

## 3 Elements to a Deal-Sealing Classified ad

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Have you ever wondered why your perfectly fine classified ad fails to attract the attention you desire? There should be dozens—no, hundreds—of perspective buyers swamping your e-mail inbox with offers. After all, you are offering a mint baseball card, a vintage coat, pristine used car, those wholesale-priced sporting goods, and whatever other attractive items are in your inventory. Instead, you only have a slow trickle of questions, a handful of sales. What gives? More than likely, your sales are slow because you have not mastered the three techniques of writing a classic classified ad.

Of course, give yourself credit for recognizing one important facet of today's selling world. You decided to sell your stuff at an online classified site. As anybody in the business knows, online classified ads get you more privacy, a broader selection of buyers, and a wealth of tools to help you keep tabs on your transactions. When compared to a newspaper, cyberspace is also a wee bit more spacious. There are billions of pages on the Web, and only a few dozen in your typical neighborhood rag. For you, that means a lot more space for your ad to say the least.

With that space, however, comes great responsibility—and great potential. The extra room gives you the freedom to include as much product description and sale copy as you want. You can't just slap together a whole bunch of information, though. You need to use the three special ad writing techniques that will attract buyers and seal the deal: attention, interest, and action.

**Attention.** Make sure the buyer stops at your ad instead of the thousands upon thousands of others out there in cyberspace. Your ad's title is the first lure to grab his or her attention, and the first component of a catchy title is the item's best feature, whether it's the price, the item's rarity, or its popularity. Next, be sure the title includes keywords or other synonyms for your item that a buyer might use in a search. For instance, a buyer could search for "automobile" instead of "car," "pullover" instead of "sweater."

**Interest.** Once you have the buyer's attention, hook them with details. There is a direct relationship between the amount of information you provide and the number of sales you'll make. So describe the item as completely as possible—size, color, material, designer, model—and provide a clear, digital photo to finish the job where your words leave off. Even offer your prospective customer the item's history if possible.

Also, try to list as many possible benefits that your sales item could offer the buyer. Come up with some that the buyer probably wouldn't think of on his or her own. And zone in on specific benefits. Use what you already know about your target. For instance, if you were selling a car, you know that whoever is looking at your ad is in need of a vehicle. If your car is compact, perhaps the buyer is in search of great gas mileage. Or perhaps its power he or she wants if your car is a sports model.

**Action.** Finish your ad strongly. Don't just suggest to the buyer that you offer a great deal. Tell them it's a fantastic offer that they can't pass up. Use phrases like "Call me now before someone else does" or "Buy now, this opportunity won't last long." Be cordial while you're pressing the issue, of course. Thank them for reading your ad and make sure they know you appreciate their business.

Most importantly, your customers will also value your honesty throughout the whole ad. So whether it's the attention, interest, or action you're shooting for, never lie or exaggerate. Go so far to include any defects if your product is not in mint shape. Your honesty will build trust, and trust above all else makes an ad work. What's more, it makes for repeat customers.

Remember, if you use all three of these elements—or four if you include honesty. When you're finished with it, it should read something like the two examples below.

Example 1:

Discover the beauty of a Forest Hill Home

2500 sq. ft. home, 4 bedroom, 3 baths, double garage, upgraded kitchen, 12 ft. ceilings

This open concept house is situated in a historical landmark district of Rhode Island. It's a wonderful neighborhood to raise your family, with nearby schools and amenities.

(Insert your image or photo here.)

Call for an on-site appointment. Thanks for looking!

Example 2:

Looking for an inexpensive used car that drives well? Only \$4,950.

2003 Honda Civic, Limited Edition, 65,000 miles, manual transmission, CD, AM/FM radio, power steering, low maintenance. Great on gas - this car will save you \$\$\$ on high gasoline prices.

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