example, consider using the words antique glass as well as Depression glass, as different sellers may select different names or descriptions for their items.

Buyer Beware!

Various factors can influence the final sales price of an item, including condition, age, color, and season.

Buyer Beware!

Look at a variety of hits in the search returns, because the highest and lowest prices may not reflect the average sales price of a certain type of item. The Bids column on the results page shows the number of bids that the item received and indicates the level of interest in it. Lower numbers in this column usually indicate lower interest.

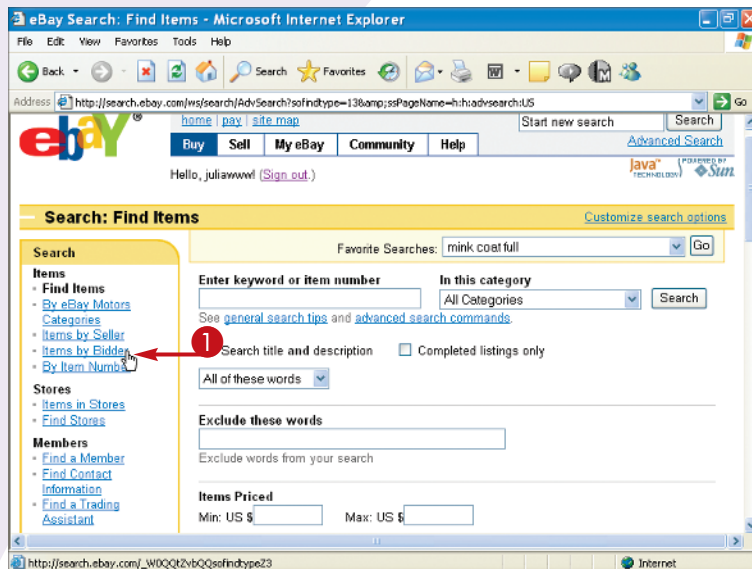
View what OTHERS HAVE BOUGHT

You can use the Items by Bidder feature in the eBay search page to view what other users bid on and buy. The Items by Bidder option allows you to benefit from other people's shopping skills, because they may find a great item that you would otherwise miss. If you often bid against certain users in key categories, then you can use their user IDs in an Items by Bidder search.

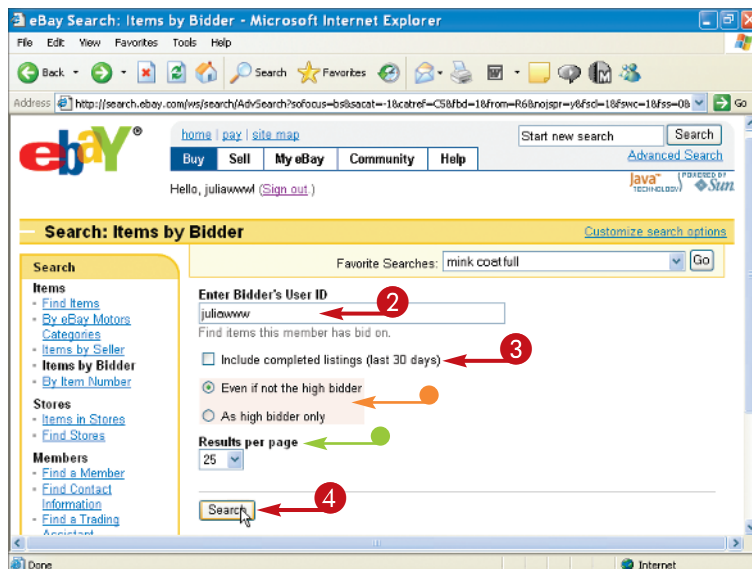
On the Items by Bidder page, when you type the bidder's eBay ID, a list of the items on which that person is bidding appears. This information includes

an item number, a start and end date and time, price, title, current high bidder, and seller.

You can choose not to include completed items if you only want to see the items on which a user is currently bidding. You can also select the As high bidder only option to eliminate auctions that the user has lost. Finally, you can specify how many results display on each page: 5, 10, 25, 50, 75, 100, or 200.

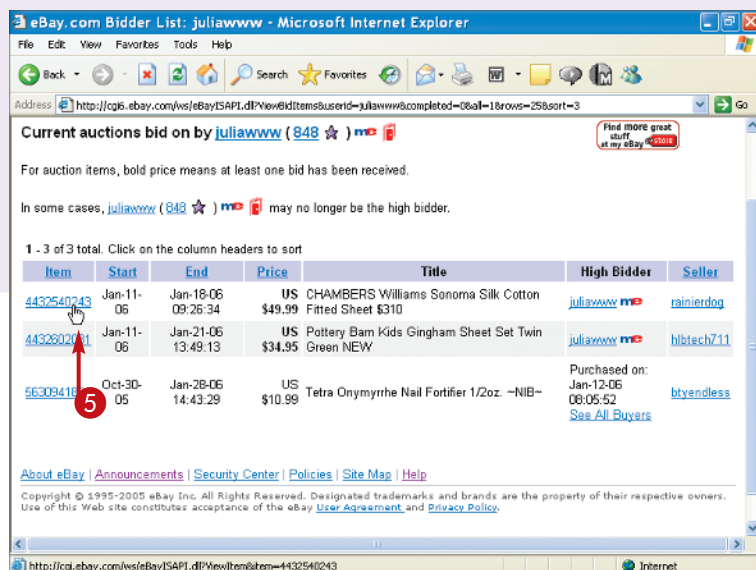


- 1 In the eBay Search page, click the Items by Bidder link.



The Items by Bidder page appears.

- 2 Type the bidder's user ID.
- 3 Click to select whether you want to include or exclude completed listings.
- 4 You can select either the Even if not the high bidder or As high bidder only options.
- 5 You can click here and select the number of results that you want to see on each page.
- 6 Click Search.

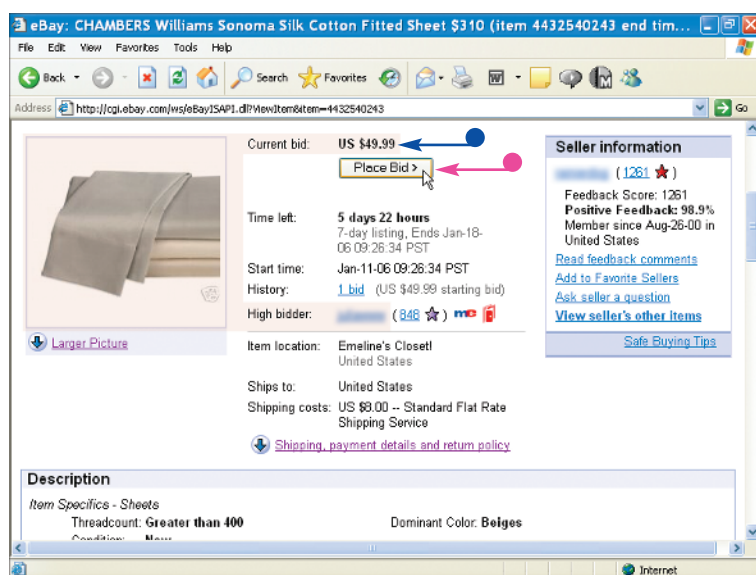


The titles appear for auctions on which the user has bid.

#4

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

- 5 If eBay lists any item on which you want to bid, then click that item number.



- You can view an item on which the bidder is presently bidding.
- You can click Place Bid to begin bidding.

TIPS

Savvy Selling!

You can use the Items by Bidder page to learn what your customers want. For example, if you sell bubble wrap, and you see your repeat customers bidding on tape and envelopes, then you should consider adding those items to your inventory.

Did You Know?

Have you received e-mails from an eBay member who does not specify their user ID? If you have completed previous transactions with this member, then you can look up their user ID. In the Items by Bidder page, click the Find a Member link, and then type the e-mail address in the Enter User ID or email address of member text box. eBay prompts you through a security screen, where you can click Search to retrieve the user's ID.

BROWSE

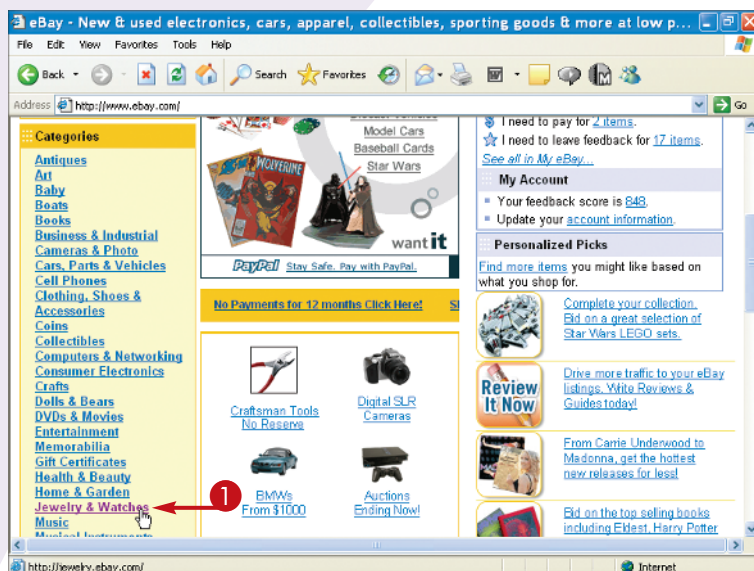
to supplement your searches

You can increase your chances of finding items if you supplement your searches by browsing in the appropriate eBay category. This is because some sellers use titles or descriptions that you may not find when you perform a search.

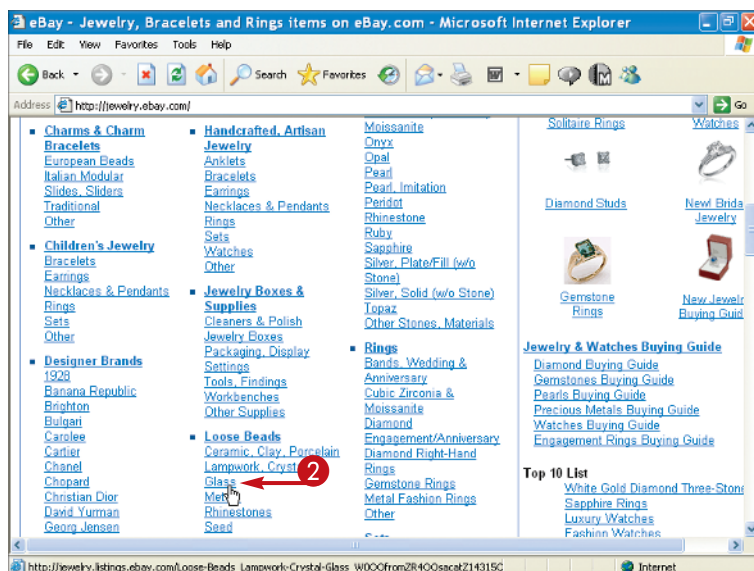
Some eBay treasure-hunters actively use this search method to find listings where a seller has an item whose true value they do not realize. For example, one eBay browser bought an old manuscript written by a famous author, although the seller did not know that the writer of the manuscript was famous. The

buyer found this manuscript by looking for clues to its origin from the seller's description.

Because eBay offers a steadily growing number of category choices, you must check similar categories to obtain a thorough search. For example, under the Jewelry and Watches category, some items make sense in both the subcategories of Loose Beads and Loose Diamonds & Gemstones. Although some sellers list items in a second category, not all sellers do. Sellers sometimes even have items that can belong in more than two categories.



- 1 In the eBay home page, click a main category of your choice under the Categories heading.



The list of categories appears.

- 2 Click a subcategory.

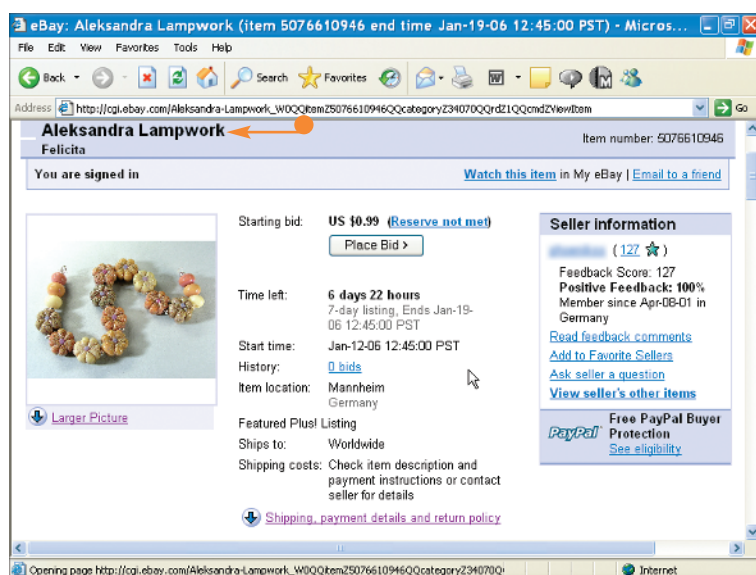
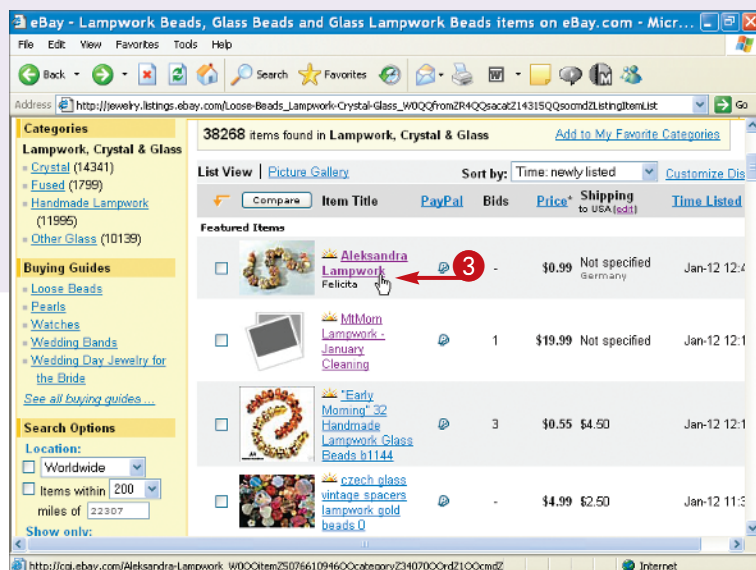
Because eBay can have long category lists, you may need to scroll down through the page.

You may need to click through several layers of subcategories to find the subcategory of your choice.

The results list appears, displaying all of the items in the category that you selected.

Review the different types of auctions that are available.

- 3 Click a listing.



The details page appears for the listing.

You may find an unusual item that you may otherwise not find when you do a search.

- In this example, the listing title does not contain the word bead, but is instead for lampwork, a type of bead.

TIP

More Options!

To get a quick overview of eBay's categories, click the All Categories link, located beneath the Everything Else link on the eBay home page. The All Categories link allows you to see all of the first- and second-level eBay categories on one page, which can quickly help to familiarize you with the various category options as they currently stand.

[Video Games](#)
[Everything Else](#)
[All Categories](#)



Use categories to REFINE YOUR SEARCH

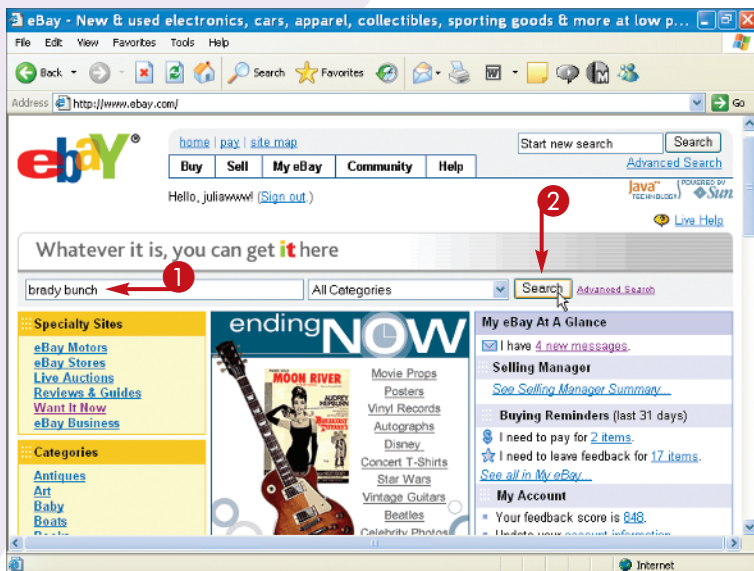
You can combine browsing and searching to narrow down your search. This technique allows you to take advantage of eBay's large category hierarchy by moving through the many category layers — sometimes referred to as *drilling down* — to access the items that you want. You may need to drill down into several subcategories before you find your item.

Combining the Search and Browse features is especially useful when you want to browse for a specific item, but do not know in which category that

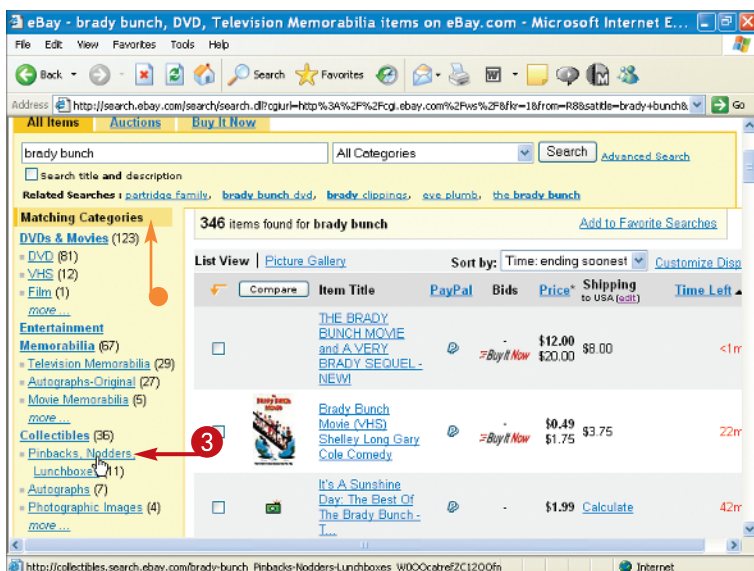
item belongs. You may also find this technique useful if the item falls into several different categories. For more information on browsing, see Task #5.

You can combine the Browse and Search features by using the Matching Categories list, which appears on the left side of the page after you do a search. eBay often lists more than one category here, and presents you with a list of matching categories.

When you perform a search and then enter a matching category, eBay's search continues to filter out items according to your search words.



- 1 Type a search word or phrase into an eBay Search text box.
- 2 Click Search.



The search results appear.

- The Matching Categories pane appears on the left side of the page.

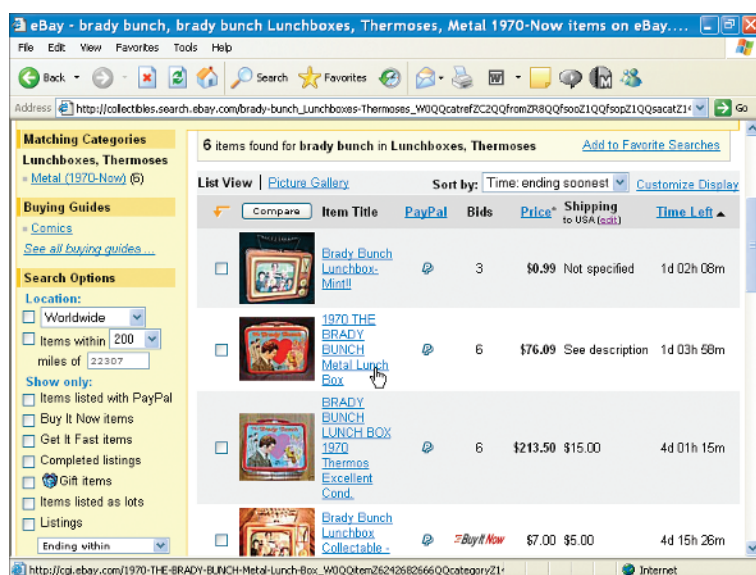
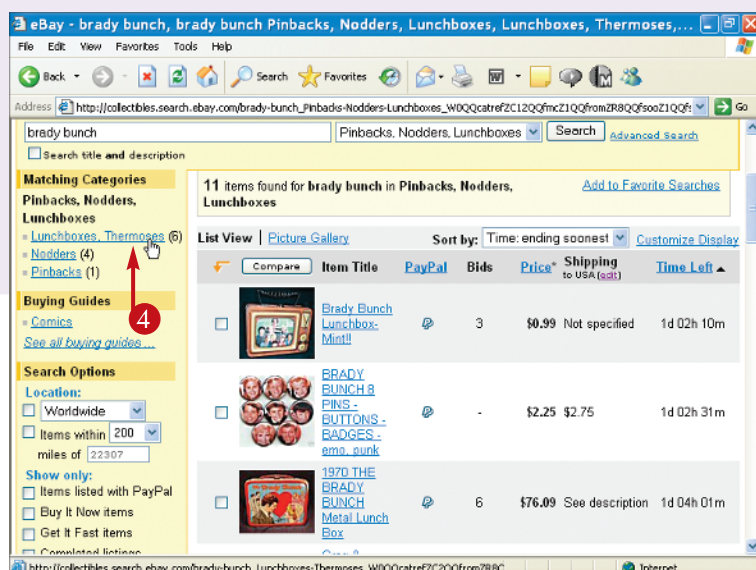
These categories vary, depending on the search words that you typed.

- 3** Click the category that you want.

The search results appear.

eBay narrows down the Matching Categories list to smaller categories.

- 4 Click another category under Matching Categories.



eBay displays the search results, further narrowing down the items.

TIPS

More Options!

You can perform a search within any given category. In the eBay home page, click a top-level category. Once you drill down into a category with auction listings on the right, you can type search words into the Search text box on the upper left, and then select an option from the category drop-down list next to it.

Did You Know?

You can get information about keywords that eBay buyers and sellers use most often in the Common Keywords page, located at <http://keyword-index.ebay.com/a-1.html>. From there, you can browse a list of keywords, and sort them Alphabetically, by Products Only, By Category, or by Stores. If you click a link, then a list of popular keywords displays, sorted by the option of your choice.

Find HOT ITEMS

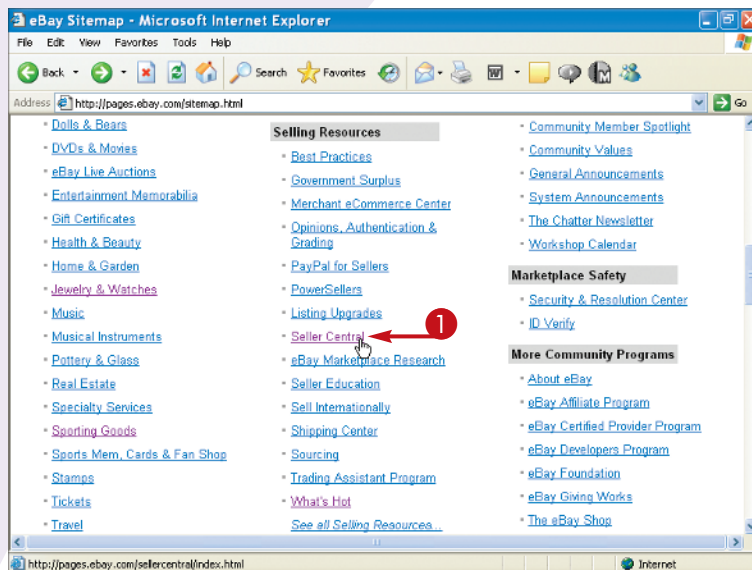
You can read the Hot Items by Category document, located in Seller Central, to determine which items have sold well recently. eBay staff creates a list of items that are hot sellers in each category. eBay defines *hot items* as recent items whose bidding growth significantly outpaces new listings growth, or where the bid-to-item ratios are higher than other products in the same parent category.

As a seller, you can read the Hot Items by Category list to get ideas for things that you can sell to make the most money. You can put the hot items

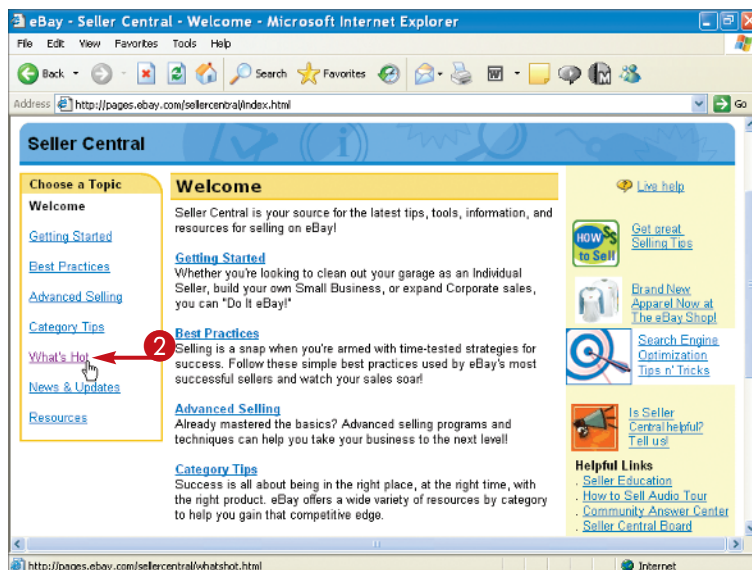
information to work and experiment with new types of products, and see what sells.

Because the hot items list changes regularly, it is a good idea to check it frequently to get the best idea of what sells well in a particular category.

As an alternative to the steps in this task, you can also use a pay service that does the tedious work of searching for hot items for you. One service is Andale's What's Hot. To use Andale's service, go to www.andale.com.

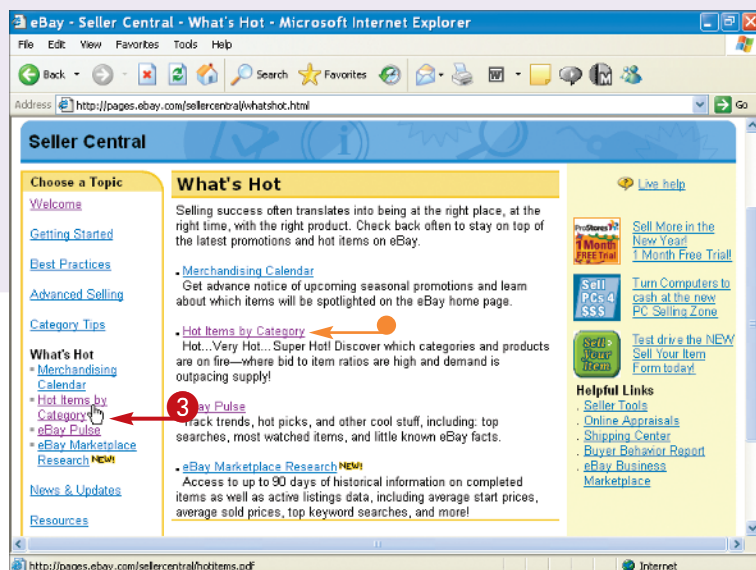


- 1 In the eBay Site Map page, located at pages.ebay.com/sitemap.html, click the Seller Central link under Selling Resources.



The Seller Central page appears.

- 2 Click the What's Hot link.



The What's Hot page appears.

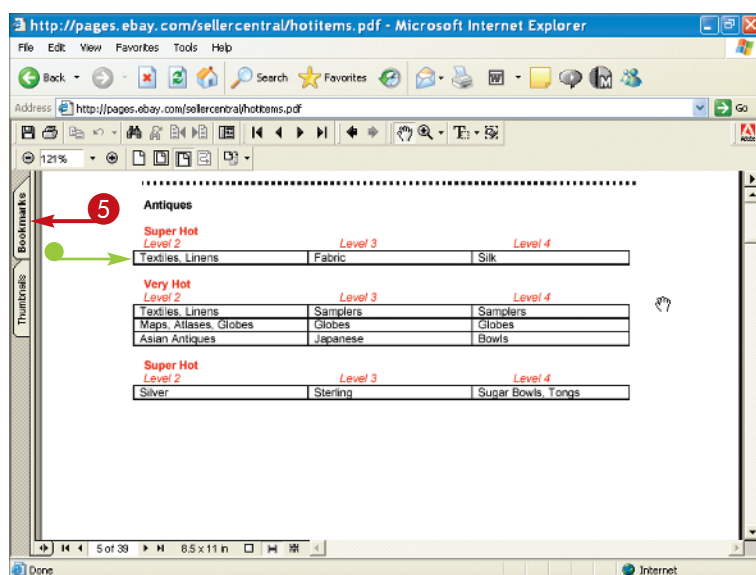
- 3 Click the Hot Items by Category link.

You may need to scroll down to access this link.

- You can also click the Hot Items by Category link here.

#7

DIFFICULTY LEVEL



The Hot Categories Report opens as an Adobe Acrobat PDF file.

If you do not already have the Adobe Acrobat Reader, then eBay may prompt you to download it.

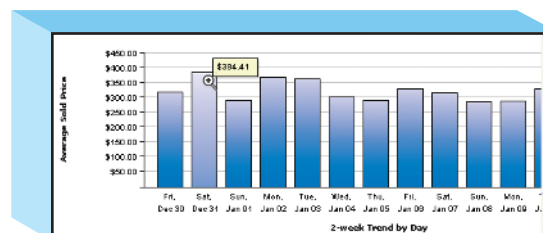
- 5 Click the Bookmarks tab to view the report.

- You can view the Hot Products by category.

TIP

More Options!

You can get more information about what's selling well on eBay, including up to 90 days of completed items data, information on average sale prices, and charts, by using eBay's Marketplace Research feature. Prices range from a one-time, two-day usage fee of \$2.99 to a Pro subscription fee of \$24.99 each month.



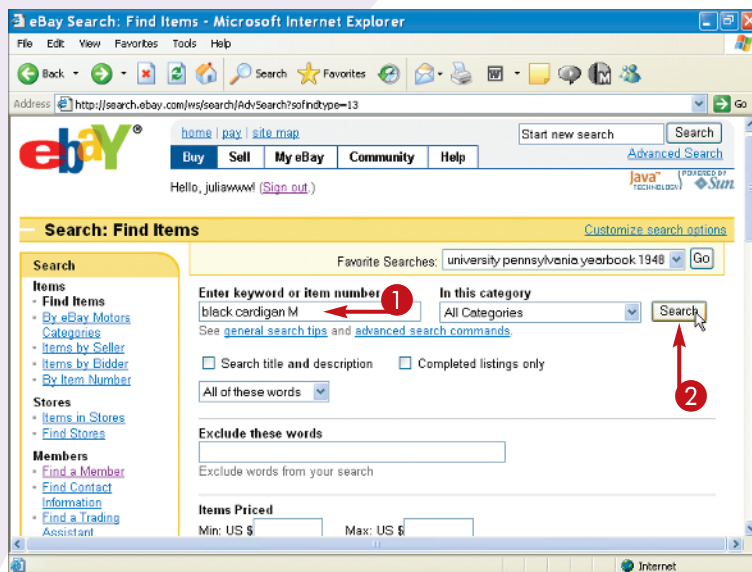
Search WHILE YOU SLEEP

You can use eBay's My Favorite Search feature to have the system regularly scan for a certain type of item. This is a convenient and timesaving way to locate a particular item without having to perform multiple manual searches. This technique is especially useful when you are not in a hurry, and can take your time to find an item over days, weeks, or even months.

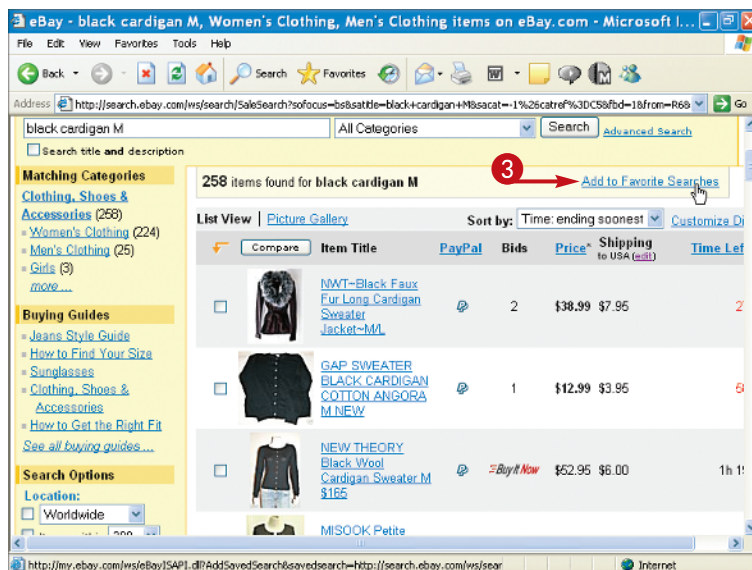
You can give the search a name. For example, if your search is for a medium-sized, black cardigan, then you can name the search black cardigan M. You can

also designate for how long you want eBay to e-mail you the daily results of the search, with options ranging from 7 days to 12 months.

You can specify whether eBay e-mails your search results using the E-mail me daily whenever there are new items option. You can also check the saved search anytime in the My Favorite Searches area located in My eBay's Favorites tab.

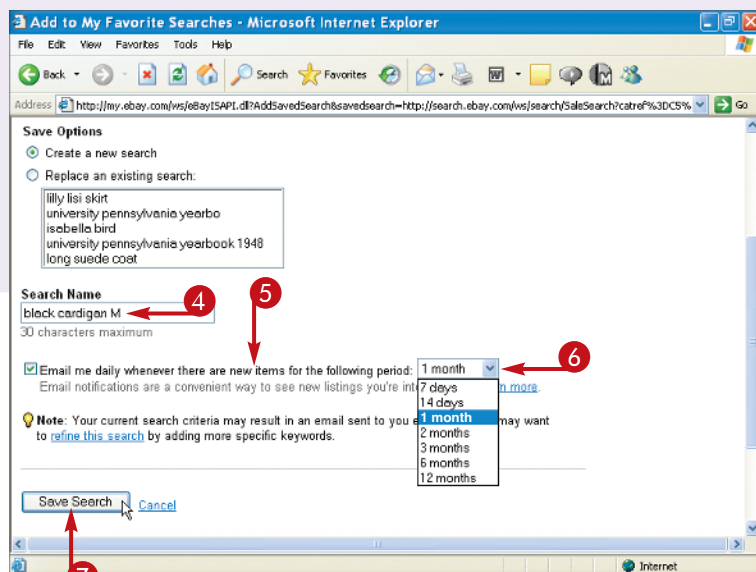


- 1 In the eBay Search page, type a search word or phrase.
- 2 Click Search.



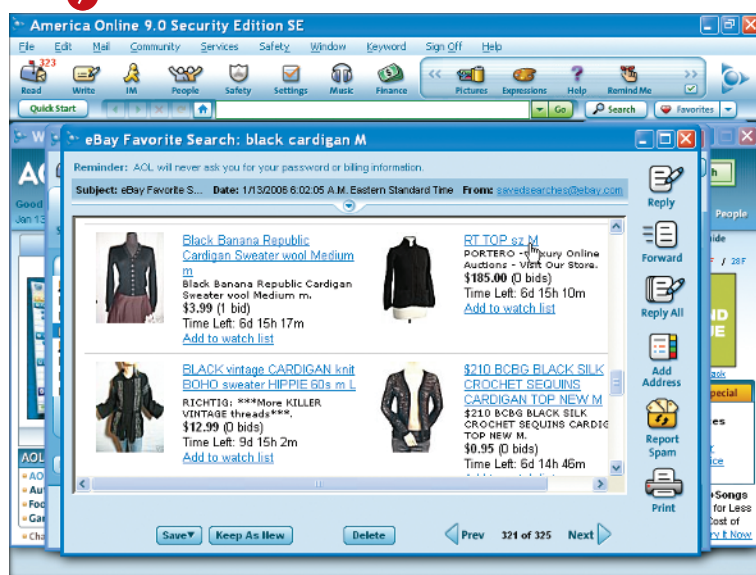
The search results appear.

- 3 Click the Add to Favorite Searches link.



The Add to My Favorite Searches page appears.

- 4 Type a name for your search.
- 5 Click to select the Email me daily whenever there are new items option.
- 6 Click here and select a time frame for the search.
- 7 Click Save Search.



eBay e-mails your Favorite Search results to you.

You must sign on to your e-mail service to check your Favorite Search e-mails.

TIPS

Did You Know?

When you find the item that you want, you can delete its Favorite Search to make room for new searches. Click My eBay in the eBay home page, or any eBay page, and then click the Searches link under All Favorites. Click the option next to the name of the search, and then click Delete. You can save up to 100 searches.

More Options!

If you want to quickly and easily view new items from a preferred seller or store, then you can save them as favorites. In the My eBay page, click the Sellers link under All Favorites. Click Add new Seller or Store, and type the seller's user ID or store name. Click Continue, and then click Add to Favorites.

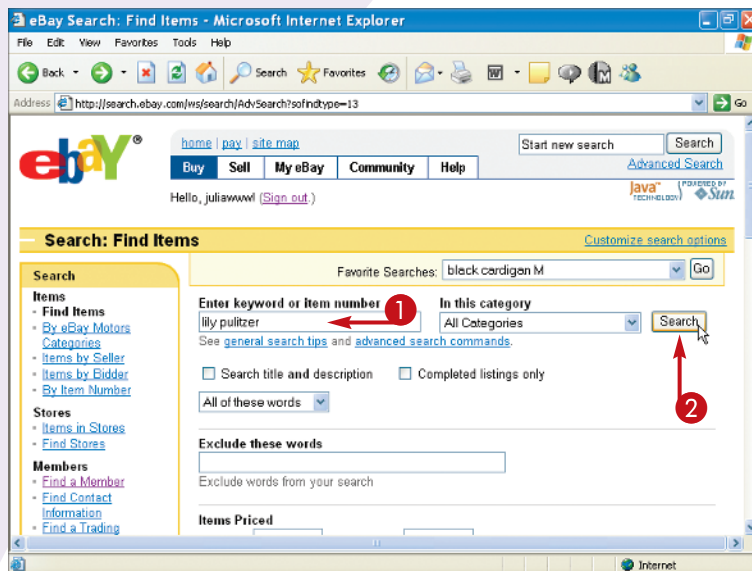
Find eBay's HIDDEN GEMS

You can find great items that other eBay users may miss by searching for alternate spellings and typographic variations of words. Because many searchers overlook alternate spellings, fewer people view and bid on these listings, thus allowing you to find wonderful bargains.

For example, if you look for Lilly Pulitzer brand clothing, which tends to sell very well on eBay, then you may want to search under the spelling Lily Pulitzer, as this is a common misspelling of the brand

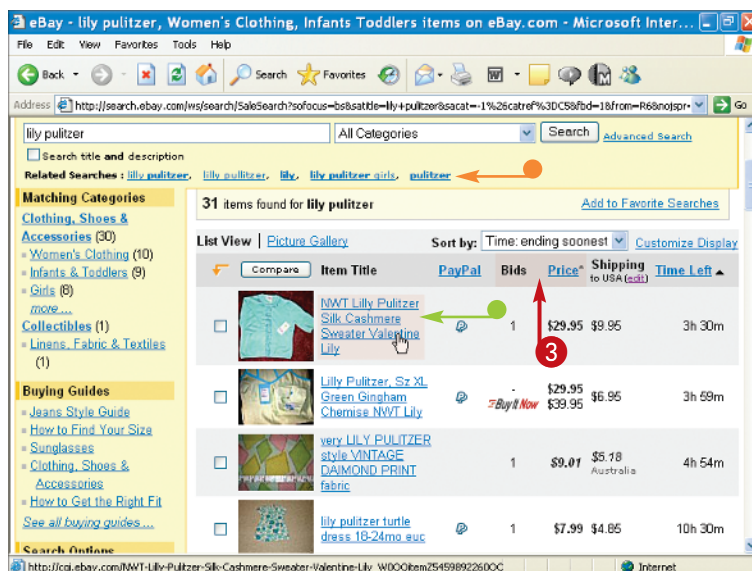
name. Another common error that sellers make is transposing two letters. You can almost always find items with this mistake. For example, try DNKY instead of DKNY, or Evlis instead of Elvis.

As an example, a recent search on DNKY brought up 45 listings, only six of which had bids. These listings without bids give you an opportunity to find bargains. Compare that to the correct spelling, DKNY, which brought up 6,695 listings, where out of the first 50 items, 19 had bids.



SEARCH FOR ITEMS WITH MISSPELLINGS

- 1 In the eBay Search page, type a misspelled word or phrase.
- 2 Click Search.

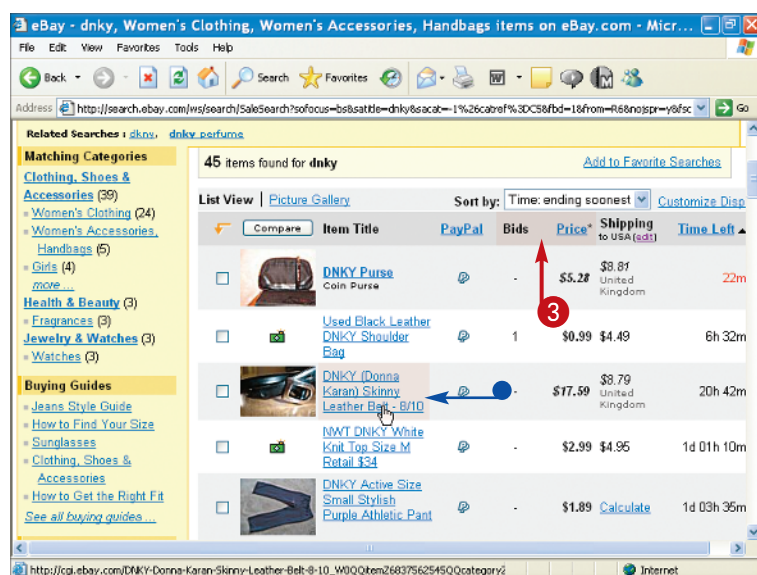
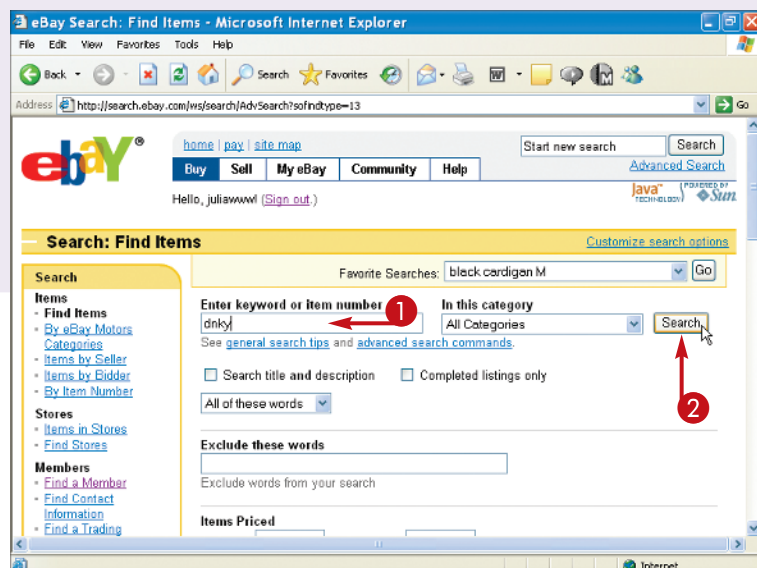


Search results appear with misspelled listings.

- eBay prompts you with alternate spellings.
- 3 Search through the Bids and Price columns for auctions that still have low bids and prices.
- You can click these items to investigate further and to bid.

**SEARCH FOR ITEMS WITH
TRANSPOSITIONS**

- 1 In the eBay Search page, type a word or acronym with transposed letters.
- 2 Click Search.



The search results appear.

- 3 Search through the Bids and Price columns for auctions that still have low bids and prices.
- You can click these items to investigate further and to bid.

TIPS**eBay Savvy!**

A misspelled item with a Buy It Now option is great, because you can buy it immediately at a low price and prevent other typo-hunters from finding it. For more information on the Buy It Now option, see Tasks #2 and #43.

eBay Savvy!

Try searching for both newly listed and Buy It Now items to increase your chances of finding a bargain, because the good deals go quickly. For example, when you browse, look for the New Today items.

Did You Know?

When you deliberately search for items with incorrect spellings, you can ignore the eBay search engine's prompt near the top of the page that suggests alternate spellings.

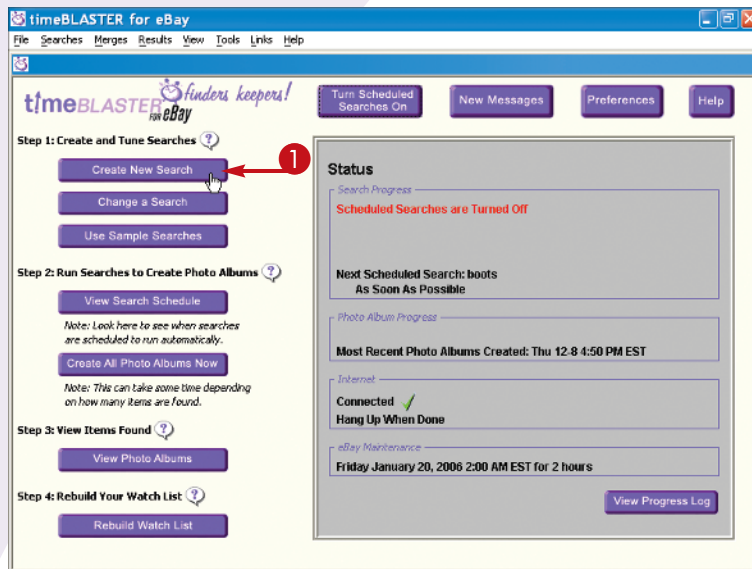
CREATE PHOTO ALBUMS

of search results

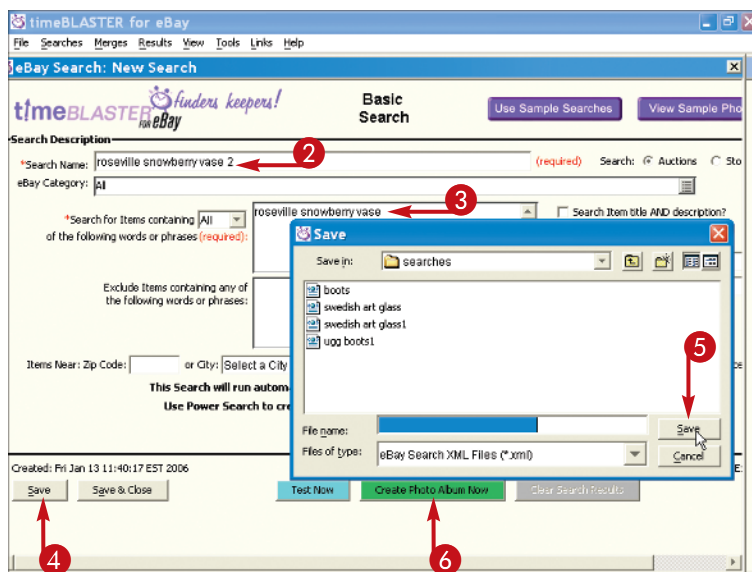
Have you ever scrolled through numerous eBay listings of similar items, clicking into each listing to find the specific one that you want? You can reduce the time that you spend finding items by using a tool called timeBLASTER, which was invented by an avid stamp collector who spent long hours on eBay. With timeBLASTER, you can reduce searches that take 20 hours a week to an hour a week. timeBLASTER is also great for sellers. For example, one sports trading card dealer uses a standing timeBLASTER search to monitor market prices.

timeBLASTER automatically searches eBay, downloads the item descriptions and photos, and creates photo albums of the results by neatly lining up rows of photos and item information. Instead of scrolling through many pages of listings and clicking each auction to see photos, you can view the search results in a compact, easy-to-view format. You can also easily bid on or watch an item directly from the Photo Album page.

Before you can use timeBLASTER, you must first download and install the timeBLASTER software from the Web site, www.timeblaster.com/tbeindex.shtml.

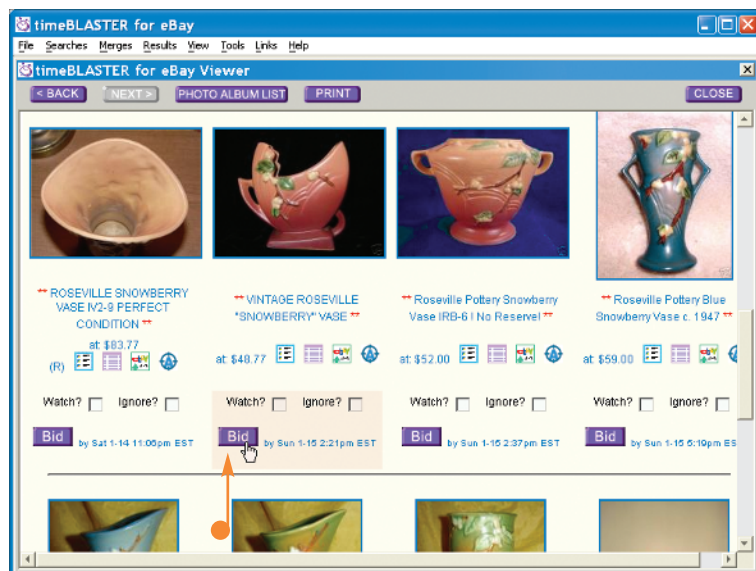
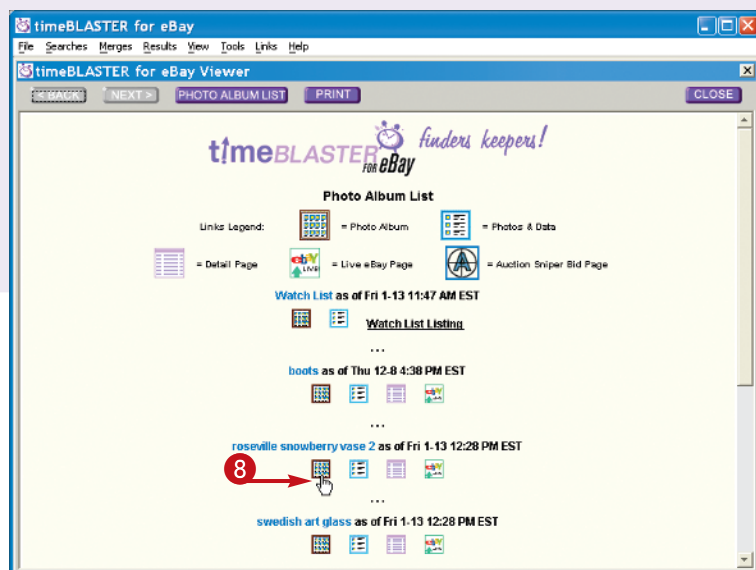


- 1 In the timeBLASTER main page, click Create New Search.



A Search Description window appears.

- 2 Type a name for your search.
- 3 Type the items for which you are searching.
- 4 Click Save.
- 5 In the Save dialog box that appears, click Save.
- 6 Click Create Photo Album Now.



The timeBLASTER main page reappears, showing the status of the newly created search.

#10

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

- 7 Click View Photo Albums.

The Photo Album List appears.

- 8 Click an icon of a photo album that you want to view.

The Photo Album appears, displaying photos and titles of multiple items on one page.

- You can click the options to watch, bid on, or ignore an item.

TIPS

Did You Know?

The timeBLASTER software for eBay is only available for Windows. You can view a free animated demonstration of how the software works on the timeBLASTER Web site. The example in the demonstration is of a search for Roseville vases, a popular collector's item. timeBLASTER offers a 30-day free trial. A one-year subscription to the service costs \$39.95, and timeBLASTER pays you \$4 for every friend that you refer who buys a one-year subscription.

eBay Savvy!

You can run searches automatically by clicking Turn Scheduled Searches On from the main timeBLASTER page. You can run scheduled searches at night, or at any time that is most convenient for you, so that you can do other things while the search runs.

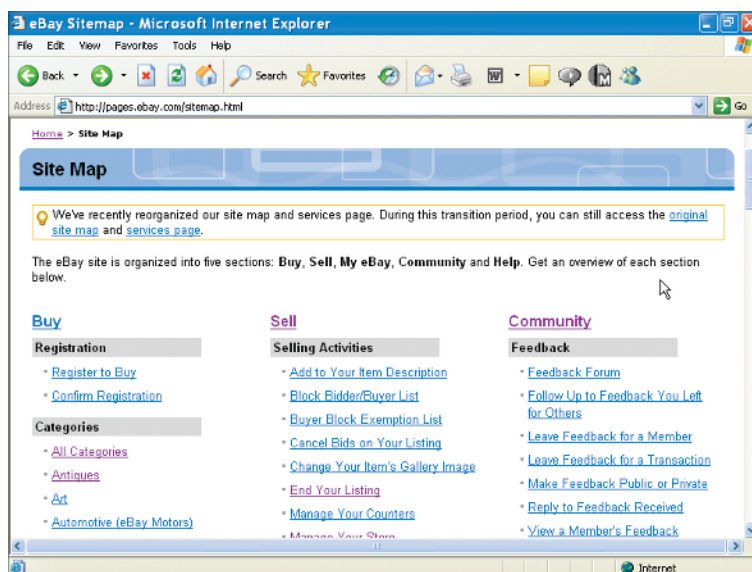
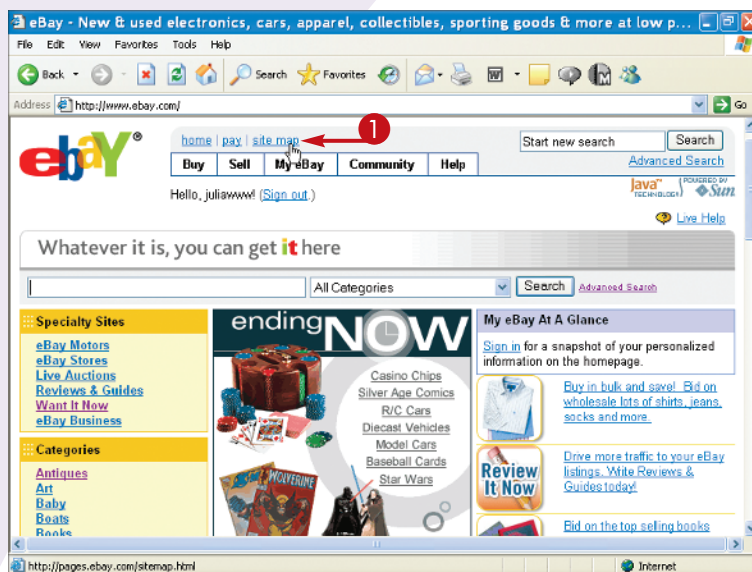
Find it fast with eBay's SITE MAP

An easy way to find a particular section of the eBay site is to use the site map. Because eBay can be many layers deep in some areas, the site map acts as a valuable guide, displaying the broad array of features, services, and information that are available on the eBay site, and enabling you to navigate to a particular link. The site map can save you time and frustration in trying to find a specific part of eBay, because it compactly organizes all of the eBay links on one page.

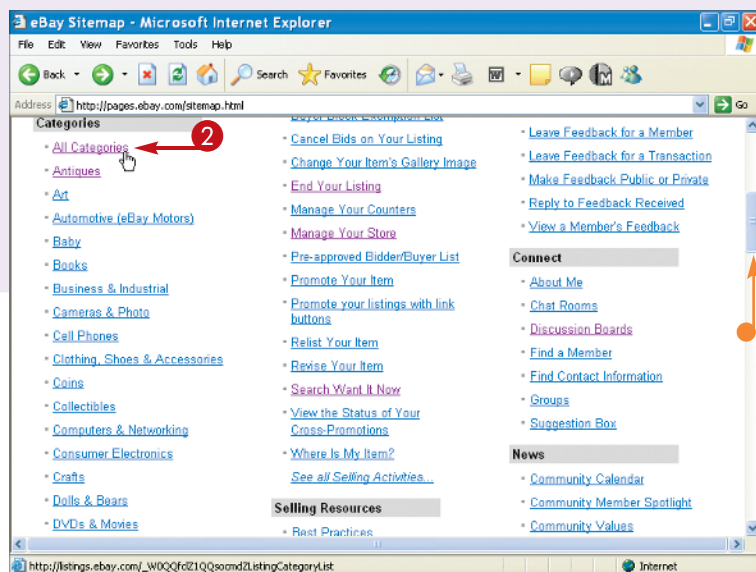
You can access the eBay site map from any eBay page through the link that appears at the top of every page.

The site map is organized as a series of links under headings that describe every area on eBay, such as Buy, Sell, Help, My eBay, and Community. In some cases, if there are many links under one section, then you can click the See all link to view links to all of the features under that section, such as See all Selling Resources under the Selling Resources heading.

- 1 In the eBay home page, click the site map link.



The eBay Site Map page appears. Links to all eBay areas appear in the lists on this page.

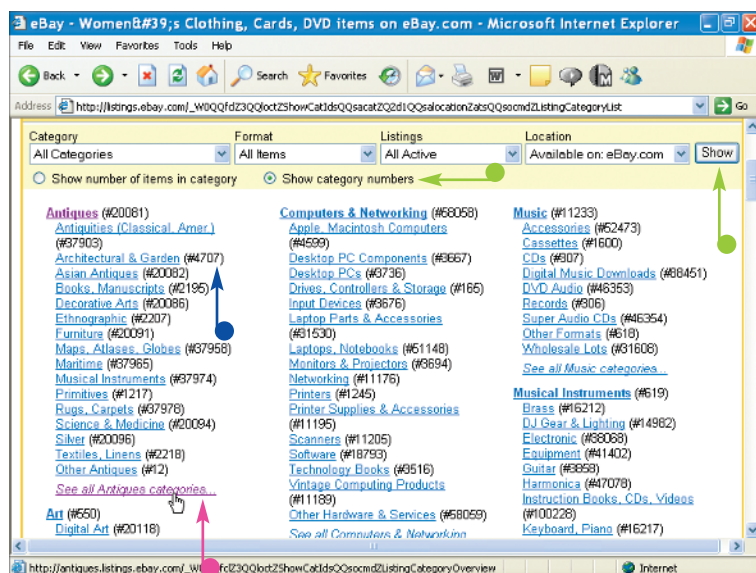


- You can scroll down to see the entire site map.
- 2 Click a link that interests you.

This example uses the All Categories link.

#11

DIFFICULTY LEVEL



The All Categories page appears, allowing you to find an eBay area that you may not otherwise notice.

- You can click the Show category numbers option to view the category numbers, and then click Show.
- You can use the numbers in the Sell Your Item form to specify the category in which to list your item.
- You can click a See all categories link for a particular category to view all of the subcategories below it.

TIPS

More Options!

If you cannot find what you need on eBay's site map, then you can search eBay's Help section. Click the Help tab, which is the top-right tab that appears in most eBay pages. You can search the help database by typing your search words in the text box at the top of the Help window, and then clicking Search Help. You can also browse a complete alphabetical list of help topics by clicking the A-Z index link in the eBay Help page window.

Did You Know?

If you still cannot find what you need using the site map or the eBay Help Center, then you can use the Contact Us link, under eBay Glossary at the upper left of the Help search page.