

GE **Bans**

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1. What is GEOBans?

GEOBans is a modification to the popular Build A Niche Store software (BANS) which allows you to easily create an eBay affiliate store.

By default, BANS only allows you to install one store per eBay country and has no built in ability to identify where in the world your visitors are from and only show them products in their own currency or from an eBay site specifically for their country.

Until now.

The GEOBans mod allows this to happen - automatically!

GEOBans uses a technique to look up the IP address of the visitor, identify which country they are from and then display the BANS store using listings from the eBay site relevant to their country.

You also have the ability to insert a series of flag icons on your page for your customer to click through to show listings from other countries if they see fit. Also, some countries do not have their own eBay site and therefore may need to locate items nearest to them.

2. How does it work?

When the customer arrives at your site, the GEOBans mod checks to see what country they are from and if they have an eBay site for their country, the auctions are shown from that site.

If they are from a country that does not have its own eBay site, the auctions shown will be from the eBay store nearest to them.

I went through all 248 possible countries that can be detected by the GEOBans mod and assigned them all to their nearest eBay store. I am not quite sure which eBay store the people on Christmas Island use, but I took logical factors and mileage into account for each one.

When the user visits the site will show auctions from the relevant eBay site nearest to them but if they click one of the flag icons, the URL will change to force BANS to show items from that country:

<http://www.redwidgetstore.com/?geo=US>

This selection will also change the URL of the store pages in the sidebars too so that if the customer clicks further into the store, BANS is still re-configured to show the items from their desired country.

Here is my store showing my store page for iPod Sports Armbands. I am from the UK, so by default it is showing me items from eBay.co.uk

iPod Sports Armbands

Imagine being able to take your iPod out with you when you run, exercise, jog or or just out on a walk.

Designed to fit snugly around the top part of your arm, either over or under your clothing, the iPod Sports Armband holds the MP3 device tightly and the rubberised design and material ensures that it does not fall off or slip - even during the harshest of training routines.

right now on



Time: ending soonest



[OFFICIAL APPLE iPod NANO SPORT ARMBAND 1 & 2 Gen](#)

[GREEN](#)

£0.99 (0 Bids)

Time Left: 53m



[OFFICIAL APPLE iPod NANO SPORTS ARMBAND 1 & 2 Gen](#)

[RED](#)

£0.99 (0 Bids)

Time Left: 1h 8m



[Neoprene MP3 Player Pouch with Arm Band - Sport Design](#)

£1.48

£1.98

Time Left: 1h 9m



[BLACK SPORTS ARMBAND CASE For IPOD CLASSIC 80GB](#)

160GB

£2.95

Time Left: 1h 14m

If I click on the US flag in the sidebar, it will show me the same page but with items from eBay.com instead!

iPod Sports Armbands

Imagine being able to take your iPod out with you when you run, exercise, jog or or just out on a walk.

Designed to fit snugly around the top part of your arm, either over or under your clothing, the iPod Sports Armband holds the MP3 device tightly and the rubberised design and material ensures that it does not fall off or slip - even during the harshest of training routines.

right now on



Time: ending soonest



[NEW Sport Armband Case for Apple iPod Nano 4 Gen 4G 4TH](#)

\$5.49

Time Left: 16m



[NEW Armband Sport Case for Apple iPod Nano 3G 3rd 3 Gen](#)

\$5.29

Time Left: 21m

Once I have clicked on the US flag, the URLs of the store menu items will then automatically change to include the selected country. This will allow your customer to browse the store with that country selected as the target.

3. Why should I use GEOBans?

I guess this depends on how many customers you get to your BANS store that are from outside your target country. I believe that any BANS store will benefit from using this modification though. You never know when you may get a customer from another country interested in purchasing an item related to your niche.

What can be more powerful than showing a potential customer items from your store in the currency they know! Even if they have not come to your site expecting to buy.

4. Will I have to rebuild or reinstall my store?

Sort of...

Let me explain.

eBay has different sites for different countries and they all list similiar products. However - eBay does not keep the category numbers the same across each of those sites.

This means that if you have a US store page set for category 123, a visitor from the UK may not see any items listed at all as the same items in the UK are listed under category 456. The UK may not have a category for 123 at all.

To ensure that every visitor will be able to see the items you are promoting, you will need to remove the category number COMPLETELY from each store page.

I know this sounds bad - but it is the only way that GEOBans will work correctly.

To ensure that the correct products are displayed, you will need to invest time in fine tuning the "search" field to only bring up items related to your niche.

I have completed this process on 6 of my stores and have found that it actually shows the customer MORE items related to my niche - not less.

I will go through this process further under the "How do I activate GEOBans" section of this document. Don't start removing any categories until you have read this section.

5. How do I install GEOBans?

The installation of GEOBans is very simple and there is not much you need to do to get it working immediately.

NOTE: Please be aware that uploading the GEOBans files will overwrite any existing modifications to your code.

If you have implemented any additional mods to BANS, then please be aware that you will have to re-apply them again afterwards. This does not include modifications made to your template files though, which will remain untouched.

a) Backup, backup, backup!

Make sure you have a recent backup of your BANS store - including the databases too. You will need to overwrite a few files to get this modification working - so you need to ensure that you can roll back to a working version of your store if things go wrong.

You can get more information on backing up your store here:

For those who use CPanel, you can follow Rochelle's excellent instructions here:

<http://www.nichestorestrategies.com/how-to-backup-your-site-from-cpanel/>
<http://www.nichestorestrategies.com/how-to-backup-your-sites-database/>

For those who don't use CPanel:

Speak to your hosting provider and make sure you backup the BANS files and also the actual mySQL database too.

b) After you have backed up your store, copy the following files into your BANS store folder, overwriting the existing ones.

Unzip the GEOBans.zip file you downloaded and make sure that you have selected to unzip with folders.

You will then get a series of files and folders as follows:

```
\GEOBans
  index.php
  GeoIP.dat
  geoip.inc
  \cont
    FrontControl.php
  \images
    rss.png
    us.gif
    sg.gif
    nl.gif
    it.gif
    in.gif
    gb.gif
    fr.gif
    es.gif
    ca.gif
    be.gif
    au.gif
```

at.gif

STOP! It might be easier to rename the existing files you are overwriting before uploading the replacements. Why? In case something goes wrong, you only have to delete the new ones and rename the old ones back to what they were before to restore your site.

After backing up your existing files (again!) - FTP the GEOBans files to your store.

```
index.php
GeoIP.dat
geoip.inc
cont/FrontControl.php
```

c) FTP the following folder to the root of your BANS store:

images

If you already have an images folder, just upload the contents of this folder into yours - be careful that you don't overwrite or replace the current one!

6. How do I activate GEOBans?

After you have uploaded the files as described in section 5, your BANS site will now be showing auctions based on the country the customer is coming from.

To fine tune this and overcome the category number issues, you will need to allow the store pages to show items from all categories.

WAIT!

DO NOT remove the main category field from the store setup page! This will most likely remove all of your store pages completely.

You can leave that category number alone!

Only remove the category numbers from the store pages.

For example:

My US BANS skateboarding niche store has 4 store pages as follows:

Birdhouse Skateboards - Category number 44555 (skateboards) - search = "birdhouse"
Flip Skateboards - Category number 44555 (skateboards) - search = "flip"
Skateboard Trucks - Category number 44556 (skateboard parts) - search = "trucks"
Skateboard Stickers - Category number 44559 (skateboard misc) - search = "stickers"

With GEOBans installed, when a UK visitor reaches any of the store pages they will not see any items as the UK eBay site does not have a category number of 44555. On the UK eBay site, skateboards are under category 667! So my visiting UK customer sees no items at all.

Therefore, by removing the category number on that store page a UK visitor (or a visitor from any other country) will get to see all items related to "birdhouse". But obviously I don't want them to also get listings for wooden birdhouses, t-shirts, videos, stickers etc - I only want them to be able to see "birdhouse skateboards" so I change my search field to be the following:

```
birdhouse skateboard
```

This works better, but also brings up associated fashion items, videos and stickers that relate to birdhouse skateboards. So to get round this i change my search field to be the following:

```
birdhouse skateboard -dvd -video -sticker -shirt
```

This search string will ensure that only eBay items that contain "birdhouse" and "skateboard" and do not contain "dvd","video","sticker" and "shirt" will be shown.

I might need to fine tune this further by scrolling through a few pages of auctions to see what is listed and then add some more exclusions to the search string. In doing this, I have now allowed my store to show any items related to my niche that were not listed under the original 55444 category number. So if some numpty has listed his Birdhouse Skateboard under the wrong category, it will still be picked up and listed on my store. It has also allowed visitors from the UK, Canada and other countries to see items relevant to the store page from the entire eBay site nearest to them.

You will need to follow this process for each store page on your BANS site.

1. Delete the category number from the store page (or set to 0).
2. Click Save and continue editing
3. View the store page and see what items are listed.
4. Return to the store page setup and fine tune the listings using the search field.
5. View the store page and see what items are listed.
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 until you are happy with what is shown.
7. Move onto the next store page.

I cannot guarantee that this technique of fine tuning the items shown will work for every niche out there - but GEOBans can only work using this method.

I suggest you take time to read up on the eBay search operators which are invaluable.

You can find the information here:

<http://pages.eBay.com/help/search/search-commands.html>

Note: I have also found that sorting the items by "most expensive first" may also get the desired items to the top of your store pages if you are having real issues getting rid of the other bits that are listed. It also depends on what your niche is though as to whether this trick will work.

7. Installing a new BANS store using GEOBans.

If you wanted to install a new BANS store using GEOBans, just upload the GEOBans files over the top of the default installation folder once you have uploaded it to your website.

You can still enter a main category number and BANS will re-produce the sub-categories as it did before, but remember - this will only be based on the category numbers from the store country you chose when you uploaded the original BANS files.

After the site has been set up, go through and delete the category numbers on each store page as instructed in section 6 and fine tune the search.

Alternatively, you can install BANS using the original files and then upload the GEOBans files over the top.

8. Updating the GEOIP database.

Over time, new IP addresses are added to the internet as it continues to expand and therefore this means some peoples country may not be caught by the detection method used by GEOBans.

It may be a good idea to download a new copy of the GEOIP.dat database every few months. At the moment, this database gets updated at the beginning of every month.

You can get the database from the developers website here:
http://www.maxmind.com/app/geoip_country.

Use the link called "Download the latest GeoLite Country CSV format"

GEOBans uses the IP address database and script from this site - but you only need to download the updated geoip.dat file.

Once it has been downloaded, unzip the contents of the file and upload it via FTP over the top of the existing geoip.dat file on your store site.

9. Adding the flags to your template.

You can add a series of flags that allows the customer to click to show items that are listed from another eBay site.

To add these items, enter the following piece of code into your template:

```
<?php $front->showFlags(); ?>
```

You may want to add them to your sidebar under a heading such as this:

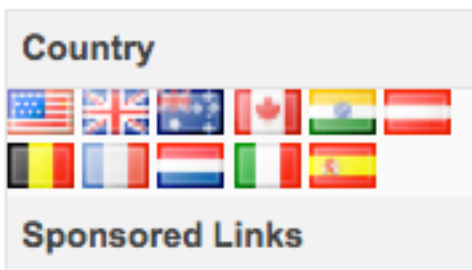
```
<div id="sidebar">  
  <h2>Country</h2>
```

```

<ul>
    <?php $front->showFlags(); ?>
</ul>
<h2>Categories</h2>
    <ul>
        <?=$front->storenav();?>
    </ul>
    <h2>Information</h2>
    <ul>
        <?=$front->pagenav();?>
    </ul>
</div>

```

This will make the flags appear as follows:



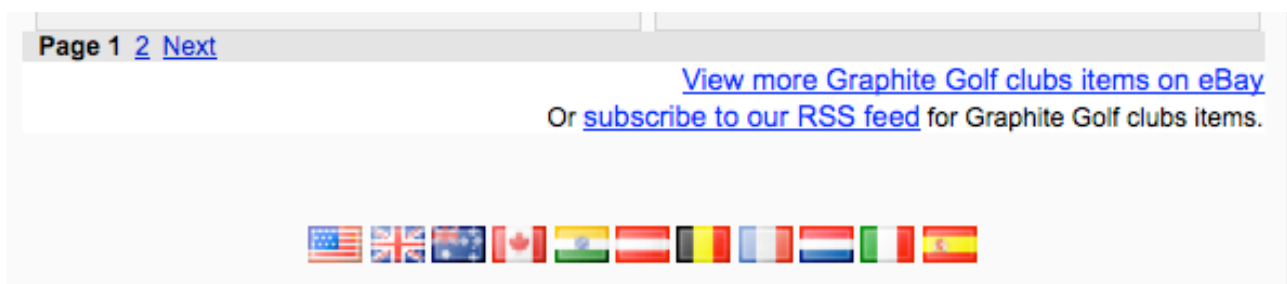
Or you could have them appear as a long line at the bottom of the page using the following code in your footer:

```

<center><?php $front->showFlags(); ?></center>

```

They will appear as follows:



The links on the flags also change dynamically to note the link of the current page the customer is viewing and re-direct them to the same page showing the items from the chosen country.

If you wanted to add your own flags or links, you can use the following links to display items from each country:

- <http://www.yourdomain.com/?geo=US> - shows products from eBay USA
- <http://www.yourdomain.com/?geo=UK> - shows products from eBay UK
- <http://www.yourdomain.com/?geo=AU> - shows products from eBay Australia
- <http://www.yourdomain.com/?geo=CA> - shows products from eBay Canada
- <http://www.yourdomain.com/?geo=AT> - shows products from eBay Austria

<http://www.yourdomain.com/?geo=BE> - shows products from eBay Belgium
<http://www.yourdomain.com/?geo=FR> - shows products from eBay France
<http://www.yourdomain.com/?geo=NL> - shows products from eBay Netherlands
<http://www.yourdomain.com/?geo=IT> - shows products from eBay Italy
<http://www.yourdomain.com/?geo=ES> - shows products from eBay Spain

10. Other MODS included in GEOBans

I have also wrapped a few other MODs into the GEOBans package to help you get your geotargetted store off to a better start.

a) Better “View more items at eBay”

I have included the MOD to change the View more items at eBay to include your page’s keywords in the text.

So “View more items on eBay” becomes “View more red widget items on eBay”.

This prompts the customer to click through to eBay more often and leads to more sales for you.

I have also added a text link to allow the customer to subscribe to the RSS feed for the items they are viewing, which will lead to more sales!



b) Better information when no search results or products are returned.

It is quite easy to set a store page up that might not show any active eBay items to your customers. This might be due to a tight niche selection or a low volume product on eBay. This is still true with GEOBans - especially when people from other countries start to visit your store.

Products that might be available to US customers may not exist in a UK based store and vice versa.

I have included the MOD that changes the “Sorry - no items were found” message to something that encourages them to click through to another flag to list the items from another eBay store. It also supplies them with a link to the eBay RSS feed for the items they are trying to view so they can subscribe via their feed reader to automatically get updates on new items listed - but the link also contains your ePN affiliate ID too!

Sorry!

No products matching your query have been found in our store at the moment.
Please bookmark this page and come back soon to see if we have what you want.

You may also like to select one of the alternative country flags at the top of the page to show similar items available to you from other eBay stores.



Subscribe to our RSS feed for related items to get them delivered straight to your email address or RSS reader by clicking the orange RSS icon to the left of this message. [What is RSS?](#)

c) Better image ALT tags.

I have added the store page's keywords to the beginning of the ALT text on each image to help with SEO and image indexing.

11. eBay Partner Network Program Changes

The GEOBans mod has been set to force traffic from the recently closed Singapore (SG) and Hong Kong (HK) programs to a US based store.

In the light of the recent changes to the way that the India (IN) eBay program runs, I have added the option to enable or disable this program.

By default the IN program is disabled and visitors will be forced through to a US store. If you want to enable support for the IN program, you will need to edit the index.php file.

Around line 125 in the GEOBans index.php file, you will find the following code:

```
//-----  
// change the following value to 1 if you want to enable the eBay  
partner network program for India (which is invite only)  
// If disabled (set to 0), the visitors from India will see US  
based auctions.  
//  
$enable_india = 0;  
//  
//-----
```

To enable the IN program, change `$enable_india = 0;` to `$enable_india = 1;` and then save the file.

This option will also enable or disable the Indian flag (see section 9)
Remember to back the index.php file up before you make any changes though!

12. Support

If you are having issues with GEOBans, then send me an email at the following address:

taoski@gmail.com

Please include as much information as possible about the issues you are having and I will try to help you.

The BANS forum is also a great place to get support - although the support of GEOBans itself is not provided by them, but I do hang out there and will be available to help.

13. Testing GEOBans

Once you have GEOBans up and running, you can test each countries content by selecting the flags that you have included in your template. Or you can just add `?geo=US` or which ever country you want to check to your URL to see items.

You can also enlist the help of friends and contacts around the world to check your store for you to see what is displayed when they visit.

I have also used a AddOn for Firefox called "SwitchProxy Tool" that allows you to redirect your browser through a different internet route which makes the website think you are coming from a different country.

13. GEOBans Installation Service

I have limited time to offer this as I have to hold down a full time job whilst I also work on my BANS sites, GEOBans and other stuff but if you are really stuck, I can install the GEOBans mod for you.

The charge for this will be \$30 per site and an additional \$1 per store page. So a site with 10 store pages will cost \$40 (\$30 base charge and 10 * \$1).

This charge is in addition to the cost of the GEOBans mod.

The installation of the GEOBans mod is not a quick "install and forget" type of mod - which is why the cost reflects the amount of work which is needed to fine tune the store pages.

This installation service will involve the following:

1. Backup your site for you first.
2. FTP the GEOBans mod to your site and install the files.
3. Set up each of your store pages to use no category numbers.
4. Fine tune each store page's search string to list the items related to your niche and page.

Send me an email for more details if you are interested.