

# eBay HACKS

*100 Industrial-Strength Tips & Tools*



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HACK  
#10

## Controlling Fuzzy Searches

Choose when and how plurals and variations of your search terms are used in searches.

For the most part, eBay searches return only listings that match your search terms exactly. That is, if you search for “possum,” you won’t necessarily retrieve the same results that you would in a search for “opossum.”

Historically, to perform a *fuzzy* search, you’d have to include all the variations of a word in the search box manually, like this:

```
(opossum,possum,apossoun)
```

or, to accommodate singular and plural variants, you’d have to type something like this:

```
(antenna,antennas,antennae)
```

The OR search commanded by the use of parentheses, as described in “Focus Your Searches with eBay’s Advanced Search Syntax” [Hack #9], takes care of this nicely. But it’s not always necessary.

As part of eBay’s new search engine (code-named “Voyager” and introduced in 2003), all eBay searches automatically include common plurals and known alternate misspellings of words. For instance, a search for “tire” will also yield results matching “tyre” as well as “tires” and “tyres,” rendering the messy OR search unnecessary in this case.

Of course, the inclusion of these variations isn’t always desirable. For instance, if you’re looking for rooftop antennas for a Pennsylvania Railroad PA-1 locomotive, you wouldn’t so much be interested in a book discussing the antennae of Pennsylvania cockroaches. To force eBay to search only for exact matches of words, enclose such terms in quotation marks, like this:

```
pennsylvania "antennas"
```

which is practically equivalent to:

```
pennsylvania antennas -antennae
```

Whether or not the quotes will be necessary, or whether you’ll still need to manually include variations (using parentheses), will depend on the particular search you’re trying to perform. eBay’s fuzzy searches are based on a hand-selected dictionary of common variations and plurals, meaning that “tire” will match “tyre,” but it’s unlikely that eBay will go as far as to equate “potato” with “tater.”

## Punctuation

To simplify searches that would otherwise require very cumbersome search phrases, nearly all forms of punctuation are considered equivalent to spaces in eBay searches. For instance, say you're looking for a 1:43-scale model car; you might expect to have to type the following:

```
car (1/43,1\43,1:43)
```

Instead, all you would need to type is:

```
car 1/43
```

wherein the 1/43 keyword will match "1 43", 1:43, 1;43, 1\43, 1-43, 1.43, 1!43, 1@43, 1#43, 1\$43, 1%43, 1^43, 1&43, 1\_43, 1=43, 1+43, and 1~43.

Now, say that car is a 1968 Ford GT 40; the appropriate search phrase would then be:

```
(gt40,gt-40) 1/43
```

While gt-40 is equivalent to "gt 40", it won't match gt40 (without any space or punctuation), so the OR search is still needed.

Unfortunately, punctuation doesn't fall under the same rules as variations and plurals, meaning that the quotation marks discussed above won't have any effect on unwanted variations. Furthermore, the equivalence of punctuation also means that the following will not work as expected:

```
"gt 40" -gt/40
```

See "Focus Your Searches with eBay's Advanced Search Syntax" [Hack #9] for more information on search exclusions.