

Easy Auction Photography

PRESENTS

Five EZ Techniques To Create Great Photographs For Internet Sales





① Use A Digital Camera



You *can* use a film camera for your eBay listings. The problem is that, with film, you can't see the results right away. Digital cameras have an LCD screen that gives instant feedback about the shot. Another factor is time. You can spend lots of time running back and forth to the film processor. Lastly, the cost of process and printing the film and/or converting the images into digital format will add up quickly.

Buying a digital camera is the wiser course – and, eventually, the less expensive one.

What should you look for when purchasing a digital camera?

-  A Brand Name
-  3 Megapixels or Better
-  Macro Focus (or Close-Up Lens)
-  The Ability To Turn The Flash-Off

You do not need an 8 to 12 megapixel monster for internet photography. Those multi-mega-mega pixel cameras are designed for photographers who want to print and enlarge their photos. On eBay, buyers only see images on computer monitors. Even the best monitor's resolution is less than that of a decent snapshot. And you want to keep your images small enough to load quickly. So 3 or 4 megapixels is all you'll need.

Choose a camera with the ability to focus close up - as close as a few inches from the item you are photographing. This close-up feature is called ‘**Macro Focus.**’ Avoid cameras with a fixed focus that will not allow you to get close-up. A fixed focus camera generally will not allow you to get closer than three feet from your subject. This is not nearly close enough for small collectibles. A postage stamp will look very small shot from three feet away!

And lastly, be sure your camera is not so automatic that you can’t turn the built in flash off. Under normal circumstances, you should not use the camera’s flash to light your subject. In product photography, items will look best under either soft, diffused light or natural light.

② *Watch the Background*

Keep your shot simple and plan ahead! Having a busy background ruins a good photograph.

Before hitting the shutter release, ask yourself, “Can I move myself or the item to display the product in a better manner?” Sometimes just moving a few inches up or down or sideways can dramatically improve the photo.



If you can’t improve the background by moving your angle of view, try using a backdrop. A simple white piece of flexible poster board can isolate your item from its surroundings. Remember to keep the backdrop a solid color - no patterns. You are trying to keep the buyers eyes focused on the item you are selling.

③ *Use Diffused Light*



Using the on-camera flash can wash out detail or create reflection spots on the item you are shooting. A flash can also create deep, distracting shadows.

To avoid these problems, use soft, diffused light.

How can you diffuse light? Clouds act as natural diffusers. Try shooting outside on an overcast day. The light is soft and allows the detail and color of the item to show clearly. If you can’t wait for an overcast day, you can create the same effect in your studio by using

an eTent – which is a box of white nylon that softens the light as it passes through the sides to fall on the subject. You simply place your item inside the eTent, put one light on each side, and shoot.

Many photographers also use umbrellas designed to bounce or diffuse the light before it reaches the subject. If you don't have a set of reflective umbrellas, that's OK. You can diffuse light by putting some sort of sheer material between the light source and the subject. That material can be anything from a clear plastic shower curtain to translucent shrink wrap.

④ Use A Tripod

A tripod is both a useful and an important tool in product photography. Yet, tripods are often the last thing people reach for. If you have one, it's time to dust it off and put it into service, ASAP! If you don't own one, get one. They sell on eBay for as little as \$20.00.

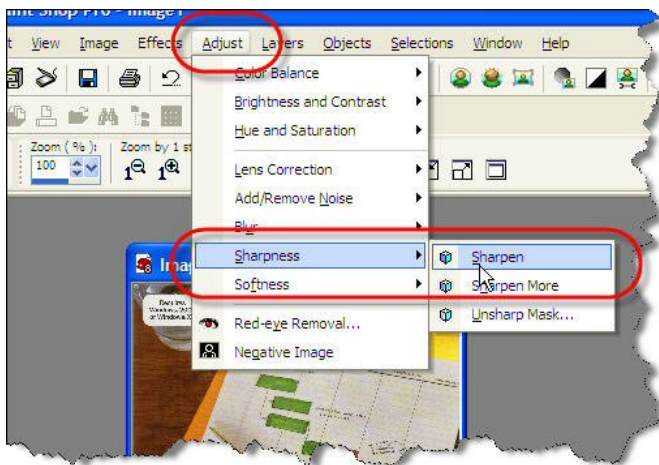
Why is it so important to use this seemingly awkward tool? When you use natural or diffused light, as you frequently will, the light falling on the subject is less intense. Your camera's shutter must stay open longer for a proper exposure. When the shutter stays open for more than 1/60 of a second, any slight movement - even the movement of pressing on the shutter button - will cause the picture to blur. However, if your camera is on a tripod, the camera will remain stable and the photo will be in focus.



Small items that are shot in macro (or close-up) face a similar problem. The very slightest movement will be magnified and the photo will appear soft or out of focus. You might not be able to tell that it is soft just by looking at the LCD screen. Perhaps you will have already uploaded the picture to your computer before you notice the focus problem. At that point, you will have no alternative to go but back and start over.

Are you convinced of the tripod's importance yet? If not, here is one more reason for a tripod: if the camera is on a tripod, the photographer's hands are free to move the lights and adjust other elements in the photo before shooting. Having your hands free is a big help when setting up a still life photograph.

⑤ Learn To Use Photo Editing Software



Learning a few simple commands that can fix up your photos will go a long way to improve the final image. I've never taken a photograph that couldn't benefit from a little touch-up. I am not talking about advanced photo techniques. I am referring to basic steps like cropping out the excess space or background around a subject to isolate it, or rotating the image so it is right side up.

One important command to master is "Resize." For eBay and similar sites, the image should be about 400 pixels on its longest side. This will insure that the image loads quickly in your buyer's browser, and it will fit the format specifications of eBay's picture service.

Photo editing software can be invaluable when working with a less than perfect shot. Fixing up or retouching your photographs is perfectly acceptable as long as you are not trying to mislead your customer about the product.

If you do nothing else, at least learn to crop, rotate and resize images.

If you use these five suggestions you are sure to improve the quality of your eBay product photography. With over 1.3 million sellers worldwide, the competition is getting fierce – and having a top quality photographs is one way to turn browsers into buyers!

For more information, tips and techniques, including how to set up a photo studio on a shoe-string budget, check out [Easy Auction Photography](#) by Cindy Shebley.

Show Off Your Work

If you use these suggestions and create a product photo you are proud of, [email the picture to me](#) along with information about how you shot it and I will post the picture(s) on the EZ Auction Blog at www.ezauctionphotos.blogspot.com . If it's an active listing don't forget to include the URL and I'll make it a clickable link back to the eBay listing!

About The Author:

Cindy Shebley was the first person in Northwest America - and one of the first 10 people nationwide - to become an eBay Certified Business Consultant, as well as Education Specialist. She has been interested in photography since her uncle handed her a Kodak Brownie when she was 9.

Cindy worked in the photography field for over 15 years, taking thousands of photos, before changing careers. She and her partner opened a successful garden store, which blossomed during the 1990's. She has since become an Internet merchant.

In her book, *Easy Auction Photography*, Cindy shares the lessons she has learned as an eBay Power Seller, photographer, and bricks-and-mortar storeowner. Every chapter of *Easy Auction Photography* is built around the techniques she uses every day in a thriving online business.

In addition to selling photo & educational supplies, Cindy offers photography services. Check out: www.ezauctionphotos.com for more details.