CARD SELLER ACADEMY

THE COMPLETE BUSINESS GUIDE

SPORTS CARD SELLING PLAYBOOK

SOURCING / GRADING / PRICING

EBAY / WHATNOT / TIKTOK

MARKETING / OPERATIONS / GROWTH

PRACTICAL, READING-FIRST EDUCATION

Includes real marketplace fees, grading prices, shipping and live-selling instruction.

INDEPENDENT SELLER EDUCATION COMPANION WORKBOOK SOLD SEPARATELY NOVEMBER 2026 EDITION

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How to use this book

This playbook is here to help you build a small sports card resale business one careful step at a time—whether you're selling individual cards ("singles"), working through collections, or trying live sales. Read the chapters in order and work through the exercises with real numbers. Before you spend money on inventory, make sure you've worked through Chapters 01 to 04.

Your first 30 days

1. **Week 1:** Pick a focused niche and one main sales channel. Look up ten exact sold comps and write down your maximum buy price before you shop.
2. **Week 2:** Start small with 15 to 30 cards that fit your budget. Check and photograph each card, then give every item an SKU so you can find it again.
3. **Week 3:** Create clear listings, pack each order carefully, and track the fees and shipping you actually pay.
4. **Week 4:** Look back at what sold, what's still sitting, and which categories made money after costs. Reinvest only what your cash flow can comfortably support.

How the book is organized

- Chapters 01 to 03 build market and card knowledge.
- Chapter 04 covers sourcing, pricing and grading, with real grading fees.
- Chapters 05 and 06 cover eBay, shipping, customer trust and live selling on Whatnot, eBay Live and TikTok Shop.
- Chapters 07 and 08 cover marketing, operations, taxes and growth.
- Chapter 09 holds worksheets, a launch audit and official references.

> **Numbers in this book. Illustrative examples are not market quotes.** Dollar figures in worked examples are teaching assumptions. Fee rates and prices in this edition were checked in November 2026 and change often. Verify each platform's and grader's current terms before you spend money. No outcome is guaranteed.

01

Market foundations

Understand the opportunity, the history and the economics

KNOW THE MARKET • CHOOSE YOUR MODEL • RUN THE BUSINESS

CHAPTER 01

Market foundations

Why the market creates opportunity

Trading cards sit at the intersection of collecting, entertainment, nostalgia and commerce. A buyer may want a favorite athlete, a completed set, a rare parallel or the thrill of a pack. Those motivations create many small, specialized markets rather than one uniform market.

For a new seller, the opportunity is not simply that cards are popular. Collectors need help finding specific items, understanding condition, comparing editions and receiving purchases safely. A seller who consistently solves those problems can provide real value, even without a large starting budget.

This guide takes an opportunity-first but risk-aware approach. Strong demand for some cards does not mean every card is liquid, every sealed box appreciates, or every stream earns a profit. Your edge comes from research, discipline and service.

> **A useful question.** Instead of asking "Which card will explode in value?", ask "Who is likely to buy this exact card, at what supported price, and what will remain after costs?"

From collectibles to a modern resale ecosystem

Sports cards began as promotional inserts in tobacco products in the late nineteenth century and became a children's confectionery item in the twentieth. The 1980s and early 1990s brought mass production, specialty shops and price guides, and oversupply later damaged the value of many common cards. Today's market is shaped by serial-numbered parallels, autographs, memorabilia cards and independent grading, which made scarcity and condition central to value. Online sold-price data, live auctions and group breaks widened how collectors find and buy cards.

The market responds to player performance, injuries, trades, playoff moments and collecting trends. Attention can rise sharply around a breakout player and fade just as quickly. That creates opportunity for informed sellers and real inventory risk.

What the numbers do and do not tell you

Industry research firms estimate the global sports trading card market in the low-to-mid teens of billions of dollars and project continued growth. Trade press has reported strong growth in singles sales on eBay. Treat these as context, not proof:

- Research-firm estimates are projections, not audited sales or a promise of future returns.
- Marketplace figures measure one marketplace and one category, not the whole industry.
- Before quoting any statistic in your own marketing, open the original source, confirm the figure and date, and cite it.

The people, platforms and prices behind every sale

The card ecosystem includes manufacturers and distributors, hobby shops, breakers, auction houses, graders, marketplace sellers, live sellers and individual collectors. Products move between these groups at different costs, with different levels of information and risk.

An asking price is an invitation to buy, not proof of market value. Completed sales are better evidence, but even a sold listing needs interpretation: check condition, grading company, card variation, quantity, sale date, shipping terms and whether a best offer was accepted.

Liquidity matters as much as headline price. A card that sells twice a year may require patience or a discount, while a popular lower-priced card may move quickly. Your cash-flow plan should reflect how long inventory may remain unsold.

Research workflow

Identify the exact card, then examine recent completed transactions, remove mismatched variants, compare condition and timing, estimate a realistic sale range, and subtract all costs before buying.

The real math behind a sale

A $50 sale can feel like a win—but it isn't $50 in your pocket. First subtract what you paid, marketplace and payment fees, shipping, and supplies. Then account for grading, returns, taxes, and cards that haven't sold yet. Run the numbers before you buy, so you know what kind of margin you're aiming for.

The anchor example used throughout this book

Assume a blended selling fee of 13 percent plus $0.30 per order, $5.00 seller-paid shipping and $1.00 packaging. You buy a card for $35, pay $5 inbound shipping (landed cost $40) and sell it for $75.

Line	Amount
Sale price	$75.00
Landed cost	negative $40.00
Fees: 13% of $75 plus $0.30	negative $10.05
Shipping and packaging	negative $6.00
Net profit	$18.95
Margin (profit / sale price)	25.3 percent
ROI (profit / invested cost)	47.4 percent

If the price falls to $60, fees drop to $8.10 and net profit shrinks to $5.90 (9.8 percent margin). That is still positive, but barely. Run this downside before every purchase.

The maximum buy price rule

Maximum buy price = expected sale price, minus selling fees, minus shipping and supplies, minus target profit, minus a risk reserve. Use conservative assumptions when comps are sparse. If you expect a $60 sale and require $15 profit, the ceiling is $60 minus $8.10 minus $6.00 minus $15.00 = $30.90. If the seller asks $42, pass or renegotiate.

Four approachable ways to participate

- **Curated singles:** buy identifiable cards below supported resale value. A strong starting point for learning condition, comps and fulfillment.
- **Collections and lots:** evaluate mixed groups, estimate the sellable portion and account for sorting time.
- **Live selling:** run auctions or fixed-price shows. Faster turnover, but fees, audience size and $1 starts add risk.
- **Educational content:** publish useful videos about identification, pricing and shipping. Views do not automatically become sales.

Choose a lane, not every lane. For your first month, pick one inventory category and one main sales channel. You don't need a flashy revenue screenshot to know you're making progress: a tidy ledger, honest listings, a shipping routine you can repeat, and a few well-researched buying decisions are a much stronger start.

Field exercise. Write your niche, starting budget, target net margin and the first ten products you will research. You will revise this at the end of Chapter 04.

02

Business models and selling channels

Choose how you sell and where

KNOW THE MARKET • CHOOSE YOUR MODEL • RUN THE BUSINESS

END OF FREE SAMPLE

Keep going with the full playbook

You have read the start of the Sports Card Selling Playbook. The full book continues with:

- Sourcing, including Facebook Marketplace bulk lots and a safety checklist
- Pricing formulas with real eBay and Whatnot fee math
- A grading price table for TAG, Beckett, CGC and PSA, with break-even examples
- eBay listing, packing and shipping tiers, plus returns and customer trust
- Live selling on Whatnot, eBay Live and TikTok Shop, including the Whatnot CSV upload
- Marketing, taxes, operations and a launch audit with worksheets

> **A companion Excel workbook is sold separately.**
> Visit the Card Seller Academy website for the full playbook and workbook.