



# THE PLAIN DEALER

**PLAIN DEALING** Consumers, your week is coming. See a list of events.C5

## Sharpen your consumer skills

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Plain Dealer Columnist

If you ever wished you could get personalized advice about starting a business, shipping online or avoiding scams, you can next week.

As part of National Consumer Protection Week, government and consumer agencies are staging several events that feature down-to-earth advice followed by a chance to speak one-on-one with experts from the Small Business Administration, the Better Business Bureau, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Legal Aid, the U.S. Postal Service and the Federal Trade Commission.

The advice seminars will be offered Monday in Cleveland, Thursday in Lakewood and Saturday in Cleveland Heights.

They start at 10 a.m. Monday at Nottingham Library, 17109 Lake Shore Blvd., Cleveland.

"How to Buy with eBay and Ship with the Postal Service" runs from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. The popular session explains how online buyers can use the post office's "Click-N-Ship" program to conduct business from home without ever getting out of their bathrobes.

That session is followed at 11:45 a.m. by "How to Start a Business," an SBA program that offers an hour of solid advice about free resources for entrepreneurs -- and a warning about some scams to avoid.

The event ends with what the Postal Service, which is putting the event together, bills as miniworkshops, where representatives of various state, local and nonprofit agencies will answer questions or provide information.

Agencies that will have booths include the U.S. Postal Service, SBA, Cleveland Legal Aid, the Cleveland Office of Consumer Affairs, the Better Business Bureau, U.S. Housing and Urban Development, Cleveland Saves, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the FTC.

If you live in the Akron area, start packing up unwanted financial documents now. There's a "shred it" event from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Buckeye State Credit Union, 197 E. Thornton St., Akron, at which private papers can be shredded for free.

The full advice program repeats from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Feb. 8 at the Lakewood Public Library, 15425 Detroit Ave. The eBay session starts at 9 a.m., followed by the Start a Business session at 10:15, ending with the workshops.

The final miniworkshop program runs from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 10 at the Cleveland Heights Main Library, 2345 Lee Road. The lineup is essentially the same, except I'll be speaking about scams at 9:35 a.m. The eBay session is at 10 a.m., followed by Start a Business at 11:15 and ending with the workshop sessions.

If you have a consumer problem you haven't been able to resolve on your own, send an e-mail to

sherylharris@plaind.com; write to Plain Dealing in care of The Plain Dealer, 1801 Superior Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114; or call the Plain Dealing help line at 216-999-6344. By submitting a question to Plain Dealing, you are agreeing to have it published in the paper. Because of the volume of calls, Plain Dealing can respond to complaints only through the column.

Previous columns online:

[cleveland.com/columns](http://cleveland.com/columns)

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