

Garage Sale Tips

Decide the Purpose of your sale. Is it to make money or to get rid of your stuff? The answer will help with everything you do, from how you price things to how willing you are to barter. Surprisingly, you can often make *more* money (and get rid of more junk) by pricing things low. (If your goal is to get top dollar, you should really be selling in the shopper or online.)

Advertise. Place an ad in the shopper. Post simple, effective signs around the neighborhood. It's best to use big bold text like "HUGE SALE" with an arrow pointing the right direction. Make sure your sign is readable don't forget the date & address!

Shopper Ad. When you place your ad in the shopper, don't forget your address, the date and the time. You might want to put "no early sales" in your ad to discourage people from coming to your home before the sale.

Get cash. Get a roll of quarters, a stack of twenty-five \$1 bills, a few \$5 bills and a few \$10 bills. Try to do this two days before the sale, so that if you forget, you can still get the change on the day before.

Prepare your staging area. People will be more inclined to stop if you set up shop in your yard or driveway. Some people are reluctant to enter a dark and dreary garage. Make your sale inviting and easy to browse. You can lure customers by placing highly-desirable items near the road. Also it is nice to have pop, water and snacks for sale at a reasonable price. If you do this make sure to get pop you like in case there are any left over.

Go over ground rules. Make sure that everybody working the sale is in agreement. Be clear on your bargaining policy. (You don't want your wife to be angry when you sell her rabbit-shaped jewelry box for \$2 when she wanted at least \$5 for it.) Make sure that everyone understands the importance of never parting from the money. Agree that nobody will bad-mouth the merchandise.

Think like a customer. As soon as you've opened and fielded the initial flood of shoppers, walk through your sale as if you were there to buy something. How does it feel? Are things clearly marked? Is it easy to move around? Are your books on the ground in boxes? Or are they placed neatly on shelves or tables? Would *you* pay \$10 for that porcelain cat?

Display items to their advantage. Open lawn chairs and place on the lawn don't leave them folded and leaning against the wall. Place books in bookcases or neatly titles up in boxes. Have extension cords ready for testing appliances, but keep them safely out of the way.

Play background music. There is a reason stores play music. It is relaxing and inviting. Remember to play something for everyone, nothing offensive or loud. Try classical, mix of country with easy listening or even a local radio station.

Promote expensive items. Big-ticket items can be tough to sell, but you can do it with a little extra effort. If you still have the manual make sure to include it with the item. Print out pictures and descriptions of the item if it's too big to bring outside. If you have an item with accessories make sure to keep all the parts together.

Make it easy to test electronic items. If items need batteries make sure they are charged or put in some used ones with charge left. Make sure there is easy and safe access to an electrical cord. It's easier to sell items if your customers can try them.

A group sale is better than selling alone. Try to coordinate a weekend with your neighbors, you will draw more traffic & it's also nice to share in cost of advertising.

Be prepared. Wear comfortable clothing. Have water and snacks at hand. Make sure everything (priced, placed etc.) is ready the night before so all you have to do is move items out. Move things out early. The hassle of early birds is that they prevent you from getting displays set up.

Plan your sale layout with customers in mind. Have wide traffic lanes. Use clear signs with bold lettering. Place the stuff that would appeal to older customers on tables. The stuff for kids is on the ground.

The stuff you want more people to look at in the center of the driveway, accessible from all sides. Eye-catching stuff is near the road. Have bags available for purchases.

Price things carefully. Most things are easy to price, but some will give you trouble. You don't want to just give away your perfectly functional television, but at the same time you want the price to be low enough that people will be interested. Some stuff just won't sell at any price. "You'll never sell that encyclopedia set at \$35," a man told me yesterday. "I run a book store, and I haven't been able to sell an encyclopedia in eight years."

Label things well. It won't matter. People will still ask you how much that potholder costs, even though it has a \$2 price tag on it. Label anyhow. If something "works great", label it as such. You can also use table signs such as all clothes \$2 or all books 2 for \$1.

Be friendly. Say "Hello"; be open to conversations. Answer questions. Entertain the kids so that their parents can shop. Build goodwill.

Be willing to bargain, but be less flexible at the start. On the first day, you want to get as much as you can for each item. Most people will still buy an item at \$5 even after asking you to sell it at \$3. If they're bargaining, it's because they want the item. Don't be completely rigid on the first day, but don't give your stuff away.

Keep a ledger. It's easy — and useful — to keep a written ledger. For everything you sell, jot down a brief item description, how much it cost, and who it belonged to. This is especially important in large multi-person sales. The price and the item description are most important; if the description is good, it's easy to find out who owned the item.

Do NOT use a cash box. Carry your money on you at **ALL** times. You don't want to present a target for casual thieves. More than that, you don't want to be duped by professional swindlers who run distraction con games. It happens. It is devastating to see the profits from all your labor and the proceeds from your hard-to-part-with items vanish in an instant. This happened to a woman on our street on the last day of the sale last year. Do **NOT** use a cash box. I use a cheap cloth apron/utility belt from the local hardware store. It works beautifully. Some people use fanny pack or a zippered bank deposit pouch.

For more tips see <http://www.yardsalequeen.com/>