

2nd Edition

eBay HACKS™

*Tips & Tools for Bidding, Buying,
and Selling*



O'REILLY®

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HACK
#75

Protect Your Copyright

Prevent other sellers from stealing your photos.

Taking a good-quality photo of each and every item being sold can be extraordinarily time consuming, not to mention practically impossible for items still in their boxes or not in the seller's immediate possession. As a result, many sellers resort to hijacking other sellers' photos for use in their own auctions.

The problem is that photo theft can be extremely damaging, and not so much because of mere copyright law (though it does apply).

A big part of any item's desirability is its perceived uniqueness. The more uncommon an item appears to bidders, the more valuable it becomes. When bidders see the exact same photo in two different auctions, not only are the implied scarcity and value of the item severely weakened, but the integrity of both sellers becomes suspect. And unless it's painfully obvious, most bidders won't distinguish between the thief and the seller whose photos were pilfered; a single theft of an image will hurt both sellers.

Protecting Your Image

My inspiration for this solution was a hot-dog vendor in my college town. On a shelf next to the broiler sat an old black-and-white television set, with the words "Stolen from Top Dog" written in permanent marker on its side.

The idea is to mark your photos so that they're unusable by other sellers, but in a way that doesn't adversely affect your own auctions. This is accomplished, quite simply, with a bit of text carefully superimposed on your photos.

The text should be carefully placed so that it neither obscures the subject nor can be easily removed by the thief (such as with the [clone tool \[Hack #74\]](#)). Often the easiest way to do this is with large, translucent text right over the center of the image, as in [Figure 5-9](#).

The specific text you use is up to you, but it should include a copyright symbol (©) and your eBay user ID. The user ID is important, as it indicates that the photo belongs in *your* auction and no one else's.

Disabling Right-Click

The right mouse button is what most people use if they want to save an image on a web page. If you want to take an aggressive stance on image



Figure 5-9. Tagging your photos with your eBay user ID is an effective deterrent against image theft

theft, you can disable your customers' right mouse buttons for your auction photos. Just include this code* somewhere in your auction description:

```
<script language="JavaScript1.1"><!--  
  
function lockout() {  
    for (var i=0; i < document.images.length; i++) {  
        ❶ document.images[i].onmousedown = norightclick;  
        ❷ document.images[i].oncontextmenu = nocontextmenu;  
  
    }  
}  
  
function norightclick(mousebutton) {  
    if (navigator.appName == 'Netscape' &&  
        (mousebutton.which == 3 || mousebutton.which == 2)) {  
        ❸ alert("Please don't steal my pix.");  
        return false;  
    }  
}  
}
```

* Based on code snippets by Martin Webb (*irt.org*).

```
function nocontextmenu() {  
④   event.cancelBubble = true;  
    event.returnValue = false;  
    return false;  
}  
  
⑤   if (document.layers) {  
        window.captureevents(event.mousedown);  
        window.onmousedown=norightclick;  
    }  
  
    // --></script>  
⑥   <body onLoad="lockout();">
```

Here's how it works. The `lockout` function sets two rules for the page: any time a user clicks an image on the page, the `norightclick` function is run ①, and any time a user opens a context menu on an image, the `nocontextmenu` function is run ②. Later on, the `<body>` tag ⑥ calls the `lockout` function only when the page has completely loaded, otherwise, the `for` loop would miss any images that haven't yet finished loading.

The `norightclick` function then blocks the right click with a warning message ③, but only for Netscape and Mozilla browsers. The `nocontextmenu` function disables the context menu with no warning ④, but only for Internet Explorer. The two browsers are handled differently because only Internet Explorer supports the `oncontextmenu` event. (And, to cover all the bases, there's a bit of code to handle older versions of Netscape ⑤.)

This code is by no means foolproof. Any knowledgeable or determined user can disable JavaScript, or view the page source, perform a screen capture, or simply drag and drop images off the page (for browsers that support it). But most users who steal images do so because they don't know any better, and this script gets the point across.

Other Ways to Protect Your Copyright

Here are a few other ways to protect your images from being stolen:

Take 'em down. If you're hosting your own photos, take them down right after your auctions close to reduce the window during which other sellers might find and steal your images. But this could arouse the suspicions of your winning bidder, and would weaken the marketing power of any photos in your completed auctions that might otherwise help drive bidders to your current listings.

CopySafe Pro. If you're really concerned about image copyright, you can use CopySafe Pro (available at artistscope.com), a Java-enabled image viewer. It may be overkill for simple auction photos, and it's not fool-proof, but it may be the additional security you're looking for.

Watermark. Some image editors, like Photoshop, support invisible watermarking, a method by which images can be marked and later identified for copyright infringement. Image thieves won't ever know it's there, but it can be useful for proving that theft has taken place.

Reporting Image Thieves

The most effective means of protecting your images is to simply report any auctions in which another seller has used one of your images without permission.



You can try contacting the offending sellers directly, but you may not get far. A few sellers have gotten downright hostile after I asked them to remove photos they've stolen from me. Plus, if their auctions have received bids, they may not be able to [change the photos \[Hack #65\]](#) (or may simply not know how).

To report the theft of one of your images or any of your text content, go to pages.ebay.com/help/contact_inline/. On the Contact Us page, select Report a listing policy violation → Copying of your listing → Your picture was copied. Click Continue and then click the Email link on the next page. Finally, specify the offending item number in the first box, the item number of your original listing in the second box, and explain the offense in the third box.

eBay typically takes two or three days to investigate and respond to claims. In the case of content theft, eBay will simply remove the offending auction and explain the situation to the seller (assuming you've sufficiently proven your case).