



Keep Calm and Market On

What's your crisis messaging?

Whatever the size of your online audience, they want to hear from you. If they're following you, they're connected to you and care about next steps you take in any matter or when things around them change in general.

Radio silence is bad in two ways:

1. You will fall behind in your social media SEO. And once everything around you settles down, you'll have to launch double the effort to make up for lost time, so keep posting, even if it is to post about what's going on around you.
2. People like to hear from their social media brands what they're doing in times of crisis or panic. Tell them how you're taking the news around you. Think of yourself as a role model in this case. If you're closing your store, tell your followers why you're doing so and the values the decision is coming from.
3. This also gives you a chance to tell them that their favourite products from your store are still available to them.

You will also need to consider diversifying your content creation and share it across several platforms. Think of it as you being locked in a box, and what do you have to do when you're locked in a box? You have to shout!

Creating a range of content means you can share it using several methods on social media, some of which you may not have previously, but that doesn't mean you can't use them now.

And, as always, before you begin creating content, ask yourself these questions:

- What are we trying to accomplish with our visual content?
- Who are our audience members? What kinds of [content experiences](#) are they interested in?
- What problems does our business solve for your customers?
- How can you create a consistent [brand voice](#) that communicates our value?
- What is the vision of [who you are](#) and what makes you unique? How can you communicate all these messages in a compelling way?
- What metrics will you use to [measure success](#)? For which terms should this image appear in [search engine results](#)?

For images, consider white space:

Failing to leave enough white space between your visuals can make a page seem cluttered and hard to follow, meaning people will stop looking at it. Give your core elements some breathing room by removing images that don't add to the visual conversation. This will help expand the space between unrelated elements and clarify page structure.

Pick one color to use as a base, then find compatible complementary colors with an [online color-wheel tool](#). Just as choice of colour is important, so is choice of font. You can mix up two different types of fonts, but remember, sans serif fonts are easier on the eye and provide for better reading flow. Remember, bright colours hurt the eyes when viewed on a screen, so try and go with softer palettes.

When making a choice between serif and sans serif, also remember to use a font that is easy to find everywhere (your desktop, laptop, tablet, and phone). If you use too much of a complicated font, you might not be able to find it elsewhere, hence limiting yourself when creating content. Use a font that represents your brand voice well. If you're a children's daycare centre, you can play around with some fun fonts. If you're a classy sit-in restaurant, try to go with something a bit more professional. If you know the font on your store-front sign, it's best to use that in your digital communications, too.

Emotion gets people's attention and personal stories in your content can stir emotional empathy among your followers. One way to capitalize on this is by keeping a lookout

on social media for great customer stories that your brand can bring to life through powerful visuals.

It's generally recommended that you should avoid stock images, but in the case of a crisis, you can't hire a photographer to help out there, so carefully select stock images that are meant to be used for modification. Consider hiring a professional photographer to help create some content once things have settled down. If you have content previously created, feel free to recycle it.

Think of ways to get your followers involved and engaged in creating content for you. Put out a call asking people to put on a piece of clothing or any other item they bought at your store and give them a hashtag to use when sharing that photo of themselves. This also gives them a chance to dress up for no reason at home.

For creating awesome content, consider downloading any of the various free tools available on either the Apple App Store or on Google Play. Try Word Swag, Canva, Polish, Adobe Lightroom, VSCO, Snapseed, or Quik.

If you're considering hosting virtual events from your home or your store (which shouldn't be open until the government lifts its restrictions), here's a Google guide to hosting virtual [events](#). Most of our downtown businesses may not need this resource right now, it's handy to have it in your pocket.

All that is good, but how do you keep selling in the time of a pandemic when people are hiding out and official directives are impeding your ability to earn?

Well, consider using Facebook Marketplace. It's a free tool already at your disposal if you're a Facebook user and/or have a business page.

Below are instructions on how you can use Marketplace.

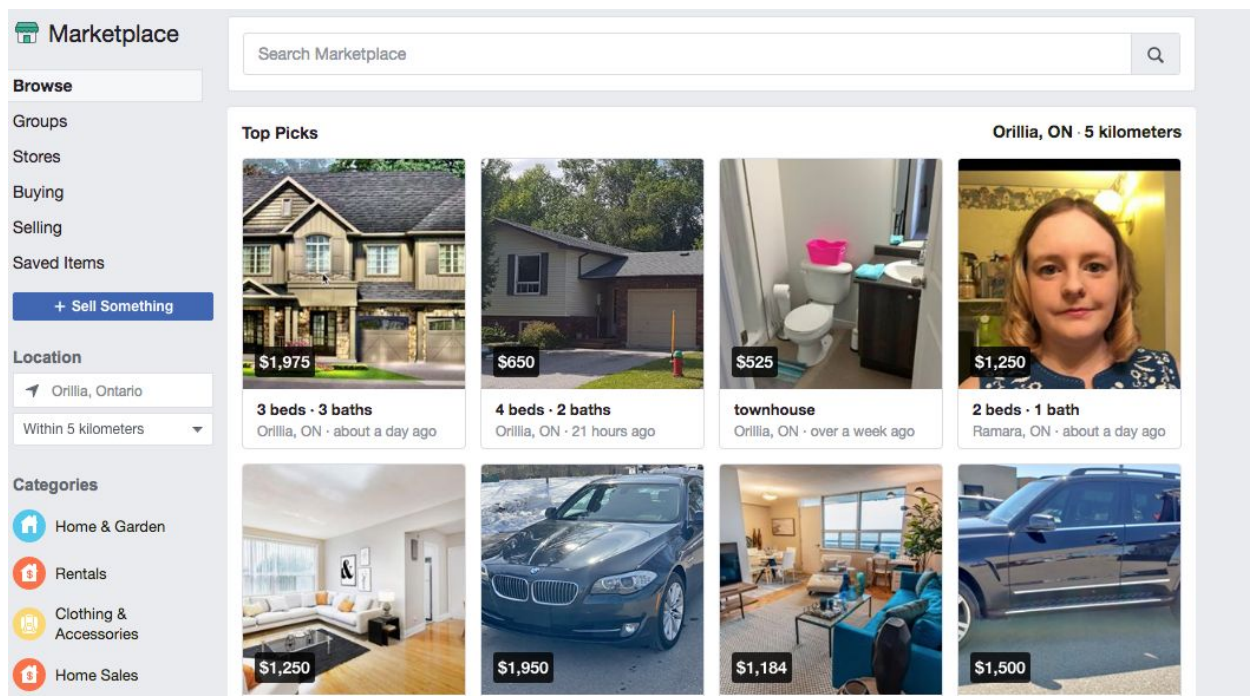
When you sell something on Marketplace, you create a public listing that can be seen by anyone on Marketplace and in their News Feed, search and other places on or off Facebook. All listings on Marketplace and buy and sell groups must follow Facebook's [Commerce Policies](#), so give them a quick read to make sure you're not getting into trouble.

Where to find Marketplace?

When you login to your Facebook account, you are now in your news feed. Here you will see a sidebar menu to your left. Marketplace should be the fourth down from the top (including your profile/name next to your profile photo).

Click on Marketplace, the icon looks like this on your phone:  .

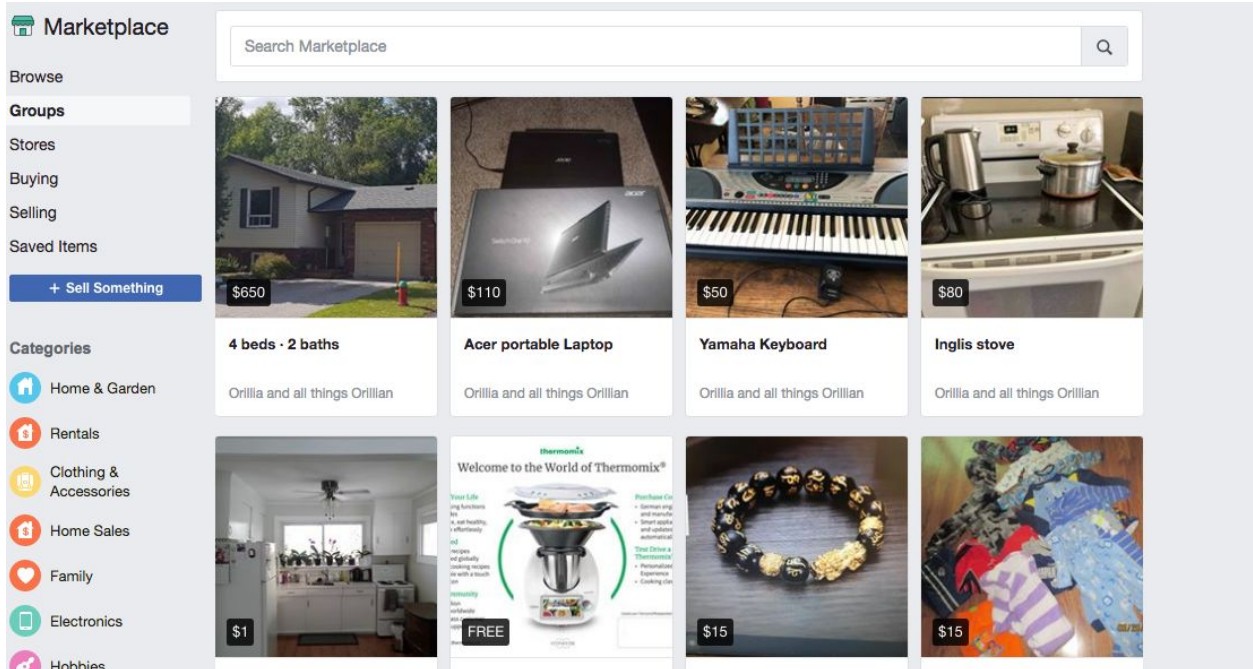
When you click on Marketplace, the next page that loads is the marketplace for your specific area.



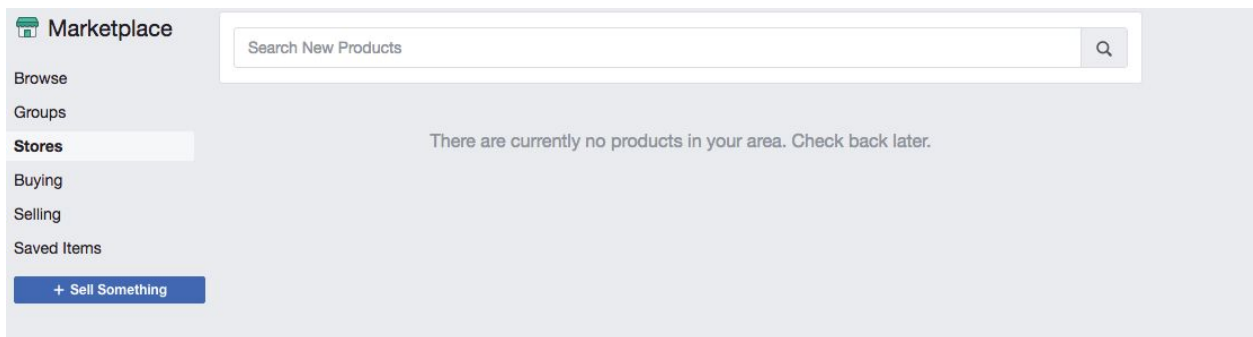
Take a good look at some of the controls here. In the left sidebar menu, you'll see options, such as Browse, Groups, Stores, Buying, Selling, and Saved Items. Below these menu items, you will see a button **+ Sell Something**.

First take a look at some of the options above this button.

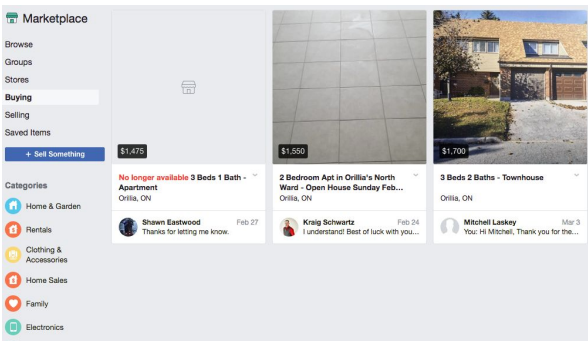
When you click on Groups, you'll be shown various groups in your area that buy and sell items. Join some of these (you can do so even as your business page).



Below this is a menu item about Stores.

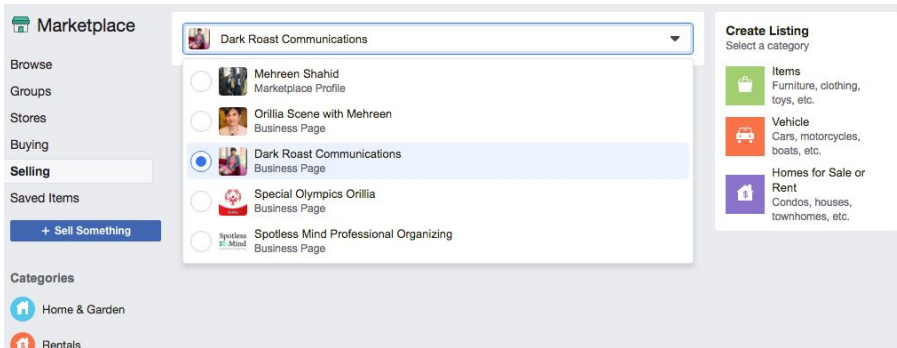
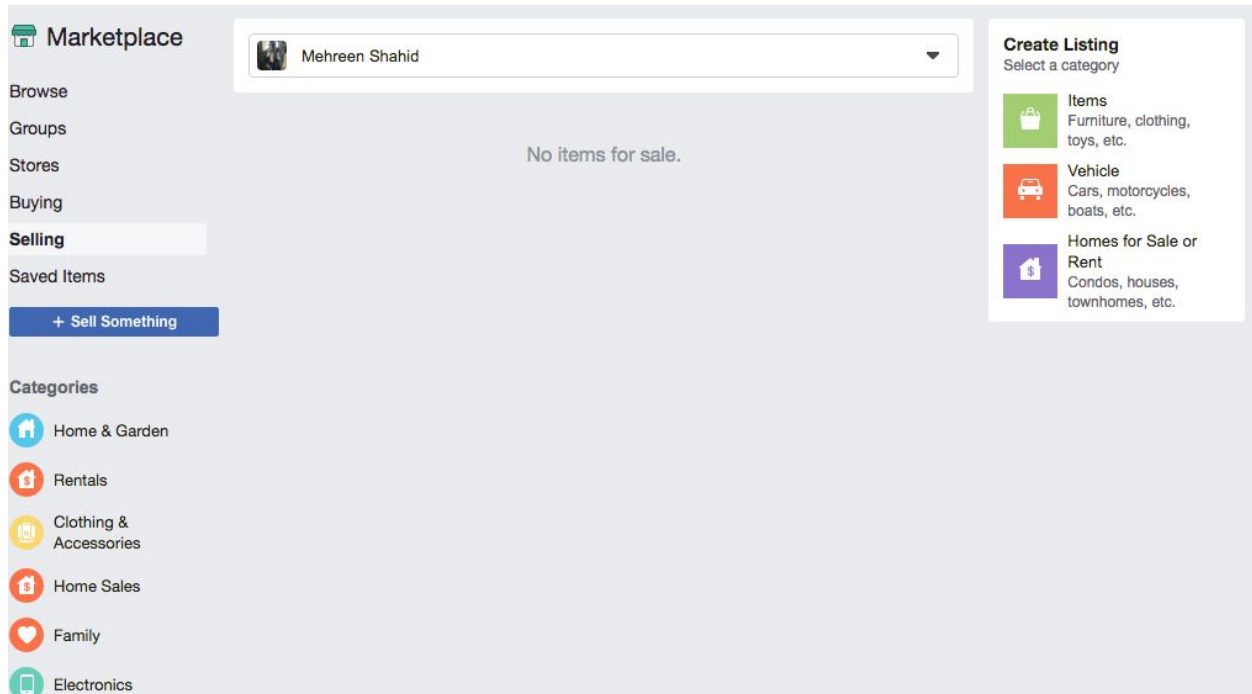


I have no stores in the area that are using this Facebook feature, hence nothing turns up.



Buying will show me what items I am interested in buying or items I've interacted with because I was interested in buying them.

The Selling menu option takes me to where I can create listings, even for different categories, and sell items.

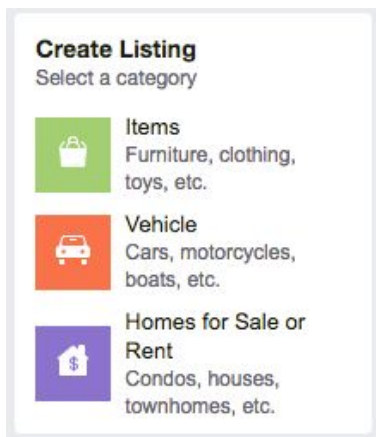


If you're shopping, you can save an item, and that will show up in your Saved Items menu tab.

Before you go ahead and create posts to try and sell your

items, select your business page from the drop-down menu where your name is showing up. Whether you post using your own profile or your business page, the rest of the process (outlined below) remains the same.

Back in the Selling menu tab, look at the sidebar menu to the right of your screen.

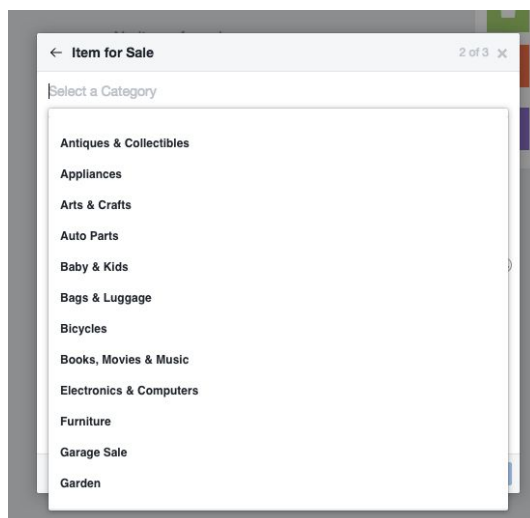


This gives you options from which you can choose the category of the item you wish to list to sell. These are the same three categories that will show up if you click on the button **+ Sell Something**.

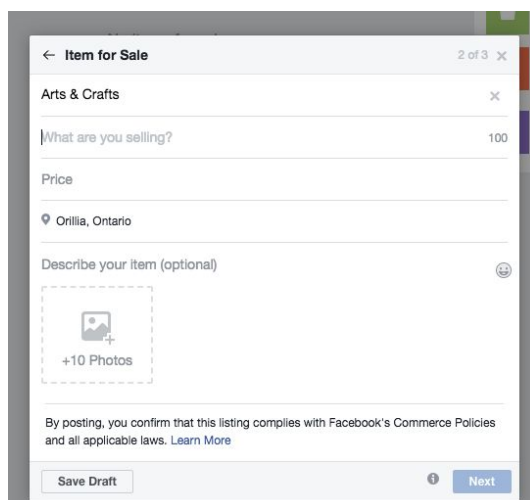
Select one of these categories and begin creating your listing. You'll notice the Items category is kind of generic and includes most everything that is sold inside a store. The Vehicle and Homes for Sale or Rent categories are a bit more specific and likely not what a downtown business owner will be looking to use to sell their items.

This is where you need to work mostly in times of your store being closed...or even open.

When you click on Items, a pop up window will give you more options to specify what it is you're trying to sell.



When you click on the field where it says Select a Category, the drop down menu will give you a vast list of categories to choose from. There's even a category for Miscellaneous items.



In the next field, enter the name of the item you're selling. Watch the character limit there, use a succinct phrase. Think of some keyword phrases that people might use when looking up the item you wish to share here. The Describe your item field gives you the ability to go into more detail about the item you're putting up for sale.

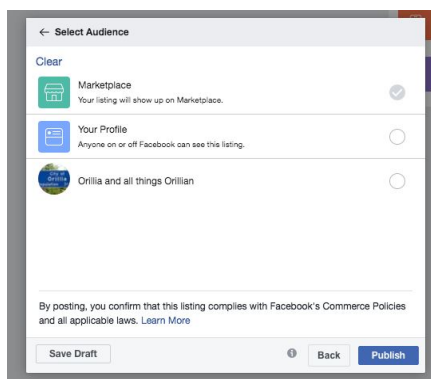
Enter a price next. You cannot enter a range, it must be a finite price.

Select a location.

You do have more room in the description part of the post to go into a bit more detail, but try to keep it interesting and focused on the qualities of the item.

Now you can add a few photos. Consider the ratio of the number of photos to add directly proportionate to how large the item is and how detailed the product is. Throw in some action shots if you can, just to create some dynamic images.

The Next button will not light up until you've added at least one photo, so have some ready to go.



Once you click Next, the next screen is simple. Now you must select where this post will appear in the realms of Facebook. It will be posted in Marketplace by default, but you can choose to also post it in groups you're a member of or on your personal profile. Before you go posting items, it would be a good idea to join some selling groups in your area, so you can get maximum reach for your post.

And voila, you're selling your item on Facebook Marketplace.

After it's published, the item will appear in people's news feeds and the way they get in touch with you is via Facebook Messenger, so please watch your inbox. Share the post to other groups you're a member of.

The sales won't come rolling in immediately after you've posted. Give it a day or two before it enters Facebook's SEO. Then start sharing it wherever you can. And keep posting items.