

Make money on the Web

Set up shop in cyberspace and bring in extra income

With just about everyone buying online these days, it's easier than ever to cash in on the Internet marketplace. If you make quilts or bags, or want to unload clothing or books, earning a profit is probably less work than you think. The popular sites below offer tools that make it simple to post items and process payments. Follow our guide and start making money right away.

By Jen Uscher



Choose the right marketplace



Sell just about anything—vintage figurines, video games, baby gear, gently used handbags—through the busiest e-commerce site on the Web.

How it works

- You can put goods up for sale auction-style, letting potential buyers bid over a specific period (usually three, five or seven days). Or you can sell items at a fixed “buy it now” price—which allows shoppers to skip the bidding process and order immediately.

What it costs

- Basic listings cost from 10 cents to \$4, depending on the item's price and other factors such as the category in which it is listed. You also pay a percentage of the final price to eBay (8.75 percent for auction items that sell for up to \$25, for example).

Go pro

- If you're selling a large number of a particular item—shoes, for instance—you might want to opt for a customizable eBay Store, which displays your items for an unlimited time for lower up-front listing fees. Monthly subscriptions start at \$16.



Clear your shelves and put some extra cash in your pocket by selling unwanted books, CDs and DVDs.

- List books, CDs and DVDs that are already for sale on Amazon; you don't need to upload a photo or description. You get a storefront displaying items you're selling and feedback from previous buyers.

- You pay a commission of anywhere from 6 percent to 15 percent of the sales price, a \$1 transaction fee and a variable closing fee (for example, \$1.35 for a book or 80 cents for a DVD or CD). Listings expire after 60 days.

- If you're selling more than 40 items a month, a Pro Merchant subscription (\$40 per month), allows you to list products not found on Amazon and waives the 99 cent transaction fee. Plus, the listings never expire.



Turn your hobbies into a business

by marketing your creations or collectibles.

- Sellers get a free customizable shop where they can sell goods they've made by hand, such as jewelry, quilts and pottery, plus vintage items.

- You pay 20 cents to list an item for four months. If it sells, you owe Etsy a 3.5 percent transaction fee, payable with a credit card or a PayPal account.

- For \$7 to \$15 per day, you can advertise an item from your shop in a showcase. The featured piece appears on Etsy's home page or another prominent spot.



Design and sell your own graphic T-shirts, mugs and other printables.

- You get a free, basic shop to stock with T-shirts and other products that are decorated with graphics you create and upload. When an item sells, Cafe Press prints it, ships it and handles the payment transaction.

- It's free to upload designs and launch a shop that sells more than 80 items (no more than one from each category). Cafe Press sets the base price (\$11 per mug, for example); you select the retail price (\$15, say) and reap the difference.

- A premium shop with multiple pages, customizable shop design and the ability to list an unlimited number of products costs \$7 per month, with discounts for longer periods (\$60 per year). A 15-day free trial is available.

Mind the store

Stay on top of your business by sticking to these rules.

✓ Manage your offerings.

Use the tools available at your host site to monitor listings, orders and shipments. On Amazon, see "Manage Your Orders"; on eBay, "My eBay"; and on Etsy, "Your Etsy." Check your account at least once a day to see if you've sold items and to answer questions from prospective buyers.

✓ Keep in touch.

As soon as you've made a sale, e-mail the buyer an acknowledgement. Once you've shipped the item, send another message with the package tracking number. If you're going to be away for more than a day, change your status to "vacation mode" if possible, so buyers aren't left hanging.

✓ Don't give up.

If an item doesn't sell, relist it. Try a new title, a more detailed product description, better photos or a lower price. On Etsy, and sometimes eBay, you pay to relist; on Amazon it's free.

✓ Stay within legal guidelines.

You need to report your income at tax time (IRS Schedule C), so maintain a record of your sales. Also keep track of listing fees and other expenses; you might be able to deduct them. If you make more than \$400, you must pay self-employment tax (Schedule SE).

✓ Remember sales tax.

You might need to collect state and local sales tax when you sell to customers who live in your state. Each locale has its own requirements, so contact your state's revenue agency for information (check out the links at business.gov/finance/taxes/state.html).

Keep customers coming back

Get top dollar with savvy marketing techniques.

✓ Price it right.

Determine what other sellers are charging for similar products.

✓ Use photos.

Make sure all your images are well lit and shot on a solid background, such as a neutral-color cloth. If possible, show items from multiple angles.

✓ Craft your words.

In product descriptions, use keywords (type of item, brand, size, color, materials) that customers are likely to use when searching for goods like yours.

✓ Earn glowing reviews.

Being honest about the condition of items and shipping promptly are two ways to garner positive feedback.

✓ Go viral.

Add a link to your shop on your Facebook or MySpace page and in your e-mail signature to make accessing the site easy.

✓ Give a little.

Offer free shipping, or bundle multiple items for one price. Gift wrapping at no cost is a nice gesture around the holidays.

✓ Keep them interested.

E-mail your customers occasional notices about new products and promotions. But be sure to ask first if they want to be on your mailing list.

Protect yourself when collecting payments

Follow these guidelines to enjoy a safe, profitable selling experience.

✓ Read the fine print.

Before getting started, read the site's terms of use and frequently asked questions (FAQ) to

familiarize yourself with its security, privacy and selling rules.

✓ Steer clear of unsolicited e-mail.

If you get a message asking you to update your account information or link to a log-in page, don't answer it. It might be a scam designed to steal your identity.

✓ Allow buyers to pay for goods online.

Speedy and secure, PayPal is the gold standard of online payment services. Payments show up in your PayPal account immediately. Amazon's sellers receive funds

through its Marketplace Payments service.

✓ Wait for clearance.

If a buyer pays by check, make sure it clears before sending merchandise. Even cashier's checks can be phony. Make sure your customers know that shipment could be delayed.

✓ Track it.

Using a shipping service that provides a tracking number can help prevent fraudulent buyers from claiming that they never received a package.



Reality
Checked
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We're doing it!

Meet three All You readers who earn cash selling goods online.

“I started using eBay to get rid of old stuff around the house. Once I realized how easy it was, I thought, Why not? I began to sell my hand-sewn wedding veils through Etsy, and now I earn upwards of \$200 a week. It's a great addition to my income.”

—Karen Willard, 59, Elma, N.Y.



“I have an eBay storefront where I sell children's and women's plus-size clothing. And I found a costume supplier, so I now do a brisk Halloween

business, which pays for all my Christmas shopping.”

—Angie Miracle, 31, Austin, Texas

“I'm a teacher, and I sell my handmade cards and crafts from my Web site. I send my creations to people as thank-yous, print my Web site address on the back of each card and put the address in my e-mail tagline. I get a steady flow of money every month.”

—Stacey Rapp, 28, Salinas, Calif.

