

# BBB offers safety tips for cleaning out and online sales

The start of a new year is a great time to clean out your home and organize your living spaces. But what should you do with the gently used clothing, furniture, exercise equipment, home items, or electronics that you aren't using anymore?

Fortunately, online marketplaces, such as Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, eBay, and Poshmark, make it easy to sell without even leaving your home.

## How to stay safe when making 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 of them focus on a specific kind of used goods, such as electronics or designer clothing. Before you create an account with a marketplace, make sure it is 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.

- Know the worth of your items and price appropriately. To determine the value of an item you want to sell, try searching for similar items on the site where you plan to list. On auction sites, look at completed sales and pay attention to the selling price rather than the minimum bid price. If you are selling an item that was never used and is still in its original packaging, remember that technically it is still coming to the buyer second-hand, so you'll need to charge a little less than the original retail value if you want to make a sale.

- Get appraisals for high value items. If you are selling jewelry made with precious metals or stones, 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 profit on a resale. If you are in possession of antiques or artwork that is worth over a thousand dollars, consider getting a written opinion on the 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. Without a good listing, you may not sell your item. Make sure the 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. Make it clear that the price you set takes the flaws into account. Finally, use search engine words in your item description that accurately describe the item, its aesthetic, and its use to attract buyers who are actively looking for what you are selling.

- Consider the timing. List seasonal items ahead of relevant holidays or seasons (e.g., winter coats in early fall, exercise equipment in January) to maximize buyer interest.

- 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 are planning on selling multiple items online and want to keep buyers coming back, put some love into your packaging as well. Wrapping the

item in tissue paper and including a thank you note can go a long way towards creating a returning customer.

- Understand the fees. Each online marketplace has its own set of fees. Before you sign up, take some time to read 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.

- Consider swapping or donating used items. If you decide not to sell an item, consider donating it or giving it away to someone who needs it. Several online sites allow you to give things away to someone who needs them for free, lend and borrow items from others in your community, and even trade items instead of selling them for cash.

- Watch out for shady buyers. Con artists often pose as buyers in scams. Sometimes they offer to overpay for an item, but that's not their only tactic. 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 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, 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 outside your local police department. Never meet up with a buyer you don't know alone. Always bring your

partner or a friend to make the transaction.

- If you are meeting up with the buyer at your home to sell big items like furniture or exercise equipment, 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 be present to help you move the furniture to an area that is easily accessible, like near your front door or in your garage, so that the buyer doesn't need to enter your home. If you don't have any-

one to help you, consider hiring a moving service to haul those big items away to the seller.

- Always protect your personal information. As you sell items online, keep your personal information under lock and key. Avoid communicating with buyers outside of the online platform you are using to make the sale and don't give out your home address, phone number, or email address.

To report a scam, go to [BBB.org/Scam-tracker](http://BBB.org/Scam-tracker).



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## Let's start the year on a healthier note

As we step into the New Year, it's natural to reflect on our lives and think about the changes we'd like to make. For many, this is the perfect time to focus on health and well-being.

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By focusing on achievable and practical resolutions, you're setting yourself up for a healthier and more fulfilling year ahead.



## Taylor Regional Hospital

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