

101 Garage Sale Tips for Sellers

by Frugal Frog for WeekendTreasure.com

Why Have a Garage Sale?

1. Need to make a little or a lot of extra cash? Do some spring cleaning and declutter your house! Less is more. Think Feng Shuai! Less clutter makes you feel good and in control of your environment.
2. Clean out that garage, basement, attic, spare room, or shed. A good rule-of-thumb is to get rid of anything you haven't used in the last year. And don't forget that storage shed you pay rent on. Better to make money on those items than to continue paying more rent than what the stuff is worth.
3. Give yourself plenty of time to get ready. At least a month will give you time to get everything you need organized.
4. Ask family members to join you. The more stuff you have, the more attractive you are to the garage-salers who drive by.
5. Invite the neighbors! Neighborhood or community sales are very popular and people will come in droves when they know they can go to 10 or 20 sales or more in one area.
6. You might go to other yard sales and garage sale to see what you like or dislike about each one and incorporate those aspects you prefer into your own. See what works and doesn't work. Think like a shopper.

Where to Start

7. Start gathering things and price as you go! This will make setting up for your sale much easier. (see pricing below)
8. As you find items to sell, make sure everything is in clean and good working order.
9. If it's broke or unrepairable, throw it out! If it's dirty, wash it!
10. Make repairs to clothing and or press and hang on hangers. Infant and toddler clothing should be neatly folded and laid flat.
11. Check the ordinances in your city to see if you need a permit to hold a garage sale. Some cities, like mine, do not require them but many do. They have rules governing how many sales you can have per year as well as how many days in a row. Don't risk ignoring the ordinances and getting shut down in the midst of your sale.
12. Choose a date that is as compatible as possible with other family members so you'll have the assistance that you need. Most sales are on Friday and Saturday and some are just Saturday. The more stuff you have to get rid of, the longer you should consider having the sale. In my area, many like to have 3 or 4 day sales starting on a Wednesday or Thursday and ending on Saturday or Sunday.
13. Choosing a start time is important. Do not advertise that the sale opens at 7 am, if you aren't an early riser. Times differ as much as people and can start anywhere from 6 am to 10 am. Be aware that if you say you will be open at 8 am, you might have eager buyers (aka "early birds") standing in your yard at 7:30. If you say you'll be open until 5 pm, do not close at 4pm.
14. Decide what you will do if it rains. Some people have it anyhow, if it's all contained in a garage. Die-hard garage-saler go to sales in the rain.

Garage Sale Pricing

15. When pricing your merchandise, think of prices you would like to see if you were shopping at a garage sale. The lower the price, the faster it will sell, the more money you make and the less you will have to pack up at the end of your sale. Nobody likes packing up the leftovers. A good rule-of-thumb for pricing is 1/2 to 1/3 of retail prices.
16. Make sure you have a tagging system like a different color ticket for each member participating. Colored stickers are easily found at Walmart and other such store for mere pennies.
17. Do not use plain color-coded dot stickers and then have a price chart posted. It's frustrating for buyers and hard to keep track of. Example; Pink dots - \$1.00, Green dots - 50¢, Yellow dots - 25¢.
18. Mark your prices large and clear on each tag with a medium line marker or pen.
19. Do not use sticker tags or tape on paper goods or cardboard boxes. This may ruin the condition of collectible items when they are removed.
20. Do not use markers directly on merchandise. This can ruin items and usually doesn't come off.
21. Do not place prices on bottom of merchandise but rather on top or on the side where it can be easily viewed without picking up.
22. Use an 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper for large items such as furniture. Print in large letters and tape on the front or lay on top. String tickets attached to handles or knobs is another option.
23. If you have history on family items like the year you acquired it (especially if it's an antique), this information can be valuable to the buyer. Print this on a sign and place on the item. For example: "Aunt Edna's rocking chair - been in family since 1955".
24. Make sure you indicate if an item requires batteries or if there is a minor fixable problem but it still works. Be honest about the condition. For example: "TV is not cable-ready." or "Cell phone works but needs new battery."
25. Offer a "free box". Everyone loves those! Put in little items you know you can't get a quarter for or little toys for the kids.
26. Please do not place eBay auction pages on your merchandise or tell people how you can sell it for more on eBay. Your garage sale is not an auction. No one cares what it sold for on eBay. If you can sell it for more on eBay, then you do it!
27. If you are the only one having the sale, you can get away with having a 25¢ or 50¢ table without price stickers. Kids love these tables.

Preparation

28. Decide how many tables you will need and beg, borrow and steal any extras you might need from family, friends and neighbors. And don't forget a table for checking out customers.
29. If you live in a hot climate area, you might want to borrow a fan or two for in the garage. The more comfortable you make your shoppers, the longer they will browse.
30. Another thing that works good in hot weather is canopies, if you are setting tables up outside.
31. How many people will you need for the sale? Create a schedule for everyone participating for all the days you will be open keeping in mind potty breaks, lunches and people to help assist and watch customers. Make sure everyone knows their shift and their job.
32. Make sure you have the following items ready for the day of the sale: note pad or paper for figuring and for placing price stickers on after sale, pens, calculator, money box or better yet, a fanny pack or carpenter's apron.
33. If you plan to sell adult clothing, figure out what you'll use to hang up the clothes and borrow any needed supplies. Good ideas for hanging clothes are a portable clothing rack, a broomstick or shower curtain rod between 2 high ladders, or links on a chain-link fence. If your sale is in the yard, the outside edge of a trampoline, a clothesline, or low branches on a tree might work well. Borrow any ladders or broomsticks you might need.
34. Start collecting bags and boxes to pack merchandise in, along with newspaper for breakables. You'll need plenty the day of your sale.

Advertising & Signage

35. Advertising can be done many different ways, word of mouth, flyers, signage, online (here at WeekendTreasure.com!), and newspaper advertisements.
36. Before preparing signs to post around the neighborhood, check your local ordinances again. There are some cities who regulate signage and where you can place them. Do not post signs on telephone poles.
37. Use large thick cardboard in bright colors or corrugated cardboard cut from boxes and a thick black marker to make your letters. Staple the signs to long pointed stakes and pound them in the ground. Make sure the signs are anchored enough so that they will not blow away or fold over should there be a sudden gust of wind.
38. Or take old realtor sign frames and place cardboard in the center. Don't forget to mark both sides and have arrows pointing the right direction.
39. Add balloons, streamers or pinwheels to your sign to catch attention.
40. The best signs are those that tell only the necessary information. Provide the day (ex: Fri, Sat, Sun) with date (ex: 6/4) and start and end times (ex: 8-4), and street address (ex: 555 Sunny Ln.), then have arrows pointing in the right direction. Remember that those reading the signs are going at least 30 mph. They can't read a list of what you are selling or small letters driving past.
41. Drive past your signs and see how well they are viewed. Adjust them if necessary.
42. If sign making sounds too hard and time-consuming, order a kit at <http://www.salesigns.info/>. No need to mess with markers, wooden stakes or cardboard! (and they are rain-proof!)
43. An alternative to making the typical poster board garage sale sign might be an old sheet hanging on a fence with large letters painted on spelling out YARD SALE with an arrow. Imagine what a huge attention-getter that would be!
44. Make flyers and post on area bulletin boards at grocery stores, laundry mats, place in neighborhood newspaper boxes or in front doors. Do not put in mail boxes as it is a federal offense.
45. Advertise in your local newspaper checking for any specials they might run for garages sales, like they do in my area. Call it in a week ahead, so you won't forget at the last minute in all your busy-ness.
46. Make sure you start the advertisement a day or two before the sale starts. A sale running Thursday through Saturday should run Wednesday through Saturday.
47. Ask if they re-run garage sale ads in the event of a rain-out.
48. Post your garage sale here on weekendtreasure.com!
49. Advertise on your local FreeCycle.com mentioning everything past 3 pm on your last day of the sale will be free and sitting in the driveway or at the curb. (but you cannot just advertise your garage sale, as anything offered on FreeCycle "must be" free!)
50. Read other garage sales ads in the paper and see what catches your eye. Is it bold print, a long list of merchandise? List yours including the major categories of things you have in your sale like infant items, tools, home decor, furniture, toys, electronics.
51. What do you call it? Garage sale, yard sale, rummage sale, barn sale, moving sale, tag sale, estate sale? I think a lot depends on the region of the country you live in, where exactly your sale will be held and what the reason is for your sale. Estate sales are typically for selling a household after a person passes on or moves into assisted living.
52. The night before your sale, place all your signs up so there is less rushing in the morning. You will be busy enough with everything else.
53. If you have large items you are still using and is too difficult to bring out into your garage, make a large sign stating the items you are selling with price and then "ask to see". Only do this if you have an extra person available to show them. Do not do this if you are alone. You do not want to leave your garage or yard unattended.

Display is Important

54. If possible, set up the tables in your garage and start arranging a couple days earlier. If there is more than one family, it may take some time.
55. Sweep out the garage, cover things you do not want to sell with sheets or tarps.
56. When setting up the tables, keep in mind traffic-flow. Do not have any dead spots where people cannot get out or they get cornered. Keep an open path and enough room for people to pass one another.
57. Cover tables with attractive tablecloths, sheets or blankets for a nice display.
58. Set up your hanging device whatever it may be and group adult clothing together by gender and size.
59. Infant and toddler clothes may be folded neatly or lying flat on table and also grouped into sizes or gender.
60. Arrange items on tables and areas according to theme or categories. Put all tools together, toys, books, electronics and so on.
61. Make sure electronic items have access to an electrical outlet for testing.
62. Bring out extension cords if necessary to plug inside the house
63. Have batteries available to show items work such as; radios, toys and other items you might sell that need them.
64. Make sure all light bulbs work in the garage and have them all on the day of the sale.
65. Decide where you and your helpers will park. You want to make it convenient for your customers. Park down the street, if you can and allow as many spaces as possible in your drive or in front of your house.
66. Rope off your yard if you do not want people driving, parking on it or walking through it.
67. Have designated areas that you group like things into such as; tools, clothes, toys & games, infant items, books, household décor, electronics, and furniture.
68. Keep any small items such as jewelry in a display case or very close to you or another adult running the sale. When it's crowded, things can disappear really quick.
69. Keep items off the ground, if possible. No one likes to have to get on their knees to look or stoop.
70. Decide what large items or extra tables can be brought out into the driveway for attention. Many cannot see what's in the garage until they get out of their car. You need to make the driveway inviting and enticing with your merchandise.
71. Place a radio in the garage and prepare to have easy-listening music playing at a low volume. Customers will shop longer if they are not confronted with uncomfortable silence.

It's About Money!

72. Make sure you have been to the bank for change a day or two earlier. Have plenty with you because on weekends after everyone gets paid, they use a lot of twenties.
73. Make sure you know who will handle the money ahead of time and make sure it's someone good with figures and making change. More than one person can help during a rush.
74. Make sure when a customer pays you, you leave the bill out on the table and then count change back to your customers, so there are no mistakes. Watch and be aware of quick change artists and take your time.
75. Have a system for running big bills into the house for safe-keeping.
76. Decide if you want to accept personal checks before the first person asks you. (personally, I would only take them from people you really know.)
77. Have a receipt book on hand in case someone requests one for a big ticket item such as a piece of furniture, an automobile, or a computer.
78. Have a tape measure or yardstick available for those needing one to see if something fits before they buy. This could clinch your sale!
79. Put up an "ALL SALES FINAL" sign.
80. Have "SOLD" signs available to tag those items someone may need to come back with a truck for.

Decisions About Safety

81. Don't talk about how much money you are making. (Don't tempt thieves.)
82. Don't let anyone in the house for any reason. Not to use restrooms or try on clothes.
83. Keep all doors locked except the one near you that you are using to go in the house from the garage.
84. Make sure each person helping with the sale knows what their job is. Is it taking money, watching tables, getting lunch, running bills in the house, or greeting customers?
85. Please do NOT stand or sit together talking or talking on your phone and ignoring your customers. Make yourself available to them.
86. Discuss ahead of time if everyone is willing to negotiate their prices and when. The last day? Mid-day? Or maybe they already priced a tad higher to allow for negotiating. Make sure you know before it starts. I advise not to negotiate too early unless already given wiggle room in the prices already marked.
87. Keep dogs inside the house or in another secured area. As friendly as dogs can be, accidents happen whether they snarl at a stranger or some child or elderly person trips over Fido. There is also the possibility your precious pooch could get stolen. It has happened before.
88. Invite your older children to join in! Children can help by setting up a little snack area and sell cans of pop or bottles of water from an ice-filled cooler and maybe offer donuts or homemade cookies sold in bags of 3 or 4. Make it easy for children by charging 50¢ apiece. Cold drinks are especially helpful on hot summer days. Keeping children busy or finding a sitter for younger ones is a good idea so you can keep your mind on your sale and not them.

Ready, Set, Go!!!

89. Get plenty of sleep the night before and get up early, make coffee, and eat breakfast! You'll need the energy! Do not open late! Be on time! Better early than late!
90. Double check and make sure everything was unpacked and out on display and is priced.
91. Expect early birds to show up but don't be pressured to open early if you don't want to. Keep your garage door closed, be polite and tell them you will open at whatever time you have designated.
92. Open your garage door, smile and greet your customers!
93. Expect a rush the first few hours and to slow up about noon/lunch time.
94. Pay attention and be helpful but do not pressure people or follow them around.
95. As items sell, rearrange to make tables look full. If tables start to look slumpy, take them down and fill the other tables.
96. Be prepared to haggle but don't be intimidated into doing what you don't want to do.
97. Jump on offers at the end of the 2nd or last day so you won't have as many leftovers to pack up.
98. Make sure you thank customers for coming whether they buy anything or not.
99. Stay open until your advertised time. Nothing is as irritating as driving to a sale or following a sign only to find it closed early!
100. At the end of your sale – close up, pack up, and take all your signs down so that no one comes knocking at your door. If possible, have someone take the signs down before you close the garage.
101. Save everything until the next sale, donate to charity or offer it all on FreeCycle!!!