

'Cliff Notes' From eBay's Workshop Regarding The Digital Product Restriction Policy From Friday April 11, 2008..

Below, I've copied and pasted the responses from moderators Brian and "Griff" to various questions posted during eBay's workshop, held to address concerns and answer questions about the new policy.

NOTE: The workshop was very unorganized. What I mean by that is.. when a question was answered, the question wasn't included in the response. Brian and Griff addressed the username of the person who asked the question, but not their question (in many instances) so all could benefit.

So as I went through the workshop posts, I copied the answers given and pasted in this document.

FYI: This is not an ebook, report, or product of any kind. It's not pretty and the info is copied as-is. This contains excerpts I took from the workshop containing just the posted answers into a doc and converted to PDF. I put this together for your convenience in an attempt to save you the time and hassle of weeding through the workshop "mess" yourself.

You can check back to the workshop page to see if more updates and answers have been posted by [clicking here](#) but this should get you some fast info right away.

With that said, you'll find, that despite the fact the questions were not always noted in the responses, many of the responses provide useable answers without knowing the questions.

Also, when you see a table of responses, that means that Brian or Griff responded to multiple questions at once so I pasted them together in a block.

After review of the workshop, one can determine that by investing in the [Physical Products Made Easy](#) videos, that you've made a good decision as physical products are certainly suggested during the workshop as a viable and recommended solution. Brian even mentions a few extra ways to send physical products that I didn't think of (think USB or flash cards).

Side note: I've discovered the perfect solution for putting the entire CD sales process on complete automation for you (once you view the PPME videos and have your CD created and your Kunaki account setup). I'm talking about an A-Z solution that takes the order for your CD on eBay, automatically contacts Kunaki to let them know that an order needs to be packaged and shipped for you, gets the buyer on your customer list/database, communicates with the customer regarding their order and order status, AND automatically offers them upsells for back-end sales! All on auto-pilot.

It's called [My Digital Dispatch](#) . You may have heard about this before if you sell digital products. But now, there's a brand new version that automates your CD sales via Kunaki.

If you already own a copy, then you've probably already received an upgrade notice from Socrates. If not, I highly recommend it if you're going to sell CD's and/or DVD's on eBay. I now own a copy for myself.

Hope this PDF saves you some time and provides answers for you ☺

(START)

Here is a link to the policy:

<http://pages.ebay.com/help/policies/downloadable.html>

First bullet in the policy.

Brian

We understood this change had the potential to negatively impact some sellers and a portion of our business. However, the eBay platform wasn't originally designed for digital delivery (why Germany never allowed them) and offering items that can be easily replicated and delivered has the potential to undermine the integrity of the Feedback system – a system that buyers rely on to assess seller performance across our entire marketplace. This was a straightforward decision given the negative impact to the reputation system vs. the benefit we receive.

I want to be very clear – not all digitally delivered goods sold on eBay undermined the reputation system and not all sellers of digitally delivered goods were attempting to manipulate their Feedback.

My guess is everyone that joins us today is selling a digital item of value.

But, by their nature, digitally delivered goods can more easily undermine the Feedback system. Attempting to delineate between digital goods of value and those without value would place eBay in an impossible position – so we chose to remove the risk to the integrity of the Feedback system and the marketplace, but still offer a way for sellers to sell digital items – at least in the US.

Thanks.

Brian

Services continue to be permitted even if there is a component of the service that includes digital deliver.

Do not confuse this with, customization of a design template.

You can offer customization of an item and ship it on a CD. If you offer the option of digital delivery it will be in violation.

Report violations via the banned items for now.

Thanks.

Brian

can someone promote a political candidate or religious organization or service group as long as no links are offered?

The short answer is "no." A Classified Ad format can only be used for a product, products, or service for sale. Not for promotion as you have outlined in your question.

dbguka

No. A seller may not offer the option of digital delivery (email, download link, file transfer, etc).

rice21895

Not sure exactly what you mean. Did you edit your listing titles? Please feel free to provide more details to me directly at griff@ebay.com and if this is indeed a system issue, I will follow up with you.

rhondita55:

The only compliant methods for listing embroidery patterns are Classified Ad format for delivery by download and auction/fixed price for delivery on physical media (CD, memory chip, etc),.

We again ask for patience as we catch up with your questions.

I would also like to remind everyone that in a moment, I will begin posting tips for adapting your business strategies to not only be in compliance with the policy but to actually provide opportunities for more sales.

Griff

You cannot link to sites that offer products for sale from the Classified Ad.

Can there be a link to my website sales page? No.

Can there be a link to Clickbank? No.

Thanks.

Brian

Brian will continue to address your policy questions.

In mid March, eBay announced a major change in the policy for listing digital download (content delivered by download) content listings. This covered a wide range of content types including but not limited to ebooks, patterns, templates, plans, and forms. In brief (and Brian will cover in depth the policy, compliance and implications) we limited the listings for content deliverable by download to the Classified Ad format only.

In the few weeks since this workshop was announced, many sellers have actually created successful workarounds and adaptations for their digital content utilizing many of the tips and information we will be presenting here (there are no better instructors for successful selling like real eBay sellers themselves!) so in order to bring value to this workshop, I have extended the topics beyond just listing strategies to include promotion, marketing, branding and pricing considerations as well.

Let's start with the policy and the format itself.

Using Classified Ads for Selling Digital Content

For many sellers, the Classified Ad format is alien territory. eBay created this format a few years ago in order to provide a workable format for sellers of goods and services for which the traditional auction and fixed price formats were not appropriate.

If you haven't done so already, review the Help page for "Advertising with Classified Ads"

<http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/f-ad.html>

Using the Classified Ad format only for your content listing strategy is probably not a wise idea. CA format will work best in tandem with a wider range of content listing options.

Selling digital content on various physical media

Using solid media like an optical disk allows a seller to continue selling their digital content in categories directly related to the topic or subject of the content. Many sellers are now listing the digital content on CD or DVD; a viable solution to policy compliance.

However, The new policy also presents intriguing marketing opportunities for the enterprising seller of digital content to add value to their content by offering it on media that can be used for other purpose. For example, offering one or more eBooks or templates on a USB flash drive, SD, or Compact Flash memory card. Currently, low capacity USB flash drives (128 or 256MB) can be purchased from on and offline wholesale and retail outlets for reasonable prices. In addition, USB drives can be branded with your eBay Store name, your logo or your domain name.

Although they cost more than low capacity USB drives, SC and Compact Flash memory cards serve an extremely useful double duty. Not only can use them for packaging your digital content, your buyers can also use them in their cell phones, laptops and digital cameras.

USB drives and memory cards also allow for cross category listing and promotion. For example, a 1GB SC card containing your selection of eBooks, templates or plans can be listed in the following categories along with many of their sub categories:

- Books
- Cameras & Photos
- Cell Phones & PDAs
- Computers & Networking
- Consumer Electronics

More to come. Stay tuned...

Griff

Please report them to us – feel free to email me directly if you like.

We are addressing the violators as quickly as possible. We have proactive referral reports, but will still rely on the community for some enforcement – so please report violators.

We've removed literally 10's of thousands of listings in just the past 2 weeks, so if we've missed a few, we will get to them.

Thanks.

Brian

A Digital Content Selling Strategy Example

A good selling strategy should utilize as many listing options as possible. Let's use the example of a seller of eBooks. (the following assumes the seller has an eBay Store to help cross promote all of their content listings with their non content listings).

1. First, list out the catalog of your eBooks and decide how you want to package them, either as single offerings, collections or both.
2. Then list out the various delivery methods at your disposal on eBay:
 - Classified Ads (for purely digital downloads)
 - CD or DVD
 - USB Flash Drives
 - Memory Cards
 - And don't forget the tried and true, Bound Paper (an actual book!)
3. List out the relevant categories in which your items will fit. If your eBook is a "how to sell on eBay," on CD and a Flash Drive, the following might be on your list:
 - Books
 - Everything Else > Information Products (auction or fixed price format)
 - Everything Else > Information Products (Classified Ad format)
 - Computers & Networking
 - Consumer Electronics

4. Decide how to package your content for each of the options (media type and category). Keep in mind that you will cross promote all of the content listings in your eBay Store.
Other points to keep in mind:
5. Use appropriate, relevant keywords in your listing titles. For example, for listings of content on CD, make sure that the title of the content and the media type are included in your title (follow the usual guidelines for effective titles: only keywords, no punctuation, no modifiers like adverbs or adjectives.) For example, content on CD:

Bigger Profits on eBay eBook CD CD-ROM

Content on Flash Drive

Bigger Profits on eBay eBook USB Flash Drive 128MB

If your eBook title has a subtitle, consider placing it as marketing in the Sub Title" area of the listing.

Once you have planned out your complete packaging, format and listing strategy, you can start listing the items on eBay and, by using your eBay Store Cross Promotional boxes, indicate which of your content items promotions (up to 12 per listing) will appear at the bottom of all your listings. If you are not using or are not familiar with Cross Promotions, you can learn more here:

<http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/cp-overview.html>)

More to come...

Classified Ads are a different way of purchasing. I understand your frustration, and we understood that this would have a negative impact on some sellers.

It is still the right decision at this time given the value the Feedback system has in the overall marketplace.

You cannot include a PayPal payment button in the add.

You can include your email address for the member to contact you.

We continue to enforce and will adjust our filters as sellers adjust in an effort to circumvent the policy.

Thanks.

Brian

Just In Time Printing

Finally, don't discount the old tried and true printed book method of delivery. As the success of on and offline bookstores like Borders, Barnes and Noble, Amazon and of course, eBay's own Half.com clearly show us, bound printed on paper books still have a huge audience of eager buyers. There are many self-publishing options available to neophyte authors, especially those authors for whom finding an agent or old world publisher is not a viable option. Search the internet for "self publishing" to discover the options available. Many self publishing businesses offer authors a "print on demand" service which could very easily tie into an eBay listing strategy.

Griff

We are continuing to invest in tools and enforcement to address Feedback Manipulation.

Sellers who violate the FB Manipulation policy, no matter what technique they use, will be suspended.

The change we made does help us, since it removes the blatant abuse and sellers and buyers who do charge backs effectively provide eBay with additional information that we can use to determine if they are manipulating FB.

Thanks.

Brian

We are aggressively enforcing the policy and will continue to do so.

If you see a technique or listing that you believe we are not addressing, please email the item # to me and I will have someone review it.

Thanks.

Brian

You cannot include a link to your shopping cart.

Thanks.

Brian

Perceived Value Matters!

I suspected that a few of you would balk at the idea of spending more to promote your content items on eBay. Let me tell you why increasing the value of your items may actually help, not hurt, your content sales.

Adding value to your content will set your listings apart from your competition. To my eye, one of more distressing aspects of the growing trend in digital content is the "sameness" that permeates this particular category of listings. There are so many titles like "How to sell on eBay," "How to Make Millions on eBay," "Needlework Patterns," etc that it is difficult for buyers to differentiate between content listings.

Let's explore the various ways a seller of self-created content can stand out from the crowd:

The Content Itself

Considering creating an "eBay How To" eBook or compile a collection of your own needlework or embroidery patterns or a collection of templates (the type of content doesn't matter here. All types of content will benefit from these tips)? Fantastic! Keep in mind that these are very crowded fields at the moment (it's almost seems like every full time seller is writing a "how to" eBook of some sort). Before you begin, ask yourself: what is my angle? What is it about my content that is different, more valuable than the existing content? Maybe it's your humorous writing style that sets your ebook apart. Or maybe you actually have strategies, tips and tricks that have never been presented. Maybe your ebook is rich in helpful graphics or is laid out like a school text books with q and a tests at the end of each

chapter.

Maybe your "how to" ebook comes in audio format as well. (Why are there not more of these?)

If you cannot come up with a unique angle for your content topic, maybe you should consider a different topic. What are your other fields of expertise? Are you a fly tying expert? An expert watercolorist? A paint decorator? There aren't too many ebooks on these subjects. The field beyond "How to [fill in the blank] on eBay" is wide open.

Branding

No matter what media, format or category, make sure that your content packaging and presentation is consistent and identifiable as your brand. Many successful content sellers create a graphic for their content that shows it as a hard or soft cover book. You may need to hire a graphic designer to do the initial work for you but again, anything you can do to set your content apart from your competition provides value to your potential buyers. Your mantra should always be, "I must set my content apart from the pack."

You raise a good point and I will take the suggestion back to the category team to explore how best to expand the categories that currently offer Classified Ads.

Pricing

This is touchy area for many sellers. No one (including me) wants to dictate the value of self-created content as indicated by the price the seller places on their own content. But consider: you spend time and effort putting together an ebook on a topic. You are proud of your work. You consider it to be of great potential value and use to your readers. You have followed all of the above suggestions and have created a workable listing and marketing promotion strategy.

Then you price the content out at .99

Remember, for the most part, buyers believe that value is best indicated by price. Sure, every buyer wants a good deal, a bargain. No buyer wants to spend more than an item is worth. However, there is a price point for every item – not always obvious and not always easy to determine – below which the buyer stops considering the item as a bargain and starts viewing the item as "cheap" with all the word's negative connotations.

Don't demean your content's value by a too-cheap price. Part of your

differentiation strategy has to be pricing. Experiment with different price points and take into consideration the results of your extensive research into existing pricing. Many sellers know this from experience but the lowest priced item in a category is not always the best seller.

That would not be an effective way of utilizing Classified Ads. **You can use one Classified Ad to list your entire inventory (type and number) of content listings as opposed to several (1000's) of auction or fixed price listings. So actually, using Classified Ads as a part of your content selling strategy will actually save you money in fees.**

You can't directly link from the Classified Ad to another website.

Brian

Typo – we announced March 24 with enforcement beginning March 31

Thanks.

Brian

We will enforce equally. Please report violators and if you ever believe that we are not enforcing this policy fairly, please let me know.

Thanks.

Brian

I think everyone knows what an event ticket is, a "ticket" discount for a club membership, even if the "ticket" is printable is not an event ticket.

Thanks.

Brian

Please send me any violating item #'s to my email address – bburke@ebay.com and I will make sure we have someone review them.

Thanks.

Brian

eBay sellers are creative, but actively circumventing, as you describe carries with it higher consequences than just having the item removed.

Feel free to send them to me and I will make sure we take action.

Thanks.

Brian

We have a policy against Feedback Manipulation, so if you see (and we look for daily) auctions or listings that are being used to manipulate Feedback, please report them to us.

The issue here isn't the content – it's how it can be easily replicated and delivered.

Thanks.

Brian

The policy was implemented to deal with delivery method, not with content.

This is an important distinction that perhaps we are not making clear:

We are not judging the worth of content ("your eBook/templates/patterns/etc are excellent and yours are not")

The policy was changed to eliminate a delivery method only.

Link to or mention their classified ad in their auction listing or store listings??

Yes.

If so what can be stated when about the classified ad when linking to it from your auction ad or store inventory listing.

You can mention the Classified Ads you have running, and you can link to them but your listing description still must be in compliance with our Keyword Spam policy and we cannot allow said seller to use the words "download delivery" or something to that effect, in their

descriptions.

Will the digital scrapbooking category be eliminated?

Yes.

Will the software digital downloadable software category be eliminated?

Yes.

Why are foreign ebay sites given a month to adjust when ebay USA was only given a week?

Germany has never allowed download or digital delivery. Other sites are located in countries that by law required a 30 day notice.

ebrownfox:

Thank you. I live to serve.

dacholiday:

Why are our classifieds forced into information products. I do not sell an information product, I sell ebay design and Ebay stores design
We are considering options to solve this including the addition of extra Classified Ad format categories as well as other possible solutions.

montessori_print_shop

Is it possible to get an answer to this question: How are you planning on preventing the listing/sale of digital/email/PDF File listings to make it a fair playing field for everyone?

If you find a listing that is in violation of the Digital Download Delivery policy, use the Report This Item link at the bottom of the offending listing page.

off2wdw4fun

Both Brian and I will be at eBay Live but don't wait till then, let us know via email what you have on your mind. (Sometimes, the process

from report to action for listing policy violations can take 2 days depending on the waiting list of reports).

rice21895

I apologize if we didn't quite understand your question. As the workshop is now locked, please feel free to email the details to me. But if your question was with regards to sending the content via email attachment POST SALE where you also never mentioned that would, as either an option, or courtesy, delivery the content in digital format, then it would be allowed.

off2wdw4fun

Why not just go to a system where digital items need to be approved before being listed?

The policy was implemented to solve the issue around delivery method, not the content.

Let me make this clear: we are not judging, qualifying or devaluing content. This is not about content. It is ONLY about delivery method.

Griff

This was not about the legitimacy of the content, but rather the ability for members to use digital goods to easily manipulate FB.

I'll be at eBay Live, they are normally great events and I encourage everyone to attend one if you haven't.

And Chicago is a great town.

Thanks.

Brian

We began enforcing on March 31st and continue to enforce.

We made the decision since we were seeing abuse and given changes we announced regarding promotion in search and discounts on final value fees based on detailed seller ratings, wanted to move quickly.

We are actively enforcing.

Thanks.

Brian

rhondita55

"...
Are you saying we will loose our money on the listings or are you still going to pull them one by one and refund us? I had assumed that the pulling of these items would be with out penalty to Power Seller statis.

Is this no longer true? ..."

We refund all listing fees for first time violations of the new policy. We do not refund listing fees for repeat violations (which can also lead to stronger sanctions including suspension).

chopsueysisters

*"...That needs to move to mature audiences and you know it
..."*

If you find an item that violates our Mature Audience policy, use the Report This Item link on the bottom of the item page. You may want to revisit the Mature Audience policy first. Not all items that some might find questionable are in violation of the policy.

\$hortdawg

"...How could this policy help intellectual rights?

*Man, I'm on file with VERO for a reason, people on eBay will rob whether it's digital or not (in my case it was not)
..."*

They are two separate policies. If you are a VeRO member and you find items that infringe on your property rights, report them to us via the usual VeRO channel and we will remove them.

kali_marcum

"...I saw where I can put multiple like items on one class Ad. Can I link to a page for each item on the one ad? I sell auctions templates and it IS a visual experience. Can we please, get to the HOW TO and get past the botching!!!

..."

Yes you can sell more than one item in a single Classified Ad. No, you cannot put links for each product. **A Classified Ad listing can have a phone number or the default email link.**

rightnowdesigns

"...Unless u can drill it into ebayers that its ok to buy off of ebay as long as its a class ad i do not see MORE sales for any of us have to use class ad sellers..."

Actually, so far, we are not seeing this buyer apprehension on the part of sellers who are using the Classified Ad format. It's always possible that a buyer may be hesitant but it is an actual eBay page. Sellers who list in CA format should always provide a little text to explain how the format works for those buyers who are unfamiliar with it. Note that for content items, we are usually not talking about big ticket prices so buyer concern should (and as I mentioned, is so far) minimal to non-existent.

chopsueysisters

I would like to know if I can still sell:

1) online membership subscription to my site

If you deliver the membership content via file download, then you can only list your online membership in the Classified Ad format. If you deliver a physical item (membership card shipped through the mail for example), you can continue listing them in the category where you have been listing them.

2) directory/compilation inventory shopping list

If you are providing a physical item (print out, CD, etc) that is shipped through the regular mail, you can continue listing these items in the categories which you currently use.

If you are providing these items as files that are downloaded, emailed as attachments, etc, then you can only list them in Classified Ad format.

3) Virtual coupon book

If by "virtual" you mean "not physical" that is, a digital file that is not delivered on physical media like paper, cd rom, memory chip, etc, then you can only list your virtual coupon book in the Classified Ad format.

AND WHICH CATEGORIES THEY HAVE TO BE IN NOW

See above. Classified Ad format is available in a range of categories which you can view if you click the Help link on the top of any eBay page and entering the words "classified ad" in the Search Help box and then click on the appropriate link.

\$hortdawg

"...How about this... classified ad, it contains a flash object, the flash object contains some form of link...

there has to be a way to STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT....

And there is. **A buyer who simply cannot wait for the content and will only purchase it by download, can do so through your Classified Ad format.**

Note to self: griff seems to be confused about the CA format himself. He keeps saying we can "sell", yet we can only put an email address or phone number in the ad. How are we supposed to SELL if you can't link to an order form or shopping cart!!

everest_life_coach

"...Please kindly answer this question:

Can something still be listed as an auction under the new policy if delivery is by both CD AND some type of digital download? For example, a band puts a tangible product, a CD with 12 tracks on it, up for auction. The description states that in addition to receiving the CD through the mail, the winning bidder receives a user name and password to log on to a website where the very same tracks on the CD can be downloaded.

There is still a tangible product (the CD). The CD is mailed to the winning bidder in all purchases...."

No. Your description for an auction/fixed price listing cannot mention download delivery at all, either as an option or the only method. As I mentioned above, **if you choose to provide the content in an email attachment to your buyers, that is your choice, as long as you don't mention it in your description.**

Thanks for your patience. I am answering these as fast as I can.

Griff

(END)