



50 things every eBay seller needs to know

In this ebook we will:

- **Introduce Best Match: eBay's search system**
- **Explain eBay's Defect system and how small mistakes can be a big problem**
- **Examine ways you can improve your listings and be more mobile friendly**
- **Explore the different shipping options available to eBay sellers**
- **Share expert tips from Tamebay readers and a whole raft of useful advice**

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Welcome

This ebook is aimed at new and fledgling sellers who want to get some insider knowledge about trading on eBay.

It's not a step-by-step guide (we're assuming that you can get registered on eBay, get your a Paypal account sorted and start listing all by your self because it's not that tricky). Rather we want to explore how to get the basics right and set the foundations of a profitable, successful and lasting ecommerce business.

This ebook is chockfull of useful pointers and tips, expert tweaks so you can maximise your sales as well a stack of expert insights from people who really understand eBay: Tamebay readers who are professional eBay traders.

Who knows? This could be the start of the development of a big ecommerce success where you start out on eBay take your selling to Amazon and other marketplaces and even establish your own webstore.

We hope you find it useful.

Dan Wilson and Chris Dawson
Editors of Tamebay

What is best match?

Best Match is the system eBay uses to determine the order in which items are presented to buyers searching the site for things they want to buy.

On one level it's quite simple. Your item title and description need to

match the terms that the buyer is using. But with so much for sale on eBay, they manipulate the results further so that the best items from the best sellers are pushed up the list so that buyers see them first.

What influences Best Match?

The exact algorithm is unknown but it's possible to discern some factors that will improve your chances. That said, we really know very little with any degree of total certainty and you've got to be wary of anyone who claims to know exactly how it works. It's impossible to quantify how they are weighted by the secret and often changing algorithm.

eBay says this: "A listing's position in Best Match is determined by numerous factors such as:

- seller track record or risk profile on eBay
- competitive pricing, including postage & packaging (P&P) costs
- relevance of the listing to the buyer's search"

These things matter to Best Match:

2. Previous successful sales

Successful sales on multi-item listings. If an item has sold before and customers have been happy with the service provided, eBay likes a listing like that. It shows a satisfaction from buyers and is a good predictor for successful future sales. So sales mean get more prominence in search.

3. Free P&P and a Premium service

eBay have said that Free P&P and a fast paid for option is something buyers like and they upweight these things in Best Match. Of course, when you offer free shipping you should wrap that into your total price to cover costs.

4. A seller's defect rate

Obviously if you're a Top Rated Seller (TRS) with an Above Average ranking, you'll do better. But it seems likely that eBay appreciates more than that from Defects. So it's the key reason to monitor and improve defects where you can. We wonder whether retail sellers get a bit of a boost too on the merits of the deals they have done with eBay as more favoured customers.

5. The quality of your listing

Obviously the keywords in an item title are vital but what about the other aspects of a listing? Multiple images may be preferred. And here's where we get into the realm of speculation. Does inclusion of keywords in the item description count? Perhaps even repeating them in an SEO (search engine optimisation) style? Maybe. We couldn't say for sure but some sellers swear by it. So it may be worth experimenting with.

6. Item Specifics

Helping eBay catalogue an item using the Item Specifics fields is definitely a key factor for Best Match and one which many sellers neglect. The system can be cumbersome and an irritation when it is incomplete or changes but it's one of those things many sellers can do to find a competitive edge. Item Specifics are the tick boxes related to attributes of the

item you're selling that can be found on the selling form or in your listing tool.

7. A mix of formats works

Auctions are treated differently by Best Match and bob up the rankings as they near their end times. It's one of the reasons why even a seller best suited to Buy it Now fixed price can find an upside from including some auctions as part of a successful mix. Using auctions is also a good way of testing price points of your wares.

8. It can be a slow start

Don't be discouraged as you start selling if it takes time to get profile and prominence: it can be a very slow start. That's why it's vital to start selling as soon as possible, to start building a reputation on eBay. And don't forget to try using auctions at first.

9. Tamebay Reader Tip.

Radroach says: Build up your own feedback by selling inexpensive and uncomplicated items at first – anything that might require a degree of technical knowledge to use (spare parts for instance) or need to be a precise fit (clothing) tends to be more problematic.

eBay Defects explained

So-called Defects have a detrimental affect on your seller profile so it's vital to be aware of what they are, how you get them and how to deal with them.

10. What's a defect?

eBay has a behind the scenes system that allows them to keep track of seller performance based on a number of inputs including buyer feedback and monitoring your behaviour. eBay then uses defects to help them determine how easily your items can be found in Best Match search. Even a 2% Defect Rate (2 in every hundred transactions being down marked) can have a detrimental impact on your sales.

11. How do I get a Defect?

According to eBay, there are several ways that you can get a Defect applied to your account:

- A detailed seller rating of 1 star for delivery time
- A detailed seller rating of 1, 2 or 3 stars for item description accuracy
- Negative or neutral Feedback
- The buyer not receiving the item
- A return request initiated because the item didn't match the listing description

- A seller-cancelled transaction where the buyer has not requested the cancellation

Additionally, buyers chasing up where an item is can count as a Defect too.

12. Keeping track of your defects

To find out how you might be affected by Defects, check out your Seller Dashboard in My eBay which will give you an immediate view on whether you're trading behaviour is considered Above Average or Below Standard.

There is also a Detailed Defect Report accessible from the Seller Dashboard which will give your granular information on a transaction by transaction basis.

13. Appealing your defects

If you feel that some Defects are unfair then it's worth appealing them. This can help you improve your seller rating but it can be time consuming. Use the Detailed Defect Report to identify which Defects you want to appeal and contact eBay.

14. All defects are equal

It's worth noting that every defect you get is equal. eBay make no distinction between one you get for a £10k car or a £1 widget. And that means if you sell fewer, higher value items then those defects hurt a lot more. That's why sellers of big ticket items often sell small things as well, low value, at cost, free P&P so they can dilute the problems associated with Defects.

15. Always refund buyers via eBay not PayPal

Not refunding a buyer who asks legitimately can count as a defect against you. And even if you do refund the buyer you can get a Defect. How? By not refunding the buyers through eBay. It's much easier to refund via PayPal but eBay don't track that so always make sure you use the eBay refund flow to avoid Defects.

16. Tracking helps your DSRs

You can help improve your DSRs by ensuring that you correctly provide eBay with tracking information. It isn't a 100% guarantee but it means you can make the case to eBay that you've done your bit and sent the goods.

17. Tamebay Reader Tip.

Joe says: If you're buying or making to sell, register with HMRC even if you don't make much profit, and register as a business seller with eBay. Don't get emotionally attached to your stock. It's an asset and sometimes you may need to dump it at cost or even at a loss.

18. Tamebay Reader Tip.

Dave says: Set normal work hours and stick to them. Leave time for a balanced life, including exercise, rest, and time together as a couple.

Optimising your listing

It's relatively easy to whack a few listings up on eBay and get a few sales but as time goes by, you want to sell more and sell for more. Before long you can be managing a fairly large portfolio of listings. So it makes sense to ensure they're as good as possible from the start. Here are some tips.

19. Follow the eBay Photo Standards

eBay has provided guidelines. Clear, zoomable images are the aim. And don't forget eBay's picture standards on size and no borders or other crud. Read more here: <http://sellercentre.ebay.co.uk/new-picture-standards>

20. Use Item specifics

In the eBay sell form and also the listing tool you might use, you'll find a selection of tick boxes relevant to the item you are selling. Use them. They will help your item perform better in Best Match.

21. Optimise your titles

It's vital that you make solid use of the 80 characters eBay offer you in the item title. Especially with listings you intend to use again and again, make

sure that you are cramming them full of relevant keywords that buyers search for. And consider international variants if your item for sale has overseas appeal. Crafting a hard working title is one of the most important things you can do as an eBay seller.

22. Tamebay Reader Tip.

Sarah says: Ensure all the important bullet points regarding the item are in your item specifics too and thoroughly detail the product in your item description.

23. Tamebay Reader Tip.

Tony E says: Answer questions on eBay as quickly as possible. Buyers, even non buyers, appreciate this.

Optimise your listings for mobile buyers

Remember that over 50% of transactions on eBay happen on a mobile device such as a smartphone or tablet. So it's worth optimising your listings for mobile buyers:

24. Use multiple pictures

Shopping on eBay using a mobile is a visual experience and that makes the images you include in your listings even more important than ever. Use the eBay system to upload images rather than embed them in your description, in the first instance.

Where possible, use multiple images (You can add up to 12 for free). With your best lines it's well worth investing in tip-top images if you're going to use them a lot. Keep the attention of the snaps on the product and crop tightly.

25. No HTML in the description

We think the age of fancy backgrounds, slideshows and the like is over. Check out how it all looks on a mobile and you'll see why: it's a mess on a small screen. We also wouldn't be surprised if there was a Best Match penalty for such descriptions. Go back to basics and just use black text on a plain background. (And if you must add a fancy HTML

design, use one that's responsive. They are available.)

26. Only include relevant text in the description

There's a lot of advice bandied about regarding the optimal length for your eBay written Item Description (80 words? 200 words?). But we've never been persuaded and if anyone has definitive evidence that word count really matters, please do share it. By all means repeat the title in the description but otherwise stick to factual, punchy bullet points describing the goods. There is no need to ramble on.

27. A place for everything

Don't clog up your description with stuff that has a home elsewhere. Things like returns and postage can be expressed elsewhere in dedicated fields. It may make you feel better to reiterate things in your blurb but remember than no-one ever read your screeds anyway.

28. Use the catalogues and product identifiers

eBay is increasingly moving to an Amazon-style model of using product identifiers and other catalogue details to help buyers find goods. The system isn't perfect but use them where you can to aid findability.

29. And check out your listings on mobile devices

Take some time to get to know the eBay buying app so you have some notion of how people are using it to buy and view your listings. You might never buy on your mobile but it is now increasingly the norm so dismissing it as a passing fad is an eccentric notion these days.

So, not only try and have a look at key listings on other people's phones when you get a chance but also use tools like <https://developer.chrome.com/devtools/docs/device-mode> that simulates the behaviour of mobile phones so you can see what users see on your own machine.

30. Tamebay User Tip.

Gary says: "Make it easy for those seekers of unique items who enter unique keywords into eBay search to locate your item. If you are not sure what an item is do research before listing to find those unique title keywords that every potential seeker of your item will be using. If you stick with generic title keywords on eBay you will be disappointed. List in the correct category and use customised item specifics to the maximum to enter your unique keywords. All this gives you a search/seeker advantage."

Shipping and fulfilment

Sending the goods you sell on eBay will be one of the things you'll be spending a great deal of your time doing. At peak times it can be an overwhelming task but don't be shy about asking for help and seeking out new providers.

31. Shop around

When it comes to delivery, the first stop as you start selling on eBay will likely be the Post Office. But you may be surprised at the variety and selection of shipping services there are out there. So be sure to do some research and seek out the best value service for your business.

32. Courier services are probably cheaper than you think.

Especially for bigger or heavier items, you might be surprised how cheap couriers can be and prices have come down in the past few years. But you generally get what you pay for so don't just judge a service on price but what they offer you and your buyer.

33. Couriers usually offer tracking as standard

eBay and PayPal like items to be tracked. It helps them rule in cases of parcel loss or even theft or fraud. It helps

them see that you did indeed despatch the goods. Many couriers offer tracking as standard and that can save you headaches later on.

34. Branded packages and inserts

When your item is delivered to the buyer, that's your chance to show off and communicate with them directly. Do use inserts and flyers to encourage repeat purchases and use branded packaging to advertise your website if you have one.

35. What about Returns?

As a business seller you are required by UK and EU law to offer Returns under certain circumstances. eBay requires that you accept Returns under the Distance Selling Regulations for at least 14 days after the buyer receives the goods.

36. But who pays for returns?

It depends. Some eBay sellers will offer Free Returns to all buyers regardless of the circumstances. But as a general rule of thumb if the return is because the item is damaged, not working or not as described then the seller pays for return carriage. If the goods come back because the buyer has changed their mind, they should bear the expense of the return postage.

37. Learn about Managed Returns

Even if you specify a Returns policy and maybe even include a Returns slip with your sales, eBay can sometimes intervene and help buyers make a Return using their Managed Returns process. This way a buyer can apply to eBay to make a Return and you have to respond to that. It's worth boning up on the system.

38. Package properly

Take time and effort to adequately pack and protect your items in the post. The materials and methods you use will depend on the item and it pays to be ultra cautious. In the normal passage of carriage your parcel go through some rough and tumble, so wrap it up safe.

39. Tamebay Reader Tip.

Tony E. says: "Really read up on the postage charges & weights for the items you are selling. Many sellers just put in any price from the top of their head & are shocked when they are charged twice as much at the Post Office."

40. Tamebay Reader Tip.

Blaine says: "As all new eBay accounts have selling limits, ask eBay customer service for an increase of your limits straight away and every 30 days after."

Tips, tools and tweaks

Here are some choice cuts and cute ideas you should know:

41. PayPal Merchant rate and Micropayments

One tip that we love giving out on Tamebay regards the preferential fees you can get on PayPal. But they keep it a secret. If you take a lot of small payments then apply for their Micropayments Rate. And if you take more than £1500 a month through PayPal you can apply for the PayPal Merchant Rate which means reduced fees. And even better news: the more you take the lower the rate gets.

42. Tamebay Reader Tip.

Sarah says: “Keep one eye on the competition but don’t get hung up with their price vs yours. By offering good comms and service they are more inclined to come back to YOU regardless. Make them know they can trust YOU.

43. Understand Seller Hub

The new console for sellers that will be replacing My eBay for serious sellers is called Seller Hub. It has numerous new tools and helpers to get your sales going. Make yourself familiar with the Seller Hub.

44. Turbo Lister, Selling Manager and Selling Manager Pro are going

You will likely have been relying on eBay’s management and listing tools, but they’re going. New tools are available in the Seller Hub but you might want to look elsewhere for something that better meets your needs. Check out the Tamebay Guide for tips.

45. Tamebay Reader Tip.

John says: Making money online is not easy and your profits are made when you buy your stock. Be professional, invest in your business and understand that you cannot be the cheapest and make money. You have to be the best to make money long-term.

46. Understand the marketplace

You don't have to fly blind. You can get a great deal of information from services available in the Seller Hub or, indeed, 3rd party offerings. They can give you data that will help you judge what to buy to sell and how to price your items. You can also use such tools to spy on competitors and see how they're doing and spot trends on pricing on specific items.

47. Concentrate on your key lines

It's not a competition to have as many lines up on eBay as you possibly can. Just managing all those adverts and the inventory can be a headache. If you're struggling at first to keep up, concentrate your efforts on a handful of key, successful and profitable lines. Again, it helps to know what's working and what's not so you can make these decisions.

48. Tamebay Reader Tip.

OJK says: "Consider carefully the price point of your items – is it really worth it (in terms of workload) to have to list, photograph, pack and post 100 items a day making 20p on each? Better surely to sell 1 item with a profit of £20..."

49. Download the Tamebay Guide

If you need help or a tool or service to help you sell more on eBay, the chances are that you'll find it in the Tamebay guide: www.tamebayguide.com.

50. Enjoy it!

The whole point of selling on eBay is to give you some money and freedom to do what you want to do. eBay selling can be a great lifestyle choice offering flexibility and potentially good money. So open your mind to the possibilities and be willing to learn something new every day.