

# Sell your unwanted



## CHILDHOOD TOYS EARN THOUSANDS

**Chris Taylor** 54, college lecturer

Childhood comics and toys found in the loft of his parents' house earned Chris Taylor nearly £5,000 when he auctioned them on eBay.

Chris from Fareham, Hampshire, discovered boxes containing items such as Spiderman and Thunderbirds comics when clearing out the loft.

He said: 'I was amazed at the prices some things fetched. I thought a torn cardboard hat that came free with a comic might fetch a pound or two, but it sold for over £230 to a collector in Texas.'

A plastic building for a Scalextric set sold for nearly £350, while some comics went for £10 each.

Chris set a low reserve (often as little as 99p) to attract buyers. He recommends describing items you're trying to sell in as much detail as possible, especially if they're collectable. Some characteristics may add value to an item without you knowing.

Chris sold more than 200 items in all, but said 'the well seems to have run dry now'.

Selling on the internet can be a great way to declutter or get rid of presents you don't want

**M**any people are given an unwanted gift for Christmas. If you can't return it, that gift could end up in the bin.

If that sounds like a waste, why not sell unwanted items on websites? The most well known site is eBay, but our research in trying to sell a Doctor Who box set suggests it's worth looking at other sites too, where you may be able to earn more.

### WHAT YOU CAN SELL

It's surprising what you can sell and how much you can make. In November 2008, we asked 1,526 Which? online panel members for their experiences of selling goods online. Members reported selling items ranging from bathroom suites to a piano and even a pile of old bricks, as well as books and CDs. Around



a quarter tried selling online and the majority found it easy and successful.

### WHERE TO SELL

eBay was the most popular site by far among Which? members – 84% of those who tried selling online used it.

Some sites may suit you better than others. For example, you have to take digital photos of your item to sell it on eBay, but amazon.co.uk and Play.com provide images for products they normally sell.

### HOW TO SELL

There are techniques you can use to improve your chance of selling an item.

### Setting your price

Unless you're selling by auction, you'll have to set a price. It's worth checking out a range of websites to see how

## Your guide to selling terms

### ■ Postage and fees

Most websites will charge fees, such as listing fees and commission. We've included the total fees that we paid on each site in the table 'How much did we make', opposite.

You also pay postage, but can pass the cost on to buyers by increasing the selling price. This is sometimes listed as a separate cost to the buyer. Find out how much postage is before setting a price. Amazon.co.uk adds a postage credit, but this may not cover the cost. For the box set, we were

**PayPal**

credited £1.24 for postage, but it cost nearly £3 to send.

### ■ eBay auction vs Buy It Now

With an eBay auction, buyers bid until the auction on your item closes. This is a good option if you don't know how much your item is likely to sell for.

With Buy It Now, a buyer can pay the amount an item is listed for to secure it. You can accept an offer lower than the list price if you don't think you'll get the desired amount.

### ■ Paypal

If you use Paypal to accept payment, you may pay extra fees (see [www.paypal.co.uk/fees](http://www.paypal.co.uk/fees)). If you're a new seller, don't expect quick payment. If you're new to eBay and using Paypal, you can't access funds for 21 days, unless the buyer leaves you positive feedback on eBay.

# gifts online

much your item's already on sale for and set your price accordingly.

For example, we bought a box set of the most recent Doctor Who series for £54.99. We then advertised it for sale on a series of websites, choosing the lowest price it was available for on that site. This was highest on amazon.co.uk, which may be why we made the most money there. Gumtree didn't have it listed, so we advertised it there for £40, the lower end of what it was selling for on other sites.

## Timing

If you use eBay, have your auction open for one weekend at least, as that's when most people visit the site. Make it finish at prime time, such as evenings or lunch. Most bidding is in the last few hours or minutes. On eBay, an auction will finish at the same time of day (eg 6pm) that it starts. Pay a 6p fee and you can start an auction at a specific time.

## Taking pictures

If a number of people offer the same item, a good photo can help to ensure a buyer chooses yours. Here's what to do:

- Set the camera to a medium resolution
- Light the item thoroughly and use a contrasting background so it stands out



- Don't use a flash if an item is reflective
- Avoid confusing background clutter
- If necessary, take photos of accessories, labels and packaging. Adding descriptions and extra photos may cost more but can help make a listing more attractive. If an item's damaged, show it with a photo.

## Describe accurately

This helps ensure you receive bids only from those who want what you're selling, avoids disputes and leads to positive feedback from buyers.

## Cheapest site to use

You pay no listing fee or commission if you sell your item on Gumtree.



The website also encourages buyer collection saving you the cost of postage. Our item, didn't sell on the site, but you'll lose nothing by trying it.

## Selling safely online

Here's how to tackle problems that can crop up

### ■ BE AWARE OF FRAUD

Refuse overpayments. In one scam, buyers send you a larger amount, request you send the difference back, then cancel payment.

Don't reply to an email request for passwords or account details (often called phishing). Receive payment before sending an item. If a bid seems too good to be true, for example much higher than market value – it probably is. See [www.ebay.co.uk/safetycentre](http://www.ebay.co.uk/safetycentre) for more.

### ■ SECURE PAYMENT

Choose a secure payment method, such as Paypal or a banker's draft. Don't accept cash in the post or cheques. A loophole in the system means that, though

a cheque may seem to have cleared, the funds can be taken back later.

### ■ POSTAGE OPTIONS

Send items recorded delivery. You'll need proof if the buyer claims they haven't received them, or you could lose the item and payment. Send expensive items by special delivery. It guarantees next day delivery, needs a signature from the recipient and lets you claim up to £500 if an item is lost. For items worth more than £500, you can buy cover up to £2,500.

### ■ HANDLING DISPUTES

If there's a problem, such as not receiving payment, ask the buyer when they plan to pay, or if they've tried to. As a seller on eBay, you get the buyer's email address. If you and the buyer can't resolve the matter, it has a mediation process. If this doesn't help, you may be entitled to a refund of your selling fee.



Using special delivery will protect you if items are lost

## HOW MUCH DID WE MAKE?

We sold a Doctor Who box set via these websites. Here's how much we made

	Listing price	Days to sell	Buyer paid	Postage we paid	Fees charged	Total made <sup>a</sup>
	£44.24	0	£44.24	£2.99	£8.44	£32.81
	£22.99	3	£40.24	£2.99	£5.27	£31.98
	£42.99	14	£32.99 <sup>b</sup>	£2.99	£4.87	£25.13
	£40.00	n/a	n/a	£0	£0	Didn't sell
	£40.98	0	£40.98	£2.99	£6.42 <sup>c</sup>	£31.57

<sup>a</sup> After postage and fees <sup>b</sup> We accepted a lower offer than our list price after 14 days <sup>c</sup> Includes a 5% fee to transfer cash into a bank. You don't pay this if you use the money to buy more items from Play.com

## Which? online shopping

Visit [www.which.co.uk/computing](http://www.which.co.uk/computing) for a wide range of tips on shopping online, including protecting your identity, finding online bargains and selling CDs online.

