

Chapter

1

Smart Searching on eBay

With millions of items for sale on eBay, and more every day, finding what you want can be very time-consuming. Good search skills can help you 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 make browsing overwhelming. Because of this, many people prefer to use searches rather than to browse on eBay.

However, you can use 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. 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 you seek from the millions of listings on eBay.

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 you sell. Because eBay shoppers expect good deals, it is critical for you to have a good idea of what kind of sales price you can expect for your items. That way, 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 hits you receive on a search by searching 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.

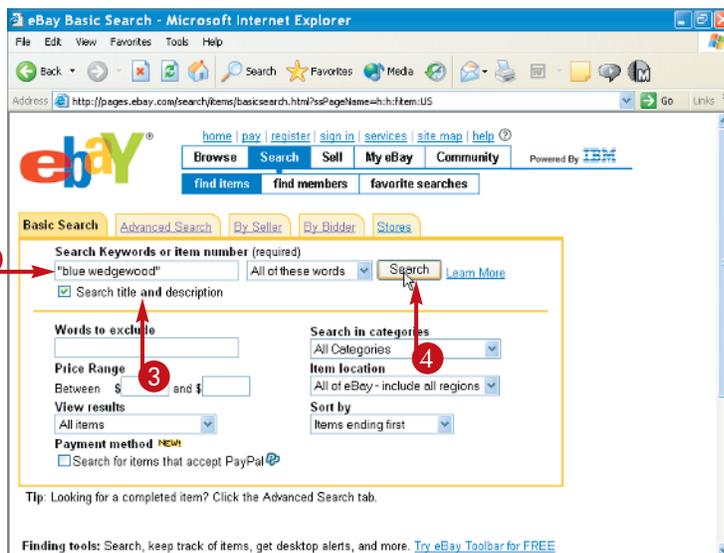
If you search using titles only, you may miss a large percentage of the available items. For example, if you search for blue Wedgewood — a popular type of collectible china — with the title and description option activated, you may receive 50 items. A similar

search without this option activated may result in 19 items, which would result in your missing more than half of the items you seek.

You may miss items when you use the titles-only search because sellers do not always include the keywords 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.

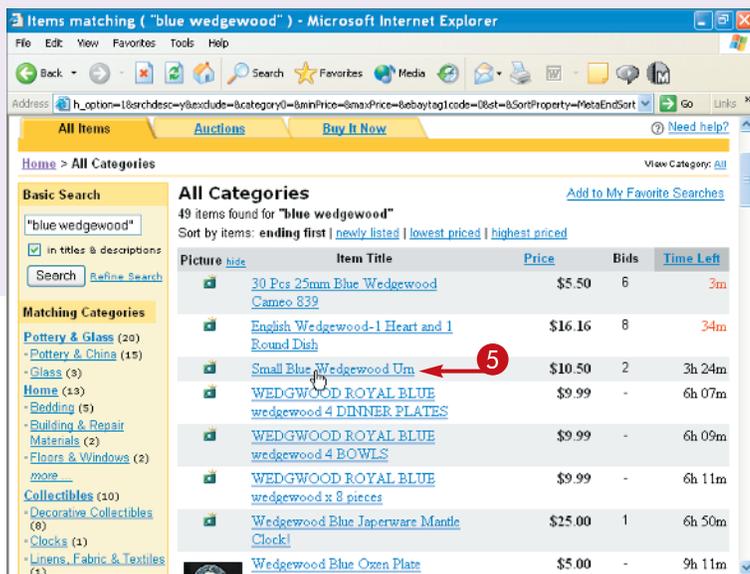


- 1 In the main eBay home page, click Search.



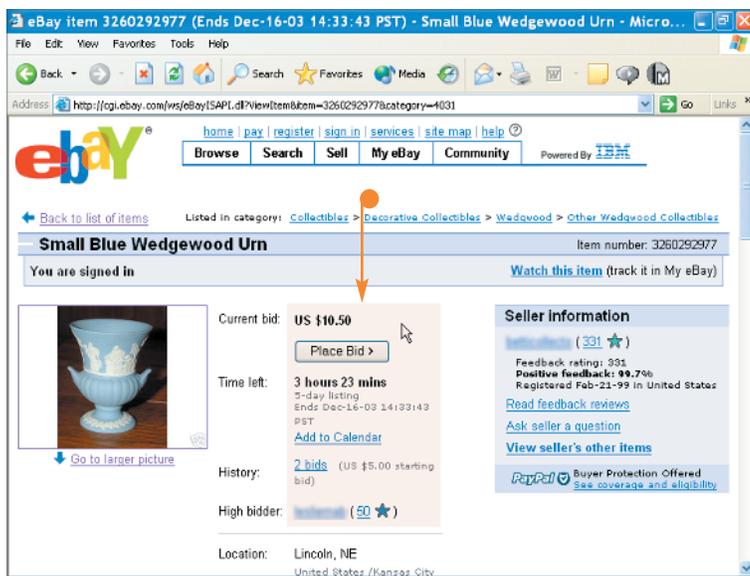
The Search tabs appear.

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



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

5 Click a listing.



The details page appears for the listing.

- The page contains information including 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, if you type "blue Wedgewood" to look for that type of china, a search may yield an item with blue Wedgewood in its description, but the description may refer to an ottoman of blue Wedgewood color.

Did You Know?

You can also access the Basic Search tab by clicking the Smart Search link on the eBay home page, below and to the left of the Find It button. Or, you can simply type your search words into the text box located just to the right of the What are you looking for? prompt.

Perform an ADVANCED SEARCH

You can perform a more powerful search on eBay by using the Advanced Search tab instead of the Basic Search tab. The Advanced Search tab contains all the features of eBay's basic search, as well as additional parameters that can narrow down your search.

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

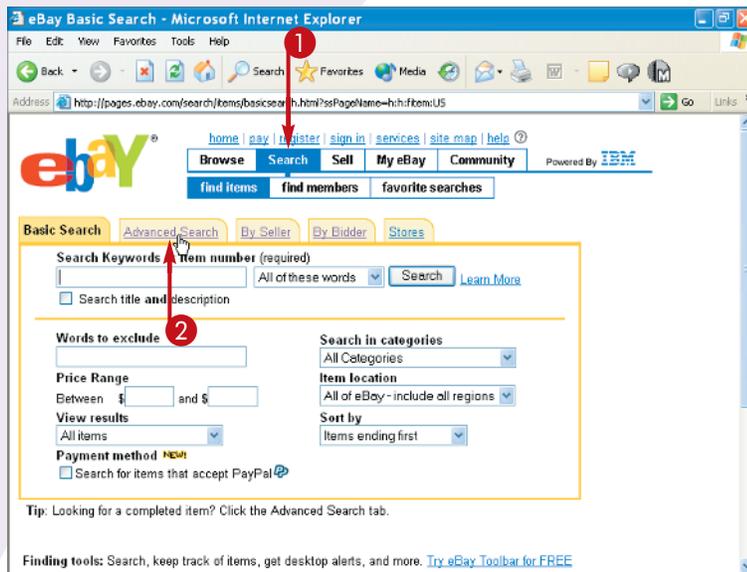
The Words to exclude option allows you to eliminate certain keywords from the search. For example, if

you know you want metal and not wooden toy trains, you can enter **wooden** in this option box.

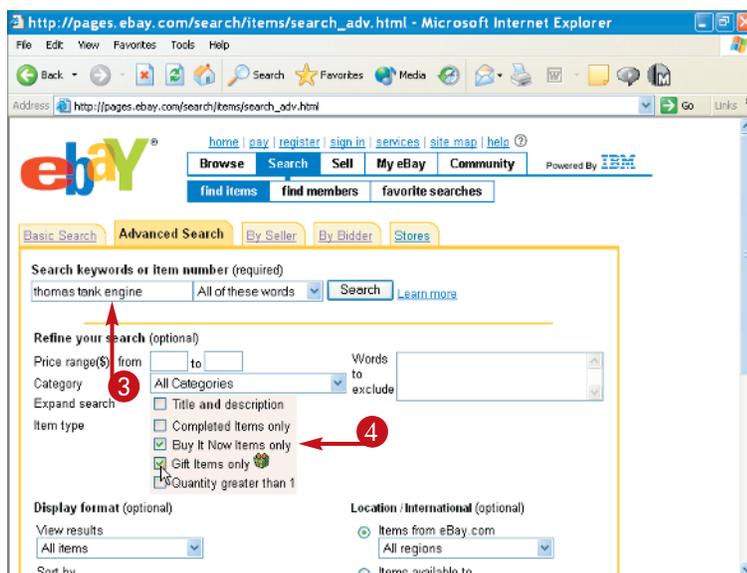
The Buy It Now Items only option displays items for immediate purchase, and is especially useful if you see a bargain. For more on this feature, see Tasks #9 and #46.

The Gift Items only 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.

The Advanced Search feature also facilitates international searching. For more information on international searching, see Task #16.



- 1 In the eBay home page, click Search.
The Search tabs appear.
- 2 Click the Advanced Search tab.



- 3 Type the word or phrase for the item you want to find.
- 4 Click the desired Expand search Item type options.

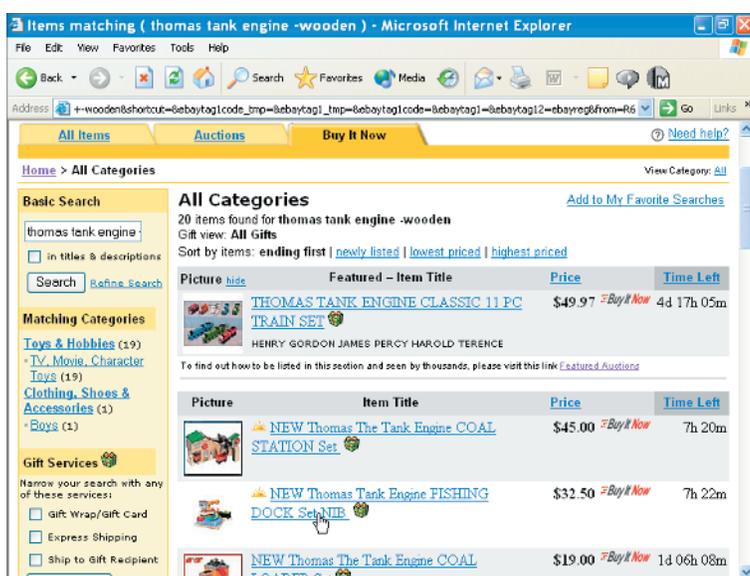
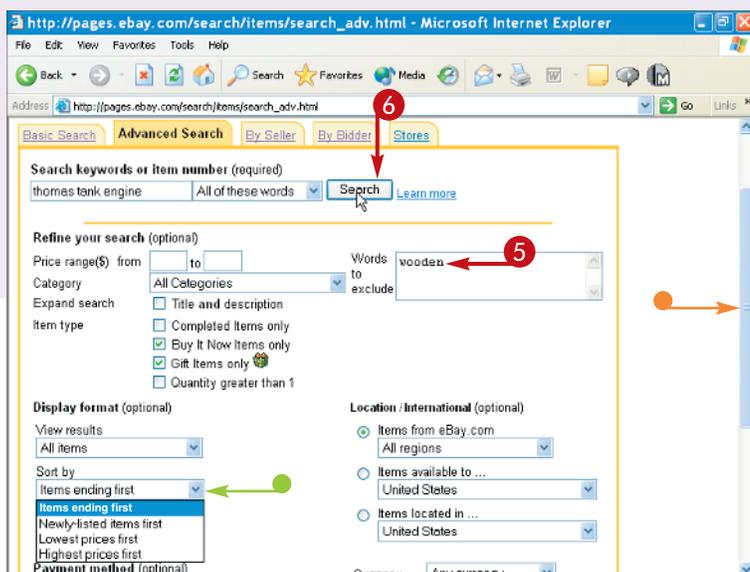
You can click the Buy It Now Items only option to show items for immediate purchase.

You can click the Gift Items only option to see items that make good gifts.

#2

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

- 5 Type the words you want to exclude.
- 6 Click Search.



The search results appear.

This example lists all Buy It Now, non-wooden Thomas Tank engine gift items, with auctions that end first at the top of the list.

TIPS

More Options!

When you click the Completed Items 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!

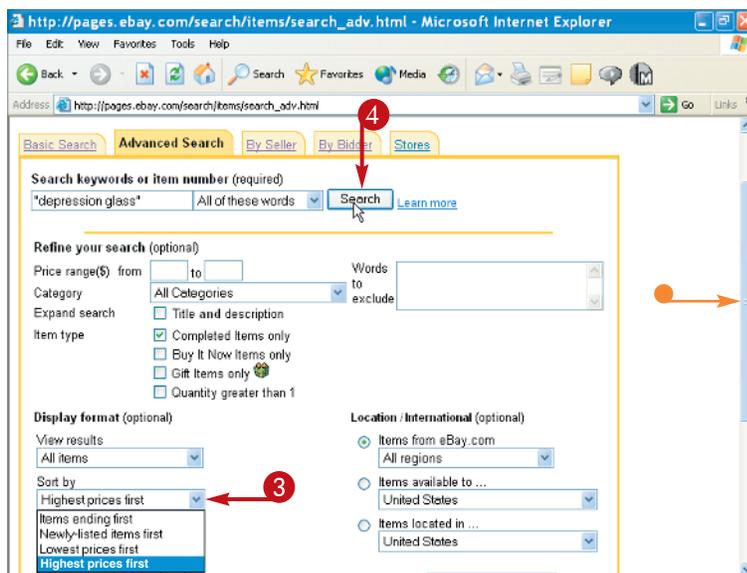
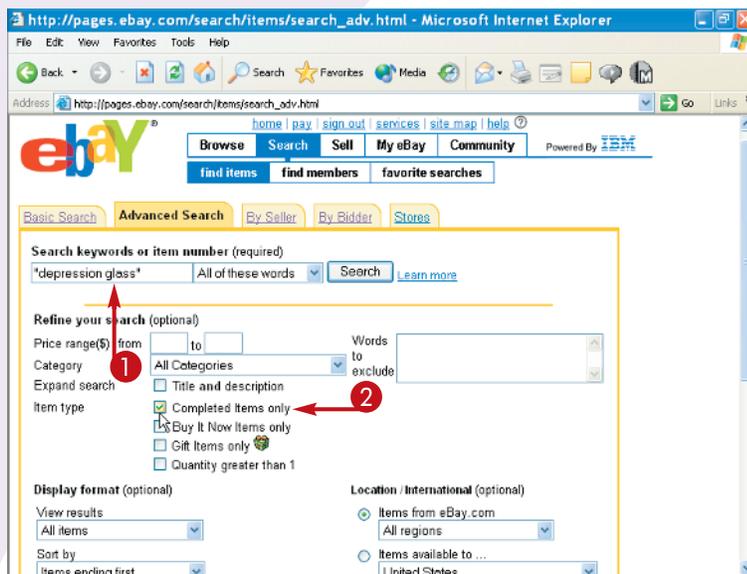
In the Sort by list, on both the Basic and Advanced Search tabs, you can select different sort options. The Items ending first option lists auctions about to end first. The Newly-listed items first option displays auctions that have just gone live first, followed by those about to end. The Lowest prices first option shows items from the cheapest to the most expensive. The Highest prices first option shows items from the most expensive to the cheapest.

Research Completed Items for MARKET PRICES

You can use the Completed Items only option in the Advanced Search tab to research the final selling prices for different types of items for 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 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 Highest prices first or Lowest prices 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.

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



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

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

- 2 Click the Completed Items only option.

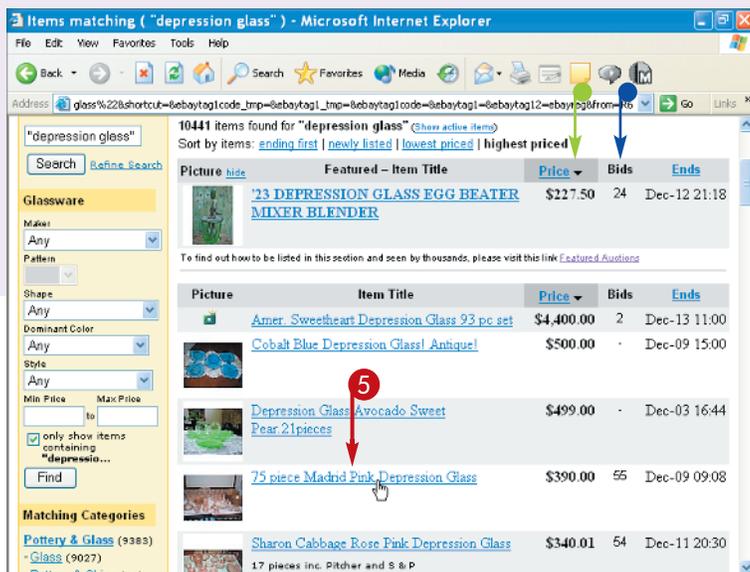
- 3 Click here and then click Highest prices first.

- You may have to scroll to see this option

- 4 Click Search.

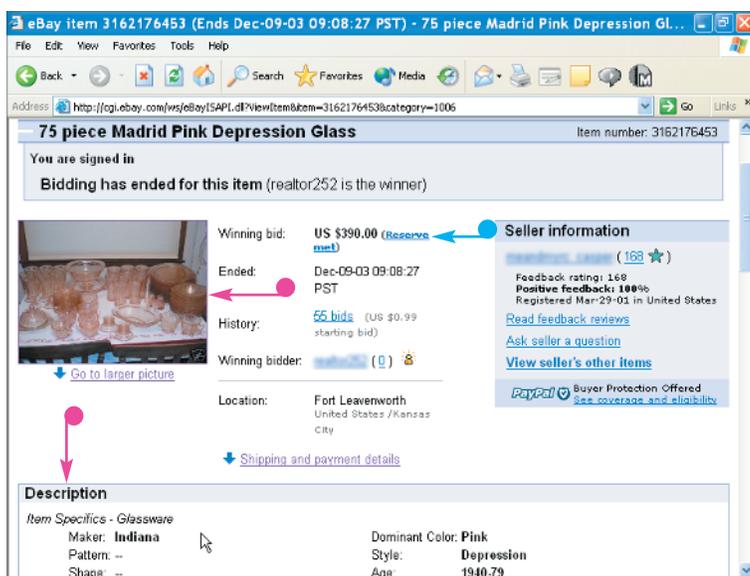
#3

DIFFICULTY LEVEL



The search results appear.

- You can scan the price column to see which items resulted in the highest prices.
 - You can scan the bid column for the highest number of bids, which indicates a popular item.
- 5 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 sold — that is, met its *reserve* price.

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

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 the item received and indicates the level of interest in it. Lower numbers in this column usually indicate lower interest.

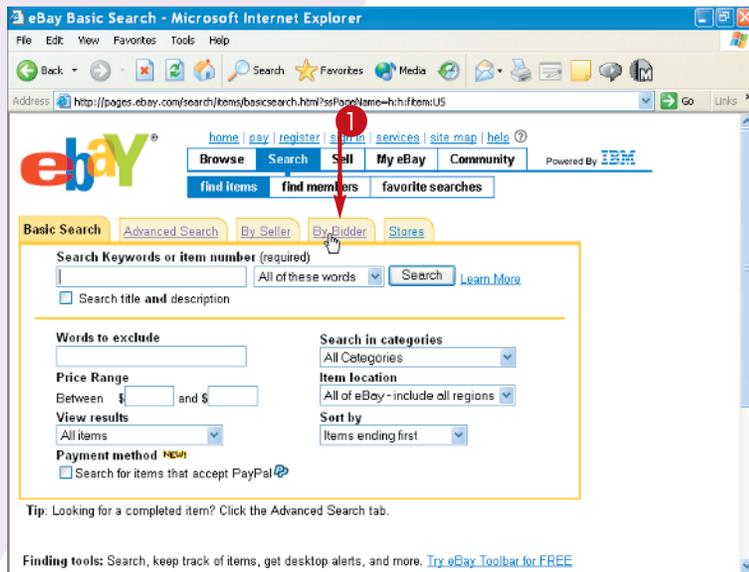
View what OTHERS HAVE BOUGHT

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

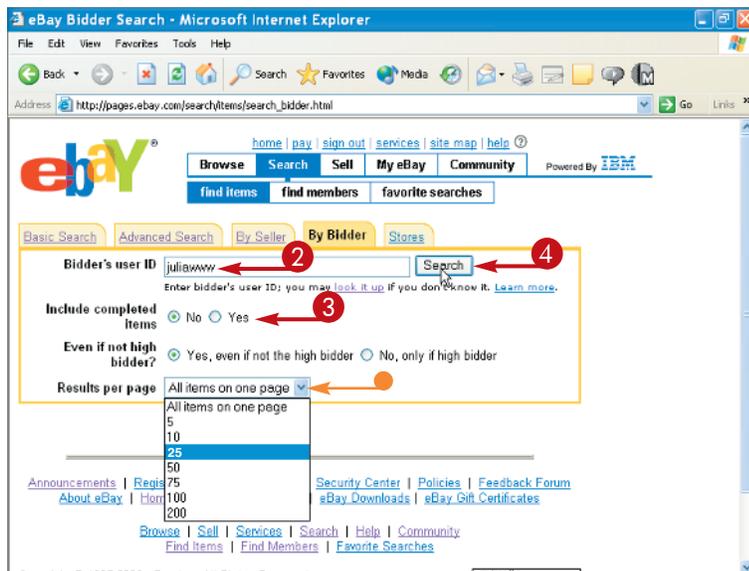
On the By Bidder tab, you can type the bidder's eBay ID, and a list of the items that person is bidding on appears, with information about those

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

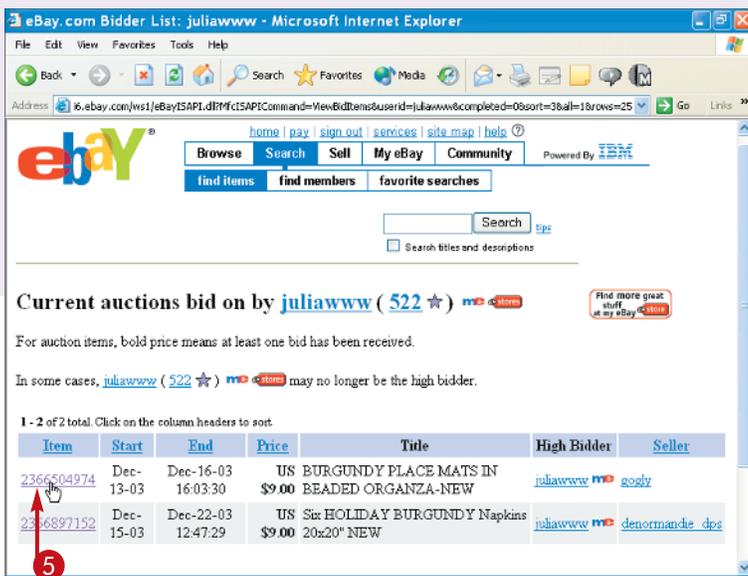
You can choose not to include completed items if you only want to see the items on which a user is currently bidding. You can also select the No, only if high bidder option to eliminate auctions the user lost. Finally, you can select how many results you want per page: 5, 10, 25, 50, 75, 100, 200, or All items on one page.



- 1 In the search page, click the By Bidder tab.



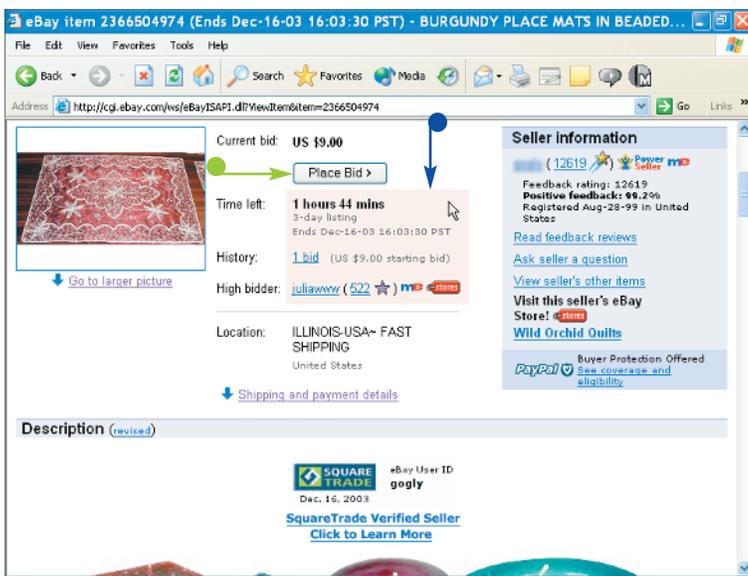
- 2 Type the bidder's user ID.
- 3 Click whether you want to include or exclude completed items.
- 4 You can click here and select the number of results you want to see on a page.
- 4 Click Search.



The titles appear for auctions bid on by the user.

4

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



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

TIPS

Savvy Selling!

The By Bidder tab is a good tool to learn what your customers want. For example, if you sell bubble wrap, and you see your repeat customers bidding on tape and envelopes, consider adding those items to your inventory.

Did You Know?

Have you received e-mails from an eBay member who does not specify his or her user ID? If you have completed previous transactions with this member, you can look up the corresponding user ID. In the By Bidder tab, click the **look it up** link, then type the e-mail address in the Request user ID option box. eBay prompts you through a security screen, at which point you can click Search to retrieve the user's ID.

Supplement your searches with BROWSE

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 for them.

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; the seller did not know that the writer of the manuscript was famous. The buyer

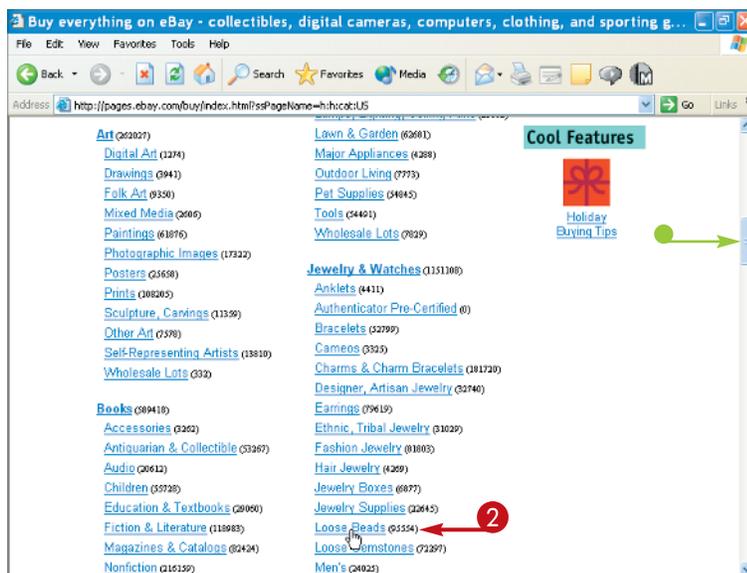
found this manuscript by looking for clues to its origin from the seller's description.

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 Gemstones. Although some sellers list items in a second category, not all sellers do. Sellers sometimes have items that can belong in more than two categories.



1 In the eBay home page, click Browse.

- Another way to begin browsing for an item is to click a main category in the list under the Categories heading.



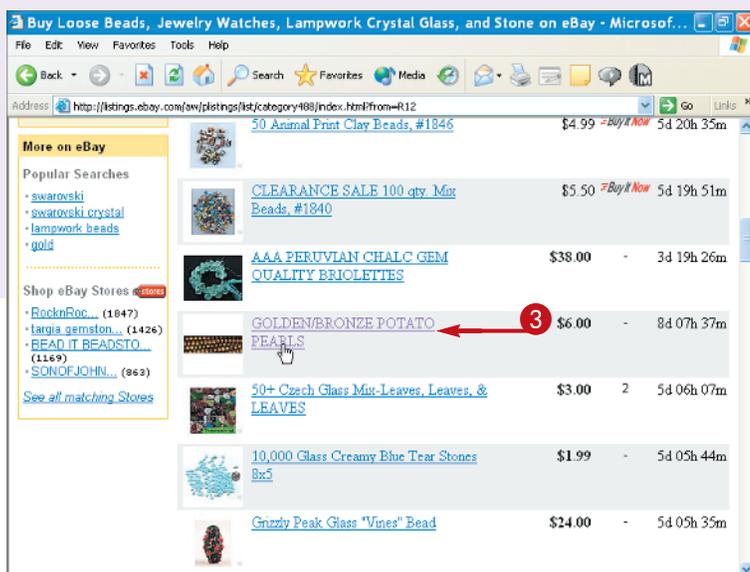
The list of categories appears.

2 Click a category or subcategory.

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

#5

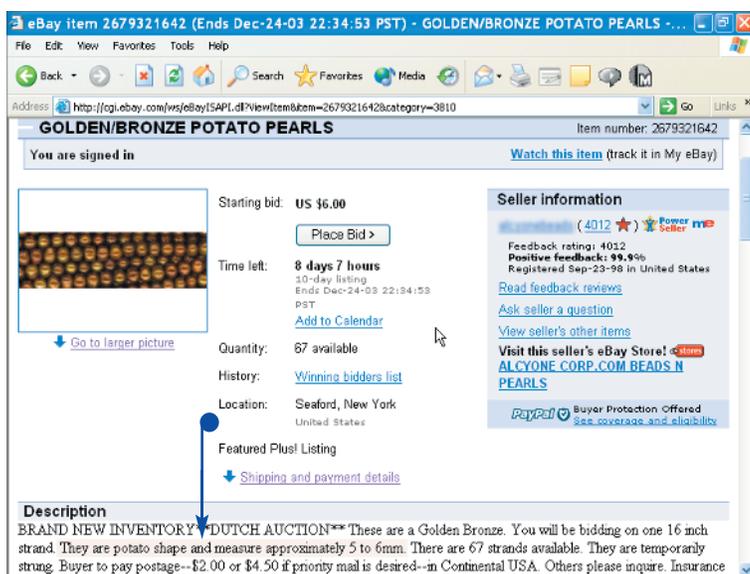
DIFFICULTY LEVEL



The results list appears, displaying all the items in the category 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 does not contain the word bead, but is for potato pearls.

TIPS

More Options!

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

Everything Else

[Gifts](#) | [Health & Beauty](#) | [more](#)
[see all eBay categories](#)



Using categories to REFINE SEARCHES

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 you want. Because eBay's categories can consist of many layers, you may need to drill down into several subcategories before you find the item you want.

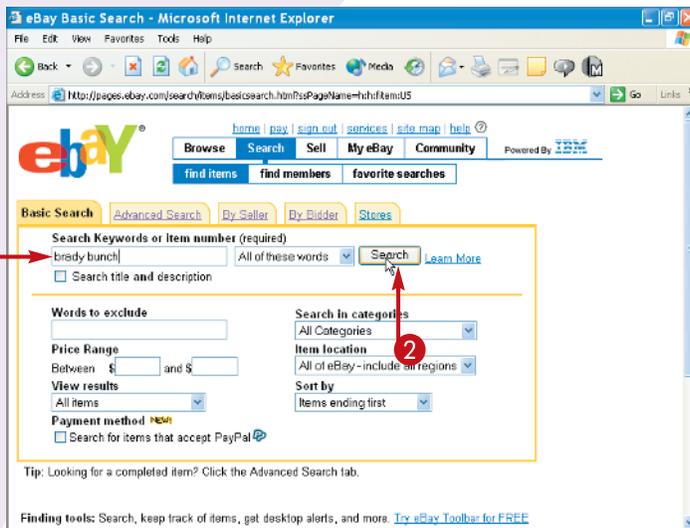
Combining the Search and Browse features is especially useful when you want to browse for a specific item, but do not know in which category

that item belongs. You may also find this technique useful if the item can potentially fall 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.

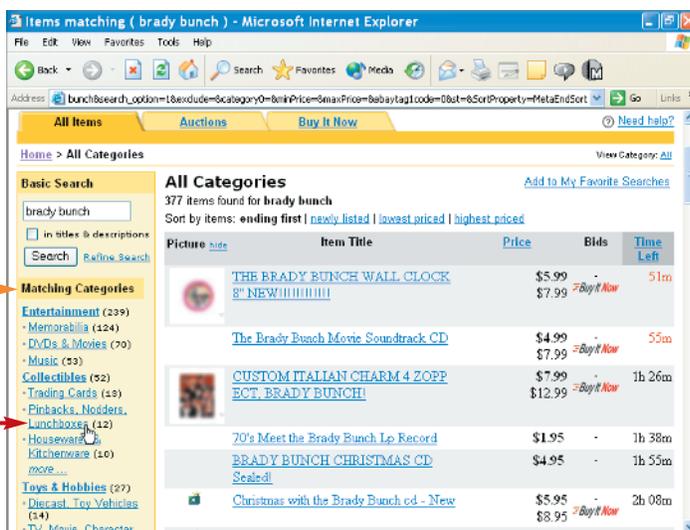
When you perform a search and then enter a matching category, eBay's search continues to filter out items according to your search words.

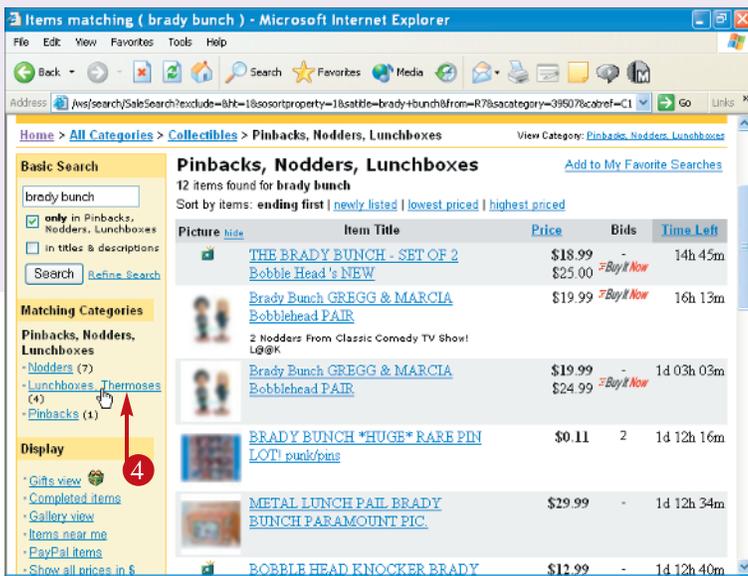
- 1 In the Basic Search tab, type a search word or phrase.
- 2 Click Search.



The search results appear.

- Matching Categories appears on the left side of the page.
- These categories vary, depending on what search words you type.
- 3 Click the category you want.

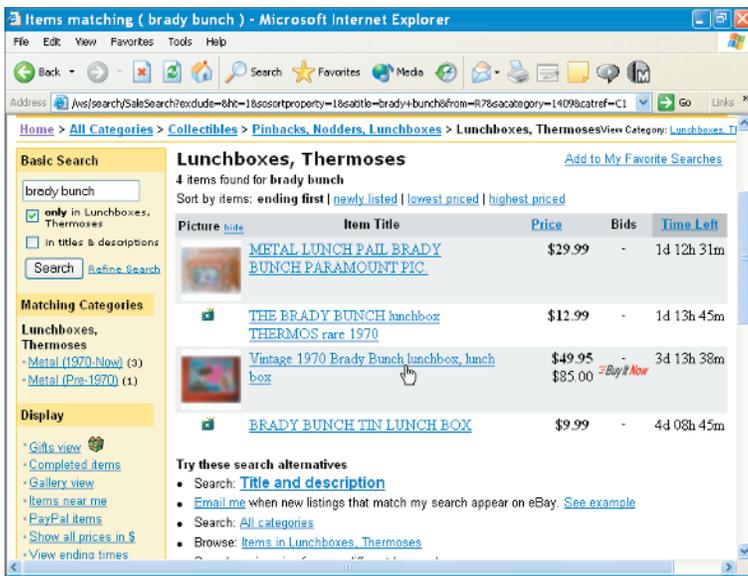




The search results appear.

#6

- 4 Click another category under Matching Categories.



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

TIPS

More Options!

You can also perform a search within any given category. In the eBay home page, click Browse. Once you drill down into a category with actual auction listings on the right, you can type search words into the Basic Search box on the upper left, and then click the Only in this category option (changes to) directly beneath it.

Did You Know?

You can find search results grouped by category for eBay's top keyword searches at keyword.ebay.com. From there, you can browse a list of keywords that eBay buyers and sellers use most often. If you click a keyword, you receive a list of categories containing the keyword along with a Gallery containing photos of items related to that keyword.

Find HOT ITEMS

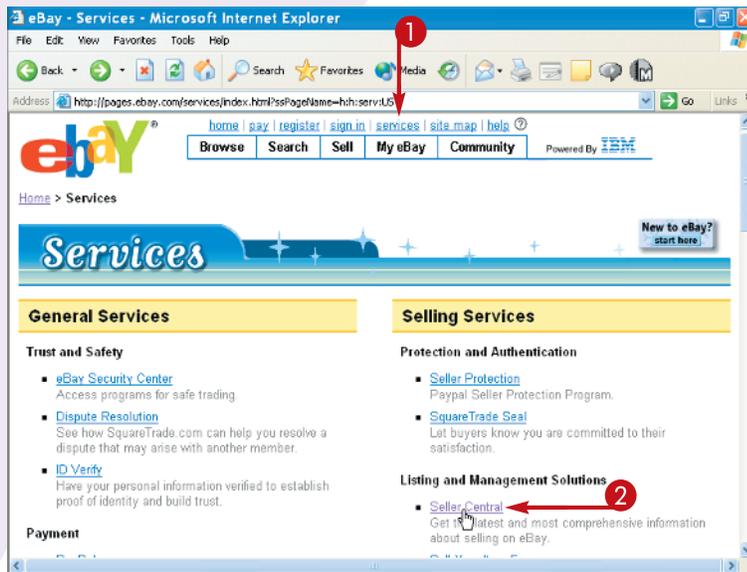
You can read the Hot Items by Category document, located in Seller Central, to determine which items sold well recently. eBay staff creates a list of items they deem hot sellers in each category. eBay defines *hot items* as recent items whose bidding growth significantly outpaces new listings growth, 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 you can sell that can make you 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.

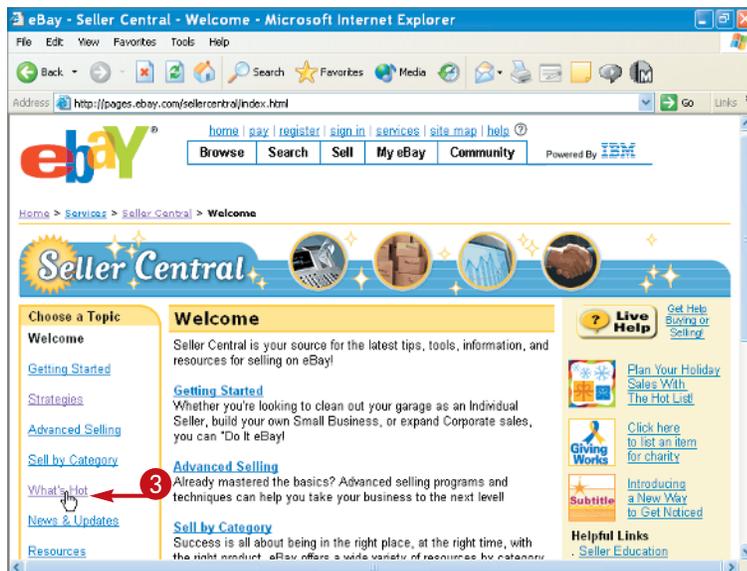
As an alternative to the steps in this task, you can also use a pay service that does the tedious work of searching for hot items for you. One service is andale's What's Hot. To use andale's service, go to www.andale.com.



- 1 In the eBay home page, click the services link.

The eBay Services page appears.

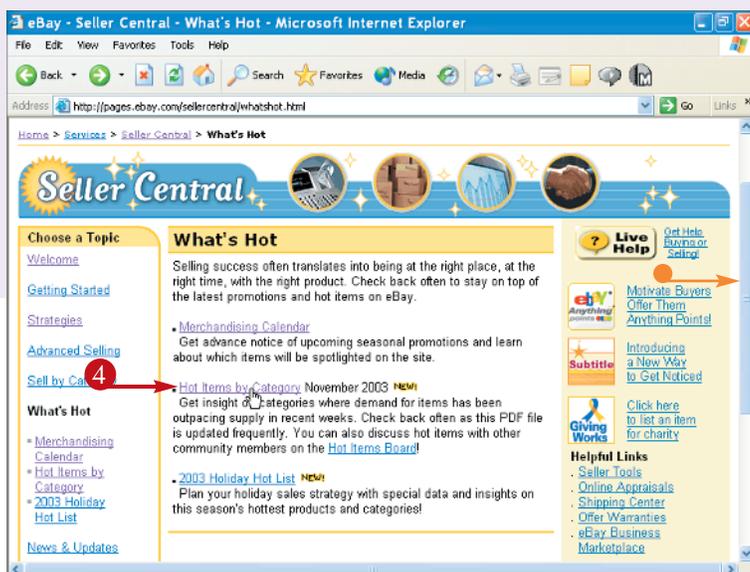
- 2 Click the Seller Central link



The Seller Central page appears.

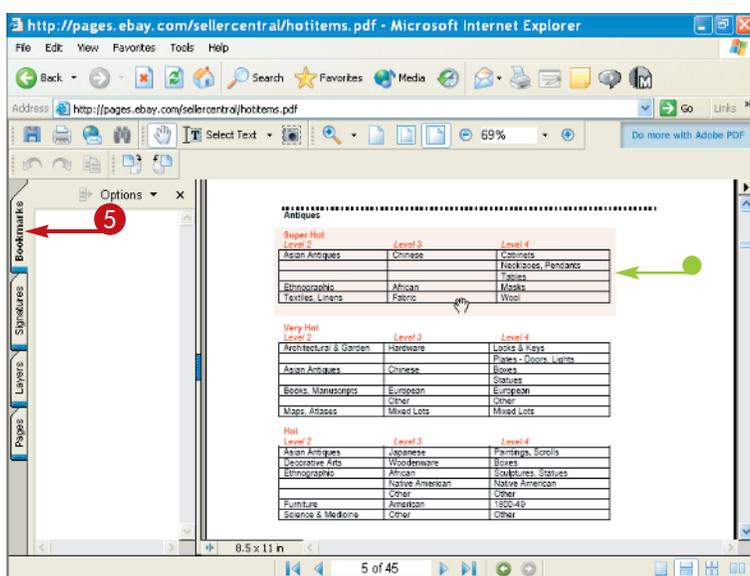
- 3 Click the What's Hot link.

#7



The What's Hot page appears.

- 4 Click the Hot Items by Category link.
- You may need to scroll down to access this link.



The Hot Categories Report, which is in Adobe Acrobat's pdf format, appears.

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

- 5 Click the Bookmarks tab to view the report.
- You can see the Hot Products by category.

TIPS

Did You Know?

You can see previous lists of Hot Items on the Hot Items Folder in the eBay Community area. In any eBay page, click Community, and then click the Discussion Boards link. Next, click the Hot Items link. Click a specific category folder, and you can see the lists of Hot Items for that category.

The hot products in the Computers & Electronics category for the week of 09/25/03:

- Desktop PCs**
- 700MHz to 1GHz
- 400-650MHz
- Gadgets & Other Electronics**
- Air Purifiers
- Home Automation
- Other Gadgets
- Home Audio & Video**
- Wholesale Lots
- Home Audio
- Office Products**
- Calendars, Planners
- Copiers & Supplies
- Laminating Machines, Supplies
- Presentation A/V
- Portable Audio & Video**
- MP3 Players
- Voice Recorders

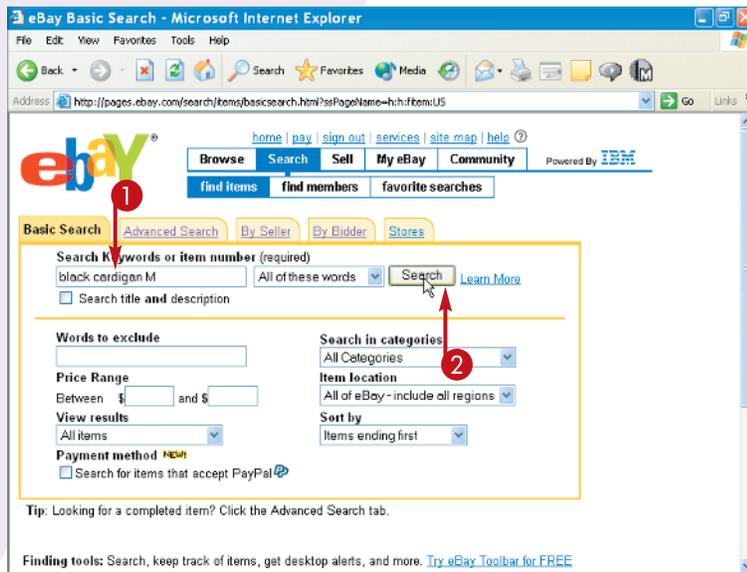
Search WHILE YOU SLEEP

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.

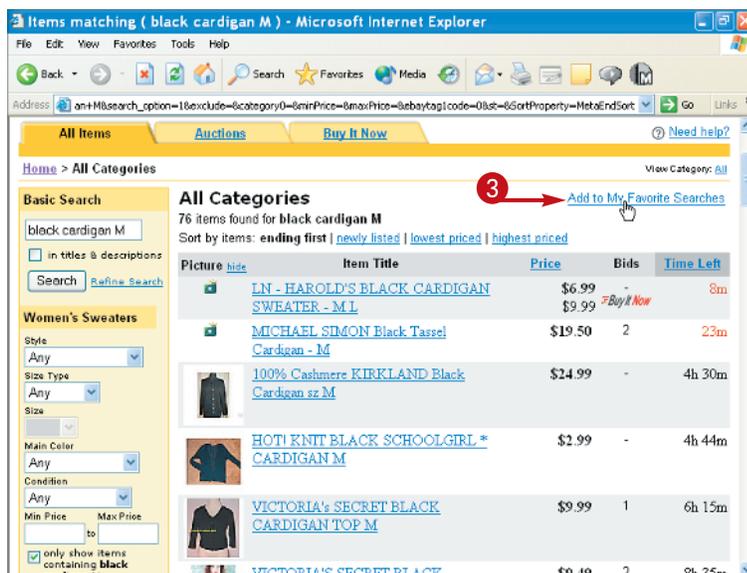
You can give the search a name. For example, if your search is for a medium-sized, black cardigan, you can name the search black cardigan M. You can also

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 opt 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.



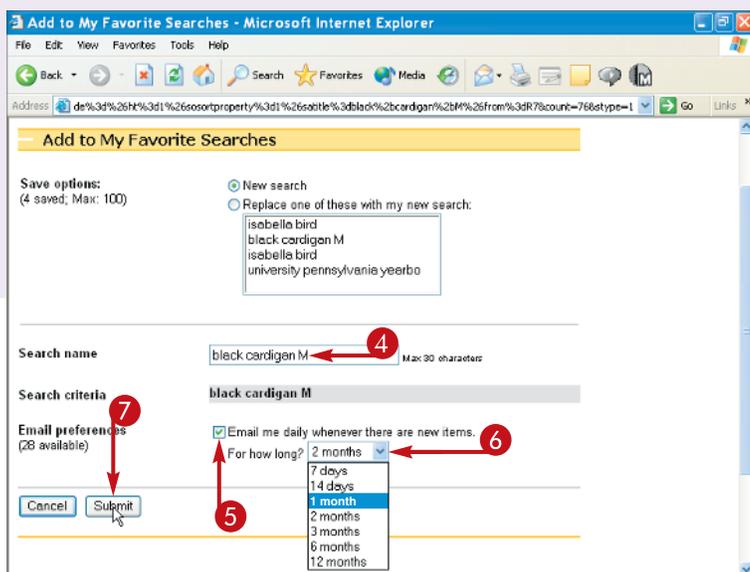
- 1 In the Basic Search tab, type a search word or phrase.
- 2 Click Search.



The search results appear.

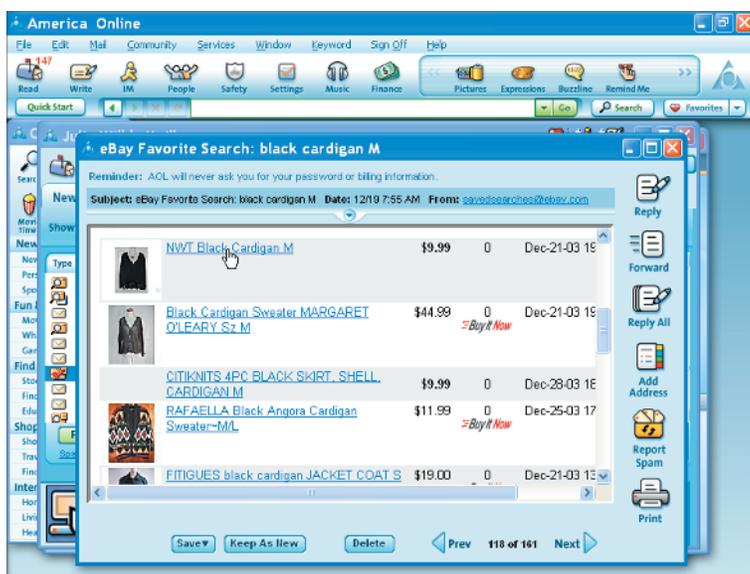
- 3 Click the Add to My Favorite Searches link.

8



The Add to My Favorite Searches page appears.

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



eBay e-mails your Favorite Search results to you.

Note: You must sign on to your e-mail service to check the Favorite Searches e-mail.

TIPS

Did You Know?

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

More Options!

If you especially like items from a specific seller or store, and you want to quickly and easily view new items, you can save them as favorites. In the My eBay page, click the Favorites tab, and then click My Favorite Sellers/Stores. Click Add new Seller/Store and type the seller's user ID or the store name. Then click Save Favorite.

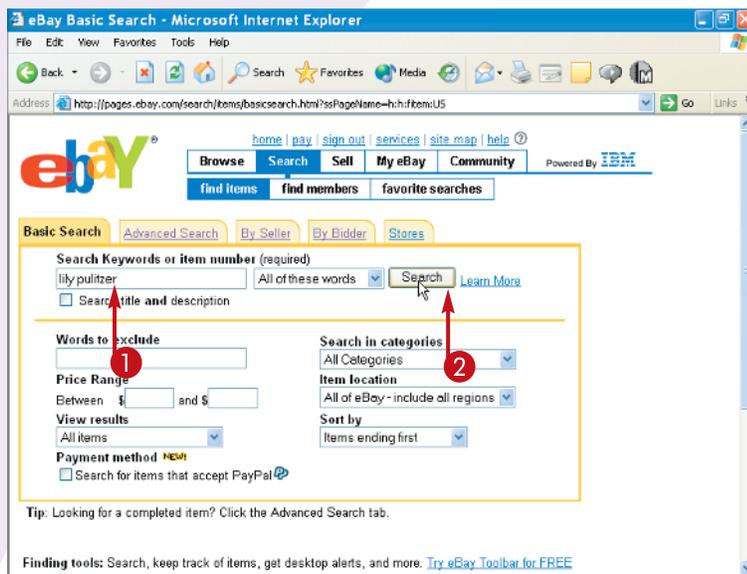
Find eBay's HIDDEN GEMS

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

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

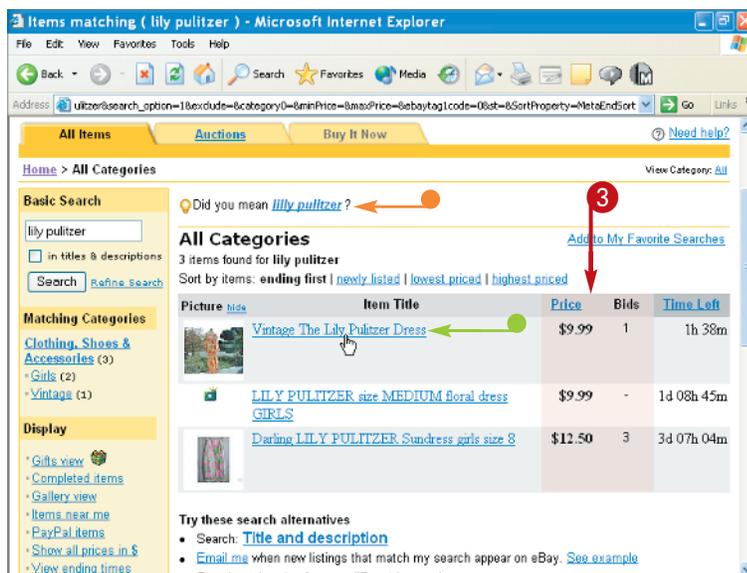
Another common error sellers make is transposing two letters. You can almost always find items with this mistake. For example, try DNKY instead of DKNY, or Evlis instead of Elvis.

As an example, a recent search on DNKY brought up 24 listings, only three of which had bids. These listings without bids give you an opportunity to find bargains. Compare that to the correct spelling, DKNY, where, out of the first 50 items, 30 have bids.



SEARCH FOR ITEMS WITH MISSPELLINGS

- 1 In the Basic Search tab, type a misspelled word or phrase.
- 2 Click Search.



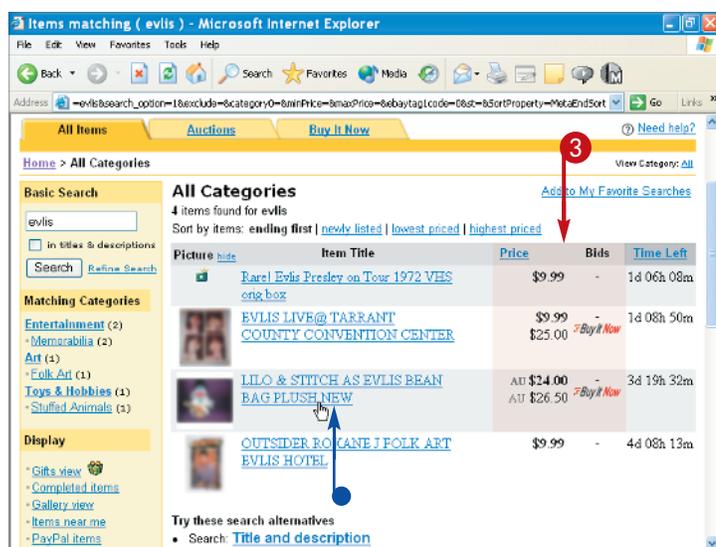
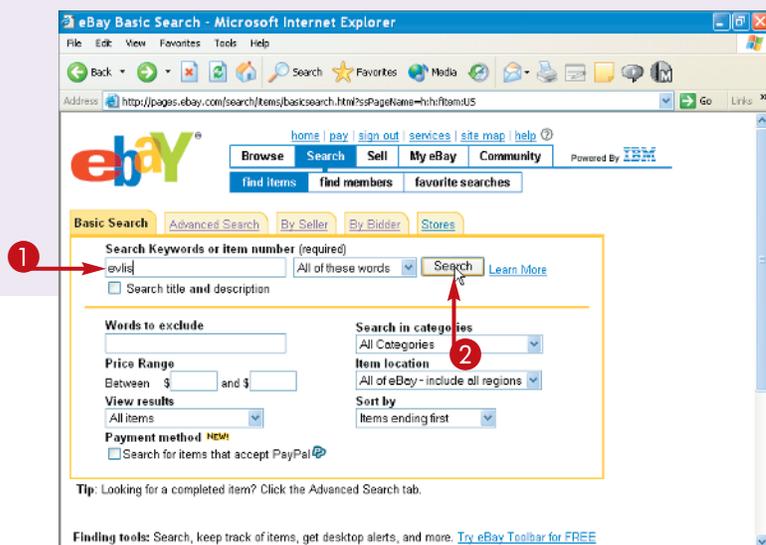
Search results appear with misspelled listings.

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

#9

SEARCH FOR ITEMS WITH TRANSPOSITIONS

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



The search results appear.

- 3 Search through the Price and Bids columns for auctions that still have low prices and bids.
- 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 #46.

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. When you browse, look for the New Today items.

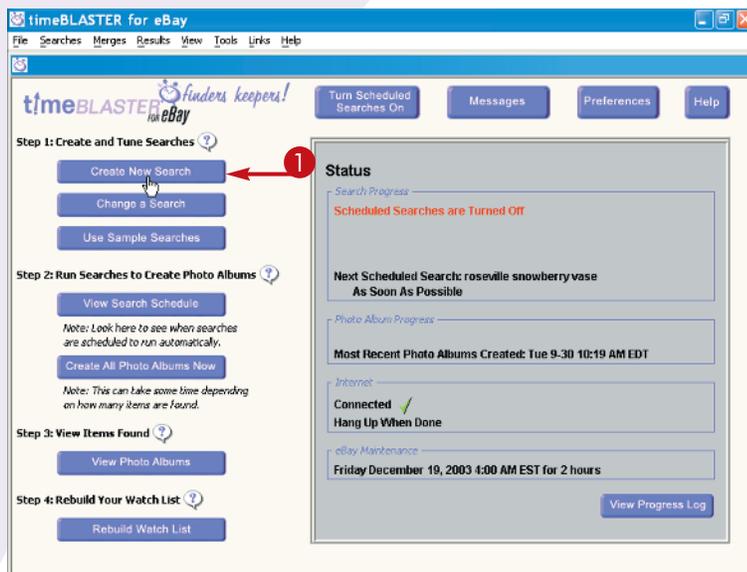
Did You Know?

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 the correct spelling.

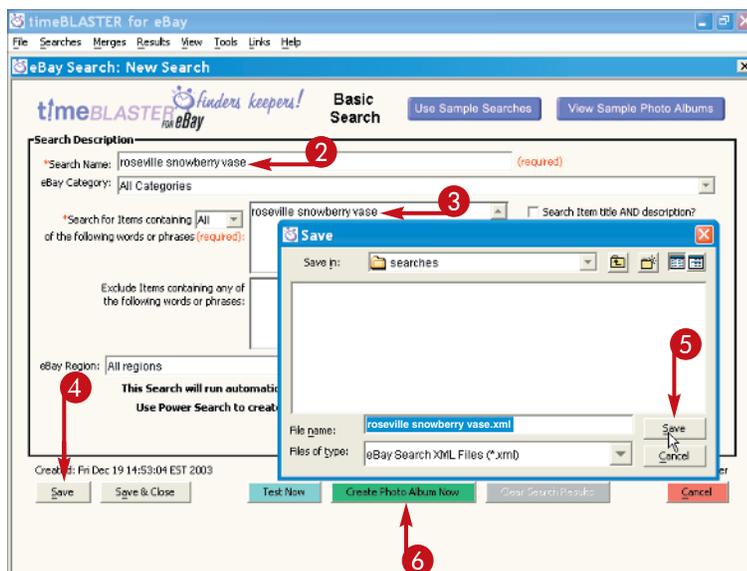
Create photo albums of SEARCH RESULTS

Have you ever scrolled through numerous eBay listings of similar items, clicking into each one to find the specific one that you want? You can reduce the time 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 great for sellers, too. 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.

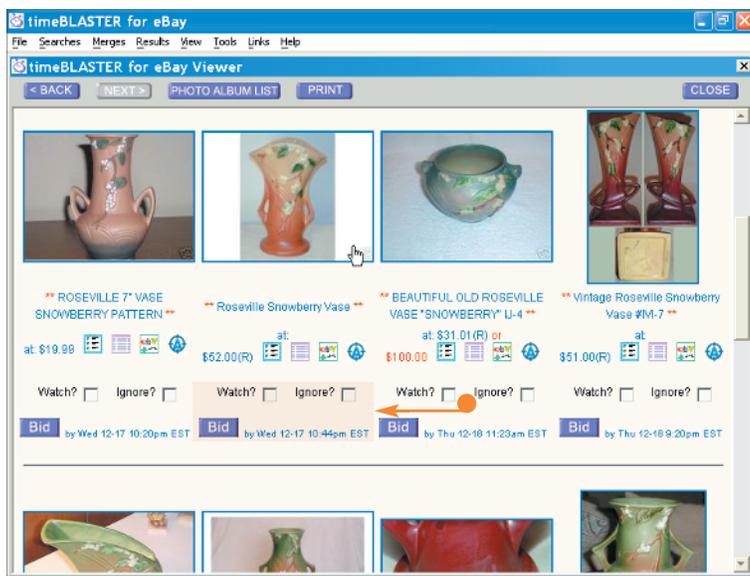
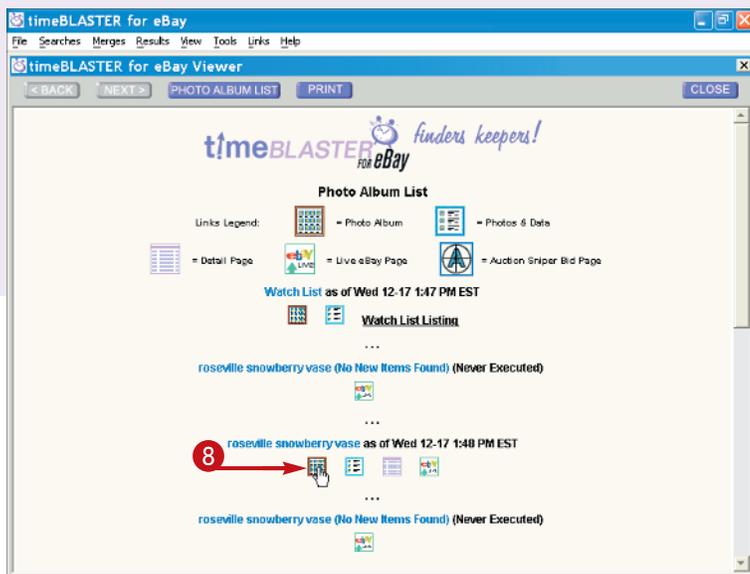


- 1 In the timeBLASTER main page, click Create New Search.



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 a photo album icon of an album you want to view.

The Photo Album appears, allowing you to view 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 PCs. 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 you refer who buys a one-year subscription.

Did You Know?

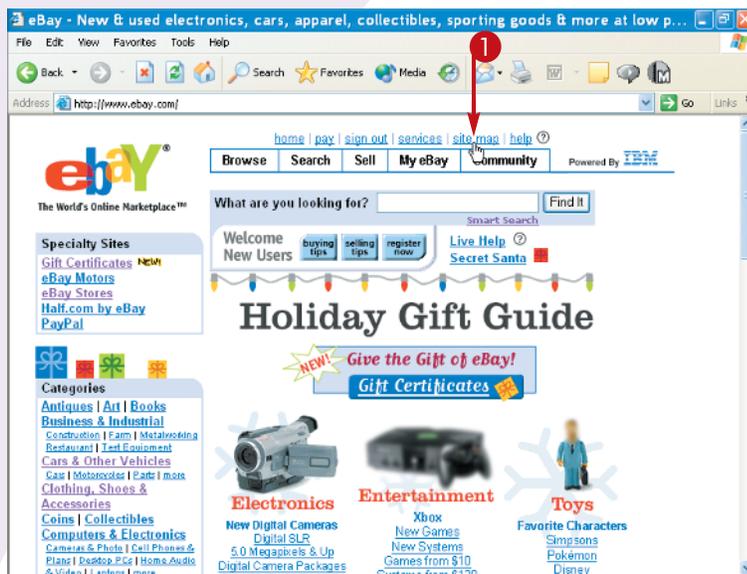
You can run searches automatically by clicking Turn Scheduled Searches On from the main timeBLASTER page. Running a scheduled search allows you to do searches at night, or any time that is most convenient for you, so you can do other things while the search runs.

Find it fast with eBay's SITE MAP

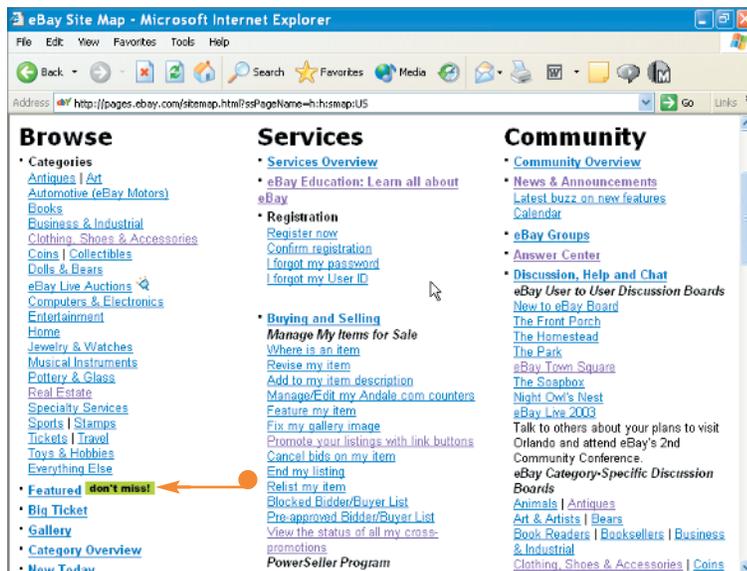
One of the easiest ways to find a particular section of the eBay site is to use the site map. Because eBay can be many layers deep in some areas, the site map acts as a valuable tool, displaying the broad array of features, services, and information available on the eBay site, and enabling you to navigate 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 by using the link that appears at the top right of every page.

The site map is organized as a series of links under headings that describe every area on eBay, such as Browse, Sell, Search, Services, and Community. New features and areas are easy to find, because they are marked with a bright yellow NEW! icon.

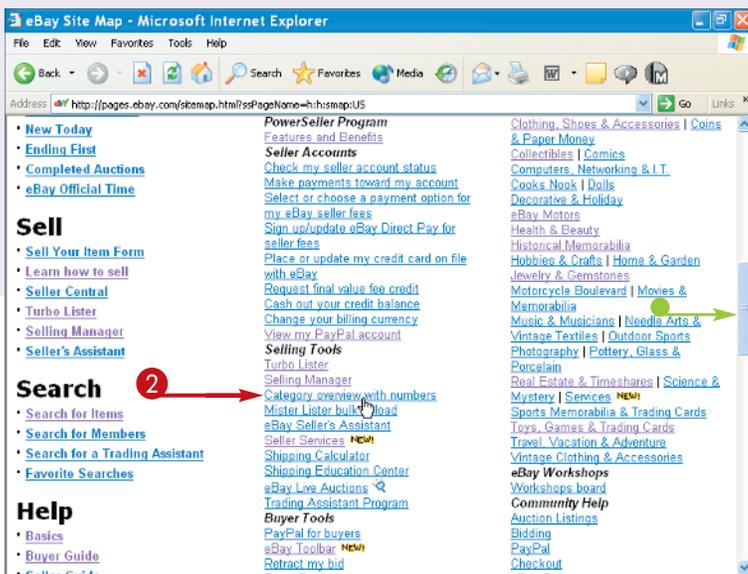


- 1 In the eBay home page, click the site map link.



The eBay site map page appears. Links to all eBay areas appear in the lists on this page.

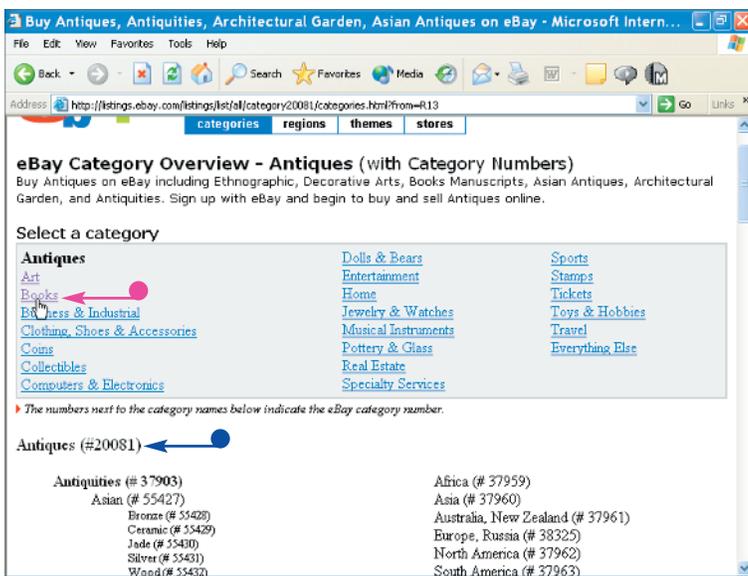
- Special items feature a don't miss! icon.



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

#11

This example uses the Category overview with numbers link.



The Category Overview with Category Numbers page appears, allowing you to find an eBay area that you may not otherwise notice.

- 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 main Category link to view the subcategories with numbers below it.

TIPS

More Options!

If you cannot find what you need on eBay's site map, you can search eBay's Help section. Click the help link, located just to the right of the site map link on any eBay page. You search the help database by typing your search words in the 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 tab in the eBay Help Center window.

Did You Know?

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