



## The Risks and Rewards of Buying Collectables on eBay

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### Tips from The Dr. Strange Archive

Auction sites like eBay can be a great resource to find rare collectables, but the risks can be high. It is always recommended to approach any purchase with caution, especially if it represents a significant dollar amount to you.

A collector can mitigate risks when making purchases if they follow some simple rules.

**Disclaimer:** Use eBay and online auction sites at your own risk. There is always a chance you can be deceived.

**1. Research the Seller:** On eBay, each seller has a Positive Feedback rating expressed as a percentage. The rating is listed in the Seller Information box near the top right hand section of the auction screen. If the vendor does not have a 100% rating, click on the seller's account name and see what the positive, neutral and negative comments are for both the buyer and seller feedback for this person. Also, look at how many total transactions the seller has completed. A person with a 100% positive feedback rating doesn't mean as much for someone who has only sold 10 items compared to someone who has sold 5,000 items. Some people will make a new account when they get too many bad reviews. Beware of sellers who have a low transaction number. One last thing to consider is the feedback rating is calculated using the positive and negative feedback for only the past 12 months.

**2. Ask Questions:** Keep in mind the seller may be misrepresenting the item for sale to make more money or the seller might just not know what they really have and they think it's worth more than it really is. Contact the seller with any questions you may have. I do this on almost any major purchase to at least verify what I believe they are saying in the item description. A common question I also ask is, "How did you acquire this item?" This helps me possibly determine the authenticity of the object. Also, ask if the item is vintage or a modern reproduction. Ask for the item size, especially for paper items. Reproduction art, poster and other paper items can tend to have smaller dimensions than the original. Beware of sellers who do not respond to your questions. Sometimes they just don't have or take the time. Sometimes they do not want to answer your questions because they know you are on to them. The sooner you ask your questions, the longer the seller has to respond. Don't wait to the last day of the auction.

**3. A Picture is Worth a \$1,000:** Or a thousand words, however you see it. Any good motivated seller on eBay will include several photographs of their item. They will highlight not only the good aspects of their item, but also point out in detail the nicks, dings, and damage to the item to ensure the buyer knows what they are buying. Beware of someone only posting one picture. People can take pictures in certain ways to disguise the bad points. If in doubt, contact the seller and ask for more pictures. If they refuse, be weary especially if it's a high dollar item. Again, don't wait until the last day of the auction to inquire about more pictures.

**4. Grading:** Always keep in mind that grading of an item can be highly subjective. Sellers will use terms like: Mint, Like New, Exceptional. Use pictures of the item in question and make your own determination on the condition of the item. As previously mentioned above, good sellers will post multiple pictures of their items, such as comic books, taking close up photos of the staples, all four corners, spine, etc. to show the exact condition of the item so you can make your own determination of the condition and grade. If the item is graded by a grading company, ensure you look at which one and ensure they are a reputable company. Sometimes there is a significant price difference on a similarly graded item between different companies. Don't look at an overall picture of a slabbed graded comic book and assume it's from CGC. Not that I endorse CGC, but they tend to bring higher prices compared to similar graded items from different companies. Anyone can easily buy the slabs and all the supplies to start their own grading business.

**3. Certificates of Authenticity:** These certificates sometimes are not worth the paper they are printed on. Research the company that issued the certificate. Over the years, some issuing authorities have been caught falsifying claims of authenticity just to make money. A quick Google search of the company can usually reveal any reported problems. Also, these certificates can be easily forged so more research is always helpful.

**4. How Much Should I Pay?** Decide what the item is worth to you and bid accordingly. Everyone gets buyers remorse when they get outbid on an item. When you see the item sold for \$1 more than you bid, you always second guess yourself and wish you bid just a little bit more. That's the nature of any auction, especially a blind auction. Determine what the item is worth to you, or more specific, what you are comfortably willing to pay for that item. Don't over extend yourself. To some, \$50 might be too much. To others, \$5,000 is their comfortable limit. Enter your bid and set your max bid. When you set a max bid, eBay will continually re-bid on that item as you get outbid up to that limit. Some people will wait until closer to the end of the auction to bid so they can see how the price progresses. If you get outbid, you can always add a new highest bid amount. Check back often and see how the auction is doing. Keep the big picture in mind. Collecting is a long game. If you miss out on one item, you will usually always have a chance at it again and sometimes at a lower price.

**5. Sniping:** There is a practice called bid sniping on eBay. I have been the victim of this many times. People will use a bidding service to place your bids for you, but they don't do it until the very last seconds of the auction. You think you are the top bidder and are going to win and in the last couple seconds before the screen refreshes you get outbid. It's a horrible feeling. I personally do not agree with such tactics, but eBay doesn't discourage this type of bidding so be aware of it. The choice is yours if you decide to use your own sniping service.

For more guides and resources, visit [www.DrStrangeArchive.com](http://www.DrStrangeArchive.com).

Good luck and have fun!!!

Sincerely,

Dr. Strange Archive