A WORKS CO. MANUAL · NO. 10

The eBay Reseller Works

How to build a real income buying low and selling well.

The Works Co. · Trade manuals

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How to build a real income buying low and selling well.

How to use this manual

This is a working manual, not a book to admire on a shelf. Read it the way you would learn any trade: once quickly, then again with your hands busy.

First pass — read it straight through. Do not stop to act. You are building a map of the whole business: how stock is bought, how it is priced against eBay sold listings, how it is listed, packed and posted, and how the money and the tax actually work. Reading the whole thing first stops you sinking money into stock before you understand what sells.

Second pass — read with the tools open. Go back chapter by chapter and do the work as you read. This is where the manual earns its keep. Two things sit alongside the text:

- **The Toolkit — 10 spreadsheets.** A plain Excel set covering everything from a self-assessment scorecard to a profit calculator, a sourcing log and a first-90-days checklist. You open the relevant sheet when a chapter tells you to and fill in your own numbers. The full index is in Appendix A.
- **The Prompt Library — 60 prompts.** Ready-made instructions you paste into an AI assistant to draft listing titles, write item descriptions, plan your week, or sense-check pricing. The library and how to use it are in Appendix B.

Where a chapter points you to a specific sheet or prompt, it says so by name. Keep both to hand from your second read onwards.

A word before you start. We would rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a business that was never going to be yours. Reselling is honest work, but it is work: sourcing, sorting, photographing, listing, packing and posting, week in and week out. If that sounds like something you would enjoy getting good at, read on.

PART ONE

The Foundations

Chapter 01

The Reselling Opportunity

It is half past eight on a Monday evening in Barnsley, and Gemma's kitchen table has disappeared under the day's work. A box of die-cast cars she paid £4 for at Saturday's car boot. Three lambswool jumpers, fifty pence each, that smelled faintly of someone's spare room until a wash sorted them out. A boxed but unused garden strimmer she talked down to £6 from a stall holder who wanted shot of it. She photographs each item against a plain bath towel pinned to the wall, types the titles into her phone, and one by one the listings go live.

The die-cast cars she bought for £4 the lot. The first one sold within the hour for £18. By the time she has rinsed her mug and turned off the lights, eBay has pinged her four times. None of these are large sums. An £18 sale here, a £14 sale there, a £31 strimmer that cost her £6. But Gemma has learned the thing that holds this whole business together: small profits, made reliably, week after week, add up to a real income. She did not get lucky. She bought well, she listed clearly, and she let eBay's enormous audience do the rest.

This chapter is about why that works, who it works for, and what it honestly takes.

What this business actually is

Strip away the noise and reselling is simple to describe. You buy stock low. You sort it, photograph it, list it, sell it, and ship it on eBay and other channels for more than you paid. That is the whole loop. Buy, list, pack, ship, repeat.

The buying low comes from the places ordinary people overlook or undervalue: charity shops, car-boot sales, auctions, clearance and liquidation pallets, retail arbitrage (clearance and discounted retail stock), wholesale job-lots, house clearances, and Facebook Marketplace and other local listings. Some of these you can do on a Saturday morning with £20 in your pocket. Others, like pallets and job-lots, come later when you have cash to commit and a system to handle volume.

The selling happens on eBay because eBay is where the buyers are. Millions of people search eBay every day for a specific thing: a replacement part for a discontinued appliance, a particular Lego set, a size 12 wax jacket, a vintage camera, the lid that fits their slow cooker. You are not persuading anyone to want what you have. They already want it. Your job is to have it, to be found in search, and to be priced competitively.

The "and other channels" part matters too, though it comes later. Once you have stock moving on eBay, you can list the same items on Vinted, Facebook Marketplace, Depop and others to reach buyers eBay alone would miss, and to lean less on any one platform's fees and rules. We cover that properly in **Chapter 10**. For your first months, though, keep it simple: eBay is plenty to learn on, and spreading yourself thin too early just slows down the routine you are trying to build.

This is a real, physical product business. It rewards three skills above all: sourcing well (buying the right things cheaply), knowing what sells and what it is worth, and running an efficient list-pack-ship routine so you handle volume without drowning. None of that is glamorous. All of it can be learned.

> **COACH MOMENT** Before you spend a penny on stock, spend ten minutes learning the single most important habit in this trade: checking eBay **sold** listings. Search any item, filter to "Sold items", and you see what things *actually* changed hands for, not what hopeful sellers are asking. This one check, done on your phone before you buy, is the difference between a profitable sourcing trip and a garage full of stock nobody wants.

Why eBay, and why now

Three things make this a sensible business to start in 2026.

The buyer base is huge and it is searching for specifics. Other platforms sell a lifestyle or a feed. eBay sells the exact item someone typed into a box. That demand for specific, spares, collectable and niche goods is what makes obscure stock valuable. The lid nobody else wants is the lid one buyer has been hunting for a fortnight.

The start-up cost is genuinely low. You can begin with **£100 to £500**. That covers packing materials, a postage scale, some basic storage, and a phone for photos. The eBay account itself is free. Your stock investment starts small and grows as the business does, funded by reinvesting what you make. Compare that to almost any other product business and the barrier to entry is remarkably low.

Good sourcing is still an edge. Charity shops and car boots have wised up, and some now price with one eye on eBay. But knowledge still wins. Knowing that a particular brand of cookware, an out-of-print book, or a specific model of drill carries a premium lets you see value that the stall holder beside you misses. That edge cannot be downloaded. It is built, trip by trip.

And there is a fourth thing, newer than the rest. **AI now speeds up the slow part of the job.** Writing keyword-rich titles, drafting honest descriptions, suggesting item specifics from a photo or a few notes, drafting replies to buyer questions: these used to be the bottleneck that capped how many items you could list in an evening. The Prompt Library in your bundle is built for exactly this, and we cover it properly in **Chapter 13**. It does not source for you and it does not pack your parcels. It just lets you list more in less time, which matters when listings are what put money in the till.

The honest part: this is work, not a money machine

Here is the paragraph we would want a friend to read before starting.

Reselling is real, physical work. Every pound of profit passes through your hands as an actual object. You will spend Saturday mornings rummaging through other people's cast-offs, often finding nothing. You will photograph and list items in batches that take longer than you expect. You will wrap parcels, queue at the Post Office or a drop-off point, answer messages from buyers who want to haggle, and occasionally deal with a return or a difficult customer with fairness and a level head. There is no version of this where money arrives while you sleep and you do nothing. The people earning well from reselling are working at it: sourcing regularly, listing consistently, and despatching reliably. The reward is real and it is earned. If you want income without the graft, this is not the business for you, and we would rather tell you that on page one than take your money. We would rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a business that was never going to be yours.

If that paragraph put you off, good. It did its job. If it did not, keep reading, because the rest of this is genuinely doable.

What you can realistically earn

Be honest with yourself about which bracket you are aiming for, because they demand very different amounts of time.

Level	What it involves	Realistic UK income (2026)
Part-time / hobby	A few sourcing trips and listing sessions a week	**£2,000–£10,000/yr**
Full-time solo	Sourcing and listing daily, one person doing it all	**£20,000–£50,000/yr**
Scaled operation	Storage unit, staff, volume buying, multiple channels	**£80,000–£200,000+**

Notice what the top bracket actually is. It is not a lone person at a kitchen table earning two hundred grand. It is a real operation with rented space, stock tied up in pallets, hired help and the cash-flow discipline that volume demands. We cover scaling honestly in **Chapter 11** and **Chapter 12**. For most people starting out, the part-time bracket is the realistic first target, and the jump to full-time comes only once the routine is proven.

The unit economics underneath all of these are the same. You aim for a healthy markup on each item, typically **2–3× the buy price**, or at the least **£8–£15+ profit per item after fees and postage**. Stack enough of those and the brackets above take care of themselves.

A worked example, using Gemma's strimmer:

Sold price (incl. postage charged)	£31.00
Buy price	£6.00
eBay final-value fee (~12.8% of £31)	£3.97
Per-order fee	£0.30
Postage (courier)	£4.20
Packaging	£0.80
Profit	**£15.73**

A clean £15.73 on a £6 buy. Not life-changing on its own. Repeated forty times in a month, with a few bigger wins in the mix, it becomes a part-time income. We do the fee maths in full in **Chapter 7**, and the Pricing & Profit Calculator (Toolkit file 04) runs these numbers for you so you never guess.

> **MENTOR MOMENT** The beginner's mistake is chasing the big hit, the rare find worth £200. It happens, and it is lovely when it does, but it is not the business. The business is the £15 profit you can repeat reliably, on stock you can source every week, all year round. Build the steady stream first. The occasional jackpot is a bonus on top of a system that already works, not a substitute for one.

Who it suits, and who it does not

We would rather you knew now. **Chapter 2** is a full self-assessment, but the short version is this.

It suits you if you:

- have, or are willing to build, an eye for what things are worth
- are patient, organised, and happy to research before you buy
- do not mind the physical side: sourcing, sorting, packing, posting

- are comfortable enough with admin, photos and a bit of bookkeeping
- are persistent, because the first weeks are slow by design

It probably does not suit you if you:

- want money without the graft of sourcing and despatch
- have nowhere to store stock and no appetite for a system
- dislike packing and posting, which you will do constantly
- will not check sold prices before buying, which is the core skill

There is no shame in either list. The honest answer simply saves you money and months.

The seasons, the rules, and the buyers

Three things shape the year, and you should know them from the start.

Seasonality is real and it is your friend. There is a strong **Q4 / Christmas peak** when buyers are spending and prices firm up, plus category seasons through the year: garden tools in spring, fancy dress at Halloween, sports kit in the new year. The skill is buying *ahead* of a season, cheaply, when nobody wants the stock, and listing it *into* the peak when everyone does. The fan you buy for £3 in October sells far better the following July.

You are trading, and that has rules. Buying things in order to sell them is **trading**, and the profit is taxable. The **£1,000 trading allowance** covers only very small amounts; above it you must register as a sole trader with HMRC and declare your income. Online marketplaces, eBay included, now **report seller income to HMRC**, so assume your sales are visible. As a **business seller** you must follow consumer law, including offering returns under the **Consumer Contracts Regulations** (a 14-day right to cancel on online sales) and describing items accurately. The VAT registration threshold is **£90,000**, well above where most start. We walk through all of this calmly, with no scaremongering, in **Chapter 3**. It is straightforward once set up.

Your customers find you through search. You reach eBay's buyers through good titles, clear photos and competitive pricing. There is no clever marketing trick. There is a title that contains the words a buyer actually types, photos that show the item honestly including its flaws, and a price the sold listings tell you is right. **Chapter 6**, the longest in this manual, is devoted to listings because they are make-or-break.

How to use this manual, the Toolkit and the Prompt Library

Your bundle has three parts, and they are meant to be used together.

This manual is the path, in order, from "is this for me" through setting up, sourcing, listing, pricing, despatch, channels, scaling and the decade ahead. Read it through once, then return to chapters as you hit them in real life.

The 10-file Excel Toolkit turns the advice into working tools: a self-assessment scorecard (01), an inventory and listings tracker (03), the Pricing & Profit Calculator (04), despatch standards (07), a 90-day checklist (10) and more. When a chapter points you to a Toolkit file, open it and use it. The numbers are already wired up.

The 60-prompt AI Library is your listing accelerator. Hand a prompt a photo or a few notes and get back a keyword-rich title, an honest description, suggested item specifics, or a courteous reply to a buyer. **Chapter 13** shows you how to weave it into your routine so you list more in less time.

Two more things you should know. The whole bundle is **£47**, with **free updates for life**, so as eBay's fees, the tax rules and the tools change, your manual keeps pace. And if it is not for you, our refund is same-day and no-friction: email refunds@theworksco.co.uk, keep all the materials, no questions. We mean the line above about the coffee. We would genuinely rather you walked away than carried on with a business that was never yours.

What success looks like in one year

Let us be realistic about where a careful start gets you.

By **month three**, you have registered with HMRC, set up your eBay account and workspace for well under £500, done a handful of sourcing trips, and made your first thirty or forty sales. You have learned what sells in your area and what gathers dust. You are not yet quick, and that is fine.

By **month six**, listing and packing have become a routine rather than an event. You know your reliable sourcing spots and your best categories. You are reinvesting profit into better stock, your feedback is building, and you are clearing a steady few hundred pounds a month on top of your costs.

By **month twelve**, if you have stuck with it, you are operating comfortably in the part-time bracket, **£2,000–£10,000** for the year, with a real chance of pushing higher as you specialise. You will have ridden one **Q4 peak** and felt how much the season matters. Some readers will be eyeing the move to full-time. Most will have a dependable side income and a skill, the eye for value, that quietly compounds.

That is the honest shape of year one. It starts small. It rewards consistency. It is real work, and it works.

Gemma's first month cleared just under £400 in profit on top of her stock costs. Her tenth was past £1,200. Nothing about it was magic. It was a towel pinned to a wall, sold listings checked on a phone, and the steady habit of buying low and listing well.

The next question is the only one that matters before you spend a thing: is this genuinely for you? **Chapter 2** helps you answer it honestly.

Chapter 02

Is This For You?

It is a wet Wednesday morning in Stockport, and Lee is standing in his spare bedroom holding a boxed Sony hi-fi separates amp he bought for £6 at a car-boot sale in Cheadle three weeks ago. The eBay sold listings on his phone say the same model has gone for £52, £58, and £61 over the past month. He has photographed it, weighed it, listed it, and now a buyer in Aberdeen has paid £57 plus £6.95 postage. Lee takes it downstairs, wraps it in two layers of bubble wrap and a box he flattened and saved from a delivery, prints a label, and walks it to the post office before the school run finishes. After the eBay fee and the postage he keeps a little over £40 on a £6 item.

That is the good version of the morning. Here is the rest of it. The spare bedroom has eleven other items in it waiting to sell, three of which have been listed for six weeks with no bids. There is a returned jacket on the bed that a buyer sent back because "it smelled of smoke" (it did not), and Lee has to refund her and relist it. The car-boot trip that found the amp also cost him an hour of driving, a £3 pitch fee, and a £4 jumper that turned out to be a fake when he looked closely at the label at home. Reselling on eBay is genuinely one of the lowest-cost, lowest-risk businesses you can start in the UK in 2026. It is also real, physical, fiddly work. This chapter is here to help you decide, honestly, whether it is work you will actually enjoy and stick at — before you spend a penny on stock.

What the business actually is

Strip away the noise and the model is simple. You buy stock low — from charity shops, car-boot sales, auctions, clearance and liquidation pallets, retail arbitrage, wholesale job-lots, house clearances and Facebook Marketplace — and you sort it, photograph it, list it, sell it and ship it on eBay (and later other channels) for more than you paid. The gap between the two, after fees and postage, is your profit.

There is a skill at the centre of it, and it is worth naming plainly: knowing what sells and what it is worth. That is not a knack you are born with. It is built by checking eBay **sold** listings (the prices items actually fetched, not the optimistic prices people are asking) over and over until you start to recognise value on a charity-shop shelf at a glance. Everything else — the photographing, the packing, the postage — is a routine you can learn in a fortnight. The judgement of what to buy is the part that pays you, and it is the part that takes the longest to develop.

The money is real but it is earned, not conjured. To set your expectations honestly, here are the brackets a UK reseller can realistically reach in 2026:

Level	What it looks like	Likely yearly profit
Part-time / hobby	Evenings and weekends, occasional sourcing trips	£2,000–£10,000
Full-time solo	Sourcing and listing daily, one person	£20,000–£50,000
Scaled	Storage unit, staff, volume, multiple channels	£80,000–£200,000+

The top bracket is a proper operation with stock, space, labour and risk — not a tweak you make from the sofa. Most people who start reselling sit happily in the first bracket and treat it as a useful second income. That is a perfectly good outcome, and this manual is written to serve it as seriously as the full-time version.

Green lights: the markers that say yes

You do not need to tick every box, but the more of these that sound like you, the more likely you are to enjoy reselling and last at it.

- **You have an eye for value, or want to build one.** You notice that the £2 mug on a stall is a discontinued Emma Bridgewater pattern, or you are willing to learn to. Curiosity about what things are worth is the single best predictor of success here.
- **You are patient and organised.** Stock comes in, gets logged, gets listed, gets packed, gets posted. You can keep track of where eleven items are without losing one behind a wardrobe.
- **You are willing to source and pack regularly.** The business runs on a rhythm of buying and despatching. People who enjoy the hunt and do not mind the wrapping do well.
- **You are comfortable with photos, descriptions and a bit of admin.** You can take a clear, well-lit photo on a phone, write an honest description, and keep a simple record of what you bought and sold.
- **You are persistent.** Your first listings will sit there. Your first month may make £40. The people who win are the ones who keep listing through the quiet start, because volume and feedback compound over time.

> **COACH MOMENT** Before you spend anything, run one test this week. Go to one charity shop or one car-boot sale with £20 in your pocket and your phone. For every item that tempts you, check the eBay sold listings before you buy. Buy only the things that have clearly sold, recently, for at least three times what you would pay. Do not list them yet — just see whether you enjoyed the hunt and whether your guesses about value held up against the sold prices. If that hour felt like a chore, this business will feel like a chore every day. If it felt like a treasure hunt, you have found something worth pursuing.

Red flags: the markers that say not yet, or not at all

Honesty cuts both ways. These are the signs that reselling will frustrate you, and we would rather you knew now.

- **You want money without the graft.** There is no version of this where the items photograph, list, pack and post themselves. If the appeal is income with no labour attached, this is the wrong business and we would genuinely rather you closed the book here.
- **You have nowhere to put stock and no system to track it.** You do not need a warehouse, but you do need a shelf, a corner, a drawer — somewhere stock lives in order rather than in a heap. Without a system you will sell things you cannot find, which is worse than not selling them.
- **You hate packing and posting.** This is a despatch business. If the thought of wrapping a parcel, queuing at the post office or arranging a courier collection makes you tired, the daily reality will grind you down, because that part never goes away.
- **You will not research prices.** Buying without checking sold listings is gambling. People who refuse to do the two-minute check on their phone end up with a bedroom full of things worth less than they paid.

If two or three of these describe you today, it does not necessarily mean never. Some are fixable — you can clear a shelf, you can build a routine. But be honest about which ones are circumstances you can change and which are preferences you cannot.

The honest reality: it is a real product business

Here is the part the louder corners of the internet skip. Reselling is a real, physical product business, and it has all the unglamorous parts of one.

There is **sourcing**: time and fuel spent going to where cheap stock is, and the discipline to walk away from things that will not sell. There is **storage**: stock takes up space in your home from the day you start, and the more you scale the more space it demands, until eventually you are paying for a unit. There is **labour**: every single item has to be cleaned or checked, photographed, measured, weighed, listed, answered questions about, packed and posted by a human being, and at the start that human being is you. There is **cash tied up in stock**: money you spend on a pallet or a job-lot is not yours again until it sells, and some of it sells slowly or not at all.

None of this is a reason not to do it. It is a reason to go in with clear eyes. The reward is genuinely good — low start-up cost, a buyer base of millions searching eBay for exactly the niche thing you have, and margins of two to three times your buy price or £8 to £15-plus of profit per item when you source and price well. But the reward is paid out in exchange for effort and organisation, not instead of them. Treat it as a small business from day one and it will behave like one.

> **MENTOR MOMENT** The resellers who quit almost always quit for the same reason: they expected the first eight weeks to look like the eighth month. At the start you are buying stock you do not yet know how to value, listing slowly because you have not built a routine, and waiting on feedback you have not yet earned. It feels like a lot of effort for a little money, because it is — that is the cost of the apprenticeship. The ones who stay push through that stretch, and somewhere around month three the sourcing gets faster, the listings get sharper, the feedback score gives buyers confidence, and the same hours start producing real money. Judge the business by what it looks like once you are competent, not by what it looks like while you are learning.

A note on the admin you cannot skip

Two facts about reselling in the UK in 2026 are worth knowing before you start, because they shape whether this is for you.

The first is tax. Buying things in order to sell them is **trading**, and the profit is taxable. This is different from selling your own unwanted possessions, which is not trading. There is a **£1,000 trading allowance** that covers only very small amounts; above it you must register as a sole trader with HMRC and declare your income. And eBay, like other online marketplaces, now **reports seller income to HMRC** — so you should assume your sales are visible and keep proper records from the first item. Chapter 3 walks through exactly how to set this up; it is straightforward, but it is not optional.

The second is your responsibility to buyers. Once you are buying to resell, you are a **business seller**, and consumer law applies to you. That includes offering returns under the **Consumer Contracts Regulations** — a 14-day right for the buyer to cancel an online purchase — and describing items accurately. Some categories carry product-safety rules on top. This is not a reason to be nervous; it is simply part of running an honest shop, and we cover it properly in Chapter 3. If the idea of a little record-keeping and the occasional return is a dealbreaker for you, better to know that now.

Score yourself before you commit

Reading two lists is one thing; being honest with yourself is another. The **Self-Assessment Scorecard (Toolkit file 01)** turns this chapter into numbers. It asks you, plainly, about your appetite for sourcing, your storage and system, your tolerance for packing and posting, your willingness to research prices, and your persistence through a slow start. You score each one, add them up, and the total gives you a clear read: a confident green light, a "fix these two things first," or an honest "this is probably not the business for you."

Spend ten minutes on it before you buy a single item. The scorecard cannot make the decision for you, but it will stop you talking yourself into — or out of — the business for the wrong reasons. If your score lands in the amber band, the gap is usually one or two practical things (clearing a space, building a sourcing routine) rather than anything fundamental, and the rest of this manual is built to close exactly those gaps.

If it is not for you, we mean it

We sell this manual, the Excel toolkit and the prompt library together for £47, and we want to be straight with you about it. If you read this chapter and the reselling life does not fit — you have no space, you dislike the despatch side, you would rather not do the admin — then the right move is not to buy a manual for a business that was never going to be yours. We would rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a business that does not suit you.

And if you have already bought the bundle and reach this chapter and realise it is not for you, that is completely fine. Email **refunds@theworksco.co.uk** the same day and we will refund you, no friction and no interrogation, and you keep all the materials. We would rather have an honest no than an unhappy yes. Updates to the manual are free for life either way.

But if the lists in this chapter mostly described you — the eye for value, the patience, the willingness to source and pack and do a little admin, the persistence to push through a quiet start — then you are exactly who this business rewards, and the rest of this manual is your apprenticeship in writing. Next, in Chapter 3, we get you set up properly: sole trader or limited, registered with HMRC, your business eBay account live, and your records in order — legal and ready, so that everything you build from here stands on solid ground.

Chapter 03

Setting Up the Business

It is a wet Friday in Dudley, and Aaron has a problem most people would envy. His spare room holds four boxes of stock — a job-lot of power tools from a house clearance, some boxed Lego, a stack of curtain rails, and a crate of brand-name trainers he picked up at a car-boot sale. Over the last six weeks he has sold £1,340 of it on eBay. The money has landed in his bank account. And on the kitchen table, next to a cold mug of tea, sits a question he has been avoiding: is this a hobby, or is this a business?

It is a business. He bought those tools to sell them, and he sold them at a profit. That is trading, and trading is taxable. The good news is that getting set up properly is cheap, quick, and mostly free. The bad news is only that nobody hands you a form and tells you which boxes to tick. So this chapter does that.

We will cover what kind of business to be (sole trader or limited company), the test HMRC uses to decide whether you are trading, the £1,000 trading allowance and what it actually covers, why eBay now reports your sales to HMRC whether you like it or not, your legal duties as a business seller, the VAT line you do not need to worry about yet, and how to set the whole thing up. By the end of it Aaron — and you — will be legal, registered, and ready to sell.

Sole Trader or Limited Company?

There are two sensible ways to structure a reselling business at the start, and for almost everyone reading this the answer is the first one.

A sole trader is you, trading under your own name (or a trading name). You and the business are the same legal person. You keep records of what you buy and sell, you fill in a Self Assessment tax return once a year, and you pay Income Tax and National Insurance on your profit — that is, on what is left after your costs. There is no fee to register and very little paperwork.

A limited company is a separate legal entity. It has its own bank account, files accounts at Companies House, and pays Corporation Tax on its profits. You take money out as a salary or dividends. It offers limited liability — if the company owes money, your personal assets are usually protected — and at higher profit levels it can be more tax-efficient. But it costs more to run, the admin is heavier, and your details appear on the public register.

For a reseller starting out, **be a sole trader.** It is simpler, cheaper, and entirely legal for a business of this size. You can always incorporate later, and many resellers do once profits

That was Chapter 1.

The other twenty chapters, the Excel toolkit and the AI prompt library are in the full bundle.