

# OLD MAGAZINES INTO GOLD

How to Make Extraordinary Profits  
From Ordinary Magazines

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Thanks to a growing number of collectors, who are seeking magazine issues about a specific person, event, author or illustrator, it's easier than ever to find a buyer for those issues. Most collectors are internet-savvy, and they will do an online search to find a collectible Maxfield Parrish magazine cover, for example, from the many magazines that featured his work. At his peak, in the 30s, Time magazine named Parrish one of the world's three most popular artists.

Other collectors, perhaps raised on a farm, look for farming-related magazines, or just collect magazine ads for John Deere tractors (the most popular) or for other farm machinery manufacturers. There is a special-interest magazine in everyone's past, from Western Horseman to Boy's Life to Playboy, and hundreds or thousands of potential buyers for the right issue or full-page ad.

Used magazine sales on the internet have been growing fast – doubling every three years, according to one insider – with most of the sales going to small, independent, home-based sellers. Another equally fast growing niche is for single pages – mostly full page ads – either loose, matted or framed. There are eBay “stores” selling nothing but old magazine ads, most in the \$10-\$30 range.

Don't forget, selling used magazines and ad pages is not a get-rich-quick scheme! It's an honest business, with generous rewards for those who are willing to work and learn as they go. In this guide, you'll learn how to find all the old magazines you want for a dollar or less (most common issues can be had for 25-50 cents each) and sell them for \$10 and up. You'll also learn how to spot the “hidden treasures” that can bring \$30 to \$60, and how to “rip” a single issue, turning the single-page ads in that issue into as much as \$300. It won't take many magazines before you've joined the ranks of other successful sellers who enjoy the rewards and freedom of this unique and profitable business.



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A “run” is a collection of several issues from a specific year, or even part of a year. As a seller, you make more money if you sell multiple issues for a “bundled” price, and it also boosts your average sale price.

Common magazines less than 10 years old are hard to sell as runs, so it's best to avoid them. The older the issue date, the more you can charge for a run, for any given magazine. While a complete set of 12 monthly issues from a particular year is an easy sell, even non-consecutive runs (called a “broken run”) sell well. To see what's in demand and what other sellers are getting for magazine runs, check the eBay closed listings using the magazine name you're researching. (More on how to do this later.)

Some magazines, *Fortune* for example, are more sought after for their full-page ads than as complete issues. This provides an opportunity to cut out the ads and sell them individually, either as loose pages, matted/mounted pages or even framed pages.

While you'll find dozens of obscure, out of print vintage magazines listed in the price guides, such as *Radio News*, *Chamber's Journal*, *Country Gentleman*, *Everybody's Magazine* and *Liberty*, the focus here is on ordinary, mass-circulation magazines that can be found in most towns in America. Keep in mind, just because they are readily available doesn't make them less desirable. The secret in finding the profitable issues is to identify what collectors want. Here are the eight areas you need to focus on to maximize your profits:

## **1. Look For: Advertising**

You've probably seen many of the vintage ads for Coca-Cola, Planter's Peanuts or John Deere tractors. They are so popular, a cottage industry of memorabilia – from coasters to posters – has sprung up to satisfy the demand from collectors. The magazine ads for these well-known brands, as well as lesser-known products such as Hathaway shirts, are collectible.

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## The Best “Ordinary” Magazines

Before the internet changed the way we live and shop, vintage magazine collectors were a fairly small group, buying and selling through dealer catalogs, conventions and trade shows. Today, with the additional exposure provided by the internet, the collector base has exploded, as has the number of dealers.

Because the internet has reduced the cost of doing business to a fraction of what it was just a few years ago (no expensive catalogs to print, no store to rent, etc.) more and more people have become involved in buying and selling old magazines. In addition, because of growing demand, the “common” magazines are now enjoying increased popularity as well as higher prices from collectors. An issue of *Life* which sold for a dollar or two just ten years ago may bring ten to twenty dollars today.

For those new to buying and selling old magazines, that’s a good thing. The common magazines were widely read, with weekly or monthly circulation often in the millions. There are still a lot of them stored in attics and storerooms, waiting to be discovered. To help you do just that, here is a list of the most popular collectible “ordinary” magazines.

You’ll notice there are only about two dozen listed, yet hundreds of special interest magazines are produced each year. If you have a passion for a specific “niche”, such as wrestling, movie stars or railroading, by all means, go for it! You’ll find profitable opportunities in the niches also.

### Better Homes and Gardens

As with many of the mass circulation magazines, the older the date, the higher the price. *Better Homes and Gardens* was first published in 1922, and the issues from the 20s and 30s sell best. More recent issues sell well in “runs” of several issues, for example, all issues from one year.

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**F.Y.I.** There are two common terms used when describing the condition of a magazine that you need to learn. First, the term “toning” refers to the darkening color, often a tan or rusty hue, that most paper picks up over time due to oxidation. You’ll find it more in cheaper paper stock and less in higher quality paper. Second, “foxing” refers to the tiny wrinkles that are caused by moisture exposure in storage.



**Life magazine May 6 1957 SOPHIA LOREN The Celtics**

Item condition: **Very Good**

Price: **US \$12.99** [Buy It Now](#)

[Add to Watch list](#)

Shipping: **\$5.00** Standard Shipping [See more services](#) | [See all details](#)

Delivery: Estimated between **Mon. Dec. 20** and **Fri. Dec. 24**

Returns: No returns accepted. Covered by [eBay Buyer Protection](#).

 **eBay Buyer Protection**  
Covers your purchase price plus original shipping.  
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To prevent any misunderstanding when you list and sell a magazine, it’s helpful to describe any flaws, such as minor tears, foxing, coffee stains, water marks or missing pages in the “condition” section of your listing. Most magazines do have a mailing label on the front or back cover – this should not affect the grading unless it obscures the photo or illustration featured on the cover. Likewise, many old magazines may have a slight musty smell. You can usually eliminate this odor by opening the magazine and airing it out for a day or two. Then put it in a protective plastic sleeve and store it in a dry space until it sells.

Here are the four grades used by most eBay sellers to describe old magazines. Every seller has minor variations on these grades – some will grade a magazine in excellent condition only very good. Dealers who specialize in vintage and rare magazines that bring very high prices may have even more grades, but the four listed here are adequate for most common magazines.