

Decluttering? BBB offers tips to safely and successfully sell your used items online!

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The start of a new year is the perfect opportunity to declutter, refresh, and reclaim your space. Thanks to online marketplaces, turning unwanted items into extra cash has never been easier - all without leaving your home.

However, before you start posting listings, there are a few important risks to keep in mind to avoid common pitfalls, and make successful online sales:

- **Choose an appropriate platform.** When planning to sell items online, [Nerdwallet](#) recommends you “think about what you’re selling and the type of online marketplace that suits it.” There are dozens of online marketplaces to choose from, but many focus on a specific type of used goods, such as electronics or designer clothing. Before you create an account with a marketplace, check it out with [BBB](#) and also verify it’s a good fit for the kind of goods you want to sell.
- **Check the platform’s refund and dispute policies.** Understand how the platform handles refunds, disputes, and chargebacks. Be aware of timeframes for reporting issues and gather any required documentation or evidence that may be needed if a buyer files a dispute.
Use secure payment methods. Stick to payment methods offered by the platform, as they often have security measures in place. Avoid accepting checks or wire transfers, as these are common methods scammers use to manipulate sellers.
- **Understand the fees.** Each online marketplace has its own set of fees. Before signing up, take a moment to review the fine print and understand whether you’ll pay a percentage of your sale, a flat rate, or both, and how the fees are collected. In addition, find out how many sales each platform allows you to make each month.
- **Get appraisals for high-value items.** If you’re [selling jewelry](#) that’s made with precious metals or stones, it’s best to get an official appraisal before you list or sell the items. Keep in mind that jewelers may give you a lower price quote as they intend to make a profit on resale. If you have other valuable items, like antiques, artwork, etc., that you believe are worth over a thousand dollars, consider getting a written opinion on each item’s worth from a professional appraiser. This will give you a better idea of the price you should set and how much insurance you need to cover the sale.
- **Make a quality listing.** A quality listing can be very helpful towards selling your item. You’ll want to make sure images are clear and accurately show the item’s color, form, and other key details. You’ll also want to include specific measurements and detailed written descriptions that inform buyers of any flaws the item may have, no matter how small. If you’ve set a price based on the flaws, share that as well. It can be helpful to use keywords that accurately describe the item, its aesthetic, and its use to help match with online searches from buyers who are actively looking for the items you’re selling.
- **Prepare items for sale.** Before you pack your item for shipping or prepare it for being picked up by the buyer, clean it thoroughly. If you’re planning on selling multiple items online and want to keep buyers coming back, it can be helpful to add some extra touches into your packaging. For example, wrapping the item in tissue paper with an included thank you note can go a long way in creating a returning customer.
- **Watch out for shady buyers.** Con artists often pose as buyers in scams. Sometimes [they offer to overpay](#) for an item, a sign that they’re paying you with a fake check, but that’s not their only tactic. Also beware of buyers who ask you to make transactions outside of the selling platform or those who ask for personal information, such as your banking information.
- **Avoid shipping items until payment is confirmed.** Don’t ship any items until you’ve confirmed that the payment has been processed and received by the platform or directly in your account. Be cautious of buyers who push for expedited shipping or send what looks like a payment confirmation email outside the platform.
- **Use tracking for shipments.** Always use a trackable shipping method and require a signature on delivery for high-value items. Tracking ensures you know the item’s delivery status, and a signature confirms the buyer received it, helping to avoid disputes.
- **Be extra cautious when making local sales.** Some platforms, such as Facebook Marketplace, allow you to meet up with people in your local area to exchange your item for cash in person. While this can be an effective way to sell big items and avoid marketplace fees, be sure you use caution when meeting up with strangers. Don’t be quick to give them your home address, instead ask buyers to meet you in a safe place, such as a designated spot in your local police department’s parking lot. Never meet up with a buyer you don’t know alone. Always bring your partner or a friend to make the transaction.

If you're selling big items like furniture or exercise equipment, you will likely need to arrange for pickup from your home. Prepare those items ahead of time so they are ready to go to the buyer. Again, never meet up with a buyer you don't know alone. Have friends or family present, and also consider moving the item to an area that is easily accessible, like near your front door or in your garage, which doesn't require the buyer to enter your home.

- **Always protect your personal information.** As you sell items online, keep your sensitive personal information under lock and key. Avoid communicating with buyers outside of the online platform you're using to make the sale and avoid giving out your home address, phone number, or email address as much as possible.

We encourage you to read more tips from BBB via our New Year's Guide at BBB.org.

Kelvin Collins is president & CEO of the Better Business Bureau serving the Fall Line Corridor, serving 77 counties in East Alabama, West Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Central Georgia, East Georgia, and Western South Carolina. This tips column is provided through the local BBB and the International Association of Better Business Bureaus (IABBB). The Better Business Bureau sets standards for ethical business behavior, monitors compliance and helps consumers identify trustworthy businesses. Questions or complaints about a specific company or charity should be referred directly to the BBB at Phone: 1-800-763- 4222, Web site: BBB.org or E-mail: info@centralgeorgia.bbb.org.