

# Enhancing your eBay Strategic and Tactical Skills VI

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**B**ack in **Enhancing your eBay Tactical Skills I**, **Enhancing your eBay Tactical Skills II**, our **Enhancing your eBay Tactical Skills III**, our **Enhancing your eBay Tactical Skills IV**, and **Enhancing your eBay Tactical Skills V** tutorials found in **GuruGrams** #41, #49, #62, #70, and #71 we looked at some advanced **eBay** items from our email **help line**, our **What's New** and newer blog pages, and the **alt.marketing.online.ebay** newsgroup. Plus stuff I've been meaning to emphasize beyond our earlier info resources that you will find in our **Auction Help** and our **Auction Resources** links.

I thought we might once again continue here with some newer **eBay** tactical skills topics. Many of these concepts are enhanced and expanded from their previous coverage in our **WHTNU05.ASP**, **WHTNU06.ASP** and (ongoing) **WHTNU07.ASP** news blog pages. Which are now also **RSS Available**.

But first, let's once again summarize the **eBay seller success** rules ...

**Offer unique products not available elsewhere.**  
**Maximize your personal value added.**  
**Always seek out a minimum 30:1 sell/buy ratio.**  
**Always aim for a 21 day payback.**  
**The minimum profitable eBay sale is \$19.63.**  
**NO foreign bidders/buyers/transshipments!**  
**Accept VISA/MC/Paypal only!**  
**Never list anything you cannot hold at arm's length.**  
**Use both a scanner AND a 5 megapixel camera.**  
**Spend at least TWO HOURS in image postproc.**  
**NO dropshipping, pallet buys, or consignment sales.**  
**Limit terms and conditions to TEN words maximum.**  
**Clearly state your revenue neutral shipping charges.**

Along with the single key **eBay buyer rule...**

**ALWAYS proxy bid your max ONCE very late in the eBay auction. Do so in odd penny amounts that are somewhat above a currency denomination threshold.**

Let's go on to some more recent concepts...

## **Rights of Abandonment**

One of the things an auctioneer hates to talk about and rarely mentions goes by the historic name of **rights of abandonment**.

Specifically, can you bid on something at an auction, take home one or two of the goodies and simply walk away from great heaping piles of poisoned dregs?

There's no universal and clear cut answer to this question. But here are some factors to consider...

**GIVEAWAYS** — Chances are there will be others bidding who have already won enormous lots and you can simply give all of your unwanted items to them. AFTER, of course a VERY careful triage.

**LEFTOVERS** — Auctioneers often haul anything of even questionable value that remains home for their monthly barn sales.

**BIG CLEANUP ANYWAY** — Some sites will require major cleanup for a new lessee. If your trash is only a minor fraction, it just may go unnoticed.

**UN-HIGHGRADING** — Sometimes the worst of the worst of your items can mysteriously end up on adjacent pallets. But do so only AFTER the auction is over.

**WATCH YOUR TERMS** — Auctions where "winner must take all" terms are specifically stated can be bad news. Especially if anything is actually in writing.

**WHICH AUCTIONEER?** — Pissing off a fly-in auctioneer you probably will never see again is not nearly as bad a scene as causing big problems for a regular you depend on for repeat income.

**WATCH THOSE DUMPSTERS!** — They are private property and may be posted against your use. But you might get away with a small load spread once over several non-obvious locations.

**KNOW WHERE THE DUMP IS** — Tipping charges on dumps and landfills can be as low as \$8 per load or so. Know where these services are and their hours.

**PAY OFF THE HELP** — Chances are there are some minimum wage workers for the auctioneer or the site whom "\$20 and "make it go away" will work miracles.

**TAKE ALL YOU CAN** — If there is room in your truck or trailer or whatever, fill it as full as you can. Unexpected value can sometimes be found in even the worst of dregs.

**WATCH LOT MARKINGS** — If the lots are not clearly and plainly marked, it can be hard later to find who abandoned what.

**CONSIDER STORAGE RENTALS** — Storage units can cost as little as \$50 per month and may give you the opportunity to more carefully review dregs. Or use multiple trips in smaller vehicles.

**BUY THE DREGS** — Sometimes you can turn this all around and buy what others have abandoned for a pittance. **IF** you know what you are doing, **IF** you have the truck or trailer room, and **IF** you have the time and help to profit from same.

## Barbie Dolls

I got an email from an individual wanting to liquidate a large **Barbie Doll** collection. They were surprised that not one local auction house so much as returned their calls. In general, though...

**Most individuals tend to grossly overvalue common collectibles.**

Just because they spent a lifetime acquiring them and spent zillions of dollars on them. The market, of course, could not care less.

A quick check on **eBay** shows nearly **10,000** Barbie listings. The overwhelming majority of these are no sales at **99** cents or **\$9.90**. But there can be a very few spectacular sales of multi thousands of dollars for very rare or highly unique items. Some of these may be bogus, may be money laundering, or fail to close.

The **Klaus Barbies** are particularly in demand because of their extreme rarity.

A second rule...

**The faster and easier you try to liquidate any, collection, the LESS will be your total return.**

**Spectacularly so!**

Here's some possible guidelines on dealing with collections...

**SPLIT IT UP** — Almost certainly, a much higher total return will be gotten by separately selling individual items.

**METER IT OUT** — Spreading the sales of the individual items out over a one year period likely will maximize your return.

**DO IT YOURSELF** — The higher your personal value added, the greater the likelihood of a higher total net return.

**KNOW YOUR VALUES** — Thorough research of present market values are an absolute must.

**USE THE BIGGIES** — Obvious "top dog" choices for selling most anything these days are **eBay** for smaller items of national interest and **Craig's List** for larger and heavier local ones. But do not overlook specialized enthusiast resources.

**ASSISTANCE COSTS MONEY** — Auctioneers and consignment sales demand a large return on their time and risk. Figure **twenty percent** for an auction, **fifty percent** for consignment, and **less than a penny on the dollar** for instant cash buyouts.

**HAVE REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS** — It can be extremely hard to get back **five cents on the dollar** on more common low end collectibles. Especially wildly overrated items such as nearly anything from the **Franklin Mint**.

**CONSIDER A "REAL" ART HOUSE** — In the rare case that you have true and unique high value collectibles, the specialty auction houses such as **Sothebys** or **Christie's** might be of help. My regional recommendation would be **Count Your Assests**.

Above all, special emphasis needs placed on **collector specific resources**. These include original manufacturer sites, fan sites, history sites, pricing guides, general antique services, and newsgroups. The easiest way to find these is to start with **Google** and **Wikipedia**, and then follow all of the links and new keywords they generate.

As always, careful research wins over a panic sale nearly every time.

## Dealing With Bad Actors

One of the realities of local auctions is that the same bad actors often may keep showing up and competing against you. Some of whom will not be outbid at any price. And all of which may trash out bargains.

Here are some defenses that seem to be working for me...

**HIT 'EM WHERE THEY AIN'T** — Dig down really deep to find obscure auctions where they are unlikely to attend. Best are the auctions where your interest items are only a tiny fraction of the lots.

**KEEP A LOW PROFILE** — Do not let them recognize you as a competitor or as a threat. Be totally invisible except when actually bidding and are in the auctioneer's face. Always listen. Speak rarely. But **NEVER** gloat or brag.

**RECOGNIZE HIDDEN VALUE** — Spend as much extra time as you can by previewing and evaluating lots. Using your expertise as personal value added. Secret marks ( such as a thumbtack on a pallet rail ) may prove extremely useful.

**IGNORE THEM** — Set your max price ahead of time and stick with it.

**BE NICE** — Be generous with useless info such as upcoming auctions you will not be attending. Or which auctioneer just did what to whom.

**NO PISSING CONTESTS** — Never bid further than **one increment** above your absolute max solely to cause them grief.

**PLAY THE ODDS** — You only need hit big time on one auction out of twenty or so. If more than five percent of your bids are accepted, you are paying too much.

**BE PATIENT!** — The bad guys may leave early or run out of money or use up all of their haul space.

I guess the bottom line on all this is to simply not let the bad guys be part of your auction experience. Set your limits and stick with them. There is no tug-o-war if you do not pick up your end of the rope.

## Creating Your own Regional Auction Finder

One key secret to **eBay** success is finding deeply distressed unique sources of supply that are close enough to you they don't rack up outrageous shipping expenses. As we have seen [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), you should **always seek out a bare minimum of a 30:1 sell/buy ratio.**

Sources that work well for me include privatized military surplus, dot bomb bankruptcies, industrial auctions, business failures, aerospace overstocks, city or county surplus, and school & community college auctions.

I've long had an [Arizona Auctions Regional Directory](#) up on our [Auction Help](#) library page. Along with a companion [tutorial](#) guide. We also offer a custom service where we can produce similar resources for your area [per these details](#).

Several examples also [appear here](#).

There is no way you could create your own similar listings that are as fast and as complete and as thorough and as low cost as this service. But I thought we might go over the creation steps just in case you might like to try.

Start the listing with the **National Auctioneers Association** and your local or your regional equivalent to the **Arizona Auctioneers Association**. Then compile a list of local auctioneers from their members listings that have web sites. Visit the sites to make sure they are currently active. Eliminate any realtor sites that do not also have estate sales. Or any highly specialized services not of interest.

Then compile an extensive list of national or international auctioneers that may be active in your areas. This may be similar to the middle column of our resource listings. Next, compile a list of links to all of your state's **universities, community colleges, schools, cities, towns** and **counties**. email any likely candidates to find out when and how their surplus property is disposed of.

Next, add the other web auction finder resources. Most of these could not find a pig in a dishpan when it comes to Arizona auctions. Typically there will be **65 to 150** Arizona auctions announced at any one time. See how many you can find how fast without my help.

After ongoing thorough link testing, you can go on to column three. Where you get a **national newspaper list**, a **state newspaper list**, and links to all of those **Craig's List** and **Kijiji** resources nearby.

Follow this up by carefully going through each and every newspaper for your state, finding which ones have active classified sections and which of those have enough auction listings to be worthwhile. Some newspapers (but only those that wish to survive for a few more weeks) will also have web access to their display ads as well. Be sure to seek these out and link them.

You might also want to create a list of all of the major companies and employers in your area. Again to seek out which have surplus property routinely disposed of.

Finally, you continually recheck each and every listing. Followed up by asking all auction sites to put you on their email lists.

## Some Thoughts on Inventory Control

When we went to selling thousands of lower cost electronic component lots on **eBay** from fewer higher cost items, it became obvious that some sort of inventory control was essential.

The trick is to get "just enough" controls in place that you do not spend bunches of time on items that may not sell. Or otherwise waste or misdirect energy.

Tighter controls become especially important when any hired help has to know the differences between, say, a type N connector and a UHF connector. Or between a regular banana jack, a mini banana jack, or a pin jack.

Or a dozen variants of similar looking DIP relays.

Bee and I both still prefer **plain old 3x5 cards**, so we use a mix of these and spreadsheets. Similarly, you can guess, weigh, or count items, and a mix here is essential for sanity.

An important rule...

**Do not spend excess time inventorying products that do not have a sales history or that are unlikely to ever turn into consistent best sellers.**

**Use only the MINIMUM necessary inventory controls!**

Our larger quantity items start off in shipper's boxes and downgrade into drawer slots or else jiffy bags in the quart, gallon, and two gallon sizes as sold.

Each item has an **ITEM CARD** associated with it. On this card is the exact **eBay** description and the exact image URL. Along with a sketch of the item with key differences between it and potential mixups. Remaining quantities are also shown, as is the item location. The latter is important during setup.

Each listing has a **LISTING CARD** associated with it. This stays near the workstation, and goes into an active or a previously sold file. The listing card has the **eBay** history with specific item numbers, the quantities sold, and the dates sold. It also has the exact image URL, estimated or exact remaining inventory, and the location of the stock.

Pricing usually starts out as "**one sixth of new stock at a major distributor**". From there, the price gets adjusted on how fast the item sells and on how many items remain in inventory. Obviously, if you have 35 of something left, you do not want to sell in lots of 12. You instead drop the count to lots of 11. Any dregs can go into a bargain cabinet assortment later. Or cover you for a misread or mixup.

The minimum breakeven sale on **eBay** is somewhere around \$19.63, so our lots usually will open at one half of this price. Most buyers "start a tab" and each shipped order is typically well above breakeven.

With lower prices, you do get into too much pissing around. Worse yet, the minimum shipping becomes too large a fraction of the total price...

**NEVER let a buyer nickel and dime you over shipping!**

**BLOCK THEM IMMEDIATELY if they even try this.**

We do very aggressively combine shipping and often will refund any excess on quantity sales. We normally do **not** give any actual item price reductions if the total billing is under \$70 or so. Moderate discounts may happen above this point, and very generous ones for substantially larger deals.

We also emphatically, absolutely, and totally **will not sell to a foreign bidder/buyer/transshipment**. The risk factors are way too high and the closing costs and time involvement are far too exorbitant.

Much more on this in our [Auction Help](#) library page.

## Some Random Factoids

Here's an assortment of shorter hints, tips, techniques, and whatever...

**THE DUTCH AUCTION TRAP AGAIN** — Much as it pains me to pass up free money, a repeat warning of the **eBay Dutch Auction trap** seems appropriate here...

**NEVER bid on all "n" Dutch items!**

If you bid on all "n" quantity of a Dutch Auction on **eBay**, your proxy bid **IMMEDIATELY** jumps to your **MAXIMUM** bid price!

For instance, suppose you are the only bidder on a ten item Dutch auction opening at a dollar. If you bid two dollars to be sure of winning 9 items, you'll win nine items at a dollar each.

If you bid two dollars on all 10 items, you'll still win the first nine items at a dollar each. But the tenth item will cost you **ELEVEN DOLLARS!**

**An eBay buyer's tutorial appears [here](#)**, a seller's tutorial [here](#), and great heaping bunches of other resources [here](#).

In most of our own Dutch auctions, the quantity (often 5) gets set by an **eBay** listing price break. Chances are we usually will have bunches more in stock, so **email** me.

**TRUTH IN ADVERTISING**— At least one seller got things right when they said "**All freight arrangements are the sole responsibility of the buyer.**"

A classic that should go right up there with the **swash stickers**.

**SEMINARS**— Much of what you see here on our [Guru's Lair](#) website is also available as online interactive training or live seminars. My preferred

location for these is the **Black Range Lodge**. Cleverly hidden in the remote wilderness part of New Mexico that you cannot get to. At quite reasonable rates. Don't miss either the **Percha Creek Salmon Run** or the **Kingston Frisbee Festival**. The latter usually runs from January 1st to December 31st on any given year. Contact Catherine or Pete for details.

My weekend seminar topics might include An intro to **Magic Sinewaves**, eBay **selling secrets**, eBay **buying secrets**, insider **live auction access**, **PostScript** programming , **Entrepreneurial Engineering**, or any of our **postproc photo workshops**.

Prices are quite reasonable. Please **email me** if you have any interest in these or similar topics. Arizona locations are also possible.

**AN eBay BUG WORKAROUND** — For a while there, some attempts at using eBay's "sell similar" feature ended up trashing most of the descriptive content **on any category change**. Forcing you to re-enter everything.

Here is a bizarre approach that seems to cure the problem...

First, **give the sell similar enough time to fully download**. Then, you switch to **HTML View**. Then make one or more benign **changes** to the HTML code, such as a space or a carriage return. All of your previous text should now be retained rather than vanish without a trace.

Be sure to delete the old category before adding a new one, or you'll get double charged. Plus having the bug reappear when you try to get rid of the original.

**KIJJI VERSUS CRAIG'S LIST** — eBay just started up a new US **Craig's List** imitator wannabe at an ineptly misnamed **www.kijji.com**. Which is strange, because eBay is already a partial owner of Craig's List.

So far, it is kinda empty since it only has been up for a few hours, and I feel the name choice is far beyond very bad. Initial nav is much better than **Craig's List**, though.

A reasonable bet is that the two will eventually merge with a buyout. Possibly with "ain't broke" Craig's list doing business as usual and new concepts being tested and evaluated on kijji.

This, of course, is the very last thing that newspapers want or need.

**SHILLING AGAIN** — Great heaping bunches of utterly clueless newspaper, **Slashdot**, and tv "exposes" of the heinous crime of eBay shilling seem to be once again coming out of the woodwork.

Here are the facts...

- Shilling is **NOT** at all illegal under the **Uniform Commercial Code** section 2-328 if preannounced or if part of a distress sale. Otherwise, if and when challenged, all that happens is that the price reverts to the pre shill level.
- Shilling simply **DOES NOT WORK** on eBay! Two essential elements of shilling are mark demeanor feedback and auctioneer bailout. (I'm sorry sir — I could have sworn you had your hand up!) Both of these are utterly and totally absent on eBay.
- An eBay seller dumb enough to attempt any shilling will also be making enough other stupid mistakes to guarantee their demise. **Any shill that wins — loses.**
- A perfect 100 percent defense against any eBay shilling attempt is to **proxy bid your max ONCE very late in the auction.** If your price goals are met, it does not matter in the least how the price got to that point.

Much more in our [eBay Buying Secrets](#) tutorial and in our [Auction Help](#) library.

## On Staying Tightly Focused

I just came from an industrial bankruptcy auction that strongly reinforced the key things to look for in deep distress auctions...

- **Poor promotion** by a second tier auctioneer.
- **Utter panic** by a lienholder who just wants their building back.
- **Few but huge lots**, most of which are poisoned and need major triage.
- **Astounding bargains** in "contents of cabinet" and "contents of room" offers.
- **Hassles over payments**, removal dates, and cleanup details.
- **Time and date conflicts** with a major competitor.
- **Few people attending**, and even fewer interested in the stuff you are.

- **Continual negotiating** to get around those pesky \$2.50 minimum bids.
- **Dark and murky rooms** that hide or obscure most items being offered.
- **120 degrees in the shade**, except for the scorpions and the four inch hail.
- And, of course, the **restrooms not working**.

Sometimes you just know when an obscure auction is gonna go overwhelmingly in your favor. It only happens one time in twenty or so. But do **be ready when it happens!**

Even then, though, it is trivially easy to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory...

- If you bid on **too little** to make your time and effort worthwhile.
- If you bid on **too much** to cause all sorts of loading and hauling hassles.
- If the stuff flat out **will not sell** on **eBay**.
- If its **price per pound** or price per cubic foot is way too low for resale.
- If its **large size or high bulk** makes for intractable shipping hassles.
- If the really good stuff **gets pulled** at the last possible instant.
- If you get into a **pissing contest** with another competitor or bidder.
- If you lack specialized **insider knowledge** on the particular items being offered.
- If you are unable to add significant **personal value added** to the products involved.
- If the stuff is **woefully obsolete** but remains not remotely collectible.
- If extensive and impractical **repair or refurb** is needed that costs too much or takes too long.

And, of course...

- If the too good to be true deals — **are**.

A recent PD auction drove home how important it is to continually **stay tightly focused** at any auction. There were hundreds of lots of huge machinery combined with a very few pallets that held partial items of interest.

The foremost rule at any PD auction is to **never bid on a white vehicle!** Useful lots were few and far between. As always, it is of utmost importance to...

**Set your maximum bid prices well ahead of time.  
And absolutely, positively NEVER exceed them!**

When there are bunches of nearly identical pallets only a few of which are useful, **you must make some effort to identify which is which well ahead of time.** Otherwise, everything becomes a blur in the heat of the moment.

Many of the skids had a few very useful and highly sellable items combined with great heaping piles of abject trash. While some of the trash may eventually prove of surprise high value, it pays to carefully evaluate your **"signal to noise" ratio** on any pallet.

As is typical with mine surplus, the pallet items are usually filthy and have totally trashed packaging. It is super important to decide whether you can clean stuff back into its "as new" condition. With mine surplus, the items will usually be top quality once you get past their grungy appearance.

If there is a printed catalog, marking your "must have" lots in one color and your "possibles" in a second can be useful. **Memorizing exact relative positions** of desired pallets can also help.

As can walking through the auction **at least a dozen times** well before the start of the actual bidding.

I've found **"secret markings"** to be useful. In which I'll draw a cross or a star on certain boxes on certain pallets. Or actually add a small colored sticker or a colored pushpin or thumbtack. Naturally, you only do this subtly and only on external packages that add no value to their contents.

Or push the thumbtack into the skid itself.

It pays to **stay several lots ahead of the auctioneer.** So that you always end up in the **middle** of the action on any lot you really are interested in. But always **make absolutely sure the item being offered is the one you think you are bidding on!**

Another thing to avoid is the **shadow effect.** In which you are so excited about a big win on lot #753 that superb buys on lesser lots #754 and #756 go flying right on by.

Once again, the secret is to **focus, focus, focus.**

## Using Photo Insets

Sometimes one photo or image can be made to do double duty by suitable use of an **inset**. Such as this click expandable example...



In this case, the main photo shows the entire cable assembly, while the magnified portion better reveals the connector pinouts. Magnifying one photo and inseting or combining two photos is easily done in **PhotoShop** or most any other image software program. I personally use **ImageView32**.

You can get fancy and actually overlay an image of a magnifying glass. Or change inset backgrounds or borders. Or otherwise glitz things up.

BTW, here is a repeat of how you place a self-magnifying HTML image into a blog, **eBay**, or a website...

```
<a href="http://www.tinaja.com/images/
bargs/car01.jpg">
</a>
```

The first url is the photo you are going to click expand **upon**. The second is the image you are going to **present before** click magnification Spaces can precede the image to improve centering.

Note that the second image should be **exactly** 1/4 or 1/2 the size of the first one.

If appearance of the small image is super critical, then you should create a new and separate 1:1 image of the desired size using better reduction software.

Click expanding in **Acrobat** is trickier and is shown in our **sourcecode**.

## For More Help

The [alt.marketing.online.ebay](#) newsgroup often has useful solutions to **eBay** problems on it. Additional auction help resources are found on our [Auction Help](#) library page. Custom auction locators can be created for you on a private or public basis per our [Auction Resources](#) services.

Additional consulting services are available per our [Infopack](#) services and on a contract or an hourly basis. Additional [GuruGrams](#) are found [here](#). Seminars available as noted above.

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