Chapter 1

Handmade for Each Other: Falling in Love with Etsy

In This Chapter
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▶ Signing up for (and making your way around) Etsy
▶ Setting up your Etsy shop
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If your goal is to “make a living making things,” then Etsy (www.etsy.com) is for you. Etsy was created specifically to enable artists and craftspeople to sell their wares online — “to reconnect makers with buyers.” In short, Etsy enables creative types to channel their passion for their craft into their life’s work!

In this chapter, we give you a bird’s-eye view of Etsy — its purpose and business model, how to sign up for and navigate around it, and all sorts of good stuff about opening and running your own shop.

Handmade Crusade: Understanding Etsy’s Purpose and Business Model

Many people think of Etsy as a sort of eBay for arts and crafts. And you can see why: People use both Etsy and eBay to buy stuff from other individuals. Also, both sites charge listing fees and make a small commission on every sale. Plus, members use feedback to rate their transactions.
But the sites have big differences, too:

- Although Etsy is growing — as of December 2010, the site boasted 7 million registered users spanning the globe and facilitated $400 million in transactions — it’s still the proverbial mouse to eBay’s proverbial elephant.

- Etsy, which launched in 2005, doesn’t use an auction format.

- Perhaps the biggest difference is that whereas anything goes on eBay, Etsy was created specifically to enable artists and craftspeople to sell their handmade wares online. Etsy itself puts it this way: “Our mission is to enable people to make a living making things, and to reconnect makers with buyers. Our vision is to build a new economy and present a better choice: Buy, sell, and live handmade.” (Over time, the site has evolved to also allow the sale of vintage items and craft supplies; find out more about what you can and can’t sell on Etsy in Chapter 7.)

Etsy is part of a larger movement against the homogenous nature of mass-produced items. This movement is typified by an organization called The Handmade Consortium (of which Etsy is a member), which notes:

> The ascendancy of chain store culture and global manufacturing has left people all dressing, furnishing, and decorating alike. The connection between producer and consumer has been lost. Buying handmade helps them reconnect . . . . We want people, whenever possible, to support independent creators and shop outside the big boxes.

More than just ensuring that you and your frenemy don’t wind up wearing the same dress to the Academy Awards, Etsy and The Handmade Consortium assert that buying handmade results in an economy that’s more sustainable, more environmentally responsible, and more socially responsible. Simply put, the Consortium has said, “It’s better for people.” (Check out www.buyhandmade.org for more information.)

Lofty philosophy aside, Etsy is a business — meaning it needs to make money. So how does Etsy’s business model work? Etsy stays afloat by charging sellers a fee for each item listed on the site. At this time, the listing fee is 20¢ per item. In addition, Etsy collects a commission from the seller for each item sold — currently, 3.5 percent of the total price of the item, not counting shipping. These fees, which you can pay using a credit card that you put on file with Etsy or using your PayPal account, are assessed at the end of each month.
World Up: Introducing the World of Etsy

Just what can you do on Etsy? And how do you use it? This section scratches the surface.

Upper register: Registering with Etsy

You don’t need to register with Etsy to scope out what goodies are for sale. But if you’re in the market to buy any of said goodies — or to communicate with other Etsy members or participate in the site’s community features, such as its forums, teams, Virtual Labs, and the like — you need to create an account with the site. Fortunately, creating an account is simple and free. All you need to do is enter your name and e-mail address, and choose a user name and password. You don’t even need to supply a credit card number!

If you plan to use Etsy to sell your own handmade, vintage, or supply items (and we assume so, because you’re reading this book!), you need to take one more step: upgrading to a seller account. That step requires a major credit card (think Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express) and other vitals, such as your address.

For step-by-step coverage of completing the registration process and signing in to your Etsy account, turn to Chapter 2.

Moniker mystery tour: Probing the secret behind Etsy’s name

The origins of Etsy’s name are as murky as a drifter’s past, but theories abound.

✓ Some say that the name Etsy is a play on the Latin phrase et si, meaning “and if."

✓ Others suggest that the name comes from the Greek etsi, meaning “so,” “thus,” or “in this way.”

✓ Still others posit that Etsy derives from the Unix director /etc, pronounced “et-C,” or that it’s meant to call to mind the word itsy, as in “itsy-bitsy,” or “cute,” which, of course, many items on Etsy are.

Any attempts for clarification by Etsy are met with playful — but misleading — answers by Etsy’s staff, ranging from “Etsy is an acronym for Expanded Truncated Structural Y” to “It means ‘horny person’ in Japanese.” And although Etsy founder Rob Kalin once insinuated that the answer to this riddle could be found in Fellini’s film 8½, no one has yet managed to solve it.
**Homeward bound: Navigating the Etsy home page**

Whether you’re buying or selling, exploring or researching, Etsy’s home page is your home base. It’s the page that appears when you type `www.etsy.com` into your Web browser. You can also access Etsy’s home page from anywhere on the Etsy site by clicking the Etsy logo in the upper-left corner of each page.

The Etsy home page includes several important sections:

- A set of links and a header bar along the top, which you can click to access various Etsy features
- Categories, Handpicked Items, Recently Listed Items, and Ways to Shop, which make finding the perfect item a breeze
- The Featured Seller and Recent Blog Posts sections, which give access to information about exceptional Etsy sellers and other important topics, respectively

For more information about these and other home page features, check out Chapter 3.

**Let us account the ways: Understanding Your Account**

On Etsy, managing your account is easy. Etsy has grouped all the key settings and info in one easy-to-reach place: Your Account. Your Account, which you access by clicking the Your Account link that appears along the top of every Etsy page when you’re logged in to your Etsy account, acts like an instrument panel of sorts. It displays all kinds of account-related info — items you’ve bought, feedback you’ve received, your public profile, your billing and shipping info, your Etsy bill, any Etsy-related apps you use, and various shop-related settings.

For help with navigating Your Account, turn to Chapter 4.

**For sale by artist: Discovering what’s for sale on Etsy**

Etsy features unique, one-of-a-kind handmade and vintage items — goodies you simply can’t find anywhere else — along with supplies for crafting your own pieces. In fact, Etsy offers an incredible breadth of items for sale, from
accessories to ceramics, jewelry to quilts, and everything in between. And because there’s no middleman — you buy directly from artists and craftspeople — prices on Etsy are generally very reasonable. At the same time, your purchase can enable these skilled artisans to earn a living wage. It’s a total win-win!

To help you find a specific item, Etsy supports a robust Search tool. With it, you can search for handmade items, vintage items, and supplies. You can also use the Search tool to locate a particular seller or shop. If you’re just browsing, you’ll appreciate Etsy’s many browsing-related features, including Categories, Handpicked Items, Recently Listed items, Colors, the Treasury, Pounce, Shop Local, Time Machine, and Gift Ideas. You access these tools from Etsy’s home page or from the Shop on Etsy page, which you access by clicking the Buy link along the top of any Etsy page.

For additional help, turn to Chapter 5.

**Safety first: Ensuring your safety on Etsy**

No doubt about it, one of the highlights of Etsy is its thriving community of interesting, arty folk. But you may still find an occasional bad apple on the site. Take a few key steps to ensure your safety:

✔ To make sure that no one accesses your account without your authorization, you must choose a strong password. Select one that meets all the following criteria:

- It’s at least eight characters long.
- It doesn’t contain your user name or your real name.
- It doesn’t contain a complete word.
- It differs from passwords that you’ve used in the past.
- It contains a mixture of uppercase letters, lowercase letters, numbers, symbols, and spaces.

For an added layer of protection, change your password every so often — say, every 30 to 90 days.

✔ Be on the lookout for scams. These often involve the use of money orders or cashier’s checks, along with an offer to pay significantly more than is necessary to expedite shipping or to cover some other weird request. If you do get taken on Etsy, contact your financial institution on the double. Then report the situation to Etsy. You may also opt to alert your local law enforcement.
Before you jump into a forum or team discussion, monitor it for a while. See whether the Etsians engaged in the discussion are people you really want to interact with. If a discussion goes south, simply disengage. Life’s stressful enough; why embroil yourself in a conflict on a site that’s supposed to be fun? Oh, and don’t share your digits or other personal deets, such as where you live or work, on Etsy’s forums or other public spaces. And if you decide to meet up with someone you’ve met on Etsy in person, pick a neutral, public place; let a friend or family member know about your plans; and be sure to bring a cellphone with you in case you need to call for help.

Chapter 6 covers important safety issues in more detail.

**Storefront and Center: Setting Up Your Storefront**

The simple act of signing up for a seller account results in the creation of your Etsy shop. That shop, however, may strike you as incredibly plain, because it consists of a white page with only two gray bars and a few links. Fortunately, you can personalize it in several ways (and doing so makes a huge difference!):

✓ Uploading a banner (a graphic that runs across the top of the page)
✓ Including a shop title and shop announcement to describe your shop
✓ Using sections to organize your goods
✓ Populating your Etsy profile and choosing an avatar

As you set up your storefront, keep in mind that a major reason people shop on Etsy is to feel connected to the artists who make what they buy. If you want people to buy from you, make sure your Etsy shop reflects your personality! Are you serious? Then your shop should be, too. Ditto if you’re whimsical, modern, traditional, edgy, or frilly. Let your personality shine through in your choice of banner, avatar, and other visual elements, as well as in your bio and other text-based elements. Not only will this increase your sales, but it may just help you make some friends along the way. (For more on setting up your Etsy shop, check out Chapter 8.)

Oh, one more pointer: As you set up your Etsy shop, you’ll want to clearly lay out your shop policies — how much you charge for shipping, whether you accept returns, and so on. We cover smart policies in Chapter 9.
Sell’s Angels: Surveying the Etsy Selling Process

Putting up an item for sale on Etsy is a simple process:

1. Create the item you’re selling and determine how much it costs (with the help of the pointers we provide in Chapter 10).

2. Photograph your piece.
   You can include as many as five pictures of each piece in your Etsy shop. The photos you provide must convey the shape, size, color, and texture of your piece, and also be easy on the eye.

3. Compose a snappy title and description for your item listing.

4. List your item on the site and wait for someone to snatch it up.

5. When the item sells, ship it to the buyer (after you receive your payment, of course)!

Okay, that’s a broad overview. Of course, the process has a little more to it, but trust us: It’s nothing you can’t handle. After you read Part III, you’ll be up to speed.

Takin’ Care of Business: Handling Business Matters

For some sellers, running an Etsy shop is merely a hobby — a way to make a little extra money on the side. For others, it’s their day job, or “what they do.” Regardless of which camp you’re in, you need to treat your Etsy shop as a proper small business — building a brand, marketing your shop, and providing excellent customer service.

If you’re in the latter category — someone who seeks to earn a living by selling on Etsy — you may choose to do even more. For example, you may opt to incorporate your business, obtain a business checking account, streamline your supply chain, use special tools to analyze your business, and so on.

Part IV covers all these topics and more, including how to handle tax matters and pair up with a friend to run an Etsy shop.
Community Collage: Engaging in the Etsy Community

Sure, Etsy is a great place to buy and sell handmade pieces, vintage items, and supplies. But it’s more than that: It’s a community of creative, crafty people that just begs for participation. Etsy offers several tools that help you jump right in, including these:

- Public message boards, called forums
- Teams, for connecting with likeminded Etsy members
- Chat rooms, for chatting with other Etsy members in real time
- Virtual Labs, which are special chat rooms where Etsy staffers and members can run seminars, workshops, shop critiques, and other educational gatherings

You can also gather your favorite shops and sellers into your own Etsy circle, to keep up with their goings-on and more. And you can show your love on the site by “hearting” your beloved items and shops — that is, adding them to your favorites.

Other great resources for the Etsy community include The Etsy Blog (also called The Storque; check out www.etsy.com/storque), which acts as a neighborhood newspaper of sorts. The Etsy Blog, which serves up fresh content daily, boasts material ranging from tips for improving your Etsy shop, to information to help you perfect various crafting techniques, to glimpses into the lives of other Etsy sellers.

Etsy’s e-mail newsletters are another great source of information and inspiration. And if you’re among the more than 500 million people who maintain a Facebook account, you can connect with Etsy there, as well as on Twitter, and YouTube.

Etsy is super easy to use, but you’ll still need a little help sometimes. Fortunately, Etsy maintains copious resources to help members find answers to all their burning Etsy-related questions, from help files to an interactive Help forum. Go to www.etsy.com/help for the scoop.

Ready to dive in? Flip to Part IV for all the details on engaging in the Etsy community.