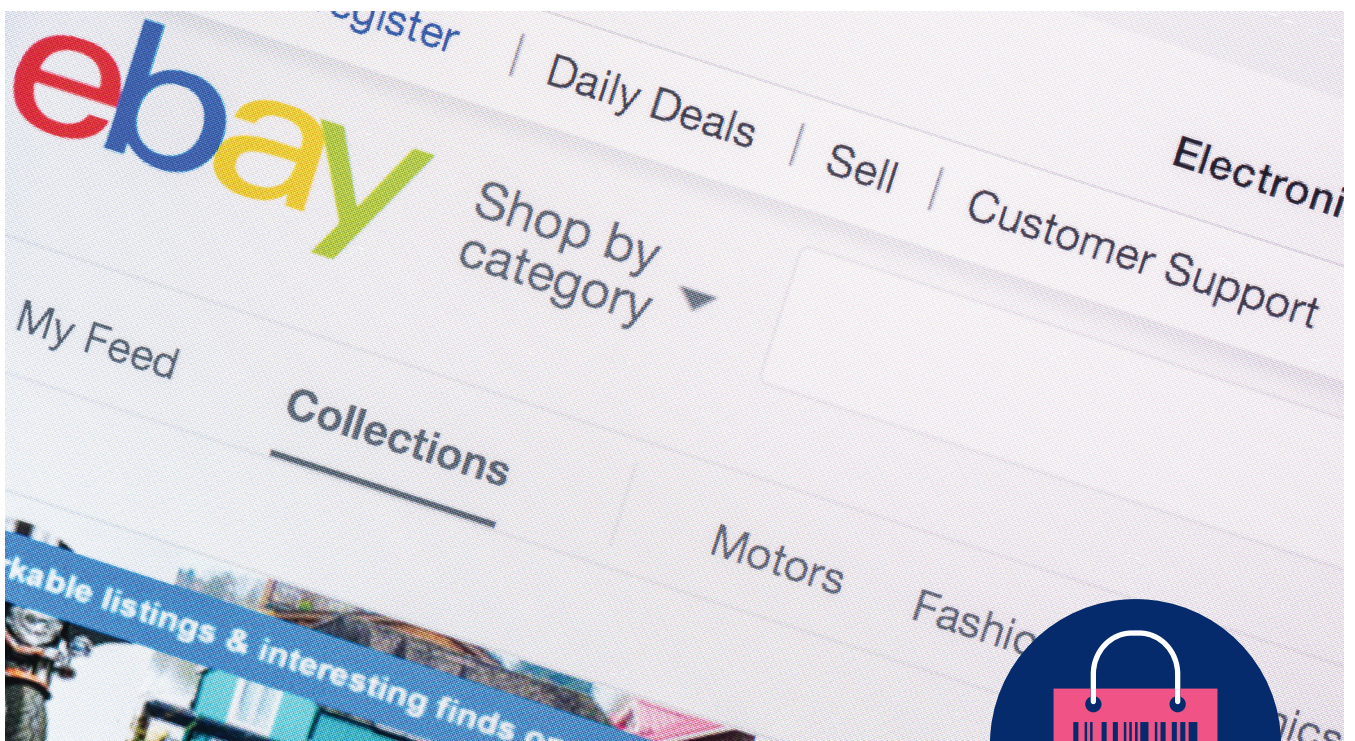# Optimise your listings and make them perform better on eBay

eBay's search is complicated. Shoppers browsing eBay need to be able to find the products they're looking for, and the inventory on eBay also needs to be visible on search engines to draw shoppers to the eBay marketplace in the first place.

Not long ago eBay suffered a Google penalty and they're working hard to regain visibility on the search engine. But Google doesn't stand still. They frequently change the product information they require, so eBay are also now requesting this data from sellers.

Search on eBay

Over the last decade shoppers have migrated from accessing the internet from mainly desktops to using mobile devices more frequently – now well over 50% of eBay purchases are touched by mobile. Even if a purchase is completed on a desktop device, it's likely the shopper looked at the product on a mobile first.

Shoppers don't want to scroll through hundreds of listings on their mobile phone, they want to find the item they're looking for quickly at the right price with convenient delivery options — and make the purchase instantly.

Search has also changed. Major search engines such as Google are constantly updating their search algorithms and introducing new products such as Google Product Listing Ads. These new products have different requirements for how product data is presented if you want your products to be surfaced.

This affects every aspect of how your listings should be optimised. Once a great keyword rich title, perfect product images and a comprehensive description was all that was needed. Today's technology requires structured data for the machines that drive the internet.

In this guide we'll show you how to optimise your listings to make them perform better on eBay for the web as it's evolving – where shoppers are using mobile devices and search engines require structured data.

Over 50%
of eBay purchases are now touched by mobile
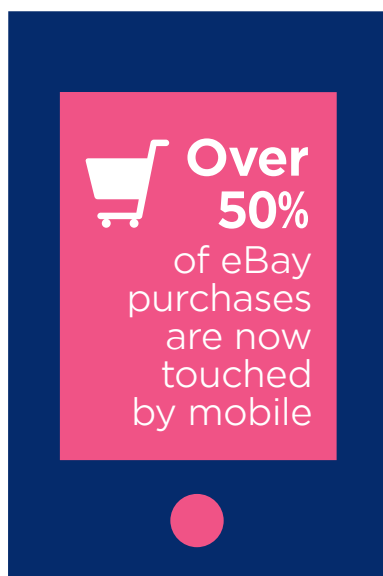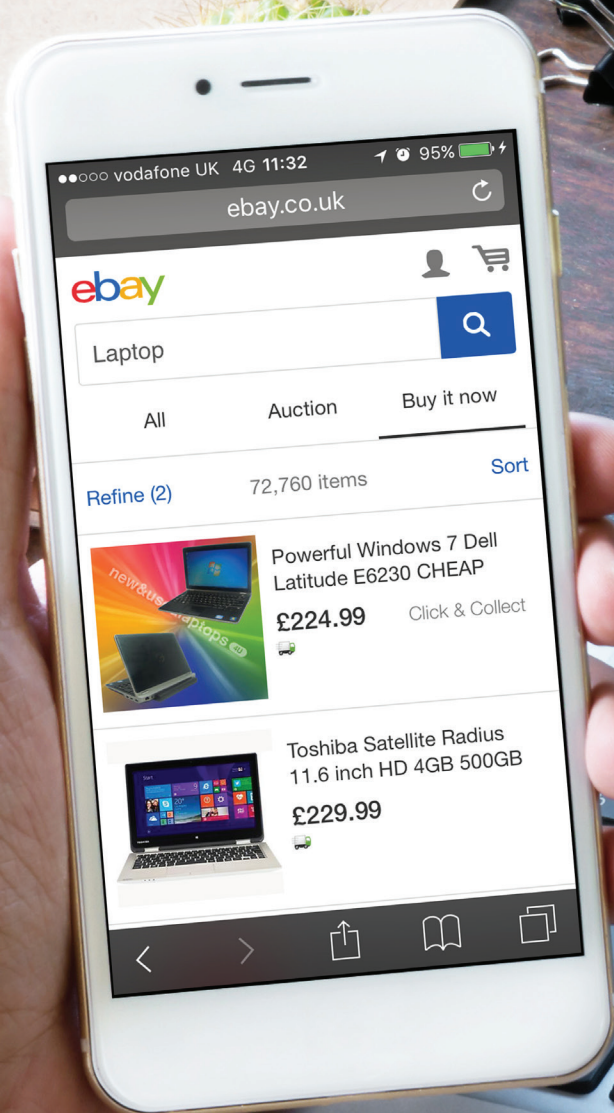
Optimising for search: the basics

1. Titles

The first thing a search engine looks for on a page is the product title.

In your **product titles** you should use primary keywords, correct capitalisation and avoid acronyms or jargon. Don't use terms like 'BNIB' (Brand New in Box), eBay has fields for item condition now – which we'll come to shortly.

You should state exactly what the item is, even if it repeats the category name, and include key details of the product even if they're included in your item description.

eBay allows up to 80 characters in the item's title, so make use of all of them with key product details. But keep in mind that in eBay's gallery view the title will be truncated so the first 55 are the most important.
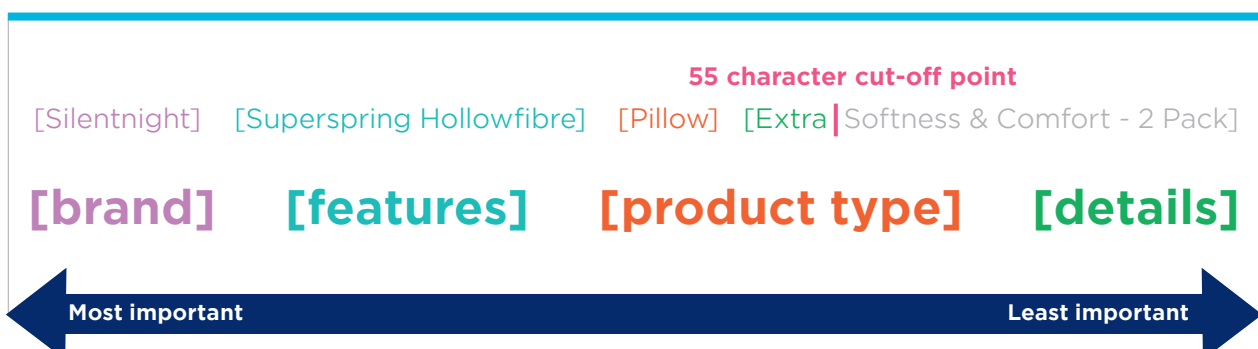
> **!** Place important words, such as the brand and product type, towards the beginning of your title. See example below.

eBay product listing - full title (80 Characters)

eBay gallery view - truncated title

55 character cut-off point

[Silentnight]   [Superspring Hollowfibre]   [Pillow]   [Extra | Softness & Comfort - 2 Pack]

[brand]   **[features]**   **[product type]**   **[details]**

◄ **Most important**   **Least important** ►

2. Categorisation

## Correct categorisation is key for both on eBay and off eBay search.

When buying on eBay one of the first ways a shopper will narrow their search, after entering some keywords, is to select a **product category**. For instance, if a shopper uses the search term 'Suit', it's likely that they'll narrow their search to either the 'Men's Suits & Tailoring' or the 'Women's Suits & Tailoring' category. If your product hasn't been categorised correctly, then it will be eliminated from the products shown to the shopper.

Choosing the correct category also allows you to present shoppers with the correct **item specifics**, which will ensure your product is surfaced as they further narrow their search.

Categorisation also enhances visibility for your products on external search engines. The category adds context, which combined with additional keywords, helps your product to be found more easily on Google.

> **!** eBay updates their category structure regularly. Check your products are in the best category and sub-category for their type of product.
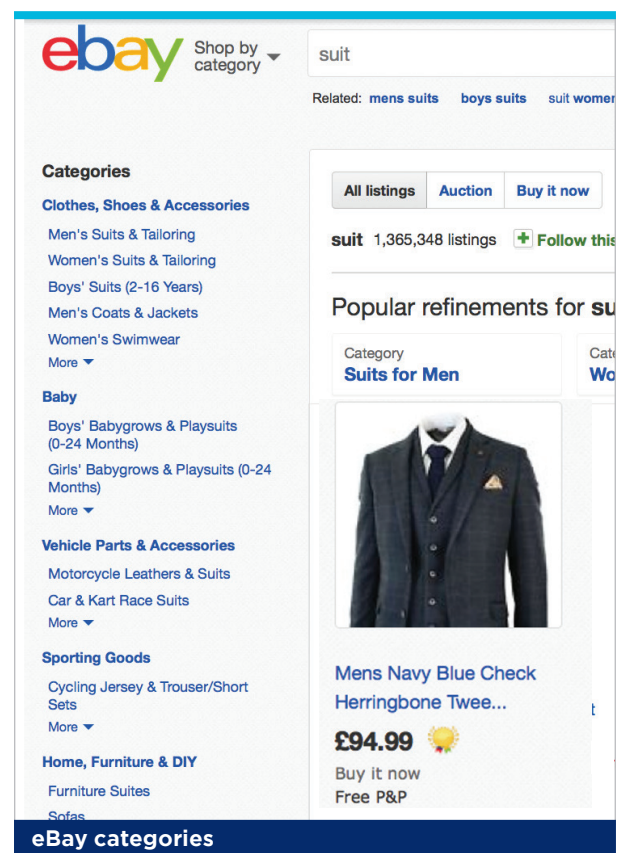
eBay categories

3. Product identifiers

eBay are mandating **product identifiers** for an increasing number of categories. Listings with **product identifiers** benefit from better visibility in search results, both on eBay and in search engines.

Product identifiers are used by eBay to distinguish between an 'item' and a 'product'. If you were to purchase two items on eBay and when they arrived you were unable to distinguish between them once the packaging was thrown away, then they would be the same product.

Product identifiers enable eBay to reliably compare two items and determine that they're the same product, assign user reviews to the product and also increase your chance of sales from search engines by telling them exactly which product your item is.

There are three main product identifiers that you should complete:

1. Brand

Use the main brand that a buyer might search for. This can be slightly confusing as, for example, you may be selling a Compaq Laptop but Compaq are owned by HP, also a brand. In this instance use the product brand not the brand owner. Equally you shouldn't list Gillette products as 'Procter & Gamble' as Gillette is what the shopper will search for.

2. Global Trade Item Number (GTIN)

GTINs are a series of numbers assigned to most retail products. They're also commenly known as European Article Numbers (EANs), Universal Product Code (UPC) – used in North America – and Japanese Article Number (JAN), used in Japan.

Your supplier or manufacturer may already supply GTINs for your products. If not, then you'll need to assign your own GTINs, which can be obtained from GS1.

GS1 is the not-for-profit membership organisation that's been providing global identification standards for over 40 years. GS1 is the only issuer of GTINs which are recognised not only on eBay, but throughout your entire supply chain and on all the marketplaces, websites and retail outlets you supply your products to. GS1 can ensure that you have access to the number of unique GTINs you need for all your products.

If you're selling books then you'll use International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs).

3. Manufacturer Part Number (MPN)

An MPN is a number that, in combination with the brand, uniquely identifies a product. Manufacturers use these numbers to manage their product inventory and product lines. If you manufacture your own products then you should assign each item an MPN as well as obtaining a GTIN for it.

4. Item descriptions

Your **item descriptions** should provide additional information for shoppers to confirm that this is really the product they want to purchase.

> **(!)**
>
> **Do include:** Anything that is a 'product description' – brand name, model, fabric, material, colour and any additional information that's helpful to your prospective purchaser.
>
> **Do not include:** Information about your business, terms and conditions, shipping, returns or eBay feedback.
>
> Your description supports rank and visibility on search engines both on and off eBay and information not relevant to your product may lower its position in search.

Modern St. Tropez Fabric Corner Sofa With Reversible Chaise in...	Habitat Porto reversible chaise sofa - RED fabric - £895 in store	New Sara Luxury Jumbo Cord Fabric Corner Sofa Reversible...	Habitat Porto reversible chaise sofa - Natural fabric - £895 in st...	New Sara Luxury Jumbo Cord Fabric Corner Sofa Reversible...	Brand New Modern Fabric Corner Sofa Bed PORTO II With Storag...
£299.00 Free P&P	£495.00	£299.00 Free P&P £1,198.00	£595.00	£299.00 Free P&P	£479.00 Free P&P

Description

Seller assumes all responsibility for this listing.
Last updated on 09 Aug, 2016 07:57:08 BST View all revisions

eBay item number: 162137805301

Item specifics

|			
Condition:	**New other (see details) :** ⓘ		
Seller notes:	"'As New' StockUnwanted and unused customer return product or ex-display stock. Stock appears "as new" and should come complete with original packaging and all accessories (where applicable). A small percentage of packaging may show some signs of in-transit damage (outer retail box damage) with the box having been opened for inspection and resealed. All product retains it's original retail packaging."		
Type:	Chase Sofa Bed	Style:	Contemporary
To Seat:	Up to 4	Material:	Polyester
Main Colour:	Red	Room:	Living Room, Dining Room, Children's Playroom, Children's Bedroom, Home Office/Study
MPN:	18985	Pattern:	Solid
Brand:	Habitat	Length:	220cm
EAN:	0645953118985		

eBay product description

5. Mobile item description summaries

eBay announced that from July 2016 they are using **mobile item description summaries**, which appear on mobile devices and are limited to just 800 characters.

eBay recognise that on mobile many shoppers don't click into your **item descriptions**, so while they'll still be available if the shoppers wish to view it, eBay will automatically display the shorter **mobile item description summary**.

eBay will scan your description to pick out keywords to construct the **mobile item description summary**. You can either limit your full description to 800 characters or ensure that only highly relevant product information is included.
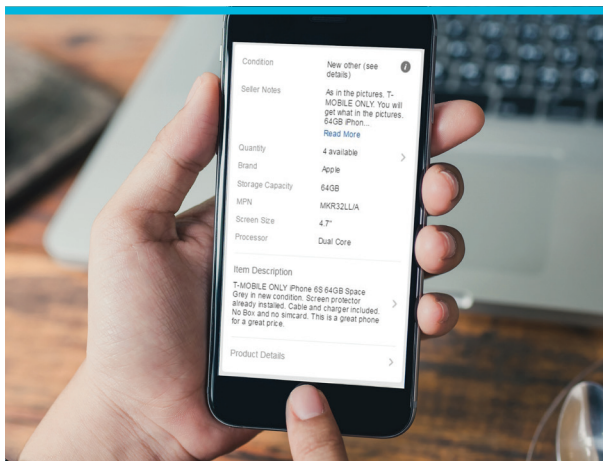
**eBay mobile product description**

> ! If you wish to control exactly what your item description summary contains then use the new HTML tag format:
>
> ```
> <div vocab='http://schema.org/'
> typeof='Product'> <span property=
> 'description'>[your description
> summary goes here]</span> </div>
> ```

6. Format

When possible use eBay multi-variation listings. These allow shoppers who find your product to easily select a different colour or size – if they decide the first variation they see isn't perfect for them.

Over 80% of eBay sales are now fixed price so consider the use of eBay auction style listings sparingly. Shoppers now want to make immediate purchases and unless you're selling rare or valuable items, they may not want to wait for an auction to end.

eBay multi-variant listing

Over 80% of eBay sales are now fixed price
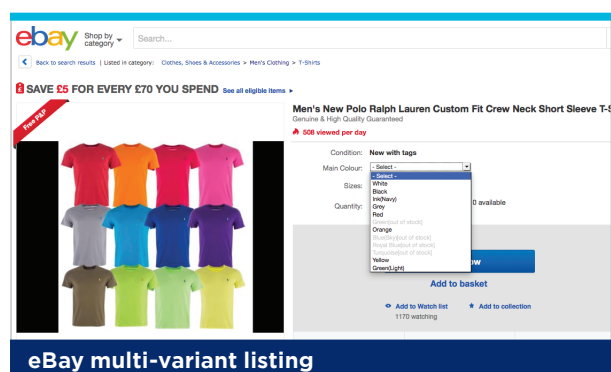
7. Images

Many sellers include images in their **item descriptions** but only add one to the eBay **gallery** - even though eBay allow you to add up to 12 **gallery** images for free.

But adding images to your descriptions makes them harder to view on mobile, even with a responsive listing. If your listing design is not responsive, including images will make it almost impossible to view on a small mobile screen.

eBay will use **gallery** images to display in search results and they should be clear, preferably on a white background and without any text or border decoration.

- On mobile, eBay display the images as a rotating gallery, which shoppers can swipe through.
- On desktop the first four **gallery** images are the most important ones as they'll be displayed as thumbnails.

eBay recommend that image sizes are a minimum of 1600 pixels on the shortest side. The maximum file size is 7MB.

Square pictures perform better on eBay than landscape or portrait. You can self host images, but it's preferable to upload them to eBay as they'll be optimised for different devices.

eBay listing with images
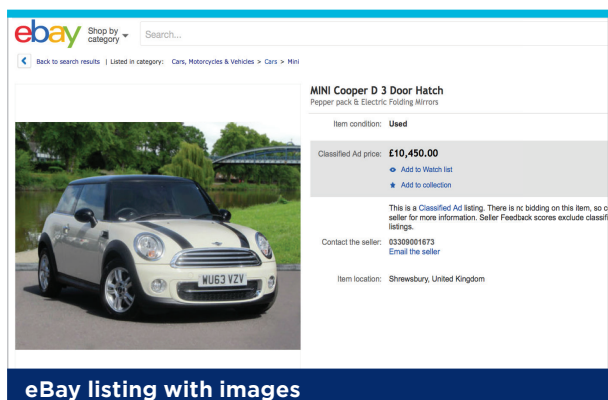
8. Postage and returns

Offer a range of delivery options at appropriate prices. Some shoppers may be ultra-price sensitive and willing to wait a few days to receive their item, while others may want their purchase delivered as quickly as possible, even if it means paying a little more.

It doesn't cost you anything to offer both economy and express delivery services, so make sure you do even if you don't think your customers will pay extra for fast delivery. You never know when a shopper's purchase is urgent and if you can offer delivery tomorrow you'll get the sale in favour of your competition that only offers delivery in two or three days' time.

If you don't ship internationally (or only to select countries), make sure your products are included in eBay's Global Shipping Program to attract overseas sales. For domestic customers add your items to eBay's Click and Collect at Argos program to give additional delivery choices.

Finally, offer a clear returns policy and give shoppers peace of mind that if their purchase isn't exactly what they wanted they'll have a no fuss returns option to get their money back. You can reduce the amount of returns you get by giving shoppers as much information as possible to inform their buying decision.

Optimising for search: advanced

1. Price

Price is of course always key to a buying decision. However, while your price needs to be reasonable, you don't always have to be the cheapest to beat the competition. If you optimise your listings using the processes described in this guide, you may well find that your listing is surfaced higher in search results than your competitors' and shoppers may prefer to make their purchase from you as they can be confident they're getting the right product .

2. Item condition

In most eBay **categories** it's mandatory to specify the **item condition**. This can be 'New' or 'Used' and in many **categories** there are further options such as 'New with tags' or 'New without tags'.

The **item condition** is also essential for off-eBay search engines that will use this information to decide when to include your product in search results. For instance, if a buyer searches for an 'iPhone', they may wish to purchase brand new phones only. But a search for a 'Cheap iPhone' or 'Second hand iPhone' would indicate that they may be happy with a used or refurbished device.

3. Item specifics

Item specifics are an area that can be key in determining if eBay will display your product to a shopper or not. Key **item specifics** such as brand, product type, size and colour should always be included.

Think like a shopper. If you searched for the product that you're about to list on eBay, how would you narrow your search? Which **item specifics** would you choose?

It's essential that your information is accurate but whenever possible use eBay's suggested values to give your product the greatest chance of being presented to shoppers.

> **!** Don't be too exact when detailing the **item specifics**. eBay have sets of attributes which they display to shoppers.
>
> As an example in clothing colours they display 'Red', but they don't display 'Crimson', 'Cherry', 'Candy' or 'Plum'.
>
> You should set your **item specific** to the more generic 'Red' and then use an 'Exact Colour' **item specific** to display the shade of red or the manufacturer's colour code/name.

Main Colour		
Brand	☐ Beige (72,669)	☐ Orange (174,194)
Size	☐ Black (2,099,103)	☐ Pink (282,198)
Material	☐ Blue (1,339,774)	☐ Purple (282,197)
Sleeve Type	☐ Brown (137,884)	☐ Red (655,648)
Neckline	☐ Gold (25,905)	☐ Silver (8,268)
Fit	☐ Green (675,100)	☐ White (1,284,177)
	☐ Grey (747,790)	☐ Yellow (284,524)
	☐ Ivory (9,219)	☐ Not specified (3,968,057)
	☐ Multi (465,170)	

In this example it's likely that many of the 3.9 million listings with the main colour 'Not specified' have entered a value that's not on eBay's display list.

Final thoughts

Optimising your listings on eBay to make them perform better using the steps described in this guide is one of the best ways to not only reduce returns, but also increase sales by attracting traffic from eBay and from external search engines.

Checklist for optimising listings

Create your **product title** with the most important keywords at the beginning

List items in the correct **category** and **sub-category**

Add **product identifiers** - brand, MPN and GTIN (if provided by the manufacturer)

Ensure your **description** is descriptive. Put terms and conditions in the eBay provided fields, not your **description**

Add a mobile friendly description

Use the multi-variation format when appropriate

Use square images in a minimum of 1600 pixels wide

Offer a range of postage options and easy returns

Check your price is reasonable, but you don't have to be the cheapest

Specify the **item condition** of your item

Complete **item specifics** using eBay suggested attributes

Want to know more?

You can find help and guidance for your marketplace listings at **www.gs1uk.org/marketplaces**

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