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The *tech side* of eBay

by Jack Socha

While our new CD tutorial *eBay: sell smart from the start* is primarily about the business of successful selling on eBay, there are many technical aspects of eBay that potential sellers need to understand. The following are points I've gleaned from my three years of teaching a live eBay class to a wide variety of students.

First, about 10% of my students somehow expect that eBay is going to do all the work for them. It's almost as if they think they can place an object for sale in front of their PC and it will do the rest. So, immediately, I explain that being computer literate is more than checking e-mail and browsing the Internet.

These are some of the basics needed to sell on eBay:

You need to have basic file handling skills, such as navigating a hard drive, locating folders, opening and saving files, and copying and pasting.

For example, using photos is an essential eBay component. At one point in the listing process, eBay asks the seller to browse their hard drive for the item's photo so it can be uploaded. At least 10% of my class cannot do this. They are in foreign territory the minute they leave the **My Documents** folder on the desktop.

Also, it is sometimes more convenient to write a description in a word processor or an accessory, such as **Windows WordPad**, and then copy and paste the text to the eBay listing later.

In addition, it is sometimes useful to copy specifications of an item from a company

website, store them as a document, and paste them into the description later.

A significant number of people in my classes do not know how to copy and paste from one application to another. They are also unaware of **Windows** accessories, such as **WordPad**.

eBay also allows basic HTML commands, which make listings more attractive and attention-getting. Sellers can use an HTML editor to create a listing and then copy and paste the source code into eBay. Only a handful of students who have their own websites understand this idea.

To illustrate the necessity of basic computer file handling skills, I bring a golf club into the class on the first night. I tell my students I know nothing about golf (which is true!) and I just bought this club at a garage sale for ninety-nine cents. I then tell them I'm going to play golf. I ask them why I can't.

The reasons are obvious. I have no idea what the club is used for, what other clubs I need, how to hold them, and how to address the ball and keep score. And I don't know golf etiquette. I need to learn these basics before I can play. Then I tell them it is the same with using a computer. Basic file handling skills are essential for any task, and once they are learned, everything about the computer makes more sense—including the way you list an item on eBay.

(*eBay: sell smart from the start* PC CD is \$18.95 postpaid at acpress.com or 1-800-647-8273.)

Note: A text version of this information is available at acpress.com.